

International LIVING

NOVEMBER 2025 | VOL.46 | Nº7

The Best Places on Earth to Buy Real Estate in 2026

**11 Countries Where
You Can Buy a
Second Passport**

**Searching for Our
Forever Place
Along Brittany's
Granite Coast**

**American Man
Seeking Love
in Asia...**

November 2025

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Balancing Timing and Opportunity

Every time I read one of Ronan's real estate pieces, I find myself doing the same thing: opening a new browser tab to check flight prices. Last month, it was to Tamarindo, and in my mind I was trying to navigate which surfboards to take and which to leave behind.

This month led me to dreams of Caminha, Lagos, Cap Cana, and beyond. All these places where the math seems to be mathing more than it does in the States.

In his annual index of the world's best places to buy real estate for profit, Ronan and his team rank the 25 best markets for overseas property in the year ahead—and what stands out this time isn't just the potential, but the timing. These are places in that perfect pre-boom moment—where beauty meets value, and life still moves at its own pace before the rest of the world catches on.

The art of recognizing a turning point—whether in a market or in life—runs through this issue. It's about knowing when something is shifting... and having the courage to follow it. In Thailand, *IL* Correspondent Bart Walters reflects on connection and what it means to feel at home half a world away. In Brittany, Tim Ward reminds us that belonging sometimes finds you, not the other way around. And *IL*'s Global Diversification Expert,

Ted Bauman, takes a wider view—showing how citizenship itself can be a different kind of investment in freedom.

And maybe that's what makes this issue feel especially timely. As the year winds down and thoughts turn homeward—wherever *home* happens to be—it's hard not to think about what we're holding onto, and what we're ready to let go.

For many, food and wine are the best bridge between those worlds—and this month's Globetrotters offer a culinary detour with international discoveries that remind us wherever we land, comfort often begins at the table.

And maybe that's the balance—finding comfort where you are, but knowing when it's time to move on. Maybe it always comes back to timing—knowing when to move, and trusting yourself enough to do it before everyone else does.




Holly Andrew

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Triumphs, tragedies, and mulled wine by the fire—London's annual Winter Wonderland is a treasured tradition.

FESTIVALS

My Penguin Was Robbed in London's Hyde Park

The gloves came off. It was a brisk evening, sure, but what's a little frostbite when I have precision?

"I need full finger dexterity. Unshackle me from these woolly constraints." I declared. Before me in a neat line sat 20 or so opponents, faces shining in the blue and orange lights of the Penguin Slide Race. This was my game. I could feel it.

We'd spent a jolly evening strolling around the Winter Wonderland Festival in Hyde Park, London's crowning jewel of festive frivolity. Nonetheless, the ring toss had left us empty-handed, the BB Gun Shoot hadn't even nicked a target. Yet, somehow, our spirits stayed high, no doubt kept afloat by succulent Chinese dumplings, our fair share of mulled wine, and the undeniable thrill of this winter carnival.

The Penguin Slide was my domain. The rules were simple: Fling the balls into the holes. Each successful throw nudges your chosen mechanical penguin closer and closer to the finish line.

The game began, and my hands went to work. Straight out of the gate came our flightless hero. Number 10. Or as we championed her *Pengwenth Paltrow the Elegant*.

With each toss, she inched closer to victory, her progress met with cheers from my party. But I could feel more eyes watching and I knew people could sense something special was about to happen.

And then came the final stretch. Penguin 23—a bird as dull as a damp Monday—appeared out of nowhere. Neck and neck, they raced toward the victor's ribbon. The crowd held its breath. With one last throw, I sent the ball sailing. Pengwenth leaped forward, victorious—or so we thought.

The official verdict? A photo finish. And in a travesty of justice that still stings now, Penguin 23 was declared the winner. Pengwenth's moment of glory, stolen.

We refused to let defeat ruin our evening. We found ourselves a Bavarian pub marquee to nurse our defeat with some mugs of mulled wine, next to the warmth of a gentle wood fire, perfect for thawing out my fingers and slightly cold and bruised ego. Roasted chestnuts were passed around, and we continued a great evening now sharing tales of *Pengwenth Paltrow the Elegant*.

[Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland](#) for all its triumphs and tragedies, had delivered exactly what it promised: joy and laughter and an incredible array of food stalls, games, and amusement rides. Entertainment for all. It's a London institution now in its 18th year. It runs for 6 weeks from November 21st to January 6th.

Whether you come to conquer the Penguin Slide or simply soak up the holiday cheer, one thing is for certain: You'll leave with great stories.

—Darren Clarke



© EXPLORE BRAČ

Off-road adventure meets olive oil and wine on Croatia's rugged island of Brač.

EXPERIENCES

Bouncing Around Brač in a World War II Behemoth

“Do you want to go offroad?” Our driver, Tino Tomas, looks back with a cheeky grin. There’s only one answer to that question. We’re nearly bounced from our seats as the ancient army truck pulls off the road and lurches into the forest.

I’m with friends on the Croatian island of Brač for an adventure in a Puch Pinzgauer—a vintage World War II military vehicle that looks like a tank transmogrified into a tour bus. A local family fixes up these behemoths—the ride may be bumpy, but the panoramic views and breezy open sides make up for a bit of bone rattling.

Our day begins in quaint Splitska, a tiny fishing village perched on the shimmering Adriatic, before visiting the olive oil museum in Škrip where we’re put to work powering the ancient olive press by hand. A huge platter soon appears laden with the purest olive oil I’ve ever tried,

For more information on Jeep safaris on the island of Brač, just an hour from Split by ferry, visit [Explore Brač](#). We took the [Jeep safari on Brač Island tour](#), where they use Jeeps and Puch Pinzgauers, depending on the size of the group. Our tour was €190 (about \$211) per person for a full day of adventure, lunch, olive oil tasting, and snacks.

juicy black olives, and homemade tapenades and jams.

Tino shouts over the roar of the engine to hold on tight as the Pinzgauer lumbers up to the peak of Brač, Vidova Gora. From up here we spot tiny people sunbathing on the sandy promontory far below, while boats zigzag through brilliant turquoise waters between verdant islands.

Heading back down, Tino handles the truck like a pro, pumping the gas in symphony with our screams. We cling to each other with every pothole, wondering if we’ll make it to lunch time. Finally we pop out at a lofty vantage point where Tino points out an abandoned submarine pen once used to hide Croatian dictator Tito’s Yugoslavian vessels.

The scent of wild thyme and the smoother road calms our nerves. We switchback our way down to a silent bay only accessible by boat (or an offroad monster like the Puch) to cool off in the serene waters and sip crisp white wine after the adrenaline rush.

We end our day at the Tomas family vineyard feasting on traditional homemade Dalmatian dishes paired with their own wines. Croatia’s Dalmatian coast was once part of the Venetian Republic, and culinary influences like homemade pasta and rich velvety beef stews like *pasticada* or a zingy olive oil, garlic, and wine-based seafood sauce known as *buzara*.

—Alice Longhurst-Jones

FESTIVALS

Mexico's Best Wines... All in One Place

In a country with its drink list consisting primarily of mezcal and tequila cocktails, most of us don't think to order wine when visiting Mexico. Mexico produces outstanding wines—yet many travelers never get the chance to taste them. That's the reason why I put together the Oaxaca Food and Wine Festival. The festival launched this year and we're bringing it back this coming spring: February 25-March 1, 2026.

This is not your typical buy-a-ticket and stand-under-a-tent-sipping-wine kind of event. With eight events over five days, in different venues across the city, these are intimate, curated dining experiences serving only Mexican wines, as well as locally-crafted beers and mezcals.

Wine is produced in about seven states in Mexico with the majority coming from Baja California (yes, that's in Mexico), but Queretaro, Coahuila, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, and Guanajuato produce their fair share too. Because many of the wineries are small and often family-owned, they produce only enough to sell in-country, meaning many brands don't make it out of Mexico.

Yet at the festival, you can chat with Cava Maciel's winemaker from Baja, and sip organic Dos Buhos wine from San Miguel de Allende at the Guelagueta Brunch.

WITH EIGHT EVENTS OVER FIVE DAYS, IN DIFFERENT VENUES ACROSS THE CITY, THESE ARE INTIMATE, CURATED DINING EXPERIENCES SERVING ONLY MEXICAN WINES, AS WELL AS LOCALLY-CRAFTED BEERS AND MEZCALS.

Food and drink are the gateway to understanding a local culture, so a festival like this is a peek into ancient cooking methods, foundational recipes, and a way to sample ingredients indigenous to this particular region (I'm talking about the grasshopper garnish on the guacamole). Guests will absorb Oaxacan culture not only through the food and drink, but from the out-



© JANNHUIZENG/ISTOCK

At Oaxaca's Food and Wine Festival, Mexican winemakers, chefs, and artisans showcase five days of flavor, culture, and tradition.

door art murals, the woven rugs, the alebrije folk art, the pottery and, of course, the grand architecture.

Beyond traditional Oaxacan dishes, you can taste the work of incredibly talented chefs who are putting their own spin on heritage dishes. The OaxAsia Cocktail Party at Muro is exactly what it sounds like; food that blends both Oaxacan and Asian flavors.

Ancestral dishes rely on pre-Hispanic ingredients and cooking methods, yet Spain's food influence is still present. We also host El Olivo's Rooftop Paella Lunch as part of the festival.

The VIP ticket package includes all eight events or you can purchase event tickets individually. Tickets are sold online at [Oaxaca Food and Wine Festival](#) and only in advance. For updates, follow @OaxacaFoodandWineFestival on: [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

—Donna Shields



© BEL WOODHOUSE

Citrusy Sauvignon Blanc, silky Cabernet Franc, and sourdough pizza made with malbec yeast—yes, this is Mexico.

WHAT TO DRINK

Archangels of the Andes? No—Mexico's Divine Wines

In Mexico's central highlands—around Querétaro and Guanajuato—small wineries are producing vintages that are turning heads. And one vineyard stands above the rest.

In Dolores Hidalgo, [Viñedo Los Arcángeles](#)—The Vineyard of the Archangels—crafts wines as divine as its name. I tasted 13 all-natural vintages straight from the fermentation tank, barrel, and bottle. It's the only vineyard I've ever visited where I truly loved every single wine.

Though I usually lean red, Los Arcángeles' whites were a revelation—light, citrusy, and elegant. Their reds, meanwhile, rival an Italian Barolo, with deep, velvety plum notes. No wonder they're climbing the ranks in Mexico's international wine competitions. Standouts included the Siren's Song Sauvignon Blanc 2023 (\$34) and the Siren's Song Cabernet Franc (\$40).

The experience extends beyond the cellar. Los Arcángeles serves woodfired sourdough pizza made

with grape flour and malbec yeast—heaven alongside a glass of their reds. It's a vineyard that feels both intimate and world-class, a place where winemaking passion meets genuine hospitality.

THOUGH I USUALLY LEAN RED, LOS ARCÁNGELES' WHITES WERE A REVELATION.

By contrast, the region's bigger names impressed more with ambiance than with what was in the glass. [Tres Raíces](#) boasts a wall of medals and sleek architecture, and their 2018 Merlot was delicate and smooth. [Cuna de Tierra](#) offered tastings under Honey Mesquite trees and the romance of grapes fresh off the vine. Pleasant visits, yes, but their wines couldn't match the brilliance of Los Arcángeles.

—Bel Woodhouse



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Slovenia blends Old World beauty with modern ease—an attractive spot to explore Europe.

GLOBAL SAVVY

A New Haven for Remote Workers: Slovenia Welcomes Digital Nomads

At the crossroads of the Alps and the Adriatic, medieval towns hum with café culture, and the rest of Europe lies just beyond your doorstep—Slovenia is stepping into the digital nomad spotlight.

Earlier this year, Slovenia announced the launch of a Digital Nomad Visa to go into effect on November 21, 2025. The visa is targeted at non-EU / non-EEA nationals who are employed by, contracted to, or self-employed for entities or clients outside Slovenia. Immediate family members may accompany the main applicant.

The permit is valid for up to 12 months and isn't renewable. However, after expiration, the applicant may reapply—but only after a 6-month “cooling-off” period outside Slovenia.

To qualify, applicants must show sufficient income to support themselves (and family, if applicable). According to some reports, the threshold will be around €3,200 (\$3,744) per month, similar to other EU digital nomad visas. You'll also need a valid passport, health insurance covering emergency care,

a clean criminal record, and proof of accommodation in Slovenia.

Applications can be made online, or via Slovenian embassies/consulates abroad. Applicants already in Slovenia legally (for example under a short-stay visa) may apply through local administrative units; during the application processing, they may receive a temporary certificate permitting them to remain pending a final decision.

Because Slovenia is part of the Schengen Area, holders of the digital nomad permit will enjoy visa-free access to other Schengen states for up to 90 days within any 180-day period—making it an attractive base for exploring Europe more broadly.

As the launch date draws nearer, I'll be keeping an eye on the final regulations, application portal rollouts, and clarifications of income and procedural requirements.

—Ted Baumann, [IL Global Diversification Expert](#)



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Forget the heavy reds. They crush the bird and the conversation.

Thanksgiving Abroad: Double the Adventure

Thanksgiving abroad is always twice the work. Which is why it's always twice the story.

