

Chapter 4

Things To Think About Before You Expatriate

Expatriating out of the United States to a foreign country can cause a wide variety of emotions.

Some people are just giddy with the thought of leaving the US. The adventure! The excitement! Leaving problems behind. Starting anew! Being able to survive the coming collapse. Moving to a more ideal climate. The scenery.

For other people, the thought of expatriating can create deep feelings too, but on the opposite side of the emotional scale. Fear! The unknown! Change. It'll be so hard. Leaving my family behind. A different language. Yikes! Will I regret it later? It's such a big deal!

This article is meant to give you balance and a realistic look into this thing called "expatriating". Is leaving the US exciting? Well, yes, it can be.

Is leaving the US an adventure? Of course it is!

Can you leave your problems behind by moving to another country? Well, yes and no. It depends upon what your problems are.

Is leaving the US scary? It can be for some.

Is expatriating hard to do? For some yes, for some, it's not that bad. It is all in your attitude and priorities.

Tens of millions have done it before you, all over the world. Millions have done it on the spur of the moment to escape certain death (i.e.: The millions that fled Europe during WWII). For some, it is not a choice made with much preparation. It is a life-or-death choice made suddenly. Many times the alternative, staying where you are, is UNTHINKABLE.

NOTE: For the untold millions who have fled (expatriated) on the spur of the moment to save their lives over the past thousand years, nearly all of them would certainly say they wished they would have had more time to prepare before they fled.

Some countries are VERY difficult to expatriate to, while others are easier. Notice we didn't say "easy", but "easier than others".

NOTE: There are NO "easy" countries to expatriate to. There simply are some countries that are less difficult than others. They may seem easy in comparison to others, but how many

people have expatriated to and from a dozen countries? VERY few in the world have had this experience, and therefore, few people can rightly compare one country with another.

For those of you who have a positive attitude and are excited about expatriating, you *may* be ready. But let us give you words of wisdom, and a word of caution.

Have you really thought through the entire process?

Are you really ready to leave your family and friends behind?

(Maybe you *are* the first member of your family to ‘pioneer’ to your new country, hoping your loved ones will follow. But what if they don’t? Are you able to handle that?)

Have you realistically looked at the total expense involved in moving? Do you really want to leave the US?

Do you know what is involved in expatriating?

Do you know all the options and choices you have to expatriate?

If you have said yes to all of the above, then you are ready to start looking for your new home. Maybe you already have.

Have you visited the country you are thinking about moving to?

Do you know what the weather is like year ‘round’?

Are you able to speak at least a little of the language?

Do you know the customs that are different from the US?

How do you know the country that you are thinking about (your target country) is the best one that fits your needs? You don’t want to have regrets later, do you?

Do you know the difference between a 1st world country and a 3rd world country? If the thought of daily seeing small children use a ravine or ditch in front of their home as the toilet AND a place to play, then avoid 3rd world countries. Want running water, electricity, adequate sewer systems, an educated populace... then stick with 1st world countries, or at least upper 2nd world countries.

Get the picture? See what we are saying?

You may have already gone through the entire thought process. You may have done your due-diligence. You may have spent time doing your research and investigation into expatriating. Well good on you mate!

However, if you haven't done your due-diligence, then that is your first priority, before you go much further.

You really need to talk about it with those that you love the most. Especially those that your move will affect the most. Many times you are going to get huge resistance from family members and friends.

Not everyone will be asking if they can come with you or tell you how jealous they are of your decision or mention how smart and perceptive you are to get out before it is too late! Are you ready to be rejected? Are you ready for the onslaught of questions? The bombardment of comments like, "You are crazy!", "Traitor!", or "How could you take our grandkids so far away from us?!"

Expatriating is a PROCESS. Those that do it methodically: 1, 2, 3, 4, and A, B, C, D, will experience the least difficulties. Those that do not have a plan are going to struggle.

