



Home / Video / Lifestyle & Learning

Older Aussies flee cost-of-living crisis to retire in SE Asia



By [Desiree Savage](#), and [Eileen Wood](#)

Updated August 2 2024 - 5:23am, first published July 28 2024 - 4:00am

Save

Share

1



A couple enjoy a drink by the pool of the new Sullivan Retirement Residence, in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Picture supplied

There's a growing trend among Australian retirees to give away the humdrum life of the suburbs for a tropical paradise of cocktails on a wave-lapped beach, palm trees and a low cost of living overseas.

Fed up with sky-rocketing inflation, huge property prices, expensive rentals that eat away at retirement income, depressing news and the same old day-to-day living, many Westerners have taken up greener

pastures overseas – especially in South East Asia like Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia.

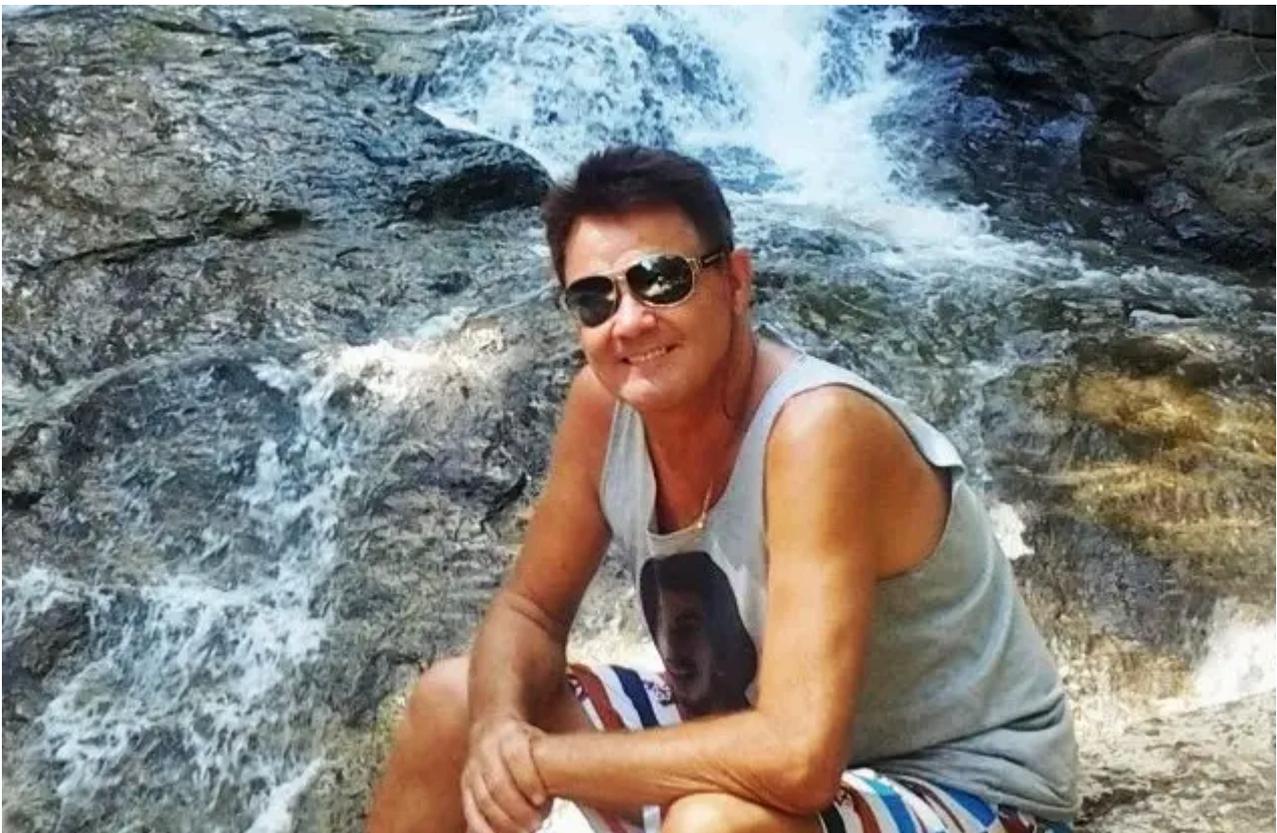
[Former chef-turned-author Gerald Hogg](#) is one of them, having found his retirement paradise in Thailand in 2017 after travelling the world for work, and he hasn't regretted a minute.

"In the seven years I have lived here I have never felt threatened or come to any harm," he told *The Senior*. "When I go shopping, I can leave my crash helmet and shopping bags full of shopping on my motorbike knowing that when I return everything will still be there."

In 2022, 130,000 Australians retired, with an average age of 64.8 years, adding to the 4.2 million retirees nationwide.

Authorities like the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) are aware of an increasing trend for retirees to relocate overseas but currently neither collect specific data on those living abroad, but people over 60 do make up more than a third of travellers needing help.

