Ask A Card

DECISION COMPASS

Lisbon or Chicago — Your Real Criterion

“Should I move to Lisbon for a remote-friendly lifestyle or stay in Chicago near my friends?”

Prepared for Grace · November 12, 2026



YOUR QUESTION

Should I move to Lisbon for a remote-friendly lifestyle or stay in Chicago near my friends?

THE SHORT ANSWER

Not settled — a small test will clarify it

The cards suggest a time-limited Lisbon trial is the most useful next move: the Ace of Wands confirms the opportunity is real and worth exploring, while the Ten of Cups reminds you that your Chicago friendships are a real resource worth protecting, not leaving behind. The Five of Pentacles names transition costs — social distance and logistical friction — that are manageable with preparation rather than reasons to stay put. Because The Moon marks key unknowns that only experience can resolve, a one- to three-month stay with your Chicago base kept accessible lets you gather real information rather than deciding permanently on incomplete data.

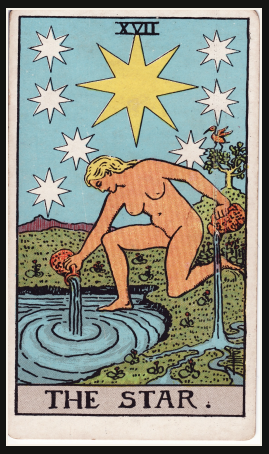
This reading was written with AI assistance around the cards you drew and the question you asked. It is a reflection to help you think clearly, not a prediction of the future or of anyone else's feelings.

Your answer, continued

As a planning suggestion, a checkpoint around four weeks into a trial stay would give you a grounded read on whether the daily rhythm replenishes you — that's your natural reassessment moment, not a deadline.

7 CARDS, IN THE ORDER THEY WERE DRAWN

The cards in your reading



The Star
The real criterion



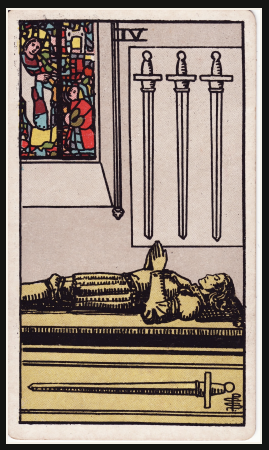
Ace of Wands
Option A · Move to Lisbon · opportunity



Five of Pentacles
Option A · Move to Lisbon · cost



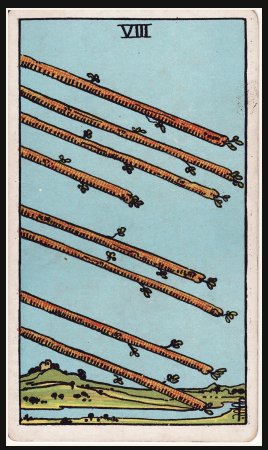
Ten of Cups
Option B · Stay in Chicago · opportunity



Four of Swords
Option B · Stay in Chicago · cost

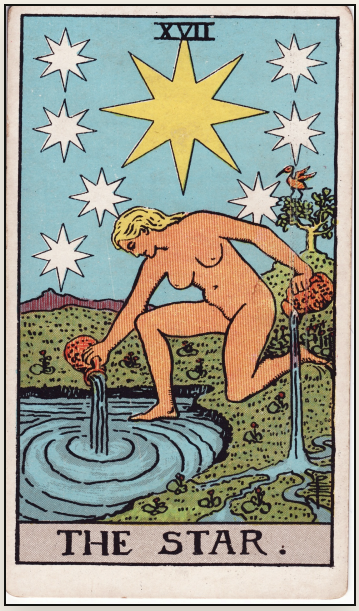


The Moon
What remains unknown



Eight of Wands
A reversible next step

Each card has its own page, then one page brings them all together.



THE REAL CRITERION

The Star

RENEWAL, ORIENTATION, CREDIBLE HOPE

What the card shows

A kneeling figure pours water from two vessels, one into a pool and one onto land. A large star and seven smaller stars shine overhead.

What it means for your question

The Star sits at the center of this reading as the real criterion — the standard against which both cities should be measured. Its kneeling figure pours water into a pool and onto open land simultaneously, suggesting that your deepest need isn't either adventure or belonging alone but steady, sustainable nourishment in both directions. The large star overhead offers orientation rather than a destination: it names what you're actually navigating toward. For you, Grace, that criterion seems to be a life that feels replenishing day after day, not just exciting in prospect. Before weighing Chicago against Lisbon, The Star asks you to name what renewal concretely looks like on a Tuesday afternoon when the novelty has settled. That answer becomes your measuring stick for every practical consideration that follows in this spread.

