



THE DEPARTURE CODE

MOVE ABROAD STARTER KIT

A free planning workbook to compare countries, calculate real costs, protect your health, verify visas, and plan a smarter first move abroad.

DepartureCode.com

Before you leap

This kit is not about chasing the prettiest destination. It is designed to help you find the country, city, and timeline that fit your money, health, visa reality, family needs, safety needs, and day-to-day lifestyle.

<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the readiness score first.	<input type="checkbox"/> Shortlist no more than three countries at a time.
<input type="checkbox"/> Build both a monthly budget and a landing-cash number.	<input type="checkbox"/> Verify visa, tax, healthcare, pets, schools, and accessibility before major commitments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use this free kit first, then use the full Departure Code destination dashboards for deeper research.	

START HERE

How to Use This Starter Kit

Work through the pages in order. By the end, you should know whether you are ready for a scouting trip, a seasonal stay, a full relocation plan, or more preparation.

Step	What You Complete	What It Tells You
1	Readiness Scorecard	Whether you are prepared to compare countries seriously.
2	Country Shortlist Matrix	Which destinations are worth deeper research.
3	Budget + Landing Cash	Whether the move works financially after real-world costs.
4	Visa + Tax Reality	Whether you can legally stay and avoid expensive mistakes.
5	Healthcare + Medication Plan	Whether the destination can support your body, mind, and prescriptions.
6	Lifestyle Fit Pages	Whether the destination works for family, pets, accessibility, safety, weather, and community.
7	Scouting Trip Plan	How to test the country like a future resident, not a tourist.
8	First 90 Days + Decision Gate	How to move carefully without burning bridges or money.

Best use

Print this workbook or complete it digitally before you buy flights, sign leases, sell property, ship pets, enroll children, or quit a job.

PHASE ONE

1. Move Abroad Readiness Scorecard

Score each line from 1 to 5. Be honest. A dream destination can still be the wrong destination if the foundation is weak.

Readiness Area	Score 1-5	Proof / Notes / Gap
Income is stable, portable, or retirement-based		
I have 3-6 months of emergency savings		
I know my must-have healthcare and medication needs		
I understand that visas control how long I can legally stay		
I know whether I need schools, pets, disability access, or family support		
I can adapt to language, culture, climate, and slower processes		
I have a backup plan if the destination is not a fit		
I can test the country before making irreversible commitments		
I have handled U.S. obligations: taxes, mail, banking, insurance, documents		
I am willing to choose the right city, not just the famous city		

Score guide

42-50: strong planning candidate. 32-41: good candidate with gaps. 22-31: start with a scouting trip and preparation phase. Under 22: pause the move and build stability first.

2. Country Shortlist Builder

Compare destinations by real-life fit. This keeps you from falling in love with a place that does not match your money, health, family, or legal-stay needs.

Category	Country / City 1	Country / City 2	Country / City 3
Destination and city/region			
Who this destination is best for			
Estimated monthly budget			
Likely visa pathway to verify			
Healthcare strength and nearest hospital base			
Safety and daily risk concerns			
Family, school, or dependent fit			
Pet import and rental fit			
Accessibility and mobility fit			
Climate concern: heat, rain, smoke, winter, storms			
Language/culture comfort			
Best reason to choose it			
Biggest reason to pause			
Overall fit score 1-10			

3. Monthly Budget Worksheet

Use conservative numbers. The move only works if your budget survives visa costs, medical surprises, flights home, exchange-rate changes, and the lifestyle you actually want.

Budget Line	Current U.S. Cost	Target Abroad Cost	Notes / Source
Rent or mortgage			
Utilities, phone, internet			
Groceries and household items			
Dining, coffee, delivery			
Transportation, rideshare, transit, fuel			
Healthcare insurance or medical reserve			
Medication, dental, therapy, vision			
Visa, immigration, documents, renewals			
School, childcare, activities			
Pets, vet, grooming, pet deposits			
Travel home / emergency flight fund			
Fitness, entertainment, personal care			
Monthly cushion / inflation buffer			
TOTAL MONTHLY COST			

Budget rule

If the budget only works when everything goes perfectly, it is not ready. Build in a monthly cushion before deciding a country is affordable.

