

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

Expats in Oman enjoy the peacefulness and find the local population friendly.

- 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).
- Oman comes 24th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Ease of Settling In Index (6th) and worst in the Working Abroad Index (49th).

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.

Oman comes 24th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are very happy with the ease of settling in (6th) and also quite satisfied with the cost of living (21st). While Oman also lands in a fairly average 32nd place in the Quality of Life Index, it does not so well in the Personal Finance (45th) and Working Abroad (49th) 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.



Oman in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

In the Top 10 for Ease of Settling In

Coming in 24th place out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Oman performs best in the Ease of Settling In Index (6th). The majority of expats (83%) is happy with the friendliness of local population towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). Another 86% rate the general friendliness positively (vs. 69% globally). An expat from the Philippines likes that *"the locals are very friendly and hospitable"*. Additionally, 58% of expats find it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally). In Oman, most expats (60%) have a fairly mixed group of friends and acquaintances that includes both expats and locals (vs. 48% globally). However — perhaps owing to Oman's huge expat population — just 1% are mostly friends with locals (vs. 20% globally), while 39% mainly socialize with other expats (vs. 32% globally). Most expats feel at home in Oman's local culture (69% vs. 63% globally) and find it easy to live there without speaking the local language (84% vs. 54% globally).

The Downsides: Work and Money

Oman ranks in a low 49th place in the Working Abroad Index. Only 24% of expats are happy with the local career opportunities (vs. 45% globally), and a further 31% are dissatisfied with their job security (vs. 20% globally). An Indian survey respondent says that *"as an expat, there is not much room for career development"*. Just 58% of expats are satisfied with their jobs in general (vs. 68% globally). Many expats in Oman work in the field of education (20% vs. 12% globally), followed by construction (14% vs. 3% globally) and finance (10% vs. 8% globally).

The country also performs poorly in the Personal Finance Index (45th): 28% of expats say their disposable household income is not enough to cover all their expenses (vs. 23% globally). While just 30% of expats worldwide report an annual income of less than 25,000 USD, this is the case for 40% of expats in Oman. A large share (24%) even has an income of less than 12,000 USD yearly (vs. 15% globally). This may be the reason why only 54% of expats are satisfied with their financial situation, compared to 64% globally. A British expat even says: *"I feel like more taxes are being introduced that affect expats far more than locals."*

Mixed Results for the Quality of Life

In the Quality of Life Index, Oman places 32nd, doing best in the Safety and Security subcategory (6th). Nearly all expats (97%) rate the peacefulness positively (vs. 80% globally), placing the country second worldwide for this factor — just behind Finland (1st). An expat from Sri Lanka shares: *"It is a very peaceful place to live and raise a family."* Moreover, 91% of expats are happy with the country's political stability (vs. 64% globally). On the other hand, 17% of expats in Oman rate the unrestricted access to online services negatively (vs. 7% globally). And Oman lands among the bottom 10 in the Health & Well-Being subcategory (50th): just 43% of respondents find the healthcare affordable (vs. 61% globally), and 21% rate the quality of medical care negatively (vs. 14% globally). However, the country receives better results in the Quality of the Environment subcategory (17th), with 79% of expats being satisfied with the air quality (vs. 66% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Oman

In Oman, the relocation plans of 56% of expats have changed due to the pandemic (vs. 37% globally). While 9% say they will move back home sooner than planned (vs. 5% globally), 23% say they will stay and not move home in the near future (vs. 18% globally). The pandemic has

mostly impacted expats in Oman in terms of their work and business (24% vs. 15% globally), personal travel (23% vs. 28% globally), and personal finances (19% vs. 8% globally). And their most important sources of information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations are social media (59% vs. 40% globally), official government channels (48% vs. 48% globally), and local news (46% vs. 47% globally). Most survey respondents (68%) are happy with the official communication (vs. 66% globally): for example, 61% of these describe it as 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.

Find more information about InterNations on our [press page](#), [in our company blog](#), or in our [magazine](#).

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