

The Best and Worst Cities for Expats in Switzerland

The annual Expat City Ranking reveals how expats rate life in 82 cities around the world, including seven cities in Switzerland.

- Zug (8th) and Basel (10th) rank far ahead of Lausanne (36th), Bern (38th), Zurich (41st), Lugano (53rd), and Geneva (69th) in the Expat City Ranking 2019.
- Based on the ranking, Taipei, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore, Montréal, Lisbon, Barcelona, Zug, The Hague, and Basel are the best cities to move to in 2020.
- Kuwait City (82nd), Rome, Milan, Lagos (Nigeria), Paris, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Lima, New York City, and Yangon (73rd) are the world's worst cities.

Munich, 3 December 2019 — Seven Swiss cities are featured in the Expat City Ranking 2019 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with more than 3.5 million members. They all rank among the top 20 in the world for the quality of life, receiving mostly high marks for safety, local transportation, and the environment. On the other hand, expats struggle to get settled, with Zurich and Bern even ranking among the world's worst cities in this regard. While the local cost of living is rated negatively across the board, the performance of the Swiss cities varies more in the Finance & Housing and Urban Work Life Indices.

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations, which is with more than 20,000 respondents in 2019 one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad. In 2019, 82 cities around the globe are analyzed in the survey, offering in-depth information about five areas of expat life: Quality of Urban Living, Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, Finance & Housing, and Local Cost of Living. Taken together, the first four areas make up the Expat City Ranking, which reveals the best and worst cities to move to in 2020.

Expat City Ranking 2019

Expat Life in 7 Swiss Cities

	 Quality of Urban Living Index	 Getting Settled Index	 Urban Work Life Index	 Finance & Housing Index	 Local Cost of Living Index	 Happiness Level
Basel 10th	6th	62nd	18th	14th	43rd	79%
Bern 38th	7th	79th	44th	49th	48th	78%
Geneva 69th	16th	70th	64th	75th	75th	69%
Lausanne 36th	14th	53rd	39th	57th	60th	76%
Lugano 53rd	19th	54th	74th	48th	53rd	70%
 Zug 8th	1st	58th	5th	32nd	63rd	83%
Zurich 41st	4th	73rd	36th	61st	68th	76%

The Expat City Ranking 2019 covers 82 cities in total.

What Expats Think about Life in 7 Swiss Cities

8. Zug

Zug is not only the highest-rated city in Switzerland, but it also offers the world's best quality of life. In fact, not one respondent in Zug is dissatisfied with the local transportation (vs. 19% negative answers globally), the quality of the environment (vs. 17% globally), or their personal safety (vs. 9% globally). The majority of expats in Zug is also satisfied with the availability (87% vs. 73% globally) and quality (82% vs. 65% globally) of healthcare in the city.

What is more, Zug is the only Swiss city that places among the top 10 in the Urban Work Life Index (5th). Close to seven in ten are satisfied with their work-life balance (67% vs. 60% globally) and working hours (69% vs. 62% globally). Expats even rank Zug first in the world for the state of the local economy (91% happy vs. 66% globally). However, the city ranks a mediocre 44th out of 82 for job security. In fact, almost a quarter of expats (24%) do not feel secure within their jobs (vs. 21% globally).

While Zug manages to rank ahead of other Swiss cities, expats still struggle to feel settled. The city places 58th in the Getting Settled Index, with 35% of respondents saying that they find it hard to get used to the local culture (vs. 20% globally), making it Zug's worst-rated area. *"I find that making friends is extremely difficult, and I am a very social person,"* shares a Canadian expat. In fact, 31% of expats feel that people are unfriendly towards foreign residents (vs. 19% globally).

10. Basel

Basel ranks 10th out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking, with expats rating the quality of life very highly (6th). They are particularly happy with their personal safety (93% vs. 81% globally), the local transportation system (98% vs. 70% globally), and the quality of the environment (93% vs. 71% globally). A Belgian expat particularly enjoys the city's *"central location, the good transportation systems, and the mountains"*.

However, following the trend across all Swiss cities, expats find it difficult to get settled (62nd). Exactly three in ten (30%) struggle to get used to the local culture (vs. 20% globally), and 28% do not feel at home (vs. 21% globally). This leaves Basel with a low 71st place in the Feeling Welcome subcategory. Additionally, the city ranks 63rd in both the Local Friendliness and Friends & Socializing subcategories. *"The locals are not really open to making friends,"* states an expat from Venezuela. *"This makes integration more difficult."* She seems to be not alone with her views, as 28% of expats describe the attitude towards foreign residents as generally unfriendly (vs. 19% globally), and 35% are unhappy with their social life in Basel (vs. 27% globally).

