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### Class shows how to live, retire abroad

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White beaches. Palm trees.

Drinks packed with twisty straws and umbrellas.

And all this for the rest of your life.

Or that's the plan, at least, spelled out in one class at North Idaho College.

"It's relatively simple to do," said Michael King, who is teaching How to Live and Retire Abroad for his ninth time at NIC. "People can have the

retirement they dream of and live from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month, which you couldn't do in the U.S."

Retiring abroad isn't as impossible -- or as expensive -- as it sounds, according to King, a financial consultant at D.A. Davidson in Coeur d'Alene.

At his two-hour class, usually packed to the point that he has to shoulder an overflow class, too, he discusses options in foreign countries that expedite the transition across the border.

Popular locations include Costa Rica, Belize, Mexico, France and Croatia, he said.

And more.

"My purpose is to give people more tools to continue researching this," he said.

The first essential piece, King said, is making the decision to move.

For some that might be the hardest part.

"Understand it's not for everybody," the 42-year-old said. "In this country, things are very convenient. You can go to Super 1 Foods anytime. If that's something you need, this may not be for you. But if you like a slower pace, not everything has to be today, this might match."

He suggested a test run, renting a house or apartment for as long as possible in the target country.

Try to stay for months, he added.

"When the honeymoon is over, you have to live with the reality of how life is down there," he said.

After that, folks can sign up for retirement programs offered by countries like Panama, Belize and Costa Rica, which provide different visas for Americans on retirement funds.

"You just have to prove you're getting that source of money, and you can bring it in tax free," King said.

The appeal, he said, is a balmy location paired with low cost of living.

"It allows you to own a home near the beach in a tropical climate, and you can live from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month," he said. "That includes where you live, having a gardener, having a maid and going out to eat rather frequently."

There are options for younger Americans with a few decades to go before retirement, King added.

He said that more than ever, businesses are being run by owners out of the country, particularly Internet businesses.

"People get very enthusiastic in class, they ask a lot of questions," King said. "You can see their minds turning, looking at the number of possibilities."

Connie Tompkins, owner of A Travel Resource travel agency in Coeur d'Alene said she often fields calls from folks investigating retirement abroad.

"Mostly for cost of living, weather," Tompkins said. "I've seen people from all different financial levels, from those who can afford to go anywhere to those living on a fixed income."

Costa Rica and Panama tend to be the most popular choices, she added.

She's spoken with King about his class, and she thinks his instructions are sound.

"Would I do it? In a heartbeat," Tompkins said. "I would go for the different culture, and I would also look at it as a mission. The next part of my life I want to devote to helping people."

King said his class will address obvious concerns like avoiding heavy crime areas. He also covers health care access, as Medicare doesn't offer coverage abroad.

"In many countries there's local nationalized health care. It covers everything from pharmaceuticals to basic health care," he said. "There's also private health care, which is relatively cheap, especially compared to here."

King said he thought up the class when he was working for a Wall Street firm and dealt with clients living overseas.

"One day a person would call me from Chicago, the next day he'd call from his other house in Hong Kong," he said. "I thought, 'That's a pretty impressive lifestyle. I'll bet you have to be really wealthy.' But most were regular folks wanting their money to go farther by living in a different country."

King teaches one class from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 23. Folks can sign up at [www.workforcetraining.nic.edu](http://www.workforcetraining.nic.edu). The class costs \$19.

He has also written a blog on the subject, which can be viewed at: [liveanywhere.wordpress.com](http://liveanywhere.wordpress.com).

The 20 seats for the class fill up quickly, he said.

"I think for people retiring, this is an opportunity for another adventure," he said. "People really think they can live a life less ordinary."

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