

choose Mexico, Costa Rica or other places in Latin America and the Caribbean. Destinations in the Southern Hemisphere, such as Australia, New Zealand and Chile, while farther away, offer "snowbirds" the possibility of an endless summer.

### *Immigration and Citizenship Issues*

#### Country of Destination Regulations for Visitors

Retirees who live in another country for less than six months each year can simply visit that country as tourists. Most countries welcome Canadian visitors who come for recreational purposes, and a valid passport is usually the only requirement.

The United States does not require Canadian visitors to have a visa. The only requirement is that the immigration officer at the port of entry is satisfied that your trip is for recreational purposes, and you must maintain your tourist status while you are there.

Mexico is also open to seasonal Canadian visitors. A Mexican tourist card, which is technically a *Forma Migratoria de Turista* (FM-T) visa, is good for 180 days

and can be obtained at any port of entry.

Many countries have more stringent limitations on the length of time visitors may stay. For example, the Bahamas permits visitors to stay up to a total of eight months a year, but each entry is limited to four months or less. Costa Rica allows visitors to stay for up to 90 days. Some countries issue initial tourist visas for as little as 30 days. In some cases, you can lengthen your stay by applying for an extension from within the country, but this is not always possible. Mexico, for example, will extend tourist visas beyond 180 days only for emergency medical reasons.

Many Canadians are reluctant to settle in a country where they have the right of entry only as tourists, especially if they are planning to purchase a home. Some people deal with this issue by applying for residency status, even though they intend to maintain their Canadian residency. In Canada, residency is a matter of fact, not law, whereas in many other countries a resident is a person who has a resident visa or residency permit but does not actually reside in that country for a significant time. Taking out legal