

Leaving home...

DORSET is one of the most beautiful places to live anywhere in the UK. For some, it would be unthinkable to leave this piece of England for a new life abroad.

Yet every year, hundreds of Dorset residents head overseas, and, according to recent figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the county is one that people are most likely to leave behind.

Four local authorities in Dorset had some of the highest emigration figures in the UK, with Poole, Christchurch, West Dorset and East Dorset all ranking in the top 10.

Analysis by the Sunday Times, based on net international emigration (people moving abroad minus immigrants), found that Poole had the highest figures, with 6,200 people turning their backs on places

Maria Court talks to some of the thousands of people who have left Dorset to live abroad

such as Sandbanks and Branksome Park to put roots down in foreign climes between 2001 and 2006.

Over the same time period, just 3,400 immigrants arrived.

According to Paul Arthur, director of The Emigration Group, this comes as no surprise "Middle England is on the move and it's well-off areas such as Dorset that are hot spots for emigration."

He believes there are many factors fuelling emigration from the UK – chiefly immigration, crime and tax.

"Many people are basically

looking for a better life both for themselves and their children and they see emigration as a way of achieving this.

"The part the housing boom has played also can't be underestimated. Homeowners can sell up and find they've a huge amount of equity that will go a long way in some other countries, where average prices and the cost of living are far less.

"I can see emigration rising further over the next 10 years, as long as there is still a high demand for the skills that Brits have to offer abroad."

Would you do it? Here are four people from Dorset who did ...



"I've no regrets about making the move"

Heather Johnson, 30, grew up in Poole and moved to the USA she was 21 ...

"My mum's English but I have family in America. Visiting as a child, I just adored the way of life.

"I knew from a young age I would probably come and try the lifestyle myself. There always seemed to be a lot more opportunity in America, and I really wanted to make the most of my life and give it a try. It was still a big step but a little easier as I had family to help me out.

"I live in North Carolina. I love the weather. We still have the seasons, with hot summers and mild winters.

"It was a bit of a culture shock at first. My accent was too quick and I used too much slang, so I had to speak slowly and really concentrate on what I was saying just so people could understand me.

"I was shocked when someone asked me what language we spoke in England!

"I soon embraced the American way of life. I don't feel so confined and crowded that's for sure. People have made me feel so welcome here that it has sometimes been overwhelming.

"I seem to have a more relaxed approach to my daily life now. I have no worries about driving long distances, for example. I've driven across many states in a single journey, which is quite common here, but when I was in Bournemouth the furthest I drove was to Southampton.

"I miss so much about the UK – the countryside, the wonderful sunny days that Dorset gets in the summer. It's such a beautiful county. I miss the character and history of the villages and towns.

"I miss the shops, my television shows – EastEnders, especially – and the fantastic British sense of humour.

"Oh, and the food. I go crazy when I'm back in England, immediately heading to a supermarket to stock up on the food I can't get in America.

"I miss my English family dearly, and it's such a great place. I may live in the USA, but England will always be my home.

"But I'm not sure I can go back to England as it's so expensive. Things are cheaper here and I feel my lifestyle has changed quite a bit. I own a three-bedroom house, which I would have never been able to afford on my own in the UK.

"I've no regrets about making the move and I've learned that if I put my mind to something I can make it happen. My advice to others would be just pack up and go, but really appreciate what you do have – even the small things – as you'll miss them."





The thing I miss most is the sea

Bob Davis, 40, a freelance IT consultant, born and raised in West Dorset, now living in Switzerland ...

"I chose Switzerland because of the nature. I live by a lake and near the mountains and today I saw a magnificent eagle while walking to work. I find my lifestyle has become much healthier. I can catch a train and be on the ski slopes in an hour. In the spring and summer, I go hiking and cycling in the hills.

"Luckily there have been no real culture shocks, but punctuality is an obsession here.

"The thing I miss most about Dorset is

the sea. Switzerland has one of the lowest crime rates and highest standards of living in the world, but that's not why I left the UK. And I pay a bit less tax here, but not much.

