

Autumn 2012

★ THE EURApean

The official newsletter for the European Relocation Association

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MIDDLE EASTERN PROMISE

*Destination services
in the wake of the
Arab Spring – special
five page report*

*Review of the EuRA
Congress in Stockholm
– see pages 18/19*

INSIDE:



Families in Global Transition

5 Global networking
group launches in UK



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continent of contrasts



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Training programme boosts objective for EU recognition

A MAJOR new training programme will bring the global mobility industry one step closer to professional recognition on a worldwide scale.

The Managing International Mobility (MIM) programme will be launched by the European Academy of Relocation Professionals (EARP) in January 2013. A fixed syllabus, four day programme, it will sit alongside the Association's existing ERQ programmes.

Quality Seal. "In order to gain a specific EU designation for relocation as a profession, we need to offer two accreditations; personal and corporate and the new MIM programme will be the first European specific programme to outline and deliver a minimum training standard for relocation professionals."

Based on four key modules each looking at the processes, service delivery and transferee impact, MIM will be a comprehensive overview of our industry, delivered both face to face and online.

There will be exemptions for professionals with existing industry qualifications.

• Full details of this new initiative will be sent to all EuRA members when the programme goes live next January.

A lot in the pipeline

IT WAS wonderful welcoming 600 delegates to my home city of Stockholm in April for the 15th EuRA International Relocation Congress (see pages 18/19).

It was a terrific conference and it was great to have so many delegates continue to use our event as their primary networking and professional forum, especially in the complex financial situation we all find ourselves in. It was very much geared towards inter-industry discussion and the feedback I personally have received backed up the online evaluations,



which confirmed that it this approach that delegates want from the event.

We are currently carefully constructing the Bucharest 2013 programme to focus again on the issues that face us all in

terms of supply chain management, client relations and changing mobility policies. Before then, Tad and I look forward to welcoming you to our 5th annual U.S. reception in Washington DC on October 4.

There is a lot in the pipeline at the moment. We will be formally launching our new EARP fixed syllabus training programme in January and delivering the first two days in Bucharest. Details are on the website and will be sent out to members when the programme launches.

The 5th EuRA Quality Seal Review took place in September and the new standard will be published in January for all audits after July 1, 2013. Tad is meeting with national HR groups across Europe with a view to creating a pan European users group in 2013. EuRA will be representing members at WERC in London and China, as well as the Canadian Employee Relocation Council in Ottawa, where we will be exhibiting to promote the Quality Seal and the Oxford Brookes Coaching programme.

May I wish you all a bright last quarter for 2012 and hope that things improve across the global economy in 2013.

Ase Löfgren Gunsten
President, EuRA



FIRST OF ITS KIND: Training delivered by the programme will be unique to the profession.

Award-winning Apart'hotel opens

THE OPENING of an upgraded property in London's Trafalgar Square brings the number of Apart'hotels run by The Ascott Limited (Ascott) to six.

The world's largest international serviced residence owner-operator opened its Citadines Prestige category property this Spring and within two months had already won a 2012 TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence Award for its consistently high rating by regular site users and travellers.

It is the third Ascott property in London to be transformed in the last two years. The other three are in Paris.

The investment of more than £6 million represented a complete redesign and renovation over nine months. The company says that guests will benefit from an intelligently re-designed living space, offering optimum comfort and

a contemporary, relaxing décor. All apartments (a total of 187 ranging from studio to one-and two-bedroom apartments) benefit from air-conditioning, complimentary WiFi, flat-screen TV, well-equipped kitchen and separate bathroom facilities, 24-hour manned reception, user-friendly business corner, lounge and breakfast areas and car park.

Across the other side of the world, the Ascott Limited has secured a contract to manage its first serviced residence in Xiamen, China.

Set to open late 2012, the company says that the 169-unit Citadines Jinshang Road Xiamen reinforces its leading position as the largest international serviced residence owner-operator in China with more than 8,000 apartment units in 42 properties across 17 cities.

What Will Be Your Next Challenge?

Customers continue to raise their expectations. What is your next challenge?

- Better reporting?
- Quality measurement?
- Secure access to information?

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Margaret's a Clear winner

THE SECOND ever recipient of the UK Relocation Personality of the year trophy is Margaret Moes of Clearview Relocation.

"It's brilliant news, and well deserved" said Simon Bell, managing director of Clearview. "When your company philosophy is all about offering excellent personal service, this kind of endorsement from your peers really means something."

Margaret won the award because, as one of her referees said, "Margaret is a great ambassador for relocation, has been at the forefront of service delivery and innovation, and is always ready to share knowledge with colleagues and peers."

The trophy was presented by TV's



DELIGHTED: Beatriz Carro de Prada and Pascal Bourbon of BRS Relocation.

Adrian Mills and Steve Marshall, European managing director of SIRVA, the award sponsor. The awards are organised by Re:Locate magazine.

Margaret said she was "honoured to be recognized for a job I love doing." Last year's winner of the Personality of the Year was Tad Zurlinden, CEO of EuRA and ARP.

Pricoa Relocation UK (now Brookfield Relocation Services) took the award for Best Relocation Strategy/Policy. As in previous years, UK Relocation Service Provider or Team of the Year was the category with the highest number of entries. The trophy went to Interdean Relocation Services.

PricewaterhouseCoopers took the Technological Innovation in Relocation award for its TravelWatch system, which provides a comprehensive solution to the issue of business traveller tracking. The award for Creative Application of Technology went to Cartus for its new mobile app.

Barcelona-based BRS Relocation Services was named Best International Destination Services Provider. It was a double celebration for the company when BRS's Beatriz Carro de Prada won this year's Rising Star in Relocation award. For the second year running, the Excellence in Employee & Family



HONOURED: Margaret Moes from Clearview.

Support award went to London-based Focus. The trophy for Best Property Provider or Solution went to serviced accommodation provider BridgeStreet, while the Green Achievement award, which recognises excellence in environmental initiatives and practices, was won this year by HCR Group.

Get ready for Bucharest!

INITIATION, delegation, communication: three key elements of success for any company requiring, and providing, global mobility services.

These are the themes of EuRA's 2013 International Relocation Congress, which will take place in Romania's capital, the ancient and beautiful city of Bucharest (see picture right), from 24-26 April.

Throughout the event, speakers and delegates will be building on the themes explored in the 2012 Congress in Stockholm, looking at the supply

chain, the outsource models and how excellent, accurate and culturally sensitive communication can improve service delivery and supplier relationships.

The venue is the imposing Bucharest InterContinental Hotel, a landmark in the city and the secure haven for the world's press during the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime.

Situated in the geographical centre of the city and a five minute walk from the old town area of Lipscani, the hotel is in a great place from which to get a real flavour of Bucharest.

Tad Zurlinden, CEO of EuRA, says: "We will be running a three day event, a welcome reception, the Gala Dinner and Party Night



as well as our popular training, open and conference sessions. Bookings will be taken online from September. If you are interested in sponsoring or exhibiting at the event, please contact the office."

