



# OVERSEAS

## Living Letter

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Panama**

**Overseas Living 101:**

**How To Get Your  
Passport Ready  
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— THAILAND —

**Setting The Standard For Paradise**

**Spotlight On: 3 Places Where The U.S. Dollar Goes Far In 2023**



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# KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

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#### Wat Plai Laem

Located on the northeastern tip of paradisiacal Koh Samui, Thailand, is one of the world's most colorful and attractive temples. It houses two giant, eye-catching statues. One of those is Budai, also known as the Giant Laughing Buddha, featured on this month's *OLL* cover.



Photo © Sergii Figurnyi, Adobe Stock.

— Cristian Landero  
Editorial Design Director



## Publisher's Note:

# How To Afford The Retirement You Deserve



Dear *Overseas Living Letter* Subscriber,

The average American household spends US\$66,928 per year, according to the latest Consumer Expenditures report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Over 70% of this amount goes to necessities—things like housing, transportation, food, and health care.

With inflation currently running at 6.4%, costs are only going up, which makes it increasingly difficult for people to afford the necessities.

Some 67% of Americans are worried about being able to cover their basic, ongoing expenses. The level of concern is even higher for people on fixed incomes, like retirees.

For many Americans, the reality of living paycheck to paycheck is that they have no budget for discretionary expenses—things like travel, entertainment, and goods and services that are deemed nonessential but that may affect how much they actually enjoy life.



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Any investments recommended in this letter should be made only after consulting with your investment advisor and only after reviewing the prospectus or financial statements of the company.

Though it's waning, inflation is still high by historic standards. It continues to be a threat to retirees' long-term quality of life, but there's a solution that can help mitigate it... and, as you're a reader of these dispatches, I'd suspect you already know what that is.

I'm talking about: Retiring overseas.

Costs are so much lower overseas that you can reduce the amount you spend on necessities by 50% or more simply by relocating.

This creates more room in your budget for discretionary spending, which can be used to create a lifestyle of great restaurants, unique cultural experiences, and adventure.

Here are three top examples of places where you can invert your budget allocation to spend less on basic necessities and more on the things you enjoy.

## Medellín, Colombia

Medellín is one of the world's most livable cities thanks to its efficient public transportation system, strong infrastructure, friendly locals, ample green-spaces, and agreeable year-round weather.

This high standard of living doesn't cost a premium. Housing alone provides an opportunity for savings of up to 80% compared to what the average American household spends on housing (US\$1,885 per month).

Housing prices vary across Medellín, but about US\$550 per month is standard for a mid-range, 80-square-meter, two-bedroom apartment in a central area. A local-style apartment of similar size in a less central area is about US\$360 per month.

Utility bills stay low in "The City of Eternal Spring" because temperatures are always in the 60- to 80-degree Fahrenheit range. Because it's never too hot or cold, there's no need to heat or cool your home. Expats spend about US\$55 per month on utilities.

Living in Medellín also allows you to save money on transportation, which was the second largest



expense for the average American household after housing.

Medellín has Colombia's only metro rapid transit system. It's efficient, easy to use, and inexpensive. The standard fare is 2,880 Colombian pesos—about 60 cents.

The average American household spent about US\$913 per month on transportation in 2021. A monthly transportation budget of about US\$100 per household would be plenty in Medellín.

Another necessity you can save on in Medellín is health care. Health care services in Colombia cost 20% to 25% as much as in the United States, and the care is higher-ranked.

Colombia is ranked 22nd for performance by the World Health Organization while the United States is ranked 37th.

With the same budget as the average American household (US\$66,928 annually or US\$5,577 monthly) available to you in Medellín, only 16% to 20% of it would need to be allocated to basic expenses, as opposed to over 70% in the United States.

This would leave you with at least US\$4,437 per month for discretionary expenses, and in Medellín, there are countless opportunities for diversion. It's a cultural hub, a place where you can enjoy gastronomy, orchestra and theater performances, museums, festivals, and a generally sophisticated art scene.

## Pattaya, Thailand

Pattaya is a seaside resort city located a two-hour drive south of Bangkok on the Gulf of Thailand's eastern seaboard.

It's a sprawling area that's home to everything from sleepy fishing villages frozen in time to modern zones with high-quality infrastructure and international flair.

Pattaya offers something for everyone, which is part of the reason it's home to such a big, diverse expat community. Many are retirees who came here on holiday and stayed for the warm weather, low cost of living, and easy beach lifestyle.



Housing prices depend on where you live, how big your space is, and the duration of your rental contract. US\$515 per month will get you an 80-square-meter, two-bedroom condo in a desirable area about 10 minutes from the beach.

Having a car isn't necessary in Pattaya, helping you save on your monthly transportation costs. People get around using ride-hailing apps like Bolt and Grab. Using a mix of these and public transportation and taxis, transportation costs come to about US\$115 per month for two.

When it comes to food, there are diverse shopping options and associated price points. At the low end of the price spectrum are open-air Thai markets that sell fresh meat and produce; at the high end are boutique grocery stores and Costco equivalents that exclusively sell international brands. Imported goods always cost a premium.

Monthly groceries for two, including a mix of national and imported products, cost about US\$430. This is a savings of almost 40% relative to the amount the average American household spends on food.

High-quality and affordable health care is one of the top reasons to live in Thailand, and the Pattaya area boasts some of the best health care facilities in the country.

Comprehensive health coverage for two people costs about US\$300 per month. Even major procedures are priced 50% to 70% less than in North America, and many physicians are trained at top medical schools in Asia, Europe, and the States.

In Pattaya, you could cover your basic expenses with about US\$1,385 per month, or 25% of the average American household's monthly expenses. This would leave US\$4,192 per month for discretionary expenses.

This amount would go a long way in Pattaya. You could indulge in a lifestyle that includes going for drinks and nice meals regularly, shopping at the luxury malls, and hiring household help.

The beautiful and diverse beaches plus the associated watersports are the main appeal. World-class golf courses and wellness treatments and practices are other top attractions.



## Chitré, Panama

Chitré is a beach town along Panama's Pacific Coast, about a three-and-a-half-hour drive west of Panama City.

It's a small town with a population under 10,000, but because it's a local hub of commerce and transport, it offers the conveniences of a much bigger city, including shopping, banks, health care, legal services, real estate agents, and more.

Chitré receives limited tourism attention, and it has a small expat community relative to other parts of Panama, so prices for everything are low. The cost of living is highly customizable and depends on your lifestyle preferences.

Rent for a two-bedroom home ranges from US\$450 to US\$800 per month, which is 55% to 75% less than the housing expense for the average American household.

One thing you can't skimp on here is air conditioning for your home, which will run up a monthly electricity bill of about US\$125 depending on use and the size of the space you are cooling.

If you shop for local produce and seafood at the open-air market, you'll spend about US\$100 per month on groceries versus about US\$425 shopping at supermarkets for imported goods, which cost a premium.

Even at the high end of the spectrum, this is almost 40% less than what the average American household spends on food.

Owning a car will cost about US\$60 a month for gas and maintenance, but you can get by without one if you live in a central part of town and walk or cycle from A to B.

With several public hospitals and private clinics in the region, Chitré has high-quality health care available. A local health insurance plan that covers two people costs about US\$200 per month.

This adds up to a monthly budget of US\$1,215 to US\$1,565 for basic necessities in Chitré, which amounts to just 22% to 28% of the average American household's monthly expenses.

This would leave at least US\$4,012 per month left over in your budget, which you could save, invest, or spend on enjoying Chitré's unique lifestyle opportunities.

This low-key town is paradise for lovers of the outdoors. It's close to some of Panama's most beautiful beaches as well as national parks, golf courses, ballparks, and trails for biking, running, and walking.



Kathleen Peddicord  
Founding Publisher, *Overseas Living Letter*



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## Letters To The Editor:

We love to hear from our readers, and with so much valuable reader mail each month, it seems a shame not to share it, along with our responses...



### Investing In Bucaramanga And Pereira, Colombia

"I will be attending [the Colombia conference](#). However, two weeks prior to the conference, I will be spending a week each in Bucaramanga and Pereira.

"I would like to compare them to Medellín. Since they have spring climate all year and seem similar to Medellín but on a smaller scale.

"Do you work with any realtors in each location? Any expats, attendees, or

contacts I can reach out to? In order to get more information on living there, what town should I stay in, etc.

"Thank you,

"Best,"

Anthony N.

Latin America Correspondent Lee Harrison responds:

"[Here's the agent we worked with in Bucaramanga](#). (Note that this website is not his, but it includes a link to his site.)

"He toured me around while I was there and also hooked me up in Santa Marta.

"With regard to where to stay in Medellín, I'd vote for Provenza. Easy access to the best of the city."



### "What Should I Do With My Panama Corporation?"

"We came to Panama a few years ago and obtained our permanent residency and our attorney said we

needed to open a business, which we did. She just sent us a bill for \$671 to maintain it. Do we need to maintain it? Can we just not pay the bill? Will it affect our residency? Note the company has not done any business.

"Thanks."

D.T.

[Simon Letter](#) Editor and Offshore Expert Lief Simon responds:

"Well, technically, you set up a corporation, not a business. The original rules for the Friendly Nations residency permit had options for buying real estate, getting a job offer from a local company, or setting up a business. However, the business part was never defined or enforced.

"Therefore, people just started setting up corporations, which was all that was needed to get the residency application approved.

"Of course, a corporation has annual government fees and registered agent fees. US\$671 a year is a bit high for Panama; US\$550 is what the total charge is with [our recommended attorney](#). That breaks down as US\$250 for the government fee, US\$250 for the registered agent fee (that's the attorney), and US\$50 for 'costs.'

"To answer your key question, no, dropping that corporation won't affect your Friendly Nations residency at this point. You should have permanent residency cards and *cédulas* (identity cards). If you didn't bother to get your *cédulas*, I recommend you do.

"You don't need to do anything to 'close' the corporation. A formal process exists, but that would cost more money. If the corporation hasn't done any business and doesn't have a bank account or any assets, you can just let it die on the vine, i.e., stop paying the annual fees. The corporation will go dormant and then eventually be stricken from the corporate registry."



## **A Question From The Latest OLU Webinar**

"Hi Sophia and Kat,

"Thanks for the webinar today—very interesting details on index! The chat was closed so I couldn't ask this during your session—hoping to hear your insights via email.

"Two queries: 1. Why didn't Italy make it on the list this year? 2. Why only 10 places (vs. 14 or so from last year)?

"Thanks in advance!"

*Christy R.*

We use the Q&A feature instead of the public chat function during the webinars, as the latter can cause confusion. The Q&A function was enabled, so it should have been possible to ask me and Kat questions directly. Apologies for the confusion.

With regard to your questions about the index, we've made an effort to thin-slice not only the destinations featured (homing in on specific locales rather than broad regions) but the entire world, presenting a smaller final selection of places to consider but covering them in more detail.

That's part of the reason Italy didn't make the cut this year. We had already dedicated more space to Europe than any other geographic region. It's not that Italy isn't a fantastic place to retire; it's that we were more excited about the opportunities in the European spots that did make the cut.

Italy remains among the dozen or so core countries that we recommend, and we'll revisit it and reconsider all that it has to offer in a few months when it comes time to start conversations about 2024's index.



## **The Upcoming Live And Invest In Cyprus Event**

"Looks like I am unable to make the [Live And Invest In Cyprus conference](#). Can you let me know if the recordings of the event will be available for purchase after the event? If so, what will the cost be?"

"Thanks!"

*Christine W.*

Our Live and Invest in Cyprus event is virtual, so you'll be able to discover, from the comfort of your own home, this island destination that we believe will be heralded as the world's top retirement haven.

It runs March 8–10, but if you can't make the dates, that's no problem. [Sign up for the event](#), and you'll gain lifetime access to the professionally edited video package (which is unavailable for purchase to non-attendees).

You'll also have access to all seminar materials, including session and chat schedules, biographies, and contact information for our faculty of experts...

[All the details of the event are here.](#)



## **Clarifying Ecuador's Time-In-Country Requirements**

"Could you provide a breakdown of how long you have to spend in Ecuador for its different residency types?"

*R.H.*

Ecuador's Temporary Resident visa is good for two years, and you can (and should) apply for renewal (or upgrade to permanent resident) after 21 months.

You can renew it for another temporary visa multiple times with no limit. There are no travel restrictions on this visa, per se...

However, if you plan to upgrade to permanent resident, you must have been out of Ecuador for no more than 90 days over the entire 21 months of temporary residency.

Permanent residents may be out of Ecuador no more than 180 days per year, for each of the first two years. Thereafter, they may not be absent for more than five years.

But if you plan to apply for citizenship, you may not have been out of Ecuador for more than 180 days during the three years prior to application. 🗣️

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On the line with Sophia will be the writer of the current *Overseas Living Letter* feature who'll reveal more behind-the-scenes information and answer any questions you might like to put to him.

## STAY TUNED FOR

more information about our next Overseas Living Unlimited Webinar, coming later this month.

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# KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

## SETTING THE STANDARD FOR PARADISE

By Bart Walters



About 20 years ago, I made a trip to Vancouver, Canada, in February. It was cold, rainy, dark, and miserable.

I remember thinking, "No wonder they chose this place to film 'The X-Files!'" I couldn't think of a bleaker and more foreboding backdrop.

Not long after, I made my first visit to Koh Samui in Thailand, and it reminded me of every movie I'd ever seen that takes place on a tropical island. "The Beach," "Dr. No," "Castaway," and every single one of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies could have been filmed on Koh Samui.

White sand beaches with coconut trees? Check.

Mountains, jungles, and waterfalls? Check.

Monkeys, mosquitos, and tree snakes? Triple check!

Koh Samui doesn't even have to try.

Sun, sand, seafood, and boatloads of Thai charm make Thailand's second-largest island a cartoonishly tropical paradise. For a honeymoon, a two-week holiday, or a month in a detox resort, it's hard to beat Koh Samui.

But what's it like to live here? Do people live here? Is it a good idea to live here?

That's what we're going to explore in this month's feature. Trust me, there's more to this little chunk of paradise than meets the casual tourist's eye.

