

Country or City? Which is right for you?

Looking at where to buy a home and put down roots? Explore the pros and cons of choosing the city or country as the ideal location for your career, family and living happily ever after.

Everyone has a different idea of their perfect home, job and neighbourhood. One person's stress-free lifestyle is downright boring for someone else. In choosing the best spot to settle down, it's important to be clear about what you value and what will make day-to-day living work best for you.

Here are a few home truths about country and city living to keep in mind as you're deciding where to call home in the years, or decades, to come.

Lifestyle

City pros...: The bright lights, big city lifestyle is all about the opportunities on your doorstep. If you love being in amongst it all, there's easy access to jobs, cultures and activities to keep you fascinated by the richness of our modern world. Whether you're deciding where to have dinner or what sort of workout to do before work, you'll be spoilt for choice. You'll also have plenty of public transport for getting around, so you can design your life around walking, buses and trains instead of relying on a car.

..and cons: If you do find yourself using your car, expect to be frustrated by limited or expensive parking. As well as being a wonder of cultural diversity, cities can also make you more aware of income inequality. With lavish displays of wealth under your nose, you could be left feeling poor by comparison. And if you value space, whether that's more room to relax at home or large natural landscapes to roam in, you might feel cramped and crowded in a city habitat.

Country pros...: In contrast with urban communities, country living is about taking things slowly and living with less. That means less temptation to spend money in bars and restaurants, order take out, and buy new things for your home and wardrobe. And with the slower pace of life, you could find yourself with more time on your hands to connect with neighbours and others in your community. And there'll be no shortage of parking spots when you arrive with your blankets, baskets and esky for a picnic at the local park or waterfront reserve.

... and cons: The glacial pace of life in a regional town can be infuriating when it's not what you're used to. Expect everything to take longer, from arranging visits from a plumber to waiting for local wildlife to cross the road. And with a bit less diversity in people's interests and cultures, you could feel like more of a misfit than you might in the crazy mixed-up world of city dwellers.

Work

When it comes to lifestyle, one of the biggest factors is what you'll be doing for a living. If you rely on income from a salary, then finding rewarding employment is pretty essential to your quality of life, regardless of where you live.

Having said that, location can definitely make a difference to what you can expect from your job and career, including the type of employment available, your salary and commuting time. According to 2016 census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, growth in high-skilled jobs is generally higher in cities than in regional areas. And while we might expect more people to be snapping up these skilled jobs and working remotely, the census data also shows no change in the rate of people working from home. It seems that organising an 'e-change' – moving and working remotely thanks to better digital infrastructure – is still relatively rare.

Property

As a rule, property buyers can expect to get more for their money in regional areas of Australia compared with city dwellers. However, you could still be paying a big premium for property in regional hotspots – commercial centres and close to the beach for example – thanks to peak demand for these locations. Moving further out from regional hubs could see you living in a close-knit community but might mean more time spent in the car getting to work and running errands.

If your ideal sea or tree change is a popular holiday spot, this can also mean paying more for your new home, plus you'll need to be prepared for a mini population boom during peak season. While permanent rentals may be in short supply, thanks to strong demand from holiday crowds, it could be worth trying out a new location as a tenant for six months or so. You'll have a chance to really get to know your new neighbourhood and how it feels to live there all year round.

Finances

So in the balance, will you be better off opting for city or country living? There's certainly a few differences that can add up for your finances. Your cost of living, earning potential and size of your mortgage can all depend on where you choose to live. A Financial Planner can offer important insights into how these factors will stack up for you, now, and in the future as your lifestyle and goals change. But ultimately, the process of choosing where to live is more than a series of sums and calculations. It's about building the life you want in a community where you feel welcome and valued.

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