If you haven't thought it through, if you do not have moving as a top priority, if you do not look at expatriating as the definitive right decision; then you need to stop and think about it.

For those that are fearful and anxious, you need to take some time to think things through and seriously look at what your priorities are. Most of the people who are "ready and rearing to go", at one time or another had similar concerns that you have now. They simply took the time to determine that expatriating was the right thing for **them** to do.

When they got through the "thinking it through" process, they recognized that it was the right thing to do, for them. Those that went through the "thinking it through" process, but decided it was not right for them, are staying put (at least for now).

This is simple deductive reasoning.

Make a list of Pros and Cons. Think about alternatives to every question, every problem, and every concern.

We know that you are looking at expatriating or you wouldn't be on this website.

But we feel obligated to give you as much truthful information and honest insight as we possibly can. That includes making sure you want to proceed further in the investigation process. For many of you, you are "rearing and ready to go". You have thought it through. You know the future of living in the US is bleak at best and devastating at worst. Now you want to

know which is the best place for you to move to.

And that my dear friend, is what we are here for. But before we get to that, here are twelve important things to think about BEFORE you expatriate:

12 Things to think about before you expatriate

1. Be informed (Know) before you go.

Read! Read! Read! Reread all of our reports and articles. Surf our website, check out the country specific websites, immigration information, blogs, forums, etc. and purchase up-to-date print guidebooks, country specific to where you wish to relocate (see our recommended reading list.) Talk to or communicate (via email, etc.) with as many people as you can who have lived in the country you are thinking about expatriating to.

Always spend at least 2-3 weeks in your target country, city or region **before deciding** to make the move. Seeing is believing. **Never** rely on internet sites, user groups, forums or blogs as your only source of information. Never arrange to purchase real estate abroad from any website or contract with real estate or relocation tours online.

And once again, be informed on the immigration process. As we say a “bazillion” times on this site: “There is no easy country to immigrate to. Some are just less difficult than others.”

2. Have a basic understanding of the language BEFORE you go.

Start taking some Spanish (or Portuguese for Brazil expats) lessons through a course you purchase, or online, or in classes, or with a native speaking tutor at home, **well before departure**. Build a basic foundation of the language of your expat country. Stepping up to intermediate and advanced levels is easy once in a Spanish speaking country. This may make the difference between having a good experience and a potentially bad experience when you go to your target country the first time. We have a recommended language courses list – check it out.

Don't forget this: Communication is extremely valuable in every part of life.

NOTE: Just because you read that many people speak some English (such as in Argentina), do not think that you will be able to get by without at least some knowledge of the local language.

Amazingly, in some of our Top 10 survival countries, very few people speak English.

3. Find a cultural mentor.

Having a long-term resident or trusted bilingual local is going to be invaluable. NEARLY EVERYONE who has expatriated to another country says this is absolutely important! Look for an area with an expat community in the country you are going to. Become “friends” with someone already living there, either online (their blog or contact) or through some contact with a local. Having someone help you that has already done what you are about to do is

priceless!

This might be one of the most difficult YET NECESSARY things you have to do. Therefore, you MUST be friendly, kind, courteous, offering to return the favor for them helping you by buying lunch, or some thing that tells this person that you VALUE them tremendously! Don't be a pest.

Don't occupy that person's every waking moment. You may squander the opportunity to learn the ropes that will make your move much easier (notice I didn't say easy) and less frustrating.

Listen to your mentor's advice, especially the criticisms or things they are adamant about. They wouldn't say it so forcefully if they didn't think it important. Remember, your judgment and reaction to many things are "clouded" by being an American. You have been brainwashed or manipulated into believing many things that are simply not true. (See #5.)

Social contacts and personal relationships are very important for most people living south of the US border.

