

International Living

AUGUST 2025 | VOL.46 | Nº4

Seaside Living in Spain's Last "Authentic" City...

A Taste of Havana in the Old Country



The Walking City: Gritty,
Graceful Montevideo

The Best Passport
in the World?

The Formula I Use to Make
a Fortune in Real Estate

August 2025

01

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is for the Dreamers

03

GLOBETROTTER: EXPERIENCES

Ride the Rapids of Time in Rural Japan

04

GLOBETROTTER: EXPERIENCES

Down a Dark Alley in Dublin, Find the Neon Pig

05

GLOBETROTTER: TRAVEL APPS

Turn Your Phone Into Your Personal Travel Concierge

06

GLOBETROTTER: LAYOVER LIFE

The Best Airport in the World to Get Stuck In

07

WINE EXPLORER

Which Wine? When in Doubt, Do This...

08

CURRENCY CORNER

When Oil Prices Rise... Own This Currency

09

REAL ESTATE Q&A

Smart Buys in Playa del Carmen... and Where to Golf Near Dublin

11

LIVING THE DREAM

Building Our Tiny House: A Piece of Paradise in Belize

15

FIELD NOTES

A Dollar Crisis Is Coming... Here's How to Protect Yourself

18

GLOBAL CITIZEN

The Best Passport in the World?

21

FEATURE STORY: CÁDIZ

Seaside Living in Spain's Last "Authentic" City... A Taste of Havana in the Old Country

29

MARKET WATCH

The Formula I Use to Make a Fortune in Real Estate

33

LIFESTYLE: URUGUAY

The Walking City: Gritty, Graceful Montevideo

38

TRAVEL: SCOTLAND

The UK's Best Seaside Town... Where You Can Rent From \$750 a Month

40

TRAVEL: THAILAND

Where Sleeping Buddhas Lie: A Dreamy Day-Trip to Ayutthaya

42

CALENDAR

Ultimate Go Overseas Boot-camp • August 30–September 1, 2025 • Portland, Oregon

44

CLASSIFIEDS

Real Estate, Travel Services, and Money-Making Opportunities Worldwide.

This is for the Dreamers

"*IL* is a magazine for dreamers," he said to me.

In the first few minutes speaking with Ben Murnane—*International Living's* new (but returning) Editor-in-Chief—he described how he envisions redefining *IL*. About rekindling the dream.

Nearly 50 years ago, in the first issue of *International Living*, founding publisher Bill Bonner made a promise: *IL* would "show you ways to make your international lifestyle profitable... or at least self-supporting."

Might a tiny home in Belize do the trick?

Tiny homes have been the rage in recent years—and we'll introduce you to a couple who had one delivered on a truck... in Belize.

That's just what we're here to do: tell stories about real people doing dreamy things. But real stories have grit. So occasionally, our content will too. No place is perfect, but that needn't be a requirement of romantic promise.

This month, we journey to Cádiz with *IL's* Spain Correspondent, a palm-filled city Americans haven't discovered yet, which calls to mind Havana. *IL's* Uruguay Correspondent sheds new light on Montevideo's varied, friendly, walkable, and, dare I

say, romantic neighborhoods. Film crews are often spotted there in the Old Town, drawn to its vintage atmosphere.

Here at *IL* we're in the business of showing you a world you won't read about anywhere else. So this month, we take you to a jungle-covered temple in Thailand... explore North Berwick, Scotland... float you down a Japanese river on logs... and get you into a secret bar in Dublin. Plus, we debate the merits of house wine in Europe vs. house wine in the US... and round up the best travel apps to make your next adventure hassle-free.

Ready to find your own dream escape? Come meet me—and the experts you hear from in this issue—at our [Ultimate Go Overseas Bootcamp](#) in Portland at the end of this month. It's not too late to save \$100 on your ticket. But act fast.




Holly Andrew

Managing Editor

AUGUST 2025 | VOLUME 46 | NUMBER 4

IL Magazine Team

Founding Publisher

William Bonner

Executive Editor

Jennifer Stevens

Editor-in-Chief

Ben Murnane

Managing Editor

Holly Andrew

Senior Editor

Jess Ramesch

Designer

Derek Westwood

Online Editor

Donal Lucey

Advertising Inquiries

Advertising@InternationalLiving.com

Media Inquiries

PR@InternationalLiving.com

Cover Image

© Frank van den Bergh/iStock

International Living (ISSN 0277-2442). © Copyright 2025 by International Living Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved. Protected by copyright laws of the United States and international treaties. This magazine may only be used pursuant to the subscription agreement and any reproduction, copying, or redistribution (electronic or otherwise, including on the world wide web), in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited without the express written permission of International Living Publishing Ltd., Woodlock House, Carrick Road, Portlao, Co. Waterford, Ireland. International Living is published monthly. Subscriptions: In the United States US\$129 for one year, in Canada CAN\$165 for one year, elsewhere US\$149 for one year.

Published by: International Living, International Living Publishing Ltd., Woodlock House, Carrick Road, Portlao, Co. Waterford, Ireland. Copies of this magazine are not available on newsstands but are furnished directly to the public by email subscriptions only. International Living presents information and research believed to be reliable, but its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. There are many dangers associated with international travel and investment, and readers should investigate any opportunity fully before committing to it.

How to contact us: Customer service: To place an order for a product/ subscription, renew a subscription, pay a maintenance fee, change an address, follow up on the status of an order, or inquire about a missed issue, etc., see: www.internationalliving.com/about-il/customer-service.

ULTIMATE GO OVERSEAS

Bootcamp

August 30- September 1, 2025

Portland, Oregon



Save \$100
When You
Register
Now

Live Better for Less... Shelter Wealth... Own Real Estate for Potential Profit... Retire More Comfortably ...

In the right communities, you really can live a richer, more engaging life than you do now... but spend as little as \$1,900 a month (even for a couple) to do it—housing included.

If you're concerned about economic and social fallout... if you're feeling like the future just seems too uncertain to rely on... this event is custom-made for you.

Because we're going to show you what your best overseas options are... and how to take advantage of them. Legally. And efficiently.

Take yourself, your wealth, your health, your retirement, (even your business and your family) to someplace safer, saner, and less expensive... we'll show you exactly how.

Learn Where—and How—to Buy Smart

Owning a second home doesn't need to be an expensive luxury. Do it right overseas—buy in a market on the up, use financing, and negotiate the right kind of arrangement—and you can **gain a truly world-class getaway you enjoy... for around \$270,000 (or even less)!** I'm talking about the sort of place you would expect to see listed for \$1 million or more in the US. Plus, that property could pay you to own it, prove a sound store of wealth, and provide you an appreciating asset that helps you diversify outside of stocks, bonds, and even the dollar.

August 30 - September 1, 2025

Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront

Portland, Oregon

<https://pro.internationalliving.com/m/2450850>

Or call our special number toll-free at 1-866-681-2402 or direct at 1-443-353-4232
Monday to Friday 9 am to 7 pm ET to register by phone.



© WAKAYAMA TOURISM BUREAU

Beyond the pagodas and waterfalls of Wakayama lies a wild river ride through the ancient heart of Japan.

EXPERIENCES

Ride the Rapids of Time in Rural Japan

The raftsmen expertly steered us toward the first rapids. Sharp rocks rose from the riverbed and canyon walls. We plunged into the white, turbulent water. Excited screams of joy in English, Japanese, German, and Chinese merged with the sloshing of the Kitayama River, its chilly waves flowing over the raft and drenching us.

I have run rivers worldwide—on rubber rafts, but this was my first time on a log raft. We soared through seven adrenaline-pumping rapids, drifting through lush forests and massive rock formations that resembled turtles, alligators, and mythical spirits.

Azalea and other colorful flowers were reflected in the river as we slid past sparkling waterfalls. Mist drifted across forested mountains, and gray herons with wingspans of more than a yard wide flew away as we interrupted their patient fishing.

More than a simple rafting experience, this was a journey through Japanese nature and culture.

The sole Japanese location offering this experience is the isolated Kitayama Village, Wakayama Prefecture. For over six centuries, people here harvested trees, slid the logs to the river, and tied them into rafts they

floated 43 miles to the closest major seaport. From there, the logs were shipped across Japan to build important structures like [Kyoto's](#) Fushimi Castle.

After trucks, roads, and a dam altered traditional life, log rafting, or *ikada-kudari*, almost disappeared. Thankfully Kitayama Village officers decided to offer trips to visitors as a form of sustainable tourism, conserving traditional raft-making and guiding skills and providing financial support to the tiny community (Kitayama has a population of 385).

The fee for the 70-minute raft trip is around \$50. A sumptuous dinner with drinks at a nearby restaurant/bar named 169 cost about \$20 each. [Okutoro Onsen Yama-no-Yado's](#) riverside cottages, with access to a Japanese hot spring, ran to approximately \$100 per person.

Guests aged 10 and 75 are welcome, but individuals with difficulty walking or standing may be refused. This [handy infosheet](#) from the Kitayama Village Tourism Association helps with planning. Kitayama is a three-hour drive south of Osaka International Airport, mostly on countryside roads.

—Greg Goodmacher



© THE LITTLE PIG SPEAKEASY DUBLIN

There are a “thousand pubs” in Dublin... but this one’s a secret.

EXPERIENCES

Down a Dark Alley in Dublin, Find the Neon Pig

Just off Grafton Street, in the heart of the well-to-do neighborhood known simply as Dublin 2, I find a pay phone next to a wooden gate framed in iron, leading to a dim alley. I dial the secret code and say the password.

“We’re here for the old lady’s funeral.”

With a click of the gate unlocking, my Irish friend and I gained access to a proper alley with dumpsters, random trash, and a lingering smell. We made our way down to the red neon pig sign and up the industrial metal stairs. I knocked on the door, a tiny window slid open, and I was asked for the password again...



© HOLLY ANDREW

We were in!

The [Little Pig Speakeasy Dublin](#) is small—maybe just eight tables—and swathed in red velvet, from ceiling to floor. Our dinners were divine. My friend is vegan and thrilled with her shallot and pea ravioli.

The [craft cocktail menu](#) opened with a prologue of “rules” and anecdotes setting the tone for elegant and inventive drinks. I asked the bartender if he could, “make me something fresh with no alcohol?” and he whipped up a custom mocktail in a fancy glass.

With the pressure on my friend to decide, she exclaimed, “I really want the Kerry (G)old Fashioned but it has dairy...” The heroic server offered, “We could use vegan foam?” and her face lit up as she coyly said, “Go on...” in that delightful way the Irish do.

While not exactly an Anthony Bourdain level culinary adventure, the Little Pig is also not what I’d call “accidental dining,” where you wander around a city, stumbling across menus in the windows. Be sure to [book online](#) first—they’ll send you the exact location, pay phone code, and password.

—Holly Andrew

Turn Your Phone Into Your Personal Travel Concierge

Two decades ago, international travel meant juggling maps, paper tickets, clunky electronics, and a good old-fashioned phrasebook. But today? All you need is your smartphone. From booking transportation to navigating foreign languages and paying with a tap, your phone can now handle it all—and then some.

Whether you're headed to Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, or beyond, these tools and app tips can help simplify every step of the journey.

1. Ride-Sharing: Know the Local Alternatives

Sure, Uber and Lyft are global names—but they're not always the best (or cheapest) option abroad.

- [Bolt](#) and [Freenow](#) dominate in many parts of Europe.
- [BiTaksi](#) is your go-to in Istanbul.
- [DiDi](#) and [inDrive](#) are widely used in Mexico.

Pro tip: Download and set up these apps before your trip to avoid payment or verification issues on arrival.

2. Google Translate's Camera Feature = Lifesaver

You probably already use **Google Translate** for quick conversations. But don't forget its **camera tool**—just point your phone at foreign text (like street signs or appliance buttons), and it translates instantly.

3. Book Regional Travel with Omio and RailNinja

Need to hop between cities—or countries—in Europe?

- [Omio](#) and [RailNinja](#) make it easy to search and book trains, buses, or even ferries.
- Choose seats, pay, and store your e-ticket all in one place.

4. Budget Buses: FlixBus Is a Favorite

Especially in Europe and the UK, [FlixBus](#) offers affordable long-distance travel.

The app:

- Shows routes and GPS-tagged pickup points.
- Lets you reserve seats and track your ride in real time.

5. Ditch the Wallet: Pay by Phone

Apple Wallet (iPhone) and Google Pay (Android) are game-changers.

- Set up your credit and debit cards, secured by facial recognition or fingerprint.
- Pay instantly—no need to carry or expose your physical cards.



From chaos to convenience: On the Tube or across the globe, your smartphone is your travel command center.

You can use this feature almost everywhere: Hotels, shops, restaurants, parking meters—even public transit systems like the **London Underground**.

On a month-long trip to the UK, I never had to convert dollars into pounds. Digital payments did it all.

Even better: When a fraud attempt shut down a card during a trip to Panama, the new card was added to my digital Wallet *automatically*—no international shipping required.

6. Don't Forget Connectivity Essentials

Make sure you're equipped for smooth phone service abroad:

- Buy an **eSIM** (like [Airalo](#)) for affordable international data.
- Check that your phone is unlocked and supports your destination's networks.
- Use apps like [WhatsApp](#) or [Signal](#) for free international messaging.

Bonus: Think Beyond the Obvious

While these apps are indispensable, it's worth remembering:

- Download offline maps in Google Maps.
- Use [TripIt](#) or **Google Travel** to organize your itinerary.
- Keep scanned copies of your passport, visa, and travel insurance in your phone's cloud storage for backup.

—Jim Santos

© LVA CATTEU/ISTOCK



No one likes a layover... but you might actually look forward to one in Schiphol.

LAYOVER LIFE

The Best Airport in the World to Get Stuck In

Need to stop off in Europe on your way somewhere else?

I live in Cape Town, South Africa. So, if I want to go anywhere in Europe or North America, I need to fly through a European hub. The [Netherlands](#)' main airport—Schiphol—competes with other hubs like Paris, Frankfurt, and London for travelers like me. I've done them all... and Schiphol in Amsterdam wins hands down.

Let me count the ways...

- **Quick and easy.** I can get from the arrival gate for my flight from Cape Town to my onward departure gate in under half an hour. That means I can comfortably book a tight connection.
- **An option to snooze—any time of day.** There's an excellent Microtel in the main terminal. For anything longer than a 4- or 5-hour layover, I book one of these convenient, affordable little rooms to enjoy a shower and a nap.
- **Local dining while you wait.** In addition to typically expensive duty-free shops, it's got several food stores specializing in Dutch fare... I'm a big fan of *stroopwafels* and gouda cheese. There are plenty of places to eat, including excellent sit-down restaurants.

- **Strike up new (unlikely) friendships.** The Dutch are really nice people. The last time I flew through Schiphol, I arrived after midnight for a 9 a.m. connection. I'd never arrived so late and didn't realize I could still get through the control gates between arrivals and departures. I mistakenly walked out the wrong door and couldn't get back into the terminal. In desperation I hit a security alarm. I thought I was going to be arrested... but the Dutch border police who helped me treated me like an old friend.

If you're flying from somewhere that requires a layover in Europe, take it from me: The Dutch capital's airport is the way to go.

—Ted Baumann



© JACOBH/ISTOCK

© CHRIS L. SMITH - CSFOTOIMAGES/ISTOCK



It's the wine locals drink, the waiter recommends, and few tourists think to order.

WINE EXPLORER

Which Wine? When in Doubt, Do This...

More often than not, when you land in a new town and sit down at a promising-looking café, the hard part isn't what to eat—it's what to drink.

Maybe you're in a tiled *taverna* in Tavira, Portugal. Or a sun-faded café in Arles, France. The smells are inviting. The chalkboard menu looks fresh.

