

ANDREW FISHER

Foreword by TIM KOCHIS

THE
CROSS-BORDER
FAMILY WEALTH
GUIDE

*Advice on Taxes, Investing, Real Estate, and Retirement
for Global Families in the U.S. and Abroad*



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The Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide

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**ADVICE ON TAXES, INVESTING, REAL ESTATE, AND RETIREMENT FOR
GLOBAL FAMILIES IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD**

Andrew Fisher

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*This book is dedicated to my three wonderful children—Ella, Mack,
and Vivian. I love you guys like the whole world.*

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Foreword

Tim Kochis, JD, MBA, CFP®

For well over 40 years, I have had the great professional gratification of helping clients to optimize the achievement of their personal financial goals. The first third of that time was focused nearly entirely in the United States, and for clients with virtually no tax or investment or financial issues that extended beyond the U.S. border. Times, of course, have changed dramatically. Business, capital flows, and, importantly, human talent are increasingly globalized. Our clothes, our cars, our food, our neighbors, even our spouses and partners, often come from some other country; the same is true for residents of Italy, or Malaysia, or Chile. But, awareness of related financial issues and the optimization of financial consequences for those whose lives cross-national boundaries hasn't kept pace. In recent decades, I've been privileged to be a small part of a large effort to develop a global profession of personal financial planners, under the certification rubric of the CFP® mark. The number of these professionals and those on a pathway to this certification around the world now exceed well over 200,000. But this is a still tiny response to the immense global need—and, sadly, almost none of these have genuine competency to practice outside of their own country's laws and domestic financial structures. There remains a huge challenge and lots of room for further professional development ahead. Perhaps ironically, due to its size, prominence, and highly unusual and exceptionally complex tax laws, the biggest part of that challenge exists in, and because of, the United States.

So, here, finally, is a book that speaks to this most underserved set of personal financial planning issues! Andrew Fisher's *Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide* comes to the rescue of those many (perhaps 30 to 40 million people around the world, with 20 to 25 million of them in the United States) who may not even realize that they need to grapple with tax, financial, and investment requirements

and opportunities that are extraordinarily complex and often surprising, where mistakes are usually costly, and for which there is, today, almost no competent, comprehensive assistance readily available. This guide sets out an easy-to-grasp understanding of how to recognize the unique problems faced by non-U.S. persons with any financial connection to the United States (residence, job, inheritance, property, etc.) *and* by U.S. citizens with any parallel connection (residence, job, inheritance, property, etc.) outside the United States. But more than just entering into this sometimes nightmarish terrain, *The Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide* reveals proven pathways out.

Fisher is quick to acknowledge that he doesn't have *all* the answers; but then, no *one* person does—and there are *very* few who are even somewhat conversant with some of them. That is one of the core problems this book attempts to solve. Fisher shares decades of experience of practical solutions to very common issues and some that are uniquely challenging. And, he points the reader in the direction of more in-depth assistance where more specialized resources are required. For the many individuals and their families in need of this guidance, none of their issues are “common.” For each of them, the problem of navigating these challenges is direct, unique, and very often urgent. For many, this book will provide the complete answer; for others, it will permit a better-informed, more self-confident use of the additional advice that might be required.

The Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide makes an important contribution to the achievement of better financial outcomes for potentially very many people. The author's combination of talent and specialized experience is quite rare, but there is no attempt to self-promote or self-aggrandize here. Andrew Fisher's book reflects a genuine commitment to help.

Preface

The goal of this book is simple: to help cross-border professionals and globally mobile families to understand their personal long-term wealth management goals and align their assets and strategies to best achieve those goals, while minimizing taxes and other expenses, and reducing and controlling risk.

Whether you scan the table of contents, look for a specific issue in the index, or just read each chapter straight through, you will likely find information in *The Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide* that will shed light on critical financial questions and issues facing you and your internationally oriented family, including:

- Relocation, expat assignments, and immigration
- Banking, currencies, and cash management
- Real estate—both residences and for investment purposes
- Taxation in the United States and abroad
- Entrepreneurialism and business ownership
- Investments and asset allocation
- Retirement planning
- Estate planning

Every attempt has been made to make the information in this book as accurate, timely, and usable as possible. But since (a) every family's situation is unique, (b) financial rules, regulations, and treaties are constantly changing, and (c) international financial issues often involve great complexity, in almost every case it will make sense for you to seek out qualified, competent, and caring professional advisors to assist you. At least have someone look over your shoulder and check your assumptions; in most cases, it's worth spending the time and effort to find an individual or firm to work closely with. Please allow us to take this early opportunity to say a little about our firm and its founder.

Our Firm: Worldview Wealth Advisors

The members of our professional team here at Worldview have a passion for all things international, from travel and languages to culture and, of course, investing. That is, we were drawn to cross-border wealth management because we had a passion for international people, culture, and financial matters in the first place. We also enjoy learning and seeking answers to questions, which is a good thing, because wealth management laws and strategies for cross-border families are always changing and evolving. There is always something new to learn and apply.

Along with our international focus, our firm is dedicated to being a true holistic wealth advisor. We do not have commissioned salespeople who are always angling to make the next sale or otherwise generate a commission. Instead, we specialize in advising clients through a personalized financial planning process, for which we charge a fixed one-time fee. For clients who want our ongoing help with managing their investments, we work on a fee-based model—charging a small percentage of the total amount of financial assets that we oversee—which allows us to better sit on the same side of the table as our clients.

We abide by a fiduciary standard; we do what is right for our clients and put their best interest first. Because we employ a professional advisory approach rather than the more traditional sales-focused approach of most financial advisors and stockbrokers, we are able to focus our time on first understanding our clients challenges, and then finding solutions and answers for them. Furthermore, our professionals have the highest level of credentials in our industry, including CPA (certified public accountant), CFA (chartered financial analyst), and CFP (certified financial planner).