4. Be prepared for culture shock and doing things differently.

There is simply no other country in the world that is identical to the United States culturally. Not even Canada, Australia, or England. (Even the English language is different in those English-speaking countries.) Obviously, the more 1st World the country is you are expatriating to will naturally be less frustrating than 3rd World countries. If you HAVE TO have an identical lifestyle and culture to what you have in the United States, then stay put. Nowhere on this planet can compete or compare with the US. If you gripe and complain about little things in the US (traffic, satellite TV going out during a storm, your local grocery store is out of your favorite item, etc) then you will not be able to handle living in any other country in the world.

In almost all Latin American countries, electricity or phone service can be sporadic, your choices in the grocery stores are considerably limited compared to the US, driving and traffic can be a nightmare, and the time it takes to do almost anything can take two or three times longer. If you are an impatient person, you will struggle with living in most of the rest of the world.

Therefore, remember, 1st World is much, much closer to the US in efficiency, conveniences, choices, and the time it takes to do things. The more 3rd World a country is, the much more extreme the differences will be. But ALWAYS, the culture WILL be different in every country.

5. Be prepared for a rude awakening to discover the truth about many things.

It almost always comes as a shock to American expats to discover that many of the things they believed were true, were either lies, distorted, or half-truths. Remember, your judgment and reaction to many things is "clouded" by the fact that you are an American. Nearly all of the rest of the world does NOT think like Americans. And there is a reason – they are usually more educated, more fair in judgment, and have more experiences of "the real world" than do Americans. You have been brainwashed or manipulated into believing many things that are simply not true. Be prepared for a rude awakening to discover the truth about history, your country of birth (the USA), the way most of the rest of the world looks at the United States

and its citizens, and also your expat country. Your *opinion* about many subjects will also be the exact opposite of the opinions of the citizens **and** expats of your host country. Be prepared to change the way you look at things. Living in another country *is* an educational experience. Growing and maturing, as well as rejecting untruths that you have “always” been taught in the US, is one of the good things about living in another country.

6. Choose your home and neighborhood carefully.

Just as in the United States, there are desirable as well as undesirable areas to live in any country. Crime is usually much greater, and more violent, in the big cities. We do not recommend living in ANY big city for survivability. Even though that is where many US expats may be living, it does not necessarily mean it is good for survival. Many expats live in their host country’s big cities because that is where the expats are; there are more modern conveniences, better shopping, etc. Keep this in mind.

However, rural areas have their drawbacks too. Housing and land costs are almost always cheaper in rural areas. So that sounds great for financial reasons, but in the long run, you may find it difficult for several reasons. Being isolated, all alone, with no friends, no expats, and in an “unsophisticated” area may be more than frustrating. This is where taking a little extra time to investigate different areas of your target country could payoff big time in the end. Remember, you can almost always rent somewhere first before you make the decision to purchase a home, or farm, or ranch.

NOTE: Even though you want to make friends, it is best to keep a low profile and never divulge your personal information to overly friendly strangers. Get to know the expats and locals first before you tell them “everything”.

7. Go slow and have a game plan.

Don’t expect to get things done at the same pace as you did in the US/Canada/UK, etc. Things are just simply harder to get done in most of the rest of the world. And ALWAYS much slower and with more complications! Often people show up late, even very late, for appointments (electricians, plumbers, construction workers, etc.) Never reprimand locals. (See #8.)

Have a game plan. Think things through. Write down pros and cons about everything. Discuss, communicate, reason, and research every angle (especially with your spouse or those that will be going with you). Do your due diligence like your life depended on it – because it does. We are talking about survival here.

8. Try not to complain.

Accept the fact that other countries do things differently than the country of your birth. NEVER tell people living in your host country that your way of doing things is better, or that their way of doing things is wrong. NEVER! It simply is not appropriate, and will accomplish nothing beneficial.

EXAMPLE: If you have a maid that mops the floor differently than the way you do it back in the States, accept her way of doing it, at least initially. If you really think there is a better way, or that she isn’t really getting the floor clean, then you may ASK her if she wouldn’t mind doing it differently. If you don’t do it this way, then you may get the reputation for being difficult or “one of those Americans”. This may close the door for you ever having domestic

help, or close friends, or contacts that would have otherwise helped you with many difficult things. Burning bridges in a foreign country that you have chosen to live in is NEVER a good idea.