## What's A Koh Samui?

First off, we're going to shorten the name to just Samui. "Koh" in Thai means island. So, Koh Chang, Koh Phi Phi, and Koh Tao are all islands. Phuket is the largest island in Thailand, but nobody calls it Koh Phuket.

You'll find Samui 35 kms off the east coast of Southern Thailand, with the closest large cities being Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat. Samui, Phangan, and Tao are three islands in a chain that are part of the Chumpon Archipelago.



These islands are included in the Mu Ko Ang Thong national marine park. It covers 42 islands in a total area of 102 square kms.

At its widest point, Samui is 25 kms across. The interior of the island is dense jungle with undulating mountains. The highest point on Samui is Khao Pom which is 635 meters above sea level.

The whole island is circled by Route 4169 (aka The Ring Road) which is 52 kms long.

Gorgeous white and golden sand beaches rim the entire island with the most popular tourist spots being on the northeastern coast at Chaweng and further south at Lamai.

## A Brief History

Historians say that Samui was first inhabited around 1,500 years ago by fishermen from the Malay Peninsula and traders from the southern coast of China (Hainanese).

Ancient Chinese maps, dating back to 1687, show the coordinates we now know as Koh Samui, as Pulo Cornam.

There are two schools of thought as to where the name "Samui" originates from. "Samui" may be derived from the name of a native tree, Mui, or may have evolved from the Chinese word *saboey*, which means "safe haven" because that's what it was to the Chinese traders who moored at its shores.

The island remained an isolated community and had little contact with the mainland. But in 1967, Dilok Suthiklom, leader of the island at that time, asked the Thai government for help in developing Samui's infrastructure.

In 1973 the 52-kilometer ring road that runs around the entire island was completed, and the modernization of Samui was on its way.

In the early 1970s, word spread among the hippie backpacking communities about a beautiful unspoiled hideaway in the gulf of Thailand.



## The Coconut Index

On my first trip to Samui, I remember laughing out loud when I stepped off the plane. It was the first time I'd ever landed at an airport where you deplane on the tarmac and walk to the terminal from the runway.

The funky little airport was framed in the background by mountains covered in coconut trees swaying in the breeze. I felt like Indiana Jones arriving for some big adventure.

As an unrepentant beach snob, I'll go on record right here and say that the island of Samui is the standard by which all other islands should be judged.

Perhaps an "island index" could be created with Samui at the standard score. Islands that are more attractive would be rated higher. Those that don't measure up would be less.

Whenever someone tells you about some great island paradise they visited, you can ask, "Is it better than Samui?"

We'll call it "The Coconut Index." Keep this idea in mind because throughout this report I'll reveal what I think the criteria should be for rating and ranking islands.

Back then, the only accommodation was a few wooden beach shacks with no electricity and nothing but a hammock and a good book for entertainment. Only the most intrepid visitors were arriving on Samui's golden shores.

Realizing the tourism potential of the island, the Thai government poured significant resources into developing Samui in the 1980s.

Ferries arrived daily from the mainland, packed with tourists from all over to stay at a rapidly growing list of resorts and hostels. In 1989, the Samui International Airport opened, and the new era of modern tourism began.

I first came to Samui in 2003 when I needed a break from the hustle of Bangkok. Immediately, I was turned off by the cheap and cheesy brand of tourism I saw on Chaweng Beach, Samui's busiest area.

But as soon as I got off the beaten tourist track, I found paradise. Maenam, Lamai, and Taling Nam looked like travel posters.

The island's interior was thick with jungle, wildlife, and waterfalls. Samui really was paradise as advertised.

Since then, I've been back to Samui and its little sister, Koh Phangan, many times. A global economic rollercoaster and other significant events have caused Samui's development to be a bit sporadic.

But develop it has, and in not too ugly a fashion. Everything from six-star wellness resorts to digital nomad hostels has been built to accommodate a wide range of visitors. World-class dining venues have sprung up.

Samui has grown up, but not at the breakneck speed of other tourist hubs.

The expat community has grown as well, embracing a much larger socio-economic group than in the past. Housing for long-stay visitors and expat residents has expanded and a robust and competitive real estate market thrives on Samui.

## How Do I Get Here?

It might seem like a no-brainer decision when considering how to get to Samui. Just fly into their boutique international airport.

But there are a few variables you need to consider.

First of all, Samui International Airport is owned and operated by the private company, Bangkok Airlines. This means Bangkok Air has a monopoly on air travel to and from the island.

Other airlines fly into and out of Samui, but the price they pay for that privilege is steep and, of course, passed on to passengers with higher ticket prices.



The average price for a one-way ticket from Bangkok to Samui is about 5,500 Thai baht (about US\$160). For the same money, you could fly to Phnom Penh, Ho Chi Minh City, Chiang Mai, or a number of other regional hubs. There are rarely any discounts or special deals, so flying to Samui is relatively expensive.

With that said, the airport on Samui is excellent. The open-air design fits into the jungle island surroundings perfectly. The facility has a good layout and is easy to get into and out of. There are restaurants at the Samui airport that I actually look forward to eating in.

What's more, the airport is located in the northeastern part of the island known as Bangrak and is very close to the Big Buddha pier where all the ferries to other islands and coastal cities are located. A taxi ride from the airport to the ferry piers takes about 10 minutes.

Flights arrive daily from every major airport in Thailand as well as direct international arrivals from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia.

There are some alternatives to flying into Samui's airport...

- You could fly to Surat Thani airport on the mainland for half the price and take the ferry to Samui (1 hour and 45 minutes).
- For folks on the Eastern Seaboard like me, a new overnight ferry option is available. The Seahorse Ferry leaves the port at Sattahip near Pattaya at 5 p.m. and arrives at 8 a.m. the next morning in Samui. Accommodations range from comfortable reclining seats to private suites. It's more like a little cruise ship than a ferry. Tickets range from 1,500 up to 3,000 baht (about US\$45 to US\$85).

Both of these routes are significantly cheaper than just flying into Samui airport. If you have more time than money, they're excellent alternatives.



## The Coconut Index

I consider accessibility an important criterion for an island's Coconut Index rating. What good is paradise if you can't get there easily, right?

You can get to Samui by air or sea, and within the next few years, we may even be able to reach the island by car. I would rate Samui's accessibility as very good, especially if the land bridge gets built. Four out of five coconuts.



## Who Lives Here?

A little over 70,000 people inhabit Samui, with about 8,000 being expats from all over the world. The majority of expats I've met on Samui are from the U.K., Western Europe, and Australasia.

November through February, snowbirds arrive from Northern Europe and a few from North America to escape the cold weather.

In recent years, young expats from Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe have established a



presence on the island. Most of them are working in some capacity.

Samui's expat demographics are different to other parts of Thailand. The average age of expats is much lower than in other tourism hubs like Pattaya or Phuket.

While there are a fair number of retirees and retired couples, there's also a growing group of digital nomads and online entrepreneurs calling Samui home. Thirty and 40-something couples are common.

That said, different demographic clusters gather in different parts of the island. Let's explore each neighborhood and discover who lives there and why.

## Welcome To The Neighborhoods

The interior of the island is primarily mountains and jungle, so we'll focus on the beach communities that encircle the island and extend inward.

Let's start at the most popular neighborhood and work our way north and west around the island in a counter-clockwise direction...

### Chaweng Beach

Along the northeastern shore of Samui, you'll find its most famous beach and the epicenter of nightlife and tourism.

Chaweng Beach is a 7-kilometer crescent-shaped beach framed by a rocky headland at each end.



It offers great swimming and plenty of water sports, as well as dining and accommodation options. It has a fun, holiday atmosphere during Samui's high seasons, with sun worshippers and families enjoying the clean beach and calm water.

It's not the most secluded or peaceful of Samui's beaches, but everything you'd want is within a few meters of your sun bed, such as cold drinks, snacks, and massages.

Accommodation along Chaweng Beach ranges from 600-baht-per-night (about US\$17) huts with fans to budget-busting luxury resorts. Beachfront restaurants and bars are similarly mixed.

The beach is most often accessed through hotels or restaurants that have paths leading there from the main road that runs parallel to Chaweng beach.



## Koh Samui Video Resource

[Go here to view my Koh Samui video resource.](#)

Many people come and find a restaurant or area that serves drinks that has lounge chairs and provide a perfect place to relax and chill with their toes in the sand.

This is an excellent beach for walking both during the day and at night when many resorts have fire shows, live music, and other entertainment.

Chaweng beach is the liveliest community on the island and caters to a younger crowd. You'll find some of Samui's best nightclubs both on the beach and behind it on the Soi Green Mango Entertainment Street, which is a series of streets in a square shape that feature bars, clubs, and restaurants.

This is where you can find all the Western franchises, like McDonald's, Starbucks, Pizza Hut. There's even a Hooters.

Many expats who move to Samui start out in Chaweng because they want that beach party life to go on forever. Then they get tired of it and move to a quieter part of the island, returning to Chaweng to shop or see a movie at the Central Samui Mall or dine at a particular restaurant.

Like most tourist hubs, it's a place you want to be near to for convenience but far away enough to avoid the noise and traffic.

Just south of Chaweng Beach is a separate little cove known as Chaweng Noi (Little Chaweng). In stark contrast to its big sister to the north, Noi offers a peaceful setting with a nice clean beach.

One of my favorite resorts in Samui is Vana Belle Luxury Resort on Chaweng Noi. If you are coming to Samui as a tourist, Chaweng Noi is an excellent location to explore the rest of the island and a good base of operation.

## Choeng Mon

Heading north along the east coast of the island, we'll come to a long outcrop of land that juts out from Samui that some call the horn of Samui. The beach community on the eastern side is called Choeng Mon.



Choeng Mon is a sneaky cool neighborhood that will have you saying, "Where did this come from?" It's only about 1-kilometer long with sugary white sand and a kooky mix of rustic bungalows and five-star resorts.

Since it sits on a secluded bay, the water is calm and shielded from high winds. The beach is lined with all kinds of interesting places to eat and drink but even more awaits a little further inland on Choeng Mon's main street. The freshest seafood I've eaten on Samui was at Choeng Mon Beach.

The people living in this part of Samui are a little higher on the socioeconomic ladder than most on the island. Owning or renting big luxury villas and enjoying life at a slower speed seems to be the order of the day for residents of Choeng Mon.

Besides the nice beach, this discreet little neighborhood has three things going for it.

1. It's only five minutes from Samui International Airport.
2. It's only 10 minutes from the bright lights, shopping, and entertainment of Chaweng.
3. Most importantly, it boasts some of the best sunsets on the island.

## **Bophut And Bangrak**

Continuing around the horn, we run into Big Buddha Beach and the community of Bophut.

The area further inland west of the airport is known as Bangrak. This part of the island is quickly becoming home to the newer wave of expats who want to be close to everything but still have a little private strip of beach life.

Watching the boats come and go in Bangrak Bay over a freshly brewed cup of coffee is one of my favorite ways to start the day.

The main attraction in this part of the island is Fisherman's Village, a stretch of shops and restaurants along Bophut Beach with a walking street and a famous night market.



This area attracts a mellow crowd of families, couples, and older expats. Bophut isn't a place you go to party but somewhere to relax, have a glass of wine, and watch the sun go down.

Some of the best restaurants on the island can be found at Fisherman's village.

My go-to place is called Karma Deli. Set in a rustic wooden corner shophouse, it offers the finest imported meats and cheeses paired with an impressive array of wines from all over the world.

I've never made it past the charcuterie. It's a good reminder that island life and the good life don't have to be mutually exclusive.

Residents of this neighborhood enjoy a wide variety of accommodations to choose from. The area south of the beach is known as Bophut Hills and many expats living on this part of the island enjoy breathtaking sea views over a valley of coconut trees.

This is a convenient neighborhood to live in as residents are near the airport without being in the flight path, close to the piers to catch ferries, and sandwiched between two popular beach communities.

Top that off with easy shopping and a golf course, and it's easy to see why Bophut is popular with expats, especially retirees.



## Maenam

Continuing west along the north shore of Samui, we find the sleepy village of Maenam. This neighborhood includes a gorgeous coconut-fringed stretch of beach about 7 kms long.

Maenam is the anti-Chaweng. Rustic and authentic are words I'd use to describe this place. For years it was backpacker central, and it still has that feel.

Cozy beach bungalows parked on coarse golden sand are typical lodging on the shores of Maenam. There are some upscale resorts but most visitors come here specifically for the laid-back no-frills atmosphere.

The tourists I observed here were a mixture of families from all over, young couples, and older expats sipping cold drinks in the shade.

Maenam is home to several temples, a golf course, and some of the best coffee shops on the island.

Further inland expats find a wide variety of housing at reasonable rental prices. Most people live in bungalows or small villas.

If I were to live on Samui, Maenam would be one of my top two locations. In my opinion, it has what you come to Samui for.

## Bang Por

Continuing westward along the north shore of Samui, we come to a long stretch of narrow beach known as Bang Por.

The sand on this beach reminds me of the east coast of my home state of Florida. It's soft and creamy, with a touch of clay in it. The water is shallow and the water is calm.

This beach could be divided into two parts...

The eastern half hosts nice bungalows shaded by coconut trees and guarded by "Private No Entry" signs.

The west side is mostly fishing boats and small seafood restaurants with a few budget bungalows thrown in. A couple of pretentious houses interrupt the otherwise rustic landscape.

There isn't much convenience in Bang Por as the nearest shops and markets are in Maenam or Nathon further around to the west coast.



## Nathon

Turning south and heading down the west coast of the island is where you'll find the administrative capital of Samui and the seaport with two giant piers in Nathon.

The beach at Nathon is not the main attraction as it isn't suitable for swimming. The piers are where you can take ferries to the nearby islands of Koh Phangan, Koh Tao, and also to mainland cities like Bangkok, and Krabi.

Nathon Town is where you'll find the immigration office, bus station, tourist police office, and main post office. Koh Samui Hospital is also located in Nathon Town.

Being on the west coast, Nathon boasts some of the most spectacular sunsets on the island. As you might imagine, clusters of restaurants and bars choose this location to attract sunset lovers.

## Taling Nam

The extreme southwestern coast of Samui is home to Taling Nam, a part of the island that can only be described as wild. The coastline is jagged and rocky. The jungle is thick and full of wildlife. The views are breathtaking.

Some tourism has crept into this remote part of the island with a mix of old-style bungalows and over-the-top all-inclusive resorts, but you'll need to look hard to find them.

Because land prices are lower here and there isn't much in the way of convenience for living, budget-conscious expats have always liked this part of the island.

Cheap accommodation can be found for those willing to drive 15 or 20 minutes to markets or shops. In recent years, developers have discovered Taling Nam, and a number of swanky private residences have popped up.

If it's isolation and nature you want, Taling Nam is for you.

## Lamai

If we continue on the ring road, we will come to the southern tip of the island, which isn't a place expats or visitors consider ideal for living.

Unless you come to experience the Muslim wet market, see Buddha's footprint, or take pictures of the mummified monk, there's no reason to come to the southern tip.

But, if we start back up the east coast from the south, we'll find my favorite part of Samui, Lamai Beach. This is the second-largest town on the island and also runner-up in popularity.

Lamai Beach and Lamai Town have a much sleepier approach to the holiday destination game.

There aren't many package tourists staying in Lamai—just a nice mix of Thais enjoying some domestic tourism and in-the-know foreigners. In my opinion, it's the perfect balance between locals and tourists.

The beach itself is a stunning 5-kilometer stretch of white sand and gorgeous boulder formations starting on shore and jutting out into the Gulf of Thailand.

Quaint bungalows and sleepy resorts rim the coast with plenty of places to flop down in a sunbed under an umbrella and dig into that new novel you've been meaning to read. Despite Lamai's popularity, it never seems crowded.

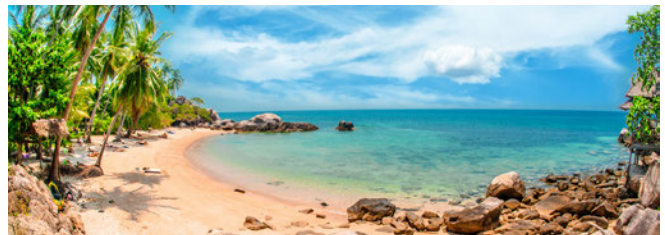
The town has several long streets dedicated to restaurants, bars, and shops aimed at tourists but not in a glitzy over-polished way.

There's a McDonald's, but that's about the only Western franchise you'll see in Lamai. The best oyster bar I've ever been to (Oyster X) and my favorite vegan restaurant of all time (Wild Tribe) are both in Lamai.

This is where you'll find Western expats living in villas or bungalows at a slower pace and on a tighter budget. It's much cheaper to live in Lamai than in the northern half of Samui.

Many who live in Lamai never venture to the northern part of the island as there's shopping, gyms, schools, and even a cluster of girly bars if that's your thing.

If I had to live on Samui, Lamai Beach would be my number-one choice.



## The Coconut Index

As you can see, Samui has a wide variety of locations and lifestyles to choose from. If you want to live in a one-bedroom beach bungalow with a fan and a toaster as your only amenities, Maenam is for you.

If you want to live in a cliff-hanging mega-crib with a 180-degree sea view, Choeng Mon or Bophut could be the answer.

Or maybe you're like me, and a sleepy little bungalow within walking distance to Lamai Beach is your style. Samui stacks up pretty well in the "diversity of lifestyles" portion of the Coconut Index. I give five out of five coconuts



## How Do You Get Around?

It's imperative that you have your own transportation if you live on Samui. Taxis are available, but they're geared toward tourists and very expensive.

None of the ride-share apps like Bolt or Grab have gotten any traction in Samui. *Songtaews* or "baht buses" operate in Chaweng Beach but only on Beach Road.

Many people take the motorbike or scooter option. They are cheap to buy, cheap to rent, and good on gas. However, I wouldn't feel right unless I issued a warning to two-wheel enthusiasts...

Thailand has the second-highest traffic mortality rate in the world. Most of those are motorbike crashes.

Samui in high season is full of tourists in cars and on motorbikes who aren't familiar with their vehicles, have no idea where they are going, and may or may not have been drinking beer on the beach all day.

For getting around in your own neighborhood, I think motorbikes are OK. But, if you think it's a good idea to start climbing steep mountain roads on a 125cc rented scooter in the rain, then I'm confident you would soon be part of these somber statistics.

Cars and trucks of all descriptions can be rented on Samui. When I go there, I rent a little Suzuki Samarai jeep for 600 baht (about US\$17) a day. I'm sure I could get a better deal if I rented monthly or annually.

Prices are all over the place for car rentals, so you'll need to sharpen your pencil, and don't be afraid to ask for discounts.

If you buy a car in Thailand, make sure you get the right one for how and where you live. If you live up one of the mountain roads in Samui, you'll need a heartier vehicle than if you just cruise around the beaches.



## The Coconut Index

I don't like to drive anymore, so this is one area of the Coconut Index Samui won't score well on. The lack of public transportation or ride-share apps gives the island only two out of five coconuts for transportation convenience.



When I lived in Phuket, I was in a remote area that required driving on treacherous and steep mountain roads. I had a four-wheel drive Isuzu D-Max pickup truck, and it was a perfect match for what I was doing and where I was going.

It should be noted, trucks are a better deal than cars here. The government gives a tax break on trucks so farmers, construction workers, etc., can purchase work vehicles more easily. You get a lot more vehicle for your money with a truck.

## Is It Expensive To Live Here?

Like all islands, almost everything is more expensive there than on the mainland. Literally, everything (but coconuts and fish) is imported by Samui. That said, it's still a lot cheaper than anywhere in North America or Europe.

Rent in Samui is less than half of that in cities like Miami or San Diego. The same for restaurant prices. Grocery prices are more than 50% cheaper.

The average rent price for a decent-sized one-bedroom apartment is about 12,000 baht (about US\$345). The average utility bill for that place would be about 2,000 baht (about US\$60).

If you were only making the average Social Security monthly payment of US\$1,500 per month, you could still live pretty well on Samui.

The way to live more cost-effectively is to not live like a tourist. Shop at local markets. Find mom-and-pop restaurants and night markets that don't have inflated pricing. Drink local beer instead of imported.

Expats have started businesses to produce some beloved foreign foodstuffs like cheese, bacon, and

sausages. Try those instead of the imported brands and you'll save 100% or more.

Maenam and Lamai are much easier on the wallet and are a better value than Chaweng and Bophut.

## The Coconut Index

Overall, Samui is cheaper than Bangkok or Phuket but more expensive than other popular expat locations in Thailand like Pattaya or Hua Hin. Samui still scores four out of five on the Coconut Index for the cost of living.





## What's The Rental Market Like?

Rental accommodations on the island are many and varied in terms of luxury, amenities, style, and price.

There are no high-rise condos in Samui. The ratio of single-family dwellings to multi-family dwellings is much higher than in other resort locations in Thailand.

Earlier this year I found a funky little apartment complex in Bangrak that was perfect. A huge, fully furnished one-bedroom with a balcony within walking distance to Big Buddha Beach was 10,000 baht (about US\$290) per month for a one-year lease.

Most people who live in Samui rent small bungalows or villas. Prices are all over the place, and you may need some negotiating skills to get the best price. Whatever you do, don't look at the asking price and assume it's firm.

Tourist islands like Samui got slammed during the pandemic. Many people invest in rental properties here as retirement income, and they've received nothing for over two years. Significant discounts can be had.

If you have the means and the inclination to rent a luxurious sea-view villa with a pool, you can get a real bargain. A search of rental sites will show ridiculous per-night pricing for these rock-star houses, but don't be fooled. Deals can be made. Don't be afraid to make an offer.

The last time I was on the island, I met some expats that were living in a resort that was almost completely uninhabited in Lamai. The sprawling, Thai-style resort included over 50 bungalows and a three-floor apartment building with a pool right on the sand. Five people were living there.

They had approached the office, talked to the owner, and negotiated one-year leases on one-bedroom bungalows. A unit that would cost 5,000 baht (about US\$145) per day in a normal high season costs them 5,000 baht per month.



### The Coconut Index

The diversity of rental options on an island is a key component of the Coconut Index rating system. The selection of accommodations on Samui combined with the price flexibility gives it five out of five coconuts for this category.



## What Is There To Do There?

Samui has all the stuff to do you'd expect a world-class holiday destination to have.

To name a few: mini-golf, shooting range, archery range, cooking schools, water park, frisbee golf, soccer golf, Muay Thai kickboxing gyms, tennis, running clubs, cycling clubs, bungee jumping, laser tag, zip lines, and on and on.

One of the advantages of being an expat living near a tourism hub, you can enjoy all of those activities at any time. But we aren't here to talk about being tourists, so let's focus on what people who live here do.

As you might imagine, anything that happens in, on, or around the water is popular on Samui. Kiteboarding, windsurfing, and paddleboarding are all perfect activities as much of the sea at most beaches is relatively shallow with calm tides.

I'd love to be a kayak salesman in Samui as it seems to be the most popular activity. Every other vehicle I see on the road seems to have a kayak or two lashed to the roof or in the bed of a pickup truck.

Samui is also home to a lot of sailboat enthusiasts. Catamarans seem to be the most popular type. Stroll down the beach near Big Buddha, and you'll see at least a dozen or so of the space-age-looking watercraft bobbing in the peaceful bay. Late in the spring is the Samui Regatta, which attracts competitive sailors from all over the world.

I met a group of Aussies who live in Lamai and belong to a sport fishing club. They go out three or four times per month catching barracuda, white snapper, red snapper, cobia, shark, and even some impressive sailfish. The club hosts tournaments a few times per year.

Divers and snorkelers usually bypass Samui for its little sister, Koh Tao. It's not that the diving is bad around Samui, it's just that Koh Tao is an entire island devoted to swimming with sea turtles and whale sharks. It's diver's heaven.



You would expect a place like Samui to have a nice golf course, but Santiburi Samui Country Club crosses the line from “nice” to “luxurious.” It’s found high in the hills and coconut groves, 180 meters above sea level, between Maenam and Ban Tai.

Indigenous landscapes, waterfalls, and just a bit of rough are all part of a rare and unique course. On a clear day, you get a panoramic view stretching all the way from Bang Por in the northwest to Choeng Mon at the most northeastern point of the island.

The five-star, 18-hole international standard championship golf course (par 72 and 6,930 yards) is known as one of the most beautiful courses in Asia and ranks as one of the top five courses in Thailand, so it’s well worth a visit whether you play golf or not.

The clubhouse is built in a discreetly modern, Thai architectural style with the typical balanced use of light and space. A leisurely lunch enjoying the 270-degree view from the open-air restaurant is sure to be the highlight of any day.

Samui is also home to a golf academy as well as the challenging course at The Royal Samui Golf & Country Club, Ratchaprapha Golf and Country Club, and the not-so-challenging course at Bophut Hills Country Club. I’ve met a lot of expats who have improved their game significantly on Samui’s golf courses.

Besides golf, a vast array of sports activities can easily be enjoyed on the island. Each neighborhood has some version of a gym. From ultra-high tech to rustic and old school, you can find one that suits your needs.

Tennis courts are scattered all over the island; some stand-alone and others inside large resorts. There are lots of cyclists and runners with local clubs hosting events. If you want to live an active lifestyle Samui doesn’t disappoint.

One of the most unique pastimes for residents in Samui is really more of a lifestyle commitment. Yoga, meditation, and holistic health centers are major attractions in Samui.

Along with sister island Koh Phangan, Samui is home to several well-run yoga schools that range



from sunrise yoga on the beach to five-star wellness retreats. Some visitors come for several months to learn and earn certification as yoga teachers.

The island is home to a vast assortment of holistic health services from vegan restaurants to Raki adjustment to the Wim Hof breathing method.

It puts a smile on my face to visit vegan restaurants or yoga studios and witness the clientele spanning 50 years of age... 20-something English teachers and 70-something retired couples comparing their downward-facing dogs.

I mention the yoga, meditation, and holistic health phenomenon because I've seen people come to the island and completely reprogram how they live. They lose weight, gain focus, and seem to have an easier time maintaining their newfound health.

If you're looking to make some positive lifestyle changes, Samui might be the place for you.

Many of the expats living in Samui are involved in volunteering and charity organizations on the island. "Sisters of Samui" is an island-based NGO working to help less fortunate residents.

Bhavanaphothikun Vocational College on the island's interior re-educates and redirects troubled Thai youth by instilling positive values and teaching them

a skill they can use to support their families. The college welcomes foreign volunteers with something to teach.

Samui's animal welfare society has a shelter for stray dogs and cats run and supported by expats. There's even an active Rotary Club in Samui organizing events throughout the year.

## The Coconut Index

What I like about Samui is you can get as involved and be as active as you want. Join clubs, make friends, attend concerts, participate in tournaments, etc. Being a social butterfly in Samui would be pretty easy.

Or you can go full-hermit and head to the quieter parts of the island to focus and relax. I spent three months in a Taling Nam bungalow writing the last half of my first novel. It was exactly the space I needed.

For a variety of things to do and social flexibility, Samui gets five out of five coconuts on the Coconut Index.



## How's The Shopping?

It depends on what you mean by shopping...

If you are referring to huge luxurious malls or outlets with deep discounts, you're out of luck. Bangkok is the fashion and luxury goods destination; Samui is not.

There's a nice shopping mall in Chaweng, Central Samui. It's the same as most of the Central brand malls in Thailand, only smaller with a lot of outdoor shops.

This is where you'll find the only cinema in Samui. There's a playground for kids, some good coffee shops, and of course, a lot of tourist stuff.

The saving grace of Central Samui is the high-end Tops Supermarket on the ground floor.

One thing newcomers are always shocked by when they come to Thailand is the quality of our supermarkets. From fresh produce to imported cheese to wagyu beef, the market at Central Samui is state-of-the-art.

As you might expect, the prices reflect the atmosphere, and I don't think I'd do all my shopping there, but when you absolutely, positively have to have a particular item from back home, you'll probably find it at Tops. Their wine shop is outstanding.

There are several other supermarkets and superstores on the island. There's Big C and Lotus, which are hypermarkets somewhere between Walmart

Superstores and a Kmart. There are also warehouse-style food markets like Makro.

When it comes to shopping for food, most people I met in Samui live the same way I do back in Pattaya. We buy our meat and poultry at foreign-style supermarkets, but we get our produce, fish, and eggs from open-air local markets.

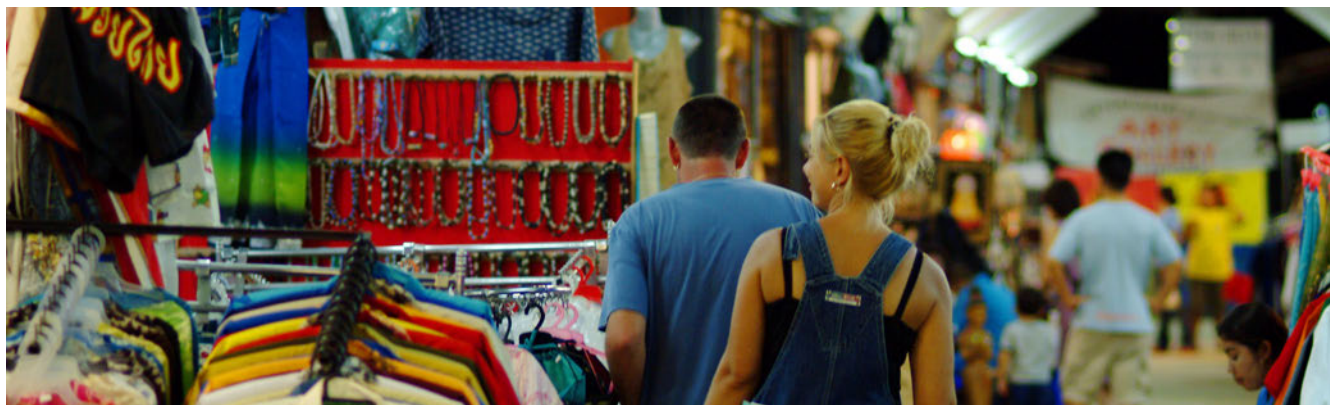
Most Thai families go to the market every day. If you ask a Thai mom what's for dinner in the morning, she'll most likely shrug and say, "I don't know, I haven't been to the market yet."

I fell into this "go to the market every day" pattern when I stayed in Samui. I highly recommend it. Eat what's freshest and you can't go wrong.

Should you buy a house or condo in Samui, there are plenty of home goods suppliers to have your place looking good and running efficiently. Floor tiles, custom curtains, appliances, furniture, etc., are all available without leaving the island.

### The Coconut Index

A shopping mecca Samui isn't. But, when it comes to the stuff you really need, there are plenty of choices. The wide range of grocery sources goes a long way with me, so I give Samui three out of five coconuts on the Coconut Index for shopping.



## Do I Need To Learn Thai?

Many tourists come to Samui and are stunned to find the natives speaking clear and concise English to them.

Seven times out of 10, they aren't speaking to a Thai, but a Burmese hospitality worker. Myanmar is part of ASEAN and its citizens have a different set of rules when it comes to work permits in Thailand.

Samui's tourism couldn't exist without them. As Myanmar (Burma) is a former British colony, they have a long history of learning English. I once stayed in a hotel on Koh Phangan where I was the only person in the building who spoke Thai. The entire staff was Burmese.

As I've said in some of my presentations for Live And Invest Overseas, in these tourist areas, you don't need to learn any Thai.

But if you plan to stay and live in a normal neighborhood, your life will be 100% easier if you learn 10 phrases in Thai. There are a dozen YouTube channels that could teach you enough to get by.

## What About Health Care?

Health care facilities in Samui are surprisingly well-equipped and staffed. There are several hospitals on the island offering a wide range of services.

### 1. Bangkok Hospital Samui

Bangkok Hospital Samui is an internationally accredited hospital providing a complete slate of health care services on the island. More than 60% of their patients are foreigners, most of them tourists.

They have a well-trained medical evacuation (medivac) team and coordinate closely with the medivac team of Bangkok Hospital in Bangkok for the expatriation of seriously ill patients.

They also do inbound medivac from surrounding islands such as Koh Tao and Koh Phangan.



## 2. Samui International Hospital

Samui International Hospital (SIH) is one of the newer private hospitals in Samui, which rates highly in the industry of Thai medical tourism.

Its services include pediatrics, orthopedics, gynecology, and dental procedures for inpatients and outpatients.

There is also a pool onsite, and the medical personnel can speak English, French, and German. SIH is generally less expensive than Bangkok Hospital Samui.

## 3. Bandon International Hospital

Bandon Hospital Koh Samui is the first international private hospital established there. It specializes in acute care and has warm, friendly qualified staff as well as cutting-edge medical equipment.

Its expertise is in the field of surgery and trauma. The medical costs here are lower than those of Bangkok Hospital Samui and Samui International Hospital.

There are also government hospitals and stand-alone clinics on the island. Dental care, eye care, and a plethora of esthetic-oriented clinics are scattered around Samui as well.

Especially for retirees, access to quality health care is atop the list of priorities. Samui delivers state-of-the-art facilities and top-notch physicians. And as the island becomes more popular with long-stay tourists and expats, services tailored to their needs are more available.

### The Coconut Index

I'd rate Samui's health care as good as any mainland location in Thailand other than Bangkok or Chiang Mai.

If I was concerned about a health condition that needed monitoring or continual treatment, I would do some investigation first and find out if one or more facilities on the island could accommodate me. When it comes to trauma and accidents, the hospitals in Samui have a ton of experience.

Samui gets four out of five coconuts on the Coconut Index category for health care.



## Can I Own Property?

Without going into an extended explanation, the answer is yes.

Foreigners can own condo units in their name. We can also own a building. And foreigners can affect ownership of a house and land with a properly structured Thai company.

I currently own a condo with my Thai corporation. I've owned multiple condos in my name. I've owned houses. I've bought land, built houses, and sold them. Never once did I feel that my investment was in jeopardy.

It's important if you consider buying vacant land to understand the land title system in Thailand. A proper title deed is called a "Chanote ti Din," or "Chanote" for short.

Sometimes land in Samui will be offered that is documented as "Nor Sor Sam," which is not as ironclad a claim as a Chanote. Just make it a rule to only accept property that has a proper Chanote ti Din title.

For specific examples of property that you can own, have a look at this issue's Property Picks.

## How Easy Is It To Set Up Life Here?

Visa laws in Thailand can best be described as "mercurial." You'll need to stay abreast of changes as they occur.

People over 50 can easily get a retirement visa if they meet financial requirements. (I'll put a link to a reputable visa website).

The pandemic scrambled much of the current visa requirements because so many foreigners got trapped here for so long. As the pandemic subsides, shiny new visa offers have come out for well-heeled visitors who don't mind parking a big chunk of money in a Thai bank.





There's also the "Thailand Elite" visa that is expensive by most standards but comes with a boatload of valuable perks.

A digital nomad visa is also in the works. My best advice is to come on a tourist visa, then hire a visa specialist to get it sorted in a way that is both legal and affordable.

Bank accounts can be opened in a day. A variety of accounts are available including ATM cards, credit cards, time deposits, and even car loans.

My experience has been that banking in Thailand (especially with online banking) is friendly and hassle-free.

All major credit cards are accepted here, but you may find that American Express is not accepted as commonly as in the States.

Transferwise and Payoneer are international currency transfer services available here, but PayPal has recently gone through some changes that prohibit foreigners from using it in Thailand.

Several major Thai banks are set up to receive U.S. Social Security payments as direct deposits.

Mobile phones can be purchased, and usage plans are obtained easily. Here in Thailand, you purchase your phone, and the service provider sells you a SIM card and sets up your plan. The top providers are DTAC, True, and AIS.

I've had the same phone number and service with AIS for over 22 years. They have excellent customer service, constantly offer me new deals to save money, and even get me big discounts when I want to buy a new phone.

The reliability and speed of the internet connection in Samui are excellent.

The two main internet service providers in Samui are AIS and 3BB. Both offer fiber optic high-speed connections. AIS can be less expensive when you bundle it with a mobile phone plan.



Electricity and water in condos are usually paid through the management office headed by the Juristic Person of the building. Service for houses needs to be set up by the local electric authority office nearest the residence. Some landlords include electricity and water with the rent.

When going through the process of setting up all of your living necessities, it's important to remain patient and cooperative. Thai people love their paperwork and copies.

In the early going, expect to sign copies of your passport repeatedly and initial every page of every document you sign. And, if you don't do it in a blue pen, it's all got to be done again. Patience and a smile go a long way in this country.

## The Coconut Index

When it comes to getting set up to live in Samui, I give it five out of five coconuts on the Coconut Index.



## Can I Work Here?

Getting a work permit and a corresponding visa for Thailand can be tricky.

First of all, unless you're coming in to work for one of the big hospitality companies that operate on the island and already have a job, finding employment may be difficult.

Secondly, the list of jobs foreigners are allowed to do here is short. If a Thai person could perform the job in question, you can't do it.

Teaching jobs are abundant, but competition is fierce, wages are low, and many employers resist getting you a work permit, or worse, expect you to pay for it.

The only real jobs available in Samui are hospitality management jobs with resorts and hotels or teaching jobs.

I wouldn't move to Samui if I was counting on gaining employment. Zero coconuts for employment, but that is pretty much Thailand-wide.

Setting up a business isn't complicated. Many legal service providers specialize in just this area, and I'll recommend a few in the Rolodex for your reference.

There are some specific rules you must follow concerning how many local employees you need before you are allowed to have a work permit.

You could actually own a business but not be permitted to work there. Again, hire a legal company, and they can set you on the right path.

If you do land a job or are able to get a work permit through your business, income taxes are a sliver of what you are used to paying, and you'll most likely be eligible for the national health insurance coverage plan offered to all full-time employees.

In the past few years, a wave of digital nomads has landed and made Thailand their home. High-speed internet, low cost of living, and a chilled lifestyle attract nomads from all corners of the globe.



Currently, Thailand is fumbling around with some kind of new visa they'll offer for digital nomads, and, most assuredly, it'll come with some kind of tax structure attached.

For now, those of us earning a living online are responsible for our taxes in our home countries and pay no taxes in Thailand.

## Are There Schools Here?

Samui is home to a surprising collection of international schools...

Oonrak Koh Samui is a bilingual school (English and Thai) serving students aged 3 to 11.

Lamai International School (LIS) offers classes in English for students 4 to 14.

International School Samui (ISS) also offers a British curriculum for students up to 18.

Greenacre International School conducts international school-type classes and emphasizes a connection to nature with outdoor gardens and jungle serving as extended classrooms.

Le Ecole Francaise Internationale de Ko Samui is a French language international school for students 2 to 18.

## What Is The Attitude With The LGBTQ Community?

Thailand's reputation as an open and progressive society is well-earned. Just like all religions are accepted and encouraged, so it is with lifestyles.

Thailand is the first country I've been to where transgender people are recognized as "a third sex" with legal rights as such.

What's more, the actual attitude within society at large is nonchalant when it comes to sexual orientation. Nobody notices. Nobody cares. It's a refreshing atmosphere.



## Is Disabled Or Handicapped Access Common?

This is an area where Thailand has improved greatly over the past decade.

It started with builders making handicapped access part of the building code with ramps and elevators.

While the upscale and tourism-oriented areas are sure to offer handicap access, more remote parts of the island may not.

## Can I Bring My Pet With Me To Thailand?

Pets can be imported to Thailand providing they have a recent health certificate, the proper vaccinations, and the completed government form.

Look for a link to the Royal Thai Consulate's website regarding importing pets to Thailand, and you can download the form.

Thai people are sincere pet lovers. They are fond of small dogs that can easily live in apartments, but you'll see larger breeds as well.

Health services and pet supply stores are readily available even in smaller towns.

## What's The Future Of This Area?

Right now, Samui and every other tourist destination in Thailand are rebounding from the pandemic.

Most experts predict that it'll take at least two tourist seasons before Samui is back to where it was in terms of arrivals.

A housing market that sat idle for two years is due to make a roaring comeback. When pent-up demand meets motivated sellers, property transactions should set a brisk pace.

Compared to other desirable locations in Thailand, Samui has avoided runaway development and kept much of the island's charm intact.



I'd expect the slow-growth model to continue unless some cataclysmic event should occur.

The luxury market continues to expand. Four Seasons, Hyatt Regency, Hilton, InterContinental, Nikki Beach, Ritz-Carlton, Conrad, and others have all established a presence on the island during the last few years before the pandemic.

## A Rising Tide

For years now, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has attempted to shift emphasis from double-decker busloads of package tourists to well-heeled independent travelers.

The pandemic actually worked in their favor by cutting off the supply of package tourists from China. With the Chinese still suffering travel restrictions, the luxury sector can gain more of the tourism market share. That bodes well for Samui.

With the economic status of arrivals to the island on the rise, so goes the expat community. Wealthier and to some extent older tourists means wealthier and older expats. Every expat was a tourist at some point.

Even if you prefer to live in a simpler, more economical way, the presence of a more affluent expat population will inevitably increase the value of property investments at all levels... A rising tide that lifts all boats.

There are a lot of bargains to be had in Samui. People who own second homes and rental income properties have been unable to earn any income for over two years.

There are a lot of villas, condos, and bungalows for sale well below market value. Buying on the dip could yield some impressive capital appreciation right away. And with the return of tourists comes the return of rental income.

## A Bridge Too Far

Another development to watch for is the proposed land bridge to Samui from the mainland.

Currently, the only way to get to Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, and Koh Tao is on a ferry from Chumpon or Surat Thani, an overnight boat from Pattaya, or an expensive flight to Samui's airport.

The ferries weren't exactly models of efficiency in the past, and post-pandemic they are running at half capacity.

Bangkok Airways owns the cool little boutique international airport on Samui, and the monopoly causes tickets to be inordinately expensive compared to other destinations in the region.

An idea to construct an 18-kilometer bridge from the mainland to the island has been planned and given political support in Thailand's parliament. The bridge would solve a world of logistical problems and help to reanimate a tourism economy that has laid dormant for two years.

This is also something the Thai government has been wanting to do for years, spreading the wealth to the restive south. Nakhon Si Thammarat is near the site the bridge would connect to the mainland.

It's an unknown jewel of a city to most of the world. Something as simple as this one infrastructure project could change the business dynamics of all three islands in the group as well as coastal cities nearby.

Opinions are all over the place regarding the bridge. The locals are hungry for it. It makes travel easier and shipping costs drop drastically. Naturists are calling it a bridge too far and worry it will trigger rampant development and ruin the vibe of the island.

## Expats Quietly Smiling

Property-owning expats are quietly smiling because they know the value of the entire area could escalate rapidly if the bridge gets built.

After 20-plus years of watching development in Thailand, I'd give the bridge project a 50/50 chance of actually getting done. Elections and a change of parties in power may happen in the near future

and promises made could influence the viability of the bridge.

The nature-loving tree hugger in me is opposed to the project. But, if I owned property in Samui, I'd be smiling, too.

## The Coconut Index

In my opinion, the future of Samui is bright on many fronts. I'd say the whole region is poised for growth and prosperity. Let's give Samui five out of five coconuts for future prospects on the Coconut Index.



## Who Should Live On Samui?

First and foremost, anyone who wants to be closer to nature should consider living in Samui.

Every day I'm here, I have at least one or two moments where my monkey mind stops chattering and my inner voice says, "Man, look around you. This place is spectacular!"

If you love beaches and jungles and mountains and waterfalls, then you'll love Samui. What's more, you'll feel like you're part of it.

People who want to live an active lifestyle but at a slower pace should consider spending some time in Samui. In many developed countries, lifestyles can be quite polarized.

Either you're working and in the rat race or you're retired and in a rocking chair. In a place like Samui, people enjoy staying active and healthy without stressing out over it.

Those lucky people who can work from anywhere will really like Samui. A low-cost but high standard of living is available. Reliable high-speed internet services are everywhere. And there's a growing community of digital nomads from all over the world to exchange ideas and experiences with.



Anyone who enjoys small-town friendliness will like Samui. Even though it's a busy tourist hub, residents live like it's a string of little villages.

People meet on the beach for sunset and discuss the matters of the day. Neighbors look out for each other. It's a closer expat community than most people realize.

There are islands out there that might stack up better than Samui in a few lesser categories like transportation and shopping. Naturally, we should reward them with higher Coconut Index scores.

There are a lot more islands out there that don't have near the beauty or charm that Samui has and they should earn fewer coconuts.

But make no mistake, when it comes to white sand beaches, palm trees swaying in the breeze, and water the color of blue sapphires, Koh Samui sets the standard. 🌴

**Editor's Note:** Looking for more information on Thailand?

Our [Live and Invest in Thailand Home Conference Kit](#) takes you on a virtual tour of this country, while also introducing you to all the experts you need to succeed here. This program was designed to help you answer the question, "Could Thailand be the place for me?"

The Best Of Southeast Asia On-Demand Video Program is another invaluable resource. It's a treasure trove of "Discover Asia" resources, including nearly two dozen videos boasting virtual tours, workshop lessons, and "warts and all" discussions. [More information here.](#)



### About The Author

Bart Walters is an American expat who has lived in Thailand for over 20 years. He's been active in real estate development and has written dozens of articles and essays about living and doing business in Thailand. Bart has also been a teacher at a major university in Bangkok and recently published his first book titled "Sunset Vertigo," a collection of short stories about expat life in Southeast Asia.



Property Picks:

# **Koh Samui Property Picks**

## **From Cliff-Hanging Super-Cribs To Beachfront Bungalows**

By Bart Walters



Samui has the widest variety of property options I've encountered in Thailand.

It doesn't matter what type or style of property you want; the price will be dictated by the location on the island and the proximity to the beach. The seafront is a lot more expensive (and rare) than the sea view.

The southern part of the island is cheaper than the north. Those who envision a large property should focus on the southwestern part of the island.

I say all this to drive home the importance of having an idea about your priorities before you start looking. Otherwise, one can be overwhelmed and frozen by indecision.

Figure out right away if you want a house or villa with a garden or a studio apartment or condo. Determine how important being close to the beach is. Try to imagine the social life you want to engage in.

It's a buyer's market in Thailand's hot spots right now, and none more so than in Samui. You should be unphased by the asking price of a particular property.

Go there. Meet the owners. Determine the urgency of their motivation before you make an offer.

From massive discounts to owner financing, it's a good time to be a buyer in Samui. Be patient. Stay focused. And don't be shy about lowball offers.

I could have included 20 properties in these pages and still wouldn't feel like I gave an adequate snapshot of the property market in Samui. Come stay for a month, and you'll see what I mean...





## 1-Bed Condo At The Bay Condominium, Bangrak

**Price: 4 million baht**

**1 bedroom, 1 bathroom**

**Construction: 60 square meters**

**Price per square meter of construction: 66,670 baht**

If you're looking for an easy-to-maintain, full-feature apartment in a good location, this place ticks all the boxes. It's the perfect size for an individual or couple. The condo features sea views and comes fully furnished with a well-equipped kitchen. It's also available for rent for 20,000 baht per month. The Bay Condominium is an immaculately kept complex with a large pool with a sun deck and lounge chairs, a fitness room, and a coffee shop. It's close to the restaurants and entertainment in Bangrak as well as Bophut and Fisherman's Village.



## Large 2-Bed Condo In Maenam

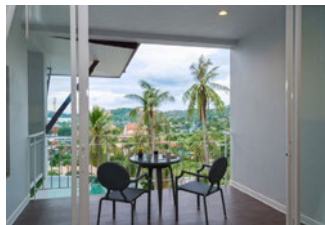
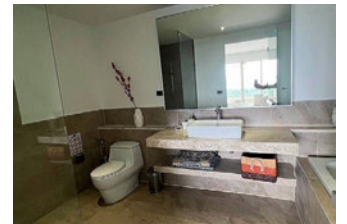
**Price: 6.95 million baht**

**2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms**

**Construction: 108 square meters**

**Price per square meter of construction: 64,350 baht**

This fully furnished condo is in a secured compound with a 26-meter swimming pool and fitness room. It includes an exterior laundry and storage room and covered parking. There are spectacular sea views from either the living room or master bedroom. This unit is great for long-term living or as an investment property. It's also available for rent for 35,000 baht per month. It's close to the village of Maenam, popular with older expats as well as some of the younger, yoga-hippy crowd, and Bophut, just 15 minutes away. Easy living here.





## Large Studio In Chaweng With Good Facilities

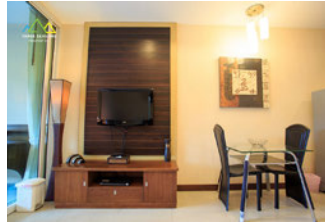
**Price: 2.45 million baht**

**1 bedroom, 1 bathroom**

**Construction: 51 square meters**

**Price per square meter of construction: 48,040 baht**

This unit could be considered either a large studio or a compact one-bedroom. It features an open living space with a fully functional kitchen and a private balcony. A sliding glass door can be used to separate the living area from the bedroom. The most impressive feature is the two communal swimming pools and well-kept garden. A fitness room, a steam room, a sauna, and plenty of covered parking make this place livable. It's near central Chaweng with access to the most shopping and entertainment choices on the island. This is a good base of operation for a single expat or an investment property. It's available for rent for 15,000 baht per month.



## Brand-New 3-Bed Apartment With Panoramic Seaview

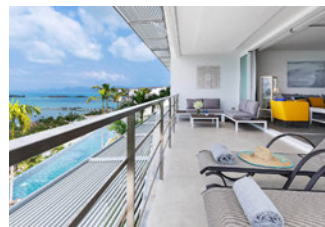
**Price: 13.5 million baht**

**3 bedrooms**

**Construction: 150 square meters**

**Price per square meter of construction: 90,000 baht**

With unimpaired views of Chaweng Bay, this condo is spectacular. Fully furnished to a high standard with a designer flair, this would be a perfect home for a couple or a family. Amenities include a sparkling infinity pool and a restaurant. The location puts it at walking distance of the restaurants, bars, and markets in Bangrak. This developer offers full management options for investment buyers. It's also available for rent for 70,000 baht per month.

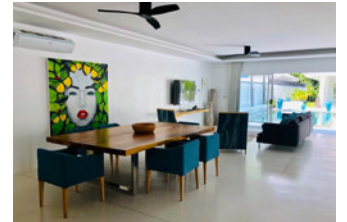
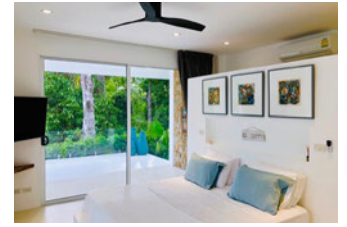




## Luxurious Mountain View Villa In Maenam

**Price: 15.9 million baht**  
**3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms**  
**Construction: 420 square meters**  
**Price per square meter of construction: 37,860 baht**

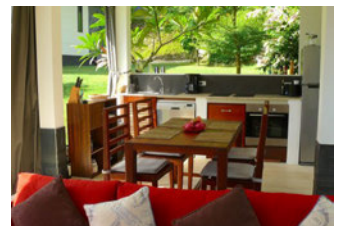
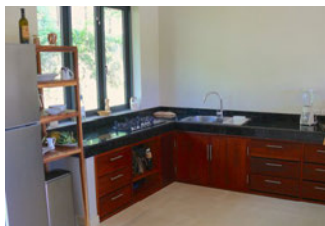
A sprawling modern villa on a mountain in a jungle... It doesn't get more secluded and peaceful than this. This house is located in a gated Balinese-style development just three minutes from Maenam Beach. The best tiles, granite, stone, fixtures, and more have been used to make this place as luxurious as it is stylish. The furniture and décor are equally tasteful. The tropical garden is lush and easy to maintain.



## Taling Nam Hideaway Villa

**Price: 10.5 million baht**  
**3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms**  
**Construction: 150 square meters**  
**Price per square meter of construction: 70,000 baht**

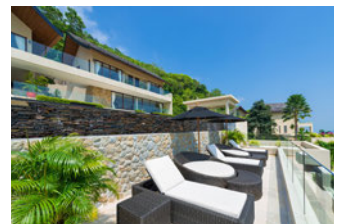
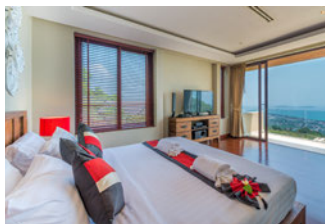
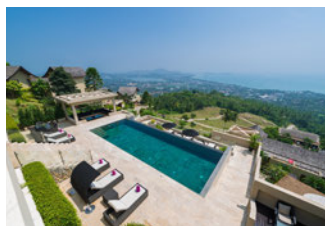
Hiding out in this chic Taling Nam villa would be a dream. On top of the sprawling open-plan house is a 30-square-meter open-air poolside sala. The poolside sala has a fully equipped kitchen, a living room, and a dining area. You can have a pool party and never get your house dirty. It's all set on a generous, 1,600-square-meters chunk of land. The house appears to have been built to take advantage of the spectacular view of the rolling hills and mountains covered in swaying coconut trees. If outdoor living is on your list of must haves, then look no further.



## Chaweng Mega-Crib

**Price: 28.2 million baht**  
**5 bedrooms**  
**Construction: 750 square meters**  
**Price per square meter of construction: 37,600 baht**

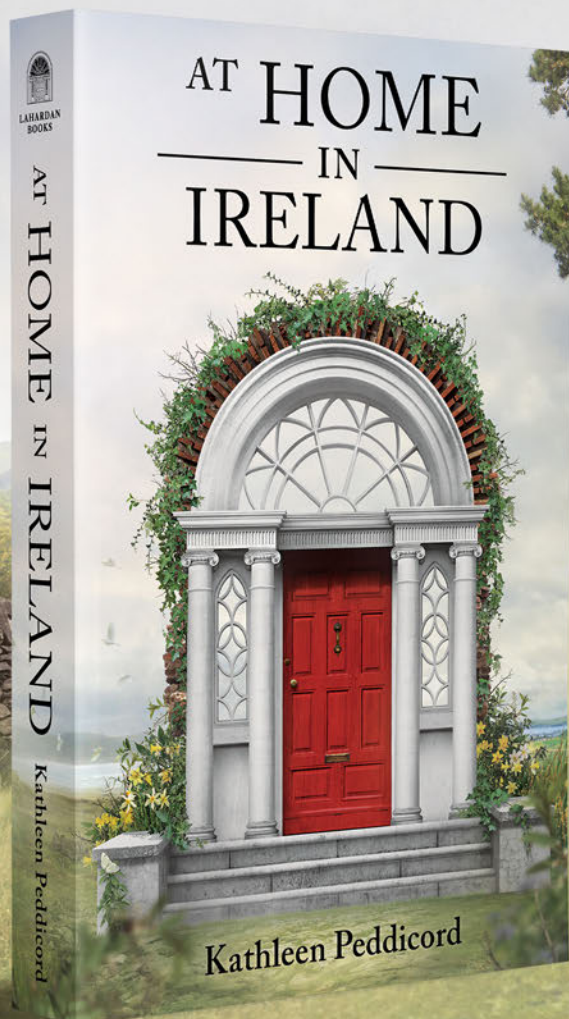
If you're wondering, "I wonder what US\$1 million gets you in Koh Samui," take a look at this jewel. Five master bedroom suites, each equipped with every luxury imaginable, are found in a gated hillside community near Chaweng Beach. Picture yourself cooling off in this infinity pool... sipping something out of a coconut while barbecuing and entertaining friends... or pouring your first cup of coffee in the morning poolside at sunrise. The house is perfectly located in the hills just a few kilometers from Chaweng Beach with all its eating, drinking, and entertainment choices. 🏠



**HOT OFF THE PRESSES—KATHLEEN PEDDICORD'S NEWEST BOOK:**

# AT HOME — IN — IRELAND

*Nearly 25 years ago, Kathleen moved from Baltimore to Waterford, Ireland, where she intended to start a business.*



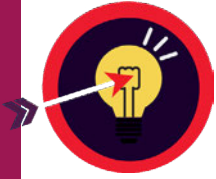
Ireland forced her to dismantle and doubt every belief she'd held as she struggled to start her business and open herself up to a new romance while restoring an Irish country ruin.

Now she remembers that tumultuous period as the sweetest of her life...

*"At Home In Ireland"* shares recollections of Kathleen's seven years on the Emerald Isle...

A memoir and a thank you to everyone who helped her along the way—*"At Home In Ireland"* is now available on Amazon.

**HEAD HERE NOW TO CLAIM YOUR FREE COPY.**



## Overseas Living 101: Your Monthly Tip For Tackling The Expat Life

Have an issue you'd like us to tackle? We want to hear from you! Get in touch with us at [editorial@liveandinvestoverseas.com](mailto:editorial@liveandinvestoverseas.com) to send in your suggestions, and we'll add them to our roster.



### How To Get Your Passport Ready For Travel

By Sophia Titley

In February, an Australian tourist was detained at Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali, Indonesia, and held for questioning by immigration officers.

The reason? A thumbnail-sized tear in his passport.

After reading a statement that acknowledged that his passport was “of poor quality and/or a fake,” the tourist was eventually allowed into Bali...

But the incident raises an important point: while you might be ready for international travel, your passport might not be.

Indonesia has some of the strictest passport laws in the world...

It expects your passport to be in near-perfect condition, with no tears, stains, or water damage. In some cases, it will even fine airlines up to US\$5,000 if they allow passengers with faulty passports to travel.

Indonesia is an extreme case, but it's not the only country with these types of laws... and it's best to be informed of potential passport pitfalls well before taking a trip to avoid expensive mistakes.

Here are a few things you need to know about your passport before you take a trip...

## Is Your Passport In Good Condition?

Do a quality control check on your passport to make sure it's in good working condition... especially if it's been gathering dust during the past three years of the pandemic.

These are the main things to look out for:

- Is there any obvious damage? Are any pages torn, cut, detached, stained, water-damaged, moldy, etc.?
- Are your passport details decipherable?
- Is the bio-data page in good condition? Is there any discoloration? Any damage to the lamination?
- If it's an e-passport, is the chip exposed or damaged?

A bit of wear and tear should be expected... but unfortunately, every country has a different definition of how much wear and tear is acceptable.

Best practice is to keep your passport in as perfect a condition as possible and brush up on the rules and any precedents for rejection that are in place in the country you plan on visiting.

If your passport isn't in good condition, you'll need to renew it before your trip at your own expense.

## When Was It Issued And When Does It Expire?

You need to be aware of your passport's issue and expiration dates as well as the passport validity requirements of the country you plan on visiting.

To visit the EU, for instance, your passport needs to have been issued in the last 10 years. It can't be due to expire until three months after you've exited the EU.

Some places, like Australia, Mexico, Japan, and Barbados, only ask that your passport be valid for the duration of your stay... while others, like Egypt, Singapore, and Thailand, require six months of passport validity.

Passport validity requirements vary from country to country, but assuming that all countries require a year of validity past your passport's expiration date is a good rule of thumb.

If you have the choice when applying for or renewing your passport, it's best to opt for 10 years of validity. It just means that the issue and expiry dates are things you have to think about less often.

U.S. passports are generally valid for 10 years at a time. With Canadian passports, you have the choice between a 5- or 10-year validity period.

## How Many Blank Pages Do You Have Left?

Make sure you have enough blank space or empty pages in your passport before you head out, especially if you plan on visiting multiple countries in one trip.

At minimum, you need enough blank space to receive immigration entry and exit stamps, assuming you're visiting just one country.

If you're visiting a country that issues visas on arrival, like Vietnam, be prepared for them to take up an entire page with the visa sticker.

Different countries have different rules about how many blank pages your passport needs to have for you to be allowed to visit. For most places, it's one... but some countries (Namibia and Brunei, for example) require six blank pages.

I ran out of space in my passport a few years ago... I was forced to renew my 10-year passport a couple years ahead of its expiration date because of this.

In the past, immigration officers may have just stamped over old stamps, but with ever-stricter regulations and controls, this is less likely in 2023.

When you apply for or renew your passport, opt for the maximum number of pages possible if given the choice...

The standard U.S. passport has 28 pages, 17 of which are blank and stampable, but you can also apply for a 52-page passport with 43 stampable pages at no additional cost.

Canada used to give you an option of how many pages you wanted in your passport, but now, all Canadian passports have 36 pages.

## What Stamps Does Your Passport Currently Have?

Your travel history can affect your ability to visit a country... A passport stamp from one country may prevent you from entering another if the two countries are on bad terms.

For example, if you have an Israeli stamp in your passport, you can't travel to certain Middle Eastern countries, like Lebanon or Kuwait, among others. Even a luggage tag or sticker with evidence of having been to Israel can cause problems.

On the flipside, if you've been to certain Middle Eastern countries, you may face increased scrutiny at immigration when you try to visit Israel.

A visit to Cuba can affect a non-American or Canadian's ability to qualify for ETSA. If you've been to Cuba since March 1, 2011, you're disqualified for ETSA and need to apply for a full visa (at a much higher cost than ETSA and including an in-person interview) instead.

## Other Things About Your Passport You Should Consider...

- **Is your passport scannable?** Depending on how old your passport is, it may be a regular passport or an e-passport. The latter contains a chip that stores your personal information (name, date of birth,



etc.) and can be scanned at certain border-control points, helping you save time at immigration. You'll know if you have an e-passport because you'll have a small rectangular icon at the bottom of the front cover of your passport.

- **Did you get your passport back?** It might sound obvious, but if you're travel-weary and shuffling many documents around, you could easily walk away from the immigration kiosk without your passport in hand. This happened to a colleague a few years back... An Ecuadorian immigration agent failed to return his passport, and he didn't notice right away. When he returned a few minutes later to retrieve the passport, the immigration officer denied having it. (Ecuador had a lucrative black market for American passports at the time.)
- **How many days are you staying, and what areas of the country are you visiting?** Immigration

officers may fill in your passport stamp with the number of days you intend to stay in the country... meaning the stamp has a limited validity. It's best to tell the immigration officer that you'll be staying for the maximum number of days a tourist visa allows. If you're visiting multiple territories within the same country (like Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands, for instance), make sure you include time spent in those territories when you quote how long you're staying to the immigration officer.

- **Do you have an emergency or temporary passport?** If you lose your passport while abroad, you can usually be issued an emergency passport at the nearest consulate. In Canada's case, a temporary passport is valid for one year, and in the United States' case, only six months. Don't try to plan long, multi-trip journeys on emergency or temporary passports. 🗳️







## Earning Anywhere:

By Ilene Little



## Expats Start A Home-Based Business In Panama

The cost of living in the U.K. was the catalyst for Barry and Mari Nicholson to move to Panama.

Barry is British. His wife Mari is Colombian but has a British passport.

They met in Panama when Barry came through on a job in 2000. They got married in the U.K. in 2003 and lived there for five years.

"I had a well-paying job, but all of our income was going to pay rent and bills. We were stuck in a cycle whereby we couldn't save enough money to put together a deposit for a mortgage.

"At that point, with the cost of living, and when my company at the time said they didn't care where I lived as long as it was close to an international airport, we got up and moved," said Barry.

They chose to relocate to Panama...

"We have friends in Panama, and one of them is a real estate agent," said Barry.

"We visited Panama on holiday in May 2007 and drove around with our friend who was out house hunting for one of her buyers.

"When I first saw the house where we now live in Villa Zaíta. I wanted to go take a closer look," Barry said.

"And when I heard the asking price was US\$120,000, I think it took all of about five seconds to decide I wanted the house."

Barry was encouraged to find he could afford to live in a house. "I've always lived in houses; I don't like the idea of living in an apartment. I like a big garden," he said.

## Rolling With The Punches In A Changing World

Barry worked as an international mariner company man for 12 years. His job duties took him around the world but home base was Panama.

Since 2010, Barry has been working freelance as an offshore navigation specialist on cable trips. "I've been working offshore for 18 years," he said.

"I'm a hydrographic surveyor. I work as a navigation specialist on cable trips."

When asked how he developed his contacts for working freelance, Barry said, "A lot of it was through LinkedIn. Because the offshore industry is very small, a lot of it is word of mouth, as well. You find a lot of people know each other."

## Stumbling Blocks For Mari Working In Panama

"My wife studied psychology in Panama from 2008 until 2013 and, only upon completion of her degree, did she discover she couldn't work as a psychologist because it's a reserved occupation," said Barry.

Certain professions in Panama, such as an attorney, architect, engineer, and medical or veterinary doctor, are reserved for Panama nationals. It's a fact worth remembering.

"Unfortunately, no one at the college during her four years of study told her she wouldn't be able to use her degree to work in Panama," said Barry.

## Starting A Home-Based Business In Panama

The idea of a special events business based on the import of London taxis evolved from Barry's quest to find adequate transportation for his family.

His story is typical of how finding a solution to a personal challenge can reveal an opportunity for starting a business in a foreign country...

"I've had several cars here in Panama," said Barry, "and the problems I've had with every one of them was electrical issues. Once you start having problems with electrical-related issues, it's very difficult to get them repaired properly.

"The first car I bought from a private party here in Panama was misrepresented," he said.

"It was a Nissan Titan and the gentleman who sold it to us neglected to tell us it been a total write-off in the United States. It was a flood vehicle.

"In the space of a year, we spent more than US\$10,000 on electronic components, and it got to the point where the vehicle was totally unreliable," Barry said.

Barry wanted to buy something mechanically robust, simple, and with minimal electronics.

An acquaintance suggested he import a London taxi, especially the later Fairways which use Nissan diesel engines.

"All of the mechanical components for Nissan diesel engines are available here in Panama," said Barry, "transmissions, running gear, and Nissan engines.

"The nice thing is, the taxis weigh 2 tons, they've got a 25-foot turning circle, and they are designed to take abuse," Barry explained.

"You get a huge passenger compartment in the back, so to get our baby in and out is simple. There is nothing that can be damaged because they are working vehicles. They are built to be easily cleaned and maintained," said Barry.

They now own three taxis.

"When we imported our first taxi, we had no idea of setting up a business at the time," said Barry.

"What happened is that everywhere we went in the car, people were photographing it; people wanted to see inside it; there was a lot of interest."

Barry and Mari took a cue from companies setting up businesses in the U.K. using retired classic taxis as wedding vehicles to develop their wedding and special events transportation business here in Panama City.

"There're only three of these taxis in Latin America, and we own all three," said Barry. "It's quite a selling point in our wedding-related transportation."

The selling point that identified the niche market for the business is the look of the taxi but also the roominess that allows for unique photography.

"Of course, we have red carpet and trimmed seats and flower arrangements, but a major selling point is that you stand up before you exit the taxi, so getting in and out is more dignified and makes for great pictures," he said.

## Challenges Starting A Home-Based Business

"It was very easy for us to start a business in Panama," said Barry.



"I was surprised how easy it was. We had a very good lawyer who got the legalities done very quickly for us."

He told a different story about some bureaucratic delays associated with importing the first taxi...

"It took four months to clear customs," said Barry. "After that first go-round with customs, the process got more streamlined."

Barry is happy to offer his assistance to other individuals interested in doing the same.

"We've had the first taxi on the road now for a few years," said Barry, "and since that time, business has been slowly gaining traction. It's picking up."

Barry is glad he made the move to Panama. "I honestly can't see me returning to the U.K." 🇺🇸

**Editor's Note:** For more information about starting a business in Panama and an overview of what you can expect in terms of lifestyle, sign up to OLL's sister publication, [Panama Letter](#).

## About The Author

Ilene Little is a former newspaper columnist and currently a prolific freelance writer on topics related to travel and tourism. Her background includes being a former overseas radio show personality and founder of a travel lifestyle, medical tourism, and retirement business.

**DON'T MISS THIS**

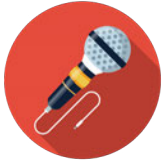
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## Expats Interview:

Bart Walters



# **The Most Interesting Woman In Koh Samui— An Interview With Nikky Noodles From Lanna Resort**

Expats are renowned for being colorful and quirky individuals.

It seems the longer they live overseas, the freer they become, the happier they are, and the better their story gets.

Thailand, and the island of Samui in particular, reflect this notion with brilliant exactitude.

Earlier this year, I met a woman who is a shining example of what a happy and fulfilling life in an exotic foreign land looks like.

Everyone knows her as Nikky Noodles, a name that somehow fits her and nobody else.

I met Nikky while staying at my new secret hideaway in Samui, called Lanna Resort in Bangrak.

This place was reputed to be extremely comfortable, convenient, and surprisingly affordable. As it turns out, all of those things held true.

Upon my arrival, I met the manager, Nikky Noodles.

Nikky is a tiny little sprite with a platinum blonde pixie haircut and a way-out-there fashion sense that reminds me of female pop icons like Rhianna or Katie Perry.

You can't not notice Nikky.

On top of that, her East London accent and infectious smile make her the most disarming hotel manager I've ever had the pleasure of meeting.

During my one-month stay in Samui, I had a conversation with Nikky every day in Lanna's *al fresco* poolside restaurant.

She told me that she came to Thailand for the first time in 2003 and moved from London to Samui permanently in 2008.

I asked Nikky what prompted the move...

"I was working in the fashion industry," Nikky said.

"I had my own design studio and shop in London, but the competition was fierce. Unless you had an angel investor or rich uncle, any downturn in business was a death sentence."

When I asked her why she chose Samui, Nikky said, "I loved the island vibe, and I could see a real market for my clothing and homeware designs. So, I came to Samui and eventually opened three shops.

"I couldn't have done any of that back in London, so you could say I chose Samui, and Thailand, for the freedom to follow my dream."



According to Nikky, the shops were doing quite well, with a steady stream of tourists from all over the world arriving and getting introduced to original designs by Nikky Noodles.

Her home fashion designs, like throw pillows and other accents, were a smashing success with local expats decorating their sea view villas.

Somehow, Nikky could feel the economic turbulence coming, and in 2016, she closed up all her shops and transferred her entire fashion design business online.