For over a decade now, we have operated in this advisory manner and professionally dedicated ourselves to learning about all of the issues and questions facing cross-border families. Over time, we have worked hard to consolidate much of what we have learned into the volume you are now holding. What you find in *The Cross-Border Family Wealth Guide*, then, is the result of our research and experience in working with hundreds of families with cross-border issues, as well as what we have learned from interviews held with dozens of cross-border experts working in this area.

Worldview's Founder, Andrew Fisher: A Personal Pledge

As a CFA (chartered financial analyst) and a CPA (certified public accountant), there are many directions I could have taken my career. I chose to focus on advising cross-border families not only because I enjoy the intellectual challenge and constant learning that is required, but also because I love meeting and getting to know the many exceptional people who come my way.

Our firm's clients tend to be extremely interesting, globally oriented, multicultural, highly intelligent, and well-educated people. They are generally very appreciative not only of the quality of the investment, tax, wealth management, and long-term planning advice that we provide, but of our inherent appreciation for who they are and what they have accomplished.

For all these reasons, I have personally dedicated myself to doing whatever it takes to make sure that we give our clients the best possible advice. For example, we consciously cultivate and rely on a large network of trusted professional partners and colleagues in many different fields, an absolutely necessity given that no single professional or firm can keep track of it all.

In just the same way that I have dedicated myself to helping my clients, I have also pledged myself to putting together the best possible, most understandable, and most useful book that I could. If you are reading this, I want you to know that I am committed to your long-term financial future and to helping you and your family not just survive, but thrive, wherever you are in the world.

Andrew Fisher

Acknowledgments

I want to first thank my dear friend and long-time business partner, David Colvin, who is with CLVN Tax and Financial Advisors in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. His friendship and our intellectual banter have been a constant part of my life since we met at university in 1989, and it was with his encouragement that I began to specialize in cross-border wealth management so many years ago. He taught me the basics of cross-border taxation, and our wealth management brainstorming sessions have been the single most important contributor to my growth over the years into an expert in this field. Thanks DC!

I would like to express my gratitude to Tim Kochis, who in addition to writing a terrific forward for this book, has been a wonderful supporter and mentor to me since we met in San Francisco. He is a big picture thinker and a true visionary for our industry. I really appreciate him taking an interest in me and in my vision for Worldview.

I have been fortunate to have gotten to know many respected professionals working in various fields of cross-border advice, including business and estate planning attorneys, tax advisors and accountants, bankers, HR professionals, immigration attorneys, association leaders, insurance brokers, and relocation providers. I'm glad to have been welcomed into the world of cross-border advice by these professionals, and many of them were very generous with their time by allowing me to interview them for this book. During these interviews I was able to learn about the most common questions and challenges they see among their clients, which helped me to expand the advice within this book greatly.

I want to make a special mention of the contributions of Russell Mansky, who is with Spott, Lucy & Wall CPAs in San Francisco. He has a vast and technical knowledge in the area of cross-border taxation,

which he so generously put to use in his review of certain chapters of this book. Other professionals who generously contributed their knowledge to this effort include: Jordi Argente, Shaun Dublin, Ming Fang, Stephen Foster, Jacob Glickman, Michael Gottschalk, Jason Graham, Scott Jones, Gary Kaplan, Eng Khoo, Vince Lau, Gopal Shah, Carol-Ann Simon, Carole Jodi Trent, Mark Walters, Mark Weaver, and Ajay Whitmore.

I'm lucky to have found a small but passionate group of employees and colleagues who've shared in my journey of building Worldview into the leading wealth management firm serving cross-border families. I want to acknowledge my current and former team members for their significant contributions to this effort, and for their genuine and unfailing concern for serving our clients and their best interests.

The cross-border area of wealth management is highly complex and is always changing. As such, to be successful one must be energized by the need to constantly research and learn new things. I've been fortunate to have a wonderful community of wealth management peers to rely upon throughout my journey. I'd like to especially thank all of my friends at the CFA Society of Portland, and in particular the people with whom I served on the Board of Directors for so many years. Also, I very much appreciate the FPA and financial planning community around San Francisco for welcoming me and for inspiring me to continue to make financial planning a larger element of my firm's core value proposition.

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About the Author

Andrew Fisher is widely regarded as a leading wealth advisor to cross-border families. He frequently writes and speaks to the unique financial planning and investment complexities faced by international families, particularly when an individual is a tax resident of the United States.

With a broad base of experience in international investing, taxation, and wealth planning, Andrew enjoys helping clients find creative solutions to complex financial problems. More than having all the answers, he prides himself on being able to identify the most critical financial questions clients face and then build a team of experts to find solutions.

Andrew is the president and founder of Worldview Wealth Advisors, an independent wealth management firm advising globally oriented families—both Americans living abroad and foreign citizens living in the U.S. In addition to leading the investment team, Andrew serves as senior client advisor. In this role, he assists families with their complex, multinational affairs, seeking to optimize wealth, which is often located in multiple countries.

Prior to founding Worldview, Andrew was an international stock research analyst for Montgomery Asset Management in San Francisco. Previously, he worked in international research at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (now Credit Suisse) and HSBC Securities, both in New York City. He began his career with PriceWaterhouseCoopers in Los Angeles.

Andrew graduated cum laude from Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo, with a degree in finance and a minor in Spanish. He also completed a year of study at the University of Madrid in Spain. He holds CFA and CPA credentials, and is actively involved with FPA and STEP organizations.

When out of the office, Andrew can be found enjoying the San Francisco Bay Area with his wife and three children.