Try this

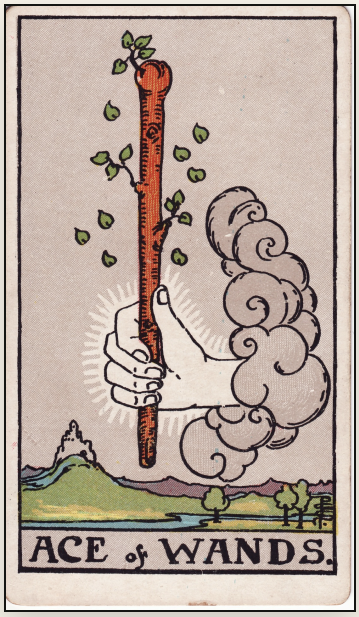
1. Write three sentences describing your ideal ordinary weekday — weather, people, pace — without naming either city by name.
2. Identify one current daily habit that reliably restores your energy and check whether it depends on a specific place or is portable.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What does a replenishing Tuesday afternoon look like for you?

WORDS TO KEEP

I know what steadily nourishes me when I look plainly.



OPTION A · MOVE TO LISBON · OPPORTUNITY

Ace of Wands

INSPIRATION, INITIATIVE, POTENTIAL

What the card shows

A hand emerging from a cloud holds a leafy wand. Small leaves float around it; a river and distant castle appear below.

What it means for your question

The Ace of Wands describes what moving to Lisbon opens up. A hand extends a leafy wand from a cloud above a river and distant landscape — raw, unformed potential reaching toward open terrain. For Grace, this card names the creative and sensory charge that a new city, a new rhythm, and consistent sunshine could provide. Remote work already removes the professional anchor that keeps many people place-bound, so the wand's energy has real traction here. Crucially, an Ace is a beginning, not a finished story: Lisbon offers an ignition point, the spark of living differently, but it won't do the building for you. The opportunity is authentic; the question is whether you have the appetite right now to convert that spark into daily structure in an unfamiliar country.

Try this

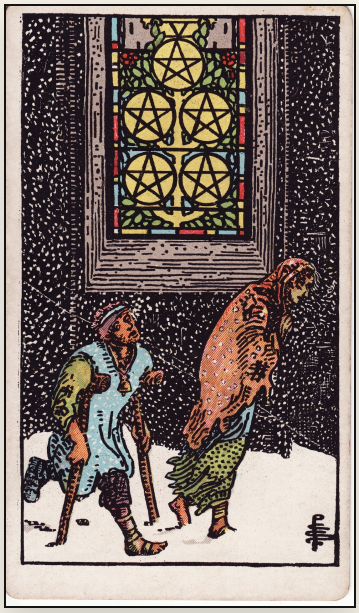
1. Spend one week working from a Chicago neighborhood you rarely visit, noting which new-environment discomforts feel energizing versus draining.
2. Research one specific Lisbon neighborhood by reading local expat forums for thirty minutes, listing what appeals and what surprises or concerns you.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

Which part of a Lisbon move excites you most when you imagine month three, not week one?

WORDS TO KEEP

I am ready to channel new energy into deliberate, grounded action.



OPTION A · MOVE TO LISBON · COST

Five of Pentacles

HARDSHIP, EXCLUSION, AVAILABLE-SUPPORT

What the card shows

Two figures walk past a lit window containing five pentacles. Snow covers the ground, and one figure uses crutches.

What it means for your question

The Five of Pentacles names the real cost of choosing Lisbon. Two figures move through snow past a warmly lit window — close to light and warmth but separated from it by circumstance. For Grace, that image maps onto the social and logistical gap a transatlantic move creates. Your Chicago friendships are built from years of accumulated trust, shared inside jokes, and the ease of being nearby. Distance compresses that richness into scheduled video calls and annual visits. Financial and administrative costs — visas, time zones, building a local support network from scratch — are real and deserve sober attention. The card isn't a warning that you'll be excluded forever; it's an honest note that the transition period will carry real loneliness and practical friction, and you should plan for that rather than be surprised by it.

Try this

1. List the three Chicago friends you rely on most and have an honest conversation with each about how you'd maintain closeness across a seven-hour time difference.
2. Research Portugal's D8 digital-nomad visa requirements and cost of living in your target Lisbon neighborhood using official government and expat resources.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What specific support system would you need to build in Lisbon before feeling at home?

WORDS TO KEEP

I can prepare plainly for hard patches without letting them stop me.



OPTION B · STAY IN CHICAGO · OPPORTUNITY

Ten of Cups

BELONGING, HARMONY, SHARED-JOY

What the card shows

A couple raises their arms beneath a rainbow containing ten cups. Two children play beside them near a house and green landscape.

