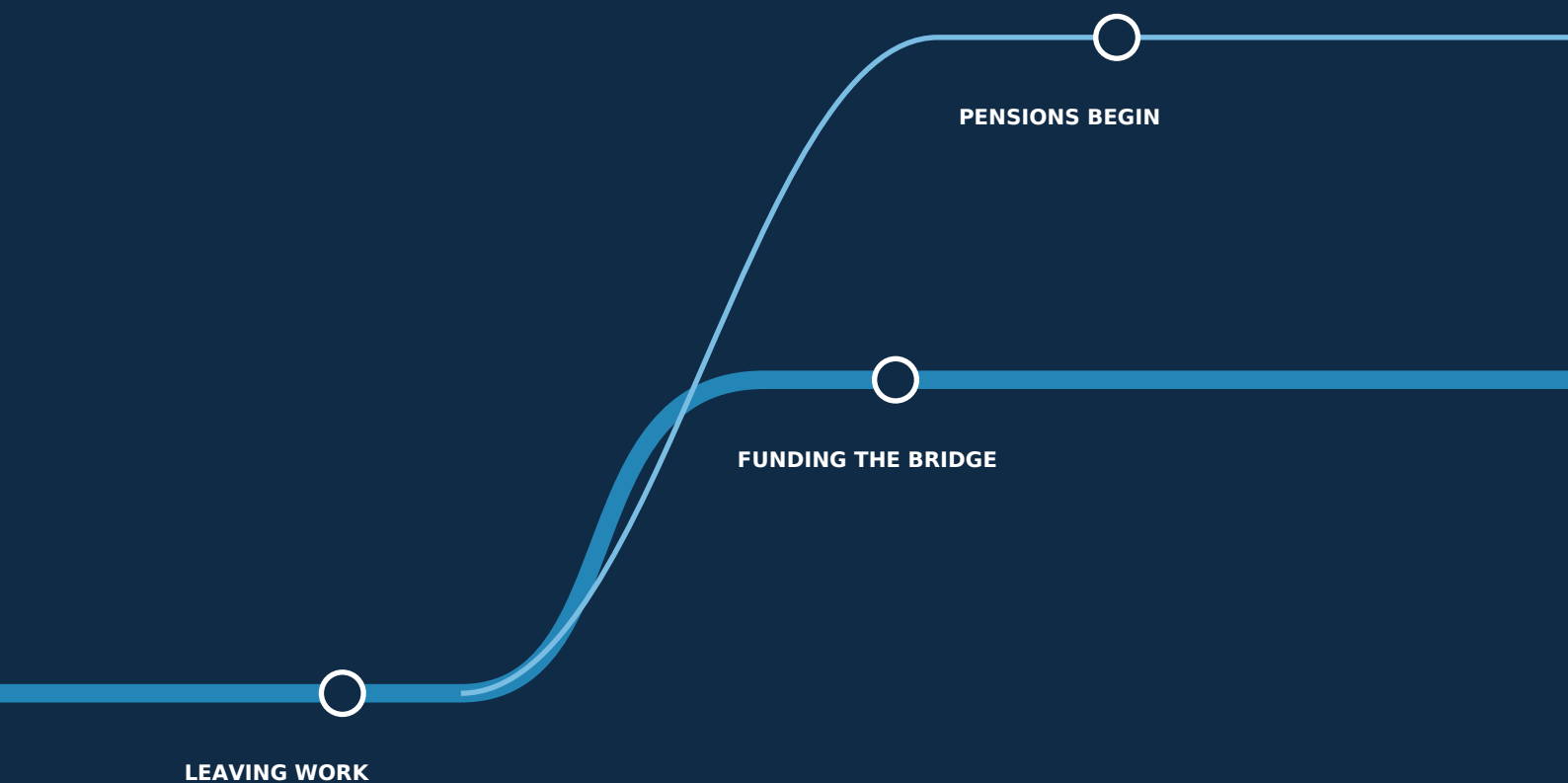


When Can I Retire as an Expat?

This guide helps you compare possible retirement dates and understand what would need to change to bring one forward.



Compare possible dates. Plan the transition.

Your retirement, your timeline

You can retire as an expat when a realistic funding plan supports the date you stop earning, the years before your pensions begin and the retirement that follows.