The wine list is a mystery. The names are unfamiliar. You want to order something local... but what if it's too expensive? What if you mispronounce it? What if it's just not good?

The waiter asks what you'll have to drink—and you freeze.

Here's the move that's saved me from overthinking in half a dozen languages: order the house wine.

Simple. No stress. No show.

Especially in Europe, this is almost always the right call.

The places I trust most rarely have printed menus. In Rome's Testaccio neighborhood, the waiter might carry over a chalkboard and prop it on the chair

beside you. Dishes are written in chalk—some already crossed off. That's the clue. The kitchen cooks what's fresh. And the wine? It's what they pour for themselves.

In the US, "house wine" isn't always bad—but it's rarely memorable. It's the wine that leaves a good margin, tastes broadly fine, and won't get sent back. Think mass-produced, poured with a smile, and forgotten by dessert.

But in Europe, it's a different story.

WITH THE HOUSE WINE YOU'RE SLIPPING INTO THE RHYTHM OF HOW LOCALS DRINK.

Here, the house wine is usually something made nearby—sometimes by a cousin, sometimes by the winemaker down the road. No label. No fanfare. No instagram. Just a carafe of what fits the food and the season.

And best of all, it's affordable. A glass might cost less than a Coke. A half-liter carafe? Often under 10 euro. You're not splurging—you're slipping into the rhythm of how locals eat and drink.

You get to be curious without risking much. Don't like it? Try the red. Or the white. No pressure.

Some of the best wines I've had came this way. A Chianti in Cortona—warm, earthy, and just tannic enough to stand up to a plate of wild boar pappardelle.

So if you're ever traveling and unsure what to order—trust the chalkboard. Trust the house wine.

It's not the safe choice. It's the local one.

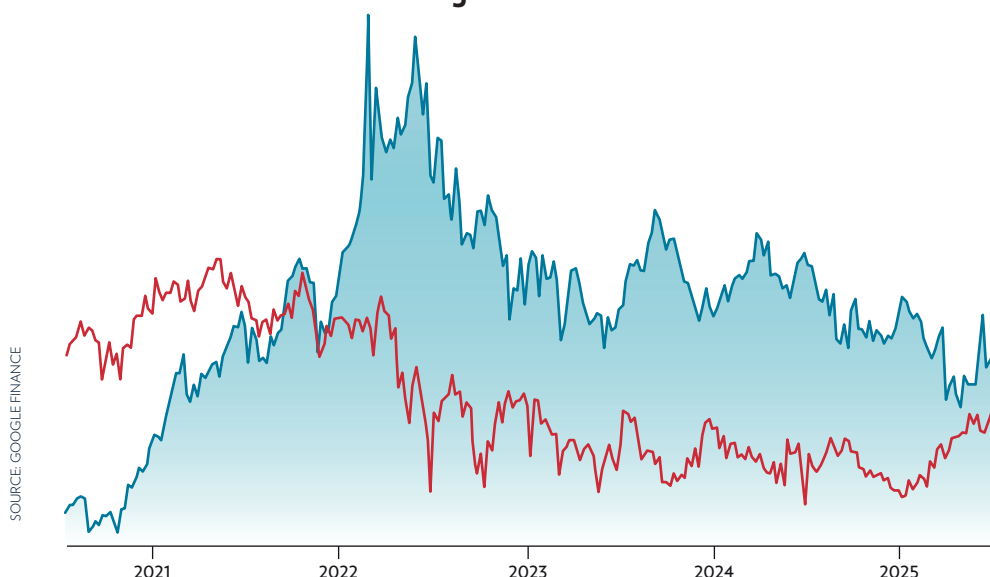
—Diego Samper

Diego Samper



The *International Living* Wine Club, where Diego enjoys the enviable title of "Wine Explorer," makes it possible for you to taste exclusive small-batch vintages. Details [here](#).

Norwegian Krone vs. Oil



A mirror image of oil... The red line is the krone-dollar exchange rate, while the blue line is oil prices. The two move in near opposition—meaning the krone buys more dollars (the dollar falls in value) as oil prices rise.

CURRENCY CORNER

When Oil Prices Rise... Own This Currency

The Trump administration's bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities in June shined a spotlight on oil prices. Brent crude, the global benchmark, rose as much as 18% in the 10-day runup to the bombing.

A quiet and overlooked beneficiary was the Norwegian krone, the currency of Norway, which gained about 4% in the same period—a nice move in the currency market.

The krone is considered one of the world's "oiliest"

currencies, thanks to Norway's deep reliance on oil and gas from the North Sea.

Where oil prices go, so goes the krone.

Now, the correlation is not 1:1, for sure. The two diverge at various times for reasons specific to the Norwegian economy. But over longer periods, the two share a similar trajectory. So much so that hedge funds, academic researchers, and others have all explored this tendency and found, as one researcher did in 2023, that the so-called "risk premium" currency investors attach to the krone "is driven by oil prices."

There's an opportunity in this: If you believe oil prices ultimately go higher—which is a thesis I've written about many times in my [Global Intelligence Letter](#) and my daily e-letter, [Field Notes](#)—then owning exposure to krone today could pay off nicely down the road.

Having hit \$75.48, Brent crude is now back below \$70 per barrel. Demand for oil keeps rising, yet production is slowing. Much higher oil prices are very likely.

Which means... the krone goes much higher too.

—Jeff Opdyke

Own Foreign Currency at Home

You can own foreign currency directly from home with a **Moneycorp** account. And you'll get a much better exchange rate than you're likely to find at your bank. If you plan to travel or buy property overseas, you can also plan ahead and track exchange rates—buying foreign currencies when the dollar is strong—so that you get the best rate possible. [Sign up for a FREE account here.](#)

(Full disclosure: *International Living* may receive a fee if you sign up via our referral link. While we require advertisers to meet basic criteria before we bring these opportunities to you, we strongly recommend performing your own due diligence.)

Smart Buys in Playa del Carmen... and Where to Golf Near Dublin

RONAN McMAHON



© AURORE KEROVERN/ISTOCK

Playa del Carmen is the beating heart of the Riviera Maya.

- **Amy & Kenny S. ask:** Hi Ronan. We read all your articles and love them!

We have two high schoolers who will be graduating in the next couple years and we are desperate to get away from the Colorado winters. We have two small cabins on our property which we Airbnb. They cover our mortgage payments.

We have often visited the Riviera Maya and like the Puerto Morelos area. It's a 3.5-hour direct flight from Denver with affordable flights often. We want to buy a two-bedroom place. We're also intrigued by Costa Rica and possibly Panama but have not visited yet.

Do you have an opinion on the best place to invest in these areas? We're hoping to Airbnb it when we're not using it.

- **Ronan says:** Hi Amy and Kenny, and thanks for your feedback.

Puerto Morelos, which sits south of Playa del Carmen and north of Tulum on the Riviera Maya,

was formerly a quaint fishing village. In recent decades, as nearby Cancun developed, Puerto Morelos has attracted an expat community looking for a quieter alternative.

Today, this town has a stunning beach... a quaint, rustic charm... and it's beginning to see some more development, including new upscale condo communities. But it retains a small-town feel with a square lined with little shops, restaurants, and cafés. The square is next to the seaside *malecon* (promenade) where you can still pick up fish, fresh off the boats.

Ultimately, though, Puerto Morelos has limitations in how and where it can grow. This is why development leapfrogged it to booming, cosmopolitan Playa del Carmen.

Have you considered buying in Playa del Carmen?

I've been scouting Playa for more than two decades.

In that time, it has undergone a dramatic trans-

formation, evolving from a laidback backpacker retreat into a world-class luxury destination.

Central Playa is walkable, the type of place where you can grab an espresso and croissant at a co-working café in the morning... enjoy a lunch of fresh seafood on the beach with your toes in the sand... and have your choice of any number of gourmet options for dinner... with shopping for high-end fashions and artisan creations mixed in—not to mention relaxing spa treatments.

PLAYA IS MATURING INTO A SOPHISTICATED, UPSCALE DESTINATION.

Playa is hip and chic. And it's maturing into a sophisticated, upscale destination increasingly drawing a well-heeled clientele with money to spend.

It's the beating heart of the Riviera Maya.

And members of my [Real Estate Trend Alert \(RETA\)](#) have done well here.

For example, in March 2022, *RETA* members could own two-bed, two-bath condos in a community there called The Village from \$258,600. Those same condos now start at \$351,961—an uplift of \$93,361.

We had another *RETA* deal in a stunning community called Singular Dream at the heart of Playa del Carmen in 2021. Our *RETA* price was from \$265,304. In 2024, a two-bed condo there was listing for \$574,322. That's an incredible \$309,018 more.

You say you're also curious about Costa Rica and Panama. I recently put together a report on the best places to own in Costa Rica, [check it out here](#).

And last month, I answered another reader's question about where to check out in Panama... [you'll find my answer here](#).

- **Doug B. asks:** Hey Ronan, I'm coming over to Dublin for Jeff Opdyke's [Future of Wealth Summit](#) this October. I'd like to book in some tee time while I'm in the area. Any recommendations for golf courses?

- **Ronan says:** Hi Doug. I too will be at Jeff's conference in Dublin, speaking about how to profit from international real estate. I'm looking forward to meeting all the attendees and listening to Jeff and the other financial experts he has lined up talking about protecting your wealth. (Jeff tells me there are still a few seats left... [go here for more info](#).)

Ireland is world renowned for its incredible golf courses and there's many to choose from. Here are two options...

[Portmarnock Golf Club](#) is located in County Dublin. I make frequent visits to play here with friends when I'm in Ireland over the summer. This stretch of north Dublin coast is an incredible in-city golfers' paradise with world-class courses including Royal Dublin, The Island, Portmarnock Links and, of course, the big one: Portmarnock Golf Club.

About a 40-minute drive from Dublin is the prestigious [K Club](#). It boasts two Arnold-Palmer-designed courses (one of which is a links course) and hosted the 2006 Ryder Cup. The courses here are immaculate with mature trees and flowering bushes backstopping pristine greens. Green fees vary depending on what course you play but start at \$140.

Golf is one of my great passions... it has been since I was a child. International real estate is another. The two things actually have a lot in common and I believe being a golfer has made me a better real estate investor. I explain the surprising similarities between golf and investing... the dangers of success... and Jack Nicklaus' simple secret for winning in golf and in life... [in this video](#). ■

Ronan McMahon



Ronan McMahon is *IL*'s international real estate expert and the founder of *Real Estate Trend Alert*. He's been traveling the globe for more than 25 years, living and investing in some of the world's dreamiest—and surprisingly affordable—locations. Sign up for his free [Overseas Dream Home](#) letter [right here](#).

Building Our Tiny House: A Piece of Paradise in Belize

NIKKI YOUNG



© NIKKI YOUNG

What began as a scouting trip, ended with a beachfront lot in Belize and tiny-home plans in place.

On our first day in Corozal, Belize, a local realtor showed us around, but nothing felt right. This area was too busy... that one too undeveloped...

Over lunch, feeling somewhat defeated, we talked about whether Corozal was right for us. Then four expats swung their chairs around and started telling us about where they lived... A small, quiet, established community, with ocean access—just what we were looking for.

The next day, with nothing to lose, we drove 20 minutes on an unpaved, pothole-filled road, until we reached... our piece of paradise.

The community was perfect for us. No through traffic, beach access, utilities, and welcoming people. Strangers let us tour their houses and shared their stories. It felt like home immediately, and we fell in love with one of only four available lots. Tucked away in the trees, and just about 500 yards from the warm, clear, turquoise waters of the Caribbean...

When my husband and I met in Alberta, we bonded

over our love of the ocean. We both grew up near water—me in southern England, him in Eastern Canada. But Alberta is landlocked. And Canadian winters are cold.

We talked about retiring somewhere warmer, but it seemed a long way off. We're mid-40s, so it felt like a dream for "later."



Breaking Down the Build

Our total build cost was \$69,800 (plus around \$10,000 for appliances and furniture), which we financed using equity from our Canadian home.

Here's a breakdown:

- Land purchase, stamp duty, and legal fees = \$27,000.
- Tree removal, groundwork, septic tank = \$7,000.
- Air conditioning, electrical, plumbing = \$6,500.
- Casita (including quartz countertops, handmade mahogany cabinets, and bedroom furniture) = \$28,900.

At 624 square feet (the 384-foot casita plus the porch), on a third of an acre, that's around \$111 per square foot.

It's hard to directly compare build costs, but for a tiny home in Canada, excluding land, base models can cost from \$197,000 CAD (\$145,000 USD) to \$228,000 CAD (\$159,000 USD).

Then came a pandemic. People discovered digital nomad life. And property prices started rising in countries we were considering.

We decided to buy land “now,” and build later. [Countries](#) like Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Honduras offered the warm weather and water we were looking for, but Belize had other benefits:

- It's English-speaking.
- It's a commonwealth country with a UK-based legal system.
- The currency is tied directly to the US dollar (\$1 USD = \$2 BZD).
- There's affordable land... and a low cost of living compared to North America.

So, in January 2022, we visited Caye Caulker, one of Belize's islands.

We were enamored with the Belizean people and way of life. The islands were perfect vacation destinations. But they didn't feel like home—they felt too touristy and not “real life” enough for us.

The regions of Belize are all quite different—from white sand beaches to jungle—so we kept looking.

Fast forward to January 2023 and we were back. This time, Corozal.

It's easy to access from the airport, close to Mexico for shopping and healthcare, and less developed than other areas.

Simple, but Terrifying: Buying Land and Building a Home in Belize

The lot we decided to buy was for sale privately, but the realtor recommended a lawyer who drew up a purchase agreement for us, then managed the paperwork, the transfer of funds to the buyer, and the Government of Belize “stamp duty” payment (8% of the land purchase price).

Things don't move at the same speed in Belize as they do in North America. It took 10 months for us to get our land title. And the tracking number didn't update until long after that.

In January of this year, we decided to build a wooden casita—a 16- by 24-foot cabin with a 10- by 24-foot screened porch. The small scale and simplicity meant we could have it ready in time for our next winter escape. (We'll eventually build a bigger house at the front of the lot, and the casita will be for guests.)

Homes in Belize are (usually) concrete or wood construction, and each has pros and cons. Concrete homes are more expensive, take longer to build, are harder to cool, and can be echoey. However, they are less susceptible to hurricane damage. Wood houses are cheaper and faster to build... and add to, so you can start small and grow your home over time. But there are fire and hurricane damage risks, so insurance can be pricey.

We spoke to various builders, but many people we knew had built with Herman—my husband was “in charge” of the build and had more information, but I never found out his last name! People raved about his work. He offered a higher quality finish for similar pricing, and he could fit us into his schedule right away.

Working with Herman was a real “trust the process” situation.

We found a floorplan online and tweaked it with a free app. He asked about light fixtures, plugs, doors, and windows. Then came up with a price on the hood of his car.

We shook hands and agreed to send him a 50% deposit. Simple. But terrifying.

Living and Working in Belize

When you arrive in Belize you receive a 30-day tourist visa. You can extend this at an immigration office for a fee (currently \$200 BZD per person per month). After 12 consecutive months in the country, you become eligible to apply for permanent residence.

If you wish to work (even remotely) in Belize, before getting permanent residence, there are other visa options.

A long stay permit (currently \$500 BZD per adult, about \$250 USD) allows you to stay for “a period not

exceeding six months in any calendar year,” as long as you meet employment and income requirements outside Belize.

This is perfect for us. My husband works in construction, so he doesn’t work over winter (Alberta, remember? Snow and construction don’t play nicely together), and I’ll soon be able to work fully remotely. Until we retire, we plan to be in Belize for four to five months a year. (And hopefully, with the lower cost of living, we’ll be able to retire early and make the move full-time.)