Anti-terrorist appraisal

PRISTINE results and positive feedback were received well by employees at AIReS upon conclusion of a visit from C-TPAT officers to the company's corporate headquarters this summer.

C-TPAT, otherwise known as Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism,

focuses exclusively on protecting American borders and security regulations for domestic shipments into the U.S. Certification in the program is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

AIReS remains proficient in correlation with full compliance to standard surveillance policies and procedures.

Families network launches in the UK

THE DREAMING spires of Oxford, UK were the setting for the launch of the Families in Global Transition (FIGT) affiliate this summer.

Claire Snowdon, founder and director of Expat Know How and Wendy Wilson, executive coach and mentor specialising in change management and cultural transition, have joined forces to develop the organisation in the UK with the key objectives of education, networking, research and support.

Originating in the USA, FIGT has been championing cross-cultural education and training to support expat families for 10 years. The UK becomes the second European affiliate country, following the opening of the first in Switzerland last year.

"One of our initial aims is to build a local



UK network across all sectors and provide a forum of exchange for globally mobile professionals, families and students," says Claire.

"We want to create a welcome place for people in global transition where they can meet and discuss issues and challenges. There will be a big emphasis on research, education and training, careers, employee retention, third culture kids, adjustment, relocation best practices and elder care responsibilities."

Around 70 guests gathered at the Said Business School in Oxford for the launch, which was sponsored by the School, Finders Keepers and the Career Boutique.

"Oxford is the centre for FIGT UK because of the growing international, commercial, educational and diplomatic

READY TO NETWORK: Wendy Wilson (left) and Claire Snowdon (centre) with special guests at the FIGT UK launch.

communities in the area." explains Wendy.

"We recognise the challenges of relocation and will organise events and discussion forums on all issues of global mobility, cultural transition and relocation."

FIGT UK is keen to collaborate with any companies and individuals with an interest in global mobility and already has strong links with EuRA, the Association of Relocation Professionals (ARP), Forum of Expatriate Management and Oxford Brookes University.

For further information on Families in Global Transition UK, visit the website: www.figt.org/uk-affiliates

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TOP TIPS FOR LONG-TERM MULTICULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

Are you having difficulties with colleagues from overseas? Is integrating into an alien workforce proving to be a challenge? EuRA member, Cultural Awareness International, has a few tips that may help, together with some great tips on repatriation support.




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dare to be different...

COMMUNICATION and work styles differ greatly across the globe. This requires a new way of doing business in order to build trust and develop long-term relationships with clients, joint venture partners and multicultural team members. Miscommunication can significantly increase costs by creating unnecessary delays and obstacles in meeting business objectives.

The following are a few general tips that apply to many cultures around the world:

1. **Misunderstandings** occur because of linguistic and cultural barriers. Loosen your timetable. Plan to spend 50-100% more time for communications.
2. **Avoid "yes" or "no" questions.** Instead, ask open-ended questions beginning with what, how, when, where or who.
3. Although **relationships** may take a very long time on the front end, the return on investment will be great. The relationship you develop will last a lifetime if nourished. Relationships are between people, not companies. Tell them about yourself first.

4. **Avoid using abbreviations,** colloquialisms and slang. Although this is a short hand way of speaking, it may confuse others and increase the time it takes to communicate an idea.
5. Chart the different **time zones** and share the burden when scheduling conference calls with your international colleagues.

6. Be aware of a person's **title** as well as his/her education and experience. Know who you are working and/or meeting with.

7. Ask your international colleagues to **follow up** in writing to confirm understanding.

8. **Stay connected.** Call just to check in from time to time with no agenda. It is important to maintain the human connection especially when you cannot always touch base face to face.

9. **Response time** varies greatly across the globe. Send emails requesting information as far in advance as possible. Do not expect an immediate answer. People answer their emails when they are able to do so.

10. Use a fairly **formal tone and style.** Many cultures prefer a formal business communications style.

Repatriation challenges

Cultural Awareness International also has a few handy tips on the tricky subject of repatriation, for employers, employees and their families.

For the employer:

- Before sending an employee on a global assignment, plan on how you will use their newly acquired culture-and market specific skills during the early phases of the selection process.
- Create a repatriation contract to reduce ambiguity on both sides about the expatriate's future within the company and his or her job on return.



Call just to check from time to time with no agenda. It is important to maintain the human connection especially when you cannot always touch base face to face.

- Provide an intercultural repatriation program for the entire family-make sure it is tailored to address each family member's unique needs.
- Establish a mentoring program to keep your expatriates fully in the loop with company policies and events while on global assignments. Keep them connected and provide a support system.

- Offer a company orientation program for your returning expatriates addressing all the changes that have taken place during their absence, including company shifts in policy and strategy.

- Keep your returning expatriates feeling valued and appreciated on their return.

- Provide spousal career consulting assistance to employees with accompanying spouses/partners. This will allow spouse/partner to regain more control of his or her career options back home.

For the returning employee and spouse/partner:

- Seek a mentor from the moment you have accepted the position. This person's role is to keep you in the loop, assist you in watching out for your interests and your career path, and facilitate your visibility within the company while you are away and when you return.

- Create a "transition" fund-a secure amount that will allow for hidden costs (such as readjusting to a lifestyle with fewer company perks or transitioning back to a home without a housekeeper) that occur during your transition back home.

- Expect your values and beliefs related to how you view the world to have changed; do not expect your old colleagues, friends, and family to immediately understand you or your new experiences.

- Prepare to effectively communicate how you now see your newly acquired values and beliefs to others in your home country.

- Understand and learn to appreciate that it will take time, sometimes even longer than anyone expects, for you to settle into what was once a very familiar environment.

- Consider creative ways to use your newly found skills and knowledge, such as assisting others through a similar relocation experience. This may offer you a unique opportunity to share your experiences in a setting where they will be most valued and respected.

- Be ready for a change in dynamics. Your colleagues might be envious of your international experience and unsure of how you are different.

- Expect the unexpected.

www.culturalawareness.com

Relocation in the digital age



DIY MOBILITY:
Michele Bar-Pereg

Digital technology moves on apace, shrinking the world and improving communications in ways that would have seemed impossible only 20 years ago. In this special feature we look at how global mobility professionals are employing some exciting technologies and transforming the way the relocation industry operates.

AN INNOVATIVE online relocation concept has been launched by EuRA member, Michele Bar-Pereg, to address increasing demands by the HR community for 'DIY mobility'.

RelocateYourself.com is a new facility aimed at relocation professionals who wish to add an online facility for 'virgin expatriates' to their list of services.

"The idea of an online department within most relocation companies has been my dream for many years," Michele explains. "Relocation has always been about personal contact, nurturing and caring – combined with good organization skills – and I have bought into that ideal for many years. However, times and technology are changing.

"I have talked to many HR managers before embarking on this path, sharing their concerns about budgets and costs, plus acknowledging that the new breed of mobile populations are all about self discovery, night-time online research and a desire to drive the move from their own needs and wishes and not from a standard relocation policy.

