

# The Happy Expatriate Family

How to Overcome the 8 Challenges  
Your Family Will Face Living Abroad

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Dena Haines



The Happy Expat Family: How to Overcome the 8 Challenges Your Family Will Face Living Abroad

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# **The Happy Expat Family**

## **Part 1: Getting Started**

- **Introduction**
- **I Want To Move Abroad! Am I Crazy?**



## By Way Of Introduction

My name is Dena Haines. In 2009, we (my husband Bryan and daughter Drew) moved from small-town Canada to city life in Cuenca, Ecuador.

We miss many things about Canada: our family, friends, favorite places and foods, and ease of communication. But the benefits of this move have made the difficulties more than worth it.

*What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals. - Henry David Thoreau*



**Photo:** Author with her family on Black Beach (Floreana Island) Galapagos.

Life in a foreign country is very different than many people think. Often a negative impression exists because of what is featured on news programs. These negative opinions lead to concerns about safety, health and quality of life. Our family and friends voiced many concerns when we told them about our plans to move abroad, and we had a number of our own.

We are happy to say that life abroad is better than we expected.

Being immersed in (and learning) a new language has taught us many things, including patience, humility and the ability to laugh at our mistakes. Learning to adapt to cultural differences has sometimes pushed us outside our comfort zone, which has been very good for our family. We've grown in ways that we didn't anticipate, and we've learned to recognize attitudes in ourselves and others that at times are intolerant and unfair. These things have helped us to become better people.

The things that our daughter has learned over the past five years have helped her in many of the same ways. Because she is experiencing these things at a young age, her future will be shaped by her experiences here. Seeing her learn, grow, and change has been very fulfilling for us.

Traveling around this diverse country has made us feel alive with a sense of exploration. Living in a foreign country allows us to understand the way life works in a different culture. This experience is much different than just passing through.

It hasn't been all fun and games. We have had our share of stress: learning to adapt and communicate. Our immune systems have had a real workout as we've been assimilating to the introduction of new germs. But, as they say, "it

all makes us stronger.”

We’ve been very happy to be able to share our experiences as expats through our blogs [GringosAbroad](#) and [InsideEcuador](#). And even happier that many have told us we’ve helped them decide to do something similar.

With this book, I hope to encourage you and your family to experience life abroad. The information in this book is specifically for families with children. Families who move abroad with children have special concerns, and it can be hard to find information from people with experience.

Thank you for purchasing this book. I hope you enjoy it and that it helps you become a happy and successful expat family.

Sincerely,

*Dena Haines*

## I Want to Move Abroad: Am I Crazy?

When you mentioned moving abroad to your friends and extended family, they probably crushed your enthusiasm.

It may have gone something like this...

**You:** We are thinking about moving abroad!

**Them:**

- What!? Are you serious? Little Madison will stand out like a sore thumb in that country! Don't you think that could be dangerous for her?
- Do you really want Emma to grow up in that culture? Haven't you heard that those people eat ... ? and live in ... ?
- I heard that the people there think foreigners are all rich, won't that make little Mason a target for kidnapping?
- It's dirty there, and even the water is dirty, poor Chloe will be sick all the time!

This reaction may have made you feel a little "crazy."

Don't worry! I've heard it all, and I know that this can cause you to question your ideas of moving abroad. But take heart. The people that say this don't really know what they are talking about.

I've lived in Ecuador with a blue-eyed blond-haired daughter for five years, and she is alive and well!

*There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing. - Aristotle*



There have been many benefits. For example, she:

- is bilingual
- gets along well with people of different cultures
- is accepting of different ways of living, thinking and acting
- enjoys more time with her father and I because we don't work as much as we did in Canada
- has friends in a number of different countries because of meeting fellow expats and travelers
- enjoys doing things and eating things that she never would have in Canada

Sure, she has times where she thinks about moving back to Canada, but other times she talks about how much she loves Ecuador. Are we worried about her moving back to Canada when she gets older? No! When she is an adult we will support her decision, whatever it may be. And we will feel content and proud knowing that we opened her eyes, mind and heart to another culture, language and way of life.

Moving abroad with your children is a very noble idea! Don't let people shake you.

With careful planning and wise choices you can have a successful move and life abroad. You can give your children a gift that will shape their future attitudes and goals.

