

# q travel: with BARRIE MAHONEY

'Tweeters from the Atlantic'

*Barrie Mahoney was a head teacher and school inspector in the UK, as well as a reporter in Spain, before moving to the Canary Islands to launch and edit a new English language newspaper. He enjoys life in the sun as a columnist and author, and continues to write a series of popular novels and books for those living and working in the sun.*



It began with a dream...

**"It began with a dream..." was the first chapter of my first book, which told the story of how my partner and I found ourselves living and working in the Costa Blanca and the Canary Islands after careers as teachers in the UK. Like so many expats before us, we needed a change of pace and lifestyle and some sunshine; Spain was beckoning.**

That was seventeen years and twelve books ago. It was a time when many Brits were seriously considering utilising the equity built up in a relatively modest property, or a pension payoff, to look at buying a good value property in Spain, France or other European destinations. The pound-euro exchange rate was very strong in those days, which made even a meagre UK state pension go a long way. Living and working in the European Union meant that visas and work permits were no longer needed. It had all become so very simple to start a new life in a country of choice, and gave many the opportunity to 'Live their dream'.

Time has moved on; Brexit has now become a large part of the concerns that present-day expats living in Europe are continuing to deal with. As a columnist and reporter, I regularly hear from many expats who share their concerns about the future. Issues relating to health cover, finance, employment rights, pensions and property are just some of the issues that continue to give many expats sleepless nights. Sadly, I know of some for whom the continual stress has been too much and they have become ill and have already returned to the UK. For others, a return to the UK is no longer possible, because they are either too sick and reliant upon the Spanish health service, or no longer have the funds to be able to return to the UK.

Spain, in particular, has a stated generous policy towards British expats during this challenging time, but much depends upon reciprocity with the British Government. Much also depends upon the government of the day; nothing is guaranteed or certain once the UK leaves the EU. These are issues that are likely to continue for years and far beyond the remaining lives of many expats currently living in Europe.

To give just one personal example of an issue that many expats are beginning to face. Although we are strong believers in and users of the Spanish health service, we are also fortunate to have maintained good value private health cover whilst living in Spain from a company that I have subscribed to since I started working. This health insurance covers us for treatment both in the UK, as well as Europe. Despite good comprehensive cover for over 40 years, our recent renewal notice now states that cover will be given only from "300 hospitals in the UK" and there is no longer any mention of European cover. When questioned about this apparent change in policy, I was advised that we are one of a long-standing group of people whose cover will be maintained in Europe "for the foreseeable future". This could easily mean a change of decision at the end of the year, and will depend upon the whim of a company whose main interest will be profit. Apparently "maintaining European cover after Brexit may be challenging".

It is some of these issues, as well as others, that have prompted my partner and myself to decide to also return to the UK in the not too distant future. We both recognise that our Spanish dream is coming to an end and that we are ready to begin another new chapter in our lives. We have met many wonderful people and have shared laughter, joys and sorrows with so many over the years. We both love Spain and the Canary Islands and are grateful for the opportunities and wonderful life that these has given us, but we know that this cannot continue in its present form in a post-Brexit Europe. Nothing is for ever.

Despite current challenges, the expat dream will continue, albeit without the ease and flexibility of the past. There will always be those who will seek the freedom to live and work in a country of their choosing and not of their birth. People will continue to have dreams and seek to turn them into reality. Life is short and so it is up to all of us to 'Live Our Dream' in the best possible way.

*If you enjoyed this article, take a look at: <http://barriemahoney.com> and <http://thecanaryislander.com> or read his latest book, 'Letters from the Canary Islands' and Spain' (ISBN: 9780995602731). Available in paperback from Amazon, Waterstones and all good bookshops, as well as Kindle editions. Join Barrie on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/barrie.mahoney](http://www.facebook.com/barrie.mahoney)*