I'm not American. Which may be why I admire Thanksgiving more than most Americans do.

I've celebrated it in Spain, the Netherlands, France, Argentina, Colombia, and, of course, the US. Every table looked different. Every kitchen had its own chaos. The holiday always worked.

Once, I lent my oven to the neighbors. Abroad, ovens are often smaller. Turkeys are smaller too. If you're chasing that postcard-perfect feast, forget it. You buy two. You need two ovens. You improvise. You borrow chairs, plates, forks. A Thanksgiving abroad is always missing something. And yet nothing is missing at all.

Gravy packets always make it through customs. I've smuggled them in luggage, tucked between shirts. It's a very unique flavor, the one that transports you. Abroad, a packet of powdered gravy feels like gold.

That's the charm of Thanksgiving. It's not political, at least not in spirit. It's food. It's gratitude. It's the rhythm of a long day cooking, waiting, telling stories. Sure, the conversation may turn political. It often does. But it happens face to face, around a table, often with wine in hand. The ritual never changes.

Say what you will about America, but no one else commits this hard to a family celebration. Football humming in the background. Kitchens are crowded. Tables patched together with every chair in the house. Americans know how to throw a feast. Thanksgiving is the proof.

Hosting Thanksgiving Anywhere

Thanksgiving, wherever you celebrate it, feels like camping indoors. Family and friends arrive from everywhere. Air mattresses in the living room. Blankets in corners. A kitchen packed with too many cooks and too few burners.

Abroad, add in a small oven and a fridge bursting at the seams. If you're hosting, be clear with your guests about what they've signed up for. Timing is critical. In some cultures, arriving late is the polite thing to do. Not on Thanksgiving. The turkey will not wait. It dries out. It cools down. Show up on time, and bring your wine ready to pour. There's no room in the fridge for it.

And if you're not hosting? Bring a bottle (bring it chilled), bring a dish, or just bring some flowers for the table and yourself. Abroad, many restaurants serve a Thanksgiving meal for Americans and anyone who wants in. They're often packed with expats. You'll find you're not as alone as you thought.

A Familiar Holiday in Foreign Territory

Cooking in a foreign kitchen? Test the oven. Knobs lie. Gas flames wander. A thermometer is worth its weight in gold.

Some things you find. Some you fake.

- **Turkey:** Always smaller. Often sold in pieces. Order early. Or roast two.
- **Cranberries:** Rare and overpriced. Currant jam or lingonberry sauce works.
- **Canned Pumpkin:** Forget it. Roast squash. Spice it heavy.
- **Pecans:** If you find them, they'll cost a fortune. Walnuts or hazelnuts will do.
- **Mini Marshmallows:** Nowhere. Cut up big ones. Or top the sweet potatoes with meringue.

- **Stuffing Mix:** Don't bother. Use bread, sausage, herbs, nuts. It'll taste better anyway.

- **Sweet Potatoes:** Available, but never the same varieties. Embrace the difference.

- **Pumpkin Pie Spice:** Make your own. Cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves.

And the gravy? Guard it like treasure. Abroad, flour and fat don't always cooperate.

In Colombia, pecans were impossible, but macadamias gave the pie a different charm.

Every country offers something, even when it takes something away. That's the expat skill: adapt, laugh, and serve it anyway.

The Table and the Bottles

Thanksgiving is abundance. The hidden flatware comes out of the cupboards. The fat separator. The roasting pan. A fryer, you're in another league. All of it dusted off for its forty-eight hours of glory. A Friendsgiving abroad is a table of misfits. And it works. Everyone fits.

The food doesn't match either. Sweet beside savory. Sugar beside salt. A meal with so many flavors, made for travelers. Impossible not to find something you like at the table.

The wines should follow the same rule. Keep them light. Pinot noir. Beaujolais. Riesling. Champagne, even rosé makes the cut!

Forget the heavy reds. They crush the bird and the conversation.

Open everything. Pour freely. Don't overthink it. A full table deserves all kinds of bottles. And remember, one bottle probably won't make it around the table. Bring a magnum. Magnums make a statement before the first glass is poured.

The best part of Thanksgiving is what comes after. The sandwich. The spoonful of stuffing. The last crispy potatoes you overlooked the night before.

The leftovers remind you what the holiday is about. Not the perfect turkey or the missing pecans. But the full table. The borrowed chairs. The laughter. The abundance.

When you move abroad, it's easy to feel guilty. To wonder if you've traded family for adventure. But traditions have a way of following you. You carry them, even when you think you've left them behind. And you realize you're not missing home. You've built another 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](#).



Marco Polo saw wealth flowing east; today's charts show capital moving overseas.

The Weak Dollar Regime: Marco Polo and the Return of Global Trade Leadership

JASON PERZ

The US Dollar Index is breaking down fast. After topping out in late 2022, the greenback has been in steady decline against other major currencies, and now it's rolling over hard toward multi-year lows.

This isn't just another wiggle in the currency market. It's the signal of a regime shift—the kind of change that doesn't just rearrange markets for a quarter or two, but reorients the flow of capital across the globe.

And to really understand what's happening here, it helps to zoom out beyond markets and look to history.

Marco Polo and the Pull of the East

In the late 13th century, Marco Polo left Venice and traveled through Central Asia into the court of Kublai Khan in China. He returned decades later with stories of a world that was wealthier, more advanced, and more interconnected than Europe had ever imagined.

His travels opened European eyes to the possibility that the center of gravity in trade and wealth didn't sit

in their own backyard. The riches of the East—silk, spices, precious metals—commanded the flow of money, ships, and risk-taking capital.

The dollar's decline today is a reminder of that same lesson: power in global markets is not fixed. It shifts. And when it does, the flow of capital follows.

"I did not write half of what I saw, for I knew I would not be believed."

—Marco Polo

Investors today risk the same blindness as Polo's contemporaries. Most US investors still can't imagine a world where leadership sits outside of American stocks and the dollar. Yet the charts tell us it's already happening.

What Happens in a Weak Dollar Cycle

A weak dollar isn't just about Americans needing more dollars to buy goods abroad. It reshapes the entire investment landscape.

Historically, when the dollar enters a downtrend:

- **Commodities surge**—priced in dollars, they get cheaper for the rest of the world.
- **Emerging markets outperform**—their debt burdens (often dollar-denominated) ease, and their exports become more competitive.
- **International equities lead**—capital rotates out of the US and into regions with stronger relative growth.

This is exactly what we saw in the 2000s. From 2002 to 2008, the dollar fell sharply, and emerging markets trounced US equities. Latin America, Asia, and commodity-linked economies delivered generational out-performance while the S&P 500 chopped sideways.

And it's what we're seeing now.

Who's Leading Right Now

The US is no longer the center of gravity in this cycle. Look at the scoreboard:

- **Japan ARK ETF** is up over 110% YTD, crushing the S&P 500.
- **South Korea and Peru** are delivering outsized gains.
- **Brazil small caps** are breaking out of multi-year bases.
- **Latin America and Africa** are surging.

These aren't isolated moves. They're the fingerprints of a weak dollar regime. Just like Marco Polo's caravans followed the wealth and goods of the East, capital today is flowing toward the countries that benefit most from a cheaper dollar.

THIS IS HOW REGIMES CHANGE. SLOWLY AT FIRST, THEN ALL AT ONCE.

The Dollar's Double-Edged Sword

For decades, the dollar has been both a blessing and a burden. It's the world's reserve currency, the denominator of global trade, and the benchmark for nearly every cross-border flow of money.

But when the dollar weakens, the leverage shifts. Exporters in Peru, Brazil, and South Korea suddenly gain an edge. Dollar-denominated debt becomes less crushing for emerging economies. Commodity



© STOCKMISTOCK

Japan ARK ETF is up over 110% YTD, crushing the S&P 500.

markets, from copper to soybeans to gold, find fresh demand from abroad.

It's no accident that international equities are surging at the exact moment the DXY breaks down. The mechanism is simple: as the dollar falls, foreign earnings translate into stronger local currencies,

capital pours into international assets, and the cycle feeds on itself.

This is how regimes change. Slowly at first, then all at once.

The Historical Echo

Think about the 1970s. The US went off the gold standard, inflation surged, and the dollar lost ground. Commodities soared, gold exploded, and international markets gained influence.

Or look at the 2000s. A weak dollar coincided with China's rise, the BRICs outperforming, and commodities entering a supercycle.

We're watching a rhyme of history play out again in real time. The dollar is rolling over, commodities are firming, and international markets are surging.

As Mark Twain put it: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."

The Investor's Blind Spot

Despite all this, most US investors remain blind to the shift. Allocations to international equities remain



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When the dollar weakens, the leverage shifts. Exporters in Peru, Brazil, and South Korea suddenly gain an edge.

near historic lows. Surveys show fund managers heavily underweigh gold and commodities. Everyone is still sitting in the dollar-heavy US trade because that's all they've known.

This is exactly how bull markets outside the US are born: with skepticism, disbelief, and money sitting on the sidelines.

Marco Polo's contemporaries didn't believe him when he described the wealth of Asia. Investors today don't believe the wealth of opportunity outside the US. They will—when prices force them to.

The Bottom Line

The weak dollar regime isn't a theory. It's happening now:

- The DXY is breaking down into the 90s.
- International equities are delivering triple-digit gains while the S&P lags.
- Commodities holding strong as capital rotates globally.

Just as Marco Polo's travels revealed that wealth and trade could thrive outside Europe, today's market shows that leadership can, and often does, sit outside the United States.

The investors who recognize that early—who allocate to international equities, commodities, and weak-dollar beneficiaries—will ride the caravan ahead of the crowd.

The weak dollar is not the end of American markets.

But it is the beginning of a cycle where the rest of the world takes the lead. And as history reminds us, those who see it early—and believe it—are the ones who capture the outsized returns.

Jason Perz



[Jason Perz](#) is a former professional BMX athlete turned portfolio manager/senior analyst and TEDx speaker. Known for his bold yet disciplined approach to trend recognition and risk management, he blends real-world experience with clear, actionable insight—challenging conventional thinking and helping traders see markets through a sharper lens.

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From Paraguay's Fast-Track Residency to Portugal's Island Escape

RONAN McMAHON



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Two very different paths to an international life—one through Latin America's most affordable capital, Asuncion, Peru; the other (pictured) in a subtropical Atlantic paradise, Madiera.

- **Brendan V. asks:** I'm currently pursuing my residency in Paraguay. As a *RETA* lifetime member I would be interested over the next few years in hearing more about potential real estate opportunities in the country.
- **Ronan says:** Hi Brendan, and thanks for your email. I've never been to this landlocked South American country, but I'm intrigued by it.

And so when Kurt Hoppe, a long-time member of my *Real Estate Trend Alert (RETA)* club (Kurt has bought in a number of our *RETA* deals) told me he was going to be spending time in Paraguay, digging into the real estate scene here, I asked him to hop on a call with me to share what he uncovered.

[You'll find our full conversation here.](#)

In a wide-changing discussion, Kurt and I talked about...

- The quality of life and incredible affordability in Paraguay's capital, Asunción—it costs less than \$2 to get anywhere in the city using Bolt, an Uber competitor.
- Paraguay's favorable tax and residency options. (Kurt got temporary residency there in 13 hours.)
- How, in some of the most popular areas of Asunción, brand-new studios sell from \$46,000... one-bed condos from \$60,000... and two beds from \$100,000...
- Kurt's investments in Asunción, including a top-floor one-bed he bought for \$74,000 that he plans to rent short term...



- A new area of the capital—now only 10 minutes from downtown after the opening of a new bridge—where folks are banking land for as little as \$10 to \$50 per square meter (around \$1 to \$4.60 per square foot).

You can see why I'm intrigued by Paraguay.

Here are a few more reasons...

Paraguay's *guaraní* is among the most stable currencies in Latin America, avoiding the extreme devaluations seen elsewhere in the region.

The country has also maintained steady GDP growth over the past two decades, driven by agriculture, energy exports, and a pro-business stance from government. This stability has quietly made it a haven for both investors and digital nomads.

Paraguay also offers one of the most straightforward residency systems in the world.

That combination—fast residency, light taxation—has made Paraguay an attractive base for internationalized living.

Plus, the capital of Asunción is transforming. A series of major infrastructure projects—including new bridges, expanded highways, and modern residential towers—are changing how people move around and where they want to live.

It's an exciting time for Paraguay for sure. I'm planning to put boots on the ground there later this year.

In the meantime, [check out my conversation with Kurt here](#).

- **John D.L. asks:** Please scout real estate in Madeira! Thanks.
- **Ronan says:** Hi John and thanks for your message. I love hearing readers' suggestions on where to scout. And Madeira is a fascinating place...

Like Ireland but with better weather... like Hawaii but without the crowds and sky-high prices... like Portugal but away from it all.

The island of Madeira is basically a magnificent mountain rising from the cobalt Atlantic. A series of jagged peaks and a plateau form the highest points. You'll find some of the highest sea cliffs in the world here. And some roads are so steep that locals treat them as one-way—downhill only.

Madeira lives up to its name “the Pearl of the Atlantic.” The climate is mild with minor variations year-round. June to September, daytime temperatures usually range from 68 F to 79 F. The sea is also warm, making it good for swimming. Even in the coldest months of winter temperatures rarely drop below 61 F during the day and can be as warm as 68 F.