So let's get started...

## What Other Expats Say:

*(These quotes are taken from expat interviews which are printed in full at the end of this book)*

“I am proud of my daughter, who speaks English, French, German and Mandarin, and am continually in awe of people who are fluent in more than one language and switch effortlessly between them.” - **Jamie Donahoe** (*expat mom living in Switzerland, has lived in Bangkok, Thailand, and Hong Kong*)

“To me, the best part about living abroad is that it is mind-opening. I’ve learned a lot about diversity: diversity in people, cultures, states of mind, and possibilities in life. Another wonderful part about living abroad, of course, is learning a new language. I am a big lover of words, and being bilingual is a gift, an opportunity to be seized with no second thoughts. In living abroad, I have met so many interesting people, and I am so thankful for that. I have made friends from so many different countries... My fingers AND my toes would not be enough to count all the countries they’ve lived in! These people have fascinating stories to share, and it is always amazing to be able to connect with them.” - **Carmen Priotto** (*expat teen living in Lyon France*)

“I think our girls have been “protected” from commercialism living here, it’s a simpler way of life where they are not as “spoon-fed” as they would have been in UK, and they recognized that themselves when they went back there for a visit. Also with everything going on in the world, it seemed a safer place to be, tucked away in a corner at the bottom of the globe in the middle of nowhere.” - **Laura Campbell** (*expat mom living in New Zealand*)

“I longed to follow an old dream of mine: to help women out of poverty. Al-

though we had all the perks of a North American lifestyle, with well-paying jobs, 2 cars, a big house in the suburbs, we wanted more adventure, more travel, and especially more freedom. I was tired of the consumerism I felt mired in – this didn't align with my values. Although I loved my job, I didn't want to spend the rest of my life fulfilling other people's dreams, it was time to follow my own. I had gained a great deal by living abroad, a different perspective, a shifting of values and a lot of adventures. I was hoping to give these types of things to my children. My husband loves to live abroad, every part of a new culture and new place delights him... we have gained so much in terms of more time to be together, more freedom, more passion for what we do, less emphasis on belongings, more joy, less anxiety." - **Tracey Krause** (*expat mom living in Ecuador*)

"We didn't think our life in Canada matched our passions. We lived to work, not worked to live. We made good money, but that did not equal happiness for us. Somewhere along the line, we realized this epiphany, just after we watched ourselves get sucked into the concept that we must constantly be achieving to have value. We shopped for the newest fads, took expensive holidays to resorts, had spa weekends, new cars, but it didn't fulfill the way the commercials said it would. Our search for a life that balanced time and money came into action. We gave it all up for a slower paced more satisfying lifestyle. We explored Europe in search of a new life... a life where we spend the maximum amount of time together, run a home based businesses in the travel industry and show our children the world first hand while they are still young enough to want to hang out with us. We picked southern France and are actively living our dream." - **Eva Hamori** (*expat mom living in southern France*)

"The reasons we decided to sell everything to travel were to give our son a more world perspective and to be active participants in his life as he's growing. We also wanted to live in a warmer climate with a lower cost of living to

give us the opportunity to work less and enjoy life more.” - **Tracey Tullis**  
*(long-term traveling mom)*

“I decided to move my family overseas because I could not provide them a good life with the rising prices that the US had to offer. Moving and visiting other countries allows me to give my children and awesome life and for them to experience new cultures.” - **LaQuisha Gallmon** *(expat mom, has lived in Germany, Honduras, The Bahamas, Kuwait, and Alaska)*

# **The Happy Expat Family**

## **Part 2: The 8 Challenges**

- **Challenge 1: Dealing with Negativity and Misconceptions**
- **Challenge 2: Involving the Whole Family**
- **Challenge 3: Preparing to Say Goodbye**
- **Challenge 4: Planning a Successful Scouting Trip**
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*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover. - Mark Twain*

## Aren't You Concerned?

I'm not going to try to convince you to move your family abroad. I think it's safe to assume that you are reading this book because you already have that desire.

As mentioned in the introduction, you are going to hear a lot of concerns. Some valid. Some crazy. In this chapter, I'll explain how to not let these paralyze you.