In Canada we’d have professional floorplans, contracts, and receipts. In Belize, we had a handshake and a WhatsApp message. I wouldn’t recommend it, but we had multiple references, which helped us feel more comfortable, and that was how it was to work with Herman.

Larger builders tend to work in a more North Ameri-

can way. But many things in Belize are based on trust. And local trades rely on referrals, so the word of an unhappy customer travels fast.

There are few zoning restrictions in Belize, but you do need a building permit from the Central Building Authority. This and the electrical inspection were organized by Herman.

PROPERTY TAXES? \$11 A YEAR.

Most wooden homes up to 20 x 40 foot are built at the builder’s yard to keep costs down, so our casita was built in a shipyard, about 90 minutes from our property. And since we were back in Canada during the build, we asked for photos every few days so we could keep an eye on progress.

We learned fast that you need to pay attention and question things. Everything ended up how we wanted it, but it might not have if we hadn’t pointed out things that didn’t look right in the photos. The windows above the porch roofline were initially framed at a third of the size they were supposed to be, and we ended up lowering the porch floor to increase the ceiling height after a measurement error.

March 2025: Our Tiny House Gets Delivered

Once the casita was finished, it was driven to the site on a trailer. We watched on a live stream as the building crew expertly backed the little house into position, jacked it up on blocks, and drove the trailer out from underneath.



© NIKKI YOUNG

The tiny home arrived by flatbed, was lifted into place, and now sits just 500 yards from the Caribbean Sea.



Sunset over the bay in Corozal, Belize—just minutes from the quiet seaside community Nikki and her husband now call home.

Then they poured perfectly positioned concrete pilings, tiled the bathroom, installed the kitchen and bathroom, and built the porch.

Deposit to completion was just under three months. We arrived back in Belize the week after to see the casita in person... and fell even more in love with our new home.

However you look at it, our casita was far more

affordable than it would have been in Alberta. Plus, we get the added benefit of sunshine, the ocean, and an escape from Canadian winters.

And the property taxes are unbelievable. We pay a whopping \$11 a year!

Average residential property taxes in Alberta in 2024 were \$3,730 CAD (\$2,726 USD).

In Belize, property taxes are the same for residents and non-residents alike. They're based on the assessed value of the property (which only gets reassessed when the property is sold)—even if you build.

My top tips if you're thinking about moving to Belize: Talk to the locals—they're a wealth of information. And remember, Belize is not North America—and that's part of the charm. ■

Banking and Money

Although not required, opening a local bank account is the easiest and cheapest way to access cash. But it can be tricky. The Central Bank of Belize requires non-resident applicants to prove their source of funds. And individual banks often require a reference letter from your home bank.

For day-to-day purchases we use a US credit card. But many local workers (including our builder) and smaller stores prefer cash.

Local ATMs limit daily withdrawal amounts and charge high fees, so we electronically transfer money to a friend in Belize. We use [Wise](#), so fees are about 0.5% per transfer.

Nikki Young



Nikki is a freelance writer, editor, proof-reader, and general word-nerd. A Brit by birth, Canadian by choice, and now one step closer to her forever-goal of living and working somewhere she can wear flip-flops every day.

A Dollar Crisis Is Coming... Here's How to Protect Yourself

JEFF OPDYKE



© DOUGLAS RISSING/ISTOCK

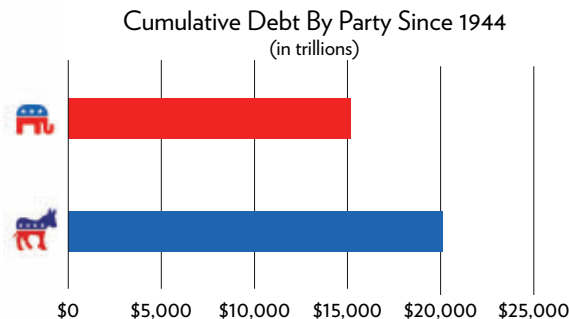
The world no longer has faith in the “full faith and credit” of the US government.

The road to hell is not paved with good intentions.

It's paved with trillions of dollars of debt, held in place by the BS that politicians spew every time they open their mouths. This is a bipartisan issue, of course. Democrats and Republicans have been equally abusive of Uncle Sam's wallet. Though one might hope that politicians would govern with a sense of financial wisdom, turns out they spend with the sense of a drunken monkey running buck wild at a banana plantation.

Here's a look at what I mean...

Democrats' stewardship of America's finances has clearly been worse in terms of profligacy, but Republicans aren't far behind, laying waste to their long-running claims that the GOP is the party of tight purse-strings. Absolute poppycock.



Thus, America's problem—by which I mean the problem that will slap all Americans at some point soon: Extreme amounts of US debt.

POLITICIANS SPEND WITH THE SENSE OF A DRUNKEN MONKEY RUNNING BUCK WILD AT A BANANA PLANTATION.

At \$37 trillion, America's debts are now so extreme that foreign investors have begun ghosting the Treasury Department by skipping the department's regular auction of Treasury debt... which in turn has helped crush demand for the US dollar. The greenback's 12% decline through the first half of the year rivals 1973 as the worst in more than half a century.

That's the rest of the world sending a message to America: We don't trust your fiscal situation; we don't trust your politics; we don't trust your ability to keep the dollar from plunging into a debt-fueled crisis.

The Great Central Bank Gold Rush—and Other Reasons to be Worried

One critical proof point: Central banks globally have been selling dollars and buying gold.

Back in the late 2010s, the dollar represented 60% of central bank assets. Today it's down to about 48%. Gold holdings that once amounted to just 12% are up to 20% now, the second largest asset on central bank balance sheets.

Central bankers are not investors. They're not plotting which assets are likely to earn them the best return over some period of time. They're bureaucrats. Bean counters charged with keeping stable the economies and currencies they oversee. To them, safety is paramount.

And their actions—selling dollars to pack on more gold—speak volumes about the dollar worries they harbor. The question they're implicitly asking: Will a

dollar crisis fuel the next great global meltdown?

If so, then best to start lining up those rows of golden ducks now.

I harbor those exact worries, too—a fact I’ve been writing about for 15 years.

Early on, telling me I was wrong was a contact-sport for some of my first readers.

Today, far fewer people challenge my concerns.

They’ve seen America’s financial, social, and political deterioration weaken the country, as I predicted. They’ve seen gold rise dramatically... as I predicted.

The thing is, though, a lot of them didn’t prepare when they had the chance. They skipped buying gold at \$1,000 when I urged them to. They skipped gold at \$1,200... \$1,500... \$2,000... \$3,000.

Now, we’re at \$3,500 and heading toward \$5,000 before doubling from there.

They skipped bitcoin at \$20,000. Now, we’re over \$120,000 and heading for 10x from here.

They skipped the Swiss franc, missing out as it gained 27% against the dollar in the last three years, a spectacular gain in the currency market.

I’ve been preparing for this for years: methodically buying physical gold, packing my brokerage and retirement accounts with particular gold-mining stocks and specific ETFs. I’ve bought six figures worth of rare and bullion gold coins over the years, often popping into local coin shops when I’m traveling just to grab an old gold coin that catches my fancy.

The largest investment in my largest mid-six-figure IRA is in Swiss francs.

I’ve gone heavy into specific cryptocurrencies that are going to survive the reckoning and then thrive in the new world of digital money that will grow out of the crisis to come.

And I’ve taken money out of the US dollar and put it into a dull, boring bank account, in Ireland, where my cash is denominated in euros and where it sits in a highly regulated banking system nowhere near as Wild West as the US system has proven to be over the last 20 years or so.

In short, since 2010, I’ve methodically been structur-

ing my financial life for a world in which the dollar is losing its power. That’s not a dig against the dollar. It’s commentary on the inevitable, based on facts I don’t control:

- US debt is unsustainable, as per Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, who last year told *60 Minutes* that America is on an “unsustainable fiscal path,” meaning that “the debt is growing faster than the economy.”
- Numerous noted economists as well as former Fed Chair Ben Bernanke have been commenting on America’s extreme debt-repayment costs, which now exceed \$1 trillion annually, more than 15% of the federal budget, the largest level in America’s peacetime history.
- The Treasury Department, as noted by Reuters and many others, has seen tepid demand among foreign investors bidding in regular auctions of Treasury debt in 2025, a sign that investors are scaling back exposure to US debt, US financial markets, and the US political environment.
- Numerous countries, including Brazil, a significant US trading partner, have begun trading directly with China in yuan rather than dollars, a trend that reduces global demand for dollars, which weakens the dollar even more and adds to inflation pressures on American families.
- The Trump administration has openly stated that it wants (and will seek) a weaker dollar in an effort to boost American manufacturing.

There’s only one way to react to all those plot points: Prepare your finances for a world in which the greenback is no longer King Dollar. Because the biggest risk of all is that a dollar in decline leads to a moment in which the rest of the world decides that they no longer need the dollar as the planet’s reserve currency.

And if that day comes to pass... personal financial life in America shifts in a radical and unexpected direction.

The Antidote to Chaos

That risk, and all the factors that beget that risk, is why I am heading to Ireland in October.

Ireland is one of the world’s premier financial hubs—with the third highest GDP per capita in the world. I have a bank account in Ireland—a handy way for any American to diversify. Plus, Ireland is just a gosh darn gorgeous place. I love being there. I’d probably live

there if I could find an Irish family to adopt me. So, this is the perfect location for a one-of-a-kind event.

For the first time, I'm holding a closed-door gathering for a very small group of my readers who want to understand fully the changes that are taking shape in America today... and in the world, since what happens in the US and with the dollar ripples through the rest of the world like a boulder dropped in a pond.

I am not being hyperbolic when I tell you that if—if—reserve currency status does go away, this American life will fracture. I know it might sound crazy given the level of costs already in the US—but life in America is cheaper today because the dollar is still the world's reserve currency. Without that, costs will explode in places people don't expect, like car leases, veterinarian bills, gasoline, and utility bills.

But even if reserve status doesn't go away, Americans need to understand why a weak dollar is inevitable, and how it flows through our financial lives. Not just our investments (they'll certainly be impacted) but our personal finances. Like: Why will a banana cream pie be pricier? Why will Starbucks have no other option but to raise prices? Why will new rims and a new set of tires be sharply more expensive than you've ever known?

Again, I know that's a weird set of items to feel the impact of a weaker dollar. But again, they are in the path of the storm. As are stainless steel sauté pans at Target; the MRI scans you need for that titanium hip replacement, which will also be pricier; the rechargeable batteries you pick up at Walgreens when you're grabbing a bottle of ibuprofen, which is going to cost noticeably more as well; and the paint and toothpaste you buy...

I could go on and on, but you get the picture: Normal, daily life in America is reliant on products that will be increasingly more costly as the dollar declines. And I'm not including tariffs in the calculation. To the degree that those stick around, well, the pain on American wallets is going to prove profoundly unbearable.

Unless you step up now to prepare your financial life.

Which is what my event in Ireland aims to help you do. Three days in a swank Dublin hotel overlooking Dublin Bay... a bit of whiskey tasting... and hearing from me and several heavy-hitters I've lined up to help you structure your finances for what is effectively the end of the dollar as we know it.



BILL
BONNER



TED
BAUMANN



RONAN
MCMAHON

Speakers at my [Future of Wealth Summit](#) in Dublin include Bill Bonner, the reclusive financial writer and founder of *International Living* who's been right about America's trajectory more times than I care to count... and *IL* Chief Global Diversification Expert Ted Baumann—who'll share second-passport secrets. Because you don't just want to diversify your finances—you want a Plan B for your lifestyle too. Plus, global real estate profits expert Ronan McMahon will be revealing his exact blueprint for finding “off-radar” properties in regions poised for explosive growth.

With the dollar and dollar assets in decline... We'll be talking about where to put your money now: The cryptocurrencies, overseas real estate markets, foreign stocks—and more—that you want to own and hold as the new world order is ushered in. ([You can read my full briefing about the event here.](#))

I'm not saying the dollar is dead. I am not saying the dollar is going to zero; currencies don't work that way. But I am saying that the value of the dollar, and the dollar's significance to the world, is in decline, and that ramifications spin out of that reality.

Those who plan for what's possible will survive and thrive.

Those who plan on the status quo remaining static... well, we're back to the beginning and that road to hell. ■

Jeff D. Opdyke



Jeff D. Opdyke is *IL*'s expert on personal finance and investing overseas, and editor of [The Global Intelligence Letter](#). Based in Portugal, he spent 17 years at *The Wall Street Journal*. His free e-letter, *Field Notes*, is full of great financial advice. [Sign up here.](#)

The Best Passport in the World?

TED BAUMANN

Are all passports created equal? Nope.

The Irish passport is currently ranked #3 worldwide by passport-ranking firm Henley & Partners. That means it offers visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 189 countries and territories. Only Singapore (193), Japan (190), and South Korea (190) outrank Ireland in visa reach.

However, the Irish passport comes with a quirk that might make it even more valuable than its rivals. A quirk far more powerful than “visa reach.”

Ireland is a member of the European Union—which means Irish citizens can live and work in any of the 27 EU countries, automatically.

Want to live in Spain? Portugal? France? Greece?

If you have Irish heritage and qualify for an Irish passport—you can live in any of those countries without having to apply for any kind of visa. All you need is your Irish passport.

But wait—there’s more!

Irish citizens can also live in any EEA country—that adds Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the Kingdom of Norway to the list of countries you can live in visa-free.

But wait—there’s even more!

Because of the complicated—often difficult—history between the islands of Britain and Ireland (Britain, of course, occupied and ruled Ireland for hundreds of years before the Irish won independence), a so-called “common travel area” exists now between the islands.

That means that holders of British passports have the right to live and work automatically in Ireland, and vice versa. So, your Republic of Ireland passport also gives you automatic access to all four nations in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). In effect, Irish citizens are the only EU citizens that still have an automatic right to live in the UK, since the UK left the EU in 2016.

Add it all up... and your Irish passport gives you the



© ESPIEGLE/ISTOCK

Ireland's greatest export might just be its citizenship.

right to live, work, or retire in a total of 34 nations across all of Europe!

Ireland also allows full dual citizenship, meaning you can retain your current nationality while reaping all the benefits of being Irish. That’s a rare combo among top-tier passports. All the countries above Ireland on the passport mobility list forbid dual citizenship.

And the best news is, if you have Irish heritage (which more than 30 million Americans do)—getting an Irish passport can be easy.

Easy Citizenship—With the Right Bloodline

Ireland has one of the most generous and easy-to-navigate ancestral citizenship systems in the world. If you can prove you have an Irish-born parent or grandparent, you’re eligible for citizenship—and a passport—without relocating to the country.

This has historically proved attractive to North Americans with Irish ancestors. It’s important to understand, however, how the process works. If...

1. **One of Your Parents Was Born in Ireland:** You are automatically an Irish citizen at birth, even if born outside Ireland. There is no need to register.

You can simply apply for an Irish passport with proof of your parent's birth in Ireland.

2. One of Your Grandparents Was Born in Ireland:

You are eligible to claim Irish citizenship by registering yourself in the Foreign Births Register (FBR). Once registered, you can apply for an Irish passport.

3. Your Great-Grandparent Was Born in Ireland:

You may qualify only if your parent (the grandchild of the Irish-born person) registered with the Foreign Births Register before you were born. If your parent was not registered before your birth, you are not eligible through that great-grandparent.

In all cases, the chain of citizenship must be unbroken. It's broken, for example, if one of your ancestors formally renounced Irish citizenship, served in the armed forces of a foreign country without permission from the Irish government, or violated a few other rare conditions.

