



**1 Old home in Great Yarmouth**  
**December 2003:** I left my six-year-old son to go travelling. I was comfortable there, it was a copy home. But I was needed to travel for a year, the house for £75,000 – an about £180,000 now.



**2 Stayed a few days: Great Yarmouth**  
**November 19, 2003:** After arriving back in England, I stayed with my eldest son Richard and his family in one of the children's rooms in their three-bedroom terrace, for a few days.



**3 Stayed one week: Hethel, Norwich**  
**November 21, 2003:** My friend Alex said I could move in with him to use his house as a base to look for work. It was on some farmland in a very scenic area, but too far away from the city centre so I left after a week.



**4 One week: Caister on Sea**  
**November 28, 2003:** This time I moved into the spare room of a friend's two-bed terrace. It was close to the beach, but didn't have many home comforts – not even a washing machine, for starters. I lasted seven days.



**5 Three months: Norwich**  
**December 2003:** My youngest son Philip, then 18, wanted to move in with me again, so we found this 1970s flat for £500 a month. But three months later I got a job in Great Yarmouth, so we were on the road again.



**6 Two months: Great Yarmouth**  
**February 2004:** This two-bed terrace cost £395 a month. But it was damp and cold and not what I wanted. Luckily I got a job with Suffolk County Council... but it meant moving again after just two months.



**7 Three days: Stowmarket**  
**April 2004:** My son moved in with friends, so I took a house share in Suffolk for £280 a month. It was next to chip shop – the smell was awful and grease oozed from walls. I lasted three days... and lost my £300 deposit.



**8 Three weeks: Norwich**  
**April 2004:** I found somewhere to rent, but needed a place for three weeks before I moved in, so stayed in this terrace with my sister's friend. I had a luxury room for a change, but it was never going to be long term.



**9 Nine months: Woodbridge**  
**May 2004:** I was delighted with this two-bed cottage in Suffolk for £360 a month. I could finally settle in. But I got PSI and had to leave work. Then my son moved back in and his room was too small.



**10 Six months: Woodbridge**  
**February 2005:** This was a large, semi-detached bungalow for £550 a month. According to local legend it was built on a mass grave – and the noises and chilling atmosphere meant we only stayed for six months.



**11 Eight months: Woodbridge**  
**July 2007:** This was a two-room maisonette in a new workhouse built in the 1930s for £250 a month. It was nice, but I felt isolated and had to move again after eight months.



**12 One week: Caister on Sea**  
**July 2007:** I moved back in with my son at Beach Road for a few days between two other moves.



**13 Six weeks: Axminster**  
**July 2007:** This was idyllic – a two-bedroom cottage with an acre of land in rural Suffolk, lovely in the village and close to the coast for just £450. After I realised the house was infested with fleas.

# I moved home 27 times in 4 years

VANDA JAMES sold her six-bed home in Great Yarmouth in September 2003 and set off for New Zealand, hoping to spend an exciting year travelling the world after her three kids had left home.

But just three months later she was back in the UK – homeless and jobless. And she has spent the last four years moving around the country, hunting for the right job and the right house. Divorced Vanda, 49, says: "The hardest thing about returning was coming to the realisation that I didn't have anything to my name at all when I got back."

She has spent the £30,000 proceeds from her house on rent, lost deposits, fuel, train fares and, after she had to sell her car, a "man with a van" to ferry her belongings around. Buying furniture has also been a huge expense – £7,000 in the past four years.

But, despite all this, Vanda remains remarkably upbeat. "Friends have said that I'm unsettled or not content with my life," she said. "But I explain that I am settled – I know what I want out of life, after all."

"It wasn't that I have been fussy, or negative about a place before I moved in. I would treat each house as though it was going to be my last move. But every time, my circumstances changed, or the house wasn't right, and I knew I had to move."

She returned from New Zealand just three months into her trip when she realised her youngest son Philip, then 18, was finding it difficult to settle without her.

Since her return, her search for happiness has taken her to Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Sussex and even Guernsey. "Moving all the time was hard, but I didn't let it get me down," she says. "And it's made me realise how little you need to live. I've learned to live with very few possessions and survive on my inner resources."

Finally she came full circle – and is now happy back in Great Yarmouth in a lovely three-storey home. It means a hellish daily commute to London where she works as an office organiser, but Vanda could not be happier.

"I can't say I'll never move again. What I can say is that the house feels 100 per cent right at the moment," she says. "I really hope this will be my last move for a very long time."

Homes editor Zena Allis says: "Moving house is in the top three most stressful experiences of our lives. Vanda has managed it more times in just a few years than most people do in a lifetime. I think she's made very brave decisions when she could easily have stayed put and moaned. How many of us complain about noisy neighbours, busy roads, long commutes or lack of space, yet never do anything about it?"

I've learned to live with very little – I rely on inner resources



Vanda has finally found a happy place

**14 Still there... for now: Gt Yarmouth**  
**January 2008:** I moved into this three-storey, three-bedroom new-build costing £595 a month at the beginning of the year and I love it. It's near my family and friends, close to the train station and has all the facilities and amenities I need – it even has an outside washing line! It's the best yet. It has three toilets, a utility room, an ensuite bathroom, a small garden. It's a gem.

Could this be the one?  
 Vanda's last move in Great Yarmouth

## VANDA BLOWS £30K IN HUNT FOR DREAM HOME

Pictures: JEREMY DURKIN/NICHOLAS BOWMAN/DAVID McHUGH/ALAMY



**11 Two months: Woodbridge**  
**September 2005:** My son left again, so with nowhere to go and no money as I was still not working, I moved into a friend's one-bed flat, and crashed on the sofa. There was no space, but I made do for two months.



**12 A few days: Woodbridge**  
**November 2005:** Staying in a tiny flat on the sofa wasn't ideal, so I moved into a lovely cottage with another friend but within a few days I realised it wasn't for me, so I moved out.



**13 One week: Woodbridge**  
**November 2005:** I moved back to my friend's sofa again before deciding to look for jobs with staff accommodation.