In 2018-19, Australians aged 60 and above comprised 29.9 per cent of DFAT's overseas consular cases. In 2023-24, this increased to 36.5 per cent.



📷 Author Gerald Hogg is living the good life in Thailand. He travelled the world as a chef but has now written a series of books on retirement and travel - all available on www.Amazon.com.au. Picture supplied

CHEAPER TO LIVE

Gerald says the cost of living in Thailand was a major factor to relocate and said his total monthly expenses are equal to what his rent would be in Australia.

"I live a very good life here in Thailand on my Australian pension," he said. "I rent a one-bedroom condo that comes fully furnished and equipped with cooking utensils, crockery and bedding for 10,000 baht a month (AU\$400.00). This includes internet WiFi, cable TV, a twice-monthly cleaning service and a change of linen. My electric bill is around 1,200 baht a month (AU\$49.00) and my water bill is 300 baht a month (AU\$12.00). The condominium block has a large swimming spa and a gym and has 24-hour security.

"Going out for a meal at my favourite venue I can listen to live music, have a meal and a few beers for less than 400 baht (AU\$16.00). My

monthly grocery bill is around 5,000 baht (AU\$200). I drive a motorbike here as I have no need for a car and I fill up the tank once a week for 100 baht (AU\$4.00). If I am touring around Thailand, I usually rent a car which costs me 13,000 baht for a full month (AU\$530) and this saves me the upkeep of owning and maintaining a car."

Gerald can't own land as he is not a Thai citizen but he can buy a condo if 51 per cent of the owners in the block of condos are Thai.

Health care for expat retirees is an issue, as insurance is expensive. However, it is not compulsory if you arrive in Thailand and then apply for a retirement visa, but, it is mandatory if you apply for a retirement visa at a Thai Embassy in your own country.

Gerald has never taken out health insurance as he says he rarely needs to see a doctor and while public hospitals are not free, health care is not expensive, he said, while dental costs are also cheap with a filling costing him just \$32. Of course, no paradise is without its serpent and for Gerald that would be how hazardous driving is as road rules are not enforced.

Expat John Nicholls currently runs the Rockwater Resort in Vanuatu with his wife Silvana, but the pair are preparing for retirement and won't be coming home to Australia.

John's research and number-crunching on costs, how to do it and which countries are most suitable has led him to create a Facebook community page "[Australians Retiring Overseas](#)" to share his findings.

"Australia has become prohibitive for a growing number of retirees with savings/superannuation/pension that would have been sufficient a few years ago, [and] is now far from adequate to live with dignity due to escalating living costs," he said. "From the data I found, it's obvious that [retirees have been settling overseas] for many years but unlike now, was not talked about."

"Retirees renting in Australia is insanity when one can find a myriad of choices with much better value rentals overseas."

- John Nicholls

John said "buying a home" in retirement back home was for the wealthy while living in Asia offered more freedom, a "variety and depth of culture" and up to 80 or 90 per cent cheaper.

"Natural wellness" is another aspect John felt couldn't be replicated in Australia, having experienced it first hand in Vanuatu. That is, decreased stress due to a more "simplified" way of living along with consuming fresh, organic foods of which many are sourced locally.

"Cambodia is my preferred country in Asia for many practical and personal reasons, but others may prefer Thailand or Vietnam. Each person will have different priorities which they have to investigate," John said. "Southern Italy, Sicily and Greece are other very interesting destinations with the added benefit of agreements with Australia."



📷 A group of people enjoy drinks and tapas on the balcony of one of the new apartments in the Sullivan Retirement Residence in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Picture supplied

PROPERTY OWNER

[Sullivan Retirement Residence](#) in Siem Reap, Cambodia is one of the latest purpose-built apartment complexes for Western retirees and is set for completion in August 2024.

The family-owned complex offers luxe living at a fraction of the cost, with residents enjoying furnished apartments, meals, onsite drivers and hairdresser, pool, bar and yoga studio. Sullivan also helps with visas, phone bills and bank accounts.

"[We] saw an opportunity to allow people to live a much better quality of life during their retirement in Asia," said Thomas Sullivan. "After conducting research we found that 79 per cent of people dream of retiring abroad, whereas 94 per cent of people who retired abroad said it was the best decision they have made.

"One of the main challenges Western retirees face is not knowing where to start, where navigating foreign systems and a new culture can be daunting. Therefore, we knew that we wanted to offer a unique way for people to retire abroad - more than just accommodation."

Thomas said their new 12-unit complex would be best suited to mobile and able-bodied retirees with an "appetite to explore and a sense of adventure".

So far, they have been "overwhelmed" by inquiries from a variety of retirees the world over such as the well travelled, those wanting a change in their lives, and those already living abroad.

Like Australia, Thomas said cost-of-living pressures were hitting his home country of Britain hard too, as well as a housing shortage for an ageing population.