

## Expat Life in Valencia, Alicante, Málaga, Madrid, and Barcelona






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

- Out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020, Valencia ranks first worldwide, followed by Alicante (2nd), Málaga (6th), Madrid (9th), and Barcelona (25th).
- 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 — Four out of five Spanish cities make it into the global top 10 in the Expat City Ranking 2020 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members. Valencia even ranks first worldwide, followed by Alicante (2nd), Málaga (6th), Madrid (9th), and Barcelona (25th). What they all have in common are good to excellent results in the Getting Settled and Quality of Urban Living Indices. On the other hand, their performance in the Urban Work Life Index is mediocre to poor. In the end Barcelona loses out since expat life seems to be most expensive there: it ranks far behind the other Spanish cities in both the Finance & Housing and the Local Cost of Living Indices.

Expat City Ranking 2020

### Expat Life in 5 Spanish 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
 Alicante	2nd	19th	1st	39th	2nd	2nd	90%
 Barcelona	25th	20th	10th	42nd	46th	28th	85%
 Madrid	9th	6th	13th	41st	34th	9th	87%
 Málaga	6th	14th	2nd	54th	9th	3rd	88%
 Valencia	1st	1st	4th	46th	3rd	1st	92%

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 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 5 Spanish Cities

### 1. Valencia Is the Best City for Expats Worldwide

Coming in 1st place out of 66 cities worldwide, Valencia is the best destination for expats, according to the Expat City Ranking 2020. The Spanish city is among the top 5 in all topical indices but one. It even ranks first worldwide in both the Quality of Urban Living and the Local Cost of Living Indices. In fact, 94% of expats rate the local cost of living positively (vs. 46% globally), and 91% consider healthcare easily available (vs. 74% globally). This places the city first in the Health & Environment subcategory. Expats are also very happy with the local climate and weather (2nd) and the leisure options (4th).

With more than four in five expats (82%) saying that housing in Valencia is affordable (vs. 41% globally), it also comes first for this factor. Overall, the Spanish city ranks 3rd in the Finance & Housing Index. A US American expat lists *"the quality of life and the cost of living"* as their favorite things about Valencia. Apparently, it is also easy to get settled in Valencia, which comes 4th in this index. More than four in five expats (84%) find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 61% globally), and 91% say that the local residents are generally friendly (vs. 68% globally).

The Urban Work Life Index (46th) is Valencia's only sore point. In the Job & Career subcategory, it only ranks 62nd, with 46% of expats saying they are unhappy with their local career opportunities (vs. 34% globally). A French expat says that *"finding employment has always been difficult"* for them. Moreover, expats are not happy with the local economy: fewer than five in nine expats (54%) rate this aspect positively, which is nine percentage points below the global average (63%).

### 2. Expats Receive a Warm Welcome in Alicante and Love the Sunny Climate

Placing 2nd out of 66 destinations, Alicante is one of the best cities worldwide for expats, beaten only by neighboring Valencia (1st). The city ranks among the global top 3 in the Finance & Housing (2nd), the Local Cost of Living (2nd), and the Getting Settled (1st) Indices. In fact, 83% of expats feel at home there (vs. 64% globally), and 68% find it easy to make friends in Alicante (vs. 47% globally). A British expat appreciates the *"easy way of life and the friendliness of people around me"*. In terms of finance, 81% of expats are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 61% globally). Additionally, more than two in three survey respondents (68%) say that housing in Alicante is affordable (vs. 41% globally), and 82% rate the cost of living in general positively (vs. 46% globally).

Similar to Valencia, Alicante shows a comparably weak performance in the Urban Work Life Index (39th). For example, 44% of expats rate their local career opportunities negatively (vs. 34% globally), putting the city into the bottom 10 worldwide for this factor (57th). In the Quality of Urban Living Index (19th), the city also receives lower results, which is partly due to public transportation

(46th). On the other hand, Alicante receives great results for the availability of healthcare (89% satisfied vs. 74% globally), as well as the local climate and weather (97% satisfied vs. 64% globally).

