



How to Live Like a Local as an Expat

Embracing the Expat Lifestyle

Living and working in a different country can be the experience of a lifetime. The chance to experience different cultures, traditions, experiences and perhaps even languages are things many people seek out. So when an employer offers someone the opportunity to live and work abroad, it probably seems like a no-brainer - of course, they're going to go for it.

However, just moving to a new country and getting stuck in at a job doesn't guarantee the overseas experience of a lifetime. There's a difference between being an expat, and living like a local as an expat. But what's the difference, and how can you make sure that you take full advantage of living abroad and the full expat lifestyle experience?

We're here to help. As [global mobility experts](#) in supporting businesses and employees as they expand across the globe with [international moves](#), we want to share our secrets for making the most of your time as an expat and making sure you live like a local for the best experience possible.





Do Your Research

One of the biggest mistakes expats make when moving to a new place is just falling into their regular old habit. Work, home, sleep, repeat. This isn't going to get you the experience of a lifetime in any way, shape or form. But there's also an important balance to strike - you don't exactly know how to live your life like someone on holiday, either.

When it comes to making sure you live like a local when working abroad, planning and research are your two best friends. Take the time before your move to learn more about your new or temporary home country and find out what you should experience. A few key areas to focus on with your research include:

- Quality of life
- Lifestyle
- Popular hobbies and interests
- Culture
- Religion
- History
- Customs

After all, if you don't broaden your understanding of your destination country and what to expect when living there, how can you in any way find a way to live like a local?

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

One of the first things anyone will tell you about moving abroad is that you should find an expat community so you can meet similar people from your country, with similar interests and so on. And while you should do this, don't let this be your only port of call for social interaction.

If you stop and think about it, limiting yourself to only interacting with other expats is going to prevent you from living like a local, because you'll have crafted yourself a personal bubble to live in, around people from the same country you're from, who speak the same language as you, and have a similar outlook on life to yours. So in addition to joining expat clubs and groups, make sure to look for local ones.

This might mean joining a local leisure club or gym to meet people who are native to the city or country, or it could look like reaching out to your new neighbours. Work to insert yourself in local circles so that you can make friends with people who aren't expats. By doing so, you're likely to learn more about local gems, things to do, places to see, restaurants to check out, and day trips and adventures you won't want to miss out on. Here are a few more ways you can put yourself in the path of some locals to make sure your social circle is as wide as possible, increasing your chances of living like a local:

- Find a charity to volunteer with
- Take a class, be it photography, cooking, pottery or karate
- Get involved in local organisations, like libraries, public gardens and other community programmes
- Shop local instead of at chain shops - you're more likely to meet locals running, working and shopping in the stores
- Make sure to get social at work, interacting with locals where possible



Learning the Language

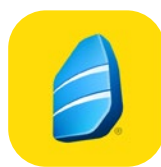
Depending on your situation, you might be moving to a country that has a different first language than your own. If that's the case for you, and you want to live like a local while you're there, you're going to have to make an effort to learn the language.

If you're moving from an English speaking country, chances are you're going to encounter local English speakers - especially if you work for an international business. But it's always a good idea to have a solid understanding of the country's language.

The best course of action is to start prepping your understanding of the local language before you move. There are plenty of tools for learning a language independently, and this is ideal for learning some common phrases and pleasantries. Start by looking into tools such as:



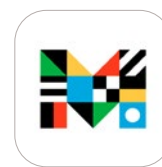
Babbel



Rosetta Stone



Duolingo



Mango

Once you've established some of the basics, it would be a good idea to enrol in a language class once you arrive in your destination city. Research language schools and programmes ahead of time and book yourself in for shortly after you arrive in the city.

You'll find having a decent grasp of the language will help you to interact and bond with locals, especially those who may not be confident trying to speak English with a stranger. At any rate, making an effort to learn the language will show your interest and dedication to the local culture, which may impress locals you'd like to connect with.

Throw Yourself into the Culture

Perhaps the best way to live like a local is to dive into all the things that the local culture has to offer.

Every country and city has its own flair, so it's important to take this all in to live your expat life to the fullest. Try not to gravitate towards the familiar things (we're looking at you, fast food and coffee chains) and instead, try to dip your toes into all things local, whether that's cuisine or music. Why move across the world for new experiences, just to do and see and eat the things you would do in your normal life every single day?

To make sure you branch out, here are just a few ways to make sure you immerse yourself into the culture of your new destination:

- Seek out local restaurants to try national dishes and delicacies
- Attend festivals
- Visit art galleries and museums to learn about local or native artists
- Attend local concerts

There are several other ways to experience the culture, but it will depend on every country. And part of the fun is finding the culture yourself! But no matter what you do, making the effort to experience a country beyond its touristy facade, you're bound to make lots and lots of wonderful memories that will make the experience a once in a lifetime.

Understanding Local Life

By doing all of the above, you'll be sure to create an experience abroad like no other. But there's one final thing you'll want to take into consideration to be able to live like a local, and that's understanding and embracing local customs and manners. Much of this you can learn beforehand online, but also through developing relationships with locals, or even other expats who have lived in the country for some time.

It's important to understand local customs because it can help prevent you from inadvertently offending someone or committing a rather embarrassing faux pas. Remember, your tone of voice, the way you address someone, and a variety of hand gestures can all come across very differently from country to country. Here are a few things you'll want to make sure you learn about to help you with this aspect of living like a local:

- How to address people properly
- Table manners
- Tipping etiquette
- Unacceptable gestures or hand motions
- Proper greetings and farewells
- How to accept gifts or kind gestures

At Gerson Relocation we aim to make things as simple and transparent for you as possible. If you have any questions at any point, please simply contact us and we'll provide further assistance, we're always here to help!

Contact us