"Added to this, there are many people working on cross-border academic programmes, junior managers and young executives who see immigration as a natural progression in gaining work skills and academic achievement. Then there are the new nations who are emerging as immigrant work populations, not experienced or used to relocation support."

Michele says that RelocateYourself.com is an affordable, easy to use online facility to help all these 'virgin expatriates', made available through the services provided

by relocation professionals. Her growing management team will continue to improve its support system.

Apart from encouraging readers to visit the RelocateYourself.com website, Michele can be contacted by email: michele@relocateyourself.com

One of the first companies to use this new resource is Moving-On Relocation Services, which specializes in Portuguese speaking countries.

Moving-ON has incorporated into its professional services the possibility to deliver online relocation, powered by the revolutionary RelocateYourself software.

"This interactive platform brings relocation online, enabling us to reach markets that weren't possible before and making relocation support possible from a low-cost yet personal and customized perspective," says Isabel Cudell about her new service, Moving-ONline.

"Services are priced by Angel Stars. After a service is performed the start credit will be deducted from the client's credit. Clients will be able to choose a combination of services, to fit their requirements, preferences and relocation needs.

"We can service in different locations, with an established network of relocation angels worldwide. Totally customizable, you may add on any number of stars to your assignee's relocation package."

The power of Apps

Move One has developed and implemented the use of an android application that simplifies, hastens and streamlines the moving survey process. Move One's latest technology can

be installed on a mobile device such as a tablet, and has been designed specifically to comply with industry standards for global use and exchange of electronic data. This innovation, now mandatory throughout Move One's global organization, replaces the cumbersome paperwork traditionally required to complete a successful moving survey.

Nikola Spasovski, Southeast Europe Manager at Move One, provides a step-by-step overview of the survey application process and a review of the application's key benefits:

Step 1: Move Coordinator emails basic contact details file to the surveyor in the field.

Step 2: Surveyor imports the file on the tablet and is ready to input the household items.

Step 3: Surveyor can organise the items per room, and separate them by transportation type. Items, volume and costs for shipment are calculated by the application. The surveyor fills in the items by selecting their icon and then adds item quantity.

Step 4: Once completed, the survey sheet is presented to the customer, surveyor describes the survey information and customer signs off.

Step 5: The survey is emailed to quoting department in an electronic (XML) format, and customer receives PDF copy of the completed and signed form outlining all the details and items shown during the survey.

Spasovski explains the benefits the new survey tablet application provides Move One's clients:

"The survey tablet has helped Move One further improve customer service and

experience in two ways. First, the device is extremely user friendly and thus very easy for staff to operate. Accurate, quality data is collected and transmitted, which then ensures that the rates team is able to provide our customers with the quotation more promptly.

"Second, the tablet provides an extremely transparent and clear preview of the surveyed items, volume and transport mode. This transparency means that customers can clearly see the results for themselves, directly as they appear on the tablet. The survey tablet is a significant time saving device, enabling the team to now undertake almost three times as many surveys."

The speed and accuracy of Move One's surveys, coupled with the quality of data collected and transmitted, has resulted in an increase in the overall number of daily surveys. This directly benefits Move One's clients, with a much faster survey response time as well as dramatically reducing the time frame for receiving the quotation.

The survey tablet ensures that Move One's staff has the tools and resources to conduct highly efficient surveys and provide prompt, accurate quotes. As a direct result of the use of the survey tablet, everyone involved benefits from greater efficiency, providing an invaluable resource to the overall operational effectiveness of the Move One team.

Serviced apartments and hotels

The Ascott Limited (Ascott) has launched mobile versions of its three brand websites

– www.the-ascott.com, www.citadines.com and www.somerset.com – as well as an online chat facility on its brand websites to enhance guests' search and reservation experience.

Guests can now easily access information, enquire and reserve Ascott's properties worldwide anytime, anywhere.

Besides the mobile and online platforms, Ascott has been reaching out to guests through social media for which the company recently won 'Best Hotel and Lodging Social Media Campaign' at the 2012 Internet Advertising Competition organised by the US-based Web Marketing Association.

Tony Soh, Ascott's Chief Corporate Officer, said: "The sophisticated and tech-savvy travellers of today want fast and convenient access to information while on the go.

"In addition to leveraging social media, Ascott's mobile-friendly websites and online chat facility will enable us to better reach out to our guests wherever they are, whenever they choose and whatever platform they prefer to use.

"These two new initiatives are part of our ongoing efforts to deliver the best Ascott experience to our guests at each and every touch-point, including interactions prior to their stay with us."

Travellers who visit Ascott's brand websites with their smartphones such as iPhone, Blackberry or Android can easily navigate the websites as they have been optimised for smaller screens with touchscreen-friendly icons.

Guests can also view current promotions, check apartment availability, and make or modify a reservation at the touch of their fingertips. In addition, Ascott's online

members can log in to their profiles on the mobile websites for quick reservations.

The mobile websites also have user-friendly features that show guests the nearest Ascott serviced residence based on their location, and interactive maps that display the attractions and amenities around the serviced residence.

To provide guests with real-time support, Ascott's new online chat facility on its brand websites enables guests to easily communicate with an Ascott representative who will address their queries through instant messaging.

This online chat facility, particularly innovative for the hospitality industry, is available in five languages – English, French, German, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

In the social media realm, guests can connect with Ascott via Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Facebook. Ascott's 'Around our Residences' Facebook app won 'Best Hotel and Lodging Social Media Campaign' Award for its 'Ultimate Resident Contest' which invites guests to share tips on what to see and do around Ascott's serviced residences thereby helping fellow travellers to navigate a new city more easily.

Those who contributed the top five tips with the most votes from Ascott's Facebook fans each received a three-night stay their choice of residence worldwide. Ascott currently has more than 38,000 fans across its Ascott, Citadines and Somerset Facebook pages.

In Europe, Citadines launched dedicated Facebook pages (15,000+ fans and growing) and its Twitter account in January 2012.

Renting in a tough landlord's market



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LETTING agents have long lists of applicants waiting for suitable properties and, on average, there are three would-be tenants competing for each rental property on the UK market. With the Olympics and Queen's Jubilee, demand has increased further this summer. In the long-term, more people are turning to renting as they struggle to take their first step onto the property ladder.

As a result of the intense demand, rents have increased in many parts of the UK over the last year, and there is often competition between tenants for the same property, leading to rents being agreed which are above the asking price.

In a market which favours landlords so keenly, the services of an experienced relocation agent can prove truly invaluable – to save those looking to rent a great deal of time, stress and money.

With competition for good quality rented homes so fierce, we - as experienced relocation agents - can put our clients in pole position for the most sought after properties and make the process as stress-free as possible for them.