STARTUP COSTS

4. Landing Cash Calculator

Landing cash is the money needed before you feel settled. It is separate from your monthly living budget.

Landing Cost	Low Estimate	Realistic Estimate	Notes
Flights / arrival travel			
Temporary housing: 2-4 weeks			
Lease deposit + first month			
Furniture, bedding, kitchen, household setup			
Visa, legal, translation, document costs			
Insurance or medical setup			
Phone, SIM/eSIM, transport setup			
Pet relocation, vet, crate, airline fees			
School deposits, uniforms, testing, admissions			
Emergency reserve: 3 months			
Emergency reserve: 6 months			
TOTAL LANDING CASH NEEDED			

Safe landing target

For most serious moves, aim for 3-6 months of expenses plus one-time setup costs. Families, pets, medical needs, and property transitions need more.

5. Visa, Tax & Legal-Stay Reality Check

This is where many move-abroad dreams become expensive mistakes. Verify official rules before you act on social media advice.

- I know the official visa or entry status that matches my purpose.
- I know how long I can stay and whether extensions are possible.
- I know whether remote work, local work, volunteering, or content creation is allowed.
- I know the income, savings, insurance, background check, or document requirements.
- I know whether I must report my address, renew in person, or keep local records.
- I know what happens if my visa is denied, delayed, or not renewed.
- I have saved official government or embassy links.
- I understand U.S. tax filing may still apply even if I live abroad.
- I know whether foreign tax residency, remitted income, pension income, VA benefits, business income, or rental income needs professional review.

Question	Answer / Source
What visa/status would I use for my first entry?	
What long-stay pathway could follow?	
What activity is not allowed on that status?	
What documents do I need before leaving the U.S.?	
What tax or financial records should I keep?	
What is my backup country or return plan?	

6. Healthcare, Medication & Accessibility Planner

If you have chronic needs, disability needs, prescriptions, mental-health support needs, or mobility concerns, healthcare should drive your city choice.

Healthcare Need	My Answer / Action Step
Nearest quality hospital in target city	
Specialist I may need	
Emergency number and ambulance plan	
Insurance accepted or reimbursement process	
Medication availability and local generic names	
Medication import restrictions to verify	
Dental, vision, therapy, counseling options	
Mobility: sidewalks, elevators, bathrooms, transit, stairs	
Mental health, community, decompression, support plan	
Medical records, prescriptions, physician letters to bring	

Healthcare rule

A place can be beautiful and affordable but still be the wrong fit if hospital access, medication, accessibility, or emergency care is weak.

7. Family, Pets, Safety & Lifestyle Fit

These are the quiet deal-breakers. Answer them before choosing a country from pretty videos.

Fit Area	Questions to Answer	My Notes
Family / kids	What schools fit my child? Tuition? Commute? Admission dates? Language support?	
Pets	Can I legally import my pet? Are rentals pet-friendly? Is the climate safe? Emergency vet?	
Accessibility	Are sidewalks, elevators, bathrooms, transit, hospitals, and housing realistic for daily life?	
Safety	What are the top risks: roads, scams, theft, unrest, weather, nightlife, isolation?	
Community	Can I find friends, spiritual community, hobbies, fitness, expat/local networks?	
Climate	Can I handle heat, humidity, smoke season, rainy season, winter damp, storms?	
Identity and belonging	Will I feel safe and respected as a solo woman, Black traveler, LGBTQ+ person, veteran, retiree, or family?	
Daily comfort	Can I live without constant access to U.S.-style stores, food, service speed, and English?	

RANK YOUR OPTIONS

8. Destination Fit Scorecard

Use this to rank destinations from evidence instead of emotion. Score each item 1-5, then total the destination.

