

## The Best and Worst Cities for Expats in the USA

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

- *Miami (27th), Houston (35th), and Chicago (37th) rank far ahead of Boston (58th), New York City (74th), Los Angeles (76th), and San Francisco (77th) 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 US American cities are featured in the Expat City Ranking 2019 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with more than 3.5 million members. While none of them makes it in the top 20, New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco even land among the world's ten worst cities in the eyes of expats. Expats tend to find it easy to get settled in the US American cities but are unhappy with the quality of life, especially when it comes to health and safety. What is more, four out of the seven cities surveyed (Boston, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago) rank among the top 10 worldwide for local career prospects, but three (New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco) can be found in the bottom 10 for working hours.

### Expat City Ranking 2019

## Expat Life in 7 US American Cities

	 Quality of Urban Living Index	 Getting Settled Index	 Urban Work Life Index	 Finance & Housing Index	 Local Cost of Living Index	 Happiness Level
<b>Boston, MA</b> 58th	65th	33rd	33rd	66th	77th	67%
<b>Chicago, IL</b> 37th	64th	28th	54th	18th	37th	83%
<b>Houston, TX</b> 35th	78th	14th	28th	9th	7th	72%
<b>Los Angeles, CA</b> 76th	74th	38th	68th	74th	73rd	65%
 <b>Miami, FL</b> 27th	55th	8th	41st	37th	55th	80%
<b>New York, NY</b> 74th	66th	42nd	56th	73rd	81st	69%
<b>San Francisco, CA</b> 77th	68th	30th	59th	81st	82nd	74%

The Expat City Ranking 2019 covers 82 cities in total.

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.

## What Expats Think about Life in 7 US American Cities

### 27. Miami, FL

With a 27th place out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2019, Miami is the easiest US American city to settle in as an expat, ranking 8th worldwide in the respective index. Miami even places second worldwide in the Feeling Welcome subcategory — only beaten by Madrid — with three-quarters of expats (75%) saying they feel at home in the city (vs. 64% globally). What is more, the city ranks by far the highest among all US American cities in the Friends & Socializing subcategory (12th): almost two-thirds of expats (66%) are satisfied with their social life (vs. 55% globally). When asked about the highlights of life in Miami, one Belgian expat says that *“people are much friendlier than in Belgium”*, and a Salvadoran expat shares that *“life here is amazing because this is a melting pot with all kinds of people”*. In fact, 66% of expats find the attitude towards foreign residents in Miami to be generally friendly (vs. 64% globally). Moreover, the local climate and weather remain one of Miami’s best features (2nd), only outranked by Barcelona. Nine in ten expats (90%) rate this factor positively (vs. 59% globally), and 74% even say it could not be any better (vs. 22% globally).

On the downside, Miami comes in 71st place for local transportation, with almost half the expats (49%) rating this factor negatively (vs. 19% globally). One French expat in Miami shares *“heavy traffic”* as their main dislike of their life abroad. As Miami also ranks low for factors such as the availability of healthcare (70th) or personal safety (53rd), the city only places 55th worldwide in the Quality of Urban Living Index overall.

### 35. Houston, TX

While Houston ranks an overall 35th place out of 82 cities, expats name it the best US American city in the Finance & Housing Index (9th worldwide). Over three in five respondents (63%) are generally satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 57% globally), and 59% find housing affordable (vs. 36% globally). This makes Houston the most affordable city in terms of housing out of all US American cities featured, ranking third worldwide for this factor and far ahead of cities like New York (77th) or San Francisco (82nd). Searching for housing (13th) is not a worry for expats in Houston, either, as 70% find it generally easy (vs. 50% globally). Moreover, Houston performs well at providing local career opportunities (7th), though the city lands on a 28th place in the Urban Work Life Index due to the low ranking in the Work-Life Balance subcategory (64th). In fact, one-quarter of expats (25%) are unhappy with the work-life balance (vs. 21% globally).

Houston ranks in the bottom 10 when it comes to the quality of urban living (78th). It even comes in second to last for local transportation (81st), while the title for worst goes to Lagos, Nigeria. Almost three-quarters (72%) rate the local transportation negatively (vs. 19% globally), with 38% even regarding it as *very bad*. *“I wish walking on the streets would be easier”*, says a German expat, and one Argentinian expat shares *“road toll”* as their most disliked feature of Houston.

### 37. Chicago, IL

Close behind Houston, Chicago ranks 37th out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2019. It places in the top 10 cities worldwide for local career opportunities (9th), alongside Boston (1st), San Francisco (2nd), and Houston (7th). Over seven in ten expats (72%) are generally satisfied with their career

prospects (vs. 51% globally), and one Ukrainian expat particularly appreciates that there are *“opportunities to grow professionally”*. However, Chicago only ranks 54th in the Urban Work Life Index overall due to a lower performance in the Job Security (66th) and Work-Life Balance subcategories (65th). For example, more than one-quarter of expats (26%) rate the state of the local economy negatively (vs. 15% globally).

It is, however, the Quality of Urban Living Index in which Chicago ranks worst (64th). It is the USA's lowest ranking city in the Safety & Politics subcategory (69th) — although close to San Francisco (67th) and Los Angeles (66th) — and even among the bottom 10 cities worldwide for personal safety (73rd). In fact, 26% state to feel unsafe in the city (vs. 9% globally). When asked about what they dislike living in Chicago, one Australian expat shares *“gun violence”* and another mentions *“weapons in the street”*.

