

# Working Abroad

## Is it an option for you?

So you're thinking of working overseas. It's been on your mind for some time now and is starting to become a "real" option for you but there are so many variables.

### Where to start.

In this short article we will look at some reasons why people do it, the benefits of international exposure to your career, locations of interest, pay and packages, and how this can benefit your CV in the long run.

Historically, Irish people have been known to travel. They say that the Irish diaspora is estimated at 80 million people worldwide. Some say that St. Brendan was the first European to set foot on the Americas. I'm sure we all have had a relative who emigrated at some stage. Coming from an island, and a small island at that, it is part of our make up that we travel, be it for economic growth, personal development or exploration (if you are not familiar with Tom Crean's expeditions then I urge you to read "**Unsung Hero**").

### Reasons why people do it.

With Ireland's current economic situation, more and more people are looking at career opportunities overseas. High levels of unemployment and future opportunities being limited, people are more open to the idea of working and travelling abroad. The world has become a very small place and journey times have been greatly reduced, so the idea of moving to another country is now a realistic option for individuals and families alike.

### Benefits of international exposure.

**So how can working internationally benefit you in the long run?**

We all know that business is becoming more internationally focused. Developments in video conferencing and other media platforms have made interaction with colleagues in other parts of the world straightforward and easy. Many companies encourage their staff to take up an overseas assignment to increase exposure to their business and to benefit from exposure to other work practices in different locations.



*"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."*  
– Mark Twain

When you work in a different country, you are immediately immersed in a different culture, both living and working. Best practice in one country can greatly differ from that of another. What you feel is the best way to do something may not always be the case. By working with people from different backgrounds, you will learn and absorb new styles, methodologies, approaches and ideas to work. The more knowledge you have in your chosen area of work, the better placed you are to make the right decision, produce the right report or deliver the correct solution.

You may get the opportunity to work in a non-English speaking country. This can be very beneficial as depending on the language it can open up many markets and countries to you. Being bilingual in today's market is a huge advantage and as I mentioned earlier, overseas assignments or the ability to communicate with a client in a different language could make you stand out from the crowd when applying for future positions.

There are many large international companies that do not have a function in Ireland. By travelling, you give yourself the possible option of working with one of these companies. Having a **big international company name** can only add value to your CV.

By working overseas you also have the opportunity to work on larger projects than maybe you would in Ireland. Contract values may be higher, delivery dates may be shorter and expectations may be greater.

You may get the opportunity to work on a world-renowned project. For example, in construction, the possibility of working on projects for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar could be very appealing and could open a number of doors in your career.

## Where to look.

If you have decided to look at career opportunities overseas, the first and most important thing you must do is decide where you would like to go. I recommend that you make a list of what you are looking for by going abroad and where you feel you will be happy. Working overseas can be hard enough and is only made harder by working in a place you do not feel comfortable. When you have made this decision, exhaust all possibility of finding work there and if you are unsuccessful then move on to your second choice. If you are looking at four or five different locations simultaneously, it can get very confusing and time consuming for you.

### Currently the locations that are appealing to Irish people are Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Middle East.

The Australian, New Zealand and Canadian markets are particularly busy and are culturally suited to Irish people. Engineering has continued to flourish in these markets and all have a skill shortage in this area. Commercial and Civil Construction coupled with Oil & Gas/Mining continues to drive these economies and with Ireland's historical links and cultural similarities, it can be an ideal location to develop a career.

The construction market in the Middle East is still busy, albeit not as busy as it used to be. The proximity of the Middle East may be better suited to some people. With improvements in the aviation industry and direct flights from Dublin, it is possible to be home at least once a quarter. Saudi Arabia signed \$66bn worth of projects in 2011 and Qatar has secured the 2022 World Cup so now may be the ideal time to get involved.

Canada and South East Asia are places to consider; Canada, being close to Ireland should you need to make a quick return and South East Asia with its booming economies. English is widely spoken in the business districts of South East Asia and culturally speaking, you are embracing a whole new and exciting world.

### Salaries to expect.

When people decide they are going overseas to work, it is for one of two reasons; the excitement of travel or money. In my opinion, if you can get a combination of both then you will succeed. Money does not buy you happiness and happiness does not pay the bills.

Depending on location, you can take advantage of low income tax rates, no income tax rates or limited income tax rates. In South East Asia you can take advantage of their low tax rate, the Middle East offers no tax rates and Australia can offer you limited tax rates (visa dependent). The cost of living will be

different and you may get your accommodation paid for, it's all job and country specific.

The days of huge salaries in the Middle East are sadly no longer with us. Salaries too are governed by supply and demand. With rising unemployment in Europe, places like Qatar and Saudi Arabia are now becoming a desired destinations for professionals. Your package will be higher than in Ireland however, analyse the overall cost benefit minus the tax break and then make your decision.

Certain skills and trades can be very attractive to a country such as Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, if you are lucky enough to qualify for a 457 Visa you can be entitled to **LAFHA – living away from home allowance**. This is very useful to a person who is planning to stay for a few years as opposed to settling down.

If you have a mortgage to pay or if one day, you are planning to have a mortgage to pay, you can use this opportunity to put that extra money aside. You may find that you are more careful with your income or in some situations, if you live in a remote location, you may not have the opportunity to spend. This is why you really need to look at the reason(s) why you are going, where is the best place to go and how long do you want/have to be away?

### Is the grass always greener?

Well, no, not always. I'm not saying that travel is for everyone or that it's the solution to all your financial issues. It can be emotionally draining, particularly if you have to leave your family behind. Socially it can be difficult if you are trying to explore new cultures or overcome a language barrier. However, like everything that's worthwhile, there has to be some element of risk. If you go into it with the right attitude and you are confident in your reasons for going then you are much better placed to succeed. Apprehension is the antagonist of the traveller.

If you are still on the fence my advice would be to make a pros and cons list. Do it over a number of days (not a five minute job) and include everything you can think of related to leaving Ireland and what you can gain by leaving Ireland. You'll soon make the right decision.

**If your outcome proves more confusing again, please contact me on 01 662 1000 and I will be happy to help.**

### Is the grass always greener?

*Why not go and take a look?*

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