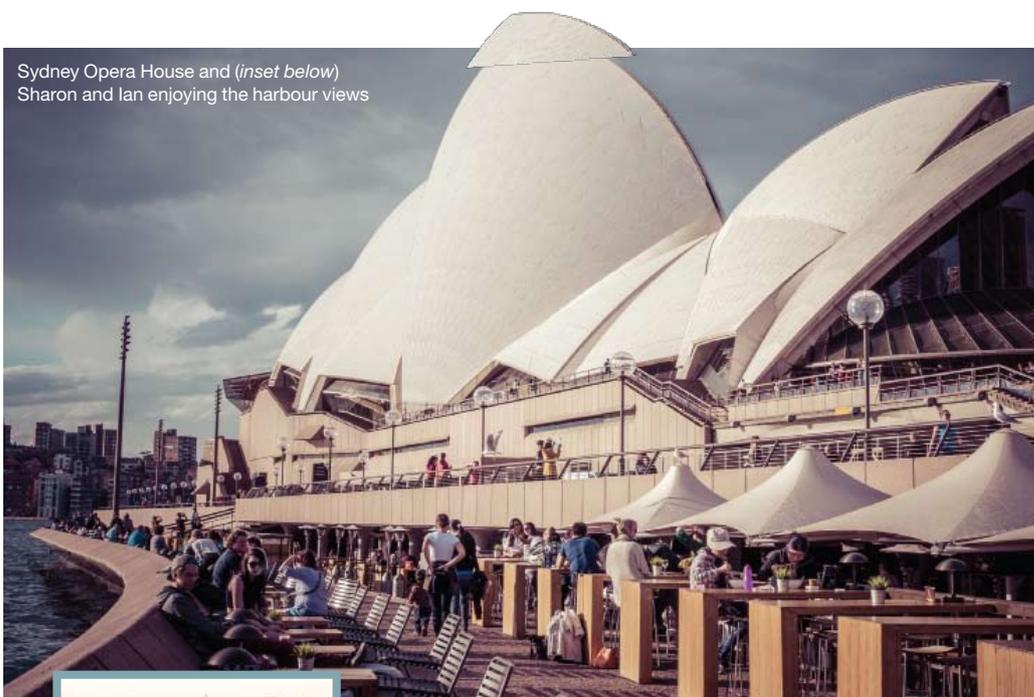


“Our lives are better here”

Looking for a work and lifestyle change, **Sharon Swift** and husband Ian decided to sample life in Sydney, Australia...



Sydney Opera House and (inset below) Sharon and Ian enjoying the harbour views

I've lived abroad much of my life and knew that I wanted to explore beyond living in England. The commute that my husband Ian and I had to do for work was a nightmare, and the cost of living in relation to our earnings made us feel like we were on a treadmill and not getting anywhere with our savings. We just didn't enjoy life as much as we knew we could and wanted to explore another way.

Ian and I had never been to Australia before so we decided to take a career break. With cash in the bank from selling our house, we took nine months off, did a round-the-world trip and our shipment arrived in Sydney before we did!

VISA PROCESS

We used Overseas Emigration Visas to help us to obtain our permanent residency visas. We felt the expense was worth it, and the people were really helpful. The visa process took 15 months from start to finish, and it was fairly straightforward – albeit long-winded and involving a lot of paperwork.

The move was more stressful. It took so much time and effort. The pressure to ensure that everything happened at the right time at an affordable price, and handling so many tasks along with working full time – it was a horrible juggling act! There was so much to do – selling a car, selling a house, getting >>

Meet the movers

NAMES

Sharon (40) and Ian (41) Swift

OCCUPATION

In the UK, the couple worked for Nielsen Media Research; Sharon as Group Account Manager and Ian as Senior Software Developer. In Australia, Sharon is director of SETTLEto (www.settleto.com), a program helping expats with their move. Ian works as a consultant software engineer

MOVED FROM

Basingstoke, Hampshire

MOVED TO

Stanmore, Sydney

USEFUL CONTACT

The couple moved with the help of the registered migration agents at Overseas Emigration Visas. For more information visit their website at www.overseas-emigration.co.uk or call 0800 193 6900



Interview: Liane Voisey





Above, Sharon and Ian decided to get married in Bali

quotes to arrange the shipment, booking flights, arranging accommodation for our arrival, and tying up an endless amount of paperwork – there was a lot to do!

