

# Expat Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

Expats in Taiwan have a great experience abroad in every respect.

- Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam are the best destinations for expats in 2021.
- The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th).
- Taiwan comes 1st out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. It ranks among the top 15 in all indices.

Munich, 18 May 2021 — For the seventh time, [InterNations](https://www.internations.org), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members, has published its *Expat Insider* survey. With more than 12,000 respondents, it is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, sharing insights into expat life in 59 destinations. The survey offers in-depth information on expats' satisfaction with the quality of life, ease of settling in, working life, personal finance, and the cost of living in their respective country of residence. Additionally, the respondents share **how they have been experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic** and how it has impacted their life.

Taiwan comes 1st out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with the high quality of life and their working life (1st for both). Taiwan also ranks among the top 10 in the Cost of Living Index (6th) and narrowly misses out on a top 10 spot in the Personal Finance (11th) and Ease of Settling In (13th) Indices. Overall, Taiwan, Mexico, and Costa Rica are the best expat destinations worldwide: all of them attract expats with their ease of settling in and good personal finances. On the other hand, the bottom three countries, Kuwait, Italy, and South Africa, all perform poorly in the Working Abroad Index. Additionally, Kuwait is the hardest country for expats to feel at home in, Italy is the worst for personal finances, and expats in South Africa do not feel safe.



## Taiwan in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

### **An Excellent Place to Work Abroad**

Taiwan ranks 1st out of 59 destinations for the third year in a row in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. It also comes first in the Working Abroad Index for the second year in a row: most expats are satisfied with their job security (83% vs. 61% globally) and the state of the local economy (85% vs. 62% globally). Additionally, three-quarters (75%) are overall happy with their job (vs. 68% globally). The top 3 fields of work for expats in Taiwan are education (26%), manufacturing and engineering (18%), and advertising, marketing, and communication (10%). Almost three-quarters of expats (74%) are satisfied with their working hours, compared to a global average of 66%. In Taiwan, full-time employees work an average 39.9 hours a week, which is below the global average of 43.2 hours per week.

### **An Incredible Healthcare System**

Taiwan lands in first place in the Quality of Life Index, and the majority of expats (80%) is generally happy with their life (vs. 75% globally). Furthermore, 96% of expats rate the quality of medical care positively (vs. 71% globally), and another 94% are satisfied with its affordability (vs. 61% globally). An expat from Chile shares: *"The Taiwanese healthcare system truly considers people as human beings instead of mere numbers."* Moreover not a single expat (0%) feels personally unsafe in Taiwan (vs. 8% globally). An expat from Canada shares: *"I can live independently. I feel safe wherever I go, and everything is convenient."* This convenience might be due to the Taiwanese transportation system, among other things: Taiwan ranks 8th in the Travel & Transportation subcategory, and 90% rate its transportation infrastructure positively, compared to 76% globally.

### **A Very Friendly Population**

Although Taiwan places slightly lower in the Ease of Settling In Index (13th), it is the best-ranking country worldwide in the Friendliness subcategory (1st). Most expats find it easy to make friends (62% vs. 48% globally) and describe the population in Taiwan as friendly towards foreign residents (96% vs. 67% globally). This is backed up by the fact that 60% of expats in Taiwan have a mixed group of friends that includes both expats and locals, a much higher share than the global average of 48%. An expat from France says: *"Taiwanese citizens make me feel at home. I do not feel like a foreigner."* Only the local language holds them back, as more than half the expats (55%) consider it difficult to learn (vs. 42% globally).

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Taiwan**

The majority of expats in Taiwan (88%) is satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations (vs. 66% globally). Over half the expats who rate the official communication positively (53%) like that the COVID-19 regulations were made available in several languages (vs. 26% globally), and 74% say the information was clear and easy to understand (vs. 60% globally). A US American expat has high praise for Taiwan: *"The response to the pandemic has been immaculate! Due to the nation's rapid response and the health regulations early on in the pandemic, there have been very little COVID cases. Taiwan is literally a safe haven from the pandemic, and I am still in disbelief how life continues as normal here."*

## The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad in 2021

According to the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, the top 10 destinations for expats are Taiwan (1st), Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam (10th). All these countries stand out with above-average results in the Ease of Settling In Index, with Mexico ranking first, followed by Malaysia (2nd) and Costa Rica (3rd). Moreover, half of these countries also rank among the top 10 in the Personal Finance Index. Taiwan (11th) and Portugal (14th) narrowly miss out on a top 10 spot in this index, while New Zealand (28th), Australia (39th), and Canada (50th) have a weaker performance in this regard.

The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th). Besides Japan (21st), all these countries rank far below the global average in the Quality of Life Index. What is more, eight out of the ten worst-rated destinations are also among the bottom 10 in the Working Abroad Index — the only two exceptions being India (46th) and Malta (31st), which, however, also receive mediocre results at best. Lastly, India is the only country in the overall bottom 10 that performs very well in the Personal Finance Index (4th), while the others — such as Italy (59th), Kuwait (58th), and Cyprus (57th) — rank below the global average or even land among the bottom 10.

## Expat Life during the COVID-19 Pandemic

On a global scale, 45% of survey respondents say that COVID-19 had an impact on their current stay abroad or their relocation plans: the **share of expats** who say so (**37%**) either decided to *not* move back home in the near future (18%), planned to move to another country but had to change these plans (8%), will move to another country due to the pandemic (6%), or will move back home sooner than originally planned (5%).

The **share of local respondents whose relocation plans were affected by COVID-19 (61%)** is a lot higher: some of them were living abroad but moved home sooner than planned (18%), others were planning to move abroad but had to change their plans (35%), and about one in ten have now decided to move abroad because of the pandemic (9%).

### The Pandemic's Impact on Everyday Life

Of course, COVID-19 has not only disrupted the relocation plans of expats worldwide. When asked where they see the biggest impact of the pandemic on their personal life *right now*, the survey respondents point out its effects on personal travel (25%), social life (23%), and their work or business (16%) in particular. In the *long run*, respondents are still concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their social life (17% of all respondents), and there are also considerable worries regarding personal travel (22%).

### How Expats Stay Informed on COVID-19

Expats across the world mostly rely on official government channels (48%), local news (47%), and social media (40%) for news on the COVID-19 situation and the related regulations in their country of residence. Considering the importance of government channels, just **how satisfied are expats with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations?** Worldwide, not quite two-thirds (66%) rate this factor positively, with close to a quarter (24%) saying they are completely

satisfied. The main complaint among expats who are *not* satisfied with the official communication on the pandemic is that the information is unclear, confusing, and/or contradictory (67%).

**For further information on the global impact of COVID-19 on expat life, please take a look at the full press release in the download center of our e-mail.**

#### **About the InterNations *Expat Insider 2021* Survey**

For its annual [Expat Insider survey](#), InterNations asked 12,420 expats representing 174 nationalities and living in 186 countries or territories to provide information on various aspects of expat life, as well as their gender, age, and nationality. Participants were asked to rate up to 37 different aspects of 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 five topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Personal Finance, and Cost of Living. The first four of these indices were further averaged together with expats' general satisfaction with their life in order to rank 59 expat destinations around the world. In 2021, the top 10 are Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam. Moreover, expats were asked about how COVID-19 has impacted their life abroad; however, these responses did not influence the overall ranking.

For a country to be featured in the indices and consequently in the overall ranking, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per destination was necessary.

#### **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.

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

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