

# [***Opinion: If Trump wins, I might leave America for good***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BXM-9731-JBSS-S14V-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Paris (CNN) &#8212; I've been an on-again, off-again resident of France for some 44 years, at times quite permanently, more often peripatetically, always in the same building around the corner from the [*Musee d'Orsay*](https://billetterie.musee-orsay.fr/en-GB/home) and directly across the Seine from the [*Tuileries*](https://parisjetaime.com/culture/jardin-des-tuileries-p3545).

We were never really forced to make a choice whether it should become our home, permanently. Now, along with hordes of our fellow Americans, we are considering just such a move.

In a growing number of cases, that reason can be traced to one proximate source - former PresidentDonald Trump. Or more precisely - how he has torn apart America and our democracy that, for my nearly 80 years on this planet, I have cherished.

And as I began asking ever more widely about this concern, my wife, Pamela, and I have found a growing sentiment that we are hardly alone.

"It's the first thing they say, 'get me out of [America],'" said Adrian Leeds. For a quarter century, through her [*Adrian Leeds Group*](https://adrianleeds.com/) real estate agency, she has been advising mostly American folks who are considering a move to France on how to find a place to live. "But now there's a real wave of younger people who are saying, 'we don't want to bring our kids up in this country. We really we want to give our kids the best. And we're very unhappy,'" she told me.

And the trend only seems to be accelerating. "We're up 100%, we've doubled our business year to date, January through March, over a year ago," Leeds continued. "It's going so fast the numbers are insane. I hear it every single day: 'Get me out!'"

Of course, it's not only France where such discussions are happening. "Beginning in 2020, we went from Americans being 5% of our clients to becoming today 70%," Patricia Casaburi, CEO of London-based [*Global Citizen Solutions,*](https://www.globalcitizensolutions.com/) an upmarket migration consultancy firm, said in a Zoom interview from Dubai. And most recently, the number of Americans "has only been increasing," she added.

To be sure, there are reasons for Americans to make the move beyond the prospects of a second Trump presidency. "When you have mass shootings in schools, they just trigger people to act on something that they've been considering for a while," said Casaburi. But, she added, "definitely the political agenda does influence people."

Tony Kahn, a veteran former producer for PBS and NPR, was sitting in a hotel lobby in Mexico City earlier this month making just such calculations.

"At the very minute you're asking me, I have mixed feelings about the extent to which America is my country," Kahn said in a zoom conversation between my perhaps not-so-temporary abode in Paris and Mexico City. In Kahn's youth, "Mexico took us in when America did not want us, basically. That is the fact of the matter. Mexico was always home to expatriates as long as they didn't practice the ***politics*** that got them in trouble in their own country," he said.

In 1950, at age eight, Kahn and his entire family fled to Mexico when his father, the renowned Hollywood screenwriter Gordon Kahn, was [*summoned*](https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/31/movies/how-blacklisting-hurt-hollywood-children.html%20/) by the feared House Committee on Un-American Activities over alleged communist ties to the film industry. He never ended up testifying.

His father was [*pursued nearly*](http://www.rightsmatter.org/multimedia/blacklisted/) to the end of his life at age 62 by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. Today, Kahn fears similar perils are not so far over the horizon.

"There's a feeling of safety that you have and a feeling of belonging in Mexico," Kahn continued. "I'm not afraid of a stranger going berserk [at me] there because I'm Jewish. At the same time, I'm not possessed by this feeling that I've got to get out of America right now before it's too late, but I'm getting close to it," he said.

Over the past six months, he's made five trips to Mexico City with his wife preparing for a final decision.

There are all sorts of avenues of escape, too. There are those who are simply seeking a refuge where they can work and live unfettered without any pressing need to acquire second citizenship. In France, for instance, there is a range of options - from simple visas that allow people to stay beyond the 90 days out of 180 under European rules, to the carte de residence (renewable every 10 years).

In most countries, like France, to make that next leap towards citizenship means learning the language and customs as well.

Then there are the [*"golden passports,"*](https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/politics/golden-visas-and-passports-the-global-market-in-residence-and-citizenship) where in some countries, broad categories or levels of investment can be a fast track toward citizenship, or a "talent passport" if you're bringing unique personal capacities.

"A lot of people now know what a Trump administration will look like, and they're realizing more than ever that the doors are open to live in another country and it's not as challenging as they thought it might be," Paris-based immigration lawyer Daniel Tostado told me.

Eight years ago, at the very start of Trump's rise to the presidency, Skyler Schmanski became one of these Americans making a choice. He'd come to France to study at a Marseilles business school. Now he plans to stay.

"I began to experience the quality of life that's over here," he told me. "Whether it's the education or the healthcare, but when I start entering that next chapter of life in my 30s, those things start to ring more true," he said. Now, with a wife and a career, and finally French citizenship, he has no doubt he made the right choice.

Schmanski recalls two pocketbook issues that were deeply persuasive. "I cracked my head open at midnight when I stood up under an armoire door I wasn't aware was open above me, saw blood, passed out, woke up and thought, "I should probably go to the hospital. But as a good American I went, 'no, I don't want to go to the hospital. I don't want the $20,000 bill.'"

"But my girlfriend, now my wife, said, 'go to the hospital, it's covered.' And I walked out with a 15 Euro [$16] bill. Wow 15 Euros. To sew up my head. So, I went, 'Wait a minute. Maybe there's a little something to the system over here.'"

Then there was grad school. "I went to business school, a very good master's program in 15 months, in and out for the equivalent of $15,000," Schmanski said.

The most popular destinations at the moment for Americans looking for a way out, seem to be Spain, Portugal and Greece, according to Casaburi of Global Citizens Solutions. She added that Italy was a popular choice for a time, but suggested that the [*arrival of hard-right*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/22/europe/giorgia-meloni-italy-new-prime-minister-intl-cmd/index.html) made some Americans question whether they might be risking a move from the frying pan to the fire.

As for my wife and me, a permanent move to France would not be such a leap - merely, as would be the case for many others, it would be an extension of the time we spend there today.

But do the next generation of Americans also see their futures elsewhere? "In the past, the conversations we have had with Americans is, 'do I need to go and retire in Europe?' but now the pool of people is a very different profile - younger families," said Casaburi.

"So, at some point there's a cost for the country when you're losing out on income taxpayers, but also talented young professionals," she added.

As Casaburi, herself a Brazilian who now lives in London, concluded, "Americans suddenly found themselves in a position where they feel that they don't know who their neighbors are or their family members."

"I don't think it matters much on which side of the political spectrum you find yourself. I think everyone's re-evaluating a bit of everything," she said.

As for us, much would depend on just what the nature of Trump's pledge to embrace the role of [*dictator-for-a-day*](https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/cnn-this-morning/episodes/2e34f63a-4ccb-11ee-96de-f377855a5691) turns out to be. As Pamela says, "it depends how safe we feel in the type of country he's promising - one that's no longer a democracy."

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