FINDING WORK

When we arrived in Sydney in November 2005 we started looking for similar jobs to what we had in the UK, and chose to live as centrally as possible.

Ian got offered every job he applied for and decided to take a contract before committing to anything. The money was also much better than working as an employee. His IT skills formed the basis of how we could move here, and we certainly found that his experience made him very popular in the Australian market.

I found it much harder to find work. My 'softer' account management skills were less in demand, and it was frustrating that recruiters couldn't see beyond the exact 'pigeonhole' that I was in – they saw me as an account manager within research, and therefore that's pretty much all they could see me doing forever more – or so it seemed. I ended up working in a



Holidaying in Phuket, Thailand – a relative hop, skip and jump from Sydney – only eight hours!

similar role for a similar company for five years before setting up my own business.

Life started to become a bit more predictable, and I eventually left to set up my own business. Ian had similar frustrations in his high-pressure corporate job and managed to find a consultancy role.

Suddenly, we found ourselves with the freedom (and fear!) of being self employed – something

we could never in a million years imagine doing in the UK.

After exploring my entrepreneurial side, I have spent the past year building a business focused on helping UK professionals relocate to Australia – either on their own or for their job.

I have also authored a book *So, you're moving to Australia? The six essential steps to moving Down Under*, a one-stop resource for anyone

‘We could walk to the city and had skyline views – it was so different from Basingstoke!’

moving to Australia from the UK.

LIVING IN SYDNEY

Our first home was a rented apartment in Ultimo. It was brand new and a short walk from the famous Darling Harbour and Sydney Fish Market.

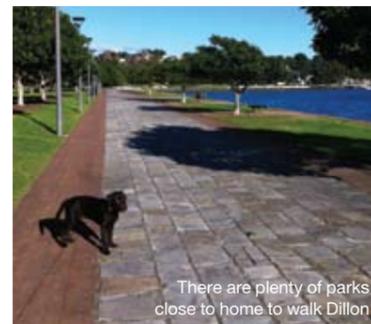
We could walk to the city and had skyline views – it was so different from life in Basingstoke! It was exactly what we wanted – a cosmopolitan lifestyle with proximity to the best that Sydney had to offer.

We had a high disposable income compared to the UK and had a whale of a time travelling around Australia and Asia, exploring the fabulous food and wine scene, and generally feeling like it was the best decision we ever made.

We decided to buy our apartment instead of moving out when our landlord wanted to sell,

Share your story!

If you are heading Down Under to start a new life and are willing to share the story about your move with us, we would love to hear from you! Simply email us at editor@australiamagazine.co.uk



There are plenty of parks close to home to walk Dillon



Dillon and Ian on a pretty beach that's part of the Royal National Park



Dillon paddles in the water in Sydney's Inner West Bay

and within six months we were on the Australian property ladder! Being residents, we got access to the Government's First Home Owners grant and managed to stay below the stamp duty threshold – which all helped to make the whole process more affordable.

Three years later, in January 2009, we craved more space, so moved to the Inner West suburb of Stanmore. It's a central urban area with a mix of young professionals and older generation families of Portuguese and Italian origin. We

likely never have worked for ourselves in the UK. That lack of predictability is what we wanted, and why we moved.

Our quality of life is so much better here. We spend more time outside, have a dog, and most of our friends live within 30 minutes' drive away.

We eat out more, have met some amazing people and most importantly, we love coming home after being on holiday, rather than dreading it as we used to living in the UK!

We mostly socialised with Brits to begin with, but that changed a few years ago and we now have a decent mix of Aussie and British friends.

We became Australian citizens in 2009. Our citizenship ceremony was held in Sydney Town Hall. We had Aussie wine, lamingtons and listened to *Waltzing Matilda* and other Australian music. It was emotional – there were over 50 of us in that one ceremony, and more than 30 nationalities represented.

As for the future, I plan to focus on growing my business, help more people with the challenge of moving, travel more frequently and build a property portfolio for our retirement fund.

My advice for other British people wanting to move to Australia is be prepared – emotionally, financially and research wise. Ensure that you have adequate savings for the lifestyle that you want, especially if you are moving without a job to go to.