It rains most on the northern side of the island. The island's famous irrigation channels, *levadas*, were built to channel this water to the sunnier southern side, and it was the south where I focused my search for real estate.

In 2023, my scout Eoin Bassett checked out real estate on Madeira. [RETA members can access his full report from that time here](#). Not yet a RETA member? Join RETA and you can instantly unlock access to Eoin's full scouting report. [Full details and all the other benefits of a RETA membership are 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. [Join RETA here](#).

Retirement Becomes Reinvention on Costa Rica's Otherworldly Coast

BEKAH BOTTONE



© CAMP PHOTO/STOCK

In Ojochal, the good life means parrots at sunrise, pickleball at noon, and sunsets on the beach.

Although I'm often white-knuckling the steering wheel on Costa Rica's steep mountains, curvy roads, and rainy-season river crossings, the drive to Ojochal felt different. It was surprisingly relaxing, almost meditative, especially as I passed through the palm oil plantations along the Costanera Sur. And just as I entered town, a flock of vibrant scarlet macaws soared overhead, a preview of the beauty to come.

Ojochal, a small inland town on the Southern Pacific Coast, is located just 10 minutes from Playa Ventanas, where the jungle meets the shoreline.

I had heard about Ojochal from real estate agents on the Nicoya Peninsula. Everyone seemed to be saying the same thing: Ojochal was one of those hidden places—the new favorite to invest.

I live in a remote town in Guanacaste, far from modern conveniences. However, I was pleasantly surprised by all that Ojochal has to offer, including its diverse global community, a variety of [events and activities](#), options for private schools, and a vibrant dining scene featuring international cuisine—not to mention the rushing waterfalls, natural pools, and

breathhtaking mountain views.

Many people choose to live at higher elevations to take advantage of the cooler air and sea breezes. And since its residents love the region's verdancy, they appreciate the intense rainy seasons. It's an unspoiled oasis.

Staying at [Ojochal Gardens Villa](#) was both comfortable and convenient, with spacious rooms and full kitchens that made it easy to settle in. Its location, right behind the lively Sabor Ojochal Plaza, meant I could wander to restaurants and shops within minutes. Each morning began with breakfast at Potz Bistro, included in the stay—I'm still thinking about the locally made smoky and savory chorizo sandwich.

Life on the beach in Costa Rica is more expensive than in the Central Valley. While exploring Ojochal, I encountered various individuals who had come to the area for retirement but ultimately started new businesses. One couple shared that they didn't want to continue depleting their retirement fund and having to stick to a strict budget.

I noticed a pattern. Many seem to transition into a

kind of “working retirement,” building small businesses around the things they enjoy most. One couple opened [L'Épicerie](#), a gourmet deli and specialty grocery, while another gentleman opened the bakery Pan Y Amor (you have to try their sourdough chocolate chip cookies).

And I also got to know Roger...

Pickleball, Parrots, and Pura Vida: Roger's “Retirement” in Costa Rica

At 77, Roger traded northern Nevada's desert environment for the lush jungle of Ojochal. These days, his neighbors include hummingbirds, toucans, parrots, and troops of howler monkeys. “Starting my morning next to 100 parrots in a tree gets noisy!”

Although starting life in a new country has its challenges, it's been more rewarding than he imagined. Roger spends time with new friends, enjoying the foodie culture of Ojochal (often called “the culinary capital” of Costa Rica's southern Pacific region) and its pristine, palm-tree-lined beaches.

AT PLAYA VENTANAS, ROCK FORMATIONS CREATE WINDOWS TO THE SEA.

What began as retirement, after handing over his US business to two employees, blossomed into [Jungle Pickleball](#), a thriving pickleball community.

Drawn Back to the West Coast

Originally from Southern California, Roger left the state in search of seasons and ended up living near Reno for about 20 years. Eventually, he was ready for another change.

“I'd read about Costa Rica, heard stories, and finally visited in 2021,” Roger recalls. “That first trip, my wife, Holly, and I traveled around quite a bit. On the second trip, we bought property.”

In January 2022, they made the move, and just a couple of months later, they purchased the property that's now their home.

Discovering Pickleball in Paradise

Though he had heard of pickleball before, Roger had never played until he arrived in Costa Rica. He started



off playing local games at the town salon for a few months. After purchasing a lot next door to his home, he got an idea.

“The court at the salon wasn't in great shape,” he explains. “I thought—I can build a better pickleball court here.”

Once just a pastime, pickleball has shifted his retirement plan into a vibrant community center. Roger's courts now host players from around the globe including Japan, Italy, South Africa, Chile, and Australia. Some are expats living nearby, while others are tourists on their Costa Rican vacation. Memberships allow regulars to play all week long, while drop-in players are also welcome.

He has expanded by purchasing a lot on the other side of his original property and now has four pickleball courts, a gym, a snack station also offering merchandise, and he's just added a cold plunge to the mix.

Community Ties and Life Outdoors

The courts are only part of what makes Roger's project special. He's created a true gathering place, hosting tournaments, offering fun glow-in-the-dark games, and adding a “dink wall” for practicing skills. And now they also serve hot dogs and root beer floats on site.

Events often double as fundraisers. In the past year, the group donated more than \$15,000 to local causes, including a coral restoration project and a community education program. They also sponsor a talented local 16-year-old track star, helping her with travel costs for worldwide competitions and supporting her in her pursuit of a full-ride university scholarship—with the ultimate goal of competing in the Olympics.

Holly has a pottery studio on the property, where she shares her creativity with the community by offering pottery classes and displaying her art in the shop.

Looking up and seeing scarlet macaws flying overhead in groups, sometimes a dozen at a time, is always a treat. Roger has also spotted porcupines, armadillos, and even the occasional anteater.

And when living in Ojochal, the beach always calls your name. Like most places, sunset is a time when the community congregates to unwind. Roger and his friends often celebrate birthdays at Playa Ventanas, where rock formations create natural windows to the sea and you can walk through the caves at low tide. “It’s a beautiful place to spend a day,” he says.

Healthcare and Everyday Life

Roger and his wife hold temporary residency and therefore have to pay into Costa Rica’s public health-care system, the *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social* (Caja). So far, Roger has only needed to go the public route for routine blood tests and checkups. “If I needed it, I could also use private insurance or go to the US to use Medicare. We do have several doctors who play pickleball, so I see them occasionally, but mostly on the court.”

As business owners, Roger and Holly know many Ticos and expats—some have retired here, while others spend three to six months each year, either renting or owning their own home.

Veterinary care has also been a pleasant surprise. With four dogs, Roger and his wife are grateful the vet bills here are cheaper than in the States.

When it comes to the cost of living, Roger admits life in Costa Rica is pricier than he expected. “Food is more expensive than I anticipated,” he explains. Eating at a “soda” (a small, family-run Costa Rican restaurant) costs between \$7–\$11, while dinner at a tourist-oriented restaurant often runs \$20–\$30 per person.

Holly shops weekly at the *feria* (farmers’ market), and they occasionally stock up at PriceSmart (Costa Rica’s version of Costco) in San José. Neighbors across the street provide fresh eggs from their chickens.

Electricity is another significant expense, so Roger decided to invest in solar panels and a backup generator to power their 15 air conditioners, pottery studio, and gym. “It was a huge investment up front,” he admits, “but now our monthly bills are lower.” Power outages are common in this area, especially during heavy rains.

Cars, too, are costly. Roger waited months for a Toyota

truck he had ordered before arriving in Costa Rica. Holly drives a Suzuki, and together they splurged on a Honda Talon ATV for off-road adventures... even though insuring it costs more than coverage on their two cars.

A Day in Roger’s Life

Roger wakes up early—usually around 5:30 a.m.—to walk his dogs and feed them breakfast. By 7 a.m., the pickleball courts are open. He plays four to five times a week.

Afternoons may include walking the dogs again, fixing something around the property, or hosting events. “We have a group of friends we often go out to dinner with on Friday evenings and for Sunday morning breakfasts.”

“The locals are incredibly respectful toward older people,” he says. “They’re friendly, honest, and helpful. That’s made adjusting easier.”

Even in retirement, Roger continues to come up with new projects. He’s planning a Pickleball Tour of Costa Rica, where visitors will fly into San José, play in Jacó for two days, then travel south to his courts for a few more days of pickleball mixed with ATV rides, beach days, and waterfall experiences.

“It’s about showing people the country, not just the game,” he says.

Roger has embraced the *Pura Vida* lifestyle, enjoying the vibrant jungle while creating a community through pickleball—something he never even dreamed of, yet everything fell into place. Although he came to Costa Rica planning to retire, it turned out a new business venture was waiting for him. ■

Bekah Bottone



Bekah is *International Living*’s Costa Rica Correspondent, as well as a writer and English teacher living in Guanacaste, Costa Rica, with her teenage twins. She shares stories of expat life and local culture while helping her students gain confidence in their English conversation skills. She enjoys connecting with readers, appreciating the country’s beauty, immersing herself in nature, and fostering a sense of community.

The “To Be Sure” Fallacy—and the Real Reason Gold is Soaring

JEFF OPDYKE



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Bullion may just sit in a vault, but it outshines paper promises when currencies, like the US dollar, crumble.

The problem with objective journalism is what reporters know as the “to be sure” paragraph—the one paragraph that’s written to let the reader know there is another side to the story, regardless of how ridiculous that other side might be.

For instance: “To be sure, breathing oxygen can be bad for your health too because of all the crap that’s in the air.” It’s a stupid sentence. No one is going to stop breathing oxygen because they’re worried about the health implications. Death awaits that idiotic decision.

Still, I played the “to be sure” game for years as a financial writer at *The Wall Street Journal*. I’d spend 95% of the Heard on the Street column making the case for some investment opportunity, and then I always had to include the “of course, there’s always the chance this is wrong.”

I came to those last three paragraphs by way of a story about gold that I recently saw on a mainstream news site. The story’s theme was spot on: Gold, which had just touched a new record at \$3,900 per ounce, is kicking butt and taking names because savvy investors are rightfully fearful that romper room rugrats are running (i.e. ruining) the US economy through some of the daftest policies in years.

But then came the “to be sure” in the form of this:

And not everyone agrees gold is a good investment. Critics say gold isn’t always the inflation hedge many say it is—and that there are more efficient ways to protect against potential loss of capital, such as derivative-based investments.

First, gold has proven its mettle over millennia. Every time governments have befouled a currency or a monetary system going back to ancient times, gold stepped in to save the day. Every. Single. Time.

Second, let’s consider gold’s inflation *bona fides* over the last 25 years:

The chart [page 18] shows that in 2000, the median new home in America cost \$166,000. Today, it cost \$410,271—an annual inflation rate of 3.7%.

Back in 2000, when gold was \$275, a homebuyer would’ve needed about 604 ounces of gold to buy that median house. Today, even though the median house is up 2.5x, a homebuyer only needs just over 105 ounces of gold to buy that house.

Or think about it this way: Had you bought 604 ounces of gold in 2000, you could buy today’s median-priced house for \$410,000... and still own \$1.9 million worth gold.

I don’t know, but that seems like a great example of gold successfully thwarting inflation.

	2000 (\$)	2025 (\$)	Annual Inflation/ Deflation	Ounces of Gold Required in 2000	Ounces of Gold Required in 2025
Gold	275	3,900	11.2%		
Median Income	42,148	62,196	1.6%	153.27	15.95
Median New Home	166,000	410,271	3.7%	603.64	105.20
Median New Car	21,041	48,026	3.4%	76.51	12.31
Value of \$1	1	0.53	-2.5%		

As for protecting potential loss of capital with derivatives?

Well, you can also prevent breaking a finger by cutting off your hand...

I'd much rather own physical gold than some paper-based derivative product. That portion of the "to be sure" paragraph is simply ignorant.

So, where are we today relative to gold and whether it's still an asset to own at \$3,900 per ounce?

Through early October, gold had racked up more than 40 all-time highs in 2025 alone. That fact says gold is screaming a message that too few people are heeding, based on emails sent to me and comments I hear at conferences. The message: The end is nigh!

Not the end of the world, of course, but the end of the world monetary system as we know it.

And I know that sounds supremely "tin-hatted," but I'm not a tin-hat wearer. I'm an Aquarius, and apparently we excel at connecting dots into the future that others don't see or refuse to see. Or so they say.

Whatever the case, for more than 80 years now the US dollar has ruled the world economy. For most of those years, the dollar was a benevolent dictator and the world was happy.

Today, the dollar is increasingly disliked and dis-trusted because the US government over the last many administrations has used the American currency as a bludgeon to impose its will on the world. The world is none too pleased by that.

Moreover, the US economy is rotting, and the fiscal situation is a house of cards waiting on a mouse to sneeze.

Consumer sentiment has collapsed; the latest reading was a dismal 55, a sign of consumer distress. The jobs market is in the toilets; as I write this, ADP reported that private employers shed more than 32,000 jobs in September when all the pundits expected a 55,000-job increase.

Inflation is persistently above the Federal Reserve's 2% annual target. The most recent report put inflation just shy of 3%—and rising. Into that environment, the Fed cut interest rates by 0.25% in September, the exact opposite of what it should be doing to quell inflation.

