



Frequently Asked Questions

Everything You Need to Know About Buying Property Abroad & in DFW

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Core International Markets: Italy | Portugal | Spain | Mexico | Costa Rica
Investment Properties via API Global: United Kingdom | Thailand | UAE



■ GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT BUYING PROPERTY ABROAD

Q: Can Americans buy property in a foreign country?

Yes — in most countries around the world, Americans can purchase real estate freely. In our five core markets:

- **Italy** — No restrictions. Americans can buy freely anywhere in the country.
- **Portugal** — No restrictions. US citizens can purchase any property without special permits.
- **Spain** — No restrictions. Americans can buy freely anywhere in Spain.
- **Mexico** — Americans can own property anywhere in Mexico, though coastal/border areas (the "Restricted Zone") require a bank trust called a *fideicomiso*. Outside those zones, direct title ownership is available.
- **Costa Rica** — Foreigners generally have the same ownership rights as Costa Ricans, with specific rules for the Maritime Zone (beachfront).

Q: Is buying property abroad complicated?

It's different from buying in the US — but with the right guidance, it's absolutely manageable. The biggest differences are the legal systems (most countries use a notary rather than a title company), currency considerations, and the due diligence process. At Passports to Property, we guide you through every step so you never have to figure it out alone.

Q: Do I need to visit the country before buying?

We strongly recommend it. A Discovery Trip — spending time in your target region before committing — is how confident buyers consistently make their best decisions. You'll experience the neighborhood, meet local professionals, and tour actual properties. We help structure Discovery Trips so your time on the ground is productive, not overwhelming.

Q: How long does the international property buying process take?

Most international purchases close in 60 to 120 days from offer acceptance to final deed. Off-plan (pre-construction) purchases have longer timelines — typically 18 to 30 months from reservation to handover — but offer staged payment plans that spread your capital over time.

Q: Do I need to speak the local language to buy property abroad?

No. In all of our core markets, the buying process can be completed in English with the right team. Legal documents will be in the local language, and your attorney will translate and explain everything before you sign. In most popular expat markets, English is widely spoken by real estate professionals and notaries.

■ BUYING PROCESS & LEGAL QUESTIONS

Q: What is a notary and why do I need one abroad?

In most countries, a notary (*notaio* in Italy, *notaire* in France, *notario* in Mexico and Spain) is a government-licensed official who handles all property transfers — verifying title, collecting transfer taxes, and registering the property in your name. Unlike a US notary public, an international notary plays a major legal role. We always recommend hiring your own attorney alongside the notary to represent your specific interests.

Q: What is a fideicomiso in Mexico?



A *fideicomiso* is a bank trust used by Americans to hold title to property within Mexico's Restricted Zone (within 50km of coastlines and 100km of borders). The bank acts as trustee while you hold all practical rights: buy, sell, rent, renovate, and pass to heirs. It is a standard, fully legal ownership structure — not a workaround. Outside the Restricted Zone, Americans can hold direct title freely.

Q: What is a Folio Real in Costa Rica?

The Folio Real is Costa Rica's national property registry — the centralized database where all titled properties are officially recorded. A title search through the Folio Real is non-negotiable before any Costa Rica purchase. Always confirm whether you're purchasing *ownership rights* (derecho de propiedad) or *occupation rights* — the latter is a red flag for unregistered land.

Q: What are the typical closing costs when buying property abroad?

Closing costs vary by country but are generally higher than in the US. Budget approximately:

- **Italy:** 10–15% of purchase price
- **Portugal:** 7–10%
- **Spain:** 10–15%
- **Mexico:** 5–8%
- **Costa Rica:** 4–6%
- **UK:** 3–5% plus Stamp Duty Land Tax (2% surcharge for non-UK residents)
- **Thailand:** ~6.3%

We provide a full cost breakdown for your specific purchase before you commit to anything.

Q: Can I get a mortgage to buy property abroad?

Financing options vary by country. In most of our core markets, international buyers purchase with cash or arrange financing through US-based lenders secured against existing assets. Local mortgages for foreign buyers are available in some markets but often carry higher interest rates and lower loan-to-value limits. Some off-plan developments offer developer financing with structured payment plans — a popular alternative that spreads capital without requiring a traditional mortgage.