Research the job market, make plenty of enquiries to recruiters and employers in your field. Accept that you will have a rollercoaster of emotions and mental challenges with the move! Know that life will be different – you need to manage your own expectations around what life will or won't be like.

‘Much of our leisure time here is spent outdoors, and by the beach in Sydney’

like the proximity to the city and how the local amenities are all within an easy walking distance.

Our three-bedroom house cost just under A\$1 million. It's an old house, dating back to 1894, and took us three months to find. The property wasn't listed. We had a private viewing and negotiated privately. It has a large yard at the back for our dog, Dillon.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Our lives are significantly better for moving to Australia. We would

We love the food culture in Australian urban centres and access to great food and restaurants. Much of our leisure time here is spent outdoors, and by the beach in Sydney.

Our weekends are typically very relaxed, catching up with friends and eating yummy food washed down by amazing Aussie wine.

It was a real struggle for me to adapt to the culture at first. It was so much more relaxed and informal than I was used to. In retrospect I would have prepared more for that.



PROS:

- Job and business opportunities
- Fun place for UK friends and family to visit
- Great access to the rest of Australia
- Lots of other expats and like-minded people in the area
- It's very cosmopolitan – restaurants, cafés, nightlife and transport

CONS:

- Expensive – property and the cost of living is generally high
- Distance and proximity to everything – Australia is huge and far away from everywhere
- The heat and extreme sun can be difficult to get used to coming from Europe
- It can be hard at first to make friends that aren't English or expats themselves
- Less access to culture and history compared to the UK



The couple love to visit gorgeous Bronte Beach

Sydney

WHY MOVE TO...

This vibrant city's warm, sunny climate and strong economy attracts many migrants...

WHAT IT'S LIKE

Sydney's population of four and a half million people enjoys living in a dynamic, multicultural city.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, almost 40 per cent of Sydney's residents were born overseas. People from the UK are Sydney's biggest migrant group, making up five per cent of the population.

In quality of life surveys, Sydney scores consistently well. The city enjoys a temperate, humid climate with abundant sunshine that is well spread

through the year. In fact, Sydney basks in more blue-sky days in winter than in summer.

GETTING AROUND

The vast majority of Sydneysiders use their own cars to get to work. Like many big cities, Sydney suffers badly from traffic congestion and jams. If you have a strong dislike of driving in these conditions, you would be well advised to live within walking distance of your work or to get a house close to a bus stop or a train station.



Sydney's busy port

HOUSING MARKET

Around 40,000 new people move to Sydney each year and 15,000 new homes are built to accommodate them. Apartments are common in the centre of Sydney.

Sydney ranks as the second most unaffordable housing market in the English speaking world. While house prices have been relatively stable for the past few months, property

is still expensive. The house prices in Sydney vary depending on where you live.

The eastern suburbs, between the CBD and the beach, are the most expensive. The northern suburbs, especially between the Pacific Highway and the sea, are nice but expensive. The more south west you go, the cheaper the housing, but you are further from the sea. 🇦🇺

Homes in Stanmore, Sydney



ORIGINAL DETAILS

A\$1,750,000 (€922,523)

In a quiet tree-lined street at the edge of Hinsby Park, this renovated Victorian freestanding residence has superb original detail and large living areas. It has three big double bedrooms. Other features include a wide entrance hall, high ceilings, large living area with gas fireplace, spacious open-plan dining zone and designer kitchen.

CONTACT: Pilcher Residential
WEB: www.pilcher-residential.com



DUAL-LEVEL COTTAGE

A\$1,625,000 (€856,628)

This renovated dual level three-bedroom cottage is a short stroll away from Annandale Village. Its well proportioned interiors can convert to four bedroom home. The north facing garden includes a covered terrace with built-in barbeque. The three bedrooms all have built-in wardrobes, one with two-way ensuite.

CONTACT: McGrath
WEB: www.mcgrath.com.au



FAMILY HOME

A\$1,100,000 (€579,961)

Displaying an ideal family layout, this single level three-bedroom residence provides a light filled sanctuary of immaculately maintained period features. Features include an open plan living area, a separate formal living area with marble fireplace, hedge-lined garden, modern granite kitchen and three queen sized bedrooms.

CONTACT: McGrath
WEB: www.mcgrath.com.au