

HOW TO BE AN EXPAT

FOREIGN TRAVEL, NEW CULTURAL EXPERIENCES, A GLOBAL NETWORK OF FRIENDS – THE REWARDS OF EXPAT LIFE CAN BE MANY, BUT THERE IS A KNACK TO MAKING IT WORK

Words:
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THE EXPATRIATE LIFESTYLE has an undeniable glamour. The opportunities to travel, to make new friends and explore different cultures is certainly attractive. But it has its downsides too. Whether it's culture shock, bureaucratic barriers or financial obstacles, living abroad can be challenging. If you're thinking of moving to a far-flung place or have just landed in the Channel Islands, here are some tips for being an expat from those who've been there.

1) BORING, WE KNOW, BUT STAY ON TOP OF THE PAPERWORK

John Marcarian has spent most of his life outside of his native Australia and is the author of *Expatriate*, a guidebook for setting up in foreign lands. "You should always plan your departure before you plan your arrival," he explains.

Marcarian stresses the importance of tying up loose ends, especially if you'll be living abroad for an extended period. This might include completing any tax returns, selling assets, closing insurance policies or thinking about how you'll move your money. Many expats forget to do this and end up having to get their affairs in order from the other side of the world.

He also lists issues expats will encounter on arrival in their new home. "You'll need to think about finding somewhere to live, choosing schools for your children, planning your commute and navigating the country's insurance and health system," he says.

And he notes the importance of reading your new job contract.

"Even if you've moved to work for the branch of your current employer, the local job contract might have some very different rules."

Marcarian emphasises the importance of working through this series of steps systematically – it will leave new expats with fewer surprises.

2) DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE – AND THINK ABOUT LIFE BEYOND THE SETTling-IN PERIOD

"It's really important to think long term," says Andrew Brook, a British expat who moved to Guernsey to work at professional services firm Altair earlier this year. Brook previously spent 16 years as an executive at an accounting firm in Bermuda, where he and his wife brought up a young family.

Raising children in a different country requires a lot of forward thinking, he explains. Not only might competition for school places be high, but you also need to consider your children's long-term circumstances. "In many places, the expat child's life is tied to their parents," says Brook.

If their parents are foreigners, children may not have

rights of residence in a place, even if they've lived there much of their lives. This was part of the reason Brook and his family returned to the UK in 2013, as their children were finishing their education.

When they were moving to Guernsey, he and his wife made sure they did this due diligence, researching the place well in advance.

That said, he praises how quick and easy the island's government has made registering and setting up on the island through its Locate Guernsey service.

3) IT MAY BE HARDER TO SPEND YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH THAN YOU THINK – BE PREPARED TO JUMP THROUGH A FEW HOOPS

One issue that almost all expatriates encounter at some point is moving money to and from their home country. Especially if you end up working for a foreign firm abroad, it can be surprisingly tricky to get your money back home.

Take property, for instance. Matthew Hillyer is a financial adviser at largemortgage.com and specialises in helping expats who are already abroad to get mortgages for properties in the UK. Of the 200 or so major lenders in the UK, Hillyer says only around 25 will deal with expatriates at all, because of the complexity of their circumstances.

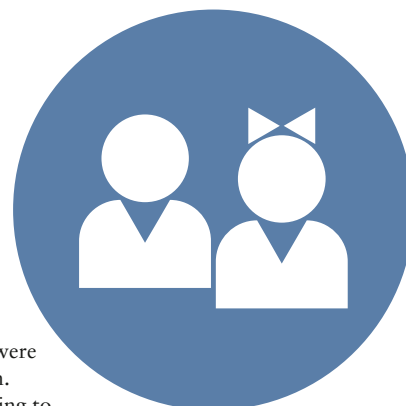
And while some lenders are happy to work with expatriates living in stable places – such as the US and Europe – fewer will want to work with you if you're living somewhere perceived as risky.

It is possible to navigate these challenges – though there might just be a few more hoops to jump through.

Jersey-based HSBC Expat offers banking services to people living and working abroad. The business's Head, John Goddard, says one of the most common finance challenges that expats face is opening a bank account in a new country without having a credit history there.

HSBC Expat holds its customers' credit histories centrally in Jersey, allowing it to offer them banking services anywhere in the world.

"Keeping and managing money in one central location, not having to worry about moving finances with every move, definitely makes moving around the world easier and, regardless of how politically unstable a country may be, those expats who bank with us know their money is safe," Goddard says.



EXPATS IN NUMBERS

31%

The percentage of expats in Jersey who come from the British Isles; this number is down from 37% in 1981 (Source: States of Jersey)



3%

The percentage of the global population formed by expats (Source: Expatland)



1,000

The number of new people (mainly working) who migrate to Jersey each year (Source: States of Jersey)



77%

The percentage of expats in the Channel Islands who say they have a better work-life balance there than in their home country (Source: HSBC Expat)



10%

The percentage of global GDP generated by expats (Source: Expatland)

82%

The percentage of expats in the Channel Islands who say they spend less of their days on trains or in cars (Source: HSBC Expat)

73%

The percentage of expats in the Channel Islands who say the environment (air pollution, water quality) is better than in their home country (Source: HSBC Expat)



16

The number of years expats stay in the Channel Islands, on average; this is twice as long as planned, often because they have met someone to share their life with (Source: HSBC Expat)



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RESEARCH THE LOCAL CULTURE SO YOU UNDERSTAND SOCIAL CUES IN BUSINESS AND PRIVATE LIFE

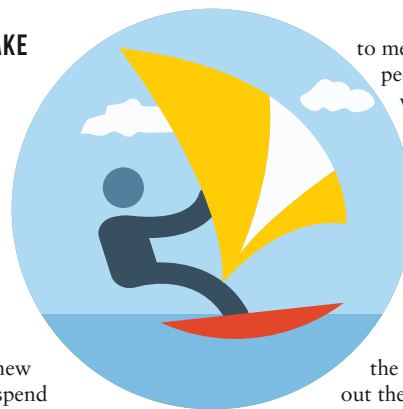
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4) NOW YOU'RE THERE, MAKE AN EFFORT TO FIT IN

“Try and have at least one new experience with your family each month,” Marcarian recommends, “whether that’s eating fish head soup in Singapore or spending a day cycling around Jersey.”

Besides the fact that such experiences are good in and of themselves, when you’re new to a place, it’s important to spend quality time with family, especially as your personal networks will be much smaller. That quality time becomes invaluable.

Marcarian also suggests doing things that will help you get to grips with your new home, including signing up to language courses (assuming the local language is new to you), joining expat clubs



to meet likeminded people, and volunteering.

He also recommends researching the local culture so you understand social cues in business and private life.

“You have to put the effort in and get out there,” says Brook, who has just signed up to a Guernsey golf club. Especially in a new place it’s important to be active in trying to build a social network – you can’t just expect people to gravitate towards you.

Happily, Brook and his wife have found their new home “very warm and welcoming” so far. ■