



Living and working in Alexandria from a single, female teacher's perspective

My feelings prior to moving to Alexandria, Egypt were a mixture of excitement coupled with a touch of apprehension at the adventure upon which I was about to embark. Having never worked abroad before, I endeavoured to research the city and country in depth before the move and on arrival found much of the literature to be accurate and honest.

I arrived in Alexandria in August 2009 and was quickly made to feel part of a team in my immediate Key Stage and likewise was welcomed warmly by staff in other phases of the school. The ex-pat community here is relatively small so it was very reassuring that the induction period was so structured, involving both work-related and social activities to allow time to get to know my colleagues. Settling into a new school, city and country was made so much easier by the support systems in place and I soon felt at home; due to its size, the school itself functions very much as a family.

Alexandria is a unique city and as such a settling period is to be expected; the quirks of the city are very much part of its charm and those things that may feel daunting initially, like my first taxi ride, soon become part of the norm. As with any posting abroad, there are days when you miss family and home and there are aspects of life in Egypt that can be frustrating, but these are greatly outweighed by the amazing opportunities that come with living in this part of the world such as the cultural experience and travel potential.

Your social life is what you make it; there are numerous good restaurants and takeaway services readily available and at very reasonable prices. It takes time to really find out what is on offer and it can mean veering off the beaten track which can be an exciting and novel experience. There are some venues that serve alcohol, but your taste buds may need to adjust to the local beverages! One huge advantage of Alexandria is its location; just 3 hours from Cairo by car or 2½ hours by train there is so much to see and do there; the Giza pyramids, the Cairo Museum and a trip up the Nile to name a few. Equally, weekends away are possible to Sharm El Sheik and Dahab; excellent for relaxing, sunbathing and a night out. There are some beautiful beaches just an hour up the coast, well worthy of a day trip. Holidaying in Jordan and visits to Luxor and Aswan are high on my agenda for the forthcoming year!

Financially, working in BSA has been very beneficial, allowing me to save whilst maintaining a good standard of living. The cost of living is considerably cheaper than in the UK and consequently you can travel, socialise and still manage to save money. With regards to shopping, you can get most things although choice can be limited. The situation is improving with the recent development of a large shopping centre that houses a Debenhams, Next and Zara amongst others.

The move for me was definitely the right one and I'm looking forward to making the most of the next year, hoping to fit in plenty of travel and experiences that would not be available had I not moved to Egypt.