



## How to make a success of moving overseas alone

Moving overseas for work is a serious undertaking. Even more so if you have decided to take the plunge by yourself. But don't worry, you are not completely alone. Increasingly, the millennial generation is starting to fill the ranks of single expat workers, and many of these are travelling

alone, looking to combine career development with a more rewarding lifestyle.

But as someone arriving in a new country alone, what should you be looking out for in order to make sure you get the most out of the opportunity? Here are the five key things to watch out for.

# 1. Living in a new country can be hard



Living and working in a new country will expose you to things you never imagined. New foods, new languages, new friends and much, much more. It is a great opportunity to plunge into new experiences, travel more, expand your worldview and broaden your mind.

But that doesn't necessarily mean it will be easy.

Moving overseas alone will mean you are far away from family and friends. You will be surrounded by unfamiliar ways of working and living. And this will be compounded by the fact that you are travelling and living alone, so won't have the same kind of support networks you are used to having.

Good preparation can help, but you need to allow yourself time to settle in and adapt. You will feel homesick, you will feel culture shock, sometimes you may even feel that you've bitten off much more than you can chew. Try to embrace these feelings, accept them as part of the journey and see them as an opportunity for growth.



# 2. It takes time to build new social circles

Making friends from scratch as a single expat in an unfamiliar country is never easy. And even when you manage to build a good social circle, these friendships can be extremely transient, with people often moving locations or returning home.

At times you will need to enjoy your own company far more than you had to at home. But with the right preparation and proactive attitude, it is still possible to build new and rewarding social circles. And that can start before you leave.

Online platforms such as Internations, MeetUp and Expat.com are a great resource to help you connect with these communities and find your own social tribe prior to departure. You can also find active single expat groups on social platforms such as Facebook that will give you a sense of the kind of activities you can expect to find in your new home. Choosing the single expat lifestyle means you will soon become part of a large community of people just like you. As such, finding other expats groups, especially in large cities and popular work destinations, is not too difficult.





## 3. Budget before you leave

One advantage of moving overseas alone is that your expenses will be less than that of a family, but it is still important that you make a plan and stick to it.

Many of the most popular expat cities also feature high in any list of the world's most expensive places to live, and so living there comes with a premium. In addition, for most overseas professionals the days of the generous expat package are a thing of the past.

This means it is crucial to budget against your new destination before you leave. Start by estimating your take home pay, factoring in any tax implications. From there decide the kind of lifestyle you are aiming for. Rent will be your largest expenditure and

how you choose to live will have major implications. Will you live in a small, downtown apartment? Maybe even a shared house? Or are you looking to rent a large villa in the suburbs? It is worth browsing local real estate websites to get a feel of what is available and for how much.

Next, you need to work out your daily expenses. Comparison websites such as [Numbeo](#) can give you a rough breakdown of how much you need to budget for everyday needs, everything from the price of a glass of beer to potential transportation costs. And if you have any specific budget requests, connect with expat groups and forums in your intended destination to get reliable on the ground intelligence.

## 4.

### Healthcare can get more complicated

Moving overseas alone will mean having to deal with a new healthcare system and potentially new health risks. Research the country you are moving to. How good is the healthcare system? How much will it cost? Can you access public services? What medication is available and what isn't?

No two countries are the same, and you may be surprised at some of the restrictions you could face. Japan, for example, prohibits a number of over-the-counter medicines that are fully available in other countries, and special authorization certificates may be needed.

The best advice is to check in with your doctor or healthcare provider before you leave. Also, make sure you have a comprehensive insurance policy that covers all eventualities. Don't make the mistake of thinking you don't need to be insured, or that travel insurance is all you will need. Securing adequate health insurance is a must and should sit right at the top of your to-do list.

Enquire with your company or an insurance provider before you depart to make sure you fully understand what kind of cover is available. Be aware that the country you are looking to settle in can to some extent determine what coverage you are entitled to.

# 5 ■ Watch your mental health

Studies show single expats experience higher levels of stress than locals, especially in their first few years abroad, and this can often trigger mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. We have also seen how the pandemic experience has for expats had a detrimental effect on their mental health, especially in those countries where there have been severe restrictions around travel and free-movement.

If you already see a therapist, speak with them before your move. They can give you advice on how to cope, and perhaps even set up regular remote consultations – for example, a monthly video call. They can also give recommendations of expat mental health resources in your new home. Similarly, if you already take medication, talk to your doctor well in advance and make sure that your medication is fully available at

your new destination, or that you are adequately stocked before you leave.

And remember, if you find yourself struggling with stress or mental health when working overseas, don't hesitate to reach out to a professional for help.

