

THE COSTS OF EMIGRATING

Moving abroad isn't the cheapest way to change your life – the costs are daunting for any family, writes **Karen Bleakley**...



“So, how much is this move going to cost?” asked my husband, Matt, as I scribbled down figures and tapped my phone calculator. On that rainy summer's day 18 months ago, I estimated the move would cost us (two adults and three children under five) around £20,000. £20,000 wasn't a bad estimate after all, although that is only part of the story (see the boxout, opposite page). Something missing from my budget was the 'extras' – some of these were optional, while others were essential, as follows...

RELOCATION COMPANY

Having a company help you settle in can be a huge help. They can meet you at the airport, give you an orientation tour, advise on schools and suburbs and show you properties.

“OUR OUTGOINGS INITIALLY WERE MUCH HIGHER BUT THESE SETTLED DOWN”

LIVING COSTS

As you will be jet-lagged and busy with admin, you will eat out more than usual for the first two months. You will also need to set up phones, buy anything you can't live without from your container and take days out to explore. Our outgoings initially were much higher than in the UK but these soon settled down.

RENT

When you find a house you'll need to pay for rent and put down a bond.

CARS

Cars in Australia are expensive, so budget more than you would in the UK. You will also need insurance. Use an online comparison site to get the best deal.

CHILD'S CAR SEATS

Car seats in Australia are different to the UK (even travel boosters aren't legal here), so you'll need to buy new ones when you arrive. This means you'll need to hire car seats with your car as a temporary measure, or arrange to go and buy seats before you take the kids out.

SAT NAVS

You could upgrade your UK unit to include Australia or use your phone instead (as most people do over here). We found our sat navs essential for exploring and getting our bearings.

DRIVING LICENSES

You will need to organise a state driving license within a certain time period. Ours cost A\$156 each for five years.



Husband Matt takes the children out for a bike ride



With Lincoln and Reuben, ready for their first day at prep school

THE COSTS OF OUR MOVE

This is the actual cost of our family migration from the UK to Brisbane, Australia in September 2014...

Visas for a family of five:	£4,500
Migration agent fees:	£2,160
TRA skills assessment:	£540
IELTS test:	£150
Police checks:	£90
Medicals:	£770
Shipping:	£4,020
Insurance for our container:	£620
One way travel insurance:	£200
Flights:	£3,000
Taxis (at both ends of journey):	£150
Holiday accommodation until we found a rental:	£2,000
Hire car for two weeks:	£350
Total	£18,550

VACUUM CLEANER AND LAWN MOWER

Unless you plan on cleaning and shipping these, you'll need to buy them when you land. Most floors are tiled so you might get away with a broom and mop for a while, and not all houses have grass, so wait to see what your rental is like before you invest in a mower. Garage sales happen everywhere at weekends and are a great place for bargains.

HOUSEHOLD THINGS

Mop, bucket, broom, dustpan, bins and door mats – all the things you don't bring with you will need replacing. Some will need to be bought straight away.

STORE CUPBOARD INGREDIENTS

Stocking your cupboards can be expensive but getting herbs, spices, rice, pasta and tins will mean you can cook proper meals rather than relying on takeaways.

WHITE GOODS

We brought our washer and dryer over but you can pick up second hand items on Gumtree.com.au and eBay. You could also apply for store credit as a way to build your credit record.

SCHOOL COSTS

Whether you plan on sending your children to state or private school, there are costs involved (uniforms, stationery, books and more).

AVOID OVERSPENDING

Buy annual passes for your favourite attractions – these are great value and it means you can go for 'free' days out all year round without having to spend any more. My favourite in Brisbane is the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary as the pass also gives you 20 per cent off food and shop purchases.

If you have a deposit for a house, move it to a savings account so that you don't touch it.

Create a list of your spending. You need to know how much you can afford to spend on a rental (and later a mortgage) so working out your weekly or monthly outgoings is a big help. It also makes you accountable for every penny so you think

twice about whether you need something. Try to make lists before you go into stores also. Bunnings (like B&Q) isn't known as the 200 dollar store for nothing – it's almost impossible not to come out with a trolley full. Go in with a strategy and be strict. You don't need everything in one go, so pace yourself.

DON'T BE PUT OFF!

Moving abroad isn't the cheapest way to change your life – the costs are daunting for any family. But we wanted a better quality of life for our family, and that's what we've got.

Your initial three months in a new country are expensive, but your costs quickly settle down and life gets into a routine again. Don't think of the money you spend emigrating as wasted – it's an investment in the rest of your life.

When you're outside enjoying that beach barbecue you'll realise it was worth every penny. 🇺🇸



■ 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.

Enjoying a family beach holiday in Noosa