But keeping interest rates elevated meant potentially more pain for the labor market.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell best expressed this conundrum in a September comment: "It's not incredibly obvious what to do."

And that scares the bejeezus out of investors.

Worsening the situation is America's extreme debts, now topping \$37.5 trillion and on path to approach \$40 trillion by the end of fiscal 2026 (ends next September) because the oh-so-fiscally-conservative Republican congress is already on track to overspend in 2026 by more than \$2 trillion. That deficit will pile atop the mountain of debt.

As such, the dollar is sinking and has had the worst year so far since 1973, when Nixon suspended the dollar's convertibility into gold.

A continued and much deeper slide is in the dollar's future. We will see historic lows on the US Dollar Index before this situation gets better. Also, just to be clear, a declining dollar exacerbates inflation because the US must import a lot of raw and finished products, and even if the prices don't change in local currency, they cost more in dollars because it takes more dollars to buy the same amount of local currency needed to purchase those goods.

Doesn't help that the illogical and punitive tariff regime is jacking up prices even more on US businesses and consumers.

The upshot: Gold setting 41 record highs so far this year.

That trend is destined to continue. As I told attendees at my *Future of Wealth* event in Dublin, Ireland in early October, gold will see \$10,000 before it ever sees \$1,000 again.

And in that fact lies extreme challenges for American families.

Gold prices aren't going up because gold is a great company earning a lot of income and spitting out hefty dividends.

Gold does absolutely nothing but sit in a vault and collect dust.

Gold is going up because fiat currency is going down and the savviest investors are trading out of fiat currency to own an anti-fiat asset. (Bitcoin is also an anti-fiat asset, and it too has been hitting records this year. But that's a column for another day.)

The fact that gold is going up with such ferocity is a sign that the problems with currencies (especially the dollar) and with the US economy are worsening.

So... own gold.

No, you are not too late to be a buyer.

People asked me if buying gold at record highs near \$1,000 was crazy and if they were too late to the game. They asked me again at \$2,000... and \$2,500... and \$3,000. At the *International Living* Bootcamp in Portland, Oregon back in September, numerous attendees asked me if buying gold at \$3,500 was lunacy.

And here we are—gold is flirting with \$4,000, and serious Wall Street banker types are saying \$5,000 or even \$6,000 could arrive before the end of the year. (I'm on record in my Twitter/X feed and in my daily [Field Notes](#) column predicting that \$5,000 could fall before the New Year arrives.)

So, again, own gold. You're not too late.

Or, as they say, better late than never.

Or, said a third: The best time to plant a goose that lays gold eggs was 25 years ago. The next best time is today.

Which raises the next question I'm always asked: What should I buy?

1. Physical gold.

To the degree you feel comfy owning gold in a home safe of a bank safe-deposit box, **own basis physical gold. Whatever size you can afford, from tenths of an ounces to multiple ounces.** I buy bars and sovereign coins like the Canadian Maple Leaf or Austrian Philharmonics.

Or buy physical gold at [BullionStar.com](https://www.bullionstar.com) in Singapore (very safe jurisdiction) and have them store the gold for you onsite for a small fee. You can log into your account and see pictures of the gold you own as well as the purchase receipt.

2. Gold ETFs.

Inside an IRA or traditional brokerage account, own a physical gold exchange-traded fund. The two I prefer are the **Sprott Physical Gold Trust (PHYS)** and the **abrdn Physical Gold Shares ETF (SGOL)**. Both own 100% physical gold held in an secure, audited vault. Sprott's gold is in Canada; abrdn's is in Switzerland.

3. Mining stocks.

This is a much more aggressive play on gold, and I would recommend this only if you can stomach volatility.

Miners are leveraged plays on gold, so they can amplify gold price movements up and down. But they don't always move in lock-step.

Gold prices began moving way before gold mining stocks began to move. Now, the miners are moving, particularly among some of the smaller and mid-tier plays (a small miner I put *Global Intelligence* readers into back in January is already up 110%, while two miners I recommended to *Frontier Fortunes* subscribers in June are up about 90% already).

The major miners have moved too, but not as much, and **I still see good value in Newmont Mining (NEM) and Barrick Mining (B).**

And to be sure... there is no "to be sure" paragraph to write.

Gold is going higher. Much, much higher. ■

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.](#)

11 Countries Where You Can Buy a Second Passport

TED BAUMANN



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From St. Kitts to Türkiye, nations are redefining what it means to buy citizenship.

Towards the end of 2024 I noticed a change in my consultation clients. There was a new urgency to find a Plan B—a place to go *if and when* circumstances dictate.

Securing residency rights in a foreign country without living there is tricky. Income-based visas like retirement and digital nomad permits require you to live in the country. After all, that's why countries offer such visas: They want your money and your taxes.

The most popular way to get optional residency rights is a golden visa, an investment-based residency permit. Like retirement and digital nomad visas, the point is to have you bring your money to the country. But if you bring a lot up front, many countries will give you residency rights without requiring you to use them very much.

Golden visas aren't cheap, especially in Europe.

Although it's possible to get one for €100,000 or so if you invest in start-up businesses, most folks are looking at a minimum of €500,000. But there's a cheaper and (often) faster alternative: *buying* a second citizenship and the passport that goes with it.

This is known as citizenship by investment, or CBI. The number of people asking me about it has tripled or quadrupled since the beginning of this year. Understanding the origins of CBI and the countries offering "passports for sale," will help you decide whether CBI is something you should pursue...

Why Do Countries Sell Citizenship?

Most people (including many here at *IL*) routinely talk about "getting a second passport." That makes it sound like you can simply *buy* a travel document.

But you can't, at least not legally. To get a passport

from another country, you must first become its citizen.

Most countries see selling citizenship as incompatible with modern nationhood. And yet some countries do... and more are planning to join the “citizenship market.” The history of CBI explains why.

In 1984, the Caribbean nation of St. Kitts and Nevis launched the world’s first formal CBI program. It allowed foreign nationals to acquire citizenship through real estate purchase or government donations.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, other Caribbean nations including Dominica, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Lucia launched their own CBI schemes. Like St. Kitts, these countries saw CBI as a way to raise revenue without raising taxes on their tiny populations. Qualifying investments included a government donation, real estate purchase, or business investment.

COUNTRIES REALIZED THEY HAD ONE THING THAT NO ONE ELSE IN THE WORLD COULD SELL: THEIR OWN CITIZENSHIP.

These island nations adopted CBI because they couldn’t generate enough revenue to fund public expenditure through exports and tourism. But they realized that they had one thing that no one else in the world could sell: their own citizenship. And with the help of self-interested migration agencies, they envisaged a big global market for CBI from people whose own passports limit their travel freedoms and flexibilities. The fact that such people rarely want to live in or even visit CBI countries means that it’s a win-win situation for both parties, since it doesn’t require more housing or other resources to accommodate them.

CBI remained under the radar until the 2010s. But after the global financial crisis, two European island nations joined the CBI market. Cyprus (2013) and Malta (2014) offered citizenship that came with EU citizenship as well. These attracted high-net-worth individuals, primarily from Russia, the Middle East, and China. Other island nations, such as Vanuatu in the Pacific, soon followed suit.

By the mid-2010s, CBI had become a multibillion-dollar global industry, marketed by companies like Henley & Partners and Arton Capital. In fact, they often

designed them and wrote the enabling legislation. They aggressively courted potential economic citizens, making money on fees from CBI governments and applicants.

But then as now, the benefits of actually *living* in such countries weren’t the biggest draw. What CBI patrons really wanted was a passport that offered more travel freedom than their own. That’s why almost all the countries that started selling citizenship had visa-free access to the European Union... one thing people with passports from countries like Russia, Iran, and China couldn’t get.

Controversy

It didn’t take long for politicians and regulators in Europe and North America to realize the risk of CBI. Investigators soon found that money launderers, tax evaders, spies, global criminals, and other miscreants were getting second passports that allowed them into the EU and the US—something they couldn’t do if they’d applied for a visa on their native passport.

That led to diplomatic pressure on CBI countries—especially Cyprus and Malta, which were part of the EU and whose citizens could legally live and work anywhere in the bloc. Cyprus closed its program in 2020 after multiple scandals. Malta was forced to end its CBI program after losing a court case to the EU earlier this year. Dominica and Vanuatu both lost visa-free access to the EU because of irregularities in their own programs.

It’s now clear that the European Union will not tolerate CBI programs from its member states. The European Commission has also tabled a recommendation that any country that sells citizenship lose visa-free access to the Schengen zone.

CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT IS BECOMING MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR THE ORDINARY RICH.

That may or may not happen. But one thing is clear: Countries that sell citizenship must find new markets. The Caribbean countries, for example, have been forced to create a uniform regulatory framework that makes it nearly impossible for someone with a dodgy background to get one of their passports. That’s the only way they can keep visa-free access to the countries their potential customers want to get to.

CBI Today

The CBI market is undergoing a global sea change. Prices are rising. Due diligence is being taken seriously. Fraud and deception are being rooted out. Dodgy “citizenship agencies” are being forced out of business. Unreasonable practices (like getting CBI without ever visiting a country or immediately changing one’s name on its new passport) are increasingly forbidden.

On the plus side however, these changes make CBI more attractive for ordinary people. As CBI becomes more legitimate, the taint associated with it is reduced. If the desire for second citizenship is genuine, and the applicant commits to “genuine connections” to the country, other countries will probably tolerate CBI.

Today, demand for CBI remains strong from wealthy individuals seeking mobility, security, and asset diversification. As always, the core requirement is an investment or donation. But that’s not the only way CBI programs compete for market share. Other points of competition include how much time the new citizen must spend in the country, and how long they must keep the qualifying asset or deposit.

Here’s a list of current CBI programs, summarizing those conditions:

In addition, eight countries have recently announced new CBI programs: Argentina, Armenia, Botswana, Nauru, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, and the Solomon Islands. (It’s interesting to note that four of these are in Africa.)

Several things stand out from CBI programs around the world:

- CBI is generally cheaper than a European golden visa.
- Few countries require its new citizens-by-investment to spend any time in the country.
- Where real estate investments are allowed, they must be “approved.” These are usually developer projects like hotels, timeshares, or gated communities. Although there isn’t firm data, it’s unlikely that most of these investments are profitable to the applicant in the long term.
- In most countries, stringent due diligence is required, especially concerning the source of funds for a qualifying investment or donation.

Country	Minimum Investment / Donation	Conditions
1. St. Kitts & Nevis	\$250,000 donation or \$325,000 approved real estate.	No presence requirement. Real estate: 7-year hold.
2. Antigua & Barbuda	\$230,000 donation or \$300,000 approved real estate.	Presence requirement of 5 days in the first 5 years. Real estate: 5-year hold.
3. Dominica	\$200,000 donation or \$200,000 approved real estate.	No presence requirement. Real estate: 5-year hold. No name changes within 5 years.
4. Grenada	\$235,000 donation or \$270,000 (share) or \$350,000 (full title) approved real estate.	No presence requirement. Real estate: 5-year hold.
5. St. Lucia	\$240,000 donation or \$300,000 approved real estate.	No presence requirement. Real estate: 5-year hold.
6. Vanuatu	\$130,000 donation.	No presence requirement.
7. Türkiye	\$400,000 approved real estate or \$500,000 bank deposit or investment.	No presence requirement. Real estate: 3-year hold.
8. Egypt	\$100,000 donation; \$500,000 bank deposit (no interest).	No presence requirement. Bank deposit: 3-year hold.
9. Jordan	\$1.4 million investment.	No presence requirement.
10. North Macedonia	€200,000 into an approved investment fund or €400,000 direct investment.	No presence requirement. Investment: 3-year hold.
11. Cambodia	\$245,000 donation or \$305,000 investment in approved projects.	No presence requirement.

Pros	Cons
Quick.	Due diligence process is more intensive than for golden visas.
Often cheaper than a golden visa.	Investment returns may be minimal or negative.
Citizenship is a lifelong right, difficult to revoke.	Citizenship doesn't guarantee the right to a passport. Countries can refuse to reissue passports, making the second citizenship useless.
Visa-free travel.	CBI programs that face scrutiny can lead to travel or banking issues for passport holders (e.g., Dominica and Vanuatu).
A plan B if things are too bad at home.	With a few exceptions, CBI countries offer limited local benefits, like poor health care, limited opportunities, and high costs of living.
Tax opportunities.	US tax obligations remain. The cost of acquiring CBI may wipe out any local tax advantages.
No language or cultural integration requirements.	Few expats live in CBI countries, so you'll have to adapt to the local culture.

Is CBI for You?

Like anything, CBI has pros and cons.

The question is whether the cons outweigh the pros. Here's my take:

First, I have no moral objection to CBI. As long as CBI programs are approved by a legitimate government and the population supports it, countries should be free to set their own citizenship policies.

Second, as I noted above, CBI programs have been dragged towards legitimacy by the threat of losing the very things that make it attractive—particularly visa free access to places like the European Union. Countries that refuse to play by the new rules will lose these benefits and therefore lose potential CBI

investors. The remaining countries will eventually be free of the taint historically associated with CBI. That makes it a viable option for ordinary people.

