

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

Expats in France are excited about the local healthcare, but struggle with the language barrier.

- 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).
- France comes 25th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Quality of Life Index (18th) and worst in the Ease of Settling In Index (45th).

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.

France comes 25th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with the quality of life (18th) and their working life (21st). While the country also lands in an above-average 27th place in the Personal Finance Index, it gets a mediocre result in the Cost of Living Index (36th) and ranks only 45th rank for the ease of settling in. 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.



France in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Healthcare in France: High Quality and Affordable

Coming in 25th place out of 59 countries worldwide, France performs slightly better than average in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. In fact, 78% of expats in France are generally satisfied with their life abroad (vs. 77% globally). The top 3 reasons for expats to move to France are to live in their partner's home country or for love (15%), to go to school or university there (10%), and to enjoy a better quality of life (10%). The latter seems to be a good reason for relocating since France performs best in the Quality of Life Index (18th).

The country even comes 3rd out of 59 in the Health & Well-Being subcategory, just behind Taiwan (1st) and South Korea (2nd). The majority of expats rates the affordability of healthcare positively (87% vs. 61% globally) and is happy with the quality of medical care (87% vs. 71% globally). A US American expat especially likes *"the high quality and abundance of food and healthcare"*. The country also receives good results in the Travel & Transportation subcategory (14th), with 90% of expats rating the travel opportunities positively (vs. 84% globally). Additionally, the majority is happy with the natural environment (89% vs. 84% globally) and the water and sanitation infrastructure (85% vs. 77% globally) — placing France 22nd in the Quality of the Environment subcategory.

Struggling with the Language Barrier

France ranks lowest in the Ease of Settling In (45th) and Cost of Living (36th) Indices. In fact, 38% of expats rate the local cost of living negatively (vs. 34% globally). In terms of settling in, just 55% find it easy to settle down in France, compared to 62% globally. It might be a hurdle that 47% have difficulties in learning the local language (vs. 42% globally). Despite that, 96% of expats in France speak the local language at least a little (vs. 87% globally). This might be urgently needed, though, as more than half the expats (52%) find it difficult to live in France without local language skills (vs. 29% globally).

"At the moment, the language is really a barrier and it will take ages before I can develop a friendship with locals," shares a Brazilian expat. Just 37% of expats find it easy to make local friends in France (vs. 44% globally). Interestingly, close to one in four expats in France (24%) still describe their friends and acquaintances as mostly local residents (vs. 20% globally), and close to half (46%) have a fairly a mixed group of friends that includes both locals and expats (vs. 48% globally).

Expats Enjoy the Work-Life Balance

France performs better than average in the Working Abroad Index (21st). While 36% of expats rate the local career opportunities negatively (vs. 33% globally), more than two-thirds (69%) are generally satisfied with their job (vs. 68% globally). Moreover, 69% rate their job security positively (vs. 61% globally). Most expats in France are satisfied with their working hours (70% vs. 66% globally) and their work-life balance (70% vs. 66% globally). A US American expat living in Strasbourg says: *"I like the job that I do and the working life in France — the French really try to have a work-life balance."* And another US American expat living in Colmar shares: *"People take the time to live life, and work in order to live."*

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in France

Almost half the expats (45%) intend to stay in France forever (vs. 34% globally), while 16% plan to stay for longer than five years (vs. 20% globally). Close to three-quarters of expats in France (73%) say that

COVID-19 has not affected their plans for their current stay abroad — ten percentage points more than the global average (63%). Just 4% will move back home sooner than originally planned (vs. 5% globally), and 14% have decided not to move back home in the near future due to the pandemic (vs. 18% globally).

Exactly one out of three expats in France (33%) feels the biggest strain of the pandemic on their social life (vs. 24% globally). For the future, close to a quarter (23%) expect their personal travel to be especially affected by COVID-19 (vs. 25% globally). Among expats in France, the top 3 source of information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations are official government channels (55% vs. 48% globally), local news (50% vs. 47% globally), and social media (38% vs. 40% globally). Almost three-quarters of expats (73%) are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 (vs. 66% globally), with 63% of them saying it is clear and easy to understand (vs. 60% 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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