



I just got back from spending six months in Ghana. This blog post could easily be a love story. My husband is Ghanaian, and I went to be with him while we work on getting his green card (which could also be a blog post).

However, there are a lot of things people moving abroad plan for ... but there are several things most people never consider, and they should.

Everyone knows you must make sure that your passport is current. Of course, you know you need a job. You also know you need somewhere to live but your life is more than where you work and where you live. Before you move locally, not to mention, internationally, you need to think about a lot of other things that you'll miss if you just look at the big picture.

Close your eyes. Think about your standard weekday.

- You get up early and you start your day with a workout at the *gym*. But before you head out, you need to walk your *dog*.
- After your workout, you drive downtown into work and park in your parking garage.
- When your workday is done, you head home. It's *dinner* time. Some people cook. Others order out (or Door Dash). Some grab something on the way home.
- What do you do on a weeknight evening. TV? Are you a gamer? How do you spend your evenings?

Now, think about a standard Saturday or Sunday?

- How do you spend your weekends? *Movies*? Outdoor activities? Theater? Dog park? Shopping? In person or online?
- What about your *spiritual* life?

Now, if you are staying in London or Toronto or somewhere similar, your options might be similar to those in the US. However, I was in Ghana, a beautiful country with an amazing culture and kind people, but it is still a developing country.

Let's look at some of the things that make up a standard day for you.

Gym and Other Amenities



Will you have access to the gym? What about other amenities – nail salon, masseur, swimming pool, hair salon, barber? These are the things that make your life, your life. These are things that you shouldn't overlook. If you are used to spending Saturday mornings at the dog park, will you still be able to do that? If you enjoy your hair and nail appointments, will you still be about to do them? Looking at the things you enjoy, will you have access to them? Or are you prepared to do without them?

Pets



First things first. Look at what you have to do when leaving this country and to prepare to enter the other country. Then, examine the pet policies in your destination country. Don't forget to look at the airline policies too! Some airlines require a specific pet carrier to be used. Determine through the airline if your pet can travel in the cabin with you and how much it will cost.

Some countries require a period of quarantining upon arrival. Other countries just want to see vaccination records.

I traveled to Ghana with Benji. Before leaving, we had to (within 10 days of our departure) visit a USDA-approved veterinarian. The vet wanted to see his vaccination records and make sure he was microchipped. On arrival in Ghana, all they did was review his papers. We stayed outside of the capital city, grooming wasn't an option nor were fancy treats, toys and beds.

Driving



Do you plan on driving? If you do, you might want to visit AAA and get an international driver's license. Even once you have the license, you want to check with your destination to see what the requirements are.

In Ghana, I didn't drive. For one, I didn't have an international driver's license. Secondly, I didn't need to. People often utilize drivers to take them around and that is what I did. Thirdly, the way people drove, I was scared to drive! Depending on the city, taking public transportation might be an option. Several cities around the world are walkable, so you might not need a car! If you do need a car and are used to paying for parking, make sure that is still a reality where you are going.

Food and Cuisine



The food scene will change depending on where you go. America really is a melting pot when it comes to food. Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Southern, Indian, and regional cuisines are available everywhere you go. Other countries may have a similar culinary diversity, but many do not.

If you enjoy a culinary adventure, then you want to make sure that your destination location has a similar diversity. I didn't have that in Ghana but that could be because I was an hour and a half outside of the capital city. I'm sure in a more international area, I would have experienced more diversity.

Evening Activities



At the end of a hectic day, I like to unwind with some good old-fashioned television! What can I say, I'm a child of the 80s. Other people prefer video games. Others still enjoy a cooking or salsa class once a week. Others go to their child's games, matches or plays. Whatever you do, make sure you can still do it when you move. I learned a lot about Ghanaian culture, watching Ghanaian TV and I also

found a few channels where I could get my fill of American fare. If you are into streaming, make sure you can stream your favorites in your new locale.

Weekend Warrior



My perfect weekend involves an early matinee at my local movie theater, lunch somewhere yummy and then maybe stopping by a store. Occasionally, I'll go home and get my shopping fix online. Sundays are about church and prepping for the week (cooking, laundry, ...).

That changed when I got to Ghana, and I was far enough outside of the city that movies weren't an option. We had to develop a new routine which involved Michael showing me new places, doing laundry and cooking together. Did I miss my movies? At first, I really did but then I also really enjoyed my adventures with the hubs. I was able to exchange one past time for another and it was worth it.

Spiritual



I've lived in six different states before moving to Ghana. The hardest thing is finding a church home. What works for one might not work for me. It isn't anything personal or to take offence to, it just is what it is. A spiritual home is just that, a home. If you are spiritual, look into options before you move. See what is available, even consider reaching out to several organizations before you go or viewing them on YouTube. I didn't find a church I liked, but I did find one that had an active online ministry that gave me what I needed.

Moving anywhere, even across the street, is a big deal. Moving to another country is an even bigger deal. There is so much big stuff to take care of and prepare for, but I wanted to focus on some of the smaller things that often get overlooked. After all, it is the collection of these small things that make a life worth living.