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## Global careers: Setting Sail

20 October 2012 | *By Suzanne Bearne*



# The attractions of working abroad are all too clear. Drapers looks at some of the most appealing markets, and tells you what you need to do to get there.

Fancy living in the world's most populous metropolis, Tokyo? Or working in New York, the city that never sleeps? Or waking up to the sound of crashing waves in one of Sydney's coastal suburbs? These scenarios are a reality for many people in the fashion industry who take the plunge and relocate.

In fact, Britons are increasingly swapping their commute on London's Tube or Manchester's tram for another, usually urban, city. An estimated 201,000 Brits emigrated for work-related reasons in the year to December 2011, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The reasons why Brits move abroad are endless: an opportunity with an existing employer, the adventure of living in a different country or to improve career prospects.

One person who has made the leap is Ranjit Thind. The menswear brand planning director EMEA at [Ralph Lauren](#) is based in Switzerland, after working in France, Monaco and Holland as well as his native UK. He says working abroad can help boost career opportunities.

"Meeting new people, cultures, travelling to new places and expanding your international exposure is a real asset in today's global economy and mandatory for the path to senior management in a large global company."

However, making the move isn't simple.

It involves months of searching for a job, interviews, obtaining a visa, finding a home and integrating into the culture.

James Hudson, global recruitment manager at [Net-A-Porter](#), suggests that as soon as you're thinking of relocating, you should be as "job ready" as possible before applying.

"Typically that would mean acquiring the appropriate visa or work permit and having a place to stay in your target destination," he says. "That's not to say you will always need those things, but most employers advertise vacancies with a view to filling them as soon as possible, so you want to make sure that your application is just as, if not more, competitive than the candidates already active in that market."

Drapers takes a closer look at some of the most popular destinations to move to:

# Australia

Australia is high on the list of destinations to emigrate to, with thousands of Britons moving 'Down Under' every year. They are attracted to the appeal of a healthier work-life balance, higher salaries and the big draw – the weather.

Now is a good time to relocate to Australia, thanks to its strong economy and influx of international brands, such as GAP and Topshop.

According to Richard Wynn, regional director of Michael Page International in Australia, the country's fashion industry is currently undergoing a transformation, providing job opportunities for talented professionals, such as merchandise planners and marketers.

As for the needs of the average Australian fashion business, they expect employees to be very energetic and multi-skilled.

"There seems to be less staff compared with UK operations and so departments need to be more interconnected," says one HR manager working for a luxury brand in Australia. "Those coming from the UK will find they will quickly expand on their expertise and become knowledgeable in other areas of the business."

To kick off a potential move to Australia, Wynn recommends first deciding where to live.

"Sydney and Melbourne are the main fashion centres and where the bulk of the fashion brand head offices are located. For operational roles based in stores, the opportunities are national."

With no dedicated fashion or retail jobs website, candidates should scour the country's largest job board [Seek.com.au](http://Seek.com.au) for opportunities and contact Australian agencies and UK-based recruitment agencies with offices in the country.

When it comes to applying, CVs need to be specific and detail candidates' full experience and career history. "When preparing the CV for international opportunities candidates should assume that the potential employer knows very little or nothing about where they work and their role in the UK," says Sandra Jackson, manager of recruitment agency CV International in Australia.

The interview process will take place on Skype, with an offer probably dependent on a final face-to-face interview.

Those under 30 can apply for the Working Holiday visa, which entitles them to 12 months in the country. For more senior level candidates, sponsorship tends to be common. That's how Alison O'Neill came to join Australian value chain Kmart as senior lingerie buyer two months ago from the UK. O'Neill, who was placed in her role by CV International, and is on the temporary residence visa, says the move was seamless.

“Apart from completing a few forms, I did very little. Kmart and the relocation company they use handled everything. They made the move hassle free and allowed me to concentrate on making the most of my last few weeks in the UK.”

## The US

The US market has a similar business structure to the UK. You may spot different job titles though – buyers can be called merchants and merchandisers are known as planners.

Coming from the UK stands candidates in good stead, according to Kate Benson, president of Martens & Heads, which was named one of the best New York fashion headhunters by Time Out New York last year.

“Most US companies love hiring creatives who have been trained and schooled in the UK, as in the fashion world companies love to hire designers. The design schools in the UK, like Central Saint Martins, are still regarded as the best training ground,” she says.

However, there’s no easy way to enter the US jobs market, warns Benson. “The hiring process in general is not a short road. There are still plenty of candidates, and employers see many people before hiring someone.”

