



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a monthly thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published on the first Sunday of every month, exclusively for members.

Pros and more pros of working abroad!

Ian Scarth FIH has been a member of the Institute of Hospitality (IoH) since 1999 and caught the travel bug early in his life, having spent his early childhood years in the Far and Middle East.

He has worked for The Savoy Group, was Professor, F&B and Service Operations Management at the world-renowned Ecole Hotelier de Lausanne (EHL) in Switzerland for over 14 years, and has extensive international experience within the hospitality and service industries.

In this month's Fellows Broadsheet Ian looks at the: 'Pros and more pros of working abroad!'

My time at EHL allowed me to travel and present at conferences from Las Vegas to Hong Kong and many countries in between. However, it was Switzerland, a country in the middle of Europe that provided me with my most challenging cultural adjustments.

The travel bug

With my father in the RAF, I was very fortunate to spend my early years in Malaysia. Followed by eighteen months in war torn Aden, or Yemen, as it is now known, before my father was posted back to the Far East. I returned to the UK when I was nearly eight years old.

It was those early experiences in far off lands that ignited an interest in different cultures and how they handle situations in different ways. It had shaped me and my future career path from that point.

In my adult life, I spent fourteen years teaching at EHL, in Switzerland, which regularly attracted students from up to sixty different countries, all working together to achieve amazing results. Sure, we had some conflicts, but these were far outweighed by the diversity of ideas and creative thinking that thrived in this multi-cultural environment.





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More tolerant

While my education may have suffered due to constant relocation, I firmly believe that the insights I gained from being overseas opened my eyes to new and different ideas and helped me be more tolerant of other people's nuances. A fact that is supported by research and expert opinion.

Prior to Covid the world had become a smaller place. International travel had become the norm and people regularly took the opportunity to work in different parts of the world.

Research from Harvard University suggests that: "People with international experience are more likely to create new businesses and products and to be promoted faster." A fact that suggests travel expands the mind and benefits career development.

But gaining a second language and becoming multilingual as part of international travel is just the tip of the iceberg. The same research points to other advantages such as an "increased ability to solve problems, thinking out of the box and enhanced levels of confidence and empathy", which are skills and competencies any leader would welcome.

Many companies operate expatriate programmes, sending their potential high-flyers on extended periods abroad. It's common practice for hotel chains to work together on international exchange programmes that are proven to enhance cultural awareness and cooperation, traits that are highly valued in the uncertain and stressful world we presently live in.

The advantages of international experience International recruitment specialist Michael Page points out that: "Just taking the decision to work abroad suggests you are willing to step outside your comfort zone."

They go on to say: "Working with people from other backgrounds exposes you to different working styles, forcing you to develop stronger communication skills and confidence as you progress your career."

In multinational companies, for example, teams are usually made up of professionals from various parts of the world, giving you the chance to develop cross-cultural communication skills."

The European Commission suggests there are seven potential benefits gained from living and working abroad.

- Better self-esteem
- New life skills
- New perspective on life
- Better communication skills
- Better foreign language skills
- Advantage over other jobseekers
- Expands your professional network

Over my fourteen years in Lausanne, I taught thousands of students, all of whom are now in jobs all over the world. Working in many different sectors of hospitality or other service industries, with big brands and independent operators. I would never have built such a network had I not taken the opportunity to travel.

When supported by communication tools such as LinkedIn and email these contacts are always available to me, enabling me to access ideas and expertise over and above what I possess myself.

I often find my hospitality contacts that have worked abroad, people such as Harry Murray, Douglas Glen and the late Alfonso Giannuzzi are/ were the most able to provide me with balanced and relevant advice.

The Harvard Business Review states: "In today's increasingly globalized world, more and more people are choosing to live, work and study abroad, and this trend appears to be a good thing: social science studies have shown that international experiences can enhance creativity, reduce intergroup bias, and promote career success."





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Internships

Internships are a good way to gain international experience and many of the world's top hospitality universities send students all over the world.