## Combating Misconceptions

When moving abroad with children, there are some common questions:

- Are you sure you should be doing this with your kids?
- Will it be good for them?
- Won't it be too hard on them to leave their home and their friends?
- Will they be happy they grew up abroad?
- Won't you be putting them at risk? Aren't you worried it will be dangerous?

We asked ourselves some of the same things when planning our move.

The funny thing is that those questions can seem paranoid and offensive coming from others.

Why is that?

I think it's because by the time you are being asked those questions you've



already answered them for yourself. You would not have decided to move if you were not confident it would be right for your family. Of course, you would never put your children at risk! So when someone asks those questions, you may feel like they are questioning you as a parent.

When we moved to Ecuador, our daughter was eight years old. The only thing we regret about the move is that we didn't do it sooner. We had the misconception that she needed to be of a certain age in order to handle the difficulties of living abroad. That idea seems so funny now, as do many of the other misconceptions we (and others) had before we relocated.

## Problematic Perceptions

Living in North America can create a fear of other countries. This can result in a feeling of superiority that can stunt our children's perspective of the world.

The news programs in our home countries help create this fear. They only show sensationalized reports of political unrest, disease outbreaks, and random abductions. Everyday life of people living in those countries is far different than the impression left by these news stories. There are some war torn areas that obviously need to be avoided. But common perceptions of many foreign countries are skewed.

Let's consider an example. *Is California dangerous?* Imagine if the only information we ever heard about California was negative. It would be a scary place where mysterious sinkholes suddenly appear, swallowing cars, homes and whatever else happens to be nearby. A place full of gang violence, wildfires, and earthquakes. We would never think of living in such a place! But because the information received is balanced, life in sunny California sounds pretty

### *Expatriate Family Tip:*

Don't rule out a country based on the negative things you've heard about it.

- Look for the positive, try to get an idea of what everyday life is like.
- Get out the map and look into areas within that country that you may never have heard of.
- Research the area.
- Read blogs of people living there.

Chances are you will be pleasantly surprised by what you find.

good.

You may find some negatives that you are not comfortable with. This will also be helpful and will most likely increase your chances of a successful relocation.

When a family researches other countries, horizons expand, and imaginations start taking off in entirely new directions. Our children begin to picture themselves feeding monkeys in Ecuador, or riding elephants in Thailand. Exotic pictures begin to transform the fridge into an art gallery of pink monkeys and purple elephants, pictures of mom with a lizard on her head and dad with a toucan on his shoulder.

What will happen when children are exposed to the wide-open world? They will learn that most people want the same thing. No matter what color their skin is or what kind of food they eat. Whether they live in big fancy houses or little humble ones. Most people just want to be happy and go about their lives as best they can.

They will also learn that the earth itself is beautiful. Whether it's a beach in Belize or the stunning Andes Mountains in Peru. They will see that there is more to life than movie theaters, Burger King and plastic water slides.

A child exposed to different cultures sees the world through different eyes. They are more accepting of things that are "different."

Yes, your child may see children their age shining shoes or begging, and while that is a sad fact of life for some children, it may motivate your children to reach out and help others.

They may also learn to appreciate what they have.

## How Can We Help Our Kids?

### *Expatriate Family Tip:*

Use experiences like the one mentioned above to teach your children, not to criticize others.

Dream with them about what a future without those kinds of things would be like.

That may help create within them the desire to get involved with volunteer work and education.

Children will interpret what they see according to our reactions. They will adopt our views. If we are shocked to see children shining shoes, and tell our kids that it's an outrage, they will likely see it the same way. But if we explain that life in different cultures is sometimes harder than what they are used to and sometimes these things are a part of life, our children will not overreact.

Remember our home country most likely has its share of homeless people and street kids too. Sometimes life is tough. We don't have to like it. But we don't have to let it turn us into small-minded sensationalists either. We need to help our children observe and think, without making negative judgments.

Not relocating because of what our children might see, could be likened to not going to the dentist because they might find a cavity. The value in heading out on this journey with our children far outweighs whatever awkwardness we may feel in trying to turn what they see into a healthy educational moment. Moments like that will contribute to a healthy mental attitude.

## Will There Be Benefits?

What lasting benefits will children receive from a move abroad? Will they benefit from all those experiences? Yes!