What it means for your question

The Ten of Cups describes what staying in Chicago protects. The card's image — two people raising their arms beneath a rainbow of cups while children play nearby — is explicitly about shared joy and the warmth of belonging to a community that already knows you. Grace, your Chicago friendships represent something the Ten of Cups names precisely: a web of harmony built over time that is difficult to replicate quickly in a new city. Staying isn't settling; it's preserving a real and nourishing form of wealth. The opportunity here is to invest more deliberately in that community, perhaps in ways that the restlessness pushing you toward Lisbon has prevented. The Ten of Cups doesn't argue that Chicago is objectively better; it simply confirms that what you'd be staying for is substantive, not imaginary.

Try this

1. Plan one intentional group experience with your closest Chicago friends in the next month — something that reminds you concretely what this community provides.
2. Identify one way your current Chicago life could incorporate more of what draws you to Lisbon: a weekly outdoor ritual, a language class, a coastal trip.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

Which parts of your Chicago community feel irreplaceable versus which parts could you rebuild elsewhere?

WORDS TO KEEP

I deeply value the community I have already built around me.



OPTION B · STAY IN CHICAGO · COST

Four of Swords

REST, RETREAT, RECOVERY

What the card shows

A carved figure lies on a tomb with hands together. Three swords hang above it; a fourth appears on the tomb below.

What it means for your question

The Four of Swords names the cost of staying in Chicago, and it's subtler than the Five of Pentacles. A still figure lies beneath three suspended swords in an interior space — not suffering, but paused. The cost of staying isn't loss; it's a particular kind of stagnation if the longing for a new rhythm goes unaddressed. For Grace, choosing Chicago without also changing something about how you live there could mean that restlessness quietly accumulates. The card suggests that staying works best if it's an active choice paired with concrete changes, not a passive default that leaves the underlying need for sunshine and sea unexamined. The Four of Swords isn't a threat; it's a reminder that comfort and stagnation can look identical from the outside, and only you can tell the difference from the inside.

Try this

1. List two specific changes you could make to your Chicago life within ninety days that directly address your desire for more sunlight, nature, or rhythmic variety.
2. Journal for ten minutes on whether your restlessness feels like a call toward something new or a signal that something current needs to shift.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

If you stayed in Chicago, what would you change first to keep this choice feeling alive?

WORDS TO KEEP

I choose staying as an active decision, not a passive drift.



WHAT REMAINS UNKNOWN

The Moon

AMBIGUITY, PROJECTION, INCOMPLETE INFORMATION

What the card shows

A moon shines above two towers. A dog and a wolf face it; a crayfish emerges from water beside a winding path.

What it means for your question

The Moon marks what remains unknown in this decision. A winding path moves between two towers toward uncertain territory while a dog, a wolf, and a crayfish each respond differently to the same moonlight overhead. For Grace, the unknowns are real and worth naming: you don't yet know how you'll feel about Lisbon after the novelty softens, whether remote work remains stable long-term, or how your Chicago friendships will actually function at distance versus how you imagine they will. The Moon isn't telling you the situation is dangerous; it's noting that some information can only be gathered by experience, not advance planning. This is an honest acknowledgment that neither city can be fully evaluated from where you're standing, which makes a time-limited test a more reliable tool than a permanent decision made on incomplete data.

Try this

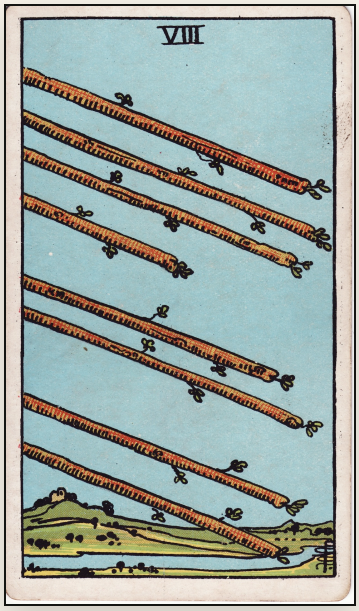
1. Write down your three biggest unknowns about Lisbon and identify which ones a one-month trial stay could realistically answer.
2. Ask a friend who has relocated internationally to describe what surprised them most after the first three months — not the first three weeks.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

Which unknown about Lisbon feels most important to resolve before making a lasting commitment?

WORDS TO KEEP

I can act thoughtfully even when I do not have every answer.



A REVERSIBLE NEXT STEP

Eight of Wands

MOMENTUM, COMMUNICATION, MOVEMENT

What the card shows

Eight wands travel diagonally through an open sky. A river, rolling hills and a building appear in the landscape below.

