

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

Expats in Ecuador are happy with the low cost of living and the ease of settling 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).
- Ecuador comes 8th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It lands in an above-average place for all categories except for the Working Abroad Index (34th).

Munich, 18 May 2021 — For the seventh time, [InterNations](#), 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.

Ecuador comes 8th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly satisfied with the ease of settling in (10th), the cost of living (7th), and their personal finances (5th). While the Latin American country also performs quite well in the Quality of Life Index (24th), it only achieves a mediocre 34th rank for working abroad. 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.



Ecuador in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* Survey

A Great Place for Budget-Conscious Expats

Coming in 8th place out of 59 countries in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey, Ecuador performs best in the Personal Finance Index (5th). Close to three in four expats (73%) are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally). Moreover, 91% describe their disposable household income as enough or more than enough to cover their expenses (vs. 77% globally). This places the country third for this factor, just behind India (2nd) and Vietnam (1st), even though half the expats in Ecuador (50%) have a yearly income that does not exceed 25,000 USD (vs. 30% globally) and 23% have even less than 12,000 USD per year (vs. 15% globally). Still, expats in Ecuador might be satisfied with their income due to a low cost of living: the country lands among the top 10 in the Cost of Living Index (7th), with 78% of expats rating this aspect of life abroad positively, compared to just 48% globally.

Easy to Settle Down in Ecuador

Ecuador places 10th in the Ease of Settling In Index, even ranking 6th in the Feeling at Home subcategory. The majority of expats (82%) finds it easy to settle down in Ecuador (vs. 62% globally), placing the country third for this factor, just behind Mexico (1st) and Portugal (2nd). Moreover, 80% of expats feel at home in the local culture (vs. 63% globally), and 68% find it easy to make new friends in general (vs. 48% globally). Additionally, 70% are happy with the ease of making local friends in particular, compared to just 44% globally. Exactly one out of four expats in Ecuador (25%) has mostly local friends (vs. 20% globally), while 18% are mainly friends with other expats (vs. 32% globally); another 57% describe their group of friends and acquaintances as a mix of both (vs. 48% globally).

Expats Are Happy despite Lack of Political and Economic Stability

Ecuador shows a slightly weaker performance in the Quality of Life Index (24th). Still, nearly all expats (96%) rate the country's natural environment positively (vs. 84% globally), and 85% are satisfied with their socializing and leisure activities (vs. 67% globally). *"The nature and scenery are great,"* shares a Venezuelan expat. However, in the Digital Life subcategory (45th), Ecuador comes last worldwide (59th) for cashless payment options, with 37% rating this factor negatively (vs. 9% globally). Additionally, 20% are unhappy with the country's political stability (vs. 16% globally), and 18% do not feel safe in Ecuador (vs. 8% globally). Nevertheless, expats in Ecuador are still happy with their life in general (88% vs. 75% globally), with the country ranking 6th in the Personal Happiness subcategory.

Working Life in Ecuador Has Its Ups and Downs

Ecuador receives mixed results in the Working Abroad Index (34th). While 72% of expats are satisfied with their job in general (vs. 68% globally), 42% are unhappy with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally). Placing 52nd in the Economy & Job Security subcategory, the country receives poor results for the state of its local economy (40% unhappy vs. 19% globally). An Indian expat says: *"Politically and economically, the country is not very stable."* However, 71% of expats are happy with their working hours (vs. 66% globally), and 79% rate their work-life balance positively (vs. 66% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life Ecuador

During the current pandemic, about two-thirds of expats in Ecuador (64%) are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 (vs. 66% globally). Nevertheless, out of those who rate the official

communication favorably, just 36% state that the information provided was clear and easy to understand, which is far below the global average (60%). To receive news about COVID-19 and related regulations, many expats in Ecuador rely on social media (48% vs. 40% globally), local news (30% vs. 47% globally), expat news and international media (46% vs. 32% globally), as well as official government channels (39% vs. 48% globally).

In Ecuador, 38% of expats had to change their relocation plans due to the pandemic (vs. 37% globally): 13% were planning to move to another country but had to change these plans (vs. 8% globally), while 21% decided *not* to move back home in the near future (vs. 18% globally). The pandemic has affected expats in Ecuador mostly in terms of their personal travel (36% vs. 28% globally) and their social life (30% vs. 24% globally).

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

According to the *Expatriate 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.

Expatriate 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.

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