



# A Broad Abroad:

## The Expat Wife's Guide to Successful Living Abroad

It is hard to imagine now, with literally hundreds of thousands of words about the experiences and issues of the accompanying partner in print and online, that this was the *first* book to ever challenge the conventional and, in my opinion, extremely convenient wisdom that an international relocation would be easy for a wife. Nothing to think or worry about; just get on with it; all will be well. These were among the platitudes many of us were told—and some of us still hear today—often in a helpful but highly dismissive, irritating, and worse, patronizing tone.

Entitled *Culture Shock! A Wife's Guide* when it first appeared in bookstores in 1992, this book broke a taboo by speaking out publicly about the challenges of the mobile life for the mobile wife (which, incidentally, was one of the book's first working titles). At the time, I just wanted to tell the honest-to-goodness truth about what becoming an accompanying wife really involved, both the good and the bad. I felt success would be more assured and decisions to move more informed, if women knew what really awaited them.

So many excellent books have since followed: other realistic accounts of expat life as a wife and mother, helpful guides to setting new career goals and keeping one's identity, plus books to help children raised overseas, third culture kids (TCKs). All of these volumes and more have contributed to an excellent body of expat family literature.

At first, no one was remotely interested in publishing this book. When I began writing it in 1989, with my then-toddler son Jay on my knee in the brief two-hour reprieve I had every morning while he went to a Taipei nursery school, I was considered radical. How dare I say, "*Hold on here*, there's more to this story than just following 'my man.'" The rejection letters I got from publishers were illuminating. The one most revealing of attitudes of the day came from a Hong Kong publisher who wrote: "Expats wives have servants. Why do they need a book?"

Corporations were not pleased with me either. They worried that after reading this particular book, a woman might decide an international move was *not* for her. That could halt plans for an international assignment for one of their employees. Spousal reluctance to relocate remains a huge deal-breaker in global mobility—ironically, for many of the reasons articulated for the first time in this book, most of which were patently obvious. I often remind people that my books are not rocket science. While speaking abroad, I have met many women who confirmed that this book gave them pause before they agreed to move. "Good, I did my job," I would respond to them then as now. "I made you think about what you were getting yourself into. And here you are!"

— from "*A Broad Abroad: The Expat Wife's Guide to Successful Living Abroad*"