Expat Life Around the World

There is a certain allure to being an expat, a definable and seductive je ne sais quoi that is evoked when someone describes their experiences in leaving everything behind to move abroad, embrace the expat life to live and work. On any given day, the evocative dream of swapping your dreary workplace for an office in an exotic local surely beckons.

By some counts, there are an estimated 232 million expats currently living abroad around the world today. Their reasons for choosing to leave their home countries for a new life overseas are many and varied. What unites them, however, is an intense desire to seamlessly combine the economic imperative of earning a living with a wanderlust-driven desire to experience the world.

What Is An Expat?

An expat is defined as a "person who chooses to take up residency in another country for career advancement, or to fulfil a personal dream or goal, rather than as a result of dire economic necessity."

Now, "expat" is most commonly used as a term to describe those working in companies outside of their home country those working in companies outside of their home country and who has home ownership, a property lease, or work visa in that country.

Benefits Of An Expat Experience

Living and working abroad can be an adventure that many of us have on our bucket list. Choosing to live overseas, either short or long-term, is a huge decision and a major adventure. Frequently, those who've done it say it was the best decision they ever made.

Not only does becoming an expat open your mind to more of what the world has to offer, be it fresh professional experiences and challenges, different cultures, food and opportunities for travel, it can also remind you about what the most important things in life are for you.

The benefits of expat living are many and varied. If you're considering making the big step and moving overseas, some of our favourite expat benefits might encourage you to take the plunge.

1. The Chance To Start Afresh: Many people are attracted to an expat lifestyle by the chance it offers to start afresh. Many expats give up stressful jobs, extended social networks, and significant financial commitments when they leave their home country and see giving up all these aspects of their current lives as a fabulous opportunity to simplify their life
2. Becoming An Expat Gives You The Chance To Get Back To Basics And Focus On What's Important: Frequently, expats find that they really get to know themselves in the first year they spend abroad
3. The Chance To Own Less And Do More: When you live your own country, it's easy to get caught up in an endless cycle of financial commitments and personal consumption. Moving overseas breaks the cycle of these commitments, and frees up new ways to spend your salary
4. Expats Travel, Explore And Do More: Expats recognize experiences are more valuable than belongings in the long run and they remember this as they explore natural habitats, visit ancient ruins, and enjoy cultural celebrations
5. The Chance To Learn New Things: When you live overseas, learning new things becomes simply a part of everyday life. You are likely to experience huge differences between your home country and the country you adopt as an expat base. Holidays, festivals, social customs, and of course language are all different, and learning about and experiencing all those differences can be enjoyable as well as challenging
6. The Chance To Be Inspired: Relocating overseas, you can expect to open yourself up to a fresh host of new opportunities and new experiences. This experience can prove to be incredibly inspiring. If you are creatively inclined, the benefits of fresh inspiration are often immediate. Seeing and learning new things on a daily basis will encourage your creativity and reignite your passion. Equally, you may find yourself dreaming up new business ideas or adopting a new hobby.

Best Countries In The World

So, you've bought into the expat dream and are keen to experience expat life, living and working abroad. However, now we come to the delicate decision of which location will provide the maximum professional and personal benefits?

There is a raft of annual surveys to consult and some countries make regular appearances in their Top 10. Here are seven of the best countries to live in for expats:

1. Costa Rica: Rates highly due to the ease of settling in, family life and quality of life
2. Bahrain: Again rates strongly because of the ease of settling in and its numerous career opportunities
3. Portugal: Fabulous weather, great food and a low cost of living make for a welcoming expat destination
4. Australia: Good weather, a high ranking for overall life experience and good salaries for expats
5. Sweden: Good economy and family benefits but falls short on overall life experience
6. Austria: Ranks strongly on economics and overall experience, but struggles on education and other family-related criteria
7. United Arab Emirates: Consistently performs well on its economics, but lags on family benefits and overall life experience
8. Spain: Brilliant weather, dynamic culture, great food a low cost of living and an established English expat community make Spain a welcoming expat destination
9. Singapore: A dynamic Asia economic power, world-class infrastructure, high standard of living, easy access to Asia's attractions, fabulous nightlife and divine food marks Singapore as a perennial favourite amongst expats
10. Columbia: Dynamic economy, ready access to Central and Latin American attractions, and a high quality of life have helped Columbia emerge onto the global expat map.