NEVER complain about anything that compares the US to your host country, unless it is a compliment to the host country. Your host country is NOT the USA, never will be, and matter-of-fact, most likely doesn't want to be like the US.

9. Expect life to be a bit annoying and frustrating in the beginning.

Cold showers are the norm in many areas. Air conditioning is most often a luxury. Water and electricity sometimes fail on a daily basis. In some areas Internet connections are slower than at home and/or sporadic. The food might not be what you are used to. (These are some of the reasons why you should research the country first, communicate with others who have or are living in your target country, spend 2-3 weeks living in the country, etc. Remember #1 - KNOW before you go.)

Things may “drive you crazy” because of the cultural differences. If you start off with an attitude that everything has to be “perfect”, then you are going to be mightily disappointed. (See #10.)

Try not to make general assumptions about your new country. You will surely be frustrated if you do.

10. Start with an attitude that this is going to be an adventure.

IF you have an adventurous spirit, you will do much better than those who don't. **ATTITUDE** is **EVERYTHING!** Why? Because things will go wrong – they always do. **IF** you get upset, or frustrated, or want to give up – simply because something has gone wrong, you will probably fail at expatriating. **IF** you accept the reality of “Murphy's Law” (anything that can go wrong – will go wrong) then you will most likely exceed expectations instead of being disappointed. It is all in your attitude.

If you are rich in the US, and think that you will be able to waltz into your new country and buy convenience and an easy time of doing everything – you are mistaken. Most of the native people that live in our top 5 Survival countries are more impressed with humble, honest, and helpful people than rich people willing to pay them to do things but treat them like “servants” or “slaves”.

11. Look for the positive and good things in your new country.

There are lots of positive things about your new host country. Look for them and appreciate them. The fact that it is most likely going to be a bazillion times safer during The Collapse than the States, is but one positive. But look for other positives as well. These include such things as the scenery, the weather, the friendly people, the cost of living, the new experience, new friends, learning a new language, creating an opportunity for loved ones to escape the coming hardships, or a plethora of other potentially positive and good things.

12. Most importantly - Be humble!

Arrogance is NEVER going to help you with ANYTHING. NEVER!

Think about it from this angle: Once you are an expat of some duration living in your new country, you will not like it when a “green” expat who thinks they know it all comes into your group and dominates the conversation with their opinions - when you are the one actually living in the country and have already experienced what they are only *talking* about!

Even if you do know more than others, (even expats who are living in your target country), do NOT act like you know more than they do.

Examples: Even if you speak the language better than expats that have lived in your target country longer than you have, don't try to show off. Never try to impress your expat friends with your supposed knowledge of the country, culture, and customs from the information you have read (even from this site.) Ask questions, even if you feel as though you already know the answers. It is the first rule of friendships – always ask the other person's opinion. If you have an opinion of your own, be humble about it and ask, “I read such and such about this subject. Is that true?” Or “What do you think about such and such a way of doing this?”

Immediately learn the term “I am sorry” in the language of your target country. In Argentina, you say, “Lo siento”. My fault is “Mi culpa” or “it is my fault” is “Es mi culpa”. Saying you are sorry or that it is your fault (that you accidentally bumped into someone, or do not understand what they are trying to say because you don't know THEIR language, or you forgot something, etc. etc. etc.) is being humble and will defuse nearly ANY potentially bad situation.

Just as you would **not** want those in the country where you are relocating to assume that every US citizen is rich, white, and arrogant, you should not assume that all Argentines, Chileans, Uruguayans, Ecuadorians, or Latin Americans are alike. Listen to locals and ask questions. It will be one of the fastest ways to make friends.

Periodically read and reread this report. Make sure everyone in your family or group that is expatriating reads this report at least a couple of times during the expat process!