I remember discussing with returning students exactly what they had learnt during this experience. Most spoke positively. Although, some felt they had been used as cheap labour, rather than the internship being a learning experience. I always encourage companies taking interns to set them a project at the start of the internship. Something that benefits both the intern, and the business and to provide them with time to work on the project and present it to the business before they leave.

The Intern Group published the following back in 2016 and I believe that had Covid not hit, these numbers would have stretched further. "An interesting trend among the world's top CEOs is that many of them have international experience, which has better positioned them to advance their career.

"An article by US News & World Report says that three-quarters of Fortune 100 CEOs today have spent a minimum of two years' working in senior positions abroad, citing a study by Healthy Companies International.

"Following globalization trends, the world's largest companies are shifting what work experience they want for individuals holding senior positions.

According to the study, the percentage of Fortune 100 C-suite executives who held senior responsibilities abroad reached 71% compared to 48% 10 years prior. Around 25 years ago, working internationally meant that an individual wasn't interested in climbing the internal executive ladder. A company would look for people to stay local."

Students are the lifeblood of our industry, and a good internship experience is key to them remaining in the industry. There is nothing better than good hands on experience.

However, abusive internships have the opposite effect and they do still happen. I would like to see an industry wide blueprint for how interns should be treated, or minimum standards set.

Living Abroad	
Pros	Cons
▪ Moving abroad give you the opportunity to experience new cultures ▪ You can make many new friends ▪ Living abroad may greatly improve your overall quality of life ▪ You can really grow in character ▪ You can study abroad ▪ You can work in a different country ▪ You will learn to take care of yourself ▪ Living abroad will show you the relativity of the world ▪ You can learn a new language ▪ Moving abroad can make sense if you want a new start in your life ▪ Gives you the opportunity to try new foods ▪ You will learn to adapt to many new things	▪ Living abroad can be expensive ▪ Cultural shocks ▪ Foreigners may not be welcome ▪ Homesickness is a problem of moving abroad ▪ You will leave your friends behind ▪ Communication issues ▪ You may feel lost ▪ Anxiety that moving abroad was the wrong decision ▪ Some people get stuck abroad ▪ Moving abroad may get you into financial problems ▪ The grass is not always greener on the other side ▪ May be harder to find a partner if you move abroad ▪ Bureaucracy can be annoying





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Points to consider

It's not all a bed of roses! There are some key factors to consider when working abroad:

- Pick your location with care to ensure you gain maximum benefit from your time abroad
- Make sure you can survive financially and that you can acquire the necessary visas
- Set up good communication links with friends and colleagues that you leave behind
- Do some research about the culture and laws of the country you are planning to work in
- If taking family, then education, medical support and safety matters are also important.

Summary

Overseas experience provides many advantages and a lot of today's top hotel directors have benefited from their time on foreign shores. While many countries are struggling to find adequate workers at present and we are stuck in the middle of a financial crisis, there is a danger that we suspend overseas exchange programmes to keep managers at home and to save money.

While this may be a short-term solution, it could lead to skills and experience shortages in the future. The hotel and F&B sectors in places like Las Vegas, Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong are worth exploring, if only for a short time. Bon voyage!





About the author

Ian Scarth FIH travelled extensively around the Far and Middle East during his childhood and has continued his passion for international travel and hospitality, throughout his career.

His hospitality career began with The Savoy Group. He won the 1979 Savoy Gastronomes Award, visiting Holland and then France, for a six-month exchange at the Hotel de Crillon in Paris.

After a period in the Contract Catering sector, he became Professor of F&B and Service Operations Management at the world-renowned Ecole Hotelier de Lausanne in Switzerland, where he remained for 14 years.

It was Ian's time in Switzerland that opened his eyes to the advantages of international work experience. Teaching students from all over the world, he also travelled for consultancy and lecturing missions in the USA, North Africa, UAE, Europe and Asia, plus worked with hotel companies in the UK. Working on consultancy projects for the International Labour Organization out of Geneva, he has spent time in Egypt and South Africa.

Ian is currently General Services Manager (GSM) at Sodexo.



Ian Scarth FIH

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