



Name: Lucas, 27 years old

Home country: France

Occupation in home country: Seasonal jobs: waiter, salesman, ski man. Lucas manages and owns a family hostel in Portugal

Moved to Finland: In December 2019

Languages: French, Portuguese, English, a bit of German

Intercultural relationship: Lucas has a Finnish girlfriend

“MY PATH”: my story before Finland, in Finland, my goals and hopes

Lucas comes from France. He met his Finnish girlfriend in Portugal where he usually spends about 8 months a year running the family business. She is studying at university in Helsinki, so it was not an option for the couple to live in Portugal or France. That is why Lucas decided to move to Finland to be together with her. Some people questioned his intention of moving to a country with a completely different language and climate. However, he had a chance to come to Helsinki and live there for a month, during which he was able to get a taste of life in Finland and then move here as a resident.

Lucas's tip № 1: If possible, get a taste of living in a new country by visiting it for a couple of months before moving there.

INTERCULTURAL FAMILY/COUPLE

Lucas feels that they have been together with his girlfriend already for many years, although their relationship has actually started quite recently. They know each other very well and feel that they are soulmates. From the very beginning of their relationship, they are used to discussing their wishes and concerns in a peaceful and relaxed manner, being sure that at this moment both are ready to listen and contribute to a conversation.

One of the cultural aspects of Finland that Lucas cannot understand yet is the fact that partners in a couple are individualistic when it comes to the finances of couples or families. For example, in France one demonstrates politeness and good manners offering to pay for their girlfriend if they go out for a date. It was surprising for him seeing Finnish couples splitting their bills in restaurants or bars. Another aspect that Lucas was not accustomed to in the Finnish life was family relations. He has a tight-knit family, they spent much time together back home and now call each other regularly. In contrast, Lucas's girlfriend is rather independent in this sense and does not see or call her family often.

The couple mostly speaks English at home. As English is not a mother tongue for either of them, they learn and improve it together by using it daily. Occasionally, they speak basic Finnish or French, as Lucas' girlfriend has been learning French for some time and he is currently learning Finnish. Lucas says it is important for him that neither of them imposes their languages or cultures on each other, for example, by intentionally speaking only one language of choice or cooking only Finnish or French food at home.

Lucas's tip № 2: Although useful, if your partner does not want to speak in your language with you, do not impose the language on them. Alternatively, you can focus on improving the language which you already use for communication, if it is not a mother tongue for both of you.

EMPLOYMENT

Back in France, it was more common for Lucas to get his jobs through personal networks, as he comes from a small town where people know each other. Also, it was possible to drop by an office and leave his CV in person. In Finland, he lacked networks and had to apply for jobs online, which he was doing all day long. He admits that sometimes it got extremely difficult to monotonously look for job advertisements and send out applications. What helped him to keep motivation high and stay productive was change of scenery. He started going to a cafe taking his laptop with him instead of being at home all the time. Besides, he enjoyed the fresh air every day while walking to a cafe, which is also very important for one's health and efficiency.

What confused Lucas at the beginning of his job search was the way CV's are done in Finland. In his home country, it is common to have a chronological CV complemented by a set of skills that shows nearly every job that one did in a lifetime. In Finland, however, it is crucial to first demonstrate the most relevant experience depending on a position and its requirements. He came for a personal CV clinic session at Familia where he redid his CV together with one of the employees taking into account Finnish recruiting standards and expectations. Shortly, he found a job in a French school in Helsinki as a teacher's assistant. He has worked with kids before and is happy that the job does not require Finnish language skills.

Lucas's tip № 3: Modify your CV according to requirements mentioned in a job advertisement and showcase experience relevant to a position that you apply for.

RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS

Being half Portuguese, Lucas and his family and friends are very open and sociable. When he moved to Finland, he was surprised that people here were not talkative.

In Finland, Lucas knew only his girlfriend in Helsinki and a friend from Jyväskylä. He says meeting his girlfriend's friends and joining them for different activities and meetups was beneficial for expanding his social circle. Being acquainted with people and society from her perspective makes Lucas's integration process easier, as he is able to meet new people through her network and get his own friends.

If one would like to get to know their fellow countrymen in Finland, Lucas recommends searching for Facebook groups where people chat, exchange opinions and experiences in their native language, help each other, and sometimes arrange face-to-face meetings in Helsinki. He knows at least such a group for French speaking people and thinks that there should be others.

Lucas also realizes that Finnish language is a big part of building relationships with local people. Although he is not fluent yet and understands very little, he finds it helpful for the listening comprehension to follow his girlfriend's conversations with her friends in Finnish.

Lucas's tip № 4: Even if you are not fluent in Finnish yet and feel excluded from others' conversations, try listening to them and paying attention to a context. It can help to develop your understanding of the language and enrich vocabulary.