

Expatriate Pain Points: User Interviews

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your current relationship status?
3. In what country do you currently live?
4. How long have you lived in that country?
5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?
6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?
7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?
8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?
9. How did you resolve those challenges?
10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?
11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?
12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?
13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?
14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

Interview 1:

Name: Albert (alias)

1. What is your age?

A. 30

2. What is your current relationship status?

A. Partner

3. In what country do you currently live?

A. UK

4. How long have you lived in that country?

A. Almost 3 years

5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?

A. Italy

6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?

A. For work, I got a job in London. I was trying to stay in Spain (Barcelona) but couldn't find good work opportunities. London is a good place to grow in my career field, thinking about remote work and the pandemic London is not as engaging, now you can live anywhere and have the same "vibes" and connections

7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?

A. It wasn't too difficult or annoying, I didn't have a lot of stuff to move and was staying with friends. I was never asked about British documents or visas during the interview process, only once offered a job did, I have to submit immigration documents. I submitted paperwork to legally stay in UK, there's a 5-year countdown that starts the day you submit the paperwork. It was more tricky to complete the documents with Italy. I had to request to Italian council to transfer residency so I wouldn't have to continue paying taxes in Italy. It took 6 months to get a letter releasing me from Italy. One person I know had to fly back to Italy to go to council in person. So, it can be really difficult completing those requirements.

8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?

A. Just trying to transfer my residency from Italy to the UK, it wasn't too hard on the UK side though.

9. How did you resolve those challenges?

A. Just had to wait for the Italian council to approve the transfer.

10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?

A. It would have been easier to know if I had a job before moving. But I moved before knowing for sure I had the job.

11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?

A. "finding a place was quite challenging," in Barcelona the image on Airbnb matched what was in real life. In London, the pictures didn't match what was advertised. "It was really tricky." It took 3 weeks to find a place once in London, prices are really high, and you get low quality. Based on expectations to live and your salary, it can be difficult. It's really difficult to trust the pictures because the real apartment might not be the ones they show online

12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?

A. {Question was already addressed during the interview}

13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?

A. I arrived in London in May 2019, only had half a year before the COVID shutdowns. I Used the meetup app to find people with similar interests and tried to get involved with meetup groups to get to know people. It took 6-8 months to find people to be "friends." It was really difficult coming as a single person trying to make friends in a new place. Even my coworkers already had their own groups.

14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

A. I'm trying to keep the same job with the same company, or get a fully remote job to work wherever in Europe where I have more friends or at least more geographically better, like warmer or near the water

Interview 2:

Name: Maria (alias)

1. What is your age?

A. 35

2. What is your current relationship status?

A. Single, no kids

3. In what country do you currently live?

A. Portugal

4. How long have you lived in that country?

A. 2.5 years

5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?

A. Sao Paulo, Brazil

6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?

A. I chose Lisbon because there was a little support, and I didn't think of any other options. I came as a tourist and to get a master's degree

7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?

A. I came as a tourist and 3 months later started a graduate program for the student visa. Before coming, I called SEF and did a lot of research on my own to try to find as much as I could about the process like blogs, YouTube, and what I could find on Google. SEF wasn't really helpful, but there are a lot of people from Brazil in Lisbon, so I had help from my parent's friends and stayed in their house when I first arrived.

8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?

A. Trying to understand everything I needed, it was stressful not knowing if I had all the documents I needed.

9. How did you resolve those challenges?

A. I just did a lot of research on my own to find the information because SEF did not offer a lot of details about the process and the documentation. I had a Brazilian friend who was already living here who went through the process before me and could help me.

10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?

A. Just all the research I did

11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?

A. When I first moved, I lived with 8 other people, and after 6 months I used an app for school housing but I couldn't see the places beforehand and often the pictures online weren't even the same apartment or the actual apartment didn't look like how it was advertised. I moved several times because of this. I finally started looking for myself instead of through the app and found a good place.

12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?

A. I'm currently not working

13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?

A. It's hard because of covid. Now only make friends that are my neighbors. My landlord is good, made friends with a neighbor. There is an outside space to connect with neighbors. I have some friends from the masters but not really good friends.

14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

A. I'm not sure. I want to stay long enough to get citizenship. Hopefully, find a remote job or open a company in Portugal. If I can't find a job, I will move to another country.

Interview 3:

Name: Adam (alias)

1. What is your age?

A. 28

2. What is your current relationship status?

A. Married, no kids

3. In what country do you currently live?

A. Portugal

4. How long have you lived in that country?

A. 1 year

5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?

A. USA

6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?

A. The quality of life. From my research, it was safest country, visited before and studied Latin before and thought it was an easier to learn the language. And my partner speaks French and we thought it was easier.

7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?

A. Planned to immigrate for long term. It was difficult and unclear. Also, during covid it took longer because it was closed. It made things more difficult. There is a lack of information, or the information is not applicable to my situation. And then you get to the country you hope for better information, but it was the same.

8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?

A. Besides the visa application, and covid times, understanding all the requirements. I had to get 3 covid tests. My immigration appointment was much longer and postponed other plans. Moving itself was not difficult.