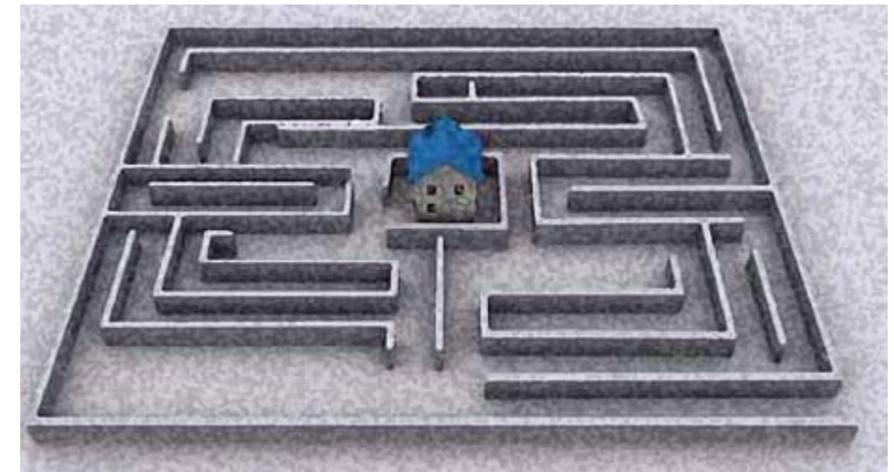
Firstly we guide our clients in the vital process of outlining their key priorities and make sure they know what issues are 'deal breakers' and which ones they would be willing to compromise on if necessary.

We also establish if there are any factors which may limit their choice of properties, such as if they have pets or are smokers, which some landlords will not accept. Being clear on these issues from the outset means our clients will avoid wasting time or effort viewing unsuitable properties.

We also carry out thorough research and give our clients detailed information about the area concerning the things that are important to them, for example schools, local amenities, average rents, transport links, etc. This helps them make an informed choice about which area will suit them best and helps us to keep the property search focused on their behalf.

When it comes to finding the property itself, we utilise the strong relationships that we have with a large network of letting agents throughout the UK who will always inform us first – before even marketing it elsewhere – that a suitable property has become available.

While many prospective tenants are under pressure to take the first thing they can get, our links with all the best agents



It's a tough market for renters in Europe – not least in the UK – and this has been the case for some time.

Demand for rented property far outweighs supply in most areas and good quality rental properties are being let as soon as they become available. Louise Balban, Relocate UK's manager, offers some advice to HR managers and others trying to find the best solutions for their clients.



means we can quickly give our clients the luxury of a range of properties to choose from that match their requirements.

We will accompany our clients when they view prospective properties, to offer a second opinion if needed and be on hand to answer any questions about the area or property. This will put them in the best position for making a prompt, informed decision, an important advantage in such a competitive market.

Once they have made their choice, we are able to secure a competitive rent for our clients by strong negotiation, particularly for corporate tenancies, which appeal to both agents and landlords. We will ensure our clients are in a strong position and also use our knowledge of Landlord and Tenant Law to look out for their interests by checking the tenancy agreement, inventory and terms and conditions of the tenancy thoroughly before they commit themselves, and negotiate better terms if necessary.

Our role is to listen to what our clients

want and make sure we give them as many choices as possible that match their requirements – accounting for deadlines or time constraints they may have.

Even when a client's requirements are not straightforward, we are able to rise to the occasion. For example, we assisted a family who were relocating to the UK with three Rottweiler dogs and who wanted a rural home with easy access to country walks. This presented a challenge as many landlords and agents will not allow any pets at all, let alone three large dogs!

However, with our extensive contacts, we were able to provide the family with a number of properties to choose from, all of which matched their requirements and had landlords who were happy to accept the dogs. The family were delighted with the home we helped them to find.

In the fight to secure the best rental options for people moving to the UK, relocation agents provide increasingly significant support.

www.relocate.uk.com

What now for the Middle East?

NOBODY can deny that the relocation map of the Middle East has changed dramatically in the last 18 months.

Many countries of the Arab Spring – Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria – have seen uprisings ranging from peaceful to more aggressive to topple regimes that have for years oppressed their people and abused the resources of their countries. With the exception of Syria, where the future is currently far from certain, all the above mentioned countries overthrew their regimes and are on their way to building a new tomorrow which has to be more capable in facing all the problems that tormented them like unemployment, social justice and availability of food.

Some other countries like Bahrain is still torn internally between Shiite and Sunni population and their needs, while countries like Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan and Saudi Arabia have all experienced smaller uprisings which have been controlled so far with little change.

At the same time, other wealthy and peaceful states such as those in the United Arab Emirates continue to invest heavily in economic development, attracting massive international interest and resulting in local populations that are far smaller than the immigrant population.

This special feature touches on the amazing mix of cultural, political and

economic issues that make up this remarkable region, as a starting point for those seeking to relocate individuals and families there.

The growth of relocation expertise in the Middle East

Despite a few 'no go' areas, the Middle East has for several decades been a region of opportunity for countless thousands of expats from Europe who have taken their skills and expertise to these rapidly developing countries, bringing their families with them. Today, the Middle East offers more such opportunities than ever, against a backdrop where previously difficult cultural differences are very gradually being eased through greater understanding and mutual respect.

Supporting relocation needs, many specialist companies have been expanding across the region, including Global Relocation Consultants (GRC) which has recently announced a new service in Egypt for furniture rental and new immigration teams based in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Cyprus, together with its presence in Iraq including Iraqi Kurdistan with a team that provides relocation and immigration services on the ground. "However, we are avoiding all conflict areas in Iraq," says a company spokesman.

Echo-Xpats, the Dubai based premium

Saudi Arabia: Do's and Don'ts

IN THE Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expatriates usually live within compounds to ensure their security as well as afford them and their families the comforts they are accustomed to. Cross cultural training is highly recommended. School buses and shopping buses are available which is an important asset is because women cannot drive in the kingdom. Women's dress code is particularly strict and all should wear an Abaya (cape) and a scarf.

Most of the compounds in Saudi Arabia offer facilities such as gate security, shuttle buses to shopping areas, school buses, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, restaurants, supermarkets, laundry services, kids coaching, satellite, cable channels and internet connections.

relocation service company, has purchased business rival Nomad Relocations to expand its regional reach. Nick Digby, Managing Partner of Echo-Xpats, said, "The purchase of Nomad was a logical step for us. By merging our resources, we are now able to offer our services in Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and in the major cities of Saudi Arabia – Riyadh, Jeddah, Jubail, Al Khobar and Dammam".

Another specialist expanding its services is Santa Fe, which this year opened a new office in Doha, Qatar, run by general manager, Ravi Rajamani (above).



Culture and Customs

Expats in the Middle East should ensure that they dress appropriately in public so as not to offend local people. In a conservative culture, where the abaya (a black cloak) and the niqab (a veil) is traditional dress, showing skin can easily cause offence.

All shopping malls in Dubai have notices asking customers to cover up from their shoulders to their knees. But some locals do not feel that this is enough and are upset by many Westerners who do not respect their local customs and beliefs. In fact, a group of Emirati women have set up a Twitter campaign called #UAEDressCode

in an attempt to highlight the issue.

Although there is not a specific law in Dubai that stipulates how foreigners should dress, expats should respect local traditions and beliefs when in public. If inappropriate dress is identified in a shopping mall by a local Muslim, for example, the Police might be called. In some circumstances, people have been issued with fines and, in extreme cases, been imprisoned and deported.

