

Your move abroad, **organized.**

A 12-month checklist, document tracker, budget worksheet, and country scorecard. Print it, pin it up, and check things off.

The 12-month moving checklist

12–9 months out

- ☐ Shortlist 2–3 countries and confirm a residency route you qualify for
- ☐ Check passport validity (aim for well over a year left)
- ☐ Plan a scouting trip in the toughest season
- ☐ Book a call with an expat tax professional
- ☐ Decide: sell, rent out, or keep your home

6–3 months out

- ☐ Submit the visa application / book the consulate
- ☐ Get moving quotes or plan to travel light
- ☐ Decide on Medicare Part B; check Social Security abroad
- ☐ Buy international health insurance
- ☐ Set up banking, 2FA, and a US mailing address

Final weeks

- ☐ Notify banks, SSA, and the IRS of your address plan
- ☐ Scan key documents to secure cloud storage
- ☐ Cancel utilities and subscriptions
- ☐ Carry original visa documents in your hand luggage

9–6 months out

- ☐ Order certified birth/marriage certificates
- ☐ Request an FBI background check if your visa requires one
- ☐ Get apostilles (check the document-age rules first)
- ☐ Research schools; request records
- ☐ Ask your vet about pet import rules

3–1 months out

- ☐ Book flights and first-month housing
- ☐ Sell, donate, or store belongings
- ☐ Refill prescriptions; copy medical records
- ☐ Get an International Driving Permit
- ☐ Enroll in STEP; send your FPCA to vote absentee

First 90 days abroad

- ☐ Complete local residency registration
- ☐ Get a local SIM and bank account
- ☐ Register with a doctor or public health system
- ☐ Start your driver's license process
- ☐ Compare real spending with your budget

Document & apostille tracker

Most residency visas need certified, recent, apostilled documents, and many require a sworn translation. Check how recently each document must be issued (often 90 days) before ordering.

Document	Ordered	Received	Apostilled	Translated	Valid until
Passport (all travelers)					
Birth certificate					
Marriage certificate					
FBI Identity History Summary					
Proof of income (SSA letter, pension, paystips)					
Bank statements					
Health insurance certificate					
Proof of accommodation (lease)					
Divorce decree / name change					
Children's school records					
Pet health certificate & vaccine records					
Driving record / license					

Federal vs. state documents: FBI background checks and other federal documents are apostilled by the US Department of State's Office of Authentications. State-issued documents like birth and marriage certificates are apostilled by that state's Secretary of State.

Monthly budget worksheet

Price the actual apartment, neighborhood, and health plan you'd choose, not an average. Then add 10–15% for exchange-rate swings if your income is in dollars.

Monthly cost	Now (US)	Country A	Country B
Housing (rent/mortgage)			
Utilities & internet			
Groceries & dining			
Transportation			
Health insurance			
Out-of-pocket healthcare			
Phone & subscriptions			
Travel home (yearly ÷ 12)			
Visa renewals & fees (yearly ÷ 12)			
US costs that continue (storage, tax prep)			
Entertainment & other			
Monthly total			

One-time moving costs

Item	Estimate
Visa, documents & legal fees	
Flights	
Temporary housing (first 1–2 months)	
Rent deposit	
Shipping or extra baggage	
Furnishing & setup	
Pet transport	
Emergency cushion (6 months)	
Total cash needed	

Country comparison scorecard

Give each factor a weight from 1 (nice to have) to 3 (deal-breaker). Score each country 1–5, multiply by the weight, and add up the column.

Factor	Weight (1–3)	Country A	Country B	Country C
Can I qualify for residency?				
Monthly cost for my lifestyle				
Healthcare quality & access				
Climate				
Language				
Safety (State Dept advisory)				
Flight time & cost to family				
Community & things to do				
Taxes (local + US)				
Gut feeling after a visit				
Weighted total				

Official sources to bookmark

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| ☐ travel.state.gov : advisories, STEP, passports | ☐ medicare.gov : coverage outside the US |
| ☐ irs.gov : taxes for US citizens abroad | ☐ va.gov : Foreign Medical Program |
| ☐ fincen.gov : FBAR filing (BSA E-Filing) | ☐ fvap.gov : voting from abroad |
| ☐ ssa.gov : Payments Abroad Screening Tool | ☐ aphis.usda.gov : pet travel |

Free tools that go with this kit: Country Matcher, Visa Income Checker, Relocation Budget Calculator, and Moving Timeline Planner at expatbound.com/tools.