### **58. Boston, MA**

Despite coming in at a below-average 58th place out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2019, Boston performs particularly well in the Job & Career subcategory (6th), and expats even vote it the world's best city for local career opportunities. Close to four in five (78%) are generally satisfied with their career prospects (vs. 51% globally). One expat shares *“the opportunity to be at the forefront of my field professionally”* as their highlight of living in Boston. On the other hand, Boston ranks low for the factors job security (67th), overall job satisfaction (65th), and work-life balance (64th), causing an only mediocre 33rd rank in the Urban Work Life Index overall.

Beyond working life, expats enjoy the local leisure options available, with almost nine in ten (86%) rating them positively (vs. 74% globally). *“There are endless opportunities to unfold your potential,”* shares an expat from Luxembourg. *“There is always something going on, which makes time fly. You are never bored.”* Similar to its result in the Urban Work Life Index, Boston still only ranks 65th in the Quality of Urban Living Index due to expats' unhappiness with other factors. For example, 38% are unhappy with the local climate and weather (vs. 23% globally), 33% rate the local transportation negatively (vs. 19% globally), and 69% disagree that healthcare is affordable (vs. 26% globally).

Lastly, Boston ranks among the bottom 10 cities in the Local Cost of Living Index (77th) and only 66th in the Finance & Housing Index. In fact, 79% find housing unaffordable in the city (vs. 44% globally), and 31% say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover daily costs (vs. 23% globally).

### **74. New York City, NY**

New York City finds itself in the bottom 10 cities of the Expat City Ranking 2019 (74th). It performs poorly in most subcategories and is even placed in the bottom 10 for finance (73rd), health & environment (75th), work-life balance (76th), and local cost of living (81st). For the latter, New York only ranks ahead of one other US American city, San Francisco. Around six in seven expats (86%) rate the local cost of living in New York negatively (vs. 38% globally), and over three in ten (31%) even describe it as *very bad* (vs. 8% globally).

The Getting Settled Index (42nd) is New York's best ranking index — although it still receives the worst result among all US American cities featured in the Expat City Ranking here. Almost two-thirds of expats (66%) find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 62% globally), and 68% describe the people in New York as friendly towards expats (vs. 64% globally). Additionally, 86% of expats enjoy the local leisure options offered in the city (vs. 74% globally), ranking New York 13th worldwide but behind Miami (11th). *“There is always something going on in New York,”* says an expat from Austria, *“the options*

*for social and entertainment are unparalleled.”*

## **76. Los Angeles, CA**

Los Angeles ranks in the bottom 10 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2019 (76th), and expats do not have many positives to share. However, the city is definitely loved for its local climate and weather (4th) — only beaten by Barcelona (1st), Miami (2nd), and Lisbon (3rd). *“Weather in LA is the best!”*, says an expat from Brazil.

On the downside, Los Angeles is voted one of the worst cities for local transportation (80th), alongside Houston (81st) and Lagos, Nigeria (82nd). The over-reliance on cars and *“heavy traffic”* are often mentioned by expats as some of the city’s downfalls. Almost two-thirds (66%) rate the local transportation negatively (vs. 19% globally). Also, Los Angeles is ranked as one of the world’s most expensive cities in general (73rd) as well as for housing specifically (75th). More than three-quarters of expats (76%) find it hard to afford housing (vs. 44% globally), and 39% are unhappy with their financial situation (vs. 26% globally). It does not get any better in terms of work life (68th): in the respective index, expats are the least satisfied with their job security (76th) and working hours (75th). Maybe the latter also contributes to the fact that 35% are unhappy with their social life (vs. 27% globally). Los Angeles even ranks worst for this aspect among all US American cities featured (62nd). One British expat finds that there is a *“lack of a real community”*, while another one from Russia points out that *“it is very difficult to make friends”*.

## **77. San Francisco, CA**

San Francisco is not only the worst US American city in the eyes of expats with a 77th place out of 82 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2019, but it is also the world’s worst city when it comes to the local cost of living (82nd) and the affordability of housing (82nd). It therefore may be unsurprising that 38% of expats in San Francisco are generally unsatisfied with their financial situation (vs. 26% globally), and one Peruvian expat explicitly points out that *“prices in San Francisco are very high”*.

On a positive note, San Francisco comes in second in the world for local career opportunities, only beaten by Boston. One Canadian expat praises the city’s *“unmatched career opportunities”*. But these opportunities seem to come at a price: San Francisco is ranked low for job security (78th), work-life balance (78th), and working hours (80th). In fact, 35% of expats are unhappy with the latter (vs. 19% globally), and only those living in Seoul (81st) and Istanbul (82nd) are less satisfied. On the other hand, local residents in San Francisco are said to be the friendliest towards expats within the USA (10th worldwide), though this does not seem to help when it comes to finding new friends (44th). One Peruvian expat shares the difficulties with *“finding true friends”* as their main dislike of living in San Francisco, and a Brazilian expat explains that *“people are friendly towards foreigners, but that is about it, they do not become your close friends”*. In fact, 31% of expats find it hard to make new friends in the city (vs. 35% 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](http://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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