Your target date should reflect when money becomes accessible, how long it must last and whether you could adjust your plans if investment returns or employment circumstances disappoint.

For someone with pensions and investments across countries, these dates may be years apart. Leaving work, moving abroad and claiming a pension do not have to happen together.

Key Takeaways

Map when each source of money becomes available.

Fund the years before pensions start separately.

Compare full retirement, working longer and a gradual exit.

Test your target date against an unfavorable start.

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Which dates should shape your retirement plan?

Your timeline should bring together your intended last working day, pension access and payment dates, and any changes to residence or employer benefits. Each can affect when retirement becomes practical.

Start with a simple calendar:

Milestone	What to confirm
● Employment ends	Last salary, notice period and any confirmed final payment
● Employer benefits end	When health cover, housing support or other benefits cease
● Pension access becomes available	Scheme-specific access conditions and any early-payment reduction
● Pension payments begin	Your intended claim date, expected net income and processing time
● Residence arrangements change	Whether you can remain after leaving employment or move as planned
● Other capital becomes available	Realistic timing of a property sale, business exit or investment redemption

An access date is not automatically the best date to claim a pension. Request illustrations for the dates you are comparing rather than assuming the payment will be identical.

Also separate confirmed money from expected money. An unsigned business sale or discretionary bonus should not carry the same weight as funds already available.

How do you fund retirement before your pensions begin?

The years between stopping work and receiving pension income need their own funding plan. This pension bridge must use money available during that period while preserving sufficient resources for the years afterwards.

Consider a hypothetical expat who wants to leave work at 60 and expects pension income to begin at 65.

\$120,000

Five years at today's prices

Assume annual spending of \$36,000 and other recurring net income of \$12,000. The annual amount to fund before the pension begins is \$24,000. Across five years, that totals \$120,000 at today's prices.

That is an illustration of the bridge requirement, not a complete retirement savings target. Inflation, taxes on withdrawals, investment results, fees and one-off costs could change the amount required.

The pension's arrival may reduce the demand on investments without eliminating it. Calculate the remaining requirement after payments begin as well.

A large total portfolio can hide a timing problem if much of it is inaccessible during the bridge. Equally, using all accessible capital to reach pension age can leave the later plan underfunded.

ILLUSTRATIVE PENSION BRIDGE



How long should your retirement funding last?

Test each retirement date over a sufficiently long period, including a scenario in which you live longer than expected. An earlier retirement creates more years to finance and may leave more time before pension income starts.

For illustration, stopping at 55 and planning through age 95 creates a 40-year funding period. Stopping at 65 creates a 30-year period. Age 95 is a scenario to test, not a prediction or a point at which financial needs disappear.

40 years

Retire at 55 / plan through 95

30 years

Retire at 65 / plan through 95

For couples, the timeline should also account for the younger partner and the possibility that one person outlives the other.

A projection should explain what happens beyond its chosen end date. A plan that reaches that date with little remaining flexibility may need further review.

Use the later-life spending scenarios in [Retiring Abroad: Can You Afford It as You Get Older?](#) as inputs when testing a longer horizon.

How can you compare different retirement dates?

Compare several dates using the same spending, inflation and investment assumptions, then identify what actually changes between them. This makes the cost and benefit of waiting visible.

For each date, project the assets you expect to have, contributions you could realistically make before then, the pension bridge and the subsequent funding period. Show both a central projection and less favorable outcomes.

For example:

Option Stop work at 60 What changes Earnings end sooner; the pension bridge is longer What to test Can accessible assets fund the bridge and support later retirement?	Option Stop work at 62 What changes Two more years of possible contributions; a shorter bridge What to test How much does waiting improve the plan after employment costs?	Option Reduce hours at 60 and stop at 63 What changes Some earnings continue during the transition What to test Does the plan still work if that income ends sooner?
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The ages are illustrative, not recommended retirement ages.

Continuing to work can improve a projection through additional saving and fewer years of withdrawals. Investment growth during that period remains uncertain.

Ask what an extra year would achieve in your circumstances, such as clearing a specific liability, securing a confirmed benefit, shortening an unfunded period or creating a larger margin for uncertainty.

