

TV weatherman swaps the Cayman Islands for the Tyne and Wear Metro

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Tyne and Wear's new customer service advisor forecasts a bright future having joined the operator, having given up life as a TV weatherman from the Cayman Islands to move to the North East of England.

Joe Avary, whose smooth American accent is proving popular with passengers, has taken an unlikely route to North East England – but insists he has no regrets leaving it all behind to become a Metro Customer Service Advisor.

His previous job saw him presenting weather forecasts and compiling news reports for the Cayman Islands' only local TV station.

In 2021, Joe, and his wife Claire, who is from Jarrow, left the paradise island to return to the UK, settling in East Boldon.

It was a big change after nearly six years of nothing but hot sun and golden sandy beaches.

Joe, 47, who is originally from Albuquerque in New Mexico, has had a 23-year media career, one that took

him across the USA as a cameraman and a journalist, culminating in his dream job working in the Caribbean.

As a senior reporter at Cayman 27, Joe not only presented daily weather forecasts, he also provided local news coverage for the tiny island, which is a popular retreat for some of the richest people in the world.

He once got the chance to interview Sir Richard Branson.

Joe now finds himself working for Tyne and Wear Metro operator, Nexus, providing support for customers and inspecting tickets across the network's 60 stations.

"People don't believe me, but it's been a great experience," he said. "It was a big change leaving the Cayman Islands, for sure, but I am really loving it here. The people are great. I just need to get used to the Geordie accent a bit more. As an American some of the local phrases are still hard to get."

Since joining the Metro Joe has proved a big hit with customers and colleagues alike.

He said: "I think it's a fantastic public transport system that you have here. I love integrating with the local community, much like I did out in the Caymans, so this was an ideal role for me. The Metro is at the heart of the area and it's the veins of the local economy.

"I love meeting my customers, and they seem to enjoy hearing my American accent, you can often see it on their faces. It takes them by surprise, and it's a good way to engage with people. My announcements on the tannoy certainly seem to make people stop and take a bit more notice."

It's a world away from life in the Cayman Islands, a British overseas territory and renowned tax haven.

Joe said: "I may well be the only weatherman to get a job on the Metro, and, of course, nobody here knows me here, but out in the Caymans I actually became a bit of a household name. I was presenting the weather and reporting the news. We broke some pretty big stories, quite often the kind that a lot of the billionaires on the island don't like to hear about.

"But it's a great way of life out there. There are so many different nationalities on the island, living there, and visiting. We had a house, with a pool, and mango trees in the garden.

"Presenting the weather in the Caymans, we often joked, was fairly easy – you knew it was going to be hot and sunny most days. There is occasional rainfall and hurricane warnings to watch for, but for the most part it's sweltering. There isn't much of a winter there.

"It was a great phase of my career, which started out back in the States when I got a chance to help out at a local television station in Omaha called Fox 42.

"I did some camera work for them and that led to a move to a national broadcaster, CBS, based in Atlanta. It was exciting work. I quite often got to film live from the news helicopter. When I was at CBS I was part of a news team that won a TV Emmy award."

He added: "The job in the Cayman Islands was too good to turn down. It was a fabulous five and a half years, but at the end it felt like the right time to come back."

Joe's decision to move to Britain with his wife was partly driven by his increasing workload, which saw him often putting in 13-hour days, something which caused him to suffer from the hair loss condition alopecia, which he has since recovered from.

He said: "We initially moved to Guernsey, and that was just before the pandemic. Then after the lockdown my wife decided she wanted to come home to Geordie land."

"It's my first time here but I am settling in great. The only thing I miss is getting really good Mexican food. My colleagues have been taken aback by my love for putting marmite and siracha on a crumpet."

"I like to think that I've brought a bit of good old American hospitality to the Metro, so if you see me on duty at a station, don't forget to come and say hi."

Photo credit: Tyne and Wear Metro