

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

Expats in Austria enjoy the beautiful natural environment and ample travel opportunities, but they find it difficult to settle in.

- 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).
- Austria comes 23rd out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks above the global average in all categories except for the Ease of Settling In Index (56th), where it lands in the bottom 10.

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.

Austria comes 23rd out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country performs particularly well in the Quality of Life (2nd) and Working Abroad (7th) Indices. However, expats find it difficult to settle in, saying that the local population is not friendly and that it is hard to get used to the local culture. 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.



## Austria in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* Survey

### **The Second-Best Destination for Quality of Life**

Coming in 23rd place out of 59 countries in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey, Austria ranks second worldwide in the Quality of Life Index, only beaten by Taiwan. It even ranks first in the Travel & Transportation subcategory: 95% of expats are happy with their travel opportunities (vs. 84% globally), and 94% rate the transportation infrastructure positively (vs. 76% globally). Nearly all expats in Austria are also happy with the natural environment (98% vs. 84% globally), as well as the water and sanitation infrastructure (97% vs. 77% globally). The country does very well in the Health & Well-Being subcategory (7th), with 82% rating the affordability of healthcare positively (vs. 61% globally) and 88% being satisfied with the quality of medical care (vs. 71% globally). There is only one downside in terms of the quality of life: 17% of expats find it difficult to pay without cash in Austria (vs. 9% globally), which places the country in the bottom 10 for this factor (50th).

### **Expats Struggle to Make Friends**

Austria also lands in the bottom 10 for the Ease of Settling In Index (56th) — only Denmark (57th), Kuwait (58th), and Japan (59th) perform worse. Exactly three in ten expats (30%) do not feel at home in the local culture (vs. 20% globally), and 54% do not find it easy to make local friends (vs. 36% globally). Moreover, 37% of respondents rate the general friendliness of the population negatively (vs. 16% globally). Not being able to connect with the local residents is not necessarily due to the language barrier: only 8% of respondents do not speak the local language at all (vs. 13% globally), while 30% speak it a little and another 56% speak it fairly or even very well.

### **A Good Work-Life Balance and Stable Economy**

On the upside, working in Austria pays off for expats: the country lands in the top 10 of the Working Abroad Index (7th), with three-quarters of respondents (75%) rating their working hours positively (vs. 66% globally). Another 73% are happy with their work-life balance (vs. 66% globally), and 86% rate the state of the local economy positively (vs. 62% globally). *"The work culture here rewards real talent,"* says an Indian expat. And a British expat shares: *"I like the Austrian attitude towards work and free time. There is a balance, and working is not stressful — everyone has time for a break!"* Lastly, Austria's above-average performance is also reflected in the Personal Finance (23rd) and Cost of Living (24th) Indices, with 56% rating the local cost of living positively (vs. 48% globally).

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

The pandemic seems to have had less of an impact on expats in Austria compared to the global average: more than three-quarters of respondents (76%) say that COVID-19 has had no effect on their stay abroad (vs. 63% globally). Altogether, just 24% of expats in Austria have had to change their plans for the future (vs. 37% globally). However, more than one out of three respondents in Austria (34%) say their social life is suffering the most, ten percentage points more than the global average (24%). For expats in Austria, the top 3 sources of information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations are local news (57%), official government channels (54%), and social media (38%). More than seven in ten expats (71%) are happy with the official communication on the pandemic (vs. 66% 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 *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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