

Top Tips for Travellers

Kimberly Millhouse, Senior Move Manager at Crown Relocations, shares some helpful advice for everyone planning a move to another country. From clues on what to take and what to leave behind, to making an overseas move as stress-free as possible.

What advice would you give to those who are unsure on how many of their belongings to take (for example – is it worth taking electrical products?)

When deciding on what belongings to take, it is vital that you check the import rules and regulations in relation to your destination. Most countries have a list of forbidden or restricted items, and these vary by location, so it's best to check with a relocation expert early in the process. Be aware that in some countries your electrical items might not work due to differences in power or voltage. If this isn't a problem and you do decide to take electrical items with you, then you may want to have the plugs changed before you leave.

Think carefully in advance about what household items and belongings you want to take with you, and then arrange for a Consultant from a relocation company to come to your home and talk you through the process. They can advise on the best shipping methods as well as letting you know of any restrictions at your destination. You might think that having your belongings around will help you settle in quicker, in which case don't be too hasty to get rid of everything. Or if you think this would be a good time for a clear out then talk to your Relocation Consultant and they should be able to help you donate any unwanted items to charity.

If you're particularly attached to your motor vehicle and wish to take it with you, you'll need to first find out what regulations are in place in your destination country. Your vehicle must be compliant with relevant emission standards and, in some cases, be under a certain age. Your Relocation Consultant will be able to offer advice.

Don't forget to keep your passport and other important documents and valuable items in a safe place when your goods are packed up – you don't want them to end up in a shipping container!

What preparations need to be made and what should you consider before embarking on an overseas move?

Time is a luxury that some people don't have when it comes to relocating, but the more time you can spend on research, the better. Research will pay dividends further on in the process when you make visa applications and will help you to avoid mistakes and pitfalls. Make sure that you plan well ahead and begin to research job opportunities, local schools and areas to live before you move. Think about what you would need to set-up if you were moving house in the UK (e.g. utilities, phone lines, bank accounts etc.) and find out what information you will be required to provide in order to do this in your new location. And then remember that setting

these things up may be more difficult or take longer than usual because you're in a completely different country.

It is important to find out about your health and welfare rights abroad; some UK benefits are not payable outside the UK, others apply only in the EU or in countries which have agreements with the UK. You should also find out about healthcare costs in the country you want to move to and take out health insurance if appropriate to cover private medical and dental treatment, as well as medical repatriation to the UK. Your UK GP, dentist and other relevant health practitioners will also need to be informed of your relocation.

Make sure you let your council tax department and electoral registration unit know you're leaving, as well as banks and financial institutions and don't forget to arrange for Royal Mail to redirect your mail. Before you leave, make sure you understand your tax obligations to both the UK and your new destination. HM Revenue & Customs can provide information and advice about your tax liability on any income over the UK personal allowance. If you are using relocation specialists, your representative will be able to advise you accordingly and direct you to informative websites such as www.moveoverseas.co.uk; otherwise you should be able to find out more details and legal requirements from government and service provider websites.

Before you move, check the status of any funds from pensions, enquire as to whether you will be able to access them abroad and if you'll benefit from incremental increases to UK pensions. It is best to seek help from a financial adviser or pension specialist to find out what financial products and pension schemes are best for you.

Ensure that you organise any obligations on your UK property correctly. Let your mortgage lender and insurance providers know if you are keeping your property and if it's going to be empty or rented out. Make sure it's secure by giving the Land Registry your new address abroad. Also be sure to inform gas, electric, water, cable and local telephone services of your move.

Any tips on making the move as stress free as possible?

Organisation is the key to a successful relocation, so ensure you leave plenty of time for preparing those all important documents such as visas, passports and customs forms. When packing, ensure that you place all legal, medical, and insurance records in a safe and accessible place so you can have these to hand quickly when required. Make necessary travel arrangements like airline, hotel, and rental car reservations as far in advance as you can.

Informing and preparing any children involved in your move is also very important and should not be underrated – they should be encouraged to join in the process by helping to pack up their belongings and being given videos, books or games that will help them get used to the idea and even make the experience an adventure for them. Involving them in the relocation process and talking to them throughout will help to prepare your children for this life-changing event as much as possible.

It is perfectly natural to experience culture shock when you arrive so it can be very beneficial to prepare yourself for the differences you may experience. You may think that some countries have similar cultures to the UK, but that doesn't mean you won't feel the effects of culture shock. Intercultural training can help to give you a true understanding of your new culture and environment and can make settling and fitting in much easier. It also helps to talk to people who are already there to find out what it is really like to move abroad.

Finding places in advance that you'll need to visit on arrival (such as a supermarket, bank, pharmacy etc.) can save time and reduce unnecessary stress. It's worth marking them on a map of your new location so that you can find your way around when you're out and about. It also means you won't need to rely on the internet when you arrive as it could take some time to organise phone lines and internet access for your new home.