

Seachange Treechange
a great idea that needs careful consideration

As the saying goes, a change is as good as a rest. There are people who rarely take a break from the grind; most, however, recognise that a holiday once in a while helps to recharge the batteries. Especially when family is involved, going somewhere different to the normal environment is refreshing and usually exciting for all. It can also sow the seed of discontent. City life may be handy for work and readily-accessible conveniences such as shops and medical facilities; but experiencing the relaxed ambience of seaside resorts and bushland settings, if only for a week or two, often poses the question – wouldn't it be nice to live here?

Maybe it is a passing thought, one of those occasional dreams that are dismissed as fanciful and totally impractical. Then again, for people who are finding the pace and stress of the metropolis a heavy burden, the chance to start over in a better place is very tempting and worth serious consideration.

Anyone contemplating this kind of major upheaval should think carefully before jumping in, boots and all. To begin with, for the duration of a holiday, work is generally left behind. As a consequence, there is time to enjoy what's on offer without being tied to rigid deadlines. Also, a particular season is probably chosen which adds to the appeal. Warm days and sunshine make outdoor activities obligatory and pleasurable. The odd rainstorm may curtail certain plans, but relaxed attitudes tend to shrug off the nuisance factor and someone will come up with a good substitute. Then, too soon it's back to the smoke. Memories and happy-snaps of the vacation are a reminder that, unless something is done, they won't be experienced again for another year. Here is when dissatisfaction of current circumstances pushes some to take the plunge.

For those with money it will be less of a change than a lifestyle addition. They might purchase a beach house, or a residence on the edge of a country town; perhaps even a hobby farm. If they own their present home, rather than selling, they may consider renting it out. At least that way, should moving to the new place not come up to expectations, they can return to the city and use the spare as a holiday retreat. For these people, they have little to lose; not so for ordinary folk, though.

Having to sell up in order to buy again somewhere else can be a long-winded affair; and if it drags on, the original shine of the plan tends to wear off. Financial stability is always going to be critical. Finding employment in a new area can be difficult. In some instances, wages may be lower; and in the more remote locations, the cost of living could be considerably higher than in the city. Commuting may impact too, because

distances are often greater out of town. Families with children have to think about this, especially with regard to education – does the local school cater for both primary and secondary students; or will it be necessary to drive or bus the kids to another town with the required facilities?

One extremely important consideration may not have been considered at all – the weather. Staying a week or two in a place during a pleasant season can give a false impression. It might have been really nice then, but what about other times? When the rains arrive, do the main access roads remain open, or are they closed due to flooding? The same rule applies to the garden which may end up as a swamp. As for the house, inspecting the chosen dwelling in fine, warm weather conditions doesn't show the whole picture. Did anyone bother to look around for signs of water leaks? What about internal heating and insulation – how cold is it likely to get in winter? Then again, the reverse might be the case. Some areas experience extreme temperatures in summer for prolonged periods, drying everything out, including residents. Before signing on the dotted line, might it not be advisable to visit at different times of year? It could be discovered that, what seemed an ideal location has definite seasonal disadvantages.

None of this may matter, not to people who are determined and have self-belief. Knowing from past experience that they possess the fortitude and ability to make the best of any decision, especially if it seems to have been a wrong one, will always tip the balance in their favour. Seachange and Treechange aren't for everyone, but they do work. And for those who didn't give up at the first hurdle, the chances are that their new lifestyle eventually compensates for the difficulties of making it happen. Then they can pat themselves on the back, while feeling sorry for those poor individuals who are still stuck with a city life that they are happy to be no longer a part of.

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