

Expatriates ESCAPES

ALMOST THREE-QUARTERS of Britons considered emigrating last year, with Australia the most popular destination, according to recent research. The survey of more than 1,000 Britons, by foreign exchange broker Currency UK, also found that Canada was the next most popular destination, followed by the United States, New Zealand, Spain and France.

A third of those questioned (33%) said they had considered moving Down Under with a quarter (26%) saying Canada was their dream destination.

Adrian Jacob, of Currency UK, said: "Many Brits are concerned by the prospect of a hung Parliament and that the next four years will be dominated by huge tax rises, cuts in public service and inflation. People are concerned about the UK's economic strength and this is leading to Brits looking to get out."

- 31% of respondents cited the poor state of the British economy
- 23% blamed the lack of job prospects
- 19% said they were worried about the outcome of last year's election.
- 12% want a change in the pace of life.

Source: Currency UK

According to figures published by the Office for National Statistics in November, 368,000 people emigrated from the UK in 2009. With different effects of the global economic crisis around the world, many Britons in search of bargains and stability are choosing to buy property in their host country.

AUSTRALIA

Australia is also a favourite choice among Britons looking to buy property abroad, according to research by Moneycorp. And although property in Australia may not be a bargain - with prices rising fast due to low unemployment and lower housing supply - many see it as a solid long-term investment if well researched.

John Goldie, a private client dealer at Moneycorp, said: "We've seen an interesting switch of focus from Europe to Australia, largely because it has weathered the economic storm much better than other countries. It has a stable currency, as well as other advantages like good climate."

He added: "A lot of people now are interested, not just in holidaying or retiring abroad, but having a career abroad. This has contributed to a downturn in the number of people buying second homes, while the interest in moving abroad permanently has gone up."





CANADA

Canada has also weathered the global economic crisis relatively well and remains a popular choice with relocating Britons, and as the world's second largest country, with just 33 million people, there's lots of space.

There are no restrictions to foreign ownership of property so foreign buyers receive the same legal safeguards as Canadian citizens. Buyers do pay a welcome tax, equivalent to UK stamp duty, but this is substantially less than in the UK.

According to the research by Scotia Economic, Canadian property markets performed well in 2010, but were volatile. Adrienne Warren, Senior Economist, Scotia Economics says: "We are neither overtly optimistic nor pessimistic regarding the outlook for 2011. On the one hand, we expect interest rates to remain at historically low levels, with the Bank of Canada deferring any further rate hikes to late 2011 given an uncertain global economic outlook and subdued inflation, and longer-term borrowing costs drifting up only modestly. This is an extremely powerful inducement for both first-time and move-up buyers and should maintain a decent level of sales."



U.S.A.

British investors are rushing to buy ultra-cheap repossessed US homes in a bid to profit from rent guarantee schemes and possible long-term capital appreciation when the US economy recovers.

Florida is the number one destination in the USA with British tourists and second homebuyers. More than one million Britons head to the state's sandy beaches, keys and entertainment attractions each year.

During the global financial crisis house prices crashed, losing, on average, half their value since 2007. Few real estate markets suffered more than Florida where oversupply was a major factor in driving down prices. Foreclosures and a glut of unsold condominiums contributed to a slow down of the Florida housing market.

According to Charles Peerless, director of Winkworth International Developments, Florida's loss can be a UK buyer's gain. He says, "With low prices on a wide range of top quality luxury homes and condominiums in world class developments, combined with a favourable exchange rate and low interest rates, buyers who seek sun, golf and wide ranging lifestyle attractions can now buy a home here for about half what they would have paid in 2005."

All this means that there has seldom been a better time to get into the Florida property market. According to most local experts, prices have nowhere to go but up and a home in Florida bought at today's bargain prices should prove to be a laudable investment five years from now." added Peerless.



FRANCE

For Britons unfazed by language barriers, the south of France - with its warm climate, laid back lifestyle and easy access from Britain - remains high on the list of expat escapes.

Although the south of France attracts interest from many UK buyers, Paris is considered to offer more in terms of lifestyle attractions with its numerous museums, galleries, restaurants and bars..

Of the 135,000 Britons living full-time in France, 20,500 have their permanent home in or near Paris, according to statistics compiled by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies in France (INSEE).

Conti recently reported that France is more popular than ever for Britons buying abroad. According to the overseas mortgage specialist, the country took a 43% share of its mortgage enquiries last year, representing a 12% rise on the same period of 2009, and a jump of 29% on 2008. The French mortgage market was very stable in 2010, largely due to the cautious approach adopted by its financial institutions in the past.



SPAIN

As recently as last April, France was the most popular country for Britons to search for, but it has now been overtaken by Spain, according to research by website Primelocation International.

In Spain, where the scale of over-supply of properties is set to grow this year-as a glut of foreclosed homes come to the market-asking prices, which have already dropped 20% to 50% in some places, are expected to fall further this year.

The Spanish government recently embarked on a roadshow around Britain and other northern European countries to promote the country's property market. House prices have fallen on average by 24% in the Malaga area and by 19% in Tenerife.

And with suspicions that prices in Spain are unlikely to fall much further, today's buyers could see their investment grow over the next few years.