

Escape From England



How we escaped England for the better life abroad!

By Living In The Sun Limited
<http://www.livinginthesun.info>

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We have all dreamed about a better life abroad and how much better our lives will be. However for those that consider it only 12% actually take the plunge and move abroad to become part of the growing ex-pat society.

Out of those that do take the plunge one in five will return within the next two years for one reason or another. What [LivingInTheSun.info](http://www.livinginthesun.info) is all about is placing all the relevant information in front of you so that you can make the correct informed choice for you. We will then helping you with your new lifestyle in the sun.

When we started planning our journey abroad we always felt that the wrong information was presented to us, it was out of date or multiple people would give us completely different information.

Our worst nightmares have included not understanding how to get our tax details through to issues involving driving in a foreign country.

We have therefore decided to put our stories together for you to read at your leisure so that you understand how much we love our new life and how much we would love you to be part of it.

After you have read this we thoroughly recommend that you head back over to our website at <http://www.livinginthesun.info> so that you can gather more information ahead of your future plans of living in the sun.

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Dominic and Samantha – Portugal

This is what Samantha had to say about her move to Portugal in the summer of 2008....

I have always been lucky enough to enjoy some lovely holidays abroad and the idea of living in the sun has always appealed to me. However it was simply one of those things that I desperately wanted to do but never quite got around to doing it.

Like with many things in life though we often find that something pushes us into action and this is exactly what happened for Dominic and me.

We were living in Manchester in England and paying out a fortune in bills and felt that way too much of our income was spoken for. Our time also seemed to be eaten up with the day to day tasks of our life and we needed change.

Then in May 2008 three things happened in one week for us to take drastic action:

- 1. Our neighbours turned into the neighbours from hell** – Our neighbours who had lived near to us for some time suddenly developed anti-social behaviour and even decided to remove our back fence. This was followed up by removal of toys from the garden and graffiti. Just like many other families in England contacting the police wouldn't be worthwhile as there was very little they would do.
- 2. We read an article in The Sun Newspaper** – We read a column in the newspaper talking about how wonderful Spain's system was compared to England. For a range of services including refuge, childcare and value for money. We had previously been on fortnightly refuge collections and loved the idea that there was no pressure to recycle even though we didn't mind doing so as long as we weren't pressured into it.
- 3. We went to the cinema together** – This must sound like the craziest thing in the world but we went to see "What Happens In Vegas" on a nice afternoon whilst our son was at primary school. If you haven't already seen the film the character played by Cameron

Diaz plans everything in her life and then suddenly decides to take the chance with her life to live for the moment.

Within an hour of arriving home from the cinema we had decided to leave for a better life and within 24 hours we had a lot of our things for sale on eBay.co.uk ready for us to transform our lives.

Three weeks later we had sold all our furniture, bought a really cheap caravan on eBay and booked our ferry tickets to take us to Spain. We then visited my parents to explain our plan in more details and then left the country. All in all we went to the cinema on the 19th of May and by the 10th of June we had boarded our ferry for a new life that we had always craved.

Obviously if we hadn't had eBay it would have taken us a lot longer to sell our goods. We also had the added bonus of me having a successful online business so we weren't really risking that much. As to provide an income all I needed was my laptop and an internet connection.

If we hadn't had this in place we would have had to look into jobs so it was nice to have one less thing to worry about.

We arrived in Bilbao a couple of days later after taking the Portsmouth overnight ferry. Then after three days of hard driving on my husband's part we arrived in the Costa Del Sol and parked up at a campsite in Torromelinos.

After a couple of weeks though we realised that Spain wasn't right for us. It was too obsessed with tourists and really didn't offer anything special for ex-pats looking for a future home. The Spanish locals were often rude and made us feel out of place. Not to mention that getting the information to become residents seemed extremely difficult.

Then we soon realised we had landed in a catch 22 situation.....

The idea behind the caravan and not flying out is that we wanted to spend a couple of weeks checking out different areas so that we made the right choice when it comes to where we would live.

However to get a Fiscal number in Spain (tax number) you needed a permanent address and a campsite wasn't acceptable. Then to get an apartment or rent a villa you could only do so with your fiscal number.

You could get one from England by visiting the foreign tourism office but just like in Spain you have to provide a permanent address in the area you wanted to live. We could have paid someone to do this for us by finding a stranger willing to offer their services but I didn't want to be dishonest.

It was at this point that we decided to try Portugal instead. From memories of visiting there we knew that it was a very friendly place though jobs are hard to come by unless you are self-employed. The language is slightly harder to learn but the beaches are much better than those in Spain and it didn't take much to convince us to leave Spain behind.