Out of all the Swiss cities surveyed, Basel ranks best in both the Finance & Housing Index (14th) and the Local Cost of Living Index (43rd). While 42% of expats are unhappy with the local cost of living (vs. 38% globally), 78% are nonetheless satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 57% globally). What is more, 46% find housing in Basel affordable (vs. 36% globally), and half (50%) say that it is easy for expats to find housing, which on par with the global average (50%).

36. Lausanne

At rank 36 out of 82 cities overall, Lausanne shows a mediocre performance across most areas of the Expat City Ranking 2019, aside from the Quality of Urban Living Index (14th). Expats are particularly happy with the quality of the environment (94% happy vs. 71% globally), ranking Lausanne sixth in this regard. *"I like the healthy-life sport options that are available, such as rowing on a lake, walking in the*

mountains, and more,” states a British expat. A further positive is that not one respondent in Lausanne rates the political stability negatively (vs. 17% globally), and 94% are happy with their personal safety (vs. 81% globally).

However, Lausanne only ranks 53rd out of 82 cities in the Getting Settled Index, and it is among the ten worst cities in the world for the Friends & Socializing subcategory (77th). In fact, 60% of expats find it hard to make friends in the city (vs. 35% globally), and 39% are unhappy with their social life (vs. 27% globally). What is more, Lausanne is also one of the most difficult cities for expats to find housing in (73rd), with more than double the global average considering this hard (66% vs. 32% globally). Housing is not only difficult to find; it is also expensive, as 60% of expats struggle to afford a place to live (vs. 44% globally).

38. Bern

Bern ranks 38th out of 82 cities overall and is rated one of the world's best cities for the quality of urban living (7th) but one of the worst for getting settled (79th) in the Expat City Ranking 2019. Similar to many other Swiss cities, expats are very much satisfied with the quality of the environment (97% positive results vs. 71% globally), their personal safety (93% vs. 81% globally), and the local transportation (97% vs. 70% globally).

When it comes to the Getting Settled Index, Bern is the lowest-ranking Swiss city (79th), and on a global scale only Copenhagen (80th), Paris (81st), and Kuwait City (82nd) do worse. Close to three in five expats (58%) find it hard to make new friends in Bern (vs. 35% globally). This may contribute to the share of 37% who are unhappy with their social life in Bern (vs. 27% globally).

Expats show mixed feelings in the Urban Work Life Index (44th). On the one hand, 71% are happy with their job security (vs. 59% globally), and 89% rate the state of the economy positively (vs. 66% globally), placing the city sixth overall in the Job Security subcategory. On the other hand, only 58% are satisfied with their job in general (vs. 64% globally), and 37% feel there is a lack of career opportunities (vs. 27% globally), resulting in a low 75th place in the Job & Career subcategory. *“There are limited job opportunities for women, for example in engineering,”* shares an expat from Poland, adding *“there is also short maternity leave and no possibility of sharing the childcare with a partner”*.

41. Zurich

Placing 41st in the Expat City Ranking 2019, Zurich confirms its reputation of being an expensive place to live in: the city ranks 68th out of 82 cities in the Local Cost of Living Index and 61st in the Finance & Housing Index. In fact, Geneva is the only Swiss city that ranks even worse for both. More than half the expats in Zurich (51%) say it is hard for expats to find housing there (vs. 32% globally), and 62% consider accommodation unaffordable (vs. 44% globally). *“Life in Zurich can be expensive, but this also means a high quality of life, as long as the salary is adequate,”* states an expat from Italy. Zurich ranks indeed fourth worldwide for the quality of life, only beaten by and Taipei (3rd), Tokyo (2nd.), and Zug (1st.). Expats in Zurich, for example, feel very safe (95% vs. 81% globally) and are happy with the quality of the environment (92% positive ratings vs. 71% globally).

