

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

Expats in Romania enjoy their financial situation but wish for a higher quality of life.

- 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).
- Romania comes 32nd out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks among the bottom 10 countries for the quality of life (51st) but lands in the top 10 for personal finance (8th).

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.

Romania comes 32nd out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Expats are particularly happy with their personal finances (8th) and the cost of living (15th). While the country also performs quite well in the Ease of Settling In Index (27th), it only lands in 37th place in the Working Abroad Index. Lastly, it even ranks among the bottom 10 destinations in the Quality of Life Index (51st). 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.



Romania in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

In the Bottom 10 for the Quality of Life...

Coming in 32nd place out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Romania lands among the bottom 10 in the Quality of Life Index (51st). The country even ranks second to last in the Travel & Transport subcategory (58th), only ahead of Kuwait (59th): 13% of expats are unhappy with their travel opportunities in Romania (vs. 7% globally), and more than half (56%) rate the transportation infrastructure negatively (vs. 15% globally). A US American expat says: *"The roads are not very good — there are too many potholes that are poorly fixed. And there is not enough public transportation outside of the big cities."*

Romania also ends up among the bottom 10 in the Health & Well-Being subcategory (54th). Over one-third of expats (36%) rate the quality of medical care in Romania negatively (vs. 14% globally). *"Romania is not the place for people with health issues or risks, even if money or private health insurance is available,"* shares an Austrian expat. More than one in four expats also are unhappy with the water and sanitation infrastructure (26% vs. 12% globally) and the air quality in Romania (26% vs. 20% globally). The country performs better in the Digital Life Index (27th). Almost all expats find it easy to get high-speed internet at home (95% vs. 79% globally) and a local mobile phone number (98% vs. 87% globally). However, 50% rate the availability of government services online negatively, compared to only 21% globally. But the majority of expats (88%) likes the peacefulness in Romania (vs. 80% globally). An expat from Pakistan even says that *"it is one of the most peaceful countries in the world"*.

... but in the Top 10 for Personal Finance

Romania performs best in the Personal Finance Index, even making it into the top 10 worldwide (8th). Nearly three in four expats (74%) are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally), and 91% consider their disposable household income to be enough or more than enough to cover all their expenses (vs. 77% globally). Romania also performs well in the Cost of Living Index (15th), with 70% of expats rating this aspect of expat life positively (vs. 48% globally).

Mixed Results for Working Abroad

However, Romania shows a below-average performance in the Working Abroad Index (37th). On the one hand, most expats are satisfied with their working hours (66% vs. 66% globally) and their work-life balance (71% vs. 66% globally). On average, expats in Romