

Vote ructions shortlived, British tourists, expats say

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As their compatriots voted to leave the European Union (EU) in a historic referendum, some British tourists and expats have started to feel the pinch of a pending Brexit.

A group of British tourists in Bangkok say the future looks uncertain after the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU.

Mark Morais, from Northern Ireland, said he wanted the UK to remain as the young are able to travel and work in Europe without visa restrictions. He worries more visa barriers will go up once Britain leaves. Northern Ireland voted for "Remain," as did London, and Scotland.

Mr Morais also said he was worried about the economic impacts, such as a weakening pound. Fortunately, the UK has strong fundamentals and as the UK enters a new round of trade deals prompted by Brexit, the economy is likely to improve.

"I didn't support 'Leave.' It is the wrong decision. I think EU members were quite shocked with the result. If you look at the demographics of the vote, most retired people wanted to leave. But for the young generation, leaving EU means difficulties in working in the EU," he said.

Karl Ashworth, a tourist from London, said it was a tough decision, but the EU's actions made a majority "dislike" the idea of staying.

However, he said the British love European countries and would prefer to stick with business as usual.

He was confident the UK would remain a good business partner with the EU and new trade regulations would be settled to improve business ties.

"I think the business partnership will go on as usual. Some regulations might change, and there we'll have to wait and see. But one thing is for sure, EU now faces a problem as many countries might want

to follow the UK. They are preparing their own referendum to leave," he said.

Rosanna Prince, from the UK, said one member of her family voted for "Remain" while the other two for Leave.

She preferred to vote Leave, saying she doesn't want to see the UK government shouldering a bigger burden in welfare payments for non-UK citizens who live and work in the UK.

Meanwhile, British expats can see no immediate effects from Brexit. However, they say Thailand now may look a more appealing retirement option than Europe for those looking to retire outside their home country.

Simon Landy, vice-chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce Thailand, said Brexit may have an impact on Britons looking to retire outside of the UK. In that case, Thailand could be a good option. About 1.2 million British citizens live in the EU.

Thailand offers many things that appeal, such as a low cost of living. "The only real disadvantage is distance. So for people who are looking to spend several months or a year in a friendly, welcoming, warm climate, Thailand is very attractive," he said.

"Much will depend on the nature of the settlements which the UK makes with the EU," said Mr Landy, who is also executive chairman of Colliers International Thailand.

Justin Moseley, managing director of Consortium UK, said he is "delighted" by Brexit, citing the difference in culture, language and laws.

"We don't know exactly what's going to happen, but I don't think it would make much difference," said Mr Moseley, who has lived in Thailand for 23 years.

He added that while more Britons might come to Thailand to retire, he is "embarrassed about the behaviour of some of the people who retire here now".

George McLeod, a manager at

PricewaterhouseCoopers, said one negative impact of Brexit will be the weakening of the pound, which fell to a 31-year-low against major currencies. However, the impact will be shortlived.

The negotiations over Britain's status in the EU would involve many checks and balances, and Britain would not isolate itself from its biggest trading partners.

Dominic Faulder, a foreign correspondent and author, said he didn't expect any significant effects of Brexit, apart from concerns that it would restrict the options of his children if they wanted to work in Europe.

"Immigration has been the biggest issue in the referendum, and if UK borders are enforced more strictly there might be reciprocal actions," said Mr Faulder.

"It might depend on how belligerent and vengeful the rest of Europe is inclined to be towards a former EU member that remains one of the world's most important economies."