Political instability caused by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in the USA have seen both America and UK plummet down the ranking of the top countries for expats, according to many surveys

7 Myths About Expats Abroad

There are many misconceptions about what is involved in life as an expat. There are seemingly as many misconceptions about what it means to be an expat as there are types of expats! Exploring some of the most common myths about expats abroad reveal some fascinating insights.

Below are 7 frequently encountered myths about expat life:

1. Expats Only Stay In Their Resident Country For A Short Time: Research, shows huge variation around this aspect of expat life. On the one hand, we see committed expats who settle for a decade or so or do not anticipate leaving their expat country of residence at all. On the other hand there are growing numbers of short secondment talent who stay for one or two years
2. Expats Arrive As Families: The high-flying male executive on an international posting, with a spouse who doesn't work and children attending an international school, is still with us but disappearing fast. Fact is most expats arrive as singles, although those who do find a partner have the highest chance of settling permanently in their adopted country
3. Expats Cannot Find A Job In Their Home Country: Most expats are in a professional role prior to relocating. Indeed, their move is frequently initiated by international recruitment agencies or a host employer, either to fill a gap in expertise or a skill scarcity in the local job market or because the employer prefers foreign talent and the value they bring in terms of innovation and knowledge transfer
4. All Expats Come From Privileged Backgrounds And Arrive On Secure Expat Packages: Expats often have to make professional and personal sacrifices in choosing to become expats and thus need to be highly flexible in their approach to their career. Abrupt career changes and employment uncertainty are commonly experienced challenges for expats
5. Expats Who Follow Their Partner's Career Do Not Need Or Want To Work: Many expats disrupt their own career when following their partner overseas. Unsurprisingly, a majority of expats actively seek employment opportunities or start their own businesses. Expat partners are often well educated, ambitious

and resilient. Dual careers are increasingly becoming the standard amongst expats

6. All Expats Are Satisfied and Secure In Long-Term Contracts And Few Want Change: Most expats remain open to new opportunities, whether a new job, as entrepreneurs, undertaking voluntary work or studying while abroad
7. Salary And Tax Rates Dominate Expat Thinking: The most important career drivers for expats are clearly job opportunities. Moreover, expats seek a balanced approach to life, their career, and soft and hard incentives when choosing a destination.

The Career Benefits Of Expat Life

Many expats benefit professionally in terms of career development from time spent abroad. Not only do enhanced language skills and intercultural sensitivity make them a valuable employee, expatriate assignments can also bring down-stream financial benefits.

Even former expatriates returning back home soon discover how their career has benefited from their period as expats. If you take the time to buff up your language proficiency you can significantly improve your chances of finding a lucrative role. Companies with international operations are always looking to benefit from employees who are fluent in one or more languages.

During your time abroad, you will often enjoy opportunities to acquire exposure to new professional experiences and operating environments. Your on-the-job expat experience can open up opportunities to work in a new field or on a major projects you wouldn't have had access to in your native country.

Millennials Are Flocking To An Expat Lifestyle

Millennials are joining the global expat movement as they see the expat experience as a way of seeing the world while earning a living and developing a career. Indeed, some social commentators would argue Millennials are being swayed by two surprising new factors: politics and wanderlust.

Wanderlust has emerged as a popular culture phenomenon for anyone who identifies as a dedicated traveller. In a culture increasingly dominated and defined by social

media, the wanderlust concept has rippled through our culture as every Facebook status update, Instagram post and Tweet reflects the passion amongst Millennials for experiential travel.

