



We're emigrate Britons

Two people per minute leave UK to live abroad

By **KAREN ROCKETT**

AROUND 700 Britons are quitting the UK and move abroad EVERY DAY, recent figures have revealed.

A record 250,000 emigrated in 2007... a fifth more than the 207,000 who left in 2006, itself a huge 70 per cent up on the 149,000 who went in 1997.

That means someone leaves every two minutes, exchanging what many see as a life of high taxes and soaring crime for a life in the sunshine. Most go to France, Spain, the US, New Zealand and Australia... emigration to Australia alone has DOUBLED in the past decade.

Paul Arthur, of the Emigration Group, which helps expats settle overseas, predicts numbers will continue to rise. He said: "We have had record enquiries over winter. People are seeking a whole change of lifestyle. Many are unhappy with high taxes and the general way of life here."

Decades of soaring UK house prices mean many can buy bigger yet cheaper homes in France or Spain – although that can mean you can't afford to come back if you ever want to.

Today we speak to three people who left Britain last year and find out what inspired them to go, and whether they are happier now...

 **FRANCE**
We really are totally ripped off in Britain

FIDELMA Cook, a journalist in her 50s, decided to move to rural France after she was made redundant.

With a hefty mortgage still to pay on her two-bedroom flat in Glasgow, the best option seemed to be to sell up, go freelance and live mortgage-free in France.

Last year she sold her flat in the city centre for £366,000 and bought a rambling farmhouse in the Garonne region for £194,000.

She said: "At my age I wouldn't get another staff job and I had 12 years left on my mortgage, which seemed like an awful slog and my council tax was going

up. My flat in Glasgow was in the best Georgian square in the city, yet we still had problems with drug dealers, which is intimidating when you're coming home.

"So I've swapped a two-bedroom flat for a huge old farmhouse with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a huge study and a massive kitchen/dining room some 30 feet long at the heart of the house.

"I also have four-and-a-half acres of land, a barn and a veranda. It is wonderful to be living mortgage-free and everything is so much cheaper here. The quality of the

food is fantastic. Everyone eats so well. Everything stops for lunch from 12 till 2pm and you can get a three-course fixed-price lunch in a local restaurant for about £8.

"My utility bill, including the local tax, is about £400 a year. I was paying £160 a month alone for council tax in Glasgow. It makes you think how ripped off we are in Britain.

"Best of all is the innocence of life in rural France. Although the cities are not without their problems, we certainly don't get hoodies here.

"At night it's pitch-black and there isn't a soul around, but I feel so much safer. People here have time to stop and talk and everyone always says 'good morning' when you go into a shop.

"Having said that, you really do need to speak French to live here successfully.

"The French are quite reserved and so you have to go to them. They won't come knocking on your door to welcome you as they would consider that rude, so you have to make the effort."

Fidelma's farmhouse is on the edge of a village, Lavit de La Lomagne, about 50 minutes' drive from Toulouse. Friends and family come out to visit and despite the relatively isolated location, Fidelma says the excellent TGV service and Eurostar mean she doesn't feel cut off.



Tres happy... Fidelma



 **SPAIN**

My son and I are living the dream

ARTIST Amanda Hamilton and her seven-year-old son Zack moved from Monmouthshire in Wales to southern Spain last year, where they bought a three-storey house, which they've partly turned into a luxury B&B.

Her white house in the village of Celada is in the heart of Andalucia with mountain views, olive groves and lakes, just an hour from Malaga and Granada.

Amanda's move was more to do with a love of Spain than a dislike of the UK. She says: "Life is cheaper here. Property certainly is, as are food and services, but then wages are less too. But you cannot compare the quality of life.

"I am sitting here in February in a bikini on my roof terrace, looking out over the mountains. My son is so happy here too. He rushes off to school every day and is already pretty fluent."

The pair spent a few weeks last summer travelling

Amanda's happy



Amanda sold her detached house in Wales and set up home in Spain

around in their campervan, exploring villages to see where they wanted to live.

Amanda, 42, says: "Having a child means you really need to do your research, but that's a good thing. I am working hard setting up the B&B and I also work as an artist and a reflexologist. It helps having a few strings to your bow and you have to be prepared to work hard.

"I sold my four-bedroom detached house in Wales for

£310,000 and bought my Spanish home for £222,000, but if I'd bought it in Marbella it would cost around £1million as prices are even higher there than the UK.

"I took out a small €50,000 (£37,000) mortgage to give myself a cushion to get the business up and running.

"I always wanted to live in Spain and feel I am living my dream. We are both very happy here. What's not to like?"

● **TO learn more about Amanda's luxury B&B visit www.casa-la-celada.com and for her online gallery go to www.amanda-hamilton.com**



 **AUSTRALIA**

You get much more house for your money

GLYN and Kathryn Moorey moved to Mandurah, in Western Australia, last October.

They enjoyed travelling Down Under so much that when they returned three years ago they couldn't settle and decided to go back for good.

Glyn, 42, a joiner, and Kathryn, 39, a housing officer, have kept their one-bedroom flat in Marlow, Bucks, and are renting a three-bed place in Australia for around £120 a week.

Kathryn said: "We are 10 minutes' walk from the best beach in the world here, and 15 minutes from town.

"We want to buy a property here but prices have gone up a lot from when we first decided to make the move, so we're still working out funding.

"Renting here is cheaper, but buying is probably similar to the UK, although you do get more house for your money.

"I quickly got work in a restaurant and Glyn got work after a few weeks for a maintenance business. I then managed to get a housing officer's job.

"I am over the moon to be able to work in the



Kathryn and Glyn have swapped a one-bed flat for a house in the sun Down Under



same career as I had in the UK. There is plenty of work here."

Kathryn says that while food is more expensive than the UK unless it is local, eating out, petrol and utility bills are all cheaper. Wages are lower but the standard of living is much better than in the UK.

She says: "We knew we would not be financially better off but the standard of living is what drew us.

"I hated the traffic in

the UK, but here it is so easy to get around. The world is so small and I think people want more out of life than previously.

"To me it is an adventure, for Glyn it is a dream. If it does not work then we can go back to the cold and crowded UK.

"I think over here crime is an issue – I feel no safer here than in the UK really. You always have to be aware, no matter where you are."

But the couple plan to stay for at least four years to get their citizenship and plan to start a family there.

"To go back to the traffic and congestion would be awful," says Kathryn.



City centre life was hard for Fidelma



Now she lives in
this farmhouse
in rural France