She's still deeply involved in the fashion world, but in late 2019, she agreed to help a friend who owned a few resorts on the island.

She became the manager of Lanna, a boutique hotel located in Bangrak in the northeastern quarter of Samui near the airport.

Lanna Resort is a 70-room, three-story complex of buildings that includes a fully equipped gym, a yoga studio, a Thai massage spa, and a playroom for kids.

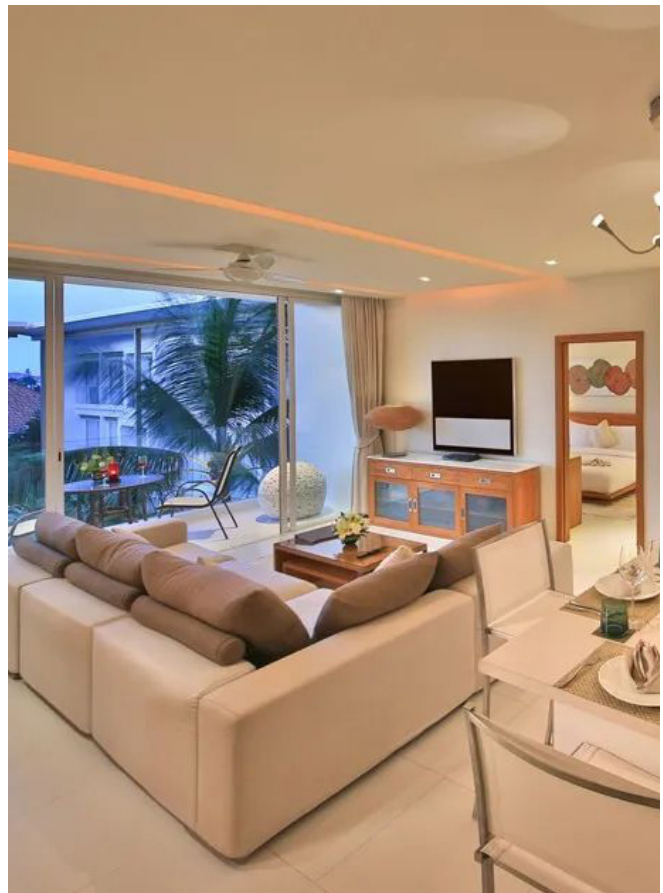
All of this is wrapped around an enormous sparkling pool flanked on one side by a cool open-air restaurant and on the other by a floating pool deck set up for barbecue and cocktail parties.

The rooms at Lanna range from cozy studios to one-bedroom units to family-style, three-bedroom units. They're all set up for long-stay tenants with full kitchens, cookware, towels, etc.

Lanna feels more like a serviced apartment than a hotel. The entire resort emanates this cool zen feel with minimalist furniture and tropical modern décor.

Nikky explained, "I came to help my friend, who has a couple of resorts on the island. It was supposed to be only a few months.

"A year later, I was hiring new staff, developing our social media presence, and revamping the menu at our restaurant. I think it's similar to the fashion business in that you have to constantly find new ways to serve your customers."



After my first week at Lanna, I could see Nikky's touch all over the place. The décor. The courteous staff. The cool house music oozes out of speakers around the pool. And the most eclectic menu I've ever witnessed at a hotel restaurant.

The vegan and vegetarian offerings are outstanding and attract patrons from all over the island. Or you can go to the opposite end of the culinary spectrum and try the incredible cheesesteak sandwich or spicy jerk chicken wings.

I chose Lanna because I knew I was staying a month, needed a good space to work, and didn't want to feel obligated to go somewhere every day.

I wondered why other people chose to stay there, so I asked Nikky who her customers were post-pandemic...

"A lot of them are like you," she said.

"Digital nomads make up nearly a third of our bookings. They come here because it is in a convenient location with all the amenities and the rooms are designed to actually be lived in.

"We've also had a lot of people who want to live in Samui, but they don't want to be in a hurry to choose where, so they live here until they decide.

"A few times per month we'll see former tenants come for lunch or dinner that have found permanent residence somewhere on the island. Lanna has been the starting point for many Samui expats.

"We also have a surprising number of single female travelers, both on slow-travel holidays or working remotely," Nikky said.

"They like it because we have a great yoga studio with regular classes, our pool is long enough to do proper laps in, and the restaurant makes it easy to eat healthily.

"It's also a safe little compound where people look out for each other. Single female travelers are my most consistent return visitors."





I asked Nikky which neighborhood she recommended for people interested in living in Samui.

She replied, "Until recently, I lived in Taling Nam on the wild side of the island. It's so quiet, and you get so much more house for the money.

"I lived in a big, three-bedroom house with a pool for 20,000 baht (about US\$575) per month. Now I live in Bophut to be closer to work.

"If you don't mind being a little remote, Taling Nam is my personal favorite. Maenam is also a good deal for the money, and it's very chill.

"Right now, the digital nomads are finding Bangrak to be perfect as it's close to the airport, and the piers, and has a great selection of bars, restaurants, and coffee shops.

Nikky and I talked about the resurgence in tourism, and I asked if she'd seen any change in the characteristics of visitors at her resort.

"Over the past two years, I've noticed the economic profile of our visitors becoming more affluent. Not too many backpackers these days.

"A lot of that has to do with remote workers, but it also is a product of more upscale offerings on the island. Better restaurants and entertainment attract a higher caliber of tourists."

"The big difference I notice with our guests is people's attitudes," Nikky said.

"Nobody is in a hurry to go see temples or ride jet skis. Many people seem totally content to relax, enjoy the sunshine, and stop stressing for a while. That plays right into our business model at Lanna."

I was considering a move to Samui myself, so I asked Nikky what the best part about living there is...

"It's a combination, really. First, you've got this breathtaking island with half a dozen little beach communities, all with their own vibe.



"Secondly, the expat community is a real mixed bag of ages, cultures, and backgrounds, so you're always meeting new and interesting people.

"And on top of it all is the inner peace that isolation on a tropical island can bring. In Samui, it's easy to tune out all the ugly noise in the rest of the world and just live your best life.

"That's why most of us came here in the first place."

Nikky is a convincing Koh Samui Ambassador. Her genuine smile and heartfelt positivity make me want to pack my bags and get some of that island vibe for myself.

Should you find yourself on the island of Samui, I highly recommend staying at Lanna Hotel in Bangrak for the comfort, the food, and the Nikky Noodles experience. 🍜

A graphic of a spotlight with a yellow beam of light shining down from the top left corner of the page.

## Spotlight On:

By Sasha Savinov



# 3 Places Where The U.S. Dollar Goes Far In 2023

I'm currently in sunny Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the U.S. dollar goes incredibly far...

The local currency declined in value against the greenback at an astounding 70% in 2022, making it a bargain barrel destination to kick off the year.

Economic turbulence has been the norm in Argentina over the last couple of decades. For a brief period of time (1985 to 1991), the peso was replaced by the austral.

Things didn't work out for the austral, and the country reverted back to the peso, which the government anchored to the U.S. dollar.

Argentines realized that there wasn't much hope for their local currency and thus made a beeline to banks to buy up dollars.

This led to limits being set on how many dollars local people can buy each month, which I've been told is currently US\$200.

To make a long story short, the government tries to prop up the peso with an inflated "official" exchange rate. As of writing in early March, this is around 200 pesos per dollar.

Locals know it's not realistic, though, and as such, there's a vibrant black market for exchanging dollars here.

Nobody likes that term, though, so it's called the "blue market." Plus, the flag is blue and white, so maybe that has something to do with it...

At the time of writing, this rate is more like 370 to 375 pesos per dollar.

The unofficial rate is nearly double the official rate. And while all of this blue market activity isn't exactly legal, it's part of life here.

As one local recently told me, "The official rate is a fiction in the mind of a few government officials."

As a quick example, my wife and my first dinner in the country was at a nice steakhouse with friends. It included a few bottles of the famous local wine, several appetizers and sides to share, and cuts of mouth-watering steak and lamb.

At the official rate, our share of the meal would have been just over US\$100. Thanks to exchanging dollars at the blue rate, however, it was more like US\$50.

How does one get this excellent exchange rate? Well, there are a few ways you can go about it...

One is to take the old-school route as we did.

Prior to traveling to Argentina, we hit the bank a few times and made sure to get brand-new 100-dollar bills. We ensured there were no tears or blemishes, carefully packed them in an envelope, and put them in a safe place in our personal items.

Skipping the money exchange booth at the airport, we instead used the Cabify app with a credit card to get a ride to our accommodation. From there, I did a quick Google search for casas de cambio (exchange houses) and found the aforementioned one.

It's that simple if you have dollars on you.

Otherwise, the most common method is using Western Union to send yourself dollars. You can go to a local office (and almost always wait in a long line), where you can pick up your U.S. dollars in ARS at the blue rate, or at least close to it.

I've heard from other digital nomads and expats here that Western Union locations often run out of cash. That's because the largest bill is \$1,000 Argentine pesos, which is only worth about US\$5.

Be prepared to deal with a large stack of pesos if exchanging a few hundred dollars.

The worst thing you can do here is use an ATM. First of all, you'll get the lousy official rate.

Second, the maximum amount you can withdraw is low, and the fees are high. Unless there's no other option, it's best to skip ATMs entirely in Argentina.

Thankfully for travel hacking nerds like me, Visa and Mastercard recently started converting charges made in Argentina closer to the blue rate than the official one.

On a trip to a nicer supermarket recently, my Chase Sapphire card converted my purchase at around 325 pesos to the dollar.

For the rest of our trip here, I plan to use my Chase card for nicer restaurants, bigger trips to the supermarket, and things like football or concert tickets.

This way, we don't always need to be carrying around huge wads of cash. We can also continue to earn points and limit the number of times we may need to use Western Union.

If you're planning on traveling to Argentina this year, my best advice would be to understand that the situation is fluid.

Things have changed so rapidly in the last few months, and it's anybody's guess as to what will happen in the next few.

You'll want to join Facebook groups where you can reach out to people on the ground before your trip to get a better idea of what's happening at the moment. It seems like every other post these days is about currency-related issues, so you won't have to look far to get up-to-date info.

## Egypt

Right now, a dollar will fetch you right about 30 Egyptian pounds.

This is just a few weeks after it reached a new low compared to the greenback when the exchange rate hit 32.14 Egyptian pounds to US\$1.

A few months ago, the country's monetary authorities eliminated the fixed exchange rate policy, thus guaranteeing Egypt a cool US\$3-billion loan from the IMF.

The pound has fallen against the dollar pretty consistently since then. To put it into context, exactly one year ago it was trading at 15 Egyptian pounds to US\$1.

I'm no economist, but I'll go out on a limb here and guess that Egypt is in the "clearance sale" category as far as travel destinations for anyone spending dollars.

Egypt is still a cash-based society. It's a good idea to bring some cash with you, and you might even want to exchange a little at the airport just to cover the cost of a taxi.

If your phone is working, you have the option of just ordering an Uber and saving the money exchange for later.



In Cairo, there's an abundance of official money exchange offices. Egypt regulates them unlike many countries, so you won't have to shop around or negotiate to get the current rate.

You can always just hit an ATM to take out some Egyptian pounds as well. Be aware that many of them have a low limit, so you may have to make multiple transactions to get enough cash.

Local banks don't charge a fee but yours might. That's why we bank with Charles Schwab as they don't charge fees on their end, and they reimburse them if the other bank does.

## Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka was rocked by protests last year amidst a full-blown economic crisis.

At the time of writing, it's open and eager for tourism. And for those bringing dollars, a rather generous exchange rate awaits. It's currently 322 rupees to the dollar, compared with 202 just a year ago.

For those willing to ignore the paranoia and give Sri Lanka a chance, you'll likely find empty beaches and friendly locals who are thrilled to have your business, whether it be in their hotel, restaurant, or shop.

As far as getting your hands on some rupees goes, your best bet is to bring some cash to exchange at first and then hit an ATM later in your trip if necessary.

While it's possible to change money at many hotels, you won't get the best rate. Stick to the official currency exchange places or local banks, but beware that many close at 3 p.m. 🇱🇰



### About The Author

Sasha Savinov is an English teacher, language student, blogger, and video producer from Michigan. He studied video production at Michigan State University (Go Green!) and moved abroad right after graduating, since living in China, Indonesia, and Mexico and currently trying the digital nomad lifestyle with his wife across South America. Together they run Grateful Gypsies, a blog focused on teaching ESL, long-term travel, being a digital nomad, and live music. When Sasha's not working online and planning grand adventures, you can find him following his favorite band, Phish.



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# Overseas Living Letter Tops:

By Anja Klingler-Brito



## 8 Things To Know Before You Move To Spain

### 1 There isn't just one Spain.

With an area of 505,990 square kms (over 195,000 square miles) almost 5,000 kms (3,100 miles) of coastline, the country spans a variety of climates, topographies, languages, cultural traditions, and cuisines.

From a So-Cal vibe on the Costa del Sol to the history-laden towns of the central highland plateau to the ski resorts of the Pyrenees, from the world-class cities of Madrid and Barcelona to remote off-grid villages, Spain has it all.

Define your criteria, pick a couple of areas, and check them out for yourself.

Even if you watch every single Youtube video on your area of choice (which was basically how my husband and I whiled our time away during COVID-19 lockdowns and evening curfews), you'll be surprised how different a place can look and feel when you're there in person.

## 2 **Be prepared to not understand the local language, even if you know Spanish.**

Some autonomous regions, like Catalonia and Valencia, have their own languages (Catalan and Valencian), and they'll tell you in no uncertain terms that it's not "just a dialect."

Other regions, such as Andalucía, have strong dialects.

Add to that the fact that the Spanish like to talk at speeds nearing those of their high-speed trains, and you can see how it's easy to get lost.

But don't let that discourage you. Keep studying and practicing, and things will get easier, especially if you really immerse yourself.

I try to read everything I can lay eyes on, from billboards to signage to local newspapers... and I'll never ask for the English version of the menu.

Another great way to learn is to watch Spanish series on Netflix. My current favorite is *Las Chicas del Cable*.