Category	Weight	Destination 1	Destination 2	Destination 3
Monthly affordability	High			
Visa pathway clarity	High			
Healthcare access	High			
Safety and emergency planning	High			
Housing quality and lease confidence	High			
Transportation and walkability	Medium			
Climate comfort	Medium			
Community and social support	Medium			
Family/pet/accessibility fit	As needed			
Food, culture, and daily enjoyment	Medium			
Travel home and exit plan	High			
TOTAL				

Decision signal

If a destination scores high for beauty but low for visa, healthcare, affordability, and housing, it is a vacation - not a relocation plan yet.

9. Scouting Trip Planner

A scouting trip is not a vacation. It is a field test of your future ordinary Tuesday.

Day / Task	What to Test	Notes
Day 1-2	Arrival, phone, cash/card access, neighborhood safety at night	
Day 3	Grocery stores, pharmacies, markets, food delivery, household basics	
Day 4	Hospital or clinic visit, medication check, insurance process	
Day 5	Transit, rideshare, walking routes, traffic, sidewalks, accessibility	
Day 6	Housing tours in at least two neighborhoods	
Day 7	Coworking, schools, gyms, worship, community spaces, expat/local groups	
Weekend	Noise, nightlife, tourism crowds, beach/market traffic, safety after dark	
Hard-season test	Rain, heat, smoke, flooding, winter damp, high-season pricing	

<input type="checkbox"/> Take photos of grocery prices, rental units, transit routes, hospital locations, and neighborhood streets.	<input type="checkbox"/> Track every expense for the trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not sign a long lease while tired, excited, or pressured.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask locals and expats what they wish they knew before moving there.

10. First 90 Days Abroad Action Plan

This plan keeps you from locking yourself into the wrong city too early.

Timing	Action Steps
Before departure	Verify visa, insurance, medications, emergency contacts, document vault, landing cash, banking access, and backup phone verification.
First 48 hours	Check entry stamp, activate phone, save address, locate hospital/pharmacy, rest, and avoid major commitments.
First 2 weeks	Test neighborhoods, groceries, transport, noise, healthcare, coworking/schools, and daily routines.
First 30 days	Update budget with real receipts and decide whether the city still fits.
First 60 days	Narrow housing, visa, insurance, banking, and community plan.
First 90 days	Decide: stay longer, switch city, choose seasonal plan, or exit gracefully.

Soft-landing mindset

Your first 90 days should be evidence gathering, not ego protection. A smart pivot is better than forcing a bad fit.

11. Red Flags That Mean Pause

These signs do not always mean no. They mean slow down, verify, and protect your money.

- [] The only visa plan is repeated tourist entries or border runs.
- [] The budget only works if rent, healthcare, and food are all unusually cheap.
- [] You cannot identify the nearest quality hospital or emergency process.
- [] The landlord wants money before a written lease or video walkthrough.
- [] You are relying on one influencer, one Facebook group, or one friend for all information.
- [] You have not verified medication legality or availability.
- [] You plan to work locally without verifying work-permit rules.
- [] You are ignoring family, pet, disability, climate, or school needs because the country looks exciting.
- [] You are considering buying property before testing the area for at least one hard season.
- [] You have no exit fund, return plan, or backup country.

12. Final Decision Gate

Do not move forward until these answers are clear.

Question	Yes / No	What I Need Before Moving Forward
Can I explain why this destination fits my real life, not just my dream life?		
Do I know my legal stay pathway and backup plan?		
Do I know my monthly number and landing-cash number?		
Do I know where I would receive routine and emergency healthcare?		
Have I tested housing, transportation, groceries, and climate?		
Do I understand the biggest risks and how I will reduce them?		
Have I avoided irreversible financial decisions based only on social media content?		
Do I have a first-90-day plan and an exit plan?		

Next step

Use this starter kit to narrow your shortlist. Then use The Departure Code destination dashboards to compare cost, healthcare, visas, housing, safety, schools, pets, accessibility, taxes, and first-90-day planning in deeper detail. Visit DepartureCode.com.

Educational planning note: This workbook is for general planning and does not replace legal, tax, immigration, financial, medical, or insurance advice. Always verify rules through official sources and qualified professionals before acting.