■ VISA, RESIDENCY & CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS

Q: Does buying property abroad give me citizenship?

No. Buying property does not automatically grant citizenship — or even residency — in any country. Property ownership gives you the right to own that specific property. In some countries, a qualifying purchase can make you *eligible to apply* for a residency program (Golden Visa), but citizenship typically requires 5 to 10 years of legal residency plus additional requirements afterward.

Q: What is a Golden Visa?

A Golden Visa is a residency-by-investment program — not a citizenship program. It grants a renewable residence permit (typically 5 years) for investors who meet a qualifying investment threshold. As of 2026:

- **Greece** — Active. Real estate thresholds of €250,000 to €800,000 depending on location.
- **Spain** — Eliminated its real estate Golden Visa in 2025. No longer available through property.
- **Portugal** — Restructured. Investment must now go into qualifying funds, not direct property.



- **Italy** — Maintains an Investor Visa with a minimum €500,000 qualifying investment. Golden Visa programs change frequently. Always verify current requirements before making any decision.

Q: Do I have to give up my US citizenship to live abroad or become a citizen elsewhere?

No. US law does not require you to renounce your US citizenship to acquire citizenship in another country. Per the US Department of State's own published policy, a US citizen may naturalize in a foreign state without any risk to their US citizenship. You would have to actively and formally renounce your citizenship at a US embassy — it cannot happen to you involuntarily.

Q: What visa options exist for Americans in our core markets?

- **Italy** — Elective Residency Visa; Digital Nomad Visa; Investor Visa
- **Portugal** — D7 Passive Income Visa; D8 Digital Nomad Visa (€3,040/month)
- **Spain** — Non-Lucrative Visa (€2,400/month); Digital Nomad Visa (€2,849/month)
- **Mexico** — Temporary Resident Visa; Permanent Resident Visa
- **Costa Rica** — Pensionado (\$1,000/month); Rentista (\$2,500/month); Inversionista (\$150,000 investment)

Q: Do I still have to pay US taxes if I live abroad?

Yes. The US taxes its citizens on worldwide income regardless of where they live. You must file a US tax return annually and report all worldwide income as long as you hold a US passport. The Foreign Earned Income Exclusion and Foreign Tax Credit mechanisms help prevent double taxation — but the filing obligation remains. Always consult a cross-border tax professional before making any international move or investment decision.

■ INVESTMENT PROPERTY & PASSIVE INCOME QUESTIONS

Q: Can I buy an international investment property for passive income?

Yes — and this is one of the fastest-growing categories of international real estate for American buyers. The model is straightforward: you purchase a property in a high-demand rental market, a professional property management company or hotel operator handles all bookings and guest services, and you receive regular rental income distributions — without being an active landlord. Passports to Property partners with **API Global** — a UK-based investment firm with over £1.75 billion in completed developments — to offer Americans access to off-plan investment properties in the UK, UAE, and Thailand.

Q: What is an off-plan investment property?

An off-plan property is purchased before construction is complete — directly from the developer during the build phase. Off-plan purchases typically offer better pricing than completed properties because developers need committed buyers early. The build period is typically 18 to 36 months, with staged payment plans that spread your capital over time. Advantages include lower entry prices, potential capital appreciation between purchase and completion, and professional management activated from day one at handover.

Q: What API Global developments does Passports to Property currently offer?

Our current portfolio includes:

- **Velocity Manchester (UK)** — 102 luxury apartments and townhouses in Trafford, Manchester. Steps from Old Trafford. Projected yields up to 6.3%. Reservation from £5,000. Q3 2028 completion.



- **PEYLAA Phuket (Thailand)** — 408 branded residences under Marriott International's Autograph Collection in Bang Tao, Phuket. Projected yields 8–13%. Freehold ownership available to foreign buyers. Q4 2027 completion. New developments are added regularly. Contact us to receive updates on upcoming launches.

Q: How does the buying process work for an API Global investment property?

