

What You Need to Know Before Your International Move

An international relocation is equal parts exhilaration, frustration and terror. The logistics are formidably complex and almost unbelievably time intensive. International moving is not for the fainthearted!

However, the art of making your relocation as painless as possible lies with your planning and preparation.

Great relocation services companies can take much of the sting out of your relocation. While they can carry much of the load around packing up your home and preparing it for international shipment, you will still find yourself facing a seemingly inexhaustible checklist of tasks to coordinate, government officialdom to deal with and last minute panics to endure.

International Moving Made Easy

Assuming you've found a great job with a fabulous overseas company, you still need to ensure the seemingly insurmountable quest for a work permit in your country of choice.

These can be difficult to secure, and if you're in a two-income household, you have the challenge of planning out how your spouse will find work. That can prove even harder, depending on your destination of choice.

Work issues aside, to cope with the rigours of an international move you need to put in place support systems. After all, you are moving from your home country to an often strange and unfamiliar place.

Whether it's being able to Skype your family weekly or have someone keep an eye on your house now you are renting it out, a support network will help keep you relatively sane as you go through your move and transition into your new life.

Packing For That International Relocation

Packing can be one of the most challenging and stressful aspects of an international move. Knowing just what to pack for an international move can be problematic.

Is the electrical voltage in your new country compatible with your home country's consumer electronics? If so, you have the option of taking your existing television sound and home electrical appliances with you. If not, you need to buy new gear at the other end.

Naturally, what you elect to take with you to an overseas country tends to differ from what you take with you if you were just moving suburbs. This is where relocation services come in.

Relocation Services

If you are being relocated either by your existing employer or by your new overseas employer, there are often services you may be able to take advantage of, to help with your relocation:

1. Site Inspection

Many international employers will meet the costs of an employee and sometimes a spouse visit to the proposed new location to look at the location and do some preliminary house hunting to streamline the move.

As part of this visit, organize meetings with a real estate agent to help you to find housing, schools and daycare for your children if required.

2. Moving Costs

Moving costs cover the cost of packing and shipping your belongings to your new location.

Some of the moving expenses to include in your budget are air or sea freight costs, insurance, and storage costs if you elect to leave some of your home contents behind.

You may also have to take advantage of temporary storage in your new location if you don't have access to housing when your contents arrive in your new country.

3. Housing Costs: Current Location

Always factor in all of the costs you may incur when moving out of your current home. This can include the penalty fee associated with breaking your lease or the costs of renting out your home.

Factor in moving out expenses such as breaking a lease or the costs associated with renting your house or apartment, terminating phone company contracts, settling utility bills, gym memberships and so on.

4. Housing Costs: Current Location

Many employers pay you a housing allowance or pay your rent directly. Do your research into typical housing costs in your new location. What seems generous in your current location may prove to be a shock when you look to rent a home in your new city.

If your company doesn't pay housing allowances, ensure your new salary covers the gap in housing costs.

If your monthly housing allowance is bundled with your salary and you have to pay rent directly, factor in bank transfer fees, as you will be losing money on fees and exchange rates. The best way to reduce your financial exposure is to arrange for your company to pay your rent directly to your landlord.

When you relocate you will often find a range of fees and deposits are required for items such as landlord deposits, rental fees, utility deposits, telecommunication deposits and connection fees and housekeeping fees

5. Assistance With Family Relocation

Most companies understand the issues faced by new employees when relocating to take up a new role. Some although not assistance packages all include all expenses paid for both the employee, but their family.

Companies who are involved with a lot of international transfers understand that if their employee's spouse or family is unhappy with the move, the employee is more likely to resign or return home before their assignment is complete. Consequently, many employers offer spousal assistance in getting a visa or work permit.

During your negotiations make the company aware that your family is ready to move, and that they are prepared with passports, to make the transition to their new location as seamless as possible.

Include the following family expenses in your planning: travel expenses including meals, visa application and passport fees and school fees or childcare costs.

6. Packing & Shipping

This relocation service organizes your removals firm to pack your household goods and ship them to your new home. Check how fragile items and furniture are prepared and protected for storage and shipping. This usually involves getting your goods inspected by and cleared through Customs. There is often a limit to extras such as insurance cover for your household items during transportation

Its one thing to have your home contents packed and shipped to your new destination but the real work begins when the relocation van line arrives at your new doorstep. Ensure your relocation service covers unloading all boxes and furniture and unpacking your contents. Also, ensure they remove any leftover packing materials.

7. Living Costs

As part of the planning and budgeting process for your relocation, remember to include living expenses such as food, utilities, rent, phone, Wi-Fi and cable costs.

Do your research on the cost of living to avoid unpleasant surprises. These will also come in handy when finalizing your contract negotiations.

Many overseas employers pay a cost of living adjustment when the cost of living is significantly higher in your new city.

Don't forget to factor in other living costs such as transportation, parking and cable costs.

8. Assistance With Immigration

Dealing with foreign governments on immigration issues is typically frustrating, time intensive and expensive. Ensure your company will assist you in arranging for your work permits and visas and try to extend their assistance to cover your entire family.

As with other budgeting areas, factor in immigration costs such as family passports and duplication of the supporting documentation you will often need to be translated and attested to support your visa and residency applications. These can be substantial for a whole family.

9. Medical Insurance

Look to have your employer provide medical cover for you and your family as part of your package. In some countries it is mandatory. If your employer does not provide the medical coverage you need, add a provision for medical premiums and dental work in your relocation budget.