Having said that, with a few exceptions like Antigua and Barbuda, Türkiye, and (potentially) Argentina and Botswana, most CBI countries aren't favorable environments for physical relocation. Most are either small and poor or face problematic domestic or regional situations. That means their primary utility from a CBI perspective is their passport. Anyone who wants a true plan B will not find that sufficient.

The market for CBI is still dominated by intermediaries who solicit potential economic citizens in the pursuit of their own profit. Historically, this is where problems come from. Small scale CBI agencies tend to misrepresent the opportunity, skimp on due diligence, and therefore risk revocation of citizenship later. It's important to work through established and credible agencies, not whoever pops up first on a Google search.

If you'd like to explore CBI, I've helped dozens of people consider their options, and some of them have acquired second citizenships that way. ■



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For a \$100,000 donation, the path to Egyptian citizenship comes with history, affordability—and no residency required.

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.

Second Passports... Wealth Protection... Tax Savings...

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*Ted Baumann, International Living's
Chief Global Diversification Expert*

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1. You're interested in **the best way to hold your overseas property**—for example, you might want to hold foreign real estate in an IRA... or use your property to move wealth outside the US... or use it to generate income...
2. You'd like to understand the **foreign legal structures you can use to better protect your assets**, your house, your business, your foreign property... you want to know where the guardrails are, the benefits, the costs, and any drawbacks...
3. You're interested in **using overseas residency to lower or eliminate your taxes**...
4. You'd like to **have a second passport, but you need help with your options**...
5. You want to pass the advantages of **global diversification on to your heirs such as children and grandchildren**...

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The Best Places on Earth to Buy in 2026— The *RETA* Real Estate Index

RONAN MCMAHON



© RETA

Caminha, Portugal is one of the places that *IL*'s real estate expert recommends.

It's late October and I'm at my historic villa in the Caminha region of northern Portugal.

From my desk, I have an incredible view out over the small community of Seixas to the Minho River that divides Portugal and Spain. It's a glorious morning here. A fog is rolling in from the ocean, the sun just starting to pierce through the mist. To my left, I can see waves crashing on beaches, some in Spain... others in Portugal.

Soon, I'll be on the move. For the next week, I'm using my Caminha home as a base to scout for real estate opportunities in the neighboring Spanish region of Galicia. Then, right around the time you might be reading this, I'll be going to Madrid to continue my recent scouting of the Spanish capital. In early November I fly back across the Atlantic to my base in the booming city of Guadalajara. From there, I've already made plans to scout the Pacific coast of Mexico around Ensenada, southwestern Nicaragua, Paraguay's capital Asunción, and the Atlantic coast of Uruguay near the glamorous city of Punta del Este.

That's all before the end of this year. And I plan to add other destinations too.

This is what I do. For more than two decades, I've been a full-time international real estate investor and scout. I put my boots on the ground all over the world... or toes in the sand, depending on where I am. And I don't do it alone.

Over the years, I've recruited and trained a dedicated team of scouts. Every year, we fan out across the world to meet with brokers and developers... view listings and land... survey new infrastructure... talk with attorneys, agents, and other key market insiders...

Nobody does what we do. We spend more than \$1 million per year on all this travel and research. And it's all so we can answer one question: Where are the best opportunities in overseas real estate today?

Answering that question has never been easy. There's so much opportunity out there... so many hidden gems, rising cities, and stunning new "Rivieras" on

the cusp of transformation. That's why some years ago, I created our *International Real Estate Index*.

Each year, in the final quarter, my team and I sit down to review all our research and intelligence—then distill it into a single, powerful resource: a ranked list of the 25 best places in the world to buy real estate for the coming year. Then I share this resource with members of my [Real Estate Trend Alert \(RETA\)](#) group.

IN MEDIEVAL SICILY, YOU CAN FIND HISTORIC HOMES FOR AS LITTLE AS €25K.

As I write, our 2026 Index is almost complete. *RETA* members will get full access in the coming weeks. But today I'm going to share special insights from it by highlighting top performers in major categories like Relative Value, Quality of Life, Income Potential and more.

The destinations that top these categories run the gamut. Some are tiny hill towns few have heard of hidden in the mountains of Italy. Others are world-famous luxury destinations where the right real estate can still deliver massive capital appreciation. One thing unites them. These are places that absolutely need to be on your radar if you're considering owning overseas in 2026.

Let's begin with the destination that offers the best value real estate...

Where You Get the Most Bang for Your Buck

The Italian island of **Sicily** is a land of historic cities, ancient temples, charming villages, towering mountains, incredible food, and stunning beaches on every shore. It's also Europe's value outlier, with housing priced like a rounding error.

In medieval towns on Sicily, particularly those set amid lost-in-time landscapes in the mountainous interior, you can find historic homes from as little as €25,000 to €50,000... sometimes even less. At this price, the homes will require some redecoration and modernization. But these are charming homes in livable condition with amazing character—think beautiful stonework, marble floors, and wrought-iron balconies.

Homes are available at these astonishingly low prices because Sicily's historic hill towns have long suffered from depopulation. For generations, the young have been leaving to seek opportunities in Italy's cities or overseas. This has left too many homes for too few people.

Now, though, there are signs the situation is improving. In recent years, the world has been catching on to the incredible bargains on offer in Sicily, in large part because of the media coverage of the €1 homes scheme. (Those homes, by the way, are not a good deal, as I discuss [in this video](#).) Now, with the explosion of the remote working trend, people are increasingly free to take advantage of these bargains. As a result, certain Sicilian hill towns are roaring back to life.



© SEAN PAVONE/ISTOCK

Sicilian hill towns boast postcard-perfect images and real-world opportunity: overlooked homes are becoming strategic investments.



© IAN MCDONNELL/ISTOCK

On the Baja peninsula's coastline, luxury living and significant uplifts converge.

In towns such as Mussomeli and Sambuca, there are new stores, cafés, and restaurants to serve the growing expat communities. Town centers are being revitalized as new investment floods in. Yet, because of the sheer abundance of empty homes, real estate prices remain astonishingly low, even in the communities experiencing revitalization. You can still buy historic homes for \$20 to \$40 per square foot—and again that's for solid, livable homes.

Of course, this market does have weaknesses. Sicilian hill towns generally attract few tourists, so the income potential of this real estate is low. Also the climate in Sicily is characterized by extremes. Spring and fall are pleasant, but winters are cold in the interior, and summers can get very hot and dry. But in terms of bang for your buck, owning in the right Sicilian hill town is next to impossible to beat.

If this opportunity interests you, put Mussomeli on your list. The town impressed my scout Ciaran Madden when he had boots on the ground there. Also consider Gratteri, a village he visited on the north coast with incredible views of Sicily's Mediterranean coastline. This is a place where you can live the picturesque Italian hill town lifestyle—morning cappuccinos in sun-dappled piazzas, hiking in the soaring hills, late dinners of handmade pasta at quaint neighborhood restaurants—and still have easy access to major cities, the coast, and the international airport in the island's capital, Palermo.

The Gold Standard for Quality of Life

Quality of life is of course a subjective category. Some of us dream of owning amid the sleepy lanes of a medieval French town. Others would favor a luxury condo steps from the slopes of a world-class ski resort. But when it comes to broad appeal, few if any destinations globally can match the quality of life on offer in **San José del Cabo**.

For those who don't know San José, it's part of Los Cabos—a booming region at the base of the Baja California peninsula that also includes the neighboring city of Cabo San Lucas.

This is a place of almost ethereal natural beauty. You have glistening golden-sand beaches, piercing blue waters teeming with marine life, the rust-colored desert with its towering cacti... And you have (for my money at least) the best weather on earth—a full nine months every year of warm sunshine, low humidity, refreshing ocean breezes, and cool evenings for a restful night's sleep.

A key contributor to the incredible quality of life here is the region's accessibility. Los Cabos international airport has 300 flights per week to more than 30 US and Canadian cities.

With this mix of natural beauty, perfect weather and great accessibility, Los Cabos has been drawing the

world's richest and wealthiest folks for decades. This coastline has the highest concentration of ultra-luxury resorts in Mexico: One&Only Palmilla, Chileno Bay/Auberge, Montage, and Viceroy Los Cabos, to name but a few. More are in the pipeline, like Park Hyatt Los Cabos and St. Regis Los Cabos. Billions are being invested in this region, and not just on the resorts, but also on infrastructure like new roads and airport upgrades.

The upshot is that basically any activity you want to do onshore or offshore—desert adventure, sport fishing, surfing, whale-watching, world-class golf, fine dining, nightlife—it's possible in Cabo. Add to this a cultural richness that often surprises.

San José del Cabo is the cultural and historic heart of this region. This is a place of cobblestone streets, colonial architecture, and a thriving art and dining scene. Set in its restored colonial buildings, you'll find trendy wine bars, Michelin-level restaurants serving farm-to-table cuisine born of local terrain, boutique stores selling one-off pieces of jewelry and designer fashion, and chic art galleries.

A key attraction in San José del Cabo is the Thursday night Art Walk, when artists display their creations in the center of the Historic Art District and locals and visitors come together to view their works, sip wine under the stars, and snack on incredible street food. This combination of art walks, marinas, golf, fishing, dining, and more—all set in the striking deserts-meets-ocean landscapes of Baja—makes this a stunning place to live or visit.

In terms of costs to own, this is not a cheap market. Around San José two-bed condos list for well over \$400,000 into the millions of dollars. Yet in just the past few weeks, I was able to bring an incredible off-market deal to my *Real Estate Trend Alert* group here. Our exclusive pricing was mind-blowing, a complete outlier for this coast—from just \$298,400 for a two-bed ocean-view condo in an ideally located, amenity-rich community 15 minutes from the airport and minutes from downtown and the beaches.

Deals like this are beyond rare, though. I scouted San José for 11 years to find this deal. I don't know if I'll be able to find another. But given the incredible benefits of owning here, which extend beyond lifestyle to amazing capital appreciation and huge income potential, I'll be searching hard.

The Best Places to Own for Capital Appreciation

There's an old saying about how to make money from real estate: "Find out where the people are going and buy the land before they get there." That's how you see big returns... buy ahead of demand. How do we find out where there's going to be huge demand? We follow transformations.

Real estate fortunes, large and small, are made at moments of big transformation. That's why, for over 20 years, I've devoted myself to finding ones I can follow, get ahead of, and profit from.

Look around the world today and you'll see dozens of markets that are seeing explosive transformations



Cap Cana—framed by palm-lined walkways and luxury boats—creates a backdrop for the Caribbean's next real estate frontier.

What is an Off-Market, RETA-only Deal?

I founded my [Real Estate Trend Alert \(RETA\)](#) club more than 17 years ago to bring together like-minded investors who recognize the incredible potential of overseas real estate... who understand that there's always opportunity somewhere when you look everywhere. Since then, our group has grown into an unrivaled block.

Using the collective-buying power of all RETA members, I can get exclusive deals from developers.

RETA pricing is off-market, negotiated directly with the developer and available only to members. This is a simple win-win for both sides. The developer can sell to RETA before public launch and get a rapid injection of sales. This changes their financial models, saves on marketing, and lets them move on sooner to other projects. In return, we get pricing far below what anyone else ever pays. That's the RETA advantage: early access, below-market pricing, and exclusive terms you can't get anywhere else.

Over the years, I've been able to negotiate incredible off-market deals in many of the destinations mentioned here. Some examples...

- **\$182,700 Uplift in Los Cabos**—In August 2021, RETA members could own two-bed, two-bath condos in the stunning ocean-view Cabo Costa community in Los Cabos from an exclusive price of \$188,200. In May this year, a condo available to RETA members for \$197,300 was listing for \$380,000—that's \$182,700 more.
- **\$87,600 More in Seven Months in Cap Cana**—In September 2024, I was able to bring RETA members our first deal in Cap Cana, just a short stroll from spectacular Juanillo Beach. Two-bed condos in the Crystal Garden community started at \$382,400 for RETA members. Just seven months later, similar units were listed for \$470,000—an uplift of \$87,600, or 22.9%.
- **€300,000 Gain in Portugal**—One RETA member bought a penthouse in the town of Lagos in Portugal's southern Algarve region that I recommended in August 2019 for €495,000. Just over three years later, in October 2022, she sold for €795,000. That's a gain of €300,000.

and where the right real estate can deliver amazing returns. San José del Cabo is one. As I say, billions are being invested there on infrastructure and new resorts by some of the world's most luxurious hotel chains—that's an unmistakable vote of confidence from brands that build only where long-run demand is bankable.

FIND OUT WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE GOING AND BUY THE LAND BEFORE THEY GET THERE.

Here are just two other destinations on my beat that offer excellent potential for capital appreciation.

Set on the eastern coast of the Dominican Republic, **Cap Cana** is a veritable micro-state of affluence and elegance. It began with a master plan conceived in the early 2000s inspired by the world's greatest bastions of wealth and beauty. Think Palm Beach, Monaco, St. Barts. The founders weren't just trying to build a

resort—they were designing a complete, self-sufficient, world-class lifestyle destination. Billions of dollars have been ploughed into this vision of self-contained Caribbean bliss.

At 30,000 acres, Cap Cana is twice the size of Manhattan. And it's just 10 minutes from Punta Cana International Airport, with regular flights across Canada and the American Northeast.

The infrastructure is top-class. You can get around on more than 62 miles of paved roads. High-speed internet runs on an equally extensive network of fiber-optic cables. And one of the details I love most: all electrical lines are underground, so there's not a single unsightly wire to be seen.

Everything in Cap Cana screams luxury. The world's biggest names in hospitality are here: Hyatt. Marriott. St. Regis. It's home to the largest inland marina in the Caribbean, incredible fine-dining, state-of-the-art equestrian facilities, a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, with another on the way. There's also a university campus, international school, convention



© RETA

On Portugal's far-north coast in Caminha, wave-tossed sands and quiet villages hint at what happens before the world catches up.

centers, fire station, medical and veterinary clinics, and the biggest water park in the Caribbean, its amphitheater inaugurated last year by Elton John.

And Cap Cana is continuing to expand. Billions more will be invested here. My scout had boots on the ground here in the summer for the launch of Cap Cana's new commercial district. The plans are for office buildings, a top-class hospital, and shopping and dining spaces. The scale of what's happening is astonishing. Crucial to note is that the setting is unrivaled. I've never seen sands so white, or waters so quintessentially Caribbean, as at Juanillo beach in the heart of Cap Cana.

This is a veritable city-state rising on the Caribbean. And yet for a limited time, there's an incredible opportunity to own on the ground floor here.

Switching gears completely...

Sometimes transformations are more akin to rebirths or rediscoveries. That's what's happening in the town of **Caminha**, where I'm writing to you from. Located on the Minho River that separates Portugal from Spain, Caminha has a long and rich history. Walk its cobblestoned lanes and alleys and you'll see constant reminders of this, from the 15th-century Igreja Matriz de Caminha church to the 13th-century Torre do Relógio clock tower. And yet despite this abundant history, Caminha today feels modern and upmarket. There are art galleries and boutique hotels, fine-dining restaurants and wine bars. Then just outside town

you have lagoon and Atlantic beaches, towering pine forests, rolling countryside. This town has so much to offer, but like other destinations in the far north of Portugal, it's overlooked and undervalued.

Over the past 10 years, Portugal has become one of the world's most popular destinations for vacationers and expats. From Lisbon to the Algarve, from the Silver Coast to Porto, towns and cities across the country are now inundated by tourists for long stretches of the year. But head 30 minutes or so north of Porto and all that begins to fade. This is despite the fact you'll find all the elements that make destinations to the south so appealing—incredible food... soft-sand beaches... rich history and culture.

When I first scouted Caminha in 2023, the town was completely off the radar of the foreign tourists, expats, and second home owners coming to Portugal. Now, though, it's being discovered. I've viewed Caminha as a "sure thing" for the past 12 months. But even I'm taken aback by the scale of the transformation now taking place there. Two years ago, there were five great, inexpensive homes for every buyer. Today, the ratio is now more like 1:1. And things are heading fast for five buyers for every nice home.

I've been writing consistently about the opportunities in Caminha, both here in [International Living](#) and to RETA members, ever since I first scouted it. And I've put my money where my mouth is. In late 2024 I bought my historic villa here. In total, the home spans around 5,000 square feet. I have a garden

where I can see waves crashing on two beaches, one in Portugal, another in Spain. Inside, this historic home is immaculate, furnished with original pieces that came from Brazil with the first owners at the end of the 1800s.

I got it for around €410,000. In US dollar terms, that's just \$90 per square foot! I expect this home to be worth €1 million within five years as more people come. This demonstrates the insane value you can find still here. Caminha is being discovered, but there's still time to act on this opportunity. (For more on the capital appreciation potential of these destinations, [check out this video I recorded for my YouTube channel.](#))

Where to Own a Rental Income Machine

Let's turn to income—the beautiful, predictable kind that rolls in month after month while you sleep.

Across my international beat, there are destinations where you'll find real estate that pays you for owning it. I'm talking about double-digit gross yields from owning best-in-class properties you can also enjoy whenever you choose.

San José del Cabo is one such destination. Cap Cana is another. Here are two more that sit atop the 2026 index in the Income Potential category and should be on your radar.

Tucked behind ancient walls in southern Portugal's Algarve region, the town of **Lagos** is a place where its charming Old Town spills down cobbled lanes into

shady plazas toward a state-of-the-art marina. Within the town's white-washed buildings, you'll find hearty local fare as well as some of the trendiest restaurants you can imagine. And along the coast you'll find a network of stunning beaches, separated by golden sandstone cliffs, sea arches, grottoes and caves. This is the most attractive town on the Algarve.

Not so long ago, Lagos was overlooked. For decades, tourism development in the Algarve was centered in the towns close to Faro airport like Albufeira and Vilamoura. They experienced unrestrained development, with high-rise condo blocks built over the sand to serve the summer tourists jetting in and out for cheap beach vacations. Lagos in the western Algarve was seen as too far from the action. Then a few things changed.

First, a new highway reduced travel time between Lagos and Faro to an hour. Later, the Algarve began attracting new kinds of folks. These were wealthier vacationers looking for a more upmarket experience... remote-working professionals looking for a place to stay for part or all of the year... well-off retirees seeking a true community where they could live year-round...

When people started arriving in big numbers in Lagos around a decade ago, the town realized it had an opportunity to develop differently. Development was kept a healthy distance back from its pristine beaches. History was emphasized, with its Old Town, white-washed churches, and historic citadel restored. Strict building regulations keep all new construction



© MEDITERRANEAN/ISTOCK

Here on the Algarve's edge, limestone cliffs and turquoise waves intersect with investment opportunity.



© RETA

Playa del Carmen is more than a beach retreat—it's a living city with businesses, cafes, stores, restaurants, bars, and more.

low-rise and low-density.

This has turned Lagos into a luxury haven. Today, new investment is flooding into the town, including Hilton, which has started construction on a vast \$119 million marina project that will comprise two new hotels, a 4-star and a 5-star.

Lagos is now on a multi-decade upswing that will ultimately see it rival Europe's and the US's great bastions of beachfront luxury. Already it sees huge rental demand, both short and long term, from well-heeled folks.

I first scouted Lagos around a decade ago and have brought a number of deals here to my RETA group. One of these was in a community called Adega. In November 2020, RETA members could own two-bed condos in this community near Lagos' attractive marina from €348,000. One sold earlier this year for €600,000. That's an uplift of €252,000.

I know a RETA member who reported occupancy rates of above 90% on their Adega condo last year along with around €45,000 in gross income. That's a 12.7% gross yield. And in the first half of this year, he saw his income jump 24% to around €33,000 from this condo. It shows what's possible in Lagos. Own the right real estate to appeal to the wealthy folks flocking to this town and you'll have a rental income machine.

From an upmarket town in the Algarve to a booming beach city in the Caribbean...

For many decades, **Playa del Carmen** on Mexico's Caribbean coast was little more than the place to catch the ferry to Cozumel—an island 45 minutes offshore

known to scuba divers and snorkelers around the world. Back then, Playa was a sleepy settlement of dirt roads, palm-thatched palapas, and a handful of basic B&Bs for the few travelers who decided to stay the night. But Playa del Carmen had an undeniable appeal. It boasts white-sand beaches, turquoise waters and a Caribbean climate that remains warm year round.

As Cancún expanded through the 1980s and '90s, travelers began seeking something smaller-scale and more authentic. Playa del Carmen became that alternative. Restaurants, cafés, and small hotels began appearing. The streets were paved. Development spread quickly along 5th Avenue, which today is the city's main drag, a miles-long pedestrian street lined with cafés, stores, restaurants, and bars.

Like Cancún before it, this sleepy seaside village transformed into a world-class tourist destination in a matter of decades. But it also followed a different path than Cancún. Instead of most tourists staying in huge resorts on the beach—which they likely never leave—Playa del Carmen became a living, breathing city.

Today, Playa is 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. Playa's highly desirable beach-meets-city lifestyle means it sees enormous rental demand from vacationers, retirees, and digital nomads who come year-round from the US, Canada, Europe, and right across Latin America.

I've been scouting Playa del Carmen for decades and over the years, I've been able to find some incredible deals here for our RETA group. One example is the



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In Uruguay—the Switzerland of South America—refined living finds its balance where stability and sophistication quietly coexist.

Singular Dream community. This is the exact kind of real estate that has massive appeal in Playa—best-in-class with amazing rooftop amenities and views of the Caribbean.

In 2021, *RETA* members had the chance to buy two-bed condos here from \$265,304. In 2024, a two-bed condo in Singular Dream was listing for \$574,322. That’s an uplift of \$309,018. What’s more, *RETA* members have reported gross rental yields in the mid- to high teens and mind-blowing occupancy rates of as much as 98% for owning short-term rentals in this community.

These destinations are just a small sample of the places where you can earn incredible income overseas. I recently recorded a video digging into the rental case for Playa del Carmen, Lagos, and a third destination to know about on Costa Rica’s “Gold Coast.” [Click here to view that now.](#)

And in the upcoming index, *RETA* members will get my full breakdown of destinations by Income Potential, as well as a host of other categories from Quality of Life to Climate to important practical considerations like Holding Costs, Stability, Availability of Finance, and so much more.

I’m hugely excited to unveil this year’s edition. It’s set to feature at least five new destinations that have never been on the index before, from stunning capitals and hidden-gem beach towns in South America... to emerging regions of Italy... to an under-the-radar coast of Greece.

Also of note is that Uruguay outperforms. Last year, Uruguay had one destination on the index. For 2026, it’s set to have three, reflecting the growing interna-

tional appeal of this safe-haven country. I’ll be sharing the full index with *RETA* members in the coming weeks.

Editor’s Note: The *RETA* index is much more than simply a table with rankings. It’s a comprehensive report featuring photos, maps, videos, and detailed introductions and analysis of each of the 25 destinations. And within the report, Ronan also provides a downloadable spreadsheet with the full scores for all destinations. He shares this raw data so you can customize the index to your needs and preferences.

Certain categories on the index are subjective. Take Climate. For the *RETA* index, top-scoring destinations in the Climate category are warm and sunny for much of the year, but not humid. But perhaps you prefer a more humid climate. Or perhaps you like to experience four seasons. By adjusting the Climate scores to your tastes, you may end up with a very different top five or top 10.

Ronan McMahon



Ronan McMahon is *IL*’s international real estate expert, editor of [Overseas Dream Home](#), 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. [Join RETA here.](#)

American Man Seeking Love in Asia...

BART WALTERS



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Romance knows no borders. Finding a partner abroad could offer discovery and challenges, but also lasting connection.

I'm not sure if love and romance have changed much in the past 50 years, but dating certainly has. Anyone I met in my early dating years back in the 1970s and 80s was only a few degrees of separation from girls in the neighborhood, classmates, or people I met at work.

But today, even at 64, the world feels wide open to me romantically, and I'm much more likely to find a real connection in Bangkok, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, or Phnom Penh than I ever was back in Orlando.

Not so long ago, any single man over 40 traveling alone to Southeast Asia was assumed to be a sex tourist or chasing a mail-order bride. Intentions didn't matter—the reputation stuck. Now attitudes have changed. Finding a partner abroad isn't just tolerated, it's become trendy.

Almost monthly, headlines warn of America's "loneliness epidemic." Writers describe men boarding planes in search of romance, blaming social media, the "Me

Too" movement, and the lingering effects of isolation from the pandemic. The press has even coined a catchy phrase: the Passport Bros. But here's the truth—none of this is new. Guys have been doing this for decades; they just didn't have Instagram accounts.

Four Case Studies

When I first landed in Bangkok 26 years ago, the first Westerners I met weren't tourists hunting temples or beaches. They were men chasing wives.

Big Joe from New Jersey was impossible to overlook: 6'9", over 300 pounds, divorced, and just shy of 40. He arrived in Bangkok with a straightforward plan—find a wife, start a family, and live a modern Norman Rockwell painting back in the US. Joe met Paew, a Thai woman in her late twenties, tiny compared to him but perfectly matched in energy. Together, they looked like a sight gag, but their affection was genuine. They met through a matchmaking website built for precisely this purpose.

Grady from Seattle was in his 50s, a successful real estate developer. His days were spent wandering temples, his nights sampling Bangkok's nightlife. Then he met Yui, a gift shop clerk in his hotel. She was striking, charming, and spoke solid English. Grady was smitten before he even knew her last name.

Greg from Nebraska, whom I met in Panama, was still married to a Colombian woman and raising two kids there. By the time I saw him again in Bangkok, that chapter was closed. Overweight, balding, perpetually wrinkled, Greg looked more like an unmade bed than a romantic hero. Yet he persisted in his search for a "smart woman in a short skirt."

Italian Michael was a soft-spoken financial consultant from near Vatican City; he had never married. When I asked what kind of partner he sought, he said, "She is shaped like a cello and has a smile that could light up the darkest night." Definitely poetic—maybe not practical, but I admired his faith in Cupid and random luck.

Over the years, I've met dozens more like them. Some were seeking "traditional" relationships, some younger partners, and others simply admired Asian beauty. The motives varied, but the drive was the same. Stick around, and see how my four amigos turned out.

Passport Princesses

By the way, Western men aren't alone in their international love quests anymore. Enter the *Passport Princesses*—Western women traveling abroad to find love.