A week later we arrived in Portugal in the sunny Algarve it looked beautiful and even though it was super busy because July had approached it was still amazing.

We then stayed in the caravan until we had found an apartment to move into in Silves (Central Algarve) and all our paperwork was sorted out. Our Fiscal number was given to us on the spot and even though the system is slow in Portugal we wouldn't change it for the world.

As a family we took to Portugal like a duck to water and would fully recommend it to others.

Pauline and Bill – Greece

This is what Pauline had to say about her move to Greece in the summer of 2008....

Bill and I lived in UK and like many other people had very busy lives, working very long hours out of the house sometimes 12 hours a day, only seeing each other one day a week on a Sunday.

I worked in retail so worked a Saturday and had a day off mid week, my husband worked in IT so he did a Monday- Friday, ok so we earned a decent wage and took 3 holidays a year but we had no social life the rest of the year and were tired all the time.

It was October 2007 and we had just returned from a visit to Florida and we were a little fed up after a great holiday and felt like "here we go again back to the rat race" so we sat down and had a chat and decided we had had enough and that we would move to another country for a more relaxing lifestyle and to spend some quality time with each other.

Our first choice would have been the USA but it is not easy to obtain a visa to live there on a permanent basis, so our second love is Greece after having visited there many times over the years to various islands and having made quite a few friends. Our favourite island was Crete so that is where we decided to make our move to.

We had last visited in May 2007 and knew the area we loved best which was Rethymnon and the small village of Adelianos Kampos and Platanes. So I e-mailed a couple of Greek friends and arranged an apartment to stay in for a week at the beginning of 2008 so we could view some properties for rent.

We decided to rent first to get a feel of living there and to see if we would like to stay in that village or move to another area, a few people that we had talked to had done the same as many people buy first and then decide they don't settle or don't like the area and it is more difficult to sell up and move than it is to find another rental property.

I booked a couple of seats on a flight for the beginning of March 2008 there are not direct flights to Crete or any islands in the winter so we flew to Athens and then took a short flight (45mins) over to Hereklion Crete.

Visiting there in the winter was a good idea also to see what life is like out of the tourist season, it may seem nice when you are holiday but life is very different in the winter when most places are closed. We actually loved it! We got to see how the Greek people live without all the tourists and what was open, where to shop etc.

We spent the week looking at properties and getting to know a few more of the local people in the village, we finally decided on an apartment with views of the ocean and mountains, it is in the middle of the village and only 4 apartments in the block so not too crowded, we agreed with the landlord when we would be moving and paid him 2 months rent as a retainer to keep it for us, we planned on moving at the beginning of May so that gave us 2 months to get things sorted.

We also opened a bank account while we were there, it was very easy, and the bank was very helpful.

On our return back to UK we were very excited as you can imagine as this was going to be a new chapter in our lives but we also knew we had a lot of hard work ahead of us in order to get everything sorted before our move.

The first thing I did was look for a removal firm, I emailed 3 different firms for quotes and chose the one that could offer the best deal, then the next thing was to start making lists of what to take and what to sell. We decided to sell all our furniture and just take boxes, we could buy new once we were in Crete.

We lived in rented property in UK so that part was easy, we contacted our landlord and gave him notice and the date we would leave. We were working, packing and sorting out things to sell, what to throw away so we were very busy and tired but we had a goal so the time passed very quickly.

About 4 weeks before we were due to have the removals pick up the boxes they called to say they were going out of business so we had to find another firm, luckily one of the other ones that we had a quote from was able to fit us in, it was a Greek man who owned the company very close to where we lived so he was a lifesaver and gave us a very good service, we wished we had chosen his firm in the beginning and done more research, it all turned out well though.

The day finally came when we left and flew to our new home on Crete, we arrived early morning on May 3rd 2008, even though we were very tired we were excited and felt that this was a new beginning and it felt good.

We spent the first few days buying a washing machine, obtaining our tax number which is needed to do things like get a phone line connected, buy a car etc.

We had to wait a few weeks to get connected to the phone and internet and as my husband needed it for his work, he was still working for the company back in UK to finish a contract so he was working out of an internet cafe, while he was doing that I was unpacking our boxes and getting the apartment in some sort of order.

Our move was fairly smooth and we have loved every minute that we have been here, our neighbours have accepted us and we have become involved in village life, and have made some new friends.

Keidi – Spain

This is what Keidi had to say about her move to Spain in March of 2004....

My moment of enlightenment came as I set on a smelly train home from London, surrounded by damp umbrellas, sneezing fits and passengers avoiding eye contact with one another.

‘Is this really my life?’ I wondered. ‘Surely there has to be something better than *this*.’

