

Expatriate Life in Cairo, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Nairobi





The Expat City Ranking 2020 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including four African cities.

- Out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020 Cairo ranks 47th, followed by Cape Town (56th), Johannesburg (60th), and Nairobi (62nd).
- Valencia (1st), Alicante, Lisbon, Panama City, Singapore, Málaga, Buenos Aires, Kuala Lumpur, Madrid, and Abu Dhabi (10th) are the top 10 cities for expats to live in 2020.
- On the other hand, expats consider Salmiya in Kuwait (66th), Rome, Seoul, Milan, Nairobi, Paris, Johannesburg, Santiago, Dublin, and Hong Kong (57th) the world's worst cities to live in.

Munich, 26 November 2020 — Cairo ranks 47th, followed by Cape Town (56th), Johannesburg (60th), and Nairobi (62nd) in the Expat City Ranking 2020 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members. All African cities featured in the survey end up among the worst-rated cities worldwide for the quality of urban living and the urban work life. On the other hand, expats rate the cities very well in terms of finances and housing, except for Cape Town, where expats are unhappy with their financial situation.

Expat City Ranking 2020

Expatriate Life in 4 African Cities

	Overall Ranking	Quality of Urban Living Index	Getting Settled Index	Urban Work Life Index	Finance & Housing Index	Local Cost of Living Index	Happiness Level
 <p>Cairo, Egypt 47th</p>	58th	27th	56th	16th	14th	62%	
 <p>Cape Town, South Africa 56th</p>	57th	24th	60th	36th	29th	67%	
 <p>Johannesburg, South Africa 60th</p>	64th	36th	58th	13th	21st	67%	
 <p>Nairobi, Kenya 62nd</p>	65th	20th	62nd	20th	44th	73%	

The Expat City Ranking 2020 covers 66 cities in total.

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations, which is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, with more than 15,000 respondents in 2020. This year, 66 cities around the globe are analyzed in the survey, which offers 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. Together, the first four topics make up the Expat City Ranking, which reveals the best and worst cities for expats to live in. As the data was collected in February and March 2020, just before COVID-19 turned into a global pandemic, one question, however, remains: Will these cities still come out on top in a post-COVID world?

What Expats Think about Life in 4 African Cities

47. Cairo — Friendly, Affordable, but with a Poor Quality of Life

Cairo comes in 47th place out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020, which is mainly due to its poor results in the Quality of Urban Living Index (58th) and the Urban Work Life Index (56th). The city ranks particularly low for its urban environment (65th), only ahead of Bangkok, with 63% of expats rating this factor negatively (vs. 21% globally). What is more, expats are unhappy with the public transportation system (58th) and the local leisure options (59th). In fact, 20% rate the latter negatively (vs. 15% globally). When it comes to the Urban Work Life Index, job security seems to be an issue in Cairo. The city ranks 58th in this subcategory, and 39% of expats are unhappy with the local economy (vs. 18% globally).

On the other hand, Cairo performs well in the Finance & Housing Index (16th) and the Local Cost of Living Index (14th). According to a British survey respondent, there is “good quality of housing”; in fact, 46% of expats find housing affordable (vs. 41% globally), while 56% say that it is easy to find (vs. 55% globally). Lastly, Cairo comes 27th in the Getting Settled Index and even lands among the top 10 worldwide for the general friendliness of local people towards foreign residents (8th). Exactly three out of four respondents (75%) describe them as friendly towards expats (vs. 66% globally), with an expat from Romania pointing out: *“The people are kind!”*

56. The Income in Cape Town Is Not Enough to Cover Daily Costs

With the city coming 56th out of 66 destinations in the Expat City Ranking 2020, Cape Town’s main pitfall are in the Urban Work Life (60th) and the Quality of Urban Living (57th) Indices. In the latter, Cape Town ranks 59th in the Transportation subcategory and second-to-last for personal safety (65th), only ahead of Johannesburg (66th). Just 31% of expats feel personally safe in the city (vs. 82% globally), and more than half of them (51%) rate the political stability negatively (vs. 17% globally).

