

Real Estate: *The Universal Language*

Few professions offer as much opportunity, on a global basis, to connect with new people and create new relationships, as those in real estate. Not many occupations provide the chance to travel like real estate. The ability of a REALTOR® to control your schedule and pace of your business creates great advantages for travel. In another way, you are always “viewing the inventory.” This proves even more true today as global real estate transactions continue to gain momentum in the 21st century.



REALTOR® Perspective

Mark Ashworth



The Bangkok skyline along the Chao Phraya River is a quick reminder of the urban metropolis the Thailand city has become. Bangkok’s popularity among foreign real estate investors has risen over the past decade.

I love to travel and the real estate profession allows me to do that. My wife Brenda and I traveled to Thailand in 2015 and then to Turkey and Greece in March of this year. It takes very little time to connect with REALTORS®. In doing so, not only do you meet the nicest folks, but you always get tips on local restaurants and sites to view that may be off the beaten path or unknown to most tourists. Plus, you never know when someone may email or text with a prospect coming to your area.

In Thailand, we traveled to Bangkok, Chang Mai, Ko Lanta, Ko Phi Phi and Phuket. Bangkok is a big city with plenty of evidence illustrating the wide gap between the “haves and have nots” ... either mansion or hovel. Ko means island in Thai, and Ko Phi Phi is a highly desirable tourist island with the majority of the real estate opportunities sewn up. Ko Lanta on the other hand was a quiet island. Still, it boasted an obviously growing economy and many affordable land opportunities. Chang Mai, in north central Thailand, had beautiful countryside. As we rode to the rescue elephant ranch, there were many farms and country estates visible from the road. Phuket brought us back to big city life, but the streets there were lined with shops and living quarters either behind or upstairs. Opportunity is definitely present there to restaurateurs who see similar business/dwellings in the states.

Turkey was amazing and steeped in history. We flew into Istanbul on the Asian side, again we experienced the big city vibe with a dominating commercial atmosphere. Our Past President of NVAR, Kevin Sigstad, attended the MIPIM conference last February and commented on how the Turkish exhibit was huge and overflowing with projects for consideration. From Istanbul, we flew to Izmir, in ancient times called Smyrna, on the banks of the Aegean Sea. Again, it had a big city feel but once out of the hustle & bustle of downtown, you drive through a country-side of small towns and villages with farms and small plots of land in between. It was difficult to see real estate oppor-

tunity here unless you have farmers looking to relocate.

Cappadocia in central Turkey is much like Nevada geographically. It offered mostly historical tourist business, although the majority of almonds for the world market are produced in that region. The restaurant and hotel owners were always anxious to talk about opportunities in the U.S. Then we were on the road to Ephesus, where Paul preached to the Ephesians. The countryside once again was lush and we saw farm after farm growing fruits and vegetables. The exchange rate makes it very attractive for foreigners to relocate.

Greece, Athens in particular, was filled with what are known as “ex pats,” folks with citizenship in other countries who have chosen to live outside of their homeland, usually for economic reasons. We made quite a few friends and I have one lead from a hotel owner who wants to sell out and move to San Francisco.

I opened this short dissertation with the statement that real estate is a universal global language. Everyone we met, from a restaurateur in Istanbul to our historical guide in Cappadocia, wanted to talk about real estate in the United States. I suggest we all take the opportunity to get involved with our local board’s global committee as well as our NVAR global committee. NAR has some excellent information on its website regarding global real estate opportunities. Oh ... and did I mention that making real estate connections on your vacations may qualify a portion of the travel expense to be tax deductible? Check with your accountant.

Happy global real estate traveling!

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