OFF THE GRID
In a Tiny House
an
Off Grid Living
Interview
Off Grid Living

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Who is Rob Greenfield? Who do you consider yourself to be?

I’m an activist, adventurer, dude making a difference, one in seven billion people on earth. I like myself and I like my life but I also realize in the grand scheme of things that I’m no more important than an ant in a giant ant hill. But I believe everything I do does matter because life is precious. So I live a pretty conscious life doing my best to have a positive impact on my community, other creatures, people far away, and earth itself.

What made you want to live off grid?

To decrease my impact on the earth, to be more connected to my surroundings, to go back to a time when everything wasn’t monetized.

Why do you live off grid?

Because when water is flowing from the tap and it only takes the flip of a light switch it is way too easy to overconsume these resources. These sources of water and electricity are seemingly endless when available like this which results in a huge overconsumption. At home I have to watch every gallon of water I use and every trickle of electricity and that’s the example I want to give to a society (American) that makes up only 2% of the world’s population yet uses 25% of the world’s resources.

What is the minimalist lifestyle?

That differs from person to person. But in general it is based on having less stuff, measuring success in experiences rather than money.
or possessions, and being able to walk without a hunched over back from all the stuff you are carrying!

You didn’t take a shower for a year…? Please explain… ;)

It started with just a summer where I used just 160 gallons of water in 104 days but after that my personal hygiene was better than ever before so I decided to continue. I just swim in natural sources of water and it has been over two years since my last shower now!

You rode across America on a bicycle? All by yourself? How did you manage that?

Twice actually. The first time I had a camera guy with me to film a documentary and the second time was alone. I really like doing my
adventures solo. I managed it by taking it one pedal at a time whether it be in a desert, over a mountain, through the wind beaten great plains, or in urban sprawl. My first tour was Off the Grid Across America where I lived an extremely low impact lifestyle and learned about our resources and how to stop destroying the earth. My second was The Goodfluence Tour where I dumpster dived in hundreds of dumpsters showing America how much food is going to waste

So you’re settled now in San Diego, and you live in a tiny house now? Tell us about that and how you came to live in such a small place.

That’s right! I’ve been living in San Diego for a little over 4 years but in this tiny house for just over 4 months. I live off the grid, in a backyard in San Diego. I do work exchange for the space to put my house. Here I live a very simple, debt free, bill free, connected life. I grow food, collect rainwater, harvest the energy of the sun, compost, use a compost toilet and am looking forward to fun projects like my solar shower and bike powered blender. Here’s a video of my life at home!

How small is your tiny house?

It’s 50 square feet (5’ x 10’) and not quite tall enough to stand in.

Do you wish you had a bigger house?

50 square feet is too small for me in the long run. 75 and a few more feet of headroom would do the trick though.

What are the difficulties in living this lifestyle?

For me the main difficulty is water. I live in a dry climate amidst one of the biggest draughts in history. Plus I missed the rainy season and am starting my garden in the dry season. I did manage to collect about 250 gallons of water though in a very unexpected rain. Now my challenge is to figure out if I can get water from a solar still or harvesting wasted water from leaky sources around town.

Do you think other folks should try this lifestyle?

Absolutely! You will never look at resources the same. This has changed the way I look at a drop of water, a morsel of food, or a couple percent of battery life on my laptop.

If you just do it for a short period of time you will hopefully take away lessons of resource conservation and appreciation that will stick with you for life.

Why do you think people should do this?

See above

You’re living sustainably, and you’re giving back to the community and world at large, but have you ever been called a mooch or lazy, or that you’re just living off the system and welfare and kindness of others?

All the time. Few people on the internet do research before commenting and many of them don’t even read the title so of course that’s going to happen. Most of it is just a lack of understanding.

Then there are the people who are just against different ways of life. I see this as similar to classism or racism. I don’t blame them though, they were probably taught to be that way.
What do you say to the naysayers and negative people out there? Do you ignore them mostly?

I don’t usually ignore them because usually they often just want attention. So instead I give them compassion with hopes to be a positive part of their day.

You kind of started a small revolution of awareness about food waste... How did you decide to fight against the incredible amount of food wasted by our food industry?

I was cycling across America and started to look into grocery store dumpsters and time after time again they were filled with perfectly good food. The more I saw it the more I had to share it with the world. I think we can end food waste while I’m still a young man and there are many people working on the issue. Tristram Stuart is an inspiration, role model, and friend to me. His Ted Talk, The Global Food Waste Scandal is a must watch.

Would you consider yourself an activist?

Absolutely. Activism is coursing through my veins and pumping through my heart.

What do you want to accomplish most?

To help people get out of the rat race and be content with life. Every little change that is made to cause less destruction to the earth and live with more health and happiness is a success to me.

Do you see yourself doing this kind of work 5, 10 or 20 years from now?

Without a doubt. It will change from time to time but I will be working on social and environmental issues until the day I die.

What advice can you give to our readers about how they can live more sustainably?

Make a list of all the things you want to change, starting with little things like using reusable bags, shopping local, and eating more veggies, and then move onto larger things like going car free and getting on a bike. Start small, take it one day at a time, and try to make little positive changes every week.

You’ll start to feel better and the things you thought were going to be hard will be much easier because of your momentum and your healthier lifestyle.

Check out 12 Simple Ways to Start Living an Awesome Earth Friendly Lifestyle Today for the things I recommend the most!

Check out Rob Greenfield’s website.

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