Legal Issues

Utilising the expertise of local destination service providers can prove especially important when the unexpected occurs in the Middle East. This is certainly true if the worst happened and an expat lost their partner, as they could also lose their financial security.

"If a spouse were to die intestate (without having made a will), then local Sharia Law would be enforced," explains Shirley Doran, relocation manager for Santa Fe. "Bank accounts and any financial assets would be frozen, sometimes only a couple of hours after their loved one's death. Not only can the authorities determine what will happen with family assets but children's guardianship could also be in jeopardy.

"This situation can easily be avoided by ensuring that you and your partner have a valid will in place."

Debbie Powell, director of Enigma Relocations, points to a new law affecting expats in Dubai. All expats must now have their tenancy contract registered with Ejari in order to apply for the residence visa for their dependants.

For this process they will need the original tenancy agreement, a copy of the tenants passport and visa, the title deed or an affection plan issued by the Municipality or Land Registry (a sales and purchase agreement is not sufficient), a landlords passport/visa, and the DEWA Receipt for deposit in the name of the tenant. There are other rules and regulations that need to be adhered to, especially for assignees who wish to sponsor their families.

Immigration challenges

Like other specialists in the region, Global Relocation Consultants (GRC) is faced with many immigration challenges due to the current volatile political situation. "Those conditions makes all assignees weary of leaving their passports and official documents with GRC to process their WP and visas," says Mona Redwan of GRC. "In addition, bureaucracies in the ME create additional challenges by sticking to

*There is a wealth of support available to anyone contemplating a move to one of the most intriguing and unpredictable regions on earth, where countries with great peace and prosperity are neighbours with those that are experiencing major upheavals. Largely written by **Mona Redwan** of Global Relocation Consultants (below), we have added contributions from several other global mobility specialists across the region.*



SCALING THE HEIGHTS: The Burj Khalifa in Dubai is the world's tallest building, a symbol of the wealth found throughout the United Arab Emirates.

Getting around locally – by plane

WHILE day trips to a different city or in the case of Europe even a different country are common place in the West, in the Middle East with all the red tape associated with immigration, high internal fares and general lethargy around timekeeping, the planning of regional travel was not so long ago akin to the same complexities of planning the annual family holiday.

That was until the advent of the low cost airlines that have opened up the skies and in the process allowed intercity day travel to become a very real possibility for people in this part of the world.

Dubai is unquestionably the leading hub in this area with FlyDubai operating from its own terminal at the international airport and neighboring Sharjah hosting Air Arabia. Both airlines cover the major cities across the Middle East with increasing frequency, and when combined with the scheduled flights of the traditional airlines, flying to Riyadh, Doha or Kuwait as a day trip is increasingly the norm.

There is something oddly reassuring about recognizing the same faces that flew with you in the morning, getting on the evening commuter back to their families after a day's work. This is especially the case when you remember that only five years ago this would have been near impossible.

Intouch Relocations continues to augment its presence in the Middle East with the opening of a new office in Al Ain. The operation will provide relocation services in the form of home search, education, orientation and settle in support to assignees. www.intouchrelocations.com



by Sebastien Besson, group managing partner, Intouch Relocations



ATTRACTIVE: Typical expat rental properties offered by GRC in the Middle East (left); the entrance of the ISL School in Qatar; ISL students benefiting from state of the art equipment (opposite).

a timeline in finalising all those documents, thus creating tension for the assignees.”

Generally, GRC faces expat requests to live in more secure areas such as security guarded compounds and which are naturally closer to their respective embassies. “They also prefer to put their children in foreign schools that have more foreign pupils than local ones,” says Mona. “This is more common in countries with sporadic riots still taking place such as Jordan, for example. Not forgetting that generally, rental fees have reduced in most of the Arab Spring countries.”

Laws and regulations for the expatriates working in the Middle East is sometimes restrictive. For example, in Algeria or Qatar you cannot relocate expats without the pre-approval of the appropriate ministry based on a given quota allocated for each company. In addition, in Algeria an extra level of challenge is faced due to processes and regulations that can change overnight. In Saudi Arabia, the country puts more effort in employing local personnel, thus limiting the possibility of bringing in new expats or renewing work and residency permits.

Religious events

Regional religious events and holidays have a direct effect on the relocation process. Ramadan (Muslim’s Holy month) is a regional event shared by the entire Muslim world and lasts for a month beginning around mid July. During this month most companies and government offices work for between four to five hours a day, directly affecting the scheduling of any relocation agent.

The whole of the Muslim world celebrates the end of Ramadan with the Baram or Eid al Fitr which is a two to three day festival that might expand to 10 days if extra holiday days can be added. In October, the Hajj (Pilgrimage) sees around five million Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia, thus limiting the expat relocation to Jeddah during that time, not just due to heavy traffic but closure of official Saudi

establishments. The Eid El Adha is also celebrated in late October with a regional holiday.

Renting and buying property

There are no restrictions on the types of properties that foreigners are allowed to buy in the Middle East, except for some countries like Qatar where expats are only allowed to buy properties in some areas and are eligible to use them only for 99 years.

Most expatriates coming to work in the Middle East rent their houses because they are coming to work for a short period of time. In all countries in the region you find that some areas are more popular with expats because they are greener, quieter or closer to their work or children’s school.

It is relatively expensive to rent good quality property in the Middle East compared to Europe or the USA. Houses and apartments are similar to their western counterparts and can be either furnished or semi-furnished. The real estate market has been rapidly growing over the past few years, housing availability is still quite limited and good properties do not stay long on the market. Some rental properties are older and may lack modern facilities and yet have their charm and their clients.

Most semi-furnished rented properties come equipped with modern bathrooms, AC’s and other kitchen appliances. Villas in secured gated compounds start from a rental base of 6,000 US\$ per month. Those villas have gardens and (in some cases) private pools and can be a unit within a compound or can be a stand-alone villa. Outside these compounds, rented villas can be found between 2,000-3,000 US dollars per month.

In Algeria, renting is simple, by a contract registered legally at a notary office. The only obligation for the expat is to have residency otherwise you can have the

(Continued on p16)

Qatar: Getting ready for 2030

THE NEW state-of-the-art Doha International Airport inaugurated this year in Qatar excels in modernity and minimises the distance for passengers to walk between connections. Yet this is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the development plans of this vibrant country.

The State of Qatar was founded in 1971 under a Constitutional Monarchy which was approved by its citizens and led by His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. The nation has been growing about 20 per cent per annum and Qatari society enjoys the highest per-capita income in the world (USD 94K).

“This high quality of life, sustainability and prosperity of Qatar is built on its natural resources as well as its careful planning for an educated and knowledge-based future,” says Lara Lindemann, head of secondary for the International Schools of London (ISL).

“Its natural resources, for example, have been developed into a state-of-the-art natural gas export model providing significant capital inflows capable of funding the growth of the non-oil sectors of the economy, a key strategic objective.”

The Emir’s ‘National Vision 2030’, which is being delivered through the ‘National Development Strategy (NDS)’ includes a forward-looking goal to create a ‘knowledge based society’ by emphasising education, sports and health.