They will if you take lots of pictures, and remember all the good times you've had living abroad. Whether you relocate for 2 or 20 years, those stories will be told and re-told over and over throughout your child's lifetime. Those memo-

ries will live and grow within your children, become part of them, and shape their future passions.

Our daughter is fluent in Spanish and enjoys the distinct culture of the Andes Mountains. I love to see her experience new things.

Watching her grow and become accustomed to life abroad has made me wish that I had been exposed to similar international experiences as a child.

Moving abroad with children does require additional planning. There is always a need to remain flexible, taking their age, energy level, and other needs into consideration. But the extra work is more than worth it!

The joy that our daughter experiences is real and healthy. And the joy that we receive as parents continues to grow as we watch her become a well-rounded person.

We are so happy that we have been able to give the experience of living abroad to our daughter.

## What Other Expats Say:

*(These quotes are taken from expat interviews which are printed in full at the end of this book)*

“Close family was always supportive. There’s always friends and family that were negative about our decision of leaving the country but we were sure of what we were looking for and about our long term plans. After a few years, they began to see how you enjoy your new country and misconceptions disappear.” - **Lorena Cagnotti** (*expat mom living in Mexico*)

“After the birth of our second child, I got a blood clot and having faced the possibility of death we were motivated to make an extreme change in our lives. Our priorities realigned automatically and we realized that all that really mattered to us was to be there as our children grew up... I knew my husband was deeply unhappy living the life he was, and outside of our children New Zealand seemed to be the only thing that excited him. I didn’t want to discuss our choice with anyone outside of the four of us until it was finalized because I didn’t want to be persuaded out of it. I knew it would likely not go down well but then the alternative was to be miserable while continuing to run the family business. It was more important to change that situation because it affected me, our children as well as James. I was aware there were lots of possible reasons why it could be considered a crazy idea...” **Laura Campbell** (*expat mom living in New Zealand*)

“Most of our friends are also expats, and those who aren’t all think what we’re doing is quite amazing (though to us it’s perfectly normal), so we haven’t really dealt with negativity. When we first left, family all thought it was great, but they are all the adventurous type anyway.” - **Jamie Donahoe** (*expat mom*)

*living in Switzerland, has lived in Bangkok, Thailand, and Hong Kong)*

We definitely struggled with the negativity of family. Things did not go as planned in many ways. The biggest thing was we would stay in Calgary for work and wait 2 years for our house to finally sell. It was hard on all of us. Mom and Dad sacrificed so much and we appreciate beyond words the time we spent in their home. But living with them had some serious challenges. They couldn't understand why we wanted to sell everything we worked so hard to accumulate not to mention why we wanted to put their Grandson in harm's way (in their uneducated opinion). I say uneducated because they never read a thing about Colombia or the places we talked about or my blog which was frustrating. There were many tense moments, hurt feelings and loud voices over that 2 year period. The result for us was steely resolve and an even stronger immediate family unit. If anything the negativity bolstered the determination to get on the road. We explained the tension to Makai as I truly believe it was: "Grandma and Grandpa are sad we are leaving because they will miss us, especially you." This made sense to him and helped him keep a positive attitude toward them and our travel plan." - **Tracey Tullis** (*long-term traveling mom*)

"We were a successful happy family in Canada. Most of our friends and family were shocked by our idea of moving abroad. We picked our timing to tell them as well, and told most people only after we sold our house and business to curb any extra negativity. We were firm on our discussion, and explained that it was something we needed to do." - **Eva Hamori** (*expat mom living in southern France*)

"When I first told my family about moving overseas I was criticized to the fullest and even called stupid and irresponsible by my own mother. I just simply explained to them that they are my children and my life and this is what I was



going to do. I explained to them that there is no need for me to live from paycheck to paycheck while missing out on valuable time with my children when I could enjoy life with my children and live on a modest income while saving money.” - **LaQuisha Gallmon** (*expat mom, has lived in Germany, Honduras, The Bahamas, Kuwait, and Alaska*)

“My family was especially negative about it, my parents were very angry with us and we had to deal with a lot of emotional manipulation. We just kept talking about the benefits and made it clear that this was our decision and that visits would be happening. Most of my friends were supportive, although some clearly thought we were nuts. Once we explained our reasoning and the things we were hoping to accomplish, they were often excited for us and some even wished they could be as courageous. We dealt with a wide spectrum of views. All our friends are well established in their jobs and entrenched in a North American lifestyle that involves a lot of things: houses, cars, cabins. They focus on moving up and getting more. We moved so far off that path that some just couldn’t relate.” - **Tracy Krause** (*expat mom living in Ecuador*)