When you're claiming ancestry through a grandparent or great-grandparent, you need to sign up on the Foreign Births Register. To do so, you need your own birth certificate, passport, and proof of address. You'll need your parents' birth certificates, passports, and marriage certificates. You'll also need a birth certificate showing your grandparent's or great-grandparent's birth in Ireland.

Create an online application at dfa.ie/citizenship/born-abroad. The fee is €278 (\$309) for adults and €153 (\$178) for those under 18. All your documents must be notarized and sent by mail to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland. Processing takes six to 12 months depending on how busy they are.

Once approved, you will receive a certificate of entry in the Foreign Births Register and can then apply for an Irish passport.

Once registered, your future children can also claim Irish citizenship through you—if they are born after your registration. Unfortunately, children born before you have had your Irish citizenship confirmed aren't eligible.

Would You Want to Move Here?

So, you've got your Irish passport. But would you actually want to live in Ireland? (After all, you can use your Irish passport to live pretty much anywhere in Europe.)

It rains a lot. 225 days out of the year, according to

some estimates. That's nearly 66% of the time!

It's one of the most expensive countries in the world. It ranked just a few spots below the US in a [survey](#) by payment platform Wise.com. (The US was #9 and Ireland #14. Switzerland, the Bahamas, and Iceland took the top three spots.)

Land of myths and legends? Bah! These days you're more likely to find Ireland playing host to multinational corporations like Google, Amazon, and a host of US pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Eli Lilly, based there for the tax breaks.

THE RIGHT TO LIVE, WORK, OR RETIRE IN A TOTAL OF 34 NATIONS ACROSS ALL OF EUROPE!

But actually... that last point gets to the heart of modern Ireland. And its appeal today.

Not so long ago, the Irish Republic was an economic basket case.

From the foundation of the Republic in 1922 until the late 1980s, Ireland was largely agricultural. Protectionist policies got in the way of industrial development. The government borrowed large amounts of money to try to kickstart the economy.

Those policies didn't work, and millions of Irish citizens emigrated to find better opportunities elsewhere. It was often said of Ireland that its best exports were its people.

Starting in the mid-1980s, the country undertook a series of reforms in education, industrial policy, taxation, and trade. Government, business, and labor concluded social pacts that focused on growing the economy for everyone's benefit.

From 1995 to 2007, Ireland grew at annual rates of 7% to 10%. Sectors like technology, finance, construction, and pharmaceuticals boomed on the back of huge foreign investment especially from multinational technology firms. The country's per capita income went from one of the lowest to one of the highest in Europe in a little over a decade. Immigration reversed itself, and Ireland became a magnet for immigrants.

After a period of hardship due to the collapse of the global financial bubble in 2007, Ireland resumed its

upward march. Today, the country is ranked at the very top when it comes to the ease of creating a new business.

Ireland became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world (9.7% growth in the first quarter of 2025)... with one of the highest GDPs per capita in the world (by purchasing power parity, it's ranked #3 globally, on par with Monaco and beaten only by Luxembourg and Singapore; the US is #9)... by fashioning itself as a sort-of Singapore-on-the-Atlantic: low corporate tax rates, and an economy open to the world.

But of course, a booming economy is not the only attraction.

I joked about it earlier—but you can still come and experience amazing history here, with ancient Celtic ringforts, Tudor mansions, and some of the oldest public houses in the world (of course) still standing.

For North Americans with Irish heritage, the lure of the homeland and experiencing a piece of that history can prove irresistible... they don't even mind the rain. And the high quality of life makes up for the relatively expensive cost.

You can move to a small town and hike every day in the nearby mountains, go trout fishing in the River Shannon... or enjoy the cosmopolitan life in Dublin (the Doobie Brothers and Simply Red are playing in the coming months at Dublin's 3Arena, where former president Barack Obama is also set to appear at an event). And because the island is so small, nothing is more than five hours away by car.

Healthcare is excellent, ranked 6th overall in the world by CEOWorld. The public system—which you will qualify for as a resident—is inexpensive but also inefficient, with long wait times. Most middle-class Irish also have private health insurance, which gives you access to private hospitals and quicker treatment, though it's mostly used for elective care. A comprehensive policy costs about \$250 a month per person.

Now for the Bad News...

If you don't have Irish heritage (especially an Irish parent or grandparent)—the barriers start going up, in terms of being able to move to Ireland. And ultimately get an Irish passport.

For non-EU or CTA citizens, the quickest way to Irish residency is through a Critical Skills Employment Permit. This applies to high demand occupations in IT, engineering, healthcare, and other technical sectors.

Living in Ireland on this visa can lead to permanent residency in as little as two years.

For people with independent passive income, such as retirees, Ireland offers so-called Stamp 0 or Stamp 1 visas. The first is granted to people who are retired and can demonstrate sufficient income and savings to sustain themselves. The second is for non-retired people who can also look after themselves in Ireland on passive income.

In both cases the immigration authorities look for a combination of suitable monthly income and sufficient savings to see a person through at least 12 months without it. There are various ways to calculate the income and savings requirements and much depends on the individual's circumstances. As a rule of thumb people should have enough money saved in an Irish bank to be able to buy an average residential home. The median property price in Ireland is \$420,000—and nearly double that in some parts of Dublin.

When you consider that some countries in Europe only require you to show passive income of about \$1,000 a month to get a visa, Ireland is pretty expensive compared to most places on the *IL* beat.

But if steeper costs and rainy days don't bother you... If you can't resist the draw of an Irish *ceilidh* or the way the light hits Lough Derg in autumn... Ireland could be your paradise.

Citizenship by naturalization is possible after five years of legal residency. People who are living in Ireland on work permits, investor visas and other forms of temporary residency can count years spent under those statuses toward naturalization. However, some statuses, including people in Ireland on Stamp 0 and Stamp 1, don't always have their time credited towards naturalization.

If citizenship is your goal, it's important to have someone help you to ensure you get the right status. I'm available if you want to chat—you can book a personal consultation with me [here](#). ■

Ted Baumann



Ted Baumann is *IL*'s [Global Diversification Expert](#), focused on strategies to expand your investments, lower your taxes, and preserve your wealth overseas.

Seaside Living in Spain's Last "Authentic" City... A Taste of Havana in the Old Country

CEPEE TABIBIAN



© HORST GERLACH/ISTOCK



Cádiz offers affordable coastal living, deep-rooted traditions, and something rare in Spain—authenticity untouched by mass tourism.

I finally made it back to Cádiz.

For years, it lingered in the back of my mind. My first and only visit was over a decade ago. Since then, I've returned to the surrounding province many times, drawn to the powdery beaches of **Tarifa** and **Bolonia** and their blissfully cool summer air. But I never made it back to the capital itself. Until now. After this trip, I can't help but wonder what took me so long.

Perched on a narrow slice of land jutting into the Atlantic, this sun-drenched city is almost entirely surrounded by water. It's the capital of Cádiz province, a region beloved by Spaniards for its wild beaches and wind-swept dunes along the **Costa de la Luz**. Unlike the crowded, built-up resorts of the **Costa del Sol**, this is where Andalusians come to escape the heat.

With its pastel buildings, a cathedral gleaming over the sea, and a breezy, palm-lined promenade, it's no wonder people have nicknamed it "Little Havana." But

Cádiz doesn't need to borrow charm—it stands firmly on its own, with a culture that feels entirely unique.

When I came here in 2008, it was for a quick Semana Santa (Holy Week) getaway from Madrid. Back then, Cádiz struck me as a quiet escape from the hustle and bustle. To my surprise, that sense of stillness hasn't changed a bit.





In Cádiz, Spain's oldest city, the view at sunset is just as timeless as the lifestyle.

In a country that sees more tourists than nearly anywhere else on Earth, it's rare to find a city that still feels untouched, at least by Americans. Cádiz has long been a summer escape for Spaniards and the occasional European, but English is scarce here. What you get instead is a city that still feels unmistakably Andalusian, with a cost of living under \$2,000 per month for two people.

That's exactly what pulled me in. I didn't come to Cádiz just to check it off a list. I wanted to understand what it might feel like to make a life here... in a place that's beautiful and affordable, yes—but also slow-paced, rooted in tradition, and wonderfully authentic. So, I packed my bags...

Remnants of the Past: A City Shaped by its 3,000-Year History

A defensible near-island with excellent access to trade routes, the city was founded around 1100 BCE by Phoenician traders who named it Gadir. The Greeks and Carthaginians came next; Hannibal himself is

Insider tip: Catch a glimpse of historic Cádiz with a climb to the top of [Torre Tavira](#)—the former lookout tower offers one of the best views in town.

said to have launched his legendary campaign from here. Under the Romans, it became Gades, which is why today you'll hear locals refer to themselves as *gaditanos*. Remnants of temples, aqueducts, and even a Roman theater still peek through the modern-day city.

After the fall of Rome, Cádiz passed through the hands of Visigoths and Byzantines before the Moors took over in 711 CE. Renaming it Jazīrat Qādis, they left their mark in the old town's narrow, shaded alleyways—cleverly designed to keep the summer sun at bay.

In 1262, Alfonso X of Castile reclaimed the city, integrating it into Christian Spain.

By the 18th century, Cádiz had monopolized trade with the Americas. With new wealth came grand baroque architecture, merchant mansions, and watchtowers that still rise above the skyline.

Today, Cádiz is a small city with a shrinking population (just over 110,000) and its charm lies in what hasn't changed. The original skyline is protected—by law, no building in the old town can stand taller than the cathedral. And while there's a newer section of the city, it hasn't been swallowed by luxury condos or glossy developments. Cádiz remains refreshingly itself.

Daily life in Cádiz is shaped by its stunning natural

Wild & Free: Carnival In Cádiz

Few events capture the spirit of Cádiz like its Carnival. With roots stretching back to the 16th century and inspired by Venice's masked celebrations, Cádiz added its own spin over time.

Here, Carnival is as much about wit as it is about wild costumes. Think Halloween meets political satire. Instead of elegant masks, locals dress up as bananas, bullfighters, or spoof versions of public figures. The real stars, though, are the *chirigotas*—farcical musical groups, usually 20-40 strong, whose clever, biting songs poke fun at politics, social issues, and life in Cádiz itself.

These groups compete in the famed Gran Teatro Falla in the weeks leading up to Carnival, delivering performances that are equal parts comedy and commentary. The city practically buzzes with anticipation.

Even under Franco's dictatorship, when Carnival was officially banned, Cádiz kept the tradition alive behind closed doors. That defiant humor—joyful, sharp, and unapologetically local—still defines the celebration today. Carnival here isn't just a party; it's a city-wide love letter to freedom of expression and the *gaditano* sense of humor.

setting and deeply rooted local culture. The city's waterfront promenades invite residents to live outside. Strolling along the **Playa Victoria**, surfing, hiking, and dining al fresco are part of everyday life. The relaxed beach-town atmosphere encourages slowing down and disconnecting.

That easy pace, along with the natural beauty and ocean views, has long attracted creatives. Local artists often draw inspiration from the golden-hour glow that blankets the old town, the curve of the bay, and the everyday scenes of coastal life. I stumbled upon a tiny studio by the artist [Sara Ochoa](#) and nearly walked out with a painting of a **Playa de la Caleta** sunset, but in the end, I couldn't figure out where I'd hang it. So I saved my wallet... and my walls. The [Omorfia Art Gallery](#) also showcases local talent in rotating exhibits.

Once a fishing town, its lively heritage remains visible in bustling markets and a strong tradition of fresh seafood. You'll see it in the daily catches hauled into the **Mercado Central de Abastos**, where locals haggle for just-caught tuna. It's best to go before 2 p.m., when most vendors start packing up for the day.

Prefer to eat out? [Casa Lazo](#) is a no-frills, traditional Spanish restaurant known for its unfussy, delicious fish dishes. The owner, Eduardo, took our order himself and insisted we try the grilled sea bream for two. It was perfectly charred, flaky, and full of flavor. But the real surprise was the *papas aliñás*, a humble dish of cold boiled potatoes doused in olive oil and vinegar, with slivers of onion on top. Simple, but so good we were practically fighting over the last bite, and all washed down with a glass of Barbadillo, a

local white wine. Book ahead and plan to linger over a long, late lunch—just like the *gaditanos* do.

The plazas buzz with locals of all ages throughout the day and into the night. With about 25% of the population over 65, there's a tight-knit community feel, but don't expect the city to quiet down early. Dinner here typically starts around 9:30 or 10 p.m., as is tradition across Spain.

Cádiz is famous for its sharp wit and humor, too. Locals are often called the funniest people in the country.

Locals are warm and welcoming to expats, and the unique *gaditano* dialect adds charm to everyday conversations. Terms like *Cai* (a loving nickname for Cádiz) and *quillo* or *quilla* (masculine and feminine versions of a term of endearment) are peppered into daily speech. I even heard *guachisnai*, a playful word for English-speaking foreigners that's said to come from the phrase "What's your name?"

Beautifully Off the Beaten Path

What makes Cádiz such a hidden gem, particularly for North American expats, is how wonderfully under the radar it remains. Unlike Spain's more famous cities, Cádiz hasn't been overrun by tourists or expats chasing the buzz. Here, you can live comfortably on less than \$2,000 a month for two people, making it an incredibly affordable option... one where you don't have to sacrifice quality of life.

But Cádiz offers more than just a budget-friendly lifestyle. It's steeped in rich culture—local festivals,

How to Live Long-Term in Spain

Spain offers several long-term visa options for non-EU nationals seeking extended stays, including the Non-Lucrative Visa, Entrepreneur Visa, and Digital Nomad Visa.

The Non-Lucrative Visa is aimed at retirees and individuals with passive income who wish to live in Spain without working locally. Applicants must prove sufficient financial resources—typically around €30,000 annually—along with private health insurance and a clean criminal record. This visa grants an initial one-year residency, renewable in two-year increments, and time spent in Spain counts toward permanent residency after five years.

The Entrepreneur Visa is for those planning to establish innovative businesses in Spain. Applicants must submit a detailed business plan, which Spanish authorities assess for economic potential and innovation. This visa allows the holder to reside in Spain while developing the business and

is renewable, leading toward long-term residency and eventual citizenship. But beware: Spain doesn't allow dual citizenship.

Introduced in 2023, the Digital Nomad Visa caters to remote workers employed by companies outside Spain or self-employed individuals with international clients. Applicants must prove stable remote income and hold private health insurance. This visa initially grants a residence permit for up to one year, extendable to five years, with time counting toward permanent residency. Unlike the Non-Lucrative Visa, Digital Nomad Visa holders can legally work remotely from Spain.

Overall, Spain's long-term visa options are designed to attract financially self-sufficient individuals, entrepreneurs, and remote workers who contribute economically while living in the country, offering a clear path to permanent residency.

—Ted Baumann

flamenco rhythms, and centuries-old customs are part of everyday life. This makes it especially appealing to retirees and digital nomads looking for a slower pace and craving inspiration beyond the usual urban hubs.

A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT IN THE CITY CENTER FOR \$950.

Another undeniable advantage is its location. Cádiz is a small town with a relaxed, seaside vibe, but when you crave more action, dining, cultural events, or expat communities, larger cities like Seville and Jerez are just a short drive away.

What It Really Costs to Live in Cádiz

Compared to Spain's bigger cities, housing in Cádiz remains quite accessible. The peninsula location restricts new construction, making homes a sought-after commodity. And renovating older buildings can be expensive due to strict preservation rules—but overall, property prices remain appealing compared to larger Spanish cities.

To get a better sense of the property market, I spoke

with Domingo from [Innysse](#). Smaller fixer-uppers start at roughly €275,000 (\$320,119), similar to **Málaga** before prices surged, while newer two-bedroom flats in the old town usually begin near €400,000 (\$465,628).