This yearning is reflected amongst the importance Millennial expats attribute to culture with 52 percent of expats aged 34 or under, rating their host country's work culture as better than that found their home countries. Expat life then promises Millennials a beguiling mix of improved job prospects, and superior work-life coupled with affordable living and the exotic allure of experiencing an unfamiliar country.

By contrast, politics is a comparatively new motivational factor behind expat attractiveness. Some commentators attribute the controversial U.S. presidential election of Donald Trump as having increased Americans' appetite for relocating overseas, with New York residents being amongst the most fervent advocates of exploring the expat option.

Political uncertainty appears to have disconcerted U.S. citizens across key states including Florida, Texas and California. Millennials, in particular, are voting with their feet on a Trump Presidency and heading for the United Arab Emirates, Australia and Canada where language is less of an obstacle.

This emerging wave of expat Millennials is noticeable for both their aspiration and ambition, an unambiguous desire to travel the world whilst enjoying the material benefits of a bountiful adult life.

Does An Expatriate Lifestyle Make You Wealthier, Happier And Healthier?

As an expat, life can often feel more relaxed, less pressured and more enjoyable depending on your expat base. Moreover, there are greater opportunities to explore personal interests, as well as enjoying the social, historical and cultural fabric of an expat's adopted home.

As expats stretch themselves personally and professionally in creating a new life for themselves in their adopted country, they agree there is something innate about the experience of starting over, in making a big change in their lives that is invigorating even if it occasionally verges into the terrifying at times.

Similarly, many expats report that while they keenly feel the distance from friends and family back home it also makes them appreciate them more. They also find social media and tools such as WhatsApp and Skype help to bridge the gap.

One aspect many expats point to is the access to better quality housing as expats, with gyms and outdoor pools being common amenities overseas, while others point the lower cost of living available in many of the most popular expat locations.

The opportunities for cheap travel, particularly weekends away is one of the most frequently mentioned advantages of being an expat. Cities such as Dubai are a convenient gateway to Africa, Eastern Europe and East Asia. These locations offer some unforgettable experiences that many expats would not have been able to enjoy had they remained in their home countries.

One common refrain about expat life is it is not always a smooth or serene ride. Certain locations can be dangerous, whilst others pose a major culture shock. Frustration, particularly with the bureaucracy attached seemingly to every aspect of moving, from organizing relocation services to having to change over driver's licenses, through to opening bank accounts and renting an apartment are common but the learning experiences can prove to be life transforming.

Overall, most expats agree that relocating opened up a world of career and personal opportunities which transformed their happiness quotient. As for wealth and health that depends very much on which location you opt for.

Surviving The Challenges Of An Expat Lifestyle

An expatriate life can prove to be more challenging in many ways than living in your home country. Recognising the benefits of the expat challenge and balancing its propensity for disruptive and confronting situations with support and a positive mindset, can transform expat challenges into a springboard to greater personal growth, understanding and contentment.

How to thrive off the back of the expat challenge:

- Balance Challenges With Support: Be willing to embrace uncomfortable and disruptive positions but always ensure you have the emotional support you need when you inevitably struggle

- Distinguish Real Challenges From Daily Terror: Social media can easily stimulate fears about threats that may prove to be fabricated or exaggerated. Maintain a healthy perspective and focus your energies only on those challenges that contribute to your personal growth and sense of fulfilment, i.e. don't sweat the small stuff
- Acknowledge When Things Aren't Working: If a situation is becoming untenable and your support structure is proving insufficient, it may be time to move on. There is no failure in voting for what is best for your wellbeing
- Look On The Bright Side Of Life: Maintaining a positive outlook and trusting your resilience and endurance, is the best way to transform a testing challenge into an inspiring and invigorating experience.

Final Word

If you're hungry for fresh inspiration and a new adventure, relocating overseas as an expat could be the right choice for you. You may discover life, as an expat is likely to expose you to new experiences, which may change your whole perspective on life. Time as an expat can enable you to reprioritise your spending habits, learn to embrace and welcome change and reappraise how you want to live your life. However, the biggest benefit of the expat life and living overseas is you never know what is around the corner and where your path might lead you.