In the Urban Work Life Index, Cape Town ranks a low 62nd in the Job Security subcategory: 34% of expats rate their job security negatively (vs. 22% globally), and 56% are unhappy with the local economy (vs. 18% globally). An expat from Singapore comments that *“there is a lot of poverty”* in Cape Town. In general, the South African city seems to be financially unattractive for expats — 40% state that their disposable household income is not enough to cover daily expenses (vs. 21% globally). The city ranks lowest worldwide for this factor. However, as housing is easy to find (61% positive ratings vs. 55% globally), Cape Town still comes in 36th place in the Finance & Housing Index.

The only real highlight Cape Town has to offer seems to be the Leisure & Climate subcategory (4th). In fact, 93% of expats rate the local leisure activities, as well as the climate, positively (vs. 71% and 64%, respectively, worldwide). An expat from Nigeria says that the *“weather is beautiful most of the year”* and that there is *“a huge number of available activities”*.

60. Beautiful Weather in Johannesburg but Low Degree of Personal Safety

Placing 60th out of 66 cities, Johannesburg performs worst in the Quality of Urban Living Index (64th). With the city coming last in the Safety & Politics subcategory (66th), 70% of expats rate their feelings of personal safety negatively (vs. only 9% globally). Additionally, the city comes 65th for transportation — just ahead of Nairobi (66th). Only 28% of expats view public transportation in Johannesburg positively (vs. 66% globally), and a Norwegian expat says that *“there is not a lot of local transportation”*. The South African city also performs poorly in the Urban Work Life Index (58th). Johannesburg comes in at 64th place for the state of the local economy, and more than three in five survey respondents (62%) rate its economy negatively (vs. 18% globally).

However, Johannesburg lands in the top 15 of the Finance & Housing Index (13th). In fact, 75% of expats say it is easy to find housing (vs. 55% globally), and 47% find the housing affordable (vs. 41% globally). Another upside that comes with living in this city is a factor in the Quality of Urban Living Index: 91% of expats are happy with Johannesburg’s local climate (vs. 64% globally). A German expat even thinks that *“Johannesburg has the best weather in the world”*.

62. Nairobi Has the Worst Public Transportation System Worldwide

Overall, Nairobi comes 62nd in the Expat City Ranking 2020, placing among the bottom 5 destinations. The city ranks especially low in the Quality of Urban Living Index (65th), just ahead of Salmiya in Kuwait (66th). Kenya’s capital even ranks last for its public transportation system (66th), with 71% rating this factor negatively (vs. 24% globally). A British expat points out: *“The road infrastructure is not good in Nairobi, so getting around can be difficult.”* Nairobi also loses points for personal safety (64th), which 46% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with (vs. 9% globally). *“Your personal safety is not always guaranteed,”* says a Dutch expat. Additionally, close to one in four expats (24%) are unhappy with the availability of healthcare in Nairobi (vs. 13% globally), and 45% rate the urban environment negatively (vs. 21% globally).

In the Quality of Urban Living Index Nairobi only stands out — in a positive way — for the local climate and weather (93% happy vs. 64% globally). An Indian expat names *“the weather and the warm friendly people”* as the highlights of his life in Nairobi. In fact, the city performs well in the Getting Settled Index (20th). Nearly three in five respondents (58%) find it easy to make new friends (vs. 47% globally). Nairobi also performs above the global average in the Finance & Housing Index (20th), with about six in seven expats (85%) saying that it is easy to find housing (vs. 55% globally).

However, Kenya’s capital performs very poorly in the Urban Work Life Index (62nd), with only 48% of respondents rating their job security positively (vs. 59% globally). Moreover, over half the expats are dissatisfied with the local career opportunities (53% vs. 34% globally) and the state of the local economy (55% vs. 18% globally).

About the Expat City Ranking 2020

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations. For the survey, more than 15,000 expatriates representing 173 nationalities and living in 181 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, considering both emotional topics and 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 66 cities worldwide. In 2020, the top 10 cities for expats are Valencia, Alicante, Lisbon, Panama City, Singapore, Málaga, Buenos Aires, Kuala Lumpur, Madrid, and Abu Dhabi. 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 2020, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per city was required.

About InterNations

With around 4 million members in 420 cities around the world, [InterNations](#) is the largest global community and a source of information for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking and socializing, both online and face to face. At around 6,000 events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include discussion forums and helpful articles with personal expat experiences, tips, and information about life abroad. Membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust. InterNations is part of the New Work SE, a group of brands that offer products and services for a better working life.

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