“My parents gave up on the idea that I would stay close to home early on. And by early I mean during high school. By then I had already set my mind to see the world. I have been so blessed to have been able to do it accompanied and not only to travel but to get to experience different countries and cultures long term. Things changed when we had kids. After our firstborn came to life in Thailand my parents were not so happy to be living far away from their grandchildren. When we come back to visit of course everyone has an opinion but we believe that as long as we as a family are together we will be fine whether in a house in the suburbs, an apartment in the city or a small shack in the middle of the jungle.” **Ana Gaby** (*expat mom, has lived in Germany, Thailand, Indonesia, France and Belgium*)

*The more that you read, the more  
you will know.  
The more that you learn, the more  
places you'll go. - Dr. Seuss*

## Getting The Kids Involved

Include your kids in the whole process. Help them get excited about choosing their new home / country.

When we decided to move to abroad, we kept our daughter involved as much as possible. She was seven years old at the time and enjoyed the process.

When we were choosing which country would suit us best, we had family discussions with the globe in front of us, and maps spread all over the table.

As we explored the options, she enjoyed adding her thoughts and opinions. And in the end, even though at first she dreamed of living in the jungle, she felt content about our decision to move to Cuenca, Ecuador.

Cuenca is a far cry from the jungle, but because she was included in the decision process, she felt like it was her decision too. She fully understood all the reasons why we felt it the best place for our family.

## How We Involved Our Daughter

Once we had our destination in mind, we went to work as a family researching the different kinds of wildlife, climate zones, and foods we would experience.

We learned that the country we chose had lots of amazing animals: like monkeys, giant snakes, large spiders, and lizards. We also discovered that the area we were moving to didn't have many of these critters (one of the reasons we chose Cuenca) and that the only one we would have to get used to was the tarantula.

### *Expatriate Family Tip:*

Be careful not to give your children too much responsibility. Leaving the final decision about a move up to your kids wouldn't be fair.

Reminding them along the way that the final decision is up to “mom and dad” will ensure they don't carry too much weight on their shoulders. It will help them express their thoughts about the move in a more balanced way, and if your move doesn't go as planned your child won't feel responsible.

To our Canadian family, tarantulas were very foreign (and a little scary!) So we started digging for information about what tarantulas were like. Keeping our daughter involved as we searched for information in books and online was crucial because she learned about their true nature. We learned that tarantulas are very shy spiders, their sting is like a bee sting, and they live in small holes in the ground. After learning about them, we were no longer worried. This experience taught us that our imagination was scarier than reality.

We also enjoyed learning about the differences in the culture. We talked about how we would deal with, and enjoy, these differences. We even tried to eat differently before we moved, more like we thought we would once we relocated.

The more information we found, the better we felt about our chances of success.

Keeping our daughter involved helped when we let our family and friends in on our decision. Because she was so well informed, she was excited about our plans. This helped our family to feel more comfortable with the journey we were about to take her on. It also made us happy because she would often talk very excitedly about what she couldn't wait to see (or hear, or do, or eat) once we were living in Ecuador.

It helped to have that positive energy bouncing around. Children are often better at staying focused on the positive, because of not having to deal with grown-up concerns.

If your parents are planning on visiting once you move, they could research some tourist attractions they want to visit with your children. This will help your kids to picture themselves there. And dream about the good times they

will have when grandma and grandpa visit.

Ideas to get your younger children involved and excited:

### *Expat Family Tip:*

Ask your parents (your kids grandparents) to help get your kids excited about the move. They could show them websites about the country you'll be relocating to.

Reading stories, drawing pictures and doing crafts are all good ideas.

