

The **expat** factor

For many people, the call to roam extends beyond just a holiday – it's about creating a new work-life balance in a different country. **Luciano Di Gregorio** meets three European expats, and discovers the appeal of their adopted homes

In the era of Ernest Hemingway, when a generation of Americans was lured to Europe by the charms of Roaring Twenties Paris, many prominent figures scoffed. It was a fad, they said, akin to the nomadic ways of gypsies of centuries past. For what could

be better than the comfort of familiar surroundings; the pull of retiring to a double-fronted weatherboard house sprinkled in tulips and skirted by picket fences? The concept of leaving one's life behind, just for kicks, was confined to the ramblings of eccentrics who conjured >>





Brussels' Grand Place is a big draw for the expat community, as is Rome's rich history (left)

IMAGE: CORNERS

“ Many humanitarian organisations have set up shop in Rome, providing work for thousands of expats

mythic islands from their own wishful dreams. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Hemingway sat on the Left Bank and wrote one of the earliest novels about expatriating purely for the thrill of it.

Since Europe opened its borders, attaining the key to your favourite city has become as effortless as pointing to a map. But as any expat will attest (myself included), things can go awry once the patter of winter rain on your foggy window – not to mention the reality of a nine-to-five job – washes some of the charm out of the relationship. It's therefore important to choose your new home wisely.



Rome

The Venerable Bede once said, “When Rome falls, the world shall end.” But while it did eventually fall, as the Empire lost its grip on the known world, it seems the Eternal City's ability to captivate people from all walks of life is still very much intact.

Andrew Burns moved to Rome eight years ago, and is still entranced by its history. “Rome is the only place in the world where old *nonnas* walk in the shadow of 2,000-year-old ruins with a smartphone in their pocket,” he laughs, as a siren wails in the background. “It's a big city, and the Italians love drama.”

But Rome's draw isn't simply about a history so culturally and architecturally entrenched it's impossible to escape from, or the drama – some would say passion – of Italians. Rome has garnered a reputation as a city with an activist's soul. A plethora of humanitarian organisations have set up shop within its walls, and provided work for thousands of expats. The World Food Programme established its headquarters here in 1960 and, attesting to its status and popularity as a city focused on NGO activities, the United Nations even based its Expatriate Spouse Association in Rome, offering services to the partners of its employees. With layer upon layer of history

to explore, and the chance to save the world as your day job, who wouldn't want in?



Brussels

The capital of Europe has far more to offer than political powerbrokers and number-crunching accountants concocting government bailouts. Take a wander through the leafy suburbs and you'll discover the real reasons that expat families like to relocate to Belgium's largest city; an expanse of green surrounds streets that boast quaint Victorian townhouses and a long list of quality colleges.

In fact, the city is known for the calibre of its education providers and has a host of top-notch international schools, such as the British School of Brussels, Brussels American School and the famous International School of Brussels to name a few. Sarah Hohmann and her husband Marc moved to Brussels from Luxembourg to set up a new life in the district of Etterbeek. “You'll find no better schools in Europe,” Sarah says, “and after the textbooks are put away, there's a good time and plenty of waffles and chocolate to be had in the beautiful Grand Place!”



IMAGE-CORNERS



Great architecture – such as the Hundertwasser House – abounds in Vienna

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A mid-sized city with a low population density, Vienna makes a peaceful place to relocate



Vienna

The former imperial capital consistently ranks highly in the Economist Intelligence Unit's yearly list of the most liveable cities in the world. In 2011 it sat in second place, though it wasn't surpassed by any other European city, being beaten only by Melbourne in Australia.

Vienna's streets are quietly sophisticated, reflecting its status as a mid-sized city with a low population density – and therefore a peaceful place to set up house. The city has also, in the last three centuries, been home to a plethora of Europe's great composers, and music is its lifeblood. After packing up her viola in her native Milan, looking to be

inspired by the creative genius of the likes of Beethoven and Mozart, Margherita Ghezzi has been “rubbing shoulders with Europe's best contemporary composers” and playing in string quartet Rudolf in Vienna for 16 years. “Vienna is a paradox,” she claims. “A street corner is just as likely to have a gathering of pink hair, dog collars and gothic streetwear as a group of Stradivarius-toting buskers and strutting businesswomen. I wouldn't live anywhere else.”