They head to youth-driven hubs in my region, like Bali, Koh Phangan, Chiang Mai, or surf spots like Siargao in the Philippines. Ironically, many end up dating fellow Westerners doing the same thing. When I taught at a university in Bangkok, many female expat teachers dated male colleagues from international schools. With 12 million people and 160 schools, Bangkok's dating scene was its own ecosystem.

But a new pattern has emerged. Women are flying to Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Barbados, Greece, and parts of Africa, where they're romanced by "beach boys." The setup mirrors men in Bangkok hooking up with go-go dancers in Patpong. The line between a love connection and a cold, hard transaction can blur. No judgment here, but my advice to both men and women is to ignore that low-hanging fruit. Authentic connections are out there and worth the effort.

What's the Attraction?

It's not all about sex. Men and women chase Cupid overseas for surprisingly similar reasons. Some just want to "expand the dating pool." Others feel out of step with the values back home. Suppose you're into Buddhism, good luck finding your soulmate in the middle of the Bible Belt. Or if you're into dating someone 15, 20, even 30 years younger—or older—that might raise eyebrows in Kansas, but it's pretty standard in Asia, Central and South America, or Africa.

There's also the lure of cultural exchange. Many Americans live in what feels like "America World," never realizing how much more is out there. Dating abroad opens doors to new religions, cuisines, languages, and family traditions. It's a more intimate education than a dozen solo trips or a hundred YouTube documentaries.

Language Barriers

Attraction is easy; sustaining it is harder. The first genuine hurdle is language.

English is commonly spoken in the major cities and tourist towns in Thailand. Still, even a handful of Thai phrases goes a long way. When I was married to a Thai woman, we invented our own private dialect, a mash-up of English, Thai, eyebrow raises, nostril flares, and the dreaded side-eye.

Khmer, Cambodia's primary language, has the world's largest alphabet. Vietnamese is equally thorny, with its tones and swallowed vowels. Thankfully, English is widely spoken in large metropolitan areas. Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia, by contrast, are refreshingly simple—Latin alphabet, no tones, phonetic spelling.

And then there's the Philippines. Americans hear "English is official" and assume fluency, but daily life blends Tagalog, Visayan, Pampangan, and hundreds of dialects spread across 7,100 islands. Still, compared to anywhere else in Southeast Asia, the odds of finding someone to understand your sarcasm or dad jokes are better.

Cultural Differences

Even if you haven't set foot in a church since your grandma's funeral, religion might matter more than you think when dating abroad. If you grew up in North America, you were shaped by Christian values, whether you realize it or not. Ideas about marriage, fidelity, and family are all tied to that framework. Thai people don't always see those concepts the same way Americans do.

Buddhist nations like Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam are curious about other faiths and aren't pushy about their spirituality. But live there long enough, and Buddhism will slowly creep into your life like the smoke from a burning joss stick.

In the Philippines, centuries of Spanish, English, and American colonization left the country overwhelmingly Christian. For Americans, that feels familiar. Just be prepared: if you marry a Filipino, you're likely in for a large Catholic wedding.

Choosing a Location

Let's say you've met someone special and you want to make a permanent connection. Where will you live? Their country or yours?

From what I've seen, many Thais like the idea of living in the West, but they are much happier in Thailand, or at least close to other Thais. Filipinos and Vietnamese, by contrast, often adapt remarkably well abroad.

Americans usually make decent expats—especially those who've logged plenty of passport stamps—but there are limits. If you fell in love in Bangkok and your partner suddenly suggests moving back to their quiet farming village, brace yourself. Westerners tend to cluster in large cities and tourist hubs, partly for comfort food, partly for conversation. The ability to occasionally grab a burger and complain about the heat with another foreigner can save your sanity—and your relationship.

The Four Amigos

I stayed in touch with those first four Bros—now more like OGs. Their stories played out in very different ways.

Big Joe married Paew within a year, and they settled in New Jersey. Joe worked on Wall Street and Paew ran the household with clockwork precision. They flew back to Thailand every year. Joe and Paew retired in Korat, near her family—a perfectly executed plan.

Grady married Yui in a rice-field ceremony in Kalasin and whisked her back to Seattle. She loved the convertible Mercedes and the mansion—for a while. But after three years, she traded the Benz for a Thai boyfriend and a small restaurant back in her hometown. Her explanation was blunt: "Thai people need to be in Thailand. I didn't like who I was in the US."

Greg married Nui, a sharp Chinese-Thai from a wealthy family. Together, they launched several businesses. They divorced after a few years, but stayed

business partners. In Asia, friendship after love isn't unusual. Nui summed it up: "We aren't in love anymore, but we still appreciate each other."

Michael met Tum at Greg and Nui's wedding. She had the dazzling smile he'd been waiting for. They married, had two kids, and built a life balanced between Bangkok and Italy. Tum manages HR at a bank; Mike trades stocks between ballet recitals and soccer practice. Twice a year, they fly to Europe, where the kids learn to ski the Alps and twirl spaghetti like pros.

What Are Your Chances?

Two wins, one loss, one draw. About the same odds as anywhere else. If you're thinking about a cross-cultural romance, a few guidelines might help:

- **Do your homework.** Learn history, food, and religion. Be genuinely curious. Don't just say, "Well, in America we..."
- **Have a plan.** Joe had one and found Paew. Michael planned to let love find him, and that worked too.
- **Have realistic expectations.** Grady thought a young country girl like Yui could transform into an American housewife. She didn't—and the divorce was costly.
- **Be willing to adapt.** Moving abroad means joining another family and culture. Don't expect it to bend entirely your way.

Now, more than ever, geography matters less than character. Find a good person, treat them with compassion and respect, and build from there. That's Relationship 101—whether you're a Passport Bro, a Passport Princess, or someone with nothing more than a one-way ticket and hope in your carry-on. ■

Bart Walters



Bart Walters is *IL*'s Thailand Correspondent and has lived and traveled throughout Thailand for 25 years, working as a real estate developer, a college professor, and a marketing executive. He's published numerous articles about what it's like to live in Southeast Asia.



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Searching for Our Forever Place Along Brittany's Granite Coast

TIM WARD



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Along Brittany's north coast, cool breezes, granite cliffs, and walkable towns offer what so many seek later in life: space, calm, and permanence.

Choosing where to live in the later years of one's retirement is a tricky business. How do we, newly retired in our 60s, know where we, in our 80s, might want to live? Will we care for the same things then that we care for now?

These are important questions, to which we can't blithely sing, *Qué será, será*. Even though the future's not ours to see, my wife Teresa and I feel some responsibility to plan ahead for our future selves. So we decided we could at least scout out some places where we think "those people" might be happy.

This means taking stock of the things we love most—cool weather, wilderness, windswept beaches, authentic architecture, good food—and also being aware of we most dislike—heat, over-development, bland architecture, suburbia. We know we want to live in Europe, which narrows our options considerably if we want to be by the sea and avoid hot summers. Iberia and the Mediterranean coast are out. Scandinavia and the Baltic coast? Also out. Their winters are just too long and dark.

One place that seems to check all the boxes was the north coast of Brittany, in northwestern France. There the Atlantic Gulf Stream moderates temperatures, producing mild winters and cool summers (though the temperature can reach 90 F, it does not stay that hot for long). The trade-off? Winters are rainy. But we could be willing to put up with that.

The first step in this direction, then, was a scouting trip along the Brittany coast between the towns of St. Malo in the east and Roscoff in the west. Here's what we discovered...

The Suburbs of St. Malo

St. Malo is the main town on the north Brittany coast. The old historic center was bombed to smithereens during World War II, and though the walled citadel with its massive turrets has been meticulously reconstructed, we found overall that it lacked authentic charm. Still, a bustling downtown core with plenty of services and restaurants is nice to have near at hand, and St. Malo is easy to reach from several smaller communities nearby, some of which had promise.



The Promenade at Sillon

We stayed at a small hotel on the beachfront promenade in Sillon that is walking distance to old St. Malo. Many of the buildings along the strand are beautiful Belle Epoque mansions, either privately owned or segmented into apartments. Teresa was seduced by the beauty of these old houses, many of them with Art Nouveau flourishes. I could easily imagine my old-man self simply stepping out the back door of one of these apartments and onto the promenade for my daily walk, or descending the stone steps for a stroll along the long beach.

Of course, any place along the promenade would be crowded in summertime, and having popular St. Malo next door means apartments with a view are expensive; at Sillon we would have to find something much smaller than what we could get elsewhere along the coast. That's the tradeoff: the proximity of urban delights comes at a steep price.

Cancale

About a 20-minute drive to the east of St. Malo, the harbor of Cancale snuggles up against a cliff right by the water's edge, while the rest of the town perches atop the bluff. The harborfront is super cute. It's lined with brightly painted hotels and restaurants all geared around Cancale's cash cow: oysters.

We passed the oyster farms on our way into town:

mud flats that stretch out into the English Channel. When the tide is up, the current flows strongly, bathing the oysters in clean, cold water. When the tide is out, the oysters are easy to harvest along the exposed shore. Plucked from the sea, they get whisked away to oyster lovers all around France.

But, to eat them in Cancale itself is a whole other experience. Teresa loves oysters, so of course we had to stop for lunch and split a platter. Now, personally, I don't much care for the pricey mollusks. I find them slippery-slimy, fishy-smelly, and frankly disgusting. But I was game to try what were supposedly the finest in France, and damned if I did not love them. These morsels-in-a-shell tasted fresh as the sea itself: salty but light, a little buttery; not fishy, in fact, not like fish at all. It turns out, I do like oysters after all—when they are straight from the beds of the best oyster farms in the world.

ARE OYSTERS ENOUGH TO BUILD A LIFE AROUND?

But, are oysters enough to build a life around? Well, it would be nice to have Cancale close at hand, but we would not want to live on this high-traffic strip of harbor, and up the bluff, the town of Cancale proper seemed a bit too small and quiet—and none of the houses inland had a view.

Dinard

The River Rance divides St. Malo from the town of Dinard, which runs along its western shore. The bridge connecting the two towns is actually the world's first tidal energy dam. The strong flow of the tide turns turbines under the bridge both when the tide comes in, and the tide goes out, providing a perpetual clean source of energy, powered by the gravitational pull of the moon.

Dinard is a world apart from St. Malo. During the 19th century, the little town became a popular destination for England's upper classes, who began building Italian villas, Yorkshire cottages, and even Louis XIII-style pavilions on the bluffs that frame the town's beaches. Some of these summer homes are whimsical gothic mansions, with arched black roofs and decorative turrets built of austere grey granite. Many of them are set dramatically right on the cliff edge, as if ready-made as the setting of a trenchant Victorian Romance novel.

Teresa was smitten as we drove along Dinard's residential roads. She "oohed" and "aahed" in ecstasy as we passed each mansion, as if some architectural cupid was shooting her with arrow after arrow. Fortunately, my beloved has a prudent side as well. Teresa is capable of falling in love with an aging wreck, and at the same time realizing this will never work out in the long term (luckily, in the case of her husband, she was wrong).

Too many of these grand homes were showing signs of wear and tear: missing slate roof shingles, cracks in the stone walls. A lot of them were still shut up for the winter, and we could only imagine the mildew that must be accumulating in their basements, permeating the interiors. Many of the mansions we passed had a white van in their driveways, disgorging construction workers or plumbers. Maintaining a house like this would be a full time job, and neither of us wanted to be responsible for a house older than ourselves in our later years, especially one that would require more care, and probably cost more too, than managing our own health. Dinard would be a romantic-heartthrob choice, but not the practical one for settling down with.

The Côtes-d'Armor

Dinard is geographically within the region called the Côtes-d'Armor, which simply means "The Sea Coast." It's a mash up of the French word for "coast" and the Breton word for "sea." The ancient Breton language still persists in western Brittany, with some

200,000 speakers of the native Celtic tongue. Many of the places we passed through in this region had distinctively un-French-sounding names, like: Ploubazlanec, Kerénoc, Plouha.

The coast divides neatly into two evocatively-named parts.

The Emerald Coast

Beyond Dinard comes a stretch known as *Côte d'Émeraude*, "The Emerald Coast." This region is mostly flat green farmland inland, with little resort towns interspersed with wild beachfront along the shoreline. We noticed the farms in this region were big—*agro-business* big. Springtime is thus an important time to visit, because you can smell the fertilizer. However we might love the idea of life in the countryside, we absolutely do not want to be downwind of a farm that has just applied a layer of manure on its crops.

The Emerald Coast's little towns along the beaches were lovely, but we also became aware of an even worse issue caused by the farms. Apparently the runoff of fertilizer into the English channel in this region has led to the proliferation of certain kinds of seaweed that washes up on the beaches in such vast quantities, the phenomenon has become known as a "green tide."

As it decays on the beaches, the seaweed turns into a toxic slime; it produces hydrogen sulphide, a potentially lethal gas that smells like rotten eggs. This has become a persistent issue along the Emerald Coast—closing beaches, and in a few cases, even killing people who unknowingly stepped on a pocket of toxic gas beneath seaweed.

While there is a plan in place to install monitoring sensors in vulnerable beaches, and to clean up "green tide" seaweed before it turns toxic, the sad truth is that until the farms stop polluting, the problem won't go away—and Climate Change is making it worse. Toxic slime? A hard no for the Emerald Coast as our future home.

