

# The travel bug is spreading from country to country

The opportunity for a career with travel to exotic locations is now seen as the norm for engineers, construction workers, teachers and many other professionals, says **VIRGINIA MATTHEWS**

**A**s globalisation continues to make its mark on virtually every sector of British industry, a jet-set lifestyle encompassing regular travel to Europe, the US, Asia or Africa is becoming the norm in everything from engineering to IT.

City high fliers for example can not only choose their specialism – private banking, commodity broking and alternative investments are just three of the employment sectors offered by the Square Mile – but they can also decide precisely where they would like to work. London and New York may still be the world's top centres for financial services – each employing hundreds of thousands of bankers, traders, analysts, managers and support staff – but there are also a multitude of jobs in Tokyo and Hong Kong, Frankfurt and Paris, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

## Postings abroad

While such prestige openings abroad would once have been reserved for highly experienced staff, such is the demand for financial acumen that

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many graduates at Goldman Sachs or Citigroup will be posted abroad, as a matter of course, within the first 18 months of their career.

For the massive engineering and construction sector, the opportunity to



work on the 2008 Beijing Olympics or the post-Tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia is one of the major attractions of the job.

“A decade ago, you would need five years experience in UK engineering to even get a sniff at one of the prestige builds in Saudi Arabia or Asia,” says Dr Anil Kumar, chief executive of the Engineering Technology Board.

“Nowadays though, the demand for British-trained engineers is such that a talented entrant will often get a first overseas posting within two years of joining the industry. Once back in Britain, that international experience will become a star feature of an engineer's CV.”

In terms of the skills required by large overseas employers, the list is long and diverse, ranging from civil,

consulting, water or transport engineering to quantity surveying, design skills and architecture.

While the telephone number salaries that were once the norm in the Middle East are now far rarer, Ed Twaite, operations director at the Dubai office of engineering recruitment firm Beresford Blake Thomas, believes that the Middle East still has enormous benefits for UK workers looking for foreign postings.

"Unlike many other economies, the Middle East is booming in terms of construction projects and it is also tax-free. Whether you are working on low-rise villa developments in the middle of the desert, or what ranks as the world's first underwater hotel here in Dubai, the sheer range of projects available to a UK engineer or construction professional is immense."

**High salaries**

"Salaries have gone down as applications have risen, but with many people pocketing £35,000-plus a year after accommodation costs – the senior guys would get a lot more of course – it offers a lot more money, and fun, than many other places in the world," says Twaite.

Regular surveys by ETB suggest that the sheer mobility of the sector is, for graduates, one of its biggest attractions. But Dr Kumar has some advice for new entrants: "Some of the most exciting engineering projects in the world today are in Asia, Africa and the new markets of Eastern Europe, so always look beyond your own continent for the real challenges."

Another profession where a passport and a willingness to travel are becoming commonplace is teaching, where the opportunities to teach English abroad are as diverse geographically as they are varied in the pay, conditions and lifestyle they offer. Yet the army of teachers now working in schools, colleges, factories and government buildings in literally every continent and country in the world is by no means restricted to qualified or even would-be teachers

**Foreign language teaching**

One of the most prestigious programmes – JET; the graduate-only



Andrea Hubbard

Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme – is one of the largest, and at an average £20,000 to £25,000 a year, best-paid international exchange teaching programmes in the world. Founded in 1987, it certainly seeks to improve foreign language teaching in Japan, yet its greater purpose is to "promote international understanding as a

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whole," says Miki Nemoto, the UK's programme coordinator.

So far this year, around 400 UK graduates have been recruited to fill 12-month contracts as assistant language teacher (ALT) or Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) positions throughout Japan, yet a large number of them will probably never choose to carve out a long-term career in a classroom.

**British Council**

The British Council is perhaps the UK's leading international organisation for

educational opportunities and cultural relations overseas. Working with its partner organisations around the world, the Council has been providing opportunities for young people to work as language assistants both in the UK and in 21 countries abroad since 1905.

For English language assistants working in anywhere from China and Italy to Senegal and Latin America, the primary task is to bring the language alive with newspapers, travel guides, photos, CDs and the Web. In terms of preferred destinations, Latin America is top. Spurred on by the intriguing mix of big cities and breathtaking mountains, rainforests and jungles, the competition for posts in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela is now such that supply exceeds demand.

And with the world of film, TV and gaming now truly international in its scope and appeal, the opportunities to work abroad on the latest Hollywood block-buster or, more commonly, a big Playstation 2 or Nintendo games release are opening up fast.