
So You Want to Move Overseas?

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Introduction

So you are thinking of picking up stakes and moving overseas. This can be one of the most amazing experiences in your life, especially if you have been thinking, dreaming, and planning it for a long time. Website after website will tout the beauty and adventure of a move to the other side of the world, but if expectations are out of whack it can quickly become a daunting experience.

Let's keep the ship afloat!

Here are a few statements I have heard over the years from those had been in their new country for a while.

The Good

1. "It only took 2 hours for the doctor to set my broken arm and cast it." – Ok, this sounds bad but it is actually true that medical care in many countries is fast, affordable, and easily accessible. In one year, my son broke his nose (\$800 surgery), arm (\$160 x-ray, set, and cast), and got braces for his teeth (\$750). So it can certainly be a bright spot in an otherwise discouraging situation when you are ill overseas. Excellent medical care, however, is not always the rule of thumb so make sure you check with your local connections to be sure before you move, especially if you have chronic illnesses or prescription medications.

2. "Ok, I just fed all my friends for \$5" – It is not surprising that food is a highlight in most countries and can be incredibly affordable. I say this with a bit of caution that if a side street stall looks super sketch – it probably is, so be careful because your stomach does not have years of strength the same way that your Moroccan friend's does. With that said, not all other costs will be so cheap. Check out the following cost of living site to get a good feel for the places you plan to research. <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living>.

3. "The people are so nice" – We at ParachuteU.com hear this a lot. Most people who move overseas are pleasantly surprised how hospitable and welcoming other cultures can be most of the time. Our media can portray certain cultures as angry and hateful when, in fact, most people – regardless of where they are from – are more than willing to help you in almost any life situation. This is not permission to stroll down a dark alley looking for the best five star restaurant, but you don't have to be suspicious of everyone you meet either.

4. "My life is so simple now" – Our lives are busy, complicated, and stressful. Many people find that when they move overseas so much falls off their plates. You may not have a car. Your bills are cut in half. You cannot communicate nearly as much due to language barriers. You cannot understand movies even if you went to one. This may at first seem odd, but over time, it can become a great gift of simplicity.

5. "Public transportation is AMAZING!" – For many of us, the idea of not having a car can seem odd, but in most places on earth a car is luxury. The proximity of cities allow for most transport to be done by bus, train, tuk-tuk, buggy, or rickshaw. Don't fight it – embrace it.

The Bad

1. "I really thought this would just be like a long vacation" – News flash! This is not a long vacation. You are starting a new life in a new place that requires much of the same energy (more energy sometimes!). Although your life might be simpler, you still have some of the same stressors. A vacation allows you to unplug, but moving overseas can (at first) be mentally and emotionally draining as you have to try a bit harder to get things done in a day. Oh, there is also not someone bringing you Pina Coladas by the beach every day either.

2. "I cannot wait to speak to someone that understands me" – One thing you will want to develop quickly is a strong community. Don't be a renegade. There will be times when familiar culture, common language, and even the same humor become desperate desires. Be prepared to feel a bit isolated at times until you develop a group of friendships that have commonality.

3. "I am feeling really lonely and tired all the time." It is normal to miss family and friends when you arrive in a new place, but when you add up all the unfamiliarity of a new culture it can be extra lonely at times. Remember, your brain will take twice the brainpower to process all the NEW. But take heart -- this will pass also as you find friends and neighbors who share your passions.

4. "It takes me all day just to go to the store" -- You are in a new culture with a new language, new customs, and you will be amazed what you take for granted back in your home country. Some things as simple as navigating a store, currency, traffic, and hand signals will take three times as long.....trust me. Set your expectations and give yourself

time to explore without being in a rush. It took me a year in a new city to just find peanut butter. When I found it, it was like I was eating something from the heavenly realms.

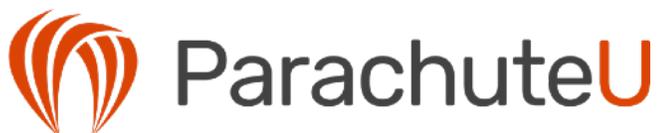
5. "I run out of money so fast" -- It is true that in many places the cost of living is so low that you can live well from a small salary, but you still have to budget your funds. This might be because you are continually allowing yourself to get ripped off at the market (learn a little language – it goes a long way) or it can just be because you are bored and spending too much. Regardless, don't be surprised if you find yourself a little short each month at first before you start shopping like a local.



Conclusion

Moving overseas can be one of the most fulfilling and life changing experiences you will ever have as long as you manage one key thing: Expectations. Now go and find your greatest journey!

Is this the year you decide to take the next step toward your greatest journey?



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