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British people moving to Spain because UK a 'shit show', says expat estate agent

Graham Hunt, who works in Valencia, says business is booming among UK emigres seeking a new life in Spain



Graham Hunt, an estate agent in Valencia, says his business has boomed since Brexit (Photo: Graham Hunt)



By **Graham Keeley**

December 25, 2023 6:00 am (Updated 6:01 am)



Graham Hunt is a staunch Remainer, but **Brexit** has turned out well for his business in **Spain**.

The British estate agent has seen his business in Valencia boom since Britain voted to leave Europe in 2016, as UK emigres sought a new life in Spain and bought properties in one of the country's most fashionable destinations.

He has also benefited from a similar influx of Americans who decided to leave their country because of Donald Trump, gun violence and political polarisation.

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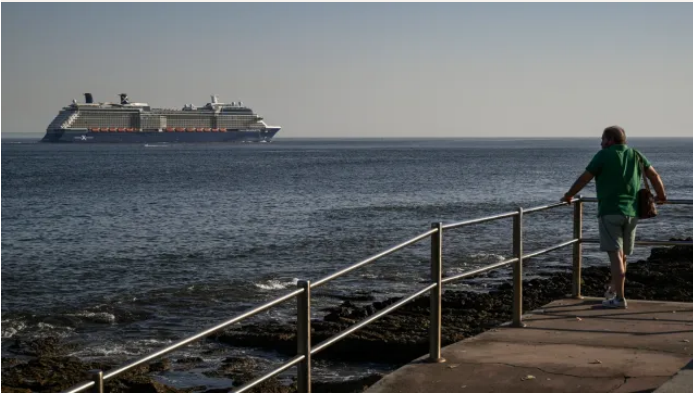
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“When we talk to Britons, they say they are coming to Spain because it is a shit show in the UK, while Americans say it is a ‘dumpster fire’ in the US, which means it is a mess,” Mr Hunt said.

New figures confirm that nearly half of Britons who have made their permanent home in Europe after Brexit have moved to Spain, according to **Eurostat**, the European Union statistics agency.

Since the Brexit vote, 850,000 **British expats** have received residency permits in European countries, of which 412,000, or 48 per cent, live in Spain.

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Mr Hunt, from Widnes, near Liverpool, said Brexit had changed the Spanish property market.

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British pensioners who want to retire must apply for a non-lucrative visa which requires a couple to show they have £70,000 in a joint account.

“Brexit has been good and bad. There were people who would save up their money and buy a place in Spain for €150,000 (£129,000). But that market doesn’t exist anymore,” Mr Hunt said.

“Many cannot afford to stay here because they have not got that sort of money for a non-lucrative visa in their bank accounts.”

However, the golden visa market was on the rise, with Britons buying more expensive homes to avoid post-Brexit visa paperwork.

“On the other hand, we have other people who spend €500,000 and get a golden visa. Currently this is indefinite,” Mr Hunt.

“Portugal is trying to get rid of it because they say it raises property prices. This is populist nonsense. Golden visa people make up a very small percentage of the market.”

Mr Hunt said in 2022 his company Valencia Property sold 60 per cent more than in its best year, 2005.

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Valencia, population one million, has cheaper property than Madrid or Barcelona, but has an international feel, so is attracting more foreign buyers.

“We have started attracting a lot more American buyers. It was because of the divisions caused by Trump. We thought after Joe Biden got in in 2020 this would change, but the divisions were still there.

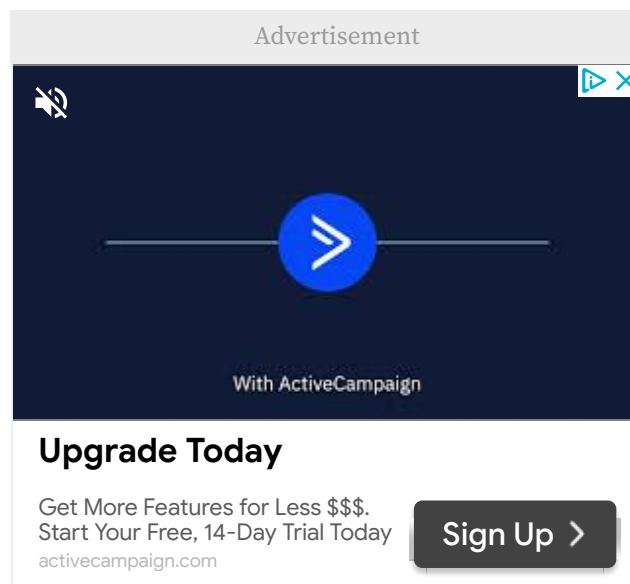
“Americans fear being in the wrong place at the wrong time and being shot. One client said the last straw was that when they got the uniform requirements from the school, they said you can buy your bullet proof vest here.”

Another American client said there was a shooting at a cinema in which four people died.

“They had been at the cinema the night before. ‘I am out of here’, they said,” Mr Hunt related.

Of Britons who sought residence in Spain, 99.6 per cent asked to stay for more than one year, Eurostat figures showed.

Britons represent about 11 per cent of the population of non-European Union foreigners living in Spain. At the end of 2022, there were 3.6 million non EU foreigners resident in Spain.



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Malaga was the Spanish province which saw the biggest rise in its British population in 2022, with 5,804 more than the year before. This was followed by Alicante, the Balearic Islands, Murcia, Tenerife and Madrid and Barcelona.

Moroccans are the biggest community of non-EU citizens living in Spain, with 844,111 at the end of last year. [i](#)

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