

Surviving your first year Abroad

You don't want to just be surviving your first year abroad, you want to fulfill your dreams and create memories that last a lifetime!

A move abroad is a serious life change, a huge upheaval. Endless planning, packing, organizing, shipping all to take your life from one location to the next. Yes it is as exhilarating, and challenging.

To make it happen, you put any nagging doubts and doomsday friends aside to get on with all you need to do, one step at a time.

Now it's over, you're in your new country, living the dream. Or are you?

There will be times when it's not all rosy



With the big move behind us – we may think the worst is over. We get lost in the excitement of living the dream. In the first phase of the move you are likely to see nothing but a world of endless possibilities.

Don't get me wrong, it still can be.

But, I also need to break it to you, that this lovely honeymoon phase wears off.

Which can leave you with a brutal reality, that the routine of life isn't that much different abroad then it was at home. One day, you'll realize that you still get up to go to work, you shop and you have a routine. It looks and feels exactly like our old life. Only worse as someone has removed the age old comforts, favorite haunts, and friends. They may have also changed the channel are all now speaking a new language – that you are not learning as fast enough for conversations past 'hello how are you?'.

It can also be at this vulnerable moment that those nagging doubts we parked before the move come back to haunt us...

Did you make the right decision?

Will this ever feel like home?

And the biggest fear, did you fail your dream or did your dream fail you...

All you may need a coffee and friendly ear, someone to share your doubts and challenges with. A friend to go to the movies with. Or a savvy local to ask for a dentist recommendation.

Whatever you do, don't start tottering on the brink either of moving forward – or going back. See it as an opportunity.

Time to take control and make it 'Home'



If you have lived abroad you may recognize the moment.

It's a wake up call and realization that living abroad is not all cocktails with mini umbrellas on a beach. It's part of the move, and part of being a nomad. When the old life starts to fade away, it's time to replace it with a fulfilling new life.

Up until this point, all your focus has been on work, a place to live, setting up the internet and a hundred other mind-numbing tasks. So much so that you haven't had the chance to establish a social life.

What you need is a plan of action.

Planning and creating a new

home abroad:

To help to motivate yourself make a list on why you moved, and what you love about living where you do. Stick this list some prominent like the fridge. Then make the effort to do those things you enjoy that attracted you to this adventure in the first place.

If you moved for nature, go out and spend time in it. If you are in Argentina and love the tango, then learn it. Whatever it is – put it on your list and into your agenda!

In all honesty, every place has its pros and cons. What we need to do is recognise them and make sure we are balancing them out. We can do this by focusing on the positives, rather than the negatives.

The very best thing that you can do to get you through these moments of doubt is to make **'friends'**. Someone you can grab a coffee with, who can share or add to your perspective. It's always the people you meet, that'll make a foreign country feel like home.

Now Let's get out there and meet people



We all know finding good friends isn't easy, we all know they are valuable and rare. Yet, the world is a pretty big and there are a lot of great places to meet people, with a bit of EFFORT.

The best way to meet like-minded people is through something that you love, common interests. What are your hobbies, are there courses and workshops that you can attend?

A [language exchange](#), is helpful in that it helps to improve your language skills and meet new people. Your exchange partner will also speak your language and is likely to have or plan to travel. A word of caution: be selective of who you choose to meet up with. [Remember the objective – meeting like-minded others', there are those that use the language exchange for an inroad to dating foreigners... and hence may have other objectives....]

It's handy to meet a few established foreigners and locals, which is where international groups such as [internations](#), or [Expatica](#) (Europe) or [Expatriate](#) work a treat as most have local gatherings. You can also find local events through [meetups](#) or a local version of the site.

Getting onto the mailing list of your own embassy in your new country is also worth while, they'll invite you to holiday celebrations and they may also have a chapter of commerce, who will get together for meetings or lunches. Which is a great place for business networking.

If you are shy, force yourself to event – you are not likely to be the only shy person there. It's going to take Effort – you are going to need to go beyond comfort zones. I assure you it will be worth it.

There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't met yet. Walter Butler Yeats

You'll meet a valuable people at each outing, and a few of these will grow into valuable friendships.

You will find before you know it, you'll have a social life, new hobbies and language skills. You will be going to the

movies or hanging out with friends.

Someone will have recommended the perfect doctor, dentist and hairdresser after all word of mouth among peers are the best recommendations.

Now, instead of feeling homesick and full of doubt, you'll feel settled and at home.

The dream you had of living in a new country has become a reality. You can kick back and enjoy the experience and dare we say it, start planning the next move...

