

PARENTING/PARENT STORIES

Leaving Seattle: 3 Families on Why They Moved Away

Why some families are leaving the Emerald City for greener pastures

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There's a lot to love about Seattle. But it seems like every conversation eventually comes around to how expensive it is to live here. Plus, you can never find parking and when you do it's expensive, too. At least it's not like New York — or is it? Has Seattle really become such a hard place to live that the cons outweigh the benefits? We talked to some former Seattle families to find out why they left and if the grass is really greener somewhere else.

Brenna McCown

Brenna McCown was born and raised in Seattle; her husband moved to Seattle from Arizona when he was a child and never thought he'd go back. But this past spring, they suddenly pulled up their North Seattle roots and moved to Gilbert, Arizona, a town in the southeast part of the Phoenix metropolitan area, with their two kids, ages five and three.

Brenna, a ParentMap employee, answered our questions about her move earlier this year:

Q: Why did you move?

It was not really thought out in advance. In January, we visited my husband's aunt in Arizona and ended up extending our trip. It was like a weight was lifted being able to go outside in January and enjoy the sunshine. I had recently been struggling with seasonal affective disorder, made worse by being cooped up during COVID. My husband was working late shifts (from 2–10 p.m.) and that crowded all of our family time into the weekends. His company has offices in Gilbert, and when he looked into it, there was an open position there that he could describe as his dream promotion. So he applied and got it. By the end of April, we were down here.

Q: How was the transition period for your family?

Summer is hard; we basically flip-flopped the months of better weather. But there are pools everywhere here, and I signed the kids up for daily swimming lessons right away. That gave us a routine. I observed local moms and learned to keep swim gear in the car at all times and to keep popsicles and snacks in an insulated cooler. It helped us adapt as fast as possible. It was a massive change, but I'm so grateful we did it. It really opened up the whole family and made us more flexible. I think the transition to kindergarten for my son was easier because he was already in a phase of accepting new things.

Q: Have you noticed a big change in your monthly expenses?

Oh, yeah, the costs are significantly lower. We got a much bigger house, with more room to store things so now we can shop in bulk, and that saves more money. When we got haircuts, I was shocked by the low price. In Seattle, we paid as much for four half days of preschool as five full days cost here. The difference is very noticeable.

Q: What do you like most and least about your new community?

Our new neighborhood is so family-friendly, with landscaped trails for bikes. I can let my son run ahead without worrying, and there are kids everywhere. The neighbors have been so friendly and helpful.

The worst has been the heat in the afternoon. If you're not swimming you have to be inside, and I'm an outdoor person. It was hard being cooped up. And apparently, I'm a mosquito magnet. It was peak mosquito season when we moved here.

Q: What do you miss about Seattle? What do you not miss at all?

Of course, I miss family in Seattle. And I miss the views of the mountains. I do appreciate the mountain views here, but they're different. And I miss being able to drive 15 minutes to the beach. But we'll always go back and visit for those things.

We used to live close to U-Village, and there were some parts of my neighborhood I didn't feel safe in.

Q: Any advice for families considering a move?

Include your kids in the conversation — don't just spring it on them. Our son was really sad to part with his best friend. When that happens, validate their feelings and don't try to convince them. We let him have time for his feelings, talked about the move, and slowly started to introduce the fun things when he became curious and excited. Once he flipped, then we started including him in looking at houses and furniture, so he felt part of the process. To help with missing his friend we planned extra playdates and made plans for sending mail and FaceTime. By the time we moved he was ready.

Kylee Win'E

Kylee Win'E was born in Texas, but she grew up in Western Washington. This summer, she and her husband sold the North Tacoma house they'd lived in for seven years. Along with their two children, ages 7 and 5, they moved to Liberty Hill, Texas, a planned community about 40 minutes north of Austin.

We asked Kylee to tell us about her recent move:



Kylee Win'E and her family. Courtesy of Kylee Win'E

Q: Why did you move?

There were a few factors. One was the weather. For a while, we'd been wanting to live somewhere with more sunny days and warmer temperatures. Then, my husband was looking for a new job, and he found one here. Third, we weren't really happy with the governor in Washington.

Q: How was the transition period for your family?

It was easier because they are younger, and we rented a house here when we were house hunting in April, so the kids got to see it before it was permanent. So they knew what to expect, and it was familiar. Moving during summer break also gave us more time to explore fun things before diving into school and routines. They just started school yesterday and they liked it.

Q: Have you noticed a big change in your monthly expenses?

I've been paying attention to that, and it's not a huge difference. I'd say it's slightly to moderately cheaper. Gas is \$1/gallon cheaper, and groceries are a little bit less. People imagine that you can get a mini mansion for next to nothing but the market here is crazy, too. Everyone knows that moving is a big expense. It's not a decision to take lightly.

Q: What do you like most and least about your new community?

We live within minutes of our family with kids the same age. That has been a game-changer for sure. Living in a master-planned community, our favorite thing has been having access to pools. The area has a small-town vibe, but it's close to large cities and all the big box stores. It's a huge neighborhood, and there is still congestion at school drop-off and commuting.

Q: What do you miss about Seattle? What do you not miss at all?

We miss the family we left behind there. But we don't miss the months of constant cold, gray days and rain.

Leslie La Motte



Leslie La Motte's three kids in Bend, Oregon.

Leslie La Motte was ahead of the curve of Seattleites moving to greener pastures. The city lost its charm for her family all the way back in 2011. After 14 years living in various North Seattle neighborhoods, she moved to Bend, Oregon, to raise her kids, now ages 13, 11 and 10.

Parent Map

Leslie answered our questions by reflecting on her family's move from Seattle over a decade ago.

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We moved for a lifestyle change, to get out of the city. We wanted a quieter lifestyle for our family and kids.

Q: How was the transition period for your family?

Moving to a place where we had no friends or family was extremely hard. Our timing wasn't great either with the housing market. It was hard to sell our home in Seattle, but it was a great time to buy here.

Q: Did you notice a big change in your monthly expenses?

There was a minor adjustment in the cost of living, but not too much. Bend is a travel destination now so things can be expensive here.

Q: What do you like most and least about your new community?

The best thing is my 4-minute commute to work and my 2-minute commute to my kids' schools. I can run multiple errands in about half an hour and don't have to fight the traffic. You get a small-town feel here. You know people working at the local businesses and run into friends often. Another great thing is that the great outdoors is so accessible here. We can be at one of the many Cascade Lakes within 30 minutes, and we have hikes along the Deschutes River within walking distance from my work and home.

The worst thing is that Bend is no longer a hidden gem and has become a tourist destination. We have lots of tourists during the summertime.

Q: What do you miss about Seattle? What do you not miss at all?

I miss friends and some of the things we would do, like visiting some of the parks and beaches and being able to catch a Broadway show. Otherwise, I don't really miss Seattle at all. I do love Bend and my life here now. I don't think I could ever move back as it is so nice to be away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

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