9. How did you resolve those challenges?

A. At first used the internet, YouTube, and blogs. The government websites were helpful. And third parties. Did 80% myself but then ended up getting a lawyer, to make it easier. I found the lawyer through YouTube, and someone recommend on YouTube and used the same person. It was very helpful because a lot more fortunate to have the help. Portugal department was having a lot of changes at the time and thought it was helpful that someone knew the process. The lawyer was expensive and then at least someone spoke the language to help. And the lawyer spoke English. And most lawyers came from an immigration background. The whole company was there to help. I received my temporary resident card, need to renew but for the next 2 years. I'm done.

10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?

A. The Lawyer and my partner made it, so I was not alone in the process. There was a second pair of eyes. YouTube was helpful. The person I watched was just a little ahead of me, so it was fresh information. We recently conducted a survey and found that many people had difficulty finding housing, a job, and social connections.

11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?

A. Really easy. I used idealista and sent a request for information and then I would see the place. The website offers a lot of information and a platform to show the place. I Found the website on YouTube from the person I had been watching throughout the process

12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?

A. I work remotely in America, but not in Portugal

13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?

A. I have a former coworker who lives here in Porto and then my partner. But I haven't made friends yet in Portugal.

14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

A. We may stay here but may move to another European country. I'm tired of moving around. If I got another opportunity, like a job offer. May move to Sweden.

Interview 4:

Name: Ana (alias)

1. What is your age?

A. 25

2. What is your current relationship status?

A. Single

3. In what country do you currently live?

A. Portugal

4. How long have you lived in that country?

A. 1 year and 4 months

5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?

A. Brazil

6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?

A. I think the weather and the language since I already spoke the language.

7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?

A. I came on a study visa, and I decided to stay in Portugal. It was a bit confusing, in the beginning, it was easy for the student visa because of the university. And then after, it was hard because I didn't have the support. I didn't have anyone to support my status and needed to pay someone to sign the paper for me for the representation. Hard to find information.

8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?

A. For me to start studying, I needed a NIF number but to get a NIF number, I needed a person to sign the paper. After 6 months I can go back to SEF to have the person removed. The bureaucracy was the main thing and trying to make appointments.

9. How did you resolve those challenges?

A. I got the person through a friend of mine who did the same process. Through social network.

10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?

A. Online, searching on google. Asking colleagues or other foreigners. Knowing people. Asking classmates/roommates.

11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?

A. It was easy because I moved with 15 days of Airbnb and then started searching for a room and then after I moved 3 times. But the places are not that cheap so was looking for a good price.

12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?

A. It's hard, I searched for an industrial design job. But I work as a freelancer for clients in Brazil. I have not found a job in Portugal. I applied a lot but never received an answer or feedback. Not sure why since I have all the qualifications. I have only received one freelance job.

13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?

A. I met Brazilians when I arrived for school. And they are going through the same problems. So, they helped me a lot.

14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

A. I can go through the Portuguese for 5 years but get an internship through Italy. But currently have a student visa.

Interview 5:

Name: Sofia (alias)

1. What is your age?

A. 30

2. What is your current relationship status?

A. Single

3. In what country do you currently live?

A. Portugal

4. How long have you lived in that country?

A. two weeks, but I plan to live here longer

5. Where did you live before relocating to that country?

A. New York, USA, but I didn't like it. I don't like big cities and New York was too big for me

6. Why did you choose to relocate to that country?

A. At the beginning, for school and after 2 weeks, I choose to stay for the people, the vibe, and the language. The weather is great and not too crowded. And the people I met here so far

7. Can you tell me about your experience with the relocation process?

A. At the beginning, I have a Sweden visa without having to do any paperwork. But now looking to get the D7 visa.

8. What did you find most challenging about relocating to the new country?

A. The language. I didn't know anyone here. But after two days, I met people. I met a friend and then they recommended another friend and they helped me a lot. One friend was from Brazil who lived here for 3 years.

9. How did you resolve those challenges?

A. {question not asked – already addressed in previous response}

10. Is there anything that made your relocation process easier?

A. There are many Argentinian people here, so I was able to talk to them. Argentina has a holiday program with Portugal and can work in Portugal for people under 35 years old

11. Can you tell me about your experience finding housing in the new country?

A. I was lucky because I found a place on Facebook. It didn't have any problems. There was an Argentinian people and networking group and specific for Argentinians in Portugal. I don't really have problems with safety because I'm confident about people.

12. Can you tell me about your experience finding a job in the new country?

A. I don't have a job right now, but if I don't get a job then I can't keep my visa and can't stay here.

13. Can you tell me about your experience finding a social connection in the new country?

A. I didn't have a problem because of those original connections and then they introduced to more people. So basically, just from Facebook. I knew some people from a friend of a friend prior to coming.

14. Do you plan to stay in the new country permanently?

A. Would like to permanently stay, at least a couple of years and I don't want to live in the United States. At first, I thought just to relocate for the school but decided to stay for a longer time.