



Expat Examined: Susie Hollands

Written by Priscilla Lalisce

I first met Susie Hollands about two years ago. We'd been working with someone in common, and that person was sure we needed to meet, and she was right. Susie is as unique as it gets. Through getting to know her, I found out that we actually have many things in common, which is a bit odd considering that I'm an American from the Deep South, and she was born and raised in Galashiels, Scotland. Not that I've ever been there, but I get a funny feeling it probably isn't quite like Alabama.

However, one thing we do have in common is our love for Paris. Susie came here four years ago and never looked back because she was a Francophile from early on. "I love the French way of life, good food, wine and good food...cigarettes. I also wanted to take a break from a high-pressure job", she says. Now that she's married to someone she met here, she has no plans of leaving Paris either.

Before coming to Paris she worked in a big London office but finds working here in Paris and running her own company, [Bonapart Consulting](#), more to her liking. Susie founded Bonapart after tirelessly searching for her own apartment when she first moved. "Back in London I was working with a lot of people in an office and here I'm working alone. There's a lot of freedom that goes along with it, but I've never worked harder either." When I quizzed her more about Bonapart, whose clients are mostly from America, Ireland and the UK, she insisted she wasn't planning to set it up straight away when she got here. "As I said, I had a terrible time trying to find accommodation when I moved here. I wasn't able to do things by internet, etc. and eventually I got an apartment of a friend of a friend. Then everyone I met afterwards had the same story, so I couldn't help it."

Living in Paris, I know how difficult it can be to get through all the administrative work that's involved here. To start one's own company seems extremely daunting to me. But for Susie, she was rather fearless about it all. "I had to trust my marketing instincts that told me this was an opportunity to set up a service that is really needed. I'm on the ground here in Paris, so I can help people coming here so they're more at ease. There's so much to work out to do and the last thing you want to think about is arriving in another country without a place to live. After about a year I did a lot of research about buying property here and now it's the biggest part of my business."

Another thing Susie and I have in common is our love of art. As if she isn't busy enough with Bonapart, she's also an artist and heads up [I V Y Paris](#), a group of over two hundred artists whose goal is "empowering emerging artists and helping them support and inspire each other."

As with almost any expat, there are usually things we really miss from home, and for Susie, her friends and family, along with shopping tops the list. "I miss certain things about London-shopping for clothes because I like vintage fashion. Even for designer shows, I prefer London to Paris. I usually go back a couple time of year to stock up on clothes. I don't like shopping here because I'm tall with broad shoulders and the French women are very petite and slim. So, it's hard to find clothes, which are cool and made for tall women. I never get long trousers in Paris either. I'm taller than most men here!"

As I sat there watching her eat her salad at the swanky café Le Nimrod just near her office in the 6th, I couldn't picture Susie in any other city, but I had to confirm it. "No, I can't think of another European city I'd live in. Probably New York or Los Angeles, but I'd keep my base here in Paris. I enjoy the cultural exchange between these cities. There's a totally different vibe between them. Paris is a wonderful place to call home though. Every time I arrive at Charles De Gaulle airport I still can't believe I live here."

I know exactly what she means. I still can't believe it myself sometimes.