When it comes to looking for a job, it’s best to try directly, recommends Net-a-Porter’s Hudson. “US businesses almost always have in-house recruitment teams so the agency market is less saturated, though LinkedIn has made it much easier for candidates to talk to employers directly on both sides of the Atlantic.”

US recruitment agencies warn that obtaining a visa is the most difficult aspect of moving across the pond. Laurent Guerrier, president of New York-based headhunter Luxe Avenue ( also named one of the best New York fashion Headhunters by Time Out New York last year) , says: “US-based companies with no European DNA are not familiar with visas. For them, it is paperwork and a waste of time. Why find talent abroad when it sounds easier to find it locally?”

For those who prefer a healthy work-life balance, it’s worth noting that the US is famed for its short annual leave period of usually just two weeks a year.

## Asia

With its buoyant and growing markets and low tax levels, key hubs in Asia are seen as attractive locations to move to.

Hong Kong is similar to London in terms of the job market and the way it operates, says Hudson, though there’s less retailers headquartered there. “Shanghai is an incredibly buoyant market generally, though in terms of retail it’s very early days. Most of the major brands run their mainland China operations from Hong Kong.” Other popular locations to move to include Singapore and Tokyo.

Anthony Thompson, senior managing director of Michael Page International in Hong Kong, says that each country is regarded as increasingly cosmopolitan and there are locations where foreigners can add value.

“In Hong Kong and Singapore, English is a language that people can transact in, while this is becoming more manageable in major cities in China and Japan. They are also locations where jobs are available with salaries at a level that could be seen as attractive to an experienced professional working in the UK.”

Job roles that are particularly sought after in Asia include production managers, product developers, buyers and designers.

The employment market across Asia is strong, thanks to more companies expanding there. However, while there is a lack of talented candidates in Asia, Thompson says that unless applicants are fluent in both English and the relevant country’s language, they “need to be able to demonstrate exceptional experience and skills that will add value to a future employer and compensate for a lack of language skills”.

According to Edward Fella, head of buying and merchandising division at Freedom Recruitment, company structure in Asia can be much more simple than the UK. “They like to have people with varied expertise so that they can stretch across more than one job role,” he adds.

CVs tend to have the same layout as the UK, but Fella advises that candidates should include links to websites of previous employers, as they may not be as well known in Asia, and to also mention the size and type of the organisation. First interviews will take place via Skype and Fella advises that candidates should be prepared to communicate with people who are not fluent in English or use different terminology.

Candidates usually need a working visa, but each country has a different immigration policy.

A key point to consider before relocating to Asia is the long working day, as “contractual hours are often exceeded,” warns Fella. “There’s a bit of a different culture to this there, and everyone works really late.”

On the flip side, the rewards for senior executives are known for being generous. Expat packages tend to include accommodation, flights home, schools fees and sometimes a driver.

## Europe

With most cities just a couple of hours away by aeroplane and no visa requirements for countries within the EU, Europe is perhaps the most straightforward territory to move to.

One of the biggest reasons people look to move to Europe are the plethora of opportunities at premium brands, according to Mathew Dixon, director at recruitment firm Hudson Walker.

“In places like Paris and Italy the market is much bigger, so the predominant driver [for a Brit] to further their career in the luxury sector is to move abroad.”

Ralph Lauren's Thind, who was placed in his current role by Hudson Walker, says he moved to Switzerland primarily for the job and to live in a clean, safe city in central Europe which makes travelling easy. “Additionally, I'm with a global company with plenty of opportunities in its European headquarters and offers the possibility to work further abroad in the US and Asia divisions.”

As Dixon explains: “We might have an assignment for a director in Paris so we do a global search. The biggest thing any brand wants is to be a global brand, and so they bring global people into their company particularly in roles such as sales and business development.”

Outside of Paris and Italy, Geneva is a popular location, known for its back office roles such as merchandising, finance and human resources at luxury brands. Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Germany are also popular locations, due to English in many cases being the second language.

US brands such as Gap and Tommy Hilfiger are expanding, thereby creating many recruitment opportunities. Dixon points to Michael Kors, which rolled out stores in Europe earlier this year and appointed senior retail directors and managers to head up each territory.

Steve Balmer-Walters, executive and international search specialist at recruitment agency CVUK Group, says the process of finding a job remains the same as in the UK, but adds that including date of birth and a photograph on the CV is common practice across Europe.

Whichever territory you are thinking of job hunting in, with more businesses expanding internationally, there's never been a better time to seize the moment and move abroad.