

A FREE GUIDE FROM EXPAT ON A BUDGET

The Body Compass

How to hear what your body already knows about where you belong



A short, practical companion to the [video](#)

Your Body Already Knows Which Country to Pick

<https://youtu.be/iDA3Ydk6QPY>

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[Expat on a Budget](#)

First, the why

If you've been researching where to live for years and you still can't pick — you don't have a research problem. You have a signal problem.

You've been asking the part of yourself that can't possibly know to make the decision. And you've been ignoring the part of yourself that already does.

Your nervous system processes information faster than your conscious mind — milliseconds versus seconds. And it's been quietly storing data on every place you've ever read about, watched a movie set in, or scrolled past in a photograph. Your whole life. All of it stored.

So when you imagine yourself walking through a village in Provence, your body isn't making something up. It's running every association it has against the version of you sitting on your couch right now — and it's giving you a verdict before your conscious mind has finished processing the sentence.

That verdict comes through the body. There's a real word for it: interoception. The sense of what your body is doing on the inside. Doctors study it. Trauma researchers study it. You can call it spiritual if you want — it's also that. But it isn't only that. It's real, it's measurable, and it's been there the whole time.

THE JOB OF THIS GUIDE

To teach you what to listen for, give you a place to write it down, and help you tell the difference between your body saying “yes,” “no,” and “I don't have enough information yet.”

The five signals

Everyone's body is a little different. Most people will feel some version of these five — and you may also have a sixth, somewhere unique to you. Read through them once, then we'll do the exercise.

1. Chest / Heart Area

YES feels like the front of you softens. The space between your collarbones feels a little wider. You suddenly notice you can take a fuller breath.

NO feels like a low-grade brace. Subtle. The chest tightens, the front of you closes a little. If you're not trained to notice, you'll miss it.

2. Shoulders

YES feels like a drop. Sometimes a quarter of an inch, sometimes more.

NO feels like a hike toward your ears, often with a small forward hunch — a closing-in, an unconscious protection. Your shoulders are basically a stress meter that lives on your body, and most of us have been ignoring it for years.

3. Breath

YES feels like a deepening. The breath travels down into your belly.

NO feels like a shallowing. The breath stays high in your chest, near the top of your lungs. If you're breathing into the top of your chest while you imagine a place — that place is making your nervous system brace. That's data.

4. Mouth

YES feels like the almost-smile. The quarter-smile that happens before your brain decides to smile.

NO feels like flat. A small downturn, or just nothing. The almost-smile is the one most people miss because it's so small — but once you know to feel for it, you'll feel it.

5. Throat

YES feels like open and quiet. Easy.

NO feels like a tightening. A subtle constriction, sometimes a swallow you didn't mean to make.

Kimberly's note: This one is mine. I don't feel the chest expansion as strongly as some people do, but a tight throat? Always. My throat has been my no-meter for years. Yours might be too — or yours might be somewhere else entirely.

+ Your own signal

Pay attention this week to where else your body talks to you. Some people feel it in their stomach. Some feel it in their jaw, their lower back, their hands. There's no wrong place. Notice what shows up for you and record it on each worksheet under "Anywhere else."

How to do the exercise

The exercise itself takes about ten minutes. The honesty it asks for takes a little longer.

What you need

- This guide, printed or open on a tablet, phone or computer
- A pen if using paper
- A quiet room and if possible, the door closed
- Your real top three countries — the ones you've actually been considering, not your wishful list

How to do it

1. Pick one of your three countries. Write its name at the top of the worksheet.
2. Close your eyes. Picture yourself there on an ordinary morning. Not a vacation, a regular Tuesday. You're walking to get coffee. You're waiting for the bus. You're sitting at a small table by an open window. Walk yourself through it for thirty seconds.
3. Open your eyes. Before your conscious mind starts negotiating, write down what your body did. What did your chest do? Your shoulders? Your breath? Your mouth? Your throat? Anywhere else?
4. Don't analyze. Don't justify. Just record.
5. Repeat with your second country. Then your third.
6. Sit with what you wrote for a few days. Don't book a flight. Don't call your sister. Just let it exist on paper, where you can't talk yourself out of it.

ONE IMPORTANT RULE

If you don't feel anything for one of your three countries, that's also data. Neutral usually means your nervous system hasn't absorbed enough about that place yet — not enough photos, stories, or conversations — to render a verdict. That's a country to visit before you decide. Not to write off. Not to commit to. Visit, walk an ordinary block, and feel what shows up when you have actual data to work with.

