



Why the Average Travel Nurse Salary Will Surprise You (In a Good Way)

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For many healthcare professionals, gaining diverse experience and seeing the world are two important motivators to choose the traveling lifestyle. But, did you know that the average travel nurse salary is significantly higher than that of a regular, full time nurse?

That's right.

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), regular licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses earn approximately \$43,170 per year.

Travel nurses, on the other hand, can make significantly more.

Let's take a closer look!

Higher Base Pay

Because travel nurses typically work on short assignments—lasting between four and 13 weeks—the average travel nurse salary base is usually higher than that of a full time professional.

Note that the base pay of a nurse varies from state to state, as it usually corresponds with the regional cost of living.

At the same time, salaries vary between healthcare institutions.

A private hospital in Hartford, Connecticut, will in all likelihood pay more than a state-run clinic in Charleston, West Virginia.

In addition, different specialties pay more than others.

Tax Free Stipends

As a travel nurse, you'll receive substantial stipends to help diffuse the cost of constantly relocating.

Housing, meals, and incidental stipends are part of the package.

Incidentals include laundry, Wi-Fi use, etc. Since these stipends don't qualify as income, they aren't taxed.

It's important to understand that these stipends are nearly always a fixed sum.

In other words, you're not expected to hand over your receipts to the staffing agency and wait to be reimbursed (though you should always keep your receipts for tax purposes).

So if you can find less expensive housing and meals, as well as save on incidentals, whatever is left of the stipends is yours!

Generous Reimbursements

In addition to stipends, you'll also receive generous reimbursements for travel costs, as well as the costs of certifications, education, and licensing. You'll need to be licensed in each state where you work.

Travel costs covered:

- airfare
- train tickets
- ferry costs
- tolls
- taxis
- shuttles
- gas
- parking
- luggage costs

Also covered:

- books

- courseware
- trade literature
- uniforms
- any devices you need in order to study

In contrast, when you're working as a regular nurse, you'll have to pay for these yourself (even if they're partially tax deductible).

This increases the average travel nurse salary, over a full time nurse, by quite a bit.

Healthcare and Retirement Benefits

Many healthcare professionals worry about how becoming a travel nurse will impact their insurance and 401K, since they'll be moving from location to location.

However, it's not the healthcare institution where you'll be working that pays for your benefits: it's the travel nurse agency.

Most agencies provide a range of options that cover individual and family medical and dental insurance at moderate cost to you.

In addition, the best have matching 401K options.

Some even provide life insurance, as well as accidental death and dismemberment coverage, at no cost to you. This can be extremely beneficial in the event you have dependents.

Tax Breaks

In order to qualify for some of the travel nurse tax deductions, you'll need to have one permanent residence in your state of origin.

If you own your own home, it makes the most sense financially to rent it out so you have some additional income and the home remains in good repair.

And guess what? All of the costs associated with maintaining your home and renting it out are tax deductible—even if you hire a property manager or realtor to handle this for you!

Of course, you'll have to declare any income you receive from rent and pay income taxes over it, but that's income you wouldn't have had otherwise.

SEE ALSO: [Travel Nurse Tax Deductions: What You Need to Know Now](#)

Bonuses

Everyone loves bonuses!

And when you're a travel nurse, there are numerous options to earn them.

Sign-on and completion bonuses can run as high as \$6,000 per assignment, depending on your employer and position.

Just imagine getting that four times a year.

Plus, many travel nurse agencies offer referrals bonuses of approximately \$500 for each person you refer to them and who accepts an assignment through them.

So if you're good at networking and can communicate your enthusiasm about being a travel nurse, your average travel nurse salary could be thousands of additional dollars a year just from referrals alone!

Deals and Discounts

One of the awesome perks to being a travel nurse is that some agencies work with travel partners that give you discounts.

These discounts can include:

- cell phones and plans
- travel insurance
- restaurants
- entry fees for amusement parks, zoos, museums, and movie theaters
- car insurance
- gym memberships

If you're an avid traveler who wants to see the sights and experience all that each location has to offer, these discounts can save you a lot of money.

The Average Travel Nurse Salary Has Big Benefits

Clearly, when you add all of this up, there's no doubt that becoming a travel nurse can be a smart financial choice.

However, it's critical that you know precisely what part of your paycheck is base pay and what part consists of stipends, bonuses, and so on.

Have your agency representative walk you through all of this at the beginning of each assignment, and don't be afraid to ask questions if you're not sure about something.

And remember: when April 15th rolls around, you'll also need to find an accountant with proven experience in preparing tax returns for travel nurses, since you'll have a lot of factors to consider in order to get the tax breaks you're counting on.

(Tip: ask your agency if they can recommend someone.)

Interested in learning more about the average travel nurse salary? [Contact us](#) about travel nurse opportunities and options.

Whether it's to see more or earn more, find out what your career can do when it travels!

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