And until I get fully fluent, I keep reminding people to talk slowly. *Despacio, por favor.*

## 3 **Your U.S. or Canadian driver's license is not valid in Spain.**

By law, you're required to have an international driving permit to legally drive in Spain, even as a tourist.

Even if your car rental company doesn't ask you for it, you risk a fine if you get pulled over.

And if you become a resident, you'll need to get a brand-new Spanish license, with all that entails: a





theoretical test, driving lessons, and a road test—all in Spanish, of course.

We're not at that point yet, but we've heard of even experienced drivers failing the road test multiple times. Pack your patience.

As a bonus tip, I'd recommend you learn to drive stick shift. Being limited to vehicles with automatic transmission will make everything more expensive, from car rentals to driving lessons and tests to buying a vehicle...

#### **4 Since we are on the topic of driving: pay attention when you fill your tank.**

Gasoline and diesel come from the same pump; there are just two separate nozzles (diesel being a different color and slightly larger), and it's easy to pick the wrong one.

It happened to us (ahem, my husband) on our first day in Spain. On the way from Málaga Airport to our destination, Murcia, we had to fill the tank.

Grumbling about the nozzle not fitting properly into the tank opening, my husband realized his mistake when he noticed the smell of diesel. By then, the tank was three-quarters full.

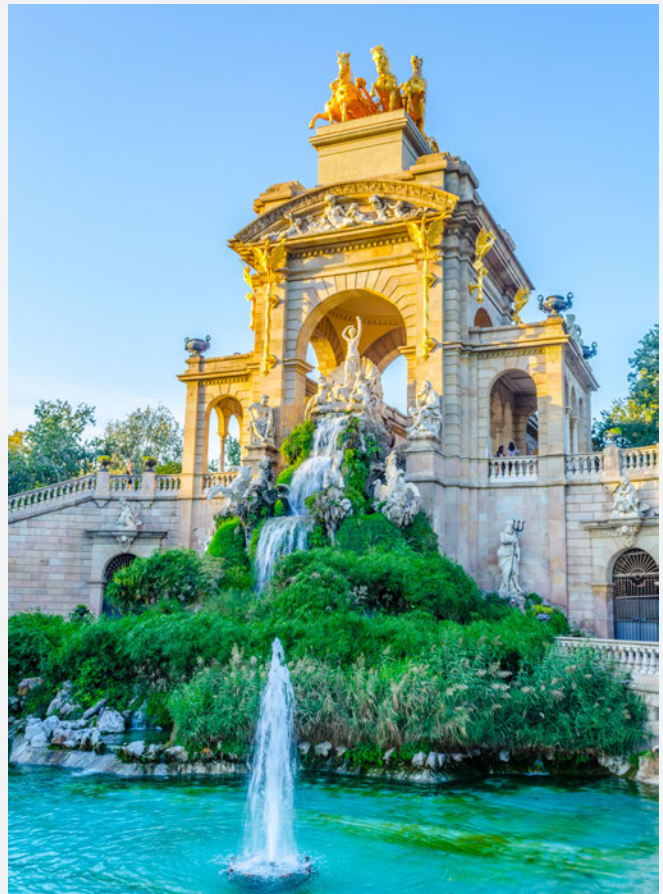
The gas station attendant patiently arranged a tow truck (on a Sunday during siesta time; I'm sure that was no easy feat), and two hours and 240 euros later we were on our way again, the rental car thankfully unscathed.

Apparently, this happens more often than one would think. Almost every time we tell that story, someone owns up to having made the same mistake...

#### **5 You need private health insurance when you arrive.**

Spain is known for its world-class health care system, which is very affordable and in certain cases, even free.

However, in order to get residency, you must have private health care that provides coverage that is comparable to the public system coverage,



meaning your plan can't have any co-pays or initial waiting periods.

For us—a couple between 55 and 60—the monthly cost of such a plan starts at around 200 euros a month.

Companies offering such plans include Adeslas, Sanitas, and Assa. You need to ask for a plan that will be accepted for *residencia*.

I have been told that one may get a bit of a deal when buying it through the bank where you have your main bank account.

6

### Prepaid cell phone plans are extremely cheap.

We pay 10 euros per 30 days and get 10 GB of data, unlimited calling within Europe, and 200 minutes of overseas calls.

This is already a good deal, but the kicker is that when we signed up, the provider offered a limited-time bonus of an extra 30 GB of data, so we have a staggering 40 GB.

This bonus has been renewed every month for the past few months, but even when it ends, I'll be fine, as I have yet to use up the basic 10 GB...

You may have noticed that the plan doesn't include text messages, but this is also not a problem since most people here use WhatsApp.

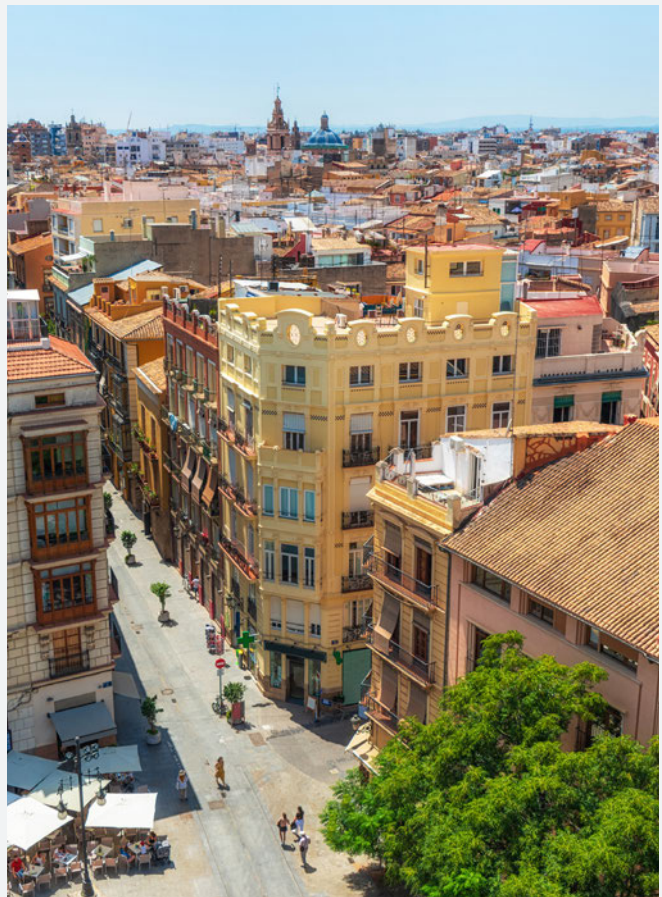
I'd venture a guess that there are other cheap prepaid plans that do include text messages as well, but for us, the data volume was more important.

7

### The food culture here is quite different than in North America.

You'll rarely see people eating or drinking coffee while walking... and if you do, they're probably Americans or Canadians.

People tend to eat late. Lunch is typically between 1:30 and 4 p.m.; dinner doesn't start before 9 p.m.; and they tend to linger after their meal.



To bridge the time between the end of the workday and dinner, people get together for tapas and drinks.

Eating and drinking out is relatively inexpensive, you can typically find a three-course lunch menu (*menú del día*) for 10 to 15 euros, and that includes a glass of wine, beer, or pop.

Tapas run from 2.50 to 8 euros; a small beer (*caña*) will set you back around 2 euros.

Dinner tends to be à la carte (except for the more touristy places) and will cost a bit more, but bare in mind that the prices you see are the prices you pay: tax and gratuities are already included.

Leaving a small tip by rounding up your bill will be appreciated, but it's not expected.

There's no tip option on the credit card machine, so if you want to put your tip on your card, you have to tell the waiter or waitress the total amount you want them to put through.

8

## Winter rentals are a great way to spend a few months on one of the Spanish Costas.

A lot of people who have a vacation properties in coastal resorts will rent them out cheap for longer stays during the low season (typically between October and April).

On the Costa Blanca, you can snap up a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house with a private pool for 650 euros per month (plus utilities).

On the Costa del Sol (also known as Costa del Golf thanks to its 70-plus golf courses), we're currently staying at a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with a sea view, just a five-minute walk from the beach, for 725 euros.

This includes utilities, high-speed internet, and cable TV. It's a perfect set-up to just spend winter in the sun while your friends up north are shoveling snow.

But it also makes for an ideal home base from which to conduct your search for a permanent home. 🏠



# GLOBAL NEWS

By the Editors of Live And Invest Overseas

## ■ Is This The End Of Europe's "Golden" Era?

In the space of three days in February, two European countries suspended their residence-by-investment programs—so-called "Golden Visas."

Ireland abolished its program abruptly due to political and domestic concerns. It currently has a housing crisis and is accepting record numbers of Ukrainian war refugees.

Existing applications will be allowed to proceed in Ireland, and those who already have visas will not be impacted...

Just a couple days after Ireland's announcement, Portugal declared that its program would also be closed. Again, politics and domestic concerns are the reason.

The Portugal government cited distortions in local property markets caused by rich foreigners buying up properties, which pushes up prices and reduces housing supply for locals.

There's some evidence to support this view. Since 2010, Portuguese property prices have gone up by more than 80%—at the high end for the EU.

Portugal's program is the biggest loss.



With this program, you could gain EU residency with as little as 250,000 euros, and you only had to spend one week a year in Portugal to maintain the visa...

After just five years, you could be eligible for an EU passport and live and work anywhere in the 27-country bloc without any restrictions.

How the government's decision will affect visa renewals for investors who've already obtained residency... whether there will be some leeway for those who've already started their applications... even if there will be a transition period where new applications can still be accepted... we just don't know yet.

None of that has been decided. [Our attorney in Portugal](#) says: "There should be a grandfathering clause; otherwise, it's going to trigger a lot of litigation and potentially constitutional issues."

"But until the government publishes something for public discussion—a proposed bill, draft, etc.—it's all speculation as to the actual changes."

The Portuguese government has said it will hold public consultations until March 16 and announce final decisions after that... We'll bring you the latest developments as they happen.

There is one very important thing to point out, however: This isn't necessarily a negative if you're

interested in living and investing in Portugal, or anywhere in Europe.

In fact, it could prove to be a net positive. The abolition of Golden Visas may lead to a dip in the property market—a fantastic buying opportunity...

You may no longer be able to obtain residency with a property purchase, but you can still purchase for investment purposes or your own lifestyle and obtain residency through the traditional route of spending time in-country.

### ■ **What You Need To Know About ETIAS**

Starting in 2024, Americans and Canadians will need to apply for travel authorization before traveling to the EU or Schengen Area.

This authorization is known as the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), and though its launch has been delayed several times, it's now set for 2024 (although no specific date has been announced).

ETIAS is a travel authorization (also known as a visa waiver) similar to the United States' ETSIA visa waiver. Before traveling to the EU or Schengen Area, you'll need to fill out an online application at "europa.eu." (Note that the website is not up yet.)

Applications will involve scanning your passport and uploading photos of yourself, plus other information. They'll supposedly take 10 minutes to process and cost 7 euros. ETIAS status will be valid for two years at a time to start out.

The EU is also launching an Entry/Exit System (EES), which will work in



tandem with ETIAS. It's an electronic system that will allow passports to be scanned rather than stamped.

### ■ **Venice Gondola Operators Up A Creek Without A Paddle**

Because of disruptions to normal weather conditions, some of Venice's most popular canals have run dry.

Many of the canals affected are under the city's most iconic bridges, leaving gondola operators and tourists up a creek without a paddle.

High-pressure weather conditions linked to low tides are the reason

for the dry spell. This high-pressure system has led to reduced Alpine snowmelt, causing several important lakes and river systems to run dry as well.

These conditions are likely due to climate change, and unfortunately, major weather fluctuations are likely to become more common. In 2019, it saw severe floods—the worst the city had seen in 50 years.

Venice is made up of 120 islands, which are connected by 177 waterways and almost 400 bridges. Aside from gondola operators and tourists, locals are also impacted by the drought, as the canals are used as streets in this car-less city.

It's estimated that by as early as 2100, Venice could be consumed by the sea. On top of rising sea levels, many of its buildings are sinking as well as being damaged by the wakes of boats.

Since Jan. 23, 2023, Venice has required tourists to book in advance to visit it and pay an entrance fee of between 3 and 10 euros, depending on the time of year. This applies to day-trippers only.

It was implemented to combat over-tourism. About 19 million day-trippers descended on it in 2019.

## ■ Move Over Milan: Rome Is Italy's New Luxury Property Market

Rome has emerged as a new favorite city for luxury buyers looking for deals in the aftermath of the pandemic. Prime residential sales volume increased by 31.4% from 2020—the highest level since 2007.

Because of Brexit, bankers started to move out of London and into other European cities, causing a boom in Milan's real estate market. However, even though Milan is Italy's fastest-growing financial hub, it only experienced a 24.4% increase in volume for the same period.

In Roman neighborhoods such as Trastevere or Garbatella, the average luxury home is priced at about 6,000 euros per square meter. This is half the cost of similar properties in Milan.

According to Immobiliare.it, one in three potential Italian high-end buyers searching for active listings were looking for properties in Rome.



Soon Rome will host a couple of major events that will attract visitors and buyers to the city, like the 2023 Ryder Cup, the Roman Catholic Jubilee in 2025, the 2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in 2033, and maybe the World's Expo in 2039.

Buying into this market is complicated, as you have to properly identify the buildings and their history by law before the real estate purchase. The city

also has high traffic congestion and a lack of public transport. This is to be addressed by the government's National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Even with the city's drawbacks, Italy's wealthy are setting their sights on Rome, opting for large homes. Luxury hospitality is also gaining traction, with a lot of opportunities for high-end residences, high-quality offices, and student and senior housing. 🏠

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# How To Make Money Overseas

By Sophia Titley


Today's world offers more ways to make money overseas than ever before...

In next month's issue, I explore the top money-making opportunities for expats abroad, from teaching to freelance writing to consultancy.

Included are first-hand accounts from expats currently running businesses or earning incomes overseas, as well as tips to get started.

In the wake of the pandemic, countries around the world capitalized on the remote working trend and launched digital nomad visas designed to entice young professionals...

But you don't have to be a professional (or even young, in some cases) to qualify.

I'll cover the top digital nomad visas as well as other considerations, like banking, taxes, and more, in next month's issue... 



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