The Move-Abroad Checklist

Every step for Americans moving abroad on a remote income, in the order to do them. Most visas take 3 to 6 months from the first document to the flight, so start here about 6 months out.

How to use it: pencil a date next to each section, counting back from your move date, and tick boxes as you go. Each country's exact rules, fees and income limits are in its free guide at getshoreward.com.

6 months before DECIDE

- [ ] **Choose your country and check its income or savings rule**
  Compare visas in the 2-minute quiz or the destinations list. Rules differ a lot: some ask for a monthly income, some for savings, some for neither.
- [ ] **Work out how much cash you need on day one**
  Visa fees, flights, the first month of rent plus deposit, insurance and a safety cushion. The free move budget calculator adds it up for your city.
- [ ] **Check your passport**
  Many residence cards are tied to your passport's validity. If it expires within about a year, renew before you apply.

5 to 4 months before PAPERWORK

- [ ] **Order your FBI background check, if your visa asks for one**
  Some countries want it issued within the last 3 months when you apply, so time it to your application date.
- [ ] **Get your documents apostilled**
  Federal documents such as the FBI check go to the State Department: $20 per document, about 5 weeks by mail. Birth and marriage certificates are apostilled by the state that issued them.
- [ ] **Order fresh certified copies**
  Birth and marriage certificates, plus diplomas or licenses if your visa or job needs them. Some countries also want sworn translations.

3 months before APPLY

- [ ] **Apply for your visa**
  Online, at a consulate in the US, or after you land, depending on the country. Your country guide says which.
- [ ] **Buy health insurance that meets the visa's rule**
  Many residence visas reject basic travel insurance. The free insurance chooser shows which kind fits your stay.
- [ ] **Get an International Driving Permit**
  AAA issues it for $20 with two passport photos and your US license. By mail it takes 4 to 6 weeks.

2 months before MONEY

- [ ] **Open a multi-currency account and tell your bank you're moving**
  Carry two cards with no foreign transaction fee, on different networks, so one blocked card doesn't leave you stuck.
- [ ] **Plan your US taxes abroad**
  US citizens still file every year from abroad. Read up on the foreign earned income exclusion and whether your state will still tax you.
- [ ] **Call your brokerage before you change your address**
  Some brokerages restrict or close accounts once you list a foreign address. Ask what happens in your new country.

6 to 4 weeks before KEEP YOUR US LIFE RUNNING

- [ ] **Book your flight and your first month of housing**
  A furnished short-term stay gives you time to see neighborhoods before you sign a lease.
- [ ] **Keep your US phone number**
  Banks text sign-in codes to it. Port it to Google Voice ($20, done from the US) or keep a low-cost plan, then test your bank and brokerage log-ins.
- [ ] **Set up a US mailing address and go paperless**
  A virtual mailbox scans your mail for about $10 to $30 a month. Its USPS Form 1583 must be notarized; online notaries count.
- [ ] **Send your Federal Post Card Application**
  Through FVAP.gov, to keep voting in federal elections from abroad.

2 weeks before PACK

- [ ] **Scan your passport and key documents to secure cloud storage**
  Keep the originals in your carry-on.
- [ ] **Get copies of medical records and prescriptions**
  Ask for a letter listing your medications by their generic names.

After you land SETTLE IN

- [ ] **Register your address and collect your residence card**
  Most countries set a deadline after arrival: Mexico gives you 30 days to swap your visa for a card. Missing it can mean starting over.
- [ ] **Get your local tax number and open a local bank account**
  Most local banks ask for the tax number first.
- [ ] **Check when you must switch to a local driver's license**
  Many countries allow a US license only for a set time after you become a resident.

Make it a dated plan

Save your cities, set a move date and get this checklist with a deadline on every step. Free, no sign-in.

getshoreward.com/planner