Perhaps rather ironically, the next day my Dad announced that he and my Mum were travelling to Spain for a couple of weeks to buy a property to rent out, for a little extra monthly income. When they returned they revealed their change of plan. They had loved that one week in the sun so much, that they decided to change their whole lives and move out to Spain, lock, stock and barrel! They had purchased a two-bedroom apartment on the tenth floor of a block in a coastal region called Torre del Mar, half an hour east of Malaga, on the Costa del Sol. They loved the fact that it was still very Spanish, unlike the western end of the Costa del Sol.

As they sold almost all their worldly possessions at car boot sales, and put their house up for sale too, I found myself growing slightly envious. It was great to know that I could fly out to Spain to visit them whenever I got some time off work. But I wanted more than that. I wanted to live there too! I somehow knew this, even though I hadn’t even seen the area. So, when my parents flew out there again to sign at the notary, I joined them. After just one day, I made the decision to sell my flat in the UK and buy an apartment in sunny Spain, in the same region where my parents now lived.

I found a buyer within days and within a further three weeks I bought a little one-bed apartment in the Torrox Costa area, a twenty minute drive along the coast from Torre del Mar. It was perfect and only a stones throw from the wonderful sandy beach. There was even a communal swimming pool and marble floors throughout! In fact, I loved the apartment so much, that five years later and it’s still my home now.

But soon after I had moved to Spain, ending a twenty three year relationship with south London, and a two year relationship with my then boyfriend, reality hit home.

As my apartment was a new-build I had to wait for the electricity and water to be connected, and thinking that this would take a week or two, I stayed with my parents in the meantime. But it didn't take two weeks, nor did it take two months. It actually took nine months – an entire pregnancy!

I found living with my parents again quite difficult, especially because due to my lack of friends, I spent most of my time with them. As a twenty three year old, I thought it would be easy to meet new people. But, unfortunately there weren't many English youngsters in the same boat as me, and I didn't speak Spanish well enough to befriend the locals.

As a result I suffered spells of intense loneliness and I wondered if I had made a mistake, and should have stayed in the UK all along. Even the weather was pants – it rained non stop for two months. Not quite the hot sun and blue skies I had imagined!

To top all this off, I suddenly realised that I was twenty-three, single, with no friends, a non-existent social life (my parent's was far more exciting than mine) and to top all that off, no job either.

In the UK I had worked as a writer for various corporate communications publications. Even though, this was a long way from my dream of working on a glossy magazine, such as OK! at least it was a step in the right direction and it sure beat flipping burgers, or working behind a supermarket till.

I soon learnt that the job situation in Spain wasn't going to be as easy as phoning an employment agency and bagging a writing job within a week or so.

The only chance I felt I had at that time was from a man in Marbella, who owned a glossy magazine aimed at the expat population. He was looking for an Editor and after telling me that I had the job, failed to contact me again until three months later when he said that he still wasn't ready for me to fill the position.

It was a day or two later, surrounded by soggy tissues and feeling disheartened, when I decided that if he could do it, I could do it. I had no idea how, but I planned to start up my own expat magazine in the region of Torre del Mar.

Fate played a pretty big role in the rest of the story.

A few weeks later my Dad came home from the pub he watched the football in, with some news. “Here, that chap who runs The Sentinel magazine is in hospital. I’ve told his Dad that if he needs any help getting the next issue ready for print, that maybe you could chip in.” I squirmed in my chair and for some reason my skin exploded with goose bumps.

Two weeks later we found out that Colin Checkley, Editor of The Sentinel magazine, had passed away, aged 44. He died of leukaemia. Even though it was terribly sad news for Colin and his family, I knew this was my chance. I gave it a few weeks before I called Colin’s father and he said he would be delighted if I would continue producing The Sentinel magazine. So I did.

I changed the name to The Sentinella, I altered the logo a tad, plus I added some colour pages in the centre of the magazine. It grew from 40 pages, to 128 pages within just 12 months and after that I set up a franchise giving other people the chance to join The Sentinella Network and launch their own magazine in their part of the world.

Five and a half years since moving to Spain my life couldn’t be better. I have just had my first book published – Sol Searching, A Fun-Filled Tale of a Modern Girl’s Move to the Costa del Sol, plus I even managed to meet the man of my dreams. I worked through the bad times, and it all came out good in the end, just as the universe intended.

Elizabeth & Oly – France

This is what Elizabeth & Oly had to say about their move to France in July of 2008....

I was never too crazy about the idea of living in a very sunny climate as I have fair skin, but what totally outweighed that niggle was my yearning to be warm, day and night. It's a fact, when working from home I get much more done when I'm not feeling cold! Although winter 2007 was no colder than usual, the unabating UK property crash froze me to the bone and the constant grey skies left me wanting to hide away under the duvet, and wishing things would change.