However, Zurich continues to be a tough place to be when it comes to getting settled (73rd). Just 57% of expats feel at home in the city (vs. 64% globally), and over a third (35%) are unhappy with their social life (vs. 27% globally). This might be due to the fact that more than half (52%) find it hard to make new friends (vs. 35% globally), and it does not help that 36% of expats in Zurich describe the attitude towards foreign residents as generally unfriendly (vs. 19% globally). *“It is very difficult to mingle*

with and get to know locals and form friendships,” says a German expat. “For colleagues from other countries, this is even harder.”

53. Lugano

Lugano, which places 53rd out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking, seems to be a safe and stable city for expats, coming third in the Safety & Politics subcategory, only beaten by Singapore (2nd) and fellow Swiss city, Zug (1st). In fact, 97% of expats feel safe in Lugano (vs. 81% globally), with almost three-quarters (73%) rating their personal safety as *very good*. A Macedonian expat emphasizes that *“there is a general feeling of safety and peacefulness”* in Lugano.

However, the same cannot be said when it comes to job security: more than three in ten (31%) rate this factor negatively (vs. 21% globally), placing the city 74th worldwide. Close to one-quarter (24%) also rate the local economy negatively (vs. 15% globally). In fact, Lugano ranks 58th for the latter, which is by far the worst among all Swiss cities featured in the ranking. In addition, almost a third of expats (31%) are generally unhappy with their jobs (vs. 19% globally), and 55% give Lugano a negative rating when it comes to local career opportunities (vs. 27% globally).

69. Geneva

Geneva is the worst-rated Swiss city in the Expat City Ranking and places 69th out of 82 cities worldwide. While all Swiss cities are considered expensive, Geneva is the only one that ranks among the ten worst destinations in the world in the Finance & Housing as well as Local Cost of Living Indices (75th for both). More than seven in ten expats (71%) are unhappy with the local cost of living, which is nearly twice the global average (38%). What is more, housing is not only considered unaffordable (78% negative ratings vs. 44% globally), but it is also difficult to find (70% vs. 32% globally). There is a *“lack of quality and affordable housing,”* states a Nigerian respondent, and a US American expat explains: *“The cost of living is way too high for what the country actually offers. Specifically, in regard to childcare options, housing, and health insurance.”* In fact, 65% of expats in Geneva find healthcare too expensive (vs. 26% globally).

Expats also struggle to settle into life in Geneva (70th). Together with Zurich (76th), Lausanne (77th), and Bern (78th), Geneva is, at rank 79, one of the world’s worst cities in the Friends & Socializing subcategory. In fact, 42% of expats are unhappy with their social life (vs. 27% globally), ahead of only Kuwait City (82nd) and Stockholm (81st). What is more, over a third (35%) find the population in Geneva generally unfriendly (vs. 19% globally), and 32% do not feel at home in the city. This is not only eleven percentage points more than the global average (21%) but is also the highest share among all Swiss cities featured in the Expat City Ranking.

On the bright side, expats enjoy the high quality of life that Geneva offers (16th). They find the city safe (90% vs. 81% globally), enjoy the quality of the environment (89% vs. 71% globally), and are happy with the local transportation (91% vs. 70% globally) — three in five respondents (60%) even give Geneva the best possible rating for this factor (vs. 36% globally)!

About the Expat City Ranking 2019

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual [Expat Insider survey](#) by InterNations. For the survey, more than 20,000 expatriates representing 178 nationalities and living in 187 countries or territories provided information on various aspects of expat life. In addition to their satisfaction with life in their

host country, respondents were also invited to share their opinions on the city they are currently living in.

Participants were asked to rate more than 25 different aspects of urban life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized the respondents' personal satisfaction with these aspects and considered both emotional topics as well as more factual aspects with equal weight. The respondents' ratings of the individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 13 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up four topical indices: Quality of Urban Living, Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, and Finance & Housing. These were further averaged in order to rank 82 cities worldwide. In 2019, the top 10 cities for expats are Taipei, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore, Montréal, Lisbon, Barcelona, Zug, The Hague, and Basel. The survey also includes a Local Cost of Living Index, which does, however, not factor into the overall ranking to avoid overrepresenting financial aspects.

For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2019, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per city was required.

About InterNations

With more than 3.5 million members in 420 cities around the world, InterNations (www.internations.org) is the largest global community and information site for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking both online and face-to-face. At around 6,000 official events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include country and city guides created by a team of professional writers, guest contributions about life abroad, and discussion forums to help members with topics such as the local job or housing search. InterNations membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust.

Find more information about InterNations on our [press page](#), in our [company blog](#), or in our [magazine](#).

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