The country I'm testing today

Close your eyes. Picture yourself in this country on an ordinary morning — not a vacation, just a regular Tuesday. Walk yourself through it for thirty seconds. Then come back and write down what your body did.

Chest / heart

Shoulders

Breath

Mouth

Throat

Anywhere else?

Pull or push?

If the thing I'm trying to leave behind got fixed tomorrow — would I still want to go here?

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WORKSHEET 3 OF 3

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Now read what you wrote

Lay your three worksheets next to each other. Don't score them. Don't add up points. Just look.

One country probably stands out

It will have more YES signals than the others — chest open, shoulders dropped, breath low, almost-smile, throat easy. It might not be the one you expected. It might be the one you've been quietly avoiding because you sense, somewhere underneath, that it's going to ask something of you.

That's your body's first answer.

Pay close attention to a clear NO

If one of your three countries gave you a clear NO — tight chest, raised shoulders, shallow breath, tight throat — do not override it because the country looked good on paper. The NO is data. The NO might be the most important signal you'll ever ignore. Most of us were taught to argue with our own bodies. Stop arguing with yours.

If everything was neutral

If none of the three gave you much of anything, two things might be true. Either you're still in your head and need to do this exercise again on a different day when you're less guarded — or your top three aren't actually your top three. Sometimes the country your body wants is one you haven't put on the list yet because it seems impractical, expensive, or too far. Try the exercise with that one too. See what shows up.

Before you do anything with what your body told you, there's one more question. The page that follows is the most important page in this guide.

THE HONESTY CHECK

A Pull Toward, or a Running From?

I have to ask you something difficult. Because your body picking a country isn't the only piece of this. There's one more question, and people skip it because it's the uncomfortable one.

“Is the place you're being pulled toward actually pulling you — or are you running away from where you are?”

Those aren't the same thing. And your body can't always tell the difference, because the body's “yes” to a beautiful village in France can come from genuine calling, or it can come from “anywhere but here.” Both feel like a yes. They're not the same yes.

Here's a way to tell them apart

Sit with this place — the one your body picked. Imagine that the thing you're trying to leave behind in your current life suddenly got fixed. The job. The relationship. The town. The political climate. Whatever it is. Imagine it gone, resolved, no longer a reason to leave.

Now ask yourself — would you still want to go? Do you still feel pulled there, even with nothing pushing you out?

IF THE ANSWER IS YES

You're being called. The pull is real. The country is genuinely yours.

IF THE ANSWER IS “I DON'T KNOW” OR “PROBABLY NOT”

You're not being called. You're running. And that's not a reason not to go. Sometimes running is exactly what a person needs to do. But you should know which one you're doing, because they end differently. People who are called build a life. People who are running often end up needing to run again — because the thing they were running from was inside them, and it followed them through customs.

I'm not telling you which one you are. I'm telling you that you owe yourself the answer. The country your body picked is real. But the reason you want to go matters as much as the place you want to go to.

Because one of those leads to a homecoming. The other one leads to a more expensive version of the same problem.

What to do next

The body picks the country. But the body can't do the rest of this alone. Here's what comes next — in this order, because the order matters.

Step one — The Country Filter

Once your body has picked, run that country through the practical filter — visa, healthcare, money, the whole reality layer. Your body picks places, not paths. It doesn't know whether you qualify for the visa. It doesn't know whether your medication costs four dollars there or four hundred. It doesn't know whether your retirement income clears the income threshold.

So once your body has spoken, your head still has homework. I made you a free guide that walks you through every question you need to answer.

- → *Download The Country Filter...*
- Fill-in-yourself version [click here](#).
- Printable PDF [click here](#).

Step two — The Tuesday Test

Once your body's pick clears the filter, simulate an ordinary Tuesday in that country. Not the vacation version — the boring version. The trip to the pharmacy. The grocery store. The 3pm lull. If you can imagine an ordinary Tuesday there and feel something other than dread, you have your answer. The Tuesday Test is twenty prompts that walk you through it.

→ *Download The Tuesday Test* [here: https://expat-freebies.b-cdn.net/TuesdayTest.pdf](https://expat-freebies.b-cdn.net/TuesdayTest.pdf)

“Body. Filter. Tuesday. In that order. That’s the whole method.”

One last thing

You don't need more spreadsheets. You don't need another video. You don't need permission.

You need to stop ignoring the part of yourself that's been quietly telling you the answer for years.

Close your eyes tonight. Ask. Then trust what you hear.

That's the whole thing.

— *Kimberly Anne*

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