



Synopsis

A huge number of expatriates come home early. Why is this and what can you do to manage your own culture shock? This article provides insights into some of the strains of expatriate life, and practical guidance on dealing with the stress of culture shock.

How to ...

How to avoid the things that can go wrong with your move.

How to understand and cope effectively with culture shock.

How to build a social network in your new country.

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Alison Town is an international training consultant based in Paris, providing inter-cultural coaching and development. She is multilingual, an avid traveler and keen people-watcher. Her professional background includes human resources experience in a variety of international organizations. Areas of special interest include expatriate management, cross-cultural negotiations, team working and people development.

Why move abroad?

Expatriation is nothing new. People have been changing country or continent for thousands of years, seeking out more favorable climates, escaping natural disasters, escaping religious intolerance, looking for mineral resources or for better farming land.

The American banker moving to Hong Kong, or the Italian designer moving to Paris may not feel they have much in common with the migrating hordes of pre-history, but the principle is the same: we move because we need, want, accept or like change. The key to a successful move is to then be able to manage the change and its impact on our life.

Every year thousands of managers leave their home country to take up a job overseas, either to work for the same company or for a new employer. Reasons for taking a foreign posting vary, but include the following:

- Opportunity for travel
- Experience a new culture
- Have a change
- Get promoted faster
- Earn more money
- Enjoy tax breaks