

Leaving the US: the checklist

From GoThere (getgothere.app/leaving-the-us). Updated 2026-10-08. General information, not legal or tax advice. Confirm every requirement with your consulate.

1. US-side paperwork (almost every path)

☐ Check your passport

Valid at least 6 months beyond your planned stay, with blank pages.

☐ Order an FBI Identity History Summary

Most residence visas want a recent federal background check.

☐ Plan apostilles early

State documents get apostilled by that state's Secretary of State; federal ones by the US Department of State. This can take weeks.

☐ Order long-form birth and marriage certificates

Certified copies, often with apostille and a sworn translation.

☐ Find your consulate

You apply at the consulate that covers the US state where you legally live, not the one with the shortest wait.

☐ Price health insurance

Most visas require private coverage with no co-pays for at least the first year.

☐ Talk to a US tax professional

You keep filing US taxes from abroad. Ask about FBAR and the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion before you move money.

2. Spain Non-Lucrative Visa

Requirement: €2,400 a month in passive income (€28,800 a year), plus €600 a month for each family member.

Source: <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/web/migraciones/w/autorizacion-inicial-de-residencia-temporal-no-lucrativa> (checked 2026-10-08)

☐ Research Spain visa options

Start with Non-Lucrative, Work, Student, or Digital Nomad basics. Confirm which options apply to your situation.

☐ Confirm your consulate jurisdiction

Spanish visa applications are usually tied to where you legally reside. Confirm the correct consulate before preparing documents.

☐ Choose the appropriate visa type for your situation

☐ Research cost of living in different Spanish cities/regions

☐ Decide on a target city or region in Spain

Consider jobs/schools, healthcare access, climate, transit, and housing costs.

☐ Start learning Spanish (apps, courses, tutors)

3. Spain Digital Nomad Visa

Requirement: €2,442 a month from employers or clients outside Spain. +€915.75 for the first family member, +€305.25 for each one after.

Source: <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/documents/d/unidadgrandesempresas/digital-nomad-faqs-english>,
<https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2026-3815> (checked 2026-10-08)

[] Use the Spain document steps above

Passport, apostilles, sworn translations, consulate jurisdiction and health insurance work the same way.

[] Add proof of your remote work

Your contract or client agreements and recent payslips or invoices showing the income threshold.

4. Portugal D7 or D8

Requirement: D7: €920 a month in passive income (+€460 per extra adult, +€276 per child). D8: €3,680 a month in remote-work income.

Source: <https://www.dgert.gov.pt/retribuicao-minima-mensal-garantida-para-2026>,
<https://aima.gov.pt/pt/temas-transversais/meios-de-subsistencia> (checked 2026-10-08)

[] Research Portugal visa options (D7 vs D8)

D7 is for passive income (pension, investments, rentals). D8 is for digital nomads with remote employment income. Both are popular pathways for Americans.

[] Confirm your consulate jurisdiction (where you must apply)

Portuguese visa applications are tied to your legal US residence. Confirm the correct consulate (Washington DC, New York, Boston, San Francisco, etc.).

[] Decide on D7 (passive income) or D8 (digital nomad) track

D7 requires proof of passive income. D8 requires proof of remote employment/self-employment with income threshold.

[] Research cost of living in different Portuguese cities

Lisbon is most expensive, Porto is mid-range, Algarve/Braga/Coimbra are more affordable. Consider your lifestyle needs.

[] Decide on initial city + accommodation strategy

Short-term rental for first months vs signing a long-term lease. Consider Lisbon, Porto, Braga, Algarve, or smaller towns.

[] Start learning Portuguese (apps, courses, tutors)

Not strictly required but highly recommended. European Portuguese differs from Brazilian Portuguese.

5. Mexico Temporary Residency

Requirement: About \$4,400 to \$4,630 a month in income (last 6 months), or \$73,000 to \$78,000 in savings (last 12 months), depending on the consulate.

Source: <https://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/lasvegas/images/2026/VISAS2026/TemporaryResidenceVisa2026.pdf>,
<https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/uma/> (checked 2026-10-08)

[] Research Mexico residency options

Temporary Resident (1-4 years) vs Permanent Resident. Most Americans start with Temporary Resident via economic solvency.

[] Select your Mexican consulate

Apply at the consulate with jurisdiction over your US residence. Requirements can vary by consulate - check their specific requirements.

[] Choose Mexico entry city and plan INM office visit

After getting your visa sticker, you'll exchange it for a resident card at INM within 30 days of entry. Research INM offices in your destination city.

[] Research cost of living in target Mexican cities

CDMX, Guadalajara, Mérida, Puerto Vallarta, San Miguel de Allende, Oaxaca - each has different costs and expat communities.

[] Budget for consulate fees + INM fees + resident card

Consulate visa fee, INM processing fee, and resident card fee are all separate. Budget approximately \$400-600 USD total.

[] Choose long-term city and housing strategy

Many expats do short-term rentals first to explore neighborhoods before committing to a long-term lease.

6. Citizenship by descent

Requirement: No income test. Ireland: a grandparent born in Ireland (fee €278). Italy: since the 2025 reform, generally a parent or grandparent who held only Italian citizenship. Canada: Bill C-3 took effect December 15, 2025.

Source: <https://www.ireland.ie/en/dfa/citizenship/born-abroad/registering-a-foreign-birth/>, <https://consnewyork.esteri.it/en/servizi-consolari-e-visti/servizi-per-il-cittadino-straniero/cittadinanza/>, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2025/12/bill-c-3-an-act-to-amend-the-citizenship-act-2025-comes-into-effect.html> (checked 2026-10-08)

[] Confirm you have an Irish-born grandparent (or eligible parent)

Ireland's Foreign Births Register (FBR) is for people born outside Ireland whose parent was Irish at the time of their birth. The most common path is via a grandparent who was born on the island of Ireland (any of the 32 counties).

[] Verify the citizenship chain has not been broken

If your great-grandparent was Irish and your grandparent never registered on the FBR before your parent's birth, your parent did not inherit Irish citizenship — and neither did you. The grandparent path requires that grandparent to have been born on the island of Ireland.

[] Plan your documentary chain

You need: your birth certificate, your Irish-citizen parent's birth certificate, the Irish-born grandparent's birth certificate, marriage certificates linking the chain, and current government photo ID.

[] Italy: check the 2025 rule first

You qualify only if a parent or grandparent held exclusively Italian citizenship, a parent lived in Italy 2 years before your birth, or you applied by March 27, 2025.

[] Canada: request a citizenship certificate

If a parent or grandparent was Canadian, Bill C-3 may already make you a citizen. Apply for proof of citizenship with IRCC.

7. Germany EU Blue Card

Requirement: A job offer paying at least €50,700 a year (lower in shortage fields such as IT, engineering and healthcare), plus a recognized degree.

Source: <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/types/eu-blue-card> (checked 2026-10-08)

[] Get a qualifying job offer in Germany

The Blue Card needs a concrete offer that meets the salary threshold.

[] Check your degree is recognized

Look up your university and degree in the anabin database, or apply for a ZAB statement of comparability.

[] Book a visa appointment at the German mission for your state

Then apply with the offer, degree proof and passport.

Track every step, deadline and document in the GoThere app: getgothere.app