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“...the whole ball of wax. Everything. Cloning, nuts with nukes, epidemics; the growing knowledge that there’s no such thing as homeland security; the fact that we’re leaving our kids with a bill no one can pay. A sense of unreality in our courts so deep that they think they can seize grandma’s house to build a strip mall; our media institutions imploding—the spectacle of a great American newspaper, the *New York Times*, hurtling off its own tracks, as did CBS. The fear of parents that their children will wind up disturbed, and their souls actually imperiled, by the popular culture in which we are raising them. Senators who seem owned by someone, actually owned, by an interest group or a financial entity. Great churches that have lost all sense of mission, and all authority. Do you have confidence in the CIA? The FBI? I didn’t think so. But this recounting doesn’t quite get me to what I mean. I mean I believe there’s a general and amorphous sense that things are broken and tough history is coming.”

—Former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan (10/27/05)

“You could be living the easy life in Thailand...or indulging as a vagrant scholar in Indonesia...or at least raking in money while exploring Japan, Korea, or Taiwan. You could be teaching English in Turkey. You could be doing yoga in India. You could be drinking beer in Prague. And it really is better than the States. People elsewhere ARE more knowledgeable.”

—A.J. Hoge, Pattaya, Thailand

Had Enough?

Somewhere between the presidential election of 2000 (and its spooky 2004 repeat), 9/11, the War in Iraq and Hurricane Katrina, many of us lost hope in the redemption of the American political system or even the ability of our government to provide the most basic care for its citizens. The wall between church and state is crumbling, the two-party system seems hopelessly broken or an outright sham, and it's become harder to ignore the creeping apparatus of totalitarian control being erected all around us.

Stay and fight? Organize? Work for social change? All are honorable paths. Still, the machines that tally our votes no longer leave any paper record. Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root had been awarded a \$385 million dollar contract by Homeland Security to construct massive detention centers without any clearly defined statement of who can or will be detained there. The President of the United States has declared it within his right to spy on citizens he deems to be a threat, and the Supreme Court, the final arbiter of justice in this country—now with the ability, it seems, to decide elections—has recently tipped toward the ruling ideology. And more than abortion rights hang in the balance.

Perhaps it's time to consider your options.

It's not a question of whether you're a Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. This country labors under an \$8.3 trillion deficit (in 2006). Social programs have been slashed, infrastructure investment neglected, government assets auctioned off and privatized. The economy has been floating on a real estate bubble that like all bubbles must soon burst. Before America comes crashing down upon you, perhaps it's time to get out from beneath the clumsy giant.

Maybe it's just as simple as feeling bored, frustrated, and ready for something new.

But picking up and moving to another country feels like a step into the void. There are different laws, languages, cultures and even strange-looking electrical sockets to deal with. "How will I live? What will I do? Can I afford it?" The questions seem endless, the fears paralyzing.

This book walks you through the steps you need to take to start a new life outside the United States. We have researched the laws of citizenships, visas

and countless other aspects of living and working abroad. We run down the basics of how to move abroad, common—and not so common—employment strategies, and point you to helpful resources where you can learn even more. Whether you just want to escape to Canada or to China, for a six-month trial or for a lifetime, *Getting Out* will help you do it.

Of course, there are as many different ways of making a life abroad as there are expatriates. We have assembled the experiences and expertise of fellow Americans living on every continent of the world. They let you know how they've made their transition and offer tips how you can make yours, too.

Getting Out gets you to look at yourself to determine what escape plan would be best for you. By examining your needs, your resources, your skills and even your family tree, *Getting Out* shows you where you can most easily gain residence, citizenship or work permits. If you feel priced out of the American Dream, *Getting Out* shows you where you can live the good life at a fraction of the cost. You'll learn which countries would be most conducive to your lifestyle, your gender, your age or your political beliefs, whether that involves living in the deepest rainforest or minutes from a Starbucks.

If you're looking for Utopia, you're bound to be disappointed. All habitable areas of this planet come with their unique set of dangers, bummers and irritants. They are all ruled by some government and subject to all the imperfections thereof. On the other hand, if you're looking for a place where the drug laws are more liberal, taxes are lower or nonexistent, and the cost of living is a fraction of what you're paying now, we'll tell you where they are and how you can live there yourself.

Leaving the country sounds like a radical solution, but history has shown us that at times it's the most rational one you can make. Whatever your motivation, you're not the first and you're not alone. In 2004, the State Department released estimates that over seven million Americans live abroad, including military and foreign service personnel. The figure does not include permanent émigrés and those who don't bother reporting their presence to the U.S. embassy. The government does not keep or release statistics on how many Americans leave for good but the estimates are at least a quarter million people per year. If you want to consider joining them, then this book is for you.

So seize the opportunity and let no one question your patriotism. If you've had enough of what they're selling here and want to take your business (that is, your life) elsewhere, well, isn't that the American way? At any rate, it's not illegal. Not yet, anyway.

