

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

There are so many things to think about when choosing where to live, writes **Karen Bleakley**



I felt like banging my head against the desk. We wanted to move to Perth. I had relatives there, we'd spent time there enjoying the beach lifestyle and we felt at home there – even to the extent that we checked out plots of land when we were travelling.

Our emigration dream for four years had all been about moving to Perth. Only the more I Googled, and the more I chatted to our friends in Brisbane, the more I realised the East Coast city was more practical for us.

Moving our family across the world wasn't something we were doing on a whim; we were taking it seriously and the thought of changing our plans was agonising. We wanted to get it right.

PICKING A CITY

There are so many things to think about when choosing where to live. The things that mattered to us were house prices, schools, lifestyle, weather, how connected



Left and above, Karen's children love Brisbane's outdoors lifestyle

lifestyle we craved, house prices were reasonable, it was close to fantastic beaches and fun theme parks, and it was well positioned for holidays to the South Pacific islands.

We thought picking which part of the country to move to was going to be the hardest part, but then we realised we were planning on moving to Australia's

“TO HELP US DECIDE ON A SUBURB, I WROTE A LIST OF MUST-HAVE FEATURES”

the city was to the rest of the world and availability of jobs.

In the end, for us, it came down to work. After checking out job websites, we saw more aviation jobs advertised around Brisbane for my husband, and he had a work contact at the airport who offered to provide valuable contacts.

After hours online, we decided that Brisbane not only had the best career prospects, but it also offered us the

third-largest city and we had no idea where to start! We'd driven through Brisbane once, but hadn't spent any time at all there.

CHOOSING A SUBURB

To help us decide on a suburb, I wrote a list of must-have features: beach, community atmosphere, shops and cafes, good schools, affordable houses, parks and proximity to the airport for work.

With its great parks and sunny climate, Brisbane ticked all the boxes



Brisbane doesn't have many beaches, so this made our job easier, and houses were more expensive closer to the city so this put our search area in the outer suburbs.

I spoke to friends who knew Brisbane and asked for their advice and I found going online helped me to come up with a list of suburbs.

I searched Google for information about suburbs and asked questions on forums for recommendations.

I used www.homely.com.au/search to come up with a list of places that matched our criteria. This fantastic website lets you tick what aspects of a suburb are important to you and it brings back a list of results with comments from people who know the area. I also looked on Google Earth to give me a feel for the areas. I checked out driving distances to narrow down which suburbs were within a commutable distance.

In an afternoon I'd narrowed down our search area to a small section of the northern suburbs.

ARRIVING IN BRISBANE

We spent our first month in a beachfront holiday home we'd booked through Stayz

called Brighton Beach Shack. We'd considered some much cheaper rentals an hour north, but it was worth paying more to be central as it made exploring easy.

We spent time speaking to locals and real estate agents, looking online at rental prices and driving around areas trying to find suburbs that felt right.

We discovered some lovely inland suburbs where we could afford a larger house, but we decided we wanted to be by the coast even at the expense of space; as for us, the sea breeze was going to make life feel more comfortable.

As we narrowed down areas, we started to look at schools. State schools can have catchment areas (depending on how full they get), and private schools can fill up, so paying for education doesn't necessarily mean you'll get a place.

We were lucky to find a fantastic school a short drive from the suburb we loved

and we secured our home and school place the same week.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

When you're trying to decide where to move, try to be open to ideas, don't rule things out until you've done all of your research and don't make any decisions until you've landed and actually seen the suburbs for yourself. You may find that what sounds great online may not appeal to you in reality.

Our decision of where to move within Australia was ruled by our heads. We knew we needed to find work quickly so we could start living the Australian lifestyle we'd dreamed of. However, when it came to picking suburbs we let ourselves be ruled by our hearts.

Being comfortable in an area is the most important thing – get that right and you'll thrive in your new home. 🇦🇺



■ Karen is a freelance travel writer and blogger. You can read about her migration journey on her family, travel and lifestyle blog at www.talesofatwinmum.com or on Twitter @TalesofaTwinMum.