### **6. Málaga Is Easy to Get Settled and Cheap to Live In**

Ranking 6th out of 66 destinations in the Expat City Ranking, the Spanish coastal city performs best in the Getting Settled Index (2nd), where only Alicante (1st) ranks even better. Málaga comes first in both the Friends & Socializing and the Feeling Welcome subcategories, with 87% of expats feeling at home there (vs. 64% globally). Additionally, 77% of survey respondents are happy with their social life in Málaga (vs. 59% globally). An expat from the UK lists *“the friendships as well as the happiness and friendliness of expats and locals”* as their favorite things about life in Málaga. In fact, the vast majority of respondents rates the friendliness of the local population positively (88% vs. 68% globally). The city also performs very well in the Local Cost of Living (3rd) and the Finance & Housing (9th) Indices. Almost nine in ten expats (88%) are happy with the local cost of living (vs. 46% globally), and 79% are happy with their own financial situation as well (vs. 61% globally). Moreover, more than half the expats (54%) describe housing in Málaga as affordable (vs. 41% globally).

Málaga lands among the top 15 in the Quality of Urban Life Index (14th), performing best in the Leisure & Climate subcategory (2nd). All expats (100%) are happy with the climate and weather in Málaga (vs. 64% globally), and 92% are satisfied with the availability of healthcare (vs. 74% globally). On the downside, Málaga receives rather weak results in the Urban Work Life Index (54th). It even ranks 65th for local career opportunities — only ahead of Rome — since just one in ten expats (10%) is happy with the local career options (vs. 43% globally).

### **9. Madrid: High Quality of Life at Low Costs for Expats**

Ranking 9th out of 66 destinations in the Expat City Ranking 2020, Madrid is the last Spanish city to make it into the top 10 — right after Málaga (6th), Alicante (2nd), and Valencia (1st). The Spanish capital does especially well in the Quality of Urban Living Index (6th), coming 8th in the Leisure & Climate subcategory: more than nine in ten expats (92%) are happy with its leisure options (vs. 71% globally), which puts Madrid in first place worldwide for this factor. *“I really like the leisure and entertainment options here,”* says a Venezuelan expat, and a US American also appreciates that there are *“a lot of activities to do with friends”*. Additionally, 89% are satisfied with the local climate and weather (vs. 64% globally).

Madrid also receives very good results in the Local Cost of Living Index (9th), with 64% of expats rating this aspect positively (vs. 46% globally). An expat from Canada says that the *“climate and cost of living”* are their favorite things about life in Madrid. Despite the apparently low cost of living, finances are not great in Madrid. Madrid ranks 34th in the Finance & Housing Index and just 47th in the Finance subcategory. In fact, 30% say that their disposable household income is not enough to all expenses (vs. 21% globally).

The Urban Work Life Index (41st) looks similarly grim: Madrid only ranks 46th in the Job Security subcategory, and 17% of expats are dissatisfied with the state of the local economy (vs. 18% globally). A US American expat shares: *“The job market is horrendous, and salaries are stagnant — I do not see the opportunity here.”* In fact, one in three expats (33%) is also dissatisfied with local career opportunities (vs. 34% globally).

On the bright side, Madrid does rank well in the Getting Settled Index (13th). Most expats (83%) feel at home in the Spanish capital (vs. 64% globally), and 79% find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 61% globally).

## **25. Barcelona: Expats Love Their Social Life but Loathe High Rents**

Ranking 25th out of 66 destinations in the Expat City Ranking 2020, Barcelona is the only Spanish city that does not make it into the top 10. It receives its best results in the Getting Settled Index (10th), doing especially well in the Friends & Socializing subcategory (3rd): 81% of expats are happy with their social life (vs. 59% globally). Also, almost four in five respondents (79%) say they feel at home in Barcelona (vs. 64% globally). In the Quality of Urban Living Index (20th), Barcelona gets great results for the local climate (96% happy vs. 64% globally) and local leisure options (94% happy vs. 71% globally). A British expat summarizes: *"The climate is good, and there are plenty of opportunities for various activities."* However, personal safety (57th) seems to be an issue, with only about two-thirds (66%) rating this factor positively (vs. 82% globally).

Similar to the other Spanish cities featured in the ranking, Barcelona does not do well in the Urban Work Life Index (42nd); in the Job Security subcategory, it just comes 48th out of 66. Only 53% of expats are satisfied with the state of the local economy (vs. 63% globally). *"I do not like the working conditions, the pay is too low, and the rents are high,"* shares a German expat. In fact, it is the costs and finances that differentiate Barcelona from other Spanish cities: 28% of expats in the city are dissatisfied with their financial situation (vs. 21% globally), and 67% find local housing unaffordable (vs. 41% 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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