



ISER Young Investigator Blog

How to Navigate Relocating to a New City Alone



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Relocating for a job, especially in the science field, is not uncommon. It is incredibly daunting to pack up your life and move to a new city, leaving loved ones and comfort spaces behind. I was born and raised in Colorado, received my Bachelors of Science from the University of Denver and have never lived anywhere else! A couple months ago, I was offered a full-time position to conduct ophthalmology research at Harvard Medical School. Although the idea of moving almost 2,000 miles away to Boston was extremely daunting, I knew it was the right choice for me. Adjusting has been quite intense, but definitely worth it! Here are some tips I've learned from moving to a big city that might make adjusting easier for you.

1. If you have never visited this city before, take a weekend trip out to where you plan to move to before making the jump. Check out different neighborhoods to see how close they are to your new workplace, how safe you feel, and if you like the general atmosphere there.

2. Determine if you'd prefer to live closer to the hustle and bustle of the city or more in the suburbs. For me, I wanted to live as close as possible to my lab and be right in the city. For other people, a longer commute to work, but a bigger, quieter, apartment/house is ideal.
3. Look into the local public transportation system and see what the options are. If you have a car, see if parking is feasible.
4. When finding new apartments, be open to having a roommate! It can be scary to move to a new city alone so sometimes it's nice to find a roommate who is more familiar with the city. It can also help alleviate moving costs like furniture, kitchenware, security deposits/broker fees, increased rent in big cities. Your roommate can help you figure out the best/closest gyms, grocery stores, pharmacies, etc. They can also help you navigate public transport and potentially become your first new friend in the new city.
5. Join Facebook groups and start looking for housing and roommates about 1-2 months before you want to live there. I recommend joining several Facebook groups and searching your neighborhood + housing/roommates/sublets (ie. "Boston, MA roommates and housing"). Facebook is the best place to go because you can see people's profiles and pictures to get a feel for what they're like before even talking to them! NEVER sign a lease with a roommate before video chatting with them on FaceTime or Zoom.
6. When you arrive, give yourself at least 2 or 3 days to settle in before starting work. You want your first day of work to be successful and you want to be focused on your job – not figuring out what to eat (and where to shop), what to wear, or where your shower towels are! Spend the first couple days unpacking, building your IKEA furniture, and getting some groceries before day 1. Thrift stores and Facebook Marketplace have a great selection of good quality, second-hand furniture and appliances.
7. Talk to your coworkers and make friends with them. Odds are some of them are in a similar situation as you and are looking for friends too! So far some of my best friends in Boston are the people I work with.
8. It sounds counterintuitive, but pack light and try not to bring everything you own to your new place! If the new city is very different from your hometown, you might not know how to dress for the weather, what people at your new job wear, and what shoes you may or may not need in the winter. It will also be fun to find new things for your apartment and decorate it from scratch to turn it into your comfortable new home.
9. Walk and use public transportation as much as possible! It will help you adjust to the new city spatially and will give you the opportunity to see certain places you might otherwise miss in a car. In Boston, it's as simple as hopping on the T and checking out a newly opened café or art gallery.

10. Find a volunteer position! It's a great use of freetime, a way to meet new people, explore the city, and develop a sense of community. From animal shelters, to the children's hospital, to environmental activism, there's guaranteed to be something that sparks your interest in your new city.
11. Get a local library card! It's great for finding a quiet place to work and borrowing some books. Most libraries now have both the hardcover and digital copies of their selections.
12. Lastly, be excited! Moving to a new city is a fun new adventure and can be really beneficial for your personal and professional growth. You'll explore a new city, make new connections, and learn so much from people you might not have otherwise gotten the chance to meet. Make the most of it!