If reaching your preferred date requires contributions you cannot sustain, use a realistic contribution level and recalculate. Avoid making the date appear affordable by increasing the assumed investment return.

How could a market downturn affect your planned retirement date?

A downturn close to retirement can reduce the assets available when earnings stop. If poor returns continue as withdrawals begin, they can also weaken the portfolio's ability to fund the rest of retirement.

This is sequence of returns risk: the order of investment returns matters when money is being withdrawn. Selling investments after losses leaves fewer assets to participate in a possible recovery.

For your retirement date decision, test an unfavorable start rather than relying only on a smooth average return. Ask:

Set these responses while you still have choices. If a projection only works when markets rise immediately after retirement, revisit the date or spending assumptions.

For the detailed portfolio and withdrawal discussion, see [How can I avoid running out of money while safely spending more in retirement?](#).

Could essential spending still be met if investments fell around your leaving date?

Which planned expenses could you postpone?

Would reduced hours or a later departure materially improve the outcome?

Would your plan work without assuming a quick market recovery?

Could a gradual retirement bring your target date forward?

A gradual retirement may let you leave full-time work earlier by retaining enough earned income to reduce withdrawals during the transition. It should include a separate date and funding plan for when that work ends.

Distinguish between “I can leave this job” and “I can stop earning altogether.” They can be different milestones.

Model the amount you expect to keep after business costs and tax, the period for which you expect to earn it, and a scenario in which the work ends early.

Confirm that your residence arrangements permit the proposed activity. Do not assume remote clients or a small workload remove the need to check local requirements.

A phased plan is more useful when it specifies the work you are willing to do and when you intend to stop. Indefinite consulting income can conceal an unresolved funding gap.

Should you move abroad and retire at the same time?

You can separate the move from the end of employment if doing so helps you establish realistic costs and confirm practical arrangements. Combining both events requires the plan to accommodate several changes at once.

If feasible, test an ordinary living budget in your intended destination before committing to a final date. Include the expenses previously covered by your employer.

Coordinate departure, residence and pension-payment dates before making major transactions. Obtain advice on the tax consequences of the proposed sequence; a timeline should use the resulting net figures.

For that review, see [Cross-Border Tax Planning for Expats](#).

How do you turn a target retirement date into a decision?

Choose a provisional date, state the assumptions supporting it and identify the events that would trigger a review. The date becomes actionable when you know what must be confirmed before giving notice.

Summarize your decision in a short retirement date record:

Preferred date:	When you would like full-time work to end.
Alternative:	A later date or a defined period of reduced work.
Funding milestones:	When pensions and other resources become available.
Remaining uncertainty:	Any unconfirmed payment, sale or ongoing earnings.
Review trigger:	A meaningful change in assets, spending, employment or access dates.

Schedule a review before your notice deadline, with enough time to act on the findings.

Once the timeline is workable, use the Financial Readiness Guide to check the arrangements needed to carry it out.

What should your retirement date give you?

Your retirement date should support a life you want to begin while leaving reasonable room to respond when events differ from the plan.

Working longer may resolve a specific financial obstacle. It may also have costs for your health, family time or personal priorities. Comparing credible alternatives helps you see what you gain by waiting and what you give up.

The goal is to identify a realistic retirement date based on what your finances can support, while understanding what could cause that date to change.

For help reviewing how your investments and retirement income fit your intended timeline, contact Adam Fayed at hello@adamfayed.com or [WhatsApp +44 7393 450 837](https://www.whatsapp.com/business/profile/447393450837).

FAQs

Can partners retire at different times?

Yes. Model each person's earnings and pension start dates separately, then combine them into the household timeline. Include any changes to shared benefits when the first partner stops working.

Should you include an expected inheritance in your retirement date?

Treat it as uncertain until the amount and timing are established. Build a version of the plan without it so a delayed or smaller inheritance does not unexpectedly determine when you can retire.

What if you are made redundant before your target date?

Recalculate from the actual employment end date using confirmed severance and accessible funds. Compare a job search, temporary work and retirement rather than treating redundancy as automatic evidence that retirement is affordable.

This guide provides general information, not personalized financial, tax, legal or immigration advice. Pension terms, eligibility and cross-border arrangements should be checked for your circumstances.