

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

Expats in Australia enjoy the great leisure options and have a flourishing social life.

- 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).
- Australia comes 7th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks among the top 20 countries in all indices aside from personal finance and cost of living.

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.

Australia comes 7th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with the quality of life and working abroad, ranking the country 6th and 10th in these two indices. While it also seems to be relatively easy for expats in Australia to settle in (18th), the country comes in a low 39th place in both the Personal Finance and the Cost of Living 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.



## Australia in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

### **A Beautiful Natural Environment**

In the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Australia (7th out of 59) lands among the top 10 destinations worldwide. In the Quality of Life Index (6th), it narrowly misses out on a spot in the top 5. This great performance is partly due to Australia's leisure options and its quality of environment. It comes first worldwide for its local leisure activities, which 87% of expats rank positively (vs. 72% globally). An impressive 97% of respondents praise the natural environment (vs. 84% globally). *"Living in close proximity to nature — close to the beach and the rainforest — is so amazing!"*, says a US expat.

### **Great Digital Life, Expensive Healthcare**

Australia also does very well in the Digital Life subcategory (8th) of the Quality of Life Index. For instance, expats appreciate the availability of government services online, which 89% rate positively (vs. 63% worldwide). They also give the cashless payment options a favorable rating (96% vs. 83% worldwide). However, opinions are divided on the topic of healthcare in Australia: while 88% of expats are satisfied with its quality (vs. 71% globally), just 68% consider it affordable (vs. 61% globally). Moreover, only 76% of respondents are happy with their travel opportunities (vs. 84% globally), although 83% rate the country's transportation infrastructure positively (vs. 76% worldwide).

### **Good Working Life, Easygoing Culture**

Australia also does pretty well in the Working Abroad Index (10th). Expats are especially satisfied with their local career opportunities (60% positive ratings vs. 45% globally) and their work-life balance (76% positive responses vs. 66% globally). Nearly four in five expats (79%) also rate the state of the Australian economy positively (vs. 62% worldwide). Even Australia's somewhat worse results in the Ease of Settling In Index (18th) still places it in the top 20. Expats find it especially easy to get used to the local culture (76% positive responses vs. 65% globally) and to settle down in Australia (74% vs. 62% worldwide). However, only a slightly above average 54% think it is easy to find new friends in Australia (vs. 48% globally).

### **The Drawback: High Expenses**

Even worse, just 63% of respondents are happy with their financial situation, about the same as the global average (64%). No wonder then that Australia only comes in 39th place in both the Personal Finance Index and the Cost of Living Index. In fact, 41% of expats are unhappy with the local cost of living (vs. 34% globally). *"I don't like the cost of living, specifically housing,"* says an expat from Brazil. *"Rent is very high in the major cities, and in the last five to eight years it has become almost impossible to buy property here."*

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

Expats are highly satisfied with Australia's official communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic: 87% rate it positively (vs. 66% globally). Most of them also rely on official government channels (66% vs. 48% globally) and local news (65% vs. 47% worldwide) to get updates on COVID-19 and related regulations. When it comes to being personally affected by the fallout of the pandemic, expats in Australia do better than average with regard to their social life — only 12% say this is the area COVID-19 has the biggest impact on their life right now (vs. 24% globally). However, it curbs their travel opportunities even further: 40% say it has affected personal travel the most (vs. 28% globally), and this is also where expats see the biggest long-term impact on their life (41% vs. 25% globally).

## 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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