

SOUTH AFRICANS SEEK LIFESTYLE HEDGE ABROAD

Those who attended the annual Investment Forum held in Cape Town and Sun City last month were painted a grim picture of the reality of our country's economic and financial situation. Professor Carlos Braga of Switzerland's IMD Business School, believes that the country's downgrade to junk status in 2016 is inevitable whilst Kevin Lings, Economist at STANLIB Asset Management, said the only way to maintain levels of growth will be for the Private sector to step up. Essentially the Private sector will need to pay more tax and invest locally.

Tired of watching tax money ill spent by a corrupt government, suffering the effects of an unstable rand exchange rate and reluctant to invest fresh capital into a potentially junk status economy, South African citizens and companies have had enough.

James Bowling, CEO of Monarch&Co, a market leading company that offers residency and citizenship programmes, investment properties and capital investment in handpicked territories around the world, says interest in offshore investment has peaked substantially over the past six months. He says "More and more South Africans are seeking alternative investments abroad as a lifestyle and financial hedge."

This is supported by latest figures released by the South African Reserve Bank, proving South African investors continue to move money out of the country at alarming rates. The last three months of 2015 saw the longest period of consecutive quarterly outflows since the period 1994 to 1999, showing South Africa's net international investment position at R109bn in September 2015 and R714bn at the end of December.

"Residency and citizenship by investment programmes provide an avenue for investors with no links to any countries outside of South Africa to gain residency or citizenship through either a business investment or the purchase of real estate," explains Bowling. Gaining residency and/or citizenship through these programmes means South Africans can retain their current passports and benefit from the advantages of another country's passport as well. These advantages typically include visa-free travel, business opportunities and access to better education and health facilities.

Taking various elements such as affordability, resident and citizen benefits and investment and application criteria into account, Monarch&Co carefully select what they believe to be the most attractive programmes currently available.

A list of countries ranked by the above elements, and their number of visa-free travel destinations, are as follows; USA (179), UK (175), Portugal (173), Greece (171), Malta (160), Cyprus (156), St Kitts & Nevis (136), Antigua & Barbuda (132), Grenada (127) and Mauritius (123).

Bearing in mind that South African citizens can only travel to 83 destinations without requiring a visa, the travel benefits of the above listed countries are considerable, and all include visa-free travel within the Schengen member countries of Europe. Bowling further emphasizes that passport holders of the UK, Portugal, Malta and Cyprus can all live, work and study in any other EU member country.

Minimum investment requirement for residency programmes start at €250,000 whilst citizenship programmes require minimum investment within the range of US\$300,000 to €2,500,000. Investors can include qualifying dependents, such as spouse, children or parents, on their application and can receive their permits or passports in as little as 3 months, depending on the country of choice.

Bowling concludes by saying that a residency or citizenship programme can provide South African investors with lifestyle security and the assurance that they have easy access to the majority of countries within the European Union as well as an assured future for their children. Bowling ends off by stressing for investors to be sure to use a reputable company with a proven track record for this extremely important process.

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About Monarch&Co:

Monarch&Co International and partners, since 2007, have been pioneering the establishment and marketing of residency and citizenship programmes, investment properties and capital investment opportunities in hand-picked territories around the world.

The team at Monarch&Co has strong foundations in the property and financial services industries with a sound knowledge of the countries on offer. Their focus is on high levels of service backed by sound business ethics and investment options.

With each country that Monarch&Co work with, key partnerships are in place with legal, accounting, property, government and tourism offices ensuring that investors can be kept abreast of the latest information in each area.