For rentals, you can still find renovated, unfurnished one- or two-bedroom apartments starting at about €850 monthly, though €1,000+ is becoming more common. With growing interest from European buyers, it's expected that property costs will continue to rise in the coming years.

When it comes to food and groceries, prices are fair. My dinner at Casa Lazo, mentioned above, included garlic shrimp, seasoned potatoes, a whole sea bream for two, wine, and dessert, all for around €70. For a typical lunch experience, it's a good idea to stop at [Taberna Casa Manteca](#) in the **La Viña neighborhood**.

Domingo with [Innysse](#) real estate.

Calle Barrié, 25, 11001 Cádiz; tel +34 856 10 01 87; email: info@innysse.es.



Outside Taberna Casa Manteca, *IL*'s Spain Correspondent explores where locals go for classic tapas and good company.

Established in 1953, this iconic tavern is adorned with vintage memorabilia and is renowned for its traditional Andalusian tapas. You can't go wrong with the famed *tortillitas de camarones* (crispy shrimp fritters), *chicharrones especiales* (thinly sliced pork belly with sea salt and lemon), and *mojama* (air-cured tuna). With tapas priced around €2-€4, you simply won't break the bank when dining out.

For around \$2,000 a month, a couple can live comfortably in Cádiz—and even enjoy a few extras. A renovated one- or two-bedroom apartment in the historic center starts at about \$950 a month. Basic

utilities (electricity, water, gas, and internet) run roughly \$135 to \$210 a month. Cellphone plans start as low as \$25 per month per person.

Private health insurance for expats typically ranges from \$70 to \$170 a month depending on age and coverage, with most routine visits costing little to nothing out of pocket. Even with transportation, such as a monthly round-trip train to Seville (\$38), you'll still have room in your budget for tapas, cultural outings, and the occasional day trip.

What Healthcare Dreams Are Made of

Have you ever experienced the rare sensation of reverse sticker shock? I did, when I first moved to Madrid. If you're an American, the quality and affordability of Spanish healthcare can feel almost too good to be true. Healthcare is hands-down one of the biggest perks of living in Spain. Access to public and private care is both affordable and high quality.

EXPERIENCE THE RARE SENSATION OF REVERSE STICKER SHOCK—HEALTH INSURANCE FROM \$70 A MONTH.

Cádiz itself has a few local clinics and public health centers that cover most day-to-day needs, but for more specialized care or larger hospitals, residents often travel to nearby Jerez de la Frontera or Seville. Both cities are home to well-equipped public hospitals and a range of private medical centers. For most people, especially retirees or expats applying for residency visas, private insurance is required and the

The Perks & Quirks

For those seeking an affordable, sun-drenched coastal city with a distinctly local vibe, Cádiz has a lot to offer. From housing prices to groceries and experiences, it remains an affordable option for European coastal living. And with over 300 days of sunshine per year, it enjoys warm summers and gentle winters.

Fresh seafood, tapas, and local wines are a way of life here, with markets and neighborhood eateries offering excellent quality at great prices. However,

while the food is excellent, it's primarily all Spanish.

You'll also have to adjust to the slower pace, limited infrastructure, and seasonal rhythms. (Summers bring an influx of visitors, making parts of the city feel overcrowded and bumping up prices temporarily.)

As for the language barrier, you can get by, but you'll need to learn Spanish to build community and integrate with locals. The local *gaditano* dialect can be challenging, even for fluent Spanish speakers.

way to go as it offers faster appointments and access to English-speaking doctors.

[Gidea-Insbrok](#) (sign up with my affiliate link) is a highly recommended insurance broker that works specifically with expats in Spain. The company makes it easy to compare plans that meet visa requirements, whether you're applying for a non-lucrative visa, digital nomad visa, or something else entirely. Through their platform, you can get quotes from Spain's top private providers like Sanitas, Adeslas, Asisa, and DKV. Since it's a brokerage, rates are often better than what you'll find going direct.

Private health insurance plans generally range from €60-€150 a month, depending on your age and coverage needs, and many come with low or no copays. For something as routine as a dermatologist visit or physical therapy session, it's not uncommon to pay under €100 out of pocket when seeing a provider out of network.

Who Will Thrive in Cádiz (and Who Might Not)

Cádiz has a quiet magic to it, but it's not for everyone.

This is a city for those who crave authenticity over convenience. It's best suited to the curious and adaptable, the kinds of people who get excited about diving into a new language, embracing local rhythms, and living where tradition still shapes daily life. If you're looking for a place where you can live well on less, walk everywhere, and feel like part of a real community, Cádiz might just be your place.

That said, if you rely on nonstop flights, big-city

energy, or want a built-in English-speaking expat network, Cádiz may feel a bit too out of the way.

Journey to the Edge of Spain (It's Worth It)

Unlike Málaga, Valencia, or Barcelona, it takes a bit more effort to get to Cádiz—which helps keep the crowds away. The nearest airport is in Jerez de la Frontera, about 30 minutes by car, while Seville Airport is larger and around an hour and 15 minutes away. There are regular trains and buses to Seville and Madrid.

Once you arrive, Cádiz is a dream for anyone hoping to live car-free. The city is flat and compact, making it easy to explore on foot. (I was able to walk from one side of the city to the other in about 20 minutes!) Just note that the cobblestone streets in Old Town can be tough if you have mobility issues.

CÁDIZ IS A DREAM FOR ANYONE HOPING TO LIVE CAR-FREE.

There's also a growing bike culture, and a breezy passenger ferry connects Cádiz to **El Puerto de Santa María** across the bay, perfect for a day trip of tapas and sherry tastings. Local buses cover most neighborhoods, though public transit is somewhat limited compared to bigger cities.

If you're planning a scouting trip, skip the rental car and stay in the historic center to get a real feel for

Worth the Drive: Zahara de los Atunes & Bolonia Beaches

If you've got a car and a free afternoon, the beaches of Zahara de los Atunes and Bolonia are well worth the one-hour drive from Cádiz (they're also just 30 minutes apart).

Zahara is a charming whitewashed town known for tuna, specifically the prized Atlantic bluefin tuna. I stopped there on a caravan trip from Malaga in 2022 to eat at [Trasteo](#), a Michelin Guide recommendation, famous for its creative bluefin tuna dishes.

I didn't have time to see the beaches, but they're known for miles of golden sand and a laid-back vibe. Bolonia beach, on the other hand, I did get to visit—

and I'm still dreaming about it. Just outside Tarifa, this wild beach is all white, powdery sand and turquoise water that looks like the Caribbean. But don't be fooled, it's the Atlantic, which means it's cold! Refreshing on a hot summer day.

No crowds, no lounge chairs or built-up boardwalks, just sand dunes, calm water, a few rustic *chiringuitos*—what Spaniards call open-air restaurants on the beach—and a whole lot of peace and quiet.

Bolonia is one of my favorite beaches in Spain, hands down.



History meets beach-town ease where every street feels like a postcard in Old Town Cádiz.

daily life. That said, if you want to explore the wider province having a car helps. Rentals are affordable (I paid just \$150 for four days), and driving through the Cádiz countryside is part of the experience.

Planning Your Scouting Trip

A visit is the best way to get a feel for daily life before making the leap. Base yourself in the historic center where you'll be walkable to the beach, market, and local cafés. Vacation rentals and boutique guest-houses offer a great introduction to the local lifestyle without sacrificing comfort. I recommend coming for at least two weeks, but a month or longer is best to truly get a sense of the rhythm and routine. For a longer stay, choose one of the following neighborhoods and experience the most authentic Cádiz lifestyle.

Where to Live: Palm-lined Streets and Flamenco

- El Pópulo:** The oldest neighborhood in Cádiz, El Pópulo is perfect for history lovers. Picture narrow cobblestone streets, Roman ruins, and ancient archways—it's like walking through a living museum. The area is filled with landmarks like the Roman Theater, Cádiz Cathedral, and Arco del Pópulo. I loved getting lost here, then stumbling upon a historic pastry shop from the 1800s, [Confitería el Populo](#). Here you can find renovated apartments inside centuries-old buildings. Noise can be
- La Viña:** If you want local flavor and lively street life, La Viña is your *barrio*. This working-class neighborhood has lots of color and character, where everyday life spills out onto the streets. In this corner of Cádiz, friendly neighbors know each other and the energy kicks up during Carnival, which basically started here. It's also home to Playa de la Caleta, a small but iconic beach where I caught a colorful sunset before wandering the palm-tree-lined pedestrian street, calle la Palma. The area's personality is a big plus, but if you're looking for peace and quiet, La Viña might not be your best match. Parking is also a struggle, so this one's best for folks who want to live car-free in the heart of it all.
- Santa María:** With deep flamenco roots and a down-to-earth feel, Santa María is known as the cradle of flamenco in Cádiz, and you'll still hear strains of guitar and song drifting out of open windows. While some buildings are in need of repair, this area is slowly changing, creative spaces are popping up, and there's a growing community of artists and students. This neighborhood is a bit rougher around the edges and still finding its way between tradition and change. Located in the old town as well, parking is hard to come by.
- El Mentidero:** Quiet, residential, and easy to fall in love with, El Mentidero is located just north of the old town, it's close enough to walk everywhere, and has a mix of historic and contemporary architecture. You'll find leafy plazas like Plaza del Mentidero and Plaza San Antonio, plus Parque Genovés—a historic garden going back to the 1800s. I almost stayed at the ultra-modern [Parador de Cádiz](#) located right on the Atlantic, but opted for the historic center, and passed by daily during my stay and noticed how calm and neighborly it felt. The Mentidero is a great choice if you want central living without the late-night noise. Parking is slightly easier to find here.
- Bahía Blanca:** Just outside the old town, Bahía Blanca is a more modern, residential neighborhood with green spaces and easy access to both the beach and transportation (you're close to the train and bus stations). It's actually one of the most expensive and sought after areas in Cádiz, with condos ranging from €400,000 (\$465,610) to €1,000,000 (\$1,164,025). I wandered through Bahía Blanca on

my way to Santa María del Mar beach and the historic feel of the old town slowly gave way to a more contemporary vibe. Housing here is usually newer and more spacious—though prices will reflect that. If you want modern comforts, fewer tourists, easy beach access, and the possibly of a building with parking, Bahía Blanca is worth checking out.

I stayed in a historic home that's been transformed into a boutique hotel called [Áurea Casa Palacio Sagasta](#), a beautifully restored Baroque mansion from the mid-18th century. I spent afternoons sipping cava (Spain's version of Champagne) in the central courtyard, which now serves as the lobby, beneath a glass-and-iron rooftop and in front of the grand imperial staircase built in 1860. The hotel is located in the heart of Cádiz's old town, on a quiet stretch of one of its main historic streets. Perfect for wandering out into the maze of cobbled stone streets scattered with tapas bars, family-run shops, and traditional restaurants.

(Another gem is [Casa Cánovas](#), with its lavish design and old-world charm.)

If you're considering a move to Cádiz, set aside time on your scouting trip to talk to real estate agents and get information on deposits, rental contracts, what's included in the price, how quickly inventory moves, and pet policies. Wandering around your desired neighborhoods is essential so you can get a sense for amenities such as supermarkets, parks, and clinics. Get your hair cut, go to a gym, ask for your medication at a pharmacy, and if you're feeling adventurous, get your teeth cleaned—these activities will give you a feel for life here.

Spring (April–June) and fall (late September–November) are ideal times to visit for good weather. You'll skip the summer crowds and stifling heat, but still enjoy long, sunny days perfect for exploring. (Summer can get busy, especially with Spanish holidaymakers, while winter, though mild, is quieter and less vibrant.)

Over the years I've been lucky to see more than just Cadiz, so I encourage you to use Cádiz as your home base to explore the surrounding gems of the province; each side trip will feel like stepping into a different world. Take a quick train ride to Jerez de la Frontera and sample the local sherry at [Bodegas Fundador](#), the oldest bodega in town, dating back to 1730. I tried a nutty, amber-colored oloroso and a sweet, rich Pedro Ximénez that tasted like dessert in a glass. If you're up for something more unique, catch an equestrian ballet (yes, that's a thing!) at the [Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art](#). I went in 2007 and let me

tell you, seeing Spanish horses dancing to flamenco music is not something you ever forget.

Or head to the hilltop town of Vejer de la Frontera, about an hour away by car or bus. One of Andalucía's famous pueblos blancos, wander the ancient white-washed walls, constructed in the 11th–15th century, that are covered with potted plants and winding streets that blend Moorish and Christian architecture. Don't leave without taking a photo in the old Jewish quarter at the Arco de la Monjas (Arch of the Nuns) for a stunning view of the town framed by the arches.

And if it's beach vibes you're after, Tarifa is just an hour's drive and absolutely worth it. It's the kite-surfing capital of Europe so the winds are no joke, but with endless white sands and the laid-back, boho energy of the town, it's the kind of place that makes you want to stay longer. This whole corner of Spain is full of Andalusian delights.

A City That Stays With You

Returning to Cádiz after all these years, I finally understand what kept calling me back. It's not just the stunning coastline or the pastel hues of its historic streets, it's the quiet pulse of daily life here, the deep-rooted culture that hasn't been diluted by overdevelopment, and the warmth of a community that still feels truly local. If any place can preserve its unique soul amid change, it's Cádiz.

As tourism continues to grow across Spain, this city feels like a quiet sanctuary. Living here as an expat means embracing a slower pace, discovering hidden corners, and becoming part of a town that values authenticity. While it may not offer the nonstop buzz of a big city, what Cádiz lacks in size it more than makes up for in affordability, and that unmistakable Andalusian spirit. ■

Cepee Tabibian



Cepee Tabibian is *IL*'s Spain Correspondent and the founder of [She Hit Refresh](#), a community helping women fast-track their move abroad. In 2015 at 35 years young, she left Texas behind to start over in Spain—and now empowers thousands of women to move to Europe through her masterclass and membership community.

The Formula I Use to Make a Fortune in Real Estate

RONAN McMAHON



© ELIJAH LOVKOFF/ISTOCK

A new airport. A paved road. A celebrity spark. The fuse is lit... and the Path of Progress begins to ignite.

In the summer of 1956, just outside Orlando, citrus grower Ray Collier watched as surveyors drove stakes along the edge of his family's groves. For generations, they'd worked that land—planting, harvesting, enduring freezes and storms. But now, those stakes marked the route of something unfamiliar: the first stretch of what would become Interstate 4.

The government offered a fair price for the right-of-way, and the local paper called it a marvel of modern planning. Still, Ray saw it as a disruption, a break in the familiar rhythm of the groves. What he couldn't see yet was that it was also the start of a fortune.

Within a decade, Ray's farmland sat on the edge of one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the Southeast. Orlando was booming. The citrus rows gave way to gas stations, motels, shopping centers, and eventually subdivisions. The Colliers leased land to hotel developers, sold parcels to theme park suppliers, and watched sleepy farmland transform into a springboard for generational wealth.

This is the power of a "Path of Progress" event—where real estate meets transformative technology. Railroads turned tiny towns into thriving hubs. The car fueled the rise of suburbia. Jet technology created mass tourism. And the interstate highways reshaped

America, just as steamboats and railroads had done before them.

When technology shifts where we can live, work, or vacation, it rewrites the rules of real estate. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 did just that. It supercharged Florida's growth, turning orange groves and pine flatwoods into suburbs, resorts, and business parks.

For those who held real estate along these new arteries of progress, highways didn't just move traffic—they moved wealth. And they unlocked opportunity that could last for generations.

Here's a fundamental fact: Real estate fortunes—big and small—are made at moments of great transformation. That's why, for over 20 years, I've devoted myself to finding big transformations I can follow, get ahead of, and profit from.

