

INTO SOMERSET CASE STUDY – LIFESTYLE

Natalie Dyson – Foot Anstey solicitors

Somerset's excellent connectivity, accessibility and technology means companies can be as efficient as if in the city, but at greatly reduced costs.

And Somerset also offers a wonderful lifestyle, superb schools, short commute times and more.

That's the view of solicitor Natalie Dyson, of leading Taunton-based law firm Foot Anstey, who worked in sales and marketing in London before moving to the West Country.

Natalie says, "You can do the same amount of business in Somerset as efficiently as elsewhere for a fraction of the overheads. Somerset offers cheaper rents, availability of quality, commercial premises and excellent staff.

"We are finding that people who typically would have used firms in London and Bristol are gradually creeping down the M4/M5 corridor and are now very happy to use provincial firms who still offer London quality, but at Somerset rates!"

Natalie's move to Somerset has undoubtedly been worthwhile. "I now have the right work/life balance with a promising career and the ability to well and truly switch off and relax at weekends."

She decided to switch careers in 2004 and train at Exeter University to be a lawyer. "I applied for the course as my sister lived in the South West and each time I visited her, I found myself wishing I did not have to go back to the South East."

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Two years later, Natalie moved to Taunton, which was within easy reach of Exeter, where she worked at the time as a Business Development Manager in a law firm, and Bristol, where her husband was employed.

"I loved the pace of life down here, the people and the scenery. On graduating, Taunton seemed to offer the right balance of opportunity and work/life balance whilst still being only two hours from my friends in London by train.





"The price of property is reasonable, there are plenty of job opportunities in the legal sector and the coast and countryside are on the doorstep. My ex-colleagues thought I was crazy giving up my sales job in the City and heading both back to university and to the deepest, darkest West Country, but now they are all jealous and come to visit me as often as they can."

Somerset has fast road and rail links to London, Birmingham and the South East and is within half an hour of Bristol and Exeter regional airports. Its broadband system is also reliable and fast.

Somerset possesses a wealth of professional firms, which provide business, networking and career opportunities. Business support networks, including Taunton Chamber of Commerce, of which Natalie is an executive member, offer numerous networking opportunities and the Institute of Directors is active in the area.

Somerset also offers five key lifestyle benefits:

1) Transport connections: "Somerset is less than half an hour to either Bristol or Exeter airports (my mum lives in Spain so this was very important) with regular and cheap flights to Europe. You can be in London in less than two hours."

2) Housing: "The standard of property is high and the price is affordable."

3) Coast and countryside: "We have a German Shepherd dog, so it was important that we were within easy reach of rural walks. My husband is a keen sailor, so being near the coast was vital."

4) Low cost of living/commuting: "I used to spend £300 per month on train and tube fares getting in and out of the City. Now my journey to work can take as little as 15 minutes each way and parking is free."

5) Top-quality private and public schools: "We are just about to start our family with our first baby due in November. Taunton and Somerset offer a huge choice of excellent, quality schools and we really are spoiled for choice. Nursery provision is excellent and more affordable than in London and so convenient – the nursery we have chosen for when the baby arrives is right opposite our offices, you can't get much handier than that!"

In addition, Somerset is a well-kept secret and is not overrun by mass-market tourism, adds Natalie. "Somerset is one of the most beautiful counties in the country. It offers everything from beautiful rugged coastlines and beaches set against the stunning backdrop of Exmoor National Park and bustling ancient historical market towns such as Wells. However, it remains unspoilt by tourism, as the masses tend to head further down the peninsula to Devon and Cornwall."

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