Living in Camden, central London, in a cute old cottage with Oly, my lovely French musician partner, I had fulfilled two of my life's dreams.

However I was ignoring the basic fundamentals that my income hardly matched my lifestyle. I had been keeping busy building up a property portfolio with hardly any capital. The combination of overzealous property course promises plus mortgage lenders only too happy to fund "no deposit" properties, led me to believe I could be an entrepreneur millionaire property tycoon within a few years. Combining that unrealistic dream with my credit card indulgencies, I was blindly living way beyond my limits.

With the constant gloomy headline reports of the property crash came the wake-up call that things were going from bad to worse. Unexpectedly Oly was now thrown to the financial lions. The lump sum he was depending on from his music publishers was withheld, the company decided to drop his band from their roster and not pay the promised third advance. There were now two of us hiding under the duvet. We both desperately wanted out, but could not see how to escape from the rut. We even started buying a weekly lottery ticket to give us some hope. Surprisingly we never won!

Oly was more fed up with the British weather than me he would often reminisce of his childhood holidays in the South of France. Five years ago with inherited money, I had bought a little flat in Old Town Nice for investment. It rented well and was great to visit between lets. However it was proving problematic renting out to only English-speaking students and bar staff. I found a nice French couple to take it over for 1-year

contract. They turned out to be not so nice at paying the rent! As property prices were falling, now was not a good time to sell, so I had to re-let it. I gave the couple notice to quit, and bought 2 cheap return flights to Nice in April 2008 to sort things out.

The first prospective tenant who visited was a chirpy London guy who was working on the boats. We were having a moan about London and he remarked, "You mean you've got this place here but you're living in Camden? Why on earth don't you move down here?" The next visitors only wanted the flat until July and were prepared to pay the entire rent and deposit in cash upfront.... **On flashed the light bulb.**

At noon Oly and I went for a walk along the Promenade in the sun with a wonderful azure blue sky to add to our high spirits. It was Oly's birthday and I treated him to lunch on the beach. We excitedly hatched a plan while eating a great steak, the clean air filling our lungs and waves rolling in the background. The reason we had never considered moving to Nice before was because of our London ties, but now our circumstances were different. Oly had no reason to stay in UK.

His American music writing partner had to return to USA, and they found a way of making music together online. I was not able to buy more properties, or sell any for profit, so best to keep them rented out. By sunset our decision was made.

My younger son sheepishly remarked that he and his girlfriend wanted to move in together, and as she worked at MTV, the Camden place would be perfect for them. That saved me having to sell it in a floundering market and also keep the mortgage paid.

The date we chose to move was Saturday July 5th. We announced the plan to the rest of our families and friends who all gave it the thumbs up and were happy to think they could come and visit us for cheap holidays! **This time the flights we bought were one way.**

The move went smoothly. Oly sold off his record collection to a local music shop, and I blitzed my wardrobe of designer clothes and sold them on eBay. We found a great affordable company to move our vanload of essentials (mainly Oly's music studio). On arrival we re-painted the whole flat and arranged some much needed repairs with a British team of builders. We were revived and full of hope. Unbelievably my UK mortgages all started to drop, and instead of sinking I started to swim.

Oly found new inspiration and wrote his third album within two months. We settled in easily to the Old Town bohemian vibe with music coming from every window.

After the summer the bustling local streets emptied of tourists, we relaxed into autumn and the town breathed again. If the weather dared to rain, that was it as far as the locals were concerned; they shut up shop and headed to the bars and play cards! Sometimes it's like being back in the 1950's here, it makes a welcome change from the fast pace of London.

It did not all go to plan, sadly my health suffered from all the stress of the financial worries and the physical move. I was exhausted mentally and physically. I found a very helpful English-speaking doctor who enabled me get back to normal. The French health system is very good, plus there are no waiting lists to see specialists, and I could take advantage of my Euro Health card. When my good health returned, my skin glowed and the botox jabs were replaced with a free healthy tan.

In 2009 Oly had a lifelong dream fulfilled, he was asked to support a very famous band playing 20 sold out shows in European football stadiums. Also his album got released and he acquired a new publishing deal. Meanwhile I studied online marketing and have started selling. I am also looking into trading at the local market.

The French are renowned for the arrogance, and we encountered it on many occasions. Certainly they have a different attitude to customer service, "the customer is always wrong"! Oly reflects, "Ahh now I remember why I left my country for the UK" But it's a small price to pay for the lifestyle we have here. Nice is our home, there's definitely no going back to the UK for us.

To your ex-pat success

Living In The Sun Team

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