As real estate investors, we want to buy ahead of huge demand, right? It's at the core of what my [Real Estate Trend Alert \(RETA\)](#) group is all about. It's why my team and I travel so much. How do we find out where there's going to be huge demand?

We follow Paths of Progress.

I have a formula...

Access + Desire + Catalyst = Demand

Access is vital. A lot of people have to be able to get there easily. Think airports with multiple direct flights, highways that reduce travel time, and ports that welcome cruise ships and cargo. A destination that's hard to reach may stay undiscovered forever, no matter how beautiful it is.

But access alone is not enough...

Desire. It's a place people want to be. Somewhere that offers the practical ingredients for a great lifestyle and also outstanding amenities. A nice climate, beautiful beaches, lots to do... from restaurants to marinas to golf courses. A place that caters to many

markets... retirees, families, couples, party-goers, beach bums, and remote working professionals.

Access and desire can lead to growth. But the most spectacular Path of Progress events have a **catalyst**...

The catalyst is the spark. It's the story, the celebrity, the policy, the buzz, the incentive—the moment the world starts paying attention. Without a catalyst, access and desire might sit dormant for years. With one? The whole engine fires.

The real turning point for Orlando came when Walt Disney purchased 27,000 acres close by in 1965. Disney picked the location largely because of I-4, Florida's Turnpike, and proximity to the Orlando Jetport (later Orlando International Airport). When Walt Disney World opened in 1971, it kicked off explosive growth in tourism, hospitality, logistics, and real estate.

Often, the catalyst is not a single big dramatic event. More often, it's a convergence—a handful of things lining up just right. A new airport expansion. A burst of celebrity buzz. A change in government policy. A big-name investor or developer planting a flag. A tax incentive that shifts the equation. The kindling's already there—but the catalyst is what lights it.

I've seen this formula play out in spectacular ways in some of the world's most beautiful and desirable destinations.

And over the last 20 years, *RETA* members have positioned themselves ahead of the world's greatest Paths of Progress to spectacular effect.

Let's take a closer look at real-life examples of this Path of Progress in action in three of the top destinations on my real estate beat...

Cabo San Lucas, Mexico – Cabo is one of the world's most prestigious and beautiful getaways—a place that has undergone a phenomenal transformation. Once a secluded playground for Hollywood stars and European royalty, it's now easily accessible with direct flights from across the US and Canada.

It all began with a starlet. Lucille Bremer was a dancer who moved from stage to screen, starring in the 1944 hit *Meet Me in St. Louis*. But Hollywood wasn't her true calling. In 1948, she fell in love with Abelardo Luis Rodriguez, the son of a Mexican president who discovered a hidden paradise at the tip of Baja California. Together they built Rancho Las Cruces, the area's first resort, and lured their celebrity friends to this exclusive escape.

For decades, Cabo remained the preserve of the rich and famous—accessible only by private planes and yachts. But over time, with new roads and an international airport, Cabo evolved. The real estate market followed suit, catering to jet-setters with second homes worth millions. And when economic downturns struck, like the 2007 crisis, savvy investors—like my *RETA* group—spotted unique opportunities.

In 2015, *RETA* members seized one of these moments. At Copala, a luxury condo development, I negotiated extraordinary prices thanks to the developer's shift from timeshares to residential condos. I personally bought a two-bed, two-bath ocean-view condo for \$336,156. In September 2022 I got an email from a real estate agent saying they had buyers ready to pull the trigger and asking would I sell for around \$600,000 (I didn't). This year, a condo in my building similar to mine listed for \$729,000.

MY FORMULA HAS ONE KEY INGREDIENT... THE PATH OF PROGRESS.

Cabo is a destination where the transformation continues, driven by billions invested in resorts, infrastructure, and luxury amenities. Names like Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, and Nobu now dot the coastline, attracting new waves of high-net-worth buyers and creating an ongoing shortage of best-in-class properties.

Cabo has been the site of some of *RETA*'s most successful deals. For example, in August 2021, I brought a deal to *RETA* members in a community called Cabo Costa. The starting price for *RETA* members was from \$188,200 for two-bed, two-bath ocean-view condos. In May 2025, a condo that was available to *RETA* members for \$197,300 listed for \$380,000—that's \$191,800 more.

But opportunities here are rare and precious—tight permitting and limited land mean the right properties are few. But when we find them, the rewards can be outstanding. And as Cabo's Path of Progress expands along the Baja peninsula, we'll be ready for what comes next.

The Algarve, Portugal – What's better than one Path of Progress? Two at the same time!

That's exactly what I've been tracking across Portugal's Algarve—a region where opportunity and

beauty come together along one of Europe's most spectacular coastlines.

Over the past decade, Portugal has transformed from a country weighed down by the global financial crisis into one of Europe's most desirable destinations for tourists, expats, and real estate investors. I've explored the length and breadth of the country, but it's the Algarve, in the far south, where the most exciting opportunities are emerging.

The Algarve offers more than 300 days of sunshine a year, world-class golf, fresh seafood, whitewashed villages, and dramatic cliffs that plunge into the Atlantic. This perfect-weather destination draws millions of visitors each year from across Europe—and now increasingly from North America.

What makes the Algarve truly special is the twin Path of Progress I see unfolding. To the west of Faro airport, development rolled through Vilamoura toward Lagos, delivering resort communities, golf courses, and profitable deals for *Real Estate Trend Alert* members.

For example, *RETA* members had the chance to own two-bed condos in the Adega community in November 2020 from €348,000 (\$386,280). A local contact says one sold for €600,000 (\$666,000) recently. That's an uplift of €252,000 (\$280,000).

In December 2019, I brought *RETA* members a deal to own stunning luxurious condos in the Santa Maria community in Lagos from €310,500 (\$345,000). Today, a two-bed condo in Santa Maria is listing for €725,000 (\$805,000). That's an astonishing uplift of €414,500 (\$460,000).

To the east, places like Tavira and Cabanas are still emerging. Here you'll find traditional charm, uncrowded beaches, and new attention from tourists and investors. This area offers some of the greatest potential for future growth.

In the Algarve, progress is pushing out from both directions—and smart investors can still ride this wave of opportunity.

Costa Rica's Gold Coast – Costa Rica's northern Pacific coast—near the border with Nicaragua—is where the original Path of Progress story in this country began. And it's a path that's still delivering today. This is Costa Rica's sunniest region, home to some of its most beautiful beaches. It boomed before the housing crash, rebounded in the years since, and has firmly established itself as a top destination for

luxury tourism and savvy investors.

Long before the tourist boom, this was cattle country. The beaches were empty, the surf was good, and visitors were few. It took grit to get here—the road from San José was rough, the journey long. Those who came were surfers, sport-fishermen, and adventurers. Small mom-and-pop hotels and rustic B&Bs were the norm.

But developers saw potential. The Four Seasons led the charge, investing over \$200 million in a luxury resort, golf course, and villas. Infrastructure followed—better roads, airport expansions, and direct flights from the US. Passenger numbers at Liberia airport soared from 50,000 in 2003 to 1.65 million by 2024.

This region earned the name “Gold Coast”—and with good reason. In September 2022, *RETA* members secured two-bed condos in Azul Paraiso for \$278,900. By August 2024, similar condos listed for \$383,260—an uplift of \$104,360. In March 2024, *RETA* members got in on two-bed homes in Acquarello Flamingo from \$286,800. Six months later, prices started at \$339,000—and have since climbed to \$395,000.

The Gold Coast remains one of the most exciting places for opportunity in Costa Rica. My team and I continue to scout this region for the next great deal.

These are just three examples of places on my beat where the Path of Progress had led to opportunity. There are many more and *RETA* members can read the full list, along with more in-depth analysis of the Path of Progress, in their [June RETA issue](#). (If you're not a *RETA* member, and would like to get all the insider intel I share with members, [you can join here](#).) ■

Ronan McMahon



Ronan McMahon is *IL*'s international real estate expert and the founder of *Real Estate Trend Alert*. He's been traveling the globe for more than 25 years, living and investing in some of the world's dreamiest—and surprisingly affordable—locations. Sign up for his free [Overseas Dream Home letter right here](#).



KEITH JACOBSEN
CEO

THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS

REACH OUT WITH ALL
INQUIRIES AND QUESTIONS,
WE'RE HAPPY TO HELP!

833-342-5422



DISCOVER THE TIMELESS BEAUTY OF NUMISMATIC COINS!
EXPLORE OUR EXCLUSIVE SELECTION

www.internationalcoinalliance.com

The Walking City: Gritty, Graceful Montevideo

DAVID HAMMOND



Life in Montevideo moves at a slower pace—urban comforts meet waterfront calm, with views like this never far away.

I didn't move to Uruguay for Montevideo. I came for the beach—sunny days in Punta del Este and a simple life by the sea. But over time, it was the capital—gritty, elegant, endlessly walkable—that quietly won me over.

Now it's home.

I moved from Washington State to Punta del Este in 2006, and two years later, I bought an inexpensive second apartment in Montevideo. (At that time it cost only \$26,000!)

For years I stayed in my Montevideo place when I rented out my Punta del Este apartment during the summer high season—earning enough to cover the ownership costs of both apartments for the whole year. In 2014, I downsized, selling my place in Punta del Este and moving to Montevideo for good.

Year after year, Montevideo is ranked as the best South American city for quality of life. And having lived here for more than a decade, I can tell you why...

Montevideo is famous for its Rambla, a 13-mile coastal promenade popular with walkers, runners, and rollerbladers. Some sections, along the seawall and nearby rocks, are good for cast fishing when the conditions are right. Other sections with benches, great views, and a cool breeze are ideal for a picnic and chat with friends on warm summer evenings.



Montevideo: A Simple Good Life by the Sea

Most days, I walk on the Rambla. A few times a week, I go to the gym. To socialize, I enjoy chatting while walking or in a café over coffee.

We have a wide selection of restaurants, interesting stores, movie theaters, live music venues, and nightclubs. Outdoors, I can enjoy large green parks, tree-lined streets, and several sandy beaches.

Summer in Montevideo is a busy time. Christmas, New Year, and the start of the 40-day Carnival season come one after the other. For weekend getaways I can head to Punta del Este, or one of the many other smaller beach resort towns that dot the coast between Montevideo and the Brazilian border. A popular winter getaway is in the northwest hot spring region, near the city of Salto.

The big winter holiday—unique to Uruguay—is *la Noche de la Nostalgia* (The Night of Nostalgia). It's an “oldies” music dance party celebrated on August 24—the night before Uruguay's Independence Day.

Noche de Nostalgia parties take place in casinos, nightclubs, hotels, restaurants, as well as more offbeat locations, like warehouses. They usually include DJs, mirror balls, and black lights. It's a night to dress retro, let down your hair, and dance to the music clichés of the '70s, '80s, and '90s.

Another great thing about Montevideo: it's in Uruguay—the most economically, socially, and politically stable country in the region.

This City is 62 Small Towns

While Montevideo is a big city, it's comprised of 62 distinct neighborhoods—like 62 connecting small

If the Tropics Don't Work for You

In Montevideo we have four seasons. Because it's in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are opposite. In summertime (December-February) highs are in the low 80s F, nighttime as cool as 65 F for comfortable sleeping.

Winter days are in the high 50s F to the low 60s F with nights in the mid-40s F. (On days with high humidity and wind, it can feel colder.)

Did you know? It's called the “River of Silver” because in colonial times traders brought silver from Bolivia down smaller rivers to the Río de la Plata to sell to merchant ships. While it's called a river, it's more accurately a large sea-sized estuary that opens up to the Atlantic Ocean.

towns, each with a unique character.

Montevideo fronts the *Rio de la Plata* (River of Silver).

As we embark on a tour of three Montevideo neighborhoods, the first is where I live. The other two are places where I often visit friends—each with a unique character that I love and appreciate.

No Car Needed in Two Historic Neighborhoods

Ciudad Vieja and Centro are *two* adjoining neighborhoods that form Montevideo's historic district. This is where I live, in Montevideo's leading tourism, cultural, and business center.

Here we have Montevideo's original plazas and earliest architecture. It's also where you find the most significant concentration of hotels, restaurants, live performance theaters, museums, galleries, nightclubs, and government and business offices.

Most of us do our day-to-day shopping on foot in close-by neighborhood markets, butcher shops, bakeries, greengrocers, pharmacies, and hardware stores. Street markets set up twice per week selling a wide range of produce, fish, and sometimes chicken.

I often buy fresh corvina, a local fish with firm white meat, at my neighborhood street market. When I buy meat I talk to my butcher who cuts it the way I like it. When I went low carb and stopped buying potatoes, my greengrocer noticed and was curious about the change. Shopping here involves more interaction that fosters a sense of community.

Both neighborhoods enjoy good bus and taxi service, so they're easy places to live without a car.

With all the period architecture, Ciudad Vieja is popular with filmmakers. So, in addition to all the tourists you frequently see film industry equipment trucks, trailers, and workers.

Residents from other parts of Montevideo come to

Ciudad Vieja to shop in its specialty stores, eat good food, go to a nightclub, or see a performance at the Solís Theater, a beautiful neoclassical building which opened in 1856.

Compared to the high volume of people coming and going, the number of us living in Ciudad Vieja is small—about 16,000. We’re a mix of middle-class, working-class, and low-income folks, which includes a few neighborhood characters. On weekends, with the workers gone, things get quieter, with most of the activity around the neighborhood’s restaurant scene.

Food choices include traditional Uruguayan barbecue, Italian food, fish, as well as international and fusion cuisine.

The most famous place to eat in Ciudad Vieja is the *Mercado del Puerto* (Port Market), a spacious building full of traditional Uruguayan barbecue restaurants, where chefs cook meat and vegetables on huge grills over wood coals.

While many barbecue places here are good, my personal favorite Mercado del Puerto restaurant is Estancia del Puerto. Mostly because it’s been around for a long time, and is a family tradition for my Uruguayan friends who grew up in Montevideo. It’s also where Anthony Bourdain ate during an episode of *No Reservations* in 2008. It’s the insider’s choice.

Sometimes, I walk on the Rambla with my friend Mike Franz. He and his wife Ligia moved from the US to Ciudad Vieja in 2017. “What attracted us was the multi-cultural diversity, the wonderful coffee shops, and of course, the bustling port only blocks away,” he says.

“Carnival is also a delight. We believe this is the best possible place to live in Montevideo!” he adds.

Where Centro meets Ciudad Vieja you’ll find Plaza Independencia, Montevideo’s largest plaza, landscaped with lawns, benches, trees, and a cherub fountain in each of its four corners. In the middle is a tall bronze statue of General José Artigas, Uruguay’s national hero.

One of the buildings adjacent to Plaza Independencia is the office of Uruguay’s president. So, the plaza is frequently used for national public ceremonies. (And once in while, protests.)

Nearby is the Salvo Palace, an elaborately designed 300-plus-foot-tall structure completed in 1922. In its early days, the Salvo Palace was among the tallest buildings in Latin America. While originally built

to be a hotel, by the 1930s it ended up serving as a popular dance hall, literary venue, and residences for artists.

A fun place to visit on late weekend afternoons is Centro’s Plaza Fabini, where people come to dance street tango.

Patrick Goodrich is an expat from the US who moved to Montevideo nine years ago. “I’ve lived in Centro for the last five years,” he says. “It has all kinds of stores, hustle and bustle, lots of bars and dance clubs! Everyone comes here to shop, party, protest, and celebrate. I love being in the center of it all.”

In Ciudad Vieja or Centro, you can find studio apartments for around \$100,000 and modern two-bedroom for \$145,000 to \$185,000.

As for rentals, there is a wide range priced between \$680 and \$930 per month. Whether you buy or rent, *gastos comunes* (common expenses) pay for the upkeep of buildings and grounds, and run from \$110 to \$225 per month.

