

Top 10 Tips FOR Moving Countries with Kids

FROM A MOM WHO KNOWS



PRE-DEPARTURE

1 Be curious.

2 Get to know the place before you go.

3 Learn about your future daily life.

4 Reach out to people already there.

5 Research housing.

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POST-ARRIVAL

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PRE-DEPARTURE

1

Be curious.

When and how you tell your children about a move depends on many factors but when the time comes, show them you're curious about the new country and your adventure there. But remember it's also ok to share that you don't have all the answers yet.

2

Get to know the place before you go.

Get out an atlas and look at a map (getting senses involved is always a bit more real than doing it on screen). Where in the world is this place? Depending on your children's interest or concerns you can research statistics, culture, food, ethnic diversity, languages spoken, vacation highlights, etc. Now is a good time to start a list of things you want to do and see in your new home.

3

Learn about your future day-to-day life.

What will school be like? How will they get there? What will they wear? What language(s) are spoken? Are there after school activities? If not, where do you go for hobbies? You can start talking about what hobbies they want to continue, what they may want to stop and what new interests you all want to pursue.

4

Reach out to people already there.

Reach out to other people already there (via your company, expat support groups, church, Facebook, friends,...), as well as to the schools you are considering, to start making connections and building your network. It can be invaluable to see a friendly face on arrival to soften the landing and help connect you with others.

5

Research housing options.

Do people live in apartments or houses where you're going? Where are they located? What can you influence? Things to consider if you can choose housing may include distance to school, work, infrastructure, hospitals, and other foreigners. Google maps can be helpful to get an understanding of the lay of the land. Find out what the rules are for pets and what the "extras" are - like a pool in the housing compound. There may be something special to look forward to.

6

Plan your goodbyes.

Who do you want to say goodbye to? Make a list and include everyone you care about. Then decide on your "how to say goodbye" (individual goodbyes or parties?). Your list should also include places, things and pets to say goodbye to. Take time early on to think about this, as in the madness of packing before a move it can feel like too much. Not saying "good" farewells can leave everyone with regrets. Having closure will help free your minds to arrive well in your new home.

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7

Get practical about your luggage.

What will you need in transit? You can buy another sweater if you're cold, but that well loved breakfast bowl may be invaluable in creating a sense of familiarity in a new place. Pack your children's favourite pillow case to bring along a bit of home and to calm them after busy days exploring (don't underestimate the power of our sense of smell - bring your favourite scented candle, too). Be sure to have the things that help you keep up familiar rituals and routines, like bedtime stories.

POST-ARRIVAL

8

Stay in touch with friends and family.

Stay in touch with friends and family. If you haven't already, use your farewells to exchange your contact information. Being in touch with those close to you will help you feel less adrift in the beginning, while you're creating your new life. Your children in particular may need those friends while they are in transition to new friendships and routines. But don't feel pressured to keep everyone up to date on everything - you don't need the extra stress.

9

Maintain routines and rituals.

Maintain routines and rituals as much as possible (and feasible). Children of all ages love the reliability of routines. It helps them feel grounded and safe when everything else is changing. Spend time before you leave identifying the routines you have and how you can work them into life in transit in hotels, temporary housing, unfurnished rooms, etc. It can be as simple as keeping the same bed times and the usual story. Be aware of what you're already doing and try to keep it up.

10

Take care of yourself, too.

Moving a family is stressful and your focus will probably be on kids, housing, finding food, etc., but as you're doing research and finding out more about this new adventure, keep a list for yourself. What (new) things do you want to do? What do you want to explore? How will you spend your days? Where will you find connection? A good starting point is to identify what you already love doing or have been wanting to do for a long time. Try to gather at least a little information about making these things happen. And when the family starts to settle in - go do them. It's your adventure, too.