The process has ten clear steps, all guided by our team alongside API Global's in-house support:

- **1. Initial Consultation** — We qualify the investment fit for your goals and budget
- **2. Reservation** — A small deposit (from £5,000) secures your specific unit
- **3. KYC Documentation** — Standard identity and source-of-funds verification
- **4. Legal Instruction** — Solicitor or attorney engaged for due diligence
- **5. Currency Conversion** — API Global's in-house team handles all exchange, forward contracts, and wire transfers
- **6. Contract Exchange** — First major payment; contracts signed
- **7. Construction Period** — Staged milestone payments; API Global monitors progress
- **8. Completion** — Final payment; title registered in your name
- **9. Management Activation** — Professional PM or hotel operator takes over from day one
- **10. Rental Income** — Quarterly distributions begin to your account

Q: What makes Manchester, England a strong investment market?

- JLL's #1 UK investment city outside London — four years running
- £110 billion economy — UK's largest city region outside London
- 21.6% projected rental growth over the next four years
- 27.6% projected property price growth 2026–2030 (Savills)
- 120,000+ students with 51.5% graduate retention rate
- 1 in 3 residents rents; 5,000 people moving into city centre annually
- £8 billion Trafford regeneration masterplan underway through 2035

Q: What makes Phuket, Thailand a strong investment market?

- 9.8 million international visitors in 2025 — 19% year-over-year growth
- 6.4% average annual capital appreciation over the past decade
- Bang Tao ranked #1 submarket in Phuket for short- and mid-term rental demand
- 5–13% rental yields; branded Marriott-managed residences outperform
- 25 minutes from Phuket International Airport with 200+ global flight destinations

Q: Can I sell the property later and reinvest the proceeds?

Yes. There is no requirement to hold an international investment property indefinitely. When you're ready to exit, your solicitor or attorney manages the sale and you receive the net proceeds. Many investors reinvest proceeds into a subsequent opportunity, compounding their position over time. Talk to your tax advisor about whether a 1031 exchange structure applies to your situation before selling.

■ DFW REAL ESTATE QUESTIONS

Q: Does Passports to Property also help with buying and selling homes in North Texas?

Yes — this is the other half of what we do. Jerrod Pickering is a licensed Texas REALTOR® with Major League Realty, serving buyers and sellers across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Whether you're buying your first home,



selling a luxury property, or understanding what your DFW equity could unlock internationally, we serve both sides of the equation.

Q: Can I use my DFW home equity to buy property abroad?

Yes — and this is one of the most strategically powerful moves available to equity-rich DFW homeowners. Options include a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC), cash-out refinance, or selling your DFW property and deploying the proceeds internationally. Many of our clients use DFW equity to purchase a second property abroad — creating an international asset alongside their North Texas primary residence rather than choosing between them.

Q: Is now a good time to sell a home in DFW?

The DFW market in 2026 rewards sellers who understand the current reality: prices have softened from their 2022 peaks, inventory is elevated, and buyers have more leverage than at any point since before the pandemic. Well-priced, well-presented homes still sell in reasonable timeframes. Getting the price right from day one — rather than overpricing and reducing — is the single most important factor in today's market.

■ WORKING WITH PASSPORTS TO PROPERTY

Q: What is the CIPS designation?

CIPS stands for Certified International Property Specialist — a designation awarded by the National Association of REALTORS® to agents who have completed rigorous coursework in international real estate markets, legal structures, cultural competency, and cross-border transactions. Jerrod Pickering holds the CIPS designation, making Passports to Property one of a small number of DFW-based teams credentialed specifically for international real estate.

Q: What countries does Passports to Property specialize in?

Our five core international markets are **Italy, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, and Costa Rica** — the destinations where we have the deepest knowledge, the strongest partner networks, and the most experience guiding American buyers. Through our partnership with API Global, we also offer investment properties in the **United Kingdom, UAE, and Thailand**.

Q: Does Passports to Property charge a fee for international consulting?

Our compensation on international purchases comes through referral partnerships with vetted local agents and developers in our core markets — similar to how buyer's agent compensation works in the US. In most cases, our services cost you nothing out of pocket. We only succeed when you close on a property you love.

Q: How do I get started?

The first step is a free 30-minute discovery call. We'll talk through your goals — whether that's selling your DFW home, buying internationally, generating passive income from an investment property, or simply understanding your options. No pressure. No commitment. Just an honest conversation.

Ready to Take the Next Step?



Book your free 30-minute discovery call today.

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