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FR Le facteur expat

S'installer dans un nouveau pays et réapprendre à y concilier vie privée et vie professionnelle... **Luciano Di Gregorio** a rencontré trois expatriés européens qui témoignent de leur expérience dans une capitale étrangère

Depuis que l'Europe a ouvert ses frontières, déménager dans sa ville favorite n'aura jamais été aussi simple que de pointer un lieu sur la carte – mais veillez toutefois à choisir votre nouvelle destination avec discernement.

Rome La capacité de la Ville Éternelle à captiver des gens venus de tous les horizons reste intacte. Andrew Burns s'y est installé il y a 8 ans, et il y est toujours aux anges : « Rome est le seul endroit sur terre où des *nonnas* déambulent à l'ombre de ruines vieilles de plus de 2.000 ans, avec un smartphone en poche. » La ville a également développé sa réputation de centre de l'engagement activiste : une pléthore d'ONG dans le secteur humanitaire y ont ouvert des magasins, offrant par la même occasion du travail à des milliers d'expats.

Bruxelles La capitale de l'Europe a beaucoup plus à offrir que des éminences grises occupées à renflouer les gouvernements. Promenez-vous dans ses faubourgs verts et vous y découvrirez de somptueuses demeures de style Victorien ainsi qu'une large panoplie de grandes écoles internationales. Sarah Hohmann et son mari Marc sont arrivés du Luxembourg pour s'installer dans le quartier d'Etterbeek. « Rares sont les villes en Europe qui offrent un aussi bon niveau d'enseignement, » confie-t-elle, « et après les devoirs, on va s'amuser du côté de la Grand-Place ! »

Vienne Vienne se situe toujours très haut dans le classement des villes les plus agréables où vivre, selon l'étude du The Economist Intelligence Unit. De plus, la musique est inscrite au plus profond de son âme. Etes-vous à la recherche des symphonies inspirantes du passé, de compositeurs tels que Beethoven ou Mozart ? Après avoir emballé son alto, Margherita Ghezzi, originaire de Milan, est venue s'installer dans cette capitale il y a 16 ans d'ici. « Au coin d'une rue à Vienne, vous pourriez tout aussi bien tomber nez à nez avec un artiste de rue ostrogoth, muni d'un Stradivarius, que d'une femme d'affaires super bien habillée, » explique-t-elle. « Je ne voudrais vivre nulle part ailleurs. »

NL De expat-factor

Drie Europese expats vertellen aan **Luciano Di Gregorio** hoe het is om in een ander land een nieuw leven te beginnen

Sinds Europa zijn grenzen opende, is verhuizen naar uw favoriete stad even makkelijk als ze op een kaart aanduiden – maar u moet u nieuwe thuis wel zorgvuldig uitkiezen.

Rome De Eeuwige Stad trekt nog steeds mensen van alle maatschappelijke standen aan. Andrew Burns verhuisde acht jaar geleden en zijn enthousiasme is nog even groot: “Alleen in Rome lopen *nonna's* met een smartfoon op zak in de schaduw van 2000 jaar oude ruïnes. De stad is ook een bakermat van activisten en tal van humanitaire organisaties hebben er een winkel geopend, waar duizenden expats aan het werk kunnen.

Brussel De hoofdstad van Europa heeft heel wat meer te bieden dan besluitvormers die reddingsoperaties uitdokteren voor regeringen. In de bosrijke buitenwijken staan prachtige Victoriaanse huizen en de stad heeft ook de beste internationale scholen. De Luxemburgse Sarah Hohmann en haar man verhuisden naar Etterbeek. “Je vindt in Europa geen betere scholen,” zegt ze “en als de boeken even worden opgeborgen, is het leuk ontspannen op de Grote Markt!”

Wenen Volgens The Economist Intelligence Unit behoort Wenen tot de aangenaamste steden om in te wonen en de muziek bepaalt er het ritme. In de hoop er bezield te worden door componisten als Beethoven en Mozart, vertrok de Milanese Margherita Ghezzi 16 jaar geleden met haar altviool naar deze stad. “Op elke Weense straathoek kun je net zo goed een straatmuzikant met een Stradivarius tegenkomen als een paraderende zakenvrouw. “Ik zou nergens anders willen wonen.”

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