The Pink-Granite Coast

Further west, the land becomes hilly, the farms seem smaller, more likely family-owned (so fewer beaches at risk of a green tide). Driving off the highway we saw plots of purple carrots—a variety we have become enamored with in Paris markets. The coast seems rougher here, with more parks and smaller resort communities around each little beach and fishing hamlet.



Next to the pink granite lighthouse stands a pink granite mansion... where dreamers and storytellers have long found their muse in the sea and stone.

A six mile stretch of shoreline is called *Côte de Granit Rose*—“The Pink-Granite Coast” for the unusual colored-rock that lines its stoney shores. It’s one of only three places in the whole world with this particular kind of granite. Worn away by wind and wave, time and tide, the rocks have been shaped into strange and wondrous formations: weird piles of stones and curved, anthropomorphic figures.

Because of its sheer splendor, overtourism has been a problem along the Pink Coast—over 700,000 vacationers visit each summer. In response, the government has turned much of the coast into protected areas to prevent overdevelopment of the prettiest parts. In compensation, there’s a well-maintained public footpath that runs all along most of the coast. My feet were itching to try it.

Teresa and I were particularly drawn to the port of Saint Guirec, which has a veritable sculpture-garden by the sea. The coastal walk runs right through the town’s beach. We followed the trail for a while, through a small pine forest and out through a boulder garden that runs along the shore to a pink granite lighthouse. Next to the lighthouse stands a pink granite mansion—this was the house in which the Polish Nobel-Laureate, Henryk Sienkiewicz, wrote his famous historical novel, *Quo Vadis*.

Quo Vadis is latin for “where are you going?” The

question, for us, could scarcely be more fitting.

The rest of the town of Saint Guirec was made up of two-story stone houses, with just a smattering of shops and cafes near the beach. Most of the homes were shuttered, so this was clearly one of many summer towns that were mostly dormant the rest of the year. Could we be satisfied living half a year in a ghost town and the other half in a tourist hub? Probably not.

Just around the next cove we hit the town of Trégasil—much larger, with a historic center and a beautiful coastline fronted by pink towers of granite just offshore. We found several condominiums near the beach, including some under construction that seemed very enticing—so enticing that if they had had an office on site, we might have laid down a deposit there and then.

Not much further along, we came to Ile Grande, a small island linked to the mainland by a bridge. It held four beaches, a marina, a pine forest, and several blocks of cottages. While more remote than we had bargained for, it was hard to imagine it drawing a crowd in summer. And the island was nevertheless near the larger town of Trébeurden. This conjunction appealed to us greatly: remote location, but town-adjacent.

I was enchanted by a neolithic dolmen we came across by the island's cliffs, called Ty-Lia. "The Covered Alley," is a 25-foot long passageway of stones, covered by a two large flat rocks. This alley is more than 4,300 years old, and one can still stoop and walk inside the dark passageway—which of course I did. Teresa, less easily amused, waited in the car while I poked around, wondering who these people might have been, and why they might have left such an intriguing monument on their island home.

IN TRÉGASTEL, WE FOUND A STUNNING COASTLINE FRAMED BY PINK GRANITE TOWERS—AND NEARLY PUT DOWN A DEPOSIT ON A BEACH CONDO THAT VERY DAY.

Local legends say either giants or dwarves built the Ty-Lia. But actually, it was erected by a prehistoric, seafaring people who sailed the Atlantic coast between Spain to Scotland over three thousand years ago. They left in their wake solitary stone dolmens, stone circles, and complex structures like this stone alleyway. There are more than 2,000 of these megalithic monuments scattered along the coast of Brittany alone.

In stark contrast to these mysterious monuments, many of the neighborhoods of these little towns were filled with bland, beige-walled stucco houses—rows and rows of them all following a few repetitive architectural designs. We got it: these are cheap-built summer homes for French families. But we found them utterly soulless, and I would never want to live in a neighborhood full of them. It was like the start of a bad sci-fi movie.

We reached the end of the Pink Coast feeling we had found several locations that would probably suit us quite well, in terms of wildness, beach views, and affordability—provided we could avoid the beige stucco ghettos. But, pretty much all of these choices would require a car or public transport to access the kind of larger town we imagined our future selves would want nearby. Definitely, the Pink Coast would be worth a long second look for us.

Finistère

Once across the Morlaix River, we reached the literal End of the World—the region of Brittany known as *Finistère* (finis: "end" plus *tère*: "world")... though

one could also translate it more prosaically as they do across the channel in Cornwall: "Land's End."

Interestingly, it was the Celts from Cornwall who colonized Finistère in the post-Roman period—many of them fleeing the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain. To this day, a region of southern Finistère is known as Cornouaille. At first, this connection was hard for us to grasp, but until the era of roads and rail arrived, the English Channel was more of a conduit for culture than a barrier. Sea travel allowed easy travel between the south of Great Britain and Brittany (which means "little Britain").

Roscoff

Not an hour past the Morlaix, we arrived at our home base for the final leg of our trip, the ancient port town of Roscoff. While some of the town looks modern, the area around the old harbor truly captivated us. Its gray-granite houses were weathered and worn and yet massively adorable. While many of these by the waterfront had been converted to restaurants, shops, and hotels, Roscoff is a town that's being lived in. Although filled with tourists, it did not feel like a "tourist town."

I guess the big difference is that Roscoff's shops were selling authentic Brittany woolens, blé noir ("black flour") biscuits made of buckwheat, local ciders, and other regional delights—not the kinds of kitschy tourist trinkets we found all over St. Malo, for example.

The town's Catholic church, Notre-Dame de Croas-Batz, captures much of what is unique about the region. On the outside walls are four carved ships, each representing one of the four main shipping families that funded construction of the church, as a reminder to God to protect their vessels. In the churchyard itself are two stone ossuary buildings, a custom unique to Brittany. The bones of dead parishioners are stored within, and prayed over on special holiday occasions by their living descendants.

We booked three days in Roscoff, and then extended to a fourth, because we liked it so much. By sheer coincidence, we were there during the spring high tides, when ocean water fills the harbor, right to the rim, and then whooshes out again at low tide, leaving a vast empty seabed to be explored. I took a stroll myself, and saw many folks with buckets out gathering fresh scallops. There were even guided tour groups for exploring the exposed ocean floor. One does have to take care, though, not to wander out too far, nor linger too long, for when the tide comes in again, it sweeps in fast.



Evening settles over Roscoff's old streets, where locals linger over cider and conversation long after the tide has turned.

The End of the World

Beyond Rocoff, the fishing villages were smaller, the seaside resort towns fewer and farther between—some no more than a smattering of houses along deserted beachfront. We were charmed by small communities around Plouguerneau and the harbor of d'Aber Wrac'h (a name that sounded positively [Welsh](#)), which had wild dunes, scattered islands, and on offshore Île Vierge, a massive granite lighthouse, 271 feet tall—the highest in all of Europe.

Finistère's far-western coast truly was the wildest country we encountered in Brittany. Gorgeous and windswept. Was it possibly too remote for us in our later years? Well, one mitigating factor is that the further west one goes towards the Atlantic, the closer one gets to the major port city of Brest (three and a half hours from Paris by fast train). Plouguerneau itself was just a forty-minute drive from the Brest train station. Paradoxically, if we were to settle at the edge of Finistère, Paris would actually be more accessible.

Our last night in Roscoff, as we strolled along the harborfront, we came to a few conclusions about our potential retirement in Brittany: First, there were several towns that checked most of the boxes for us. Second, that Roscoff was the right size and vibe for us. But also that there were wilder beachfront places near town that might be even better for us if we

bought a car. Third, since the spots we liked best were small, when it came time to actually start searching for a home, there would only ever be a few places up for sale. So, we would be smart to cast a wide net over several communities, and not set our hearts on just one area. And maybe we should start looking earlier than we previously thought.

The next step for the two of us? Explore the southwest coast of Finistère. Who knows what wonders we might find there for our future selves?

One final word of advice worth passing on: we had a huge amount of fun exploring Brittany and picturing ourselves living in various places along the coast. Because we started searching for a forever-home so early, we felt under no pressure to make a decision. We could simply relax, enjoy ourselves, and let our imaginations run free. ■

Tim Ward



Tim Ward is the author of [Mature Flâneur: Slow Travels Through Portugal, France, Italy and Norway](#) and [Mature Flâneur in New Zealand: Slow Travels in the Land of the Kiwi](#).

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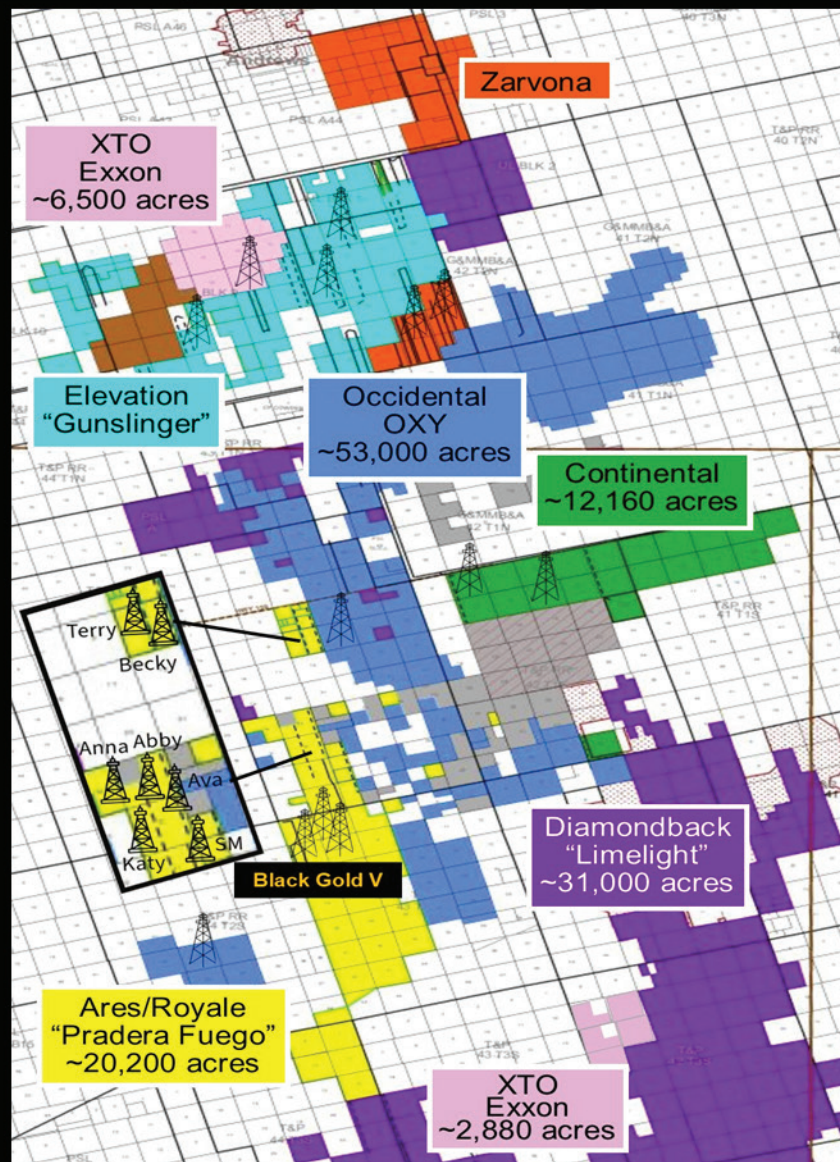
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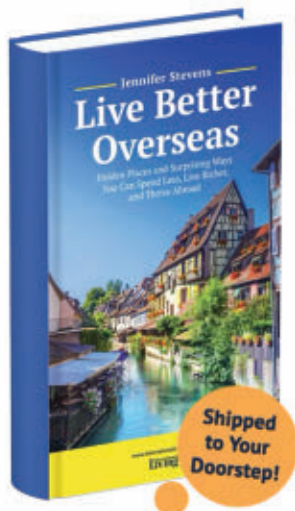
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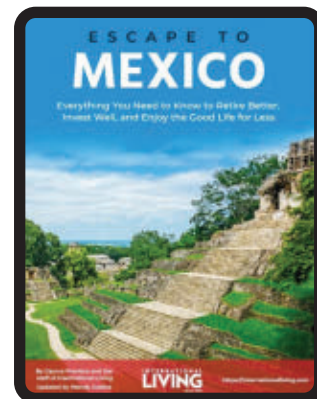
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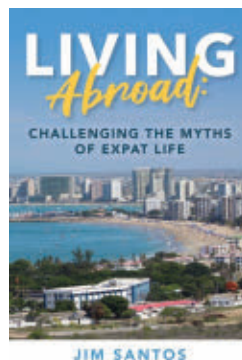
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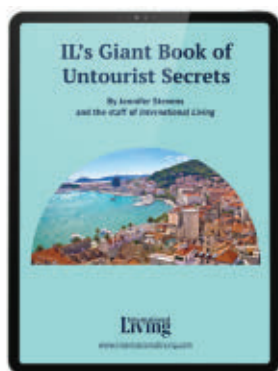


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