

WHY EUROPE IS A MAGNET FOR MORE AMERICANS

[...] One type of American expat is still the well-off innocent who comes to Europe for amusement or edification. Another sort, however, comes not to enjoy the old world but to escape the new one. [...] More Americans are moving to Europe lately, and many are fleers rather than seekers. The statistics are messy, but in some countries the trend is clear; [...] Britain thinks the number of resident Americans rose from 137,000 in 2013 to 166,000 in 2021.

Meanwhile, more and more Americans say they want out of their own country. But few of those who vowed to leave if Donald Trump were elected in 2016 actually did so [...]. The follow-through rate remains tiny: a few tens of thousands of émigrés out of a population of 330m. But many recent expats say they left partly out of despair at where the United States is heading. [...] For most expats, politics was not so much the reason they left as a reason not to go back: “Not just the election, but the continued divisiveness”.

“The thing we hear all the time is that the work-life balance is so much better here,” says an American expat who heads the John Adams Institute, an American-Dutch cultural venue. American workers toil for 1,810 hours a year, Europeans just 1,570. [...] The rise of international English makes things easier for Americans, who are notoriously bad at languages.

Some émigrés are also drawn to Europe’s robust social safety-nets. [...] In Portugal, they pay for coverage a fraction of what an equivalent American plan would cost. [...] “We felt the tension lift” within weeks of leaving America, agrees a Black American psychiatrist who moved to Lisbon in 2022. For her, the central issues were racism and violence. She had been trying for years to persuade her husband, a lawyer, to move abroad. The strife after the murder of George Floyd in 2020 brought him around. He recalls saying: “‘I think we need to get a gun.’ When I said that out loud, I was like, if I have to live in a country where I need a gun to protect my family, then this is not the country for me.”

Other factors are more prosaic. The huge increase in remote working during the pandemic made living abroad more feasible. And the European countries that lure the most Americans have set up tempting deals for foreigners. [...] Several countries are introducing “digital nomad” visas for tech freelancers. [...]

Americans once felt that their country was the ultimate immigrant nation; leaving seemed odd. Now they are aware that Europe has its advantages. [...]

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