

Five things to consider when planning to retire overseas



The attractions of retiring overseas are plentiful – better climate, more fulfilling lifestyle, lower cost of living and of course the lure of new life adventures at a time when most people are starting to wind down.

But retirement abroad is also a significant life change, much more so than retiring at home. As such,

it needs serious research and planning. Everything from the kind of expat retirement life you want to live, to how to maintain connections to the people you will leave behind. To help you get started, here are some of the most important considerations you need to be thinking about.



1. Your destination

The first and perhaps most important question you need to answer is simply whether or not you are even allowed to live in your country of choice. An increasing number of countries now offer programs and retirement visas that make it easier for expat retirees to settle, but often these come with specific residency requirements, such as proof of a minimum annual income. Remember, this is not an extended vacation and there may be many layers of complex bureaucracy for you to navigate, so research this before you commit.

On the subject of vacations, it is also worth mentioning that the best tourism destinations may not necessarily make the best places to live. For a start, you will be living there all year round, and all those things you love to do while on vacation may not be available all year round.

Then there are the practicalities of everyday life that you rarely have to face as a tourist – language barriers, taxes, healthcare services, security and political instability, leisure facilities and more. Be sure to consider all the elements that could potentially have an adverse impact.

2. Your money

A lower cost of living is a common reason for retiring overseas, but even so most expat retirees have finite savings, so you will still need to keep a keen eye on your finances.

Ask yourself what kind of lifestyle your savings or pension will support in the longer term. When doing your calculations, don't forget to factor in some kind of emergency fund to cover unexpected eventualities, particularly around your health.

And that is just the start. If your budget is tight, have you thought about future price fluctuations on things such as rent or food and how they would impact your budget? Even small price increases could leave you in a tough position. Will you need to supplement your savings with part-time work, and if so what options are available to you, legally and practically.

You should see your decision to retire overseas as a serious investment in yourself, so it pays to give it the attention it deserves during your planning. If possible, discuss with a financial professional before you finalise your move.



3. Your health



Moving to a new country doesn't mean that your access to good health care is compromised – in fact, it can mean just the opposite, as many popular expat retirement destinations can provide high quality healthcare at relatively low cost.

At the same time, at your stage in life it is vital that you account for your existing and potential healthcare needs before making the move. What is the health system like? Is it able to support your needs? Do the doctors there even speak your language? Would you be able to access

public facilities (some countries have restrictions on non-locals) and if not, can you afford to go private?

International health insurance is a must, and not just for peace of mind. In some countries, having proof of a certain level of health insurance is mandatory for obtaining a visa. You will also need to double check that your insurance provides the kind of cover you need, as some plans have restrictions based on your age, current and past medical history, as well as your planned country of relocation.

4. Your lifestyle



If you are retiring overseas, no doubt you are looking to upgrade your current lifestyle, but what quality of life will you be hoping for and how realistic are your aims?

Chances are you have already sampled your retirement destination, but how familiar are you with the language and culture of your proposed new home? Make it a priority to pick up as much of the local language as possible and familiarise yourself with local habits and everyday life, whether that is food culture in Thailand or siesta time in Spain.

Similarly, assuming you have already pinpointed an area you'd like to live in, how well do you know the neighborhood and local amenities? This is where the internet can be your friend. Browsing local real estate websites, online forums and even Google Street View can at least give you a surface impression of your planned locale.

Making new friends and building a good social network will be another lifestyle priority. If you are moving to a destination that already has a large retirement or expat community from your

home country then you will have a head-start, but even then you will need to do a certain amount of legwork to find those who share your interests.

Research local sporting clubs, or groups based around your hobbies. Join local community pages on Facebook or other social media. These platforms are also a great resource to learn about your destination – everything from local bus routes to how to hire a plumber. And don't be afraid to reach out, introduce yourself and ask questions. That's what they are there for.

5. Your family and friends

Retiring overseas shouldn't mean turning your back on home and loved ones. It is important to maintain connections with family and friends - not only will it help you overcome homesickness; it also gives peace of mind for those back home.

Luckily technology is a great help for keeping regular communications. If you are not already up to speed with the

online tools available, take time to familiarise yourself before you leave. Most are free and provide high quality audio and visual connections. And it's best to keep the more expensive direct calls for emergencies only.

Of course, the occasional video call does not make up for not seeing family and friends face to face, so have you thought about how you plan to occasionally get

together? Your new destination from the perspective of family and friends may make an amazing holiday, so be open to this option.

Or maybe you plan to make regular return visits. If so, how practical is this in terms of time and money? Bear in mind also that visits home can involve a packed itinerary, which at times can be stressful.

