

# Finding a Place to Call Home

It's moving time and you know the drill. Packing, inventory lists, shipping and of course finding a new place to call home. When searching for accommodations overseas, exactly where do you begin?

First stop, the Housing Referral Office. Here you can request listings of available houses and apartments for rent. Narrow down your search by detailing what you want. For example: by neighborhood, year built, garage, yard or single family unit. It all depends on what you place the most importance on. All off-base housing is pre-approved and inspected by diligent housing officials. They do all the leg work in finding suitable places to rent. The housing office will even assist in scheduling appointments if there is a language barrier, provide transportation upon request and lend out GPS navigation systems.

Christiane Wooten, Housing Management Assistant at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany, offers more than just leads on finding a home. "Where can I get my hair and nails done?" is a frequently asked question. "Sometimes," she said, "it's the first question before the subject of where to live is even brought

up." Whatever your concerns or needs may be, it pays to ask housing. Wooten even keeps business cards and contact information on hand. Talk about making people feel at right at home.

Local realtors are costly and should be

run and if you will be happy there or itching to move out in six months.

**Location, Location, Location.** Do you want to be within walking distance of shops and restaurants? Close to the grocery store? Near a train station, bus stop or children's school? How far of a commute are you willing to make for work? Is there a highway exit nearby?

**Internet.** Last thing you want to do is move in and realize that you are unable to get connected. Make sure your home is equipped for internet service, specifically high-speed, DSL. Unless you don't mind relying on snail mail or dial-up. Some homes are clearly out of touch.

**Satellite.** Is your new piece of paradise cable ready? Ask if there is a satellite compatible for AFN, or European television.

**The heating system.** Is it gas, oil or electric? If the house is heated by oil, will you or the landlord be responsible for refilling the tank?

**Maintenance.** Are you responsible for the lawn care and gardening? What about the front of the house? Do you need to sweep the street? Will the landlord provide snow removal, if necessary? ■

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used as a last resort. Most charge a fee equivalent to at least one month's rent. It's beneficial to check your housing office before paying a realtor to unlock the door. If you respond to a newspaper listing, always be sure to ask if there's a realtor fee involved.

Make sure you are prepared to ask many questions in order to determine your personal best living situation. It might be tempting to settle, but think of the long