The Qatar Foundation (QF) has developed ‘Education City’ in the capital, Doha, which hosts six leading American universities in an amazing display of architectural marvels. ‘The Sidra Medical and Research Project due in 2012 is a high tech facility that will not only provide worldclass patient care but will help build Qatar’s scientific expertise, funded by a USD 7.9 billion endowment from QF, the

largest such endowment of a medical and research centre in the world.

A massive influx of world class skills, expertise and labour is necessary for the construction of such an ambitious vision over a relatively short period of time. With a population of over 1.7 million, Qatar is a bustling and peaceful multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society where abilities and skills from all over the world are imported in order to speed up the fast-paced development process. Local citizens comprise about 20 per cent of the total population.

The place of women in Qatari society has been fast evolving with incentives for women to occupy professional, academic and political positions alongside with men.

Qatar ranks number 12 among 175 nations in the international security index; its society is proud to be one of the most secure and peaceful nations in the world.

Citizens, visitors and expats experience the traditional hospitality and warmth of the Arab culture. Although the English language is widely utilised, the learning of some basic words, numbers and expressions in Arabic is highly regarded by the local population, greatly improving the quality of the interaction between foreigners and local residents.

“The ways in which most people behave, dress, eat, interact and deal with all aspects of their lives clearly emanate from the Qur’an and from the Islamic tradition,” says Lara. “However, the expat community enjoys total freedom for practising religion in the many churches and temples which have been built in Qatar.

“In principle any non-Muslim manifestation in public, other than in purpose built churches or temples, is not permitted, however, for example, Christmas

tree decorations are very common in Doha in December.”

Families relocating to Qatar could find that one of the major challenges they face is that of adequate schooling.

“It is very difficult to find places and, unlike the UK, there are few relocation and education consultants to assist them,” says Heather Mulkey, group marketing and admissions officer for the International School of London (ISL) Group. “Families need to begin applying (especially for primary places) as soon as they know they may be moving.”

ISL Qatar began in 2008 when ISL was invited by the Outstanding Schools Oversight Committee of the Supreme Education Council to open a school. ISL Qatar was the first of three ‘outstanding schools’ to be invited to join the Outstanding School Initiative. The school has been highly successful and is already expanding with construction underway to add more primary and secondary classrooms and a library.

ISL Qatar is currently one of only a few International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools in Qatar, authorised for both the Primary Years and Diploma Programmes and a candidate school for the Middle Years Programme, the authorisation for which will occur this autumn.

“We have experienced great pressure for places,” adds Heather. “In some grades in the Primary, we have had three or four times more applications than we have places. As we are expanding in Secondary, there are still places available in some grades.”

The school year will begin in September with a new Head, Christopher Charleson, who joins a strong team of IB educators.

www.islqatar.org



STUNNING: The Dubai skyline.

rent under the name of the company. Buying property is limited only to Algerian citizenship but you can overcome this by purchasing in the name of a company that you own (expats can have up to 49% of the company shares).

While there are more and more agencies that work to rent out properties in Morocco, normal procedure is somewhat different than that in the west. The basic process is straightforward, utilising the services of agencies or local representatives (called simsars). You negotiate an agreeable price, pay the agent one month's rent for their services, pay two months deposit and the first month's rent, and sign contract papers. Buying property is similar, but requires a much more detailed legal process.

Renting a property in Jordan is a simple process with renting and buying fees increasing according to the area. During summer, buying and selling properties reaches a peak, directly affecting prices. However, it is harder to secure an apartment in a highly reputable area at the right price in comparison to local levels of income.

Tapping in to the region

Throughout many countries in the region, tap water is generally not safe enough for Western stomachs. Some people boil water before usage and GRC recommends buying bottled water, always checking that it is sealed before purchase.

Despite this minor setback, the Middle East continues to provide European expatriates with exciting destinations, a well-established and growing network of specialist support and an opportunity to escape from the economic downturn that continues to affect most of Europe.

www.grconsultants.org

Israel: Watch this space!

THE ONE Middle Eastern country where the culture is radically different is Israel, with its strong links to the West and its complex make-up which attracts global headlines on a weekly basis.

Due to the complex nature of this country and pressures of space in this issue, we will be including a special feature on Israel in the next printed issue of The EuRApean, with major contributions from Corporate Resources Group (Israel) and Ocean Relocation.

Egypt: It's business as usual

THE POLITICAL turmoil that has occurred in Egypt since the beginning of 2011 with the destitution of Hosni Mubarak has highly influenced all areas of the local economy including the relocation business.

The market has suffered acutely from the anxiety over an economic collapse. Some sectors, like tourism have been particularly hit. In November 2011, Standard and Poor's downgraded Egypt's sovereign debt rating after clashes. The cut meant the lack of investor confidence in the Egyptian military's handling of the interim period.

Today, the changing of the political landscape has also spurred fears with the dissolution of the Islamist-led parliament on June 14 by the Supreme Court at the benefit of the military and the election of the new president Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim brotherhood candidate on June 24.

Recently it has been a trial of strength between the two parties. Consequently, some international companies have reduced their activities and limited the number of expatriates.

According to one of the main international moving companies in Egypt, the number of departures of expatriates were stable in 2011 compared to 2010 but the number of arrivals decreased by 20%. However, 2012 shows signs of stabilisation and several major companies are back to investing in various fields of the economy.

The rental prices for housing in the neighborhoods popular to expatriate families have dropped consistently since the 2011 revolution and landlords are much more inclined to negotiate prices. This trend is quite a relief as we have noticed that many multinational companies are cutting costs and therefore reducing the housing allowances.

We also noticed in 2011 a change in the family structure of the assignees we assisted. Indeed, we had many single junior staff or couples with older children that already graduated and therefore not following.

In 2012, we relocated more families with children and the international schools are back to being full in some grades.

Cairo Relocations has not suffered from the consequences of the revolution. As a young company in full development, we have seen our activity expand a great deal in 2011 and 2012.

The security situation is under control. Although an increasing number of assaults have been reported in the past 18 months, the situation in Cairo is much calmer compared to many major capitals.

However, precautions are to be taken and locations such as Tahrir Square are not recommended during demonstrations.

The immigration procedures are back to the usual time frame after several months of tightened procedures for the obtaining of work permits for foreigners.

For the next few months, the Morsi government faces an immediate challenge to restore confidence in the economy and among the international players.

We are confident that Egypt with its strategic position in the region will continue to be a major player for multinational groups and therefore bring on more foreign assignees.

www.cairo-relocations.com



by Elizabeth Garforth, managing partner, Cairo Relocations

Morocco: Closer to Europe?

MOROCCO has standard relocation procedures. It is a reasonably accessible country to most foreigners and enjoys high level of security, little threat of massive riots and fairly supportive importation regulations with the normal amount of bureaucratic inefficiency. This and any other local problems faced can be easily surmounted by having a local agent handle those procedures.