1. Find blogs of other families already living abroad. It's fun to read their experiences together.
2. Search the fruit section at the grocery store for exotic varieties of fruit you'll be eating when you move. Have a family taste testing adventure.
3. Research the animals from your new country and then draw pictures of your family with them. Don't forget to color or paint them.
4. Make a collage of your artwork and keep it up for the whole family to enjoy.
5. Get out the play dough and let your imagination run wild as you create critters in every color of the rainbow.
6. Search clothing labels while shopping to see if you can find clothes that were made in the country you'll be moving to.
7. Research some recipes of some of the new foods you'll be enjoying and make them together. Invite family and friends over for a "(your country's name) night."
8. Read about some of the exciting adventures you could experience once you move. Get your kids to write a story about what they think it will be like to do them. Don't forget the illustrations.
9. Watch movies and documentaries about travel. See if you can find any that were shot on location in your new country.
10. Read family adventure books like *The Swiss Family Robinson* together.
11. Make up poems and songs about what life will be like.
12. Help them start a blog. It's fun to share what they are learning with family and friends. We made our blog private to keep things safe for our daughter. You can do that by creating a blog that is viewed by invitation only.
13. Make a scrapbook with some of their drawings, their little crafts, your rec-

### *Expat Family Tip:*

If your children are older, get them involved by researching together. This will help them learn where they can continue to enjoy their favorite sport or hobby once you relocate. Or maybe they will want to take up a new one.

Here in Cuenca, for example, we've seen rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, music lessons, dance classes, and a lot more.

ipes, and pictures of the family doing all of the above. Bring it along when you move.

These things don't have to be complicated to be helpful. I remember making up a song to the tune of one Barney's (the big purple dinosaur) songs. Our daughter was seven at the time, it went like this:

*"I love you, and you love me, and we're a happy family, and we live here, but soon we won't, we'll live there, in ECUEEEEEEDOOR. And I'll love you, and you'll love me, and we'll be a happy family in ECUEEEEE-DOOR!"*

This was very simple. But it served to remind her (in a fun way) that some big things were going to change, but the most important thing was going to remain the same. I still sing that from time to time, she now rolls her eyes and laughs. It brings back all kinds of memories.

The important thing is to keep your children involved and excited as the process unfolds.

## What Other Expats Say:

*(These quotes are taken from expat interviews which are printed in full at the end of this book)*

“We didn’t actually CHOOSE any of our locations, in terms of seeking them out; they were all opportunities that presented themselves at the time we needed to be moving on, i.e. a contract was ending. The first time my daughter moved, she was two, and obviously had little understanding of what was going on. When it came time to leave Switzerland, at age 6 she had fully settled in, was fluent in Swiss German and wondered why her passport was blue instead of red. She spent the first few months in Hong Kong asking when we were going to move back to Basel. Of course, six years later, she was very sad to be leaving Hong Kong and three years on, still talks about wanting to live there again. Since being expats is “what we do”, she didn’t really have any input in the moving decisions. Opinions, yes.” - **Jamie Donahoe** *(expat mom living in Switzerland, has lived in Bangkok, Thailand, and Hong Kong)*

“My sisters were 12 and 7 and in the beginning I think I was the most resistant, although I usually didn’t express my feelings out loud and just journaled about it. I think journaling is a great idea especially if the kids are having a hard time adjusting or don’t want to talk to their parents or adults about how they’re feeling.” - **Jillian Lama** *(former expat child, moved from U.S.A to Tbilisi Georgia (former Soviet Union) at the age of 15)*

“Makai was in on the planning right from the start. He traveled with us to Argentina when he was 18 months old. We included him in all conversations showing maps and pointing out places on the globe when he was really little. During the time we were researching and developing our plan to travel Makai



was a toddler. Our greatest concern was the transition for him so we tried to bring travel and the world into any craft or creative project.

Here is some of the stuff we used:

- Foam world map puzzles. We found these at the dollar store. The puzzle pieces were the continents all different colors. Great for little hands. He has since developed a love of maps.
- Light up globe. We looked at the globe every day and talked about different places in the world. It was also his night light. The globe was one of the best tools because as he developed and learned about the world from other sources he would relate new information back to that globe.
- National Geographic movies about South America from the library. DVDs and YouTube videos about South American animals and dinosaurs. Watching these videos helped spark interest and ignite passion for dinosaurs and volcanoes. Makai is excited to see a volcano on our travels. We plan to see and experience the things he liked in the videos when we can.
- We read books and stories about travel and the world. The library was an invaluable resource. It helped us bring the world to Makai.
- We encouraged trying new foods introducing new tastes regularly.”

