

Interview with Russell Greenwood

Russell Greenwood used to live in Britain, but moved to Germany to live with his girlfriend and to find work. Tom Durnall, an intern at Mediavanti, interviewed Russell about how he found the change in culture and how he is finding life in the country. Russell Greenwood is a father of one and married to a German. He lives here in a Ostenburg, which is a part of Oldenburg.



Russell after having an interview with us at Mediavanti

Tom: How did the move from England to Germany go? Did it go as planned?

Russell: Actually it wasn't planned, it was more of a spontaneous thing. I had just finished university, studying in London, then the credit crunch happened. All the jobs started to disappear and the banks were in real trouble. Getting through three or four jobs in two years was quite annoying. One day I opened a newspaper, and there was news that Germany was the first European country out of recession. So I thought: "I'm going to Germany". I jumped on a plane, and managed to get an interview with a language company, I got the job. It wasn't planned, but it went far better than I expected

Tom: Great! Were there any differences you noticed on arrival?

Russell: Well, the most obvious one is the language difference, of course. And they drive on a different side of the road, something that is quite nerve-racking when you start to cross roads. And speaking of traffic laws: they tend to turn, even if the light is red for them. This came across as strange to me, but they have a different set of rules here. But also I noticed that the German culture is different: more serious, more hard-working, more *ordentlich* as they would say. We can translate that as tidy (which Germany certainly is), or orderly: they like order and rules here, which I suppose works for them.

Tom: Based on what you said just about the language barrier and driving, was this something that took a while to get used to?

Russell: Yes, it certainly did, driving not so much though, I've been that busy I still don't drive. But the language barrier, certainly. If we look at simple things, Germans have more than one word for "the". Compared to the English language, which is much simpler, there are all these tenses and cases, which is difficult to get your head around. People still look at me like an idiot, when I refer to a bus as "it", compared to a "he".

Tom: So who did you move with?

Russell: I moved alone, but I had been having a long distance relationship with a German girl at this point. I met her at university; she was an exchange student. So I moved in with her, it was only really supposed to be a temporary thing. A baby soon followed.

Tom: That's nice! How did you get over the language barrier or did you already speak German?

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Russell: The strange thing is, because I'm an English teacher, I spend most of my time speaking English. Germans are quite hospitable people, if they notice you are struggling with tenses, they start to sympathise and start speaking English. Everyone seems to speak some English here. I haven't truly gotten over the language barrier, I still mix up my tenses and the pronouns.

Tom: Have you enjoyed the opportunities so far then?

Russell: Absolutely, I have to say, going somewhere else, anywhere else and experiencing a different culture, is a good thing: it broadens your perspective on life. Before coming to Germany, I thought Britain was the best place ever, and everyone else in Europe was stupid, because they didn't follow the same rules as we did. We had proportional representation, and different passports and all sorts of strange things. But when you travel, you see the world from different perspectives: some things are better or more effective; sometimes they're not, of course. But it's good to have exposure to different ways of life

Tom: Building on that then, do you prefer German culture? Or do you still perceive it as strange?

Russell: That's a difficult question: do I prefer German culture? I couldn't really answer it, I don't really have a preference for German or British culture. I suppose I would hold them about equal, the German way is not the British way and the other way around. What I really like about Germany is that everyone's honest with you. On the flip side, what I don't like about Germany is that if the answer is no, it is no; there are no ways around it. People are straightforward and to the point, and sometimes can be interpreted by British people as rudeness, even though it is not really rudeness, just honesty. So flip sides, different sides of the same coin.

Tom: What are your thoughts on Brexit?

Russell: When I was in university, I was quite a strange student. I was quite fond of David Cameron. Most students aren't; they're quite left wing, but I was quite right wing. I thought Europe was terrible and that we should have a referendum and leave maybe, if people wanted. But having come here and broadening my perspective, and learning new things, I can see the value of staying in Europe. Something that British news doesn't cover very well, if something is wrong, the reaction tends to be: "It is Europe's fault", but that's rarely the case. I would have voted for Brexit probably, if I hadn't have come to Europe. But now I live in Europe, I'm married to a German, my daughter is half German, so it makes no sense for me to be in favour of Brexit, Although I understand perfectly why people would vote for that, because I would have done so myself.

Tom: That's it then, thank you!

Russell: Thank you very much