

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

Expats in Portugal enjoy the high quality of life, the ease of settling in, and the affordable cost of living.

- 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).
- Portugal comes 5th out of 59 destinations in the Expats Insider 2021 survey. It ranks among the top 20 countries in all indices aside from the Working Abroad Index (36th).

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 *Expats 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.

Portugal comes 5th out of 59 destinations in the *Expats Insider 2021* survey, ranking among the top 10 in three of its indices: quality of life (3rd), ease of settling in (9th), and cost of living (9th). While it also gets good results in the Personal Finance Index (14th), the Working Abroad Index is its weakest point (36th). 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.



## Portugal in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

### Enjoying an Excellent Quality of Life

Portugal, with a 5th rank out of 59 destinations, lands in the top 10 of the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, performing best in the Quality of Life Index (3rd) — just behind Taiwan (1st) and Austria (2nd). The country also ranks third in the Personal Happiness subcategory of the index, with 84% of expats happy with their lives in general (vs. 75% globally). Placing tenth in the Safety and Security subcategory, Portugal receives excellent results for its peacefulness: 96% of expats find the country peaceful (vs. 80% globally), and a further 97% feel safe in Portugal (vs. 84% globally).

What is more, 78% of respondents rate the quality of medical care positively (vs. 71% globally), and 73% are happy with its affordability (vs. 61% globally). Portugal also performs very well in the Leisure Options subcategory (4th), with 87% of expats happy with the local leisure options (vs. 72% globally), and 90% satisfied with the climate and weather (vs. 66% globally). *"I like the weather and the laid-back lifestyle,"* says a French expat. And one British expat agrees: *"The people are lovely, as is the climate and quality of life."*

### One of the Best Places to Settle In

Portugal is also in the top 10 of the Ease of Settling In Index (9th), coming in sixth place in the Friendliness subcategory. In fact, 87% of expats find the locals generally friendly, compared to just 69% globally. Most expats (83%) also find the locals friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). Portugal even ranks second worldwide in the Feeling at Home subcategory, where just Mexico (1st) performs better. The majority of expats feels at home in the local culture (83% vs. 63% globally) and finds it easy to settle down in the country (84% vs. 62% globally). More than half the expats (53%) also agree it is easy to make local friends in Portugal (vs. 44% globally). Actually, 47% have a fairly mixed group of friends that are both locals and other expats (vs. 48% globally), while 34% are mainly friends with other expats (vs. 32% globally), and 20% have mostly local friends (vs. 20% globally).

### Spare Career Opportunities, Great Finances

Portugal receives its worst — but still fairly average — results in the Working Abroad Index (36th). The destination places 44th in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction subcategory, with more than half the expats (51%) unsatisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally). And while 61% of expats worldwide are satisfied with their job security, this is the case for just 52% in Portugal. Moreover, 29% of expats are unhappy with the state of the local economy (vs. 19% globally). However, 70% of expats are at least happy with their work-life balance (vs. 66% globally), putting Portugal in ninth place for this factor.

The country also lands in the top 10 of the Cost of Living Index (9th): three-quarters of respondents (75%) are satisfied with the cost of living in Portugal (vs. 48% globally). One Swiss expat says: *"There is a high quality of life with cheaper living costs."* Over two-thirds of expats in Portugal (68%) rate their financial situation positively (vs. 64% globally). Additionally, 79% say their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover daily costs (vs. 77% globally). *"The salary is good, especially in combination with the low cost of living,"* explains an Iranian expat.

### The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Portugal

The pandemic has affected the relocation plans of close to two in five expats in Portugal (37%), which is exactly the same share as the global average (37%). Interestingly, only 1% of expats will move back home sooner than originally planned, compared to 5% of expats globally. In fact, many plan to remain longer: more than one-quarter (27%) have decided to stay in Portugal and not move back home in the near future (vs. 18% globally). Overall, the pandemic has affected expats in Portugal in terms of their social lives (36% vs. 24% globally), personal travel (26% vs. 28% globally), and work or business (14% vs. 15% 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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