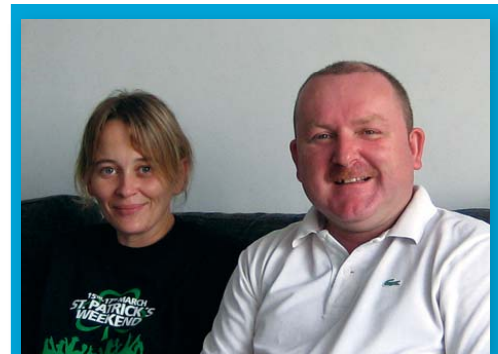


They did it



Names

Fergus Collins: Age 40

Hazel Shanley-Collins: Age 33

From:

Walthamstow, East London.

Budget:

None set

Actual:

268,000 Euros

Wish list:

A comfortable, quality house with a private pool, close to schools and work.

Actual:

All of the above.

There always seem to be new reports detailing the outcome of extensive surveys, in which supposedly up to 70 % of residents in the UK and Ireland, between the ages of 25 and 50, claim to be planning to move abroad to live.

I think though that for a great proportion of those people surveyed, it is and will remain merely a nice idea to lift their spirits when they are having a bad day with traffic or weather or whatever back at home. It takes a certain type of person to muster up enough courage (although some might call it stupidity!) to sell up at home and move the entire family lock-stock & barrel, a couple of thousand miles, to a place where you don't know a soul and can't speak the lingo!

In fact, looking at it that way, you can perhaps see why so many people are full of good intentions when answering questions on paper, but never quite manage the move in the real world. Today however, we are going to look at a family that are exactly the same as all those thousands upon thousands of others that admit they would love to move abroad 'in theory', with one small but significant difference.

They did it.

Fergus and Hazel were pretty much your typical Irish family; he was a tiler, she a dental nurse and they lived a comfortable life in Munster, County Kerry, Ireland with their 3 girls, Chloe 13, Kira 7 & Ava 3.

However, whilst life was comfortable they both felt unfulfilled and knew they were not doing what they wanted to be doing. As often happens, over the course of a few years they occasionally discussed the possibility of moving abroad somewhere and maybe starting a business although there was never anything definitive.

Then, a couple of years ago they took a family holiday to Lanzarote. They had in fact already been to Lanzarote a number of times as it was a favourite destination for the whole family. On this occasion however they hired a car and started to tour the Island playing the age old tourist game of "ooh! I wouldn't mind living there!"

One day on their travels they visited Playa Blanca and all of a sudden the game got a whole lot more serious. Instead of merely saying, "ooh! I wouldn't mind living here!" they started saying "Shall we live here?" And, this is the moment that separated Fergus & Hazel from the masses; they both said yes!

So, before procrastination had a chance to set in they returned back to Ireland and put their house up for sale. Just eight short months later, they had sold their house and their cars, had given up their jobs and had arrived back in Lanzarote with a plan for a new life.

The plan was simplicity itself; they paid six months rent in advance on a house and would decide whether to stay in Lanzarote and begin a new life and look for a business opportunity only at the end of this time.

Well, the plan worked perfectly for a while and when I say a while I mean in fact 2 weeks. After 2 weeks Fergus and Hazel both felt bored with waiting to decide whether to start a new life and decided instead to just get on and start living it.

The thing they both wanted was to open an Irish pub, as although wherever you go in the world you will always find an Irish pub, there always seems to be room for just one more. They were renting a house in Playa Blanca and knew this is where they wanted to be so started to look around for suitable premises.

Within two weeks of looking they found 'Puerto Muelas' a closed down Spanish bar opposite the church in Avenida de Papagayo. Another four weeks later and they had refurbished the bar, changed it's name to PADDY MAC'S IRISH BAR and opened to an expectant and thirsty public.

By this time, the children had started school and were settling in well and with the school day finishing at 2pm, Hazel was free to work until lunch time and then take the short walk to school and meet the children when they finished. They are also helped full time in the bar by Laura from Limerick, so you can tell this is a proper Irish pub.

Up until now they had not started looking for a home as they knew they would need six months trading with the pub before approaching a bank for a mortgage. However, with the Pub now working well, they started on their search for a new home.

With the pub and the children's school in close proximity, they knew that a similar location was one of the major points in a search for a new home. This geographical limitation obviously meant they would have less choice than most people do when looking for a home in the sun, with the whole Island to choose from.

Even though they knew they were restricted by area, they still wanted to ensure that they found the ideal family home in the sun that was always a part of their plans. So, they began the process of looking at pretty much every property in Playa Blanca.

But, it seemed that no matter what they looked at, the place they kept coming back to and comparing everything else against, was 'Residencial Los Chalets'. This is a brand new development of only 26 high quality bungalows and houses in an ideal central location in Playa Blanca, being built by the Spanish Developer UGR. Although Residencial Los Chalets is their first

project on the Island, they have managed to surpass most other developers in terms of the quality of their construction, their level of customer service and their selling price.

So it was no surprise when Fergus and Hazel decided that Los Chalets would be their new home. The property they chose was a two bedroom, two bathroom duplex with a spacious living room and well fitted kitchen. It also had a good sized plot and a private swimming pool. One of the other attractions was the garage; this was a whopping 25m2 making it ideal to convert into 2 further bedrooms, which with the appropriate planning permissions in place, they duly did.

There were also other factors involved in their decision to buy in Los Chalets. They actually knew a couple of people that had already bought on the development and moved in, so they had the benefit of learning from someone else's experiences. They also found that UGR Commercial Team, was very approachable, easy to deal with and incredibly helpful.

In fact, when they decided to buy, they told UGR that they would require a mortgage and would therefore need to start finding banks to talk to. They were a little concerned about this as they had no experience of dealing with Spanish banks and they were by this time very busy with the pub so finding the time to go back and forth to various banks was a bit of a daunting prospect.

They were delighted therefore when UGR offered to do all the leg work for them with regard to the finding and setting up the mortgage. After a couple of weeks they met up and UGR showed them the mortgage offer that he had negotiated on their behalf. They were delighted with the terms that he had achieved so agreed to proceed with the purchase.

They eventually moved in to their new home in Feb-

ruary this year and now feel that they could not have made a better decision. They are delighted with the house and have settled in to living there with out any problems at all.

The location is perfect for them as both the school and their bar are within a ten minute walk, a fact which reminds them daily of how much they love their new life as they never have to wonder whether the weather will be good enough to walk to school or to work.

As far as the house is concerned they have no complaints there either. In fact, Fergus explained that recently the head of the community came to visit them to pick up the 'snagging list' which is a list of any and all work that needs doing to finish off the house and correct any small mistakes or broken or damaged items. He left empty handed however as Fergus said that they didn't have one.

So, eighteen months on from their initial arrival on the Island what do they feel? Well, they feel happy, relaxed and realise that they are now, at long last doing what they want to do and living the life that they want to live.

And, it's important to remember that the only difference between this family and all the others that dream of a new life is that Fergus and Hazel took action. It's always possible to find plenty of reasons for not doing something now, for delaying and procrastinating. But, as Fergus says, "If you don't do it, you'll never know!"

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