



# Retirement Abroad

*Retirement abroad requires careful planning. Here are some important steps to take before you go.*

**Check Visa and Residency Requirements:** Immigration and residency laws differ greatly from country to country. Determine if you need a visa to enter and reside in the country where you want to retire by reviewing the Department of State's [Country Specific Information](#). If dual citizenship is an option for you, review our information on [dual nationality](#) before taking this step.

**Know the Local Laws:** Seek professional legal advice before settling abroad. Determine whether your trust, will and powers of attorney may be legally enforceable in your country of destination. In addition to your lawyer in the United States, the U.S. embassy or consulate can provide you with a list of local English-speaking lawyers willing to assist U.S. citizens. Especially in local real estate matters, it is important to understand any contracts you are asked to sign. Review the local traffic laws and licensing requirements if you intend to drive. Some countries have a changeable political environment with more opaque legal systems. Be sure to find out what civil liberties and political rights you will have as a foreign resident.

**Prepare Your Finances:** Determine your retirement budget, and allow for exchange rate fluctuations and inflation. You may want to meet with a financial adviser before you go and consider such things as opening a local bank account.

**Pay Your Taxes:** Leaving the country does not exempt U.S. citizens from their U.S. tax obligations. While some retirees may not owe any U.S. income tax while they are living abroad, you must still file a return annually with the IRS. This is the case even if you move all of your assets to a foreign country; you may still be taxed on income regardless of where it is earned.

Retirees abroad must also fulfill any tax obligations of their foreign country of residence. The United States has tax treaties with a number of countries that address double taxation, but these treaties generally don't exempt residents from the obligation to file a return. Retirees who acquire any assets abroad should also consider the need to modify estate plans, since those assets may be subject to local estate tax rules. Insurance is another factor to consider with assets acquired overseas. Most U.S. umbrella liability policies don't cover international assets. For more information please review the IRS's [tax information for residents and U.S. citizens living abroad](#).

**Understand your Social Security Benefits:** If you are thinking about retiring abroad, find out if you can receive your Social Security or other federal agency benefits outside the United States. [Social Security Administration's Office of International Operations](#) (OIO) provides such information, and consular officers at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can also assist you.

**Research Medical Care and Costs:** Healthcare tops the list of concerns for many U.S. citizens who are thinking about moving abroad. Medicare, the U.S. government health plan for people 65 and over, does not cover healthcare overseas. Many countries have national health systems, but it is important to investigate availability and quality beforehand. Note that environmental conditions at your overseas destination may contribute to specific health concerns, particularly if you are sensitive to altitude, air pollution, humidity, or other conditions. Consult with your physician prior to your move overseas to identify your healthcare needs at your retirement destination. We highly recommend that you get health insurance to cover private medical and dental treatment and for medical evacuation to the United States just in case.

For more tips related to health issues visit our [website](#). Health information may also be found at the Travelers' Health page of the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#).

**Research Accessibility and Accommodations:** If you have mobility difficulties or use a wheelchair, determine access to areas such as swimming pools, public facilities, restaurants, bars, toilets, etc. Determine if shopping and entertainment are accessible. For more information, check out our section on [Traveling with Disabilities](#).

**You're Still Eligible to Vote:** U.S. citizens 18 years or older who reside outside the United States are generally eligible to vote absentee in U.S. elections. In addition to voting for candidates for federal offices, voters from some states may be eligible to vote in elections for state and local offices and referendums. For more information, visit the [Federal Voting Assistance Program's](#) website.

**Beware of Scams:** Retirement funds are an attractive target for scammers who make false promises of romance, friendship, or financial gain. Scammers operate primarily via the internet, email, and phone. For more information, please review our information on [International Financial Scams](#). Information on scams common in your destination country can also be found in each country's [Country Specific Information](#).

**Prepare for Emergencies:** Leave emergency contact information and a copy of your passport biographic data page with family and trusted friends. Carry emergency contact information for your family in the United States with you when you travel (be sure to also pencil it in the emergency contact information section of your passport). Know the contact information for the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate and provide that information to your family and friends. If there is an emergency where you are staying, such as civil unrest, disrupted transportation, or a natural disaster, prevent undue worry or concern by contacting your family and friends as soon as possible.

**Stay Connected:** A secure way to maintain your emergency contact information is to enroll with [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). Your information is stored securely and enables the Department of State, U.S. embassy, or consulate to contact you, your family, or your friends in an emergency according to your wishes.