

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

Expats in Thailand enjoy the low cost of living but are dissatisfied with the local career opportunities.

- 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).
- Thailand comes 14th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Cost of Living Index (10th) and worst in the Working Abroad Index (42nd).

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 *Expatriate 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.

Thailand comes 14th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country performs particularly well for cost of living (10th) and personal finance (12th). While it also ranks well in the Ease of Settling In Index (20th), it only lands in a below-average 33rd place in the Quality of Life Index and even ranks 42nd in the Working Abroad Index. 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.



## Thailand in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

### **A Great Place for Budget-Conscious Expats**

Ranking 14th out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Thailand performs best in the Cost of Living Index (10th). While only 48% of expats globally rate the cost of living positively, 70% of respondents in Thailand are happy with this aspect of life abroad. An expat from the US says: *"The cost of living is lower than in other large and developed places."* Similarly, Thailand performs well in the Personal Finance Index (12th): two-thirds of expats (67%) are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally). Additionally, 82% of expats say their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover their living expenses (vs. 77% globally).

### **High Quality of Medical Care and Happy Expats**

Thailand lands in a mediocre 33rd place in the Quality of Life Index. On the one hand, the country performs very well for the quality of its medical care (7th), with 85% of expats rating this factor positively (vs. 71% globally). *"I like the first-class medical facilities and healthcare in Thailand,"* shares a British expat. Thailand also ranks among the top 10 in the Leisure Options subcategory (7th), with most expats (82%) happy with their socializing and leisure activities (vs. 67% globally). Moreover, the country comes 7th out of 59 in the Personal Happiness subcategory, with 85% of expats being happy with their life in general (vs. 75% globally).

On the other hand, Thailand does not do well in the Quality of Environment subcategory (51st). In fact, over half the expats (51%) rate Thailand's air quality negatively (vs. 20% globally). An expat from the United States is unhappy with *"the smoky season"* and further explains that *"in Thailand, there is the worst air quality in the world for about three months every year"*. Similarly, 22% of expats are dissatisfied with the water and sanitation infrastructure (vs. 12% globally). Thailand also lands in the bottom 10 for its political stability (55th): 40% of expats rate this factor negatively (vs. 16% globally).

### **Good Work-Life Balance but Not Enough Career Opportunities**

Thailand's performance is weakest in the Working Abroad Index (42nd): 45% of expats are unhappy with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally), and 29% rate the state of the local economy negatively (vs. 19% globally). However, most expats (72%) are satisfied with their work-life balance (vs. 66% globally), and over two-thirds (69%) are happy with their working hours (vs. 66% globally). In Thailand, full-time employed expats work an average 44.4 hours a week (vs. 43.2 hours globally). Most expats in Thailand (70%) are overall satisfied with their job (vs. 68% globally). The top 3 sectors that expats in Thailand pursue a career in are education (19%), manufacturing and engineering (12%), and IT (11%).

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

Many expats in Thailand (61%) say the pandemic has not had an impact on the length of their current stay abroad (vs. 63% globally). However, 24% will not move home as soon as they had anticipated due to COVID-19 (vs. 18% globally). A lot more expats in Thailand follow the news about COVID-19 through expat news channels and international media than the global average (55% vs. 32% globally). Additionally, half the expats in Thailand (50%) also use social media to stay up to date (vs. 40% globally). Expats in Thailand are slightly less satisfied with the official communication on COVID-19 than the global average (63% vs. 66% globally). Still, an Australian expat shares: *"I am impressed with the way the Thai government has managed issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic."*

## 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 *Expatriate Insider* 2021 Survey**

For its annual [Expatriate 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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