10. Transport Costs

Have a plan for accessing transportation in your new city. You may not be able to buy or lease a car immediately until your residency visa is finalized. Ensure your company is providing a bridging lease or rental car for your use until you are in a position to arrange your own. Check out public transport options to see if they are suitable and factor costs such as car insurance, public transportation, parking fees into your budget.

International Shipping

When you are undertaking an international relocation and you elect to take most of your household goods and furniture with you containerized shipping is your most economical option.

Most shipping containers are based on a standard 20-foot dry freight shipping container.

Moving Abroad Checklist

This checklist will cover all the topic areas you need to work through to prepare for an international relocation.

1. Documentation

This is where an international move begins. Collate all your official documentation. Ensure family passports are valid for at least six months after your intended arrival date. You will need to bring an original copy of your birth certificate, driver's license, marriage certificate, and professional certifications. These may need to be translated, certified and notarized prior to your departure.

You may also need your medical records particularly medication prescriptions together with school records and membership cards.

2. Immigration

Most international employers organise work permits and visas for your new country. However, it's sensible to meeting with an immigration official to ensure you are clear about the immigration requirements for your soon to be adopted country.

If you are relocating on your own without the support of an employer, you may need to retain an immigration lawyer to help you through the country's visa process. Clarify submission deadlines, likely processing time frames and what tourist visa options are available until your work permit and residency visa are approved. You clarify the rules applying to the importation of household goods and currency.

3. Money Matters

Before your departure, arrange to be able to access your bank accounts while overseas. The easiest method is by an Internet banking service, which makes it easier for you to have access to your accounts in your home country while living overseas. Some banks have overseas branches or affiliates in other countries, making it easier for you to access and move funds around.

After you arrive at your new destination, there is always a transition time until your new banking services are in place. Make sure you have access to sufficient funds to get through this transition period

4. Property Management

If your international relocation is just temporary and you plan on retaining your existing property, you may need to put in place arrangement to manage your property in your absence.

If you plan on making your international move permanent and you own property, you may decide to sell some of your property to free up funds to buy in your new location. Make sure you factor in a budget to cover the expenses involved in a

property sale or management and allocate sufficient time to complete the process.

Alternatively, if you elect to have someone act on your behalf while you are away, you may need to arrange for a trusted advisor to hold your power of attorney.

5. Home Contents Management

If you are moving permanently overseas, you may decide to slim down your household items to reduce your relocation costs.

On the other hand, if your relocation is temporary you may want to rent a storage facility to house some of your belongings while you are away.

6. Update Your Immunisations

Check with your local health care professional to see which immunizations you may need before travelling. Remember to keep a record of these shots. An international Health passport is a useful aid to keeping track of your shots.

7. Interim Health Insurance Coverage

Relocating to another country usually means acquiring medical coverage in your new city as your local health care coverage rarely extends overseas. However, some credit cards provide a basic level of coverage while you are travelling overseas. This may give you the cover you and your family need while until your work permit and residency visa come through and you can arrange local medical insurance.

8. Update Your Pet Passport

All pets require accompanying documentation when they are being transported internationally. Many countries have strict pet quarantine regulations so ensure your beloved pet's vaccinations are up to date.

Check your new country's entry requirements governing pets and consult a qualified and experienced pet relocation service. You may be required to place your pet in quarantine. Similarly, a quarantine period may be imposed if your pet lacks the required documentation.

9. Sort Out Your Tax Situation

Consult your accountant about tax laws and the tax implications of a move abroad. You'll need to understand the tax treatment in both your home country and your new jurisdiction.

You may also need to remove yourself from the electoral roll or register to avoid being liable for tax in your home country while you are working overseas.

10. Customs Forms And Declarations

Your relocation firm will provide the necessary Customs forms for your household goods. You will need both export and import clearance forms, so check each is in order. Some countries maintain a list of excluded items so check you are familiar with these provisions to avoid hassles and delays clearing Customs.

11. Background Research On Your New City

Prior to departing, do as much research on your prospective new home as you can. In addition to consulting Google buy country and city guides and good quality maps of both the country and your host city.

Once you have absorbed all this information you will be as equipped as you can be to hit your new city running.

12. Adjust Your Psychology

Relocating overseas can be an awesome experience. However, it can also be lonely and dispiriting if you haven't prepared yourself mentally for the move. You will potentially be separated from family and friends and your familiar surrounding and this can take some getting used to.

Technology can help, so make sure you have Skype and other chat and messaging options installed on your laptop and phone. Similarly, check your family and friends are on Facebook so you can stay in contact.

Notifying A Change Of Address

As part of your pre-departure checklist, remember to notify these organisations of your new destination:

- Post Office (mail redirection)
- Banks (transfer or close accounts)
- Credit and charge card providers
- Electoral registrar
- Tax Department
- Leasing company (Home/car/equipment)
- Household Insurance provider (terminate policy)
- Life insurance provider
- Car insurance provider (terminate policy)
- Health insurance provider (terminate policy)
- School principal (clearance letter for change of status of your children)
- Club memberships
- Publication subscriptions
- Doctor(s) and dentist (transfer copies of your records)
- Relatives, friends and regular correspondents
- Your lawyer (will)

Also, remember to discontinue these services

- Cable, satellite and Internet television service
- Newspaper and publication deliveries
- Internet service provider

Final Observation

An international relocation can be exhausting, exhilarating and frustrating in equal measure. The logistics of packing up your home and family and moving to an unfamiliar city in another country are complex, while the documentation required to smooth your way is almost unbelievable. While international moving is not for the fainthearted, it can be the beginning of a new and exciting chapter in your career as well as your life.