Punta Carretas—Upscale, Urban

With a lighthouse and a sprawling lawn waterfront, Punta Carretas is a residential neighborhood where locals enjoy playing *fútbol* (soccer) and cricket. It’s also among the most coveted communities in Montevideo for both Uruguayans and expats.

Its three-level mall, Punta Carretas Shopping, has a



The Punta Brava Lighthouse marks the edge of Punta Carretas, one of Montevideo’s most desirable neighborhoods for locals and expats alike.

multiplex where many English-language movies are shown. Next to the mall is a large supermarket called Disco Fresh Market, offering a vast selection of foods, including many imported brands.

There's also a huge Saturday outdoor market featuring produce and goods, which includes many handmade craft items, at Villa Biarritz Park.

For families, you find respected private primary and secondary schools. And Punta Carretas is also home to the 18-hole Uruguay Golf Club.

Karin Ledl moved from the US to Punta Carretas in 2011. "Punta Carretas is safe," she says. "It's a vibrant neighborhood with good shopping and restaurants, and I'm right by the Rambla. Plus, everything is close enough that I can walk."

Most people in Punta Carretas live in modern apartments in 10-story buildings. You can find a selection of two-bedrooms for sale in the \$245,000 to \$390,000 range.

Lovely two-bedrooms for rent start at \$1,125 per month.

You can also find attractive front-line two-bedroom apartments overlooking the water for \$1,900 per month.

Carrasco—For Suburban, Spacious Living

On the very east side of Montevideo is Carrasco, a low-density neighborhood of mostly single-family homes with some spacious apartments in low-rise buildings.

Carrasco is coastal, with a long sandy beach where you can buy fresh fish, just off the boat.

Across the street from the beach is the grand 5-star Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa, a building inaugurated in 1921.

The best area of Carrasco is along Arcena, the main

Insider tip: If you're a retired expat, you don't need to report Social Security payments, pensions, rental income, or capital gains income from back home, thanks to Uruguay's mostly territorial tax system.



© KSENIYA RAGOZINA/ISTOCK

In Carrasco, you'll find wide residential streets, upscale single-family homes, and easy beach access just a few blocks away.

commercial street, where you find most of the shopping and several restaurants. The neighborhood is known for its long-established private primary and secondary schools, as well as sports clubs, including the Carrasco Polo Club and the Carrasco Lawn Tennis Club.

If you come here, visit my favorite Carrasco restaurant, Alquimista, located in an elegantly renovated 1925 home. It's run by an English/Uruguayan couple, Mark and Carolina, who bought the house with the idea of turning it into offices, but went with "the romantic option of setting up a boutique hotel and restaurant."

Alquimista's menu changes about every two months and includes traditionally prepared English dishes crafted from carefully sourced local ingredients. They also offer a popular afternoon tea.

Regarding Carrasco as a place to live, Mark appreciates its quick access to the Montevideo Airport. "It's also the area with the highest concentration of the best schools. There's a vibrant restaurant scene, and Carrasco Beach is a sociable place to walk... or run... and build up that appetite!" he adds.

You can find a selection of newer three-bedroom, three-bathroom, single-family homes with yards here from \$640,000 to \$800,000.

Older single-family homes rent for \$2,150 to \$2,350, while newer ones in top locations start at around \$4,500.

Most people here get around driving their own car.

Why Uruguay Sits Atop the “Most Stable” List

With a strong economy, the highest per capita income in South America, and the largest middle class (60% of the population) in Latin America, Uruguay can afford a high level of social spending (around 25% of GDP).

And because Uruguay ranks as the least corrupt country in Latin America, more public spending goes toward building a good society.

In Uruguay, all workers receive a comprehensive healthcare plan, 20 days of paid vacation per year, and a state-managed pension. Anyone who meets the academic requirements can attend the state university at almost no cost. Everyone has access to healthcare without going into debt. And food and shelter are available for those in need. As a result, Uruguay maintains the lowest poverty rate in Latin America.

PUBLIC SPENDING GOES TOWARD BUILDING A GOOD SOCIETY.

It's also the most democratic country in Latin America.

Though Uruguay is not “cheap” (it's on the expensive side for Latin America), you can live in Montevideo for a lot less than a similar lifestyle in the US.

A set lunch special, which includes meat or fish, a salad, and a side dish, along with a glass of wine or a soft drink, and a dessert, costs me around \$26 per person, including tip.

I compared supermarket prices in Montevideo to the prices where I used to shop when I lived in Washington State. Processed and packaged foods cost more in Uruguay. Most whole foods, such as milk and eggs, cost about the same. The one thing that cost significantly less in Uruguay (up to 50% less)... is the beef.

Most imported goods, including furniture and clothing, cost more in Uruguay than in the United States. The same is true of gas for your car and electricity for your home... computers, cellphones, and other electronics... and vitamin supplements. (Many expats shop for clothes, computers, and vitamins when they visit the US)

So where do the savings come from? Things that can

How to Become a Montevidean

To qualify for permanent residency, you need to prove a regular monthly income sufficient to support yourself in Uruguay, which many consider to be around \$1,500 for a single person. For more about Uruguayan residency and citizenship see my previous [Uruguay feature story](#).

cost significantly less include big ticket items like housing... and healthcare.

Most expats here obtain a private comprehensive healthcare membership plan called a *mutualista*, which costs around \$90 per month, with a small copayment when they use a hospital service. A separate private medical response plan, that sends an ambulance with a doctor to your home in case of an emergency, costs around \$30 per month.

In Montevideo, with neighborhood shopping, reliable bus service, and plentiful taxis, it's easy to get by without a car. A bus ride costs about \$1.50 each way. A five-mile taxi ride is about \$10.50, while a bus ticket for the 80-mile ride between Montevideo and Punta del Este is about \$11.

A couple living in Montevideo's Ciudad Vieja, Centro, or Cordon neighborhoods might spend \$3,550 per month, including rent and all utilities, comprehensive healthcare plans with emergency service, and two basic cellphone plans. On this budget they would get around by bus and not own a car, but they would have a \$900 allowance for extras, such as dining out, clothes, travel, gifts, alcohol, and home repairs.

A couple that owns their apartment can expect to spend about \$2,850 per month on a similar lifestyle. ■

David Hammond



David Hammond, *IL*'s Uruguay Correspondent, moved to Latin America in 2006. A former boat captain and real estate agent, he enjoys nothing more than discovering a hidden place... and trading notes with other travelers.

The UK's Best Seaside Town...

Where You Can Rent From \$750 a Month

CAROLYN HALL



© EWGED/ISTOCK

On Scotland's eastern edge... a volcanic isle turned seabird sanctuary marks one of the UK's most dramatic coastal views.

On the craggy coastline of East Lothian, just 30 miles from the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, you'll find North Berwick. A standout for its community spirit and bustling town center, with a direct 30-minute train connection, it sits within easy reach of the capital's historic landmarks. If you love the outdoors, appreciate a bit of history, and don't mind a fresh sea breeze on your face, you're in the right place... Indeed, it was even named the UK's "best place to live."

Growing up in the south of Scotland, North Berwick was always a favorite holiday destination, with its long golden beaches and endless ways to spend a day by the sea. And after searching (mostly unsuccessfully) for crabs or sea urchins among the rockpools the tide left behind, we'd rush off to fill our pockets with pretty pebbles and broken shells. I'm fairly sure some of those treasures still grace the garden paths back home.

The North Berwick Difference

This picturesque town of about 8,000 souls sees about 75,000 visitors during the festival season, mainly throughout the summer (July is the busiest month, followed by June and September).

Every August, North Berwick hosts **Fringe by the Sea**, with over 250 music, comedy, theater, and dance performances. There are also award-winning authors, kids' illustrators, and foodie masterclasses. Best of all, the Street Food Village serves up a mix of flavors from around the world.

It makes a nice change of scenery from Edinburgh, with something to suit all tastes and all ages. Being a festival fan, I'm quite happy wandering around with no planned agenda, soaking up the atmosphere as the town comes alive.



There's a thriving economy here with local businesses, independent boutiques, and restaurants that support each other.

Unlike other towns, where everyone seems to be in such a hurry, it's the opposite here; people are happy to stop and chat.

Whether you're a slow traveler or an expat looking to settle, North Berwick offers an inviting mix of community warmth, natural beauty, and active pursuits.

Just below the town are **Milsey Bay Beach** and **West Bay Beach**. But for something more secluded, head to **Yellowcraig Beach**, a stretch of unspoiled shoreline backed by dunes and trails. From here, you can see **Fidra Island** with its lighthouse, which is said to have inspired Robert Louis Stevenson's descriptions of Treasure Island.

Just a few minutes east, you'll find **Seacliff Beach** and the ruins of **Tantallon Castle**. Once a 14th-century stronghold, Tantallon saw its fair share of sieges, battles, and noble intrigue before falling to Oliver Cromwell's army in 1651. Looking out to sea from its wind and sea-battered walls, you'll spot **Bass Rock**, home to the world's largest colony of northern gannets—the largest seabirds on the Atlantic.

To see Bass Rock up close, take a boat trip from the harbor and land on the island for a guided visit among the gannets for \$195 (There are also trips around the **Isle of May**, a nature reserve that's a haven for wildlife such as puffins and seals for \$61). These tours are organized by the award-winning [Scottish Seabird Centre](#), which is a must-visit, with interactive exhibits and live camera feeds from the islands.

Outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate the many walking routes in the area. The 1.25-mile hike up the Law is worth it for some great views overlooking North Berwick. If you're feeling brave (and energetic), follow in the footsteps of pilgrims on the 71-mile Forth to Farne Way. I haven't tackled it yet, but it's a beautiful walk along the coastline finishing at Lindisfarne in the north of England. There are two world-class golf courses if you want to test your swing. And the local yacht club offers courses if you're keen to take to the water.

Seaside Stays and Local Flavors

Perched above a secluded beach with uninterrupted views of Bass Rock, [The Lookout](#) is an architectural gem of a cabin accessible only on foot... and ideal if you prefer some solitude with your morning coffee.

Living in North Berwick

With its coastal charm and small-town warmth, North Berwick is one of Scotland's most expensive seaside towns, with property prices averaging higher than many parts of Edinburgh. The demand for homes—both as permanent residences and holiday rentals—has made the market competitive. Rentals are reasonable, though. A one-bedroom flat can cost £600-£800 (roughly \$750-\$1,000) per month, while houses start at around £1,000 (\$1,270). If you're looking to buy, however, expect an average house price of around £516,000 (\$655,000).

This is a very family-focused seaside area, with excellent schools, year-round activities for all ages, and low crime. And with everything within walking distance, it's no surprise that people take the time to stop and chat. Here, community still comes first.

For a more luxurious experience, [The Marine](#) is a large hotel overlooking both the sea and its own golf green. It also has a spa, thermal suites, and fine dining.

No trip to North Berwick is complete without a taste of the sea, and [The Lobster Shack](#), a popular harbor-side takeaway, serves up some of the freshest fare in town. (You may have to queue up for their famous lobster rolls.) In the town center, [The Puffin](#) is a family-run bistro and wine bar with a warm atmosphere and fish and chips on the menu. Or, you can do as us Scots do... Eat them straight from a newspaper, covered in salt and drowning in vinegar, while facing the biting winds off the North Sea, warming your hands while the tangy aroma hits your nose with every bite. ■

Carolyn Hall



Carolyn Hall is a wellness and travel writer based in France. She shares fresh insights on transformative wellness, mindful travel, and cultural experiences from around the world.

Where Sleeping Buddhas Lie: A Dreamy Day-Trip to Ayutthaya

RACHEL DEVLIN



© PRETO_PEROLA/ISTOCK

Centuries after its fall, Ayutthaya, a day-trip from Bangkok, speaks through weathered ruins, sun-bleached temples, and silence.

I'm gazing at a Buddha's head among the roots of an ancient banyan tree. Paralyzed in a traveler's awe, the Buddha stares back with a serenity that makes me jealous. I wish I could experience peace like that...

A chorus of crickets chirp. The wet heat blankets me in a way that feels exotic and strange. The banyan tree's root system is gnarled—layered and knotted in a random pattern only nature can design. Each year, the Buddha's head “grows” higher.

I'm in Ayutthaya, which, in its golden age 700 years ago, was the capital of ancient Siam. According to local lore, in 1767 a Burmese invasion prompted townsfolk to bury valuable statues, thus hiding them from encroaching vandals. This relic survived, but sadly, the Burmese burnt Ayutthaya to the ground, and its residents moved to what would become present-day Bangkok.

Part of Ayutthaya's magic lies in the fact that, after it was abandoned, the jungle reclaimed it. Over a hundred years or so it became a forgotten city, much like Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Ayutthaya's modern-day discovery came in the mid-

19th century. Supposedly, a mad man was dancing in the streets with a golden bejeweled sword. When the villagers asked where he'd found such a priceless artifact, he pointed to the jungle that masked the ancient city.

Thus the locals rediscovered their history in the ancient temple of **Wat Mah That** (the word “That,” pronounced TAT, tells us that sacred relics of the Buddha are kept within the grounds).

Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the history here is palpable. Large stupas stand steadfast against time, intricate lovingly carved pillars reaching towards the sky. Originally, they held treasures of past princes and kings.





© RACHEL DEVLIN

Tangled in banyan roots and Buddhist lore, Ayutthaya invites travelers to slow down and look closer at a kingdom lost to the jungle.

\$4 Cocktails and Relaxing on the “River of Kings”

At **Wat Lokkayasutha** I stopped to gaze upon a mid-15th century reclining Buddha commemorating the death of the sage. Locals placed flowers and bowed in respect, saying prayers of gratitude for his teachings.

On a further wander I discovered a Thai celebrity artist specializing in the ancient art of Nang Yai, the pin-piercing of animal hide to create iconic images. (A medium-size piece will set you back about \$30.)

After an inspiring day exploring Buddhist temples and statues, I headed to a port on the **Chao Phraya River** (“River of Kings”) to begin a relaxing cruise back to Bangkok.

Everyone on the boat was eager for a touch of luxury and an escape from the heat. We were not disappointed. A buffet lunch featured traditional Thai dishes in a colorful, aromatic arrangement.

Golden fish cakes with sweet chili sauce, pad Thai chicken noodle, and green curry called my name. Some fellow travelers were relieved to find less spicy dishes on the menu—fried rice, spring rolls, and salads to replenish us after a day of adventuring.

The drink menu was a hit after a hot day, with creative mixologists capturing the heart of Thailand in sweet and fresh cocktails—such as the Sticky Rice and Mango Daiquiri or Coconut Pandan Colada for a mere \$4. As I

sipped on a Siam Mule, with Mekhong (a Thai spirit), ginger, lemongrass, and lime, I spied rickety wooden houses on stilts that looked centuries old. Women were washing clothes from crooked bamboo docks just like their grandmothers would have done back in the day.

Beneath the shade of traditional red Thai umbrellas, we floated by grand temples built by kings of Siam, their giant Buddhas sitting quietly in meditation—a reminder to slow down and appreciate being in the present moment.

Ayutthaya’s rich history and culture offer a perfect sampling of the spirit of Thailand. Most hotels offer day trips for as little as \$50. An air conditioned hour and a half bus ride will bring you back to the year 1350, when Ayutthaya was at its height. But I recommend a slow cruise along the Chao Phraya River. ■

Rachel Devlin



At 46, Rachel Devlin walked away from her career in education and moved her family to Chiang Mai—where she writes about expat life, bold choices, and making every second count. A decade on, she has zero regrets.

Discover the Safe, Warm, Out-of-the-Fray Communities Abroad Where as Little as \$1,900 a Month Can Bankroll a Good Life...