"A big part of why I don't want to work and live in the UK is that I object to paying tax to a government that wages disastrous wars and loses hard disks containing millions of people's private banking details. That would never happen in Switzerland.

"Living abroad certainly gives you a new view of yourself. My Swiss friends and colleagues are tickled pink with my English politeness, such as

holding doors open and asking to help carry bags for women.

"I'm single at the moment but I like the idea of meeting someone and buying a log cabin up in the mountains, although there's a good chance I'll retire to Dorset.

"Emigrating may seem scary at first, but it's not that bad as you think. It's relatively cheap and very quick to fly back to the UK, and it's never been easier to live and work in Europe. That's one big advantage of being in the EU – there's nowhere as culturally rich and diverse as Europe, and it's all right on your doorstep."



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We have

the lifestyle we wanted



Natalie Bruckner, 32, used to work as a journalist at the Daily Echo. She and her husband, Mike, recently achieved a long-term dream of moving to Canada where they are currently working as snowboard instructors ...

“My parents had previously lived in Canada so we decided to do our research and see if it would be for us.

“We were after somewhere that would give us the lifestyle we wanted, with mountains and snow being a big part of that, as well as having no language barrier.

“The economy was strong and there seemed to be plenty of jobs around. It is also quite a neutral country and very forward-looking, which really appealed.

“So far we like everything, especially living next to the mountains. Although we’ve only been here three months and we could be seeing things through rose-tinted glasses, we’ve found nothing to dislike. It’s like stepping back in time in the UK.

“I miss my sister and friends, but that’s all.



"In the UK there's an attitude of, 'I want it yesterday', and one of the hardest things here is learning to slow down. And people aren't impressed by your car or house. Nor do they ask you what you do for a job – instead they ask what sports you play!

"Vancouver's a very cosmopolitan city, so it's not as if we stick out too much being English. People seem so helpful and fitting in hasn't been a problem. The locals are just great.

"We've met quite a few ex-pats, but we decided not to just stick to making English friends. I think people make that mistake and never really get to know the country they have moved to.

"England is a small country, and it's getting overcrowded. The main reason we moved was because we have a dream of owning a chalet, and we can do that in Canada.

"I won't go back to live in Dorset, even though it's a wonderful place and people say 'never say never'.

"My advice for those thinking of leaving the UK would be to do your research. Make sure it's not just a whim. It took us three years to get in and in some ways that was great because we realised we really wanted it.

"I've learned that life is about discovering what you really want and grabbing opportunities with both hands. Taking a calculated risk can be the best choice."





"If you have the chance, go for it

Steve Parish, 28, has lived in the USA for five years. He is director of computer graphics at a visual effects company in New York. Steve went to school in Bournemouth and studied at Bournemouth University ...

"I tried very hard to get a job in London, but there was no work at the time and I simply applied for a job at any company I could find, some in the USA, some in Australia.

"New York City is so culturally diverse, and I love that. I've also lived in San Francisco and Dallas, which was the biggest culture shock. The amount of guns in Texas, and the people carrying them, took a lot of getting used to.

"I like the quality of life here, and how you get more for less money. I work hard and play hard. Americans work much harder than Europeans and I've had to adjust.

"I don't like how a standard holiday

allowance is 10 days a year and I also miss the NHS.

"On the up side, I have been to the Caribbean a lot. It's a quick flight from NYC and it's nice to take five days off down there.

"I walk all the time in New York, I'm more confident here... you have to be, as Americans aren't as reserved as the British, and you'll miss out unless you are more forceful.

"I miss the countryside in England. Dorset is stunning. The rolling hills, the castles... there's real heritage there that simply doesn't exist in America.

"I also miss British wit. American humour is way too obvious. But I don't miss the British weather or young people getting drunk, which doesn't happen here as they're much stricter. Obviously I miss my family.

"I hope to return to Dorset at some stage, but for now I'll stay here – the ladies like my accent!

"If you have the chance to have a spell abroad, I'd go for it. Make sure to meet people, it can be lonely at first.

"I was nearly tempted to come back home, but eventually you settle in and enjoy yourself."