- **Tracey Tullis** (*long-term traveling mom*)

“To tell you the truth I don’t know if I was ever really brought into the loop on what was happening. At most I think I was told that we were going on a trip, and that I needed to pack up my toys. I don’t really imagine that I had much reaction at all. To me it was just like going over to Manassas to see my grand parents or down to Orlando to hang out with Mickey and his crew at the Magic Kingdom. At the time I didn’t truly differentiate between Paris and Orlando.”

- **Chris Hedges** (*former expat child, moved from the U.S.A to France at the*

*age of 5)*

“To involve our children in the move, we primarily talked to them about decisions as we were making them. We asked our son, who was quite a bit older, about his opinion and gained his support. My daughter was too young to really understand what moving to another country entailed. They were both enthusiastic which was really important as we started to sell our stuff, and especially their stuff. They got involved in the garage sales and decided what stuff they wanted to take, store and sell. We made flash cards of Spanish words and pinned them up all over the house to help everyone learn some common words. At some point, my older son started to research Ecuador on the computer and together we watched what videos we could find about our new country.” - **Tracy Krause** (*expat mom living in Ecuador*)

“It is very important to get your kids involved in your research, showing them videos, books, showing them pictures or telling stories about other families living abroad. They need to be part of your family plans and also be able to express how they feel, we are always checking other traveling families blogs and enjoying along with them to keep our wanderlust alive. Mostly at dinner time we watch videos of places we would like to visit, we learn about food and culture of different countries. We talk with our kids about our plans, they are excited and eager to see new places, try new foods and meet new people. As long as we get them involved and show them excitement, they will embrace the changes.” - **Lorena Cagnotti** (*expat mom living in Mexico*)

“My children have all been traveling since they were six weeks of age. My oldest who is 8 he gets involved by helping me do research and look at housing options. He has his own tablet and his own list of countries he wants to visit and why. The love moving around and in fact they truly dislike the fact of coming back to the states longer than a two week visit which we normally do

around December.” - **LaQuisha Gallmon** (*expat mom, has lived in Germany, Honduras, The Bahamas, Kuwait, and Alaska*)

“We told the children initially we are going for a one-year trip ( a gap year) throughout Europe with the hopes to stay. If things didn’t work out we would be back. That is what the plan was and that is exactly what the children were told. We were honest with the children from the get go, however, leading them into the unknown can be difficult for children to understand. They banked on coming home. We knew that.

They helped us sell their things, pack their bags, and were involved in every aspect of the moving process. Mentally, we thought this would help the children have an understanding.” - **Eva Hamori** (*expat mom living in southern France*)

## Expat Resources

Over the years, we've built a large set of expat resources. Here are some of the most popular.

### OUR THREE BLOGS

**[GringosAbroad](#)**: Our main site where we cover expat information, issues, reviews and interviews for countries all around the world.

**[BloggerAbroad](#)**: This is our blog where we share what we've learned about running a profitable travel / expat blog.

**[InsideEcuador](#)**: This is our families story of moving abroad where we focus only on Ecuador - both travel and expat information.

**[Products We Love](#)**: this is a listing of the items we use (and recommend) on a daily basis. Everything from travel gear and insurance to luggage and language tools. Check it out!

**[17 Best Expat Books](#)**: As we planned our move abroad, we read a lot of books. Here are some of the most popular ones.

**[11 Books & Courses We Used to Learn Spanish](#)**: To help us learn Spanish, we've experimented with just about every type of learning program. Here are the eleven different books and courses we've used.

**[7 Travel Insurance Options for Expats](#)**: This article is the result of two solid days of research. Once you leave your home country, it can be hard to buy travel insurance. Most providers want you to be a resident of the same country as your citizenship. These seven providers are much more flexible.

**[Our Favorite Photography Books](#)**: Once you move abroad, you'll be glad that you took a little time to improve your photography. Especially if you are going to blog about it.

**[How to Start an Expat Blog](#)**: We feel strongly that a blog will help your expat family. It helps make connections with other expats and with locals. It helps work through emotions and frustrations. And it can generate an income to fund your life abroad. Not bad at all! :)

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**Link to book:** <http://gringosabroad.com/expat-family-handbook/>