Ultimate Go Overseas Bootcamp • August 30–September 1, 2025 • Portland, Oregon



Embracing a more international life is like planting a tree. The best time to do it was 20 years ago. The next best time? Right now.

With all the uncertainty in the world today—there’s a lot you don’t have any control over. You can’t do anything about interest rates or the deficit or the state of the US dollar. You don’t have any say if a country makes its residency rules more strict or changes the requirements for citizenship.

But you have a wealth of excellent opportunities you can tap overseas today. And with *IL*’s one-on-one help at our event in Portland, you can put a plan in place for yourself that takes smart advantage of them.

We’ll introduce you to dozens of good-value escapes all over the world, where you can live well from as little as \$1,900 a month. Places like...

- **Italy’s marble-embellished “Town of 50 Towers,”** tucked between the Apennine Mountains and the Adriatic Sea. Here the backdrop is old and elegant, full of history—the city is vibrant with concerts, food festivals, a sprawling twice-weekly open-air market, opera, symphony, theater...
- **A thriving university city in Portugal**—in a region largely undiscovered by expats and travelers—filled with Gothic arches, grand churches and convents, curved cobblestone streets, stone homes with charming balconies, and open spaces where manicured lawns and blossom-filled flower beds beckon.

- **A peaceful Thai beachside town not on the tourist trail,** a couple of hours from Bangkok where the water is warm, the seafood is fresh, and while it’s custom-made for a laidback life, you can still access all the conveniences you need, including a condo with a panoramic ocean view for just over \$1,000 a month.

Plus more in Costa Rica... Belize... Malta... Panama... and beyond...

Imagine if you could live well on less than \$40,000 a year—including luxuries—like a housekeeper, dinners out three or four times a week, week-long vacations. In the right spots, you can. We’ll show you how...

To reserve your place, call our special number toll-free at 1-866-681-2402 or get [more info here](#). ■

Networking Hall: Chock Full of Helpful Resources and Experts to Meet With

One of the most valuable elements of this program late this month is our Networking Hall. Open all day during the conference, this is where you’ll find our country booths, and where our own editors and contributors sit when they aren’t giving presentations. They’re available to meet with you and answer your questions.

But that’s just the start: You’ll also find real estate agents, attorneys, experts in taxes, Social Security, investment, and expat health insurance... with lots more. Many of these experts here charge hundreds of dollars an hour for their services.

But in our Networking Hall, you can chat with them directly. People tell us all the time that this event is **worth the price of admission for access to the Networking Hall alone.**



ROYALE ENERGY

Build Monthly Income Using Your 2025 Federal and State Tax Dollars

Investment Advantages

- Acquire Low Cost Oil reserves using State and Federal Income Tax Dollars
- Turnkey Drilling Investments Available to Accredited Investors since 1986
- 100% Tax Write-off can be used to offset Ordinary Income, IRA/401K withdrawals and Capital Gains
- A deep inventory of High Quality locations that generate Free Cash Flow across oil price cycles
- Oil and Natural Gas Revenue is distributed Monthly

Permian Basin Texas

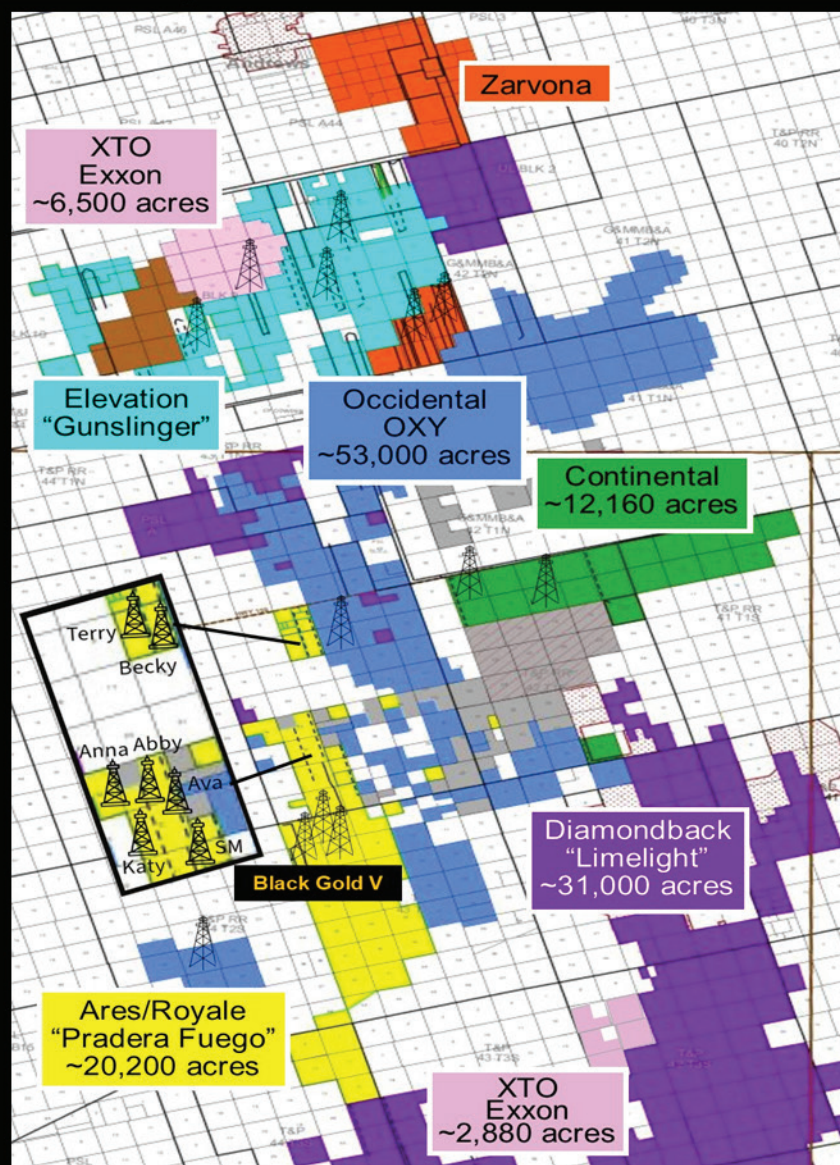
Royale Energy along with Investors are drilling in a continuous oil formation that is in the heart of one of the most active horizontal shale plays in the Permian Basin.

Royale/Ares acreage position is surrounded and being developed by four of the largest oil producers in Texas.

Since the emergence of this play 75 horizontal Mississippian wells have been drilled and completed with no dry holes.



For more information please call: (800) 447-8505
or email ir@royl.com



International Living Classifieds

Your guide to real estate, rentals, travel services, education, employment, and money-making opportunities worldwide.

PROPERTIES



Live in a stunning beachfront two-story apartment above your own turnkey hostel in Canoa, Ecuador! Perfect for an individual or couple that wants to semi-retire while also staying busy running a fun and social business that earns spending money! Live an incredible lifestyle of surfing, paragliding, hiking, mountain biking, and travel. The facilities are in excellent shape with recent renovations and ongoing preventive maintenance. Don't miss this rare opportunity! Contact cocolocosale@gmail.com for more information.



Beautiful house in Costa Rica on 3 acres of food forest

Beautiful 2 bed, 2 bath home in Costa Rica.
3 acres of hundreds of fruit trees. Includes a stream
and incredible mountain views.

Go to our website to see all:
<https://www.costa-rica-food-forest.com/>



Four-bedroom farmhouse to rent on historic Normandy Estate

Lovingly renovated farmhouse to rent on the private estate of Chateau de Courtomer. Just two hours from Paris make this your base for exploring Normandy- WWII beaches, Monet's garden, farmers markets, flea markets, quaint towns and more. What ever you love you will find it nearby. Call Beatrice on (+1) 410-585-7684 for availability and pricing or visit www.chateaudecourtomer.com. IL subscribers benefit from a 10% discount. We look forward to hearing from you!



Mountain Oasis in the Andes Mountains of Ecuador

5,478 square foot home situated on 3.8 acres just outside of Ibarra, Ecuador

Majestic mountain and city views in a quiet, tranquil location

4 Bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, gourmet kitchen, walk-in pantry, garage. MBR has balcony, his/her closets and walk-in double shower. House offers a large office as well as mirador with fireplace and patio. Security wall, cameras and alarm system.

Remote- control gate and garage door.
43 miles from Quito's International Airport

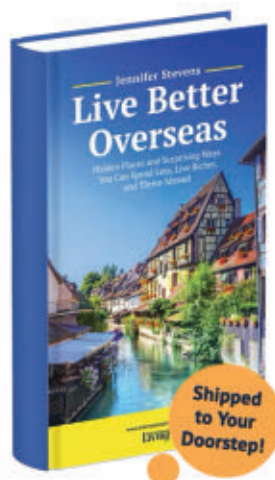
Contact: Rick Thomas
huntingcrzy@gmail.com
+593 96 782 7948

Video: <https://youtu.be/rCu7oifyMlo?si=ViuDgMaCdDtKYuqY>

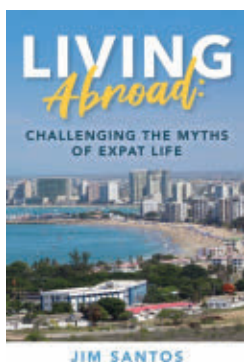


The Lowest-Cost Place to Live and Retire in Western Europe
In sophisticated, historic, sun-drenched Portugal, summers are long and costs are low. Café-lined cobblestone streets, ancient Moorish castles and pristine golden-sand beaches beckon. In this sophisticated, low-cost paradise you can enjoy a first-world quality of life... on a budget as low as \$2,207 a month. It's no surprise Portugal tops the list as Europe's #1 retirement haven in 2025.

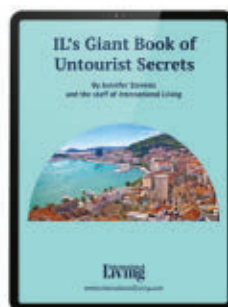
Start Creating Your Perfect Plan for Portugal Here
[Click here!](#)



In hidden places abroad, a smaller budget buys a better life... calm, overlooked, under-valued escapes where excellent healthcare costs less, the sun shines year-round, and as little as \$2,000 a month bankrolls a big, satisfying life. We'll show you what you need to know... with a special offer that ships this new book to your door, plus more... details [here](#).



"Living Abroad: Challenging the Myths of Expat Life" is a useful, honest, laugh-out-loud funny guide for anyone who's considering a move from the United States to a new country. The author's goal is not to convince you to move. Instead, you are given real-life examples of what life abroad can be like - good and bad - so you can make an informed decision for yourself. Available in kindle, paperback, hardcover and audiobook formats at <http://jimsantos.net>.

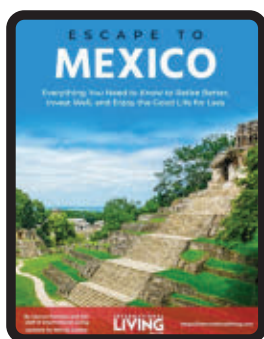


Are You an "Untourist?"

If you'd rather wander through a thatched-roofed Irish town to find the locals singing in the pub, instead of winging by on a tour bus... you're an *untourist*. If you love to find those restaurants where everybody at the other five tables lives nearby... you're an *untourist*. If you'll gladly trek that extra quarter mile to the unmarked beach the locals know but the vacationing hordes don't... you're an *untourist*.

We'd Like to Help You Travel Like That... All Over the World
[Just click here!](#)

SERVICES



Have the Retirement You've Always Wanted, But Never Thought You'd Find...
Retiring in Mexico you can have it all... close to friends and family... lots of social activities... perfect weather... extraordinarily beautiful, with charming colonial towns, world-class cities, 5,800 miles of sun-kissed beaches... and oh so affordable... especially with today's dollar-to-peso exchange rate!
Here's Why Now is the Best Time to Discover Mexico... One of the World's Top Retirement Destinations
[Just click here!](#)



The Best Kept Secret in Alternative Investments

Tired of Uncle Sam dipping his fingers in your pocket book?

To learn more about the Best Kept Secret in Alternative Investments and to receive your free gift: Call International Coin Alliance at 833-342-5422 or visit our website www.internationalcoinalliance.com





RPOST

Ask Us How We Can Save Your Money and Make You Money

Meet RPost: AI for the Good Guys

WOW. STEAL THWARTED AGAIN!

Email Lures Deep Fake Voice Match

www.RPost.com

Un-Leak Leaks See the Unseen Thwart the Steal



INVEST IN REGULATED FORESTRY
AND COFFEE PROJECTS IN PANAMA.



YOUR INVESTMENT
IS ELIGIBLE FOR RESIDENCY UNDER
THE PANAMA FORESTRY INVESTMENT VISA.

We facilitate your investment journey
into sustainable reforestation projects,
ensuring long-term returns
and a positive environmental impact.

Contact us today:
info@foresteak.com

Learn more at:
www.foresteak.com/IL



MK|P
MATA-KELLY & PARTNERS
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

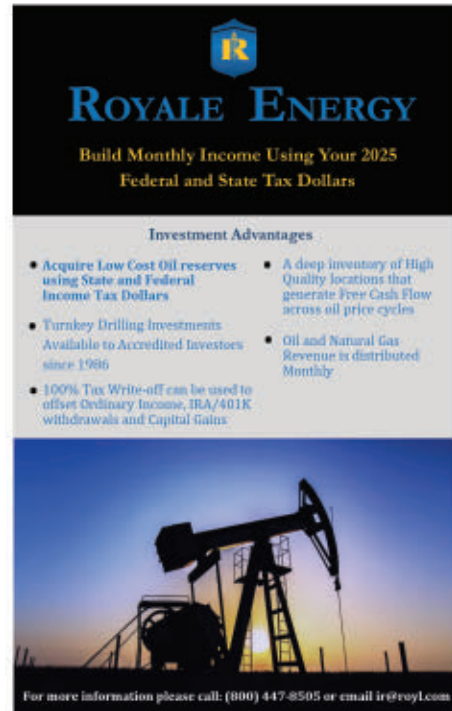
For a quarter of a century, we've proudly taken the stage at International Living Conferences, guiding hundreds on their journey to their dream retirement in Panama.

With insider expertise and proven strategies, we've been your trusted voice in making paradise a reality.

Join us for the next 25 years—your future awaits.

mata-kelly.com

Panama: Best Residency Option
35 Years' Expertise in Legal Matters Regarding
Immigration, Real Estate and Commercial Law in
Panama
LAW OFFICES: RAINELDA MATA-KELLY
Contact Us Now:
info@mata-kelly.com



ROYALE ENERGY

Build Monthly Income Using Your 2025
Federal and State Tax Dollars

Investment Advantages

- Acquire Low Cost Oil reserves using State and Federal Income Tax Dollars
- Turnkey Drilling Investments Available to Accredited Investors since 1986
- 100% Tax Write-off can be used to offset Ordinary Income, IRA/401K withdrawals and Capital Gains.
- A deep inventory of High Quality locations that generate Free Cash Flow across oil price cycles
- Oil and Natural Gas Revenue is distributed Monthly

For more information please call: (800) 447-8505 or email ir@roy1.com

Advertise with *International Living*

Contact Us at Advertising IL
advertising@internationalliving.com
to place a classified ad.



Ask Us How We Can Save Your
Money and Make You Money

Meet RPost: AI for the Good Guys



Email Lures
Deep Fake
Voice Match

www.RPost.com

Un-Leak Leaks
See the Unseen
Thwart the Steal

MK | P

MATA-KELLY & PARTNERS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW



For a **quarter of a century**, we've proudly taken the stage at International Living Conferences, guiding hundreds on their journey to their dream retirement in **Panama**

With insider expertise and proven strategies, we've been your trusted voice in making paradise a reality.

Join us for the next 25 years—your future awaits.

mata-kelly.com