What it means for your question

The Eight of Wands is the reversible next step, and its image is well-suited to this question: eight wands move with clear momentum through open sky above a river and rolling landscape. The energy here is directional without being irreversible — the wands are in flight, not yet landed. For Grace, this card suggests that momentum is available right now without requiring a permanent commitment. A trial stay — perhaps one to three months in Lisbon while your Chicago lease is maintained or paused — would let the Eight of Wands' energy carry you forward without closing the door behind you. The card's movement also suggests that clear, timely communication with your Chicago community about what you're exploring matters; keeping that connection alive in motion is part of the step, not an afterthought.

Try this

1. Research subletting or short-term lease options for your Chicago home that would allow a two- to three-month Lisbon trial without fully giving up your base.
2. Draft a brief message to your three closest Chicago friends explaining what you're considering and asking one honest question about how they'd want to stay connected.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

What is the smallest reversible move you could make toward Lisbon within the next sixty days?

WORDS TO KEEP

I can move forward with momentum while keeping my options open.

What your cards say together

Short answer

A time-limited trial stay in Lisbon is the clearest next move: it tests the lifestyle you're drawn to without permanently trading away the Chicago community the Ten of Cups confirms is worth preserving.

How the cards connect

The Star establishes that your real criterion isn't geography but sustainable daily renewal — and that standard runs through every other card in this spread. The Ace of Wands confirms that the Lisbon opportunity is authentic creative and sensory energy, not fantasy, while the Five of Pentacles plainly names what that move costs: a real transition gap in the community and practical infrastructure you've built. Those two cards together mean the opportunity is worth pursuing, but the preparation matters as much as the destination. On the Chicago side, the Ten of Cups establishes that what you'd be staying for is substantive — a web of belonging that took years to build — while the Four of Swords warns that staying without changing anything could gradually feel like stagnation rather than a real choice. That pairing means Chicago only works as an answer if it's accompanied by deliberate shifts in how you live there. The Moon then names what neither option can resolve in advance: you don't yet have the lived experience of Lisbon after the novelty fades, and that information can only be gathered by being there. That's exactly where the Eight of Wands becomes the bridge — it offers a directional, momentum-forward step that doesn't require permanent commitment. Together, the cards build a case not for Lisbon or Chicago as a final answer, but for a structured trial that lets The Star's criterion be tested in real conditions. The choice remains entirely yours to make.

Which way the cards lean

The spread leans toward testing Option A — Move to Lisbon — through a reversible trial, primarily because The Moon identifies that the most important unknowns about Lisbon can only be resolved by being there, the Eight of Wands offers concrete momentum toward that test, and the Ten of Cups community can be maintained actively across distance in ways the Four of Swords stagnation cannot be resolved from a standstill. A structured trial, rather than a permanent move, is the card-supported direction.

What your cards say together (continued)

YOUR NEXT STEP

As a planning suggestion, consider arranging a one- to three-month Lisbon stay — ideally starting within the next three to six months — while keeping your Chicago housing accessible. A useful checkpoint would be around the four-week mark of that stay: assess whether the daily rhythm feels restorative or isolating, and whether the Five of Pentacles gaps are manageable. That's your natural reassessment point.

> *A trial move is a real answer, not a delay.*

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WORKSHEET

Compare both options fairly

OPTION A

Move to Lisbon

Arrange a one- to three-month Lisbon stay with your Chicago housing kept available. Track how the daily rhythm feels after the first four weeks of settled routine, not arrival excitement.

Evidence to observe

The Ace of Wands confirms real creative and lifestyle potential; the Five of Pentacles names transition costs that are manageable with preparation rather than obstacles that make the move inadvisable.

OPTION B

Stay in Chicago

Stay in Chicago for the next quarter while deliberately implementing two changes — more outdoor time, a new community or activity — and assess in four weeks whether restlessness has eased or intensified.

Evidence to observe

The Ten of Cups confirms the community you'd be protecting is valuable; the Four of Swords signals that staying is a real cost only if it isn't paired with active change.

Your comparison notes

WORKSHEET

What makes this decision fair?

The spread leans toward testing Option A — Move to Lisbon — through a reversible trial, primarily because The Moon identifies that the most important unknowns about Lisbon can only be resolved by being there, the Eight of Wands offers concrete momentum toward that test, and the Ten of Cups community can be maintained actively across distance in ways the Four of Swords stagnation cannot be resolved from a standstill. A structured trial, rather than a permanent move, is the card-supported direction.

My most important criterion

What I know from experience

What I will check before committing

When I will review the choice

WORKSHEET

Make the reading yours

> *A trial move is a real answer, not a delay.*

What fits my experience?

What would I phrase differently?

One choice I can make this week

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THE READING

Carry one thing forward

You're not choosing between a right life and a wrong one. You're choosing between two real things: the warmth of a community that already knows you and the pull of a life that might nourish you differently. The cards in this spread don't settle that for you, but they do give you a structure for testing it plainly. Trust your own reading of what the trial teaches you.

> *A trial move is a real answer, not a delay.*

What I want to remember

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