

10 Things

TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE MOVING OVERSEAS

Ready to pack it all in and start a new life?
Read this first. By **SHARON SWIFT**.

It seems us ladies are keen to go global. Last International Women's Day, PWC released exciting statistics – 71 per cent of female millennials expressed a desire for overseas career experience. That's a lot of women with serious wanderlust. Other motivators to take the plunge overseas can be very personal: career experience, family or friendship ties, lifestyle aspirations, or simply a sense of adventure.

Living overseas is life-changing. If you return home (let's face it, some of us discover that home is in fact, elsewhere), one thing's for sure – you'll never be the same. You'll see the world, and people, differently. You'll develop resilience and adaptability. The immersion into a different culture is exhilarating. There will be a period of self-discovery and independence that you will have no choice but to explore. The experience will be character building and confronting. But, many would argue, living overseas is seldom something to regret.

Fresh out of university in 1998, I set flight on a big bird to the Big Apple. Yes, I imagined sipping on a Cosmo with Carrie. The reality was quite different. I knew no-one, wasn't paid for a month and was clueless about pretty much everything. The evenings were lonely and days confusing while I unravelled a new system and worked out how to feel at home.

Fast-forward a few more big life changes, there are 10 things I always asked myself before making a move:

1 READ PAGE TWO

As the saying goes "The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." – St. Augustine. So, the first task is to spin the globe. Ok – perhaps a tad flippant. Most who set their sights on moving abroad will have a yearning in mind – for cultural or language immersion, access to travel opportunities, to stretch themselves personally and/or professionally. Whether Moscow or Madrid, London or LA, each has its own draw. Consider the career opportunities, cost of living, and the scale of resilience needed to adjust – Auckland versus Abu Dhabi, for example.

2 DOLLARS AND SENSE

No cash, no choices. There will be the cost of the move itself

– flights, accommodation. Then consider the period you won't have an income – if you're moving with work, you may take a break. If not, finding a job takes time. Make sure you are clear on the cost of living in your new country – this will vary widely, consider your current spend and research carefully about costs.

3 WORK IT, BABY

Career will be first consideration – how will you make money? What are my skills worth in the country I want to move to? Evaluate how in demand they might be, how to write your resumé to suit the market. If the chance to move with your current company arises, how does this fit in with your overall career plan? Whilst moving abroad is enticing

ensuring that it contributes to an overall career strategy is key.

4 ENTRY PERMITTING

The matter of legal right to live and work in your country of choice can't be overlooked. Quite simply, leave it to a migration expert. If you're lucky enough to move with work, this should be taken care of by your employer. Note that visa processing times vary widely and is a complex business, so do seek expert advice.

5 HAPPY FAMILIES

Leaving behind family and friends is always a sad affair. Skype and Facebook makes it so much easier than it would otherwise be, and so do relatively cheap flights to most corners of the world. Going it alone can be daunting yet thrilling – there will be periods of loneliness and stretching outside of your comfort zone to mix within new circles. If you have a partner, ensure their career needs can be satisfied. Young children, for the most part, settle when they feel safe, assured and know what's on the horizon – they will be happy when you are happy.

6 FOMO

The fear of missing out is strong when you're tens of thousands of Ks away. Weddings, birthdays, reunions, Christmases, other celebrations... Life will go on without you – and it will not be the same when you return. All of these life experiences will change everyone. At the same time, you'll be forging "had to be there" memories in your own life that can't be shared in person with people back home. It's worth thinking about how you would deal with this.

7 HOPES AND DREAMS

Consider both personal and professional. Moving for the sake of geography and at the expense of career goals and your bank balance might be considered travel rather than moving. Can the move sustain the career path you have planned? What experiences do you want to have? How will they help you meet your overall life goals?

8 GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Setting the right expectations is a crucial part of any life change. Excitement and enthusiasm will at times be matched by loneliness and discomfort. Be prepared that, at times, it might not be how you imagined – you cannot plan for everything, and there will be a roller-coaster element to the experience. All part of the fun.

9 WORK IT

Work the plan. Balancing a tight budget and logistics requires organisation. Crystallizing your thoughts into a plan can take time – visa, finances, exploring avenues with work, researching job opportunities, network building. Careful planning is definitely worth it.

10 WANTS, NEEDS, MUST-HAVES AND COMPROMISES

Really think – what kind of life do I want? Will this move be a one-time only, or a stepping stone to a longer stint overseas? What lifestyle do I want? Do I want an improvement or am I willing to be out of my comfort zone to achieve other goals? I.e. live in shoebox in Manhattan, or sacrifice the lifestyle to have a large place in the suburbs. *

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