

International commuting

The rise in cheap flights and the greater flexibility in working hours are leading to a new trend: international commuting – living in one country and working in another.

1 How long does it take you to commute to work? Select one of the options below and compare your answer with a partner. Describe your journey to work.

Under 10 minutes 10–30 minutes 30–60 minutes Over 1 hour

2 Complete the missing information in the graphic. The information is in the first paragraph of the article below.



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Imagine a commuting time of four hours door to door. Such a lifestyle is increasingly being adopted by those professional workers choosing to live in Barcelona and work in London. They work a 35 hour week from Monday lunchtime to Thursday afternoon, and then go back home for Thursday night to Monday morning.

What makes people choose this way of life? Certainly – cost. London is infamous for high house prices. Everything from rent, food and clothes is cheaper in Barcelona. Secondly, cheap flights make such journeys possible. Thirdly, it has never been easier to work from home; employees can adopt flexible working hours and use the Internet. What drives international commuting is the search for a better quality of life – a better work–life balance.

However, this type of lifestyle is being criticised for being environmentally unfriendly. Oil prices are rising and so are taxes on aviation fuel. It is likely that environmental pressures will force budget airlines to put up their prices. If international commuting continues, pollution will simply get worse. In addition, a commuting lifestyle can be very stressful. There is always the risk of delayed and cancelled flights.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of people are choosing to commute internationally, traveling from Scotland to Norway, from England to Germany and of course, France. With even faster train journeys across the Channel next year, this kind of commuting will probably increase. Globalisation already means that businesses operate across national boundaries; soon, perhaps, it will become the same for many employees.

3 Read the whole article. What are the pros and cons of international commuting?

4 Find opposites for the following words. All the opposites are in the article.

a) low / <i>high</i>	d) expensive /	g) impossible /	j) more difficult /
b) inflexible /	e) worse /	h) friendly /	k) more difficult /
c) put down /	f) relaxing /	i) slower /	l) decrease /

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back your ideas to the class.

- Would you like to work a four-day week, with longer hours per day? Why / why not?
- Do you have a good work–life balance? Explain your answer.
- Do you agree with the idea of international commuting?