

living in abroad essay sample

Life



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Living in a foreign country is hard enough as it is, with all the administrative issues you have to deal with. But if you don't want to get stuck in the expat bubble, you'll need to learn to adjust to life in a foreign country. While living in a foreign country sounds exciting and romantic, it does have a catch. When expats tread on unfamiliar ground, they tend to stick to what is familiar. Thus, many expatriates never make the transition from expat to compatriot. After all, becoming a part of the local culture is probably the hardest part of life abroad. It is tempting to share your experiences of living in a foreign country exclusively with other expats. Nobody else will understand your hesitation to try the local food, your problems with adjusting to the pace of life and your ambivalence towards social customs as well as those who are in the same boat. However, in order to get the most out of your expat experience, you need to break out of your comfortable little cocoon after a while and try to immerse yourself in the local culture. If you let go of false impressions and stereotypes, then you have already taken the first major step. Living in a foreign country can then become a truly life-altering experience.

It is not as easy as it seems to adjust to life abroad. The process of making the transition from living like an expat to a more local life-style takes time. Culture shock is part and parcel of living abroad and hits all of us eventually. The trick is not to let it get the better of you. After all, it takes some time for all international travelers and expats to get used to their new environment. For most people who live in a foreign country, many aspects of the local culture seem strange at best. This might appear exciting at first. The initial reason for moving abroad is after all often the wish to explore foreign

cultures. However, after living in a foreign country for a while, little things that you initially considered charming may begin to annoy you. You will remember how everything ran on schedule back home, how clean your former hometown was, or how much more relaxed and friendly everyone seemed.

On the other hand if we consider the benefits and experiences which expat can feel instead of others those who never left their homeland are also huge enough that anyone can be attracted to join the community living in abroad? First of all we face new challenges, we get to know parts of we didn't know existed, we are amazed at our self and at the world. we learn, we broaden our horizons. We unlearn, and after coming down and embracing a few lessons, we start growing in humility. We evolve. We feel homesick... and we shape memories that will stay with us forever. If we have ever lived away from home or embarked on a long journey, I'm sure that we have felt these things that change forever when we live abroad. From the moment we decide to move abroad, our life turns into a powerful mix of emotions – learning, improvising, and dealing with the unexpected... All our senses sharpen up, and for a while the word “ routine” is dismissed from our vocabulary to make space for an ever rising adrenalin thrill ride.

New places, new habits, new challenges, new people. Starting anew should terrify us, but it's unusually addictive. That's why, when we get a few days off and fly back home, it strikes us how little everything has changed. Our life's been changing at a non-stop pace, and we are on holidays and ready to share all those anecdotes we have been piling up. But, at home, life's the same as ever. Everyone keeps struggling with their daily chores, and it

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suddenly strikes us: life won't stop for you. When someone asks us about our new life, we lack the right words to convey all our experiencing. Yet later, in the middle of a random conversation, something reminds us about ' that time when'..., and we have to hold our tongue because we don't want to overwhelm everyone with stories from our ' other country' and come across as pretentious. Lots of people will tell us how brave we are – they too would move abroad if they weren't so scared. And we, even though we have been scared, too, know that courage makes up about 10% of life-changing decisions.

The other 90% is purely about wanting it with all our heart. Do we want to do it, do we really feel like doing it? Then do it. From the moment we decide to jump, we're no longer cowards nor courageous – whatever comes our way, we deal with it. « It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out our door. we step onto the road, and if we don't keep our feet, there's no knowing where we might be swept off to. We have always been free, but freedom feels different now. Now that we have given up every comfort and made it work thousands of miles away from home... we feel like we are capable of anything! Sometimes we unintentionally let a word from another language slip. Other times we can only think of a way of saying something... with that perfect word which, by the way, is in the wrong language. When we interact with a foreign language on a daily basis, we learn and unlearn at the same time.

All the while we are soaking up cultural references and swear words in our second language, we find ourselves reading in our mother tongue so it won't get rusty. Like that time when Homer took a home winemaking course and <https://assignbuster.com/living-in-abroad-essay-sample/>

forgot how to drive. We soon realize that now, most things and people in our life are just passing through, and we instinctively play down the importance of most situations. We perfect the right balance between bonding and letting go – a perpetual battle between nostalgia and pragmatism. Two SIM cards (one of them packed with phone numbers from all over the world), two library cards, two bank accounts. And two types of coins, which always end up mysteriously mixing when we are about to pay for something. Living abroad, like traveling, makes us realize that ‘normal’ only means socially or culturally accepted.

When we plunge into a different culture and a different society, our notion of normality soon falls apart. We learn there’s other ways of doing things, and after a while, we too take to that habit we never thought we would embrace. We also get to know ourselves a little better, because we discover that some things we really believe in, while others are just a cultural heritage of the society we grew up in. That tourist trap we may not have visited in your country only adds up to the never-ending list of things to do in our new home, and we soon become quite the expert on our new city. But when someone comes over for a few days and asks for some suggestions, we find it really hard to recommend but a few things – if it were up to us, we would recommend visiting everything! When we live abroad, the simplest task can become a huge challenge.

Processing paperwork, finding the right word, knowing which bus to take. There’s always moments of distress, but we are soon filled with more patience than we ever knew we had in our self, and accept that asking for help is not only inevitable, but also a very healthy habit. It’s as if we were

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looking through the car window – everything moves really slowly at the back, in the distance, while in front of us life passes by at full speed. On the one hand, we receive news from home – birthdays we missed, people who left without us getting the chance to say goodbye one last time, celebrations we won't be able to attend. On the other hand, in our new home life goes by at top speed. Time is so distorted now, that we learn how to measure it in tiny little moments, either a Skype call with our family and old friends or a pint with the new ones.

A food, a song, a smell. The smallest trifle can overwhelm us with homesickness. We miss those little things we never thought we would miss, and we would give anything to go back to that place, even if it were just for an instant. Or to share that feeling with someone who'd understand us... Although deep down, we know we don't miss a place, but a strange and magical conjunction of the right place, the right moment and the right people. That year when we traveled, when we shared our life with special ones, when we were so happy. There's a tiny bit of who we were scattered among all the places we have lived in, but sometimes going back to that place is not enough to stop missing it. From the moment we squeeze our life into a suitcase (or, if we are lucky with our airline, two), whatever we thought 'home' was doesn't exist anymore.

Almost anything we can touch can be replaced – wherever we travel, we will end up stockpiling new clothes, new books, new mugs. But there will come a day when we will suddenly feel at home in our new city. Home is the person traveling with us, the people we leave behind, the streets where our life takes place. Home is also the random stuff in our new flat, those things we

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will get rid of in the blink of an eye when the time to leave comes. Home is all those memories, all those long-distance calls with our family and friends, a bunch of pictures. Home is where the heart is. In the end what it means to give up comfort, what starting from scratch and marveling at the world every day feels like. And it being such a huge, endless world... How could we choose not to keep traveling and discovering it?