In Morocco there are two areas of challenge, one involving the 'rhythms of life' and the other involving the actual paperwork requirements for residency. The first 80 or 90 percent of the process

can be completed within a week or two, sometimes even more quickly. The last portion, whether it be acquiring appliances and furnishings or obtaining internet subscription, can seem to drag on interminably.

"The solution is in proper management of expectations," explains Elena Danilova of Global Relocation Consultants. "Nobody should expect if something starts smoothly that it will continue on the same path. Another solution is to collaborate with trusted locals who can guide the expats through the process of becoming a resident of Morocco."

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Swedish smorgasbord of success

ILLUMINATING: MC, Frances Edmonds (centre) pauses to watch one of the AV presentations with the audience. Below, from left: delegates enjoying one of the many seminars; exceptional award winner Helmut Berg; the Clarion Sign Hotel, home to the Congress; time to make new friends; EuRA CEO Tad Zurlinden and President Åse Löfgren Gunsten at the Gala Dinner; Colin Moon delivers a hilarious keynote speech; high flyers gathered from around the world.



A meeting of minds, a chance to learn and share best practice while renewing contacts with very talented people ... EuRA's 2012 Congress was this and so much more.



STOCKHOLM, capital of Scandinavia and Europe's 'Venice of the North', hosted this year's EuRA International Relocation Congress – and what a smorgasbord of delights it turned out to be.

The event, the 15th to be held, has become a highlight in the relocation calendar and EuRA was delighted to welcome 600 delegates to the city.

Over the three days of the event, EuRA held 20 plenary and breakout sessions focussing on where the global mobility

industry is today and how it will develop over the coming years in response to the economic uncertainty in Europe.

Representatives from the corporate world discussed how their mobility programmes were evolving and there was much focus on the supply chain management issues that exist between global relocation companies and regional and local destination service providers.

During three days of discussion and analysis, many new ideas were formed and EuRA will take forward the work, initiating

two new forums to support HR needs and encourage dialogue between GRMCs and DSPs.

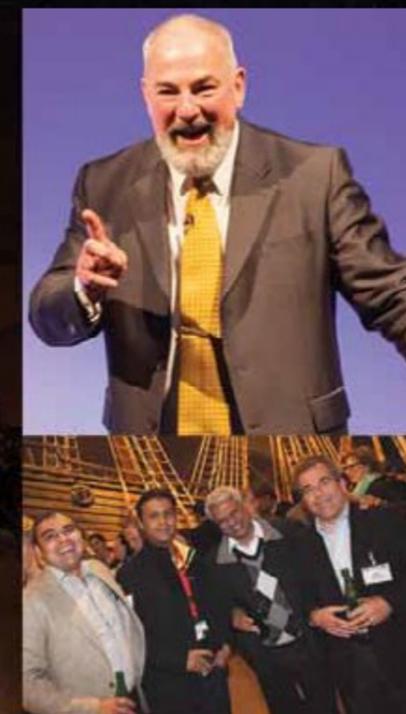
On the social calendar, three evening networking parties were enjoyed, with the highlight being the Gala Dinner which took place in the astonishing Vasa Museum, host to a complete 16th century galleon, whose ignominious fate was to sink just 800 metres from the shore on its maiden voyage.

Brought up from the deep in the 1970's, a painstaking 20 year restoration project resulted in the most visited museum in

Scandinavia and a terrific venue for EuRA's main networking event of the year.

The Gala Dinner was also the scene for the inaugural EuRA Award for Exceptional Services to Relocation. This honour was given to Helmut Berg of RSB Deutschland, who, stated the EuRA Council, has truly been a leader, innovator and promoter of our industry over his 30 year career.

The 16th Congress will take place in Bucharest, Romania from 24-26 April 2013. Full details online: www.EuRA-relocation.com



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Housing

There is generally a shortage of quality, secure housing available in most of Africa's capital cities with the exception of South Africa's major cities (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria) and some of north Africa's cities.

There are new housing developments under construction in high volume emerging markets such as Lagos (Nigeria), Luanda (Angola) and Nairobi (Kenya), but demand is typically higher than availability and rentals are extremely high. Housing in Luanda is currently ranked as the most expensive in the world. Inflation is typically higher than in western economies, and combined with housing shortages, rentals can fluctuate considerably.

Leases are pro-landlord, and with the exception of southern Africa, diplomatic clauses are resisted. Rents are payable upfront either quarterly, annually or for the entire period of the lease. Leases/offers to rent need to be turned around, and deposits paid very quickly to avoid losing properties (deposits are often paid even before the lease is signed in order to secure a property).

It should not be assumed that interim housing solutions such as corporate serviced accommodation or rental furniture are available. Protracted hotel stays can often be the norm, especially in the less developed and lower volume locations. Immigration, shipping and clearing of household goods shipments can take a considerable length of time and careful planning around realistic assignment and lease start dates is essential to contain costs.

Schooling

Although Africa's larger cities have good quality international and/or private schools, availability of places is limited. Identifying suitable schools and submitting applications well in advance of assignment start date is recommended. Companies anticipating significant numbers of expatriate families moving into such a city may need to consider creative admission



COLOURFUL SIGHTS: The whole of the African continent is a rich cultural mix. Pictures courtesy Maputo Relocation Solutions

Only five of the 54 African countries do not have some oil exploration or production activity going on

solutions such as debentures, booking and paying for a certain number of places in advance, or even going so far as investing in additional facilities.

Infrastructure

A combination of lack of investment in infrastructure and mass migration from rural to urban areas has put considerable strain on roads, sanitation, electricity and water supply. The impact of this on expatriates/families in cities like Lagos Luanda and Nairobi can be huge.

The number of vehicles and people on the move on often deeply pot-holed, poorly signed and maintained roads and sidewalks (overflowing with informal traders) is at times nothing short of chaotic. It can take hours to travel 10 kms, and the driving style is 'robust' and noisy. In Nigeria in particular, the use of horns is a constant background of getting around. All of the above are somewhat overwhelming to the newcomer. Nairobi, for example, has almost no signposting. A driver, at least initially, is a prerequisite in these locations. Careful consideration should be given to selecting a home in close proximity to school (for families with children) and office to avoid excessively long commute times.

Power outages in many of Africa's cities are commonplace, and it is essential in Nigeria, for example, for complexes/homes to have a back-up generator. Water supply can also be either erratic, not drinkable or both and either bottled or treated water should be used for drinking and cooking.

Healthcare

Health risks vary considerably across the continent. For example, in tropical central Africa, malaria and other tropical parasitic diseases are endemic, and professional advice should be obtained prior to assignment on the most appropriate immunisations, and other precautions to be taken – www.netcaretravelclinic.co.za is a good source of information.

Healthcare services are variable. Private healthcare in South Africa, for example, is excellent and of an acceptable standard for routine medical interventions in other major cities in Africa. Without exception, state healthcare services are under-resourced and not of an acceptable standard. Private health insurance, including evacuation for extreme medical situations, is essential.

International SOS (www.internationalsos.com) is a French organisation that provides health and emergency services throughout Africa.

Summary

Africa is a continent of vast potential and endless possibilities. Its people are generally entrepreneurial, warm, hospitable and proud. They are all seeking a better life for their children, and value education and employment opportunities highly. Multinational companies and a 'new breed' of expatriate employees can, and do thrive on this ever changing African continent.

There is a requirement for flexibility in terms of expatriate policy, costs, and the people deployed. Pre-assignment assessments of the employee and family for suitability to working and living in Africa are important. Some survive, others thrive.

Elliott Corporate Relocations is based in Johannesburg, South Africa and has been providing mobility and immigration services throughout the continent for nearly 20 years.

www.corprelo.co.za



MOZAMBIQUE: a country in ascendance

THE MOZAMBIKAN economy has enjoyed 7-9% growth rates during the last decade but the party has barely started. In fact,

the recent natural gas discoveries and the massive coal-producing potential of the country have caught the eye of investors from all areas around the globe and, unsurprisingly, of the biggest companies on the planet, with everyone hoping to tap-in at the right time and explore the massive potential that sits on 2.5Kms of pristine coastline of the Indian Ocean.

Those who had the vision to make the trip years ago and invest in the country will probably tell you that it is "Maningue nice" to live here. Quite often one hears of someone who came for a six months' assignment but has been here for years, sometimes decades. However, it isn't always easy to adapt and learn the charm of the Mozambican way of life, in particular for those who can't handle the disparity of living in the thriving economy of an impoverished sub-Saharan country. After surviving a brutal civil war roughly

Madalena Baptista da Silva of Maputo Relocation Solutions gives a brief overview of this fascinating land



WELCOMING: Madalena (left) and her colleague Marta Tinto-Coelho Roff.

20 years ago, one would be a fool not to expect that the country is still considerably short of local qualified staff. Keen and focused on changing this status-quo, the Mozambican Government has nevertheless

imposed restrictions on the number of foreigners that companies may hire to work in the country with the intention of tackling perhaps the biggest obstacle that it faces: a young, poor and vastly unemployed population in dire need of jobs and training. In contrast, money is pouring in and projects of all sizes and shapes are blossoming in the country, in particular in the provinces of Maputo, Sofala, Nampula, Tete, Niassa and Cabo Delgado.

Regrettably, lease and real estate prices have shot through the roof as well due to the demand far exceeding the offer available in the residential and commercial markets. Although the real estate sector has also jumped on the bandwagon, rental prices in prime zones rival those in practice in similar neighbourhoods of the majority of cities in the world. And our experience tells us that they will probably keep on increasing until the market is able



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to respond to the growing demand. Until then, an expat can be sure that it will take some time to find a house. It also takes local insight and a killer instinct to secure a house that can be called home. In a deregulated real estate market, contracting specialized assistance may prove to be the decisive factor in the search for the appropriate office or the house in which you'll live in the next couple of years.

Maputo Relocation Solutions is proud to be the first Mozambican company to exclusively provide relocation services, having assisted numerous expats from

multiple origins in making the transition to a new life in Maputo, just as we did some years back. Having gone through the experience allowed us to pin point the services that would most likely be sought by companies, individuals and families taking the same step.

Many people have mixed feelings and wrong perceptions about moving to Mozambique. Violence, poor health care, lack of good schools and infrastructure are the main concerns. To some extent, they have sound reasons to be worried – until they arrive and find a peaceful country, a

warm culture and a fair quality of life. Even so, in Maputo, cultural barriers can be many. Timing is different, the warmth and closeness of the beach gives the feeling of almost being on holiday, but in fact, work is hard and very intensive.

Medical care has improved immensely as result of a substantial effort from the Mozambican Government and the humanitarian and financial assistance of donor countries. Maputo now boasts two private hospitals and several private medical clinics.

Mozambique also offers a variety of international schools, with some currently struggling with the need to expand and harbour the rising demand for vacancies, an issue that our clients often refer as being a decisive aspect in the decision to accept or refuse the offer of employment.

All foreigners are required to obtain a residential permit and those who've been hired to work in the country also need to secure a work authorization from Labour Authorities but, with the right guidance and preparation, this time-consuming process can be easily dealt with. Having set aside the red tape and bureaucracy of those permits, you'll have time to work and enjoy the various trendy restaurants, bars and nightclubs, shopping malls, supermarkets, cultural venues, and parks during your time off in Maputo.

A word of advice to assist in the decision to relocate and ease the integration of foreigners and their families would be to know the history and reality of the country, the local culture, and the excessive cost of living conditions. The sooner these obstacles are overcome – i.e. health, education, housing, local laws and required permits – the sooner the assignee will be able to perform in the position for which he or she was hired. Moving to Mozambique can then become a pleasant surprise.

Joining a professional team with extensive experience in the provision of relocation services in Mozambique may be the key to ensuring a swift transition and adjustment of expatriates and, consequently, a competitive advantage of the companies who offer these services to their prospective employees.

A view of the sea

by Paula Brandberg of Moving-On to Mozambique

WHEN moving to a coastal city like Maputo, most expats wish for a view of the sea and most families for a house with a garden. However, descriptions are often misleading: a 'twin house' can be a first or second floor apartment with an independent entrance, or a semi-detached house; a 'duplex' can be a 2-storey apartment in a block of flats, or two units with a common wall; 'luxurious' may mean that the previous white bathroom now has black tiles and recessed light; the 'four bathrooms' may have only shower cabins!

It is not uncommon that more than one agent will show the same house and they work as a network sharing their tips – and their fee. The relationship with the agent and relocation specialist is important. Speed is essential, for houses will be taken at a fast pace.

In new residential areas, houses tend to be monuments – and totally unpractical. There are very few houses with large gardens in the city, and they seldom appear on the market. Pools are becoming common, but they can take the whole of the tiny yard.

There is no logic to the high cost of monthly rentals or sale prices. Private companies, donor agencies and NGOs are prepared to pay whatever it takes to accommodate their staff. Prices, normally paid in USD, have skyrocketed since the privatisation of the housing stock. Steady economic growth and ever increasing foreign investment mean that the number

of international staff arriving far exceeds the offer. On average, a 3-bedroom apartment in a popular area will range between USD 3,500 -5,000. A higher floor will most likely mean a view of the sea. A 4-5 bedroom house, semi-detached, terraced or in a condominium, costs between USD 6,000 and 10,000. If the lease agreement is made with a company, 14% tax is added to the rent. For the individual, the tax is the responsibility of the owner.

Despite several construction projects and the on-going rehabilitation and renovation of existing buildings, finding a house or apartment in Maputo, or in the other provincial capitals for that matter, is not for the faint hearted consultant. After much search, selection, negotiation and persuasion to secure properties and finding the right match for clients, we can assure the expat family that they will have a good house, space for the children to play, an extra room for the parent to work at home, good access to the school and, yes, even a view of the sea!

One frustrating thing for many expats is the long wait for work and residence permits and having to leave the country every 30 days, without understanding what the problem is. That also means opening bank accounts or obtaining a local driver's licence will have to wait. With the right follow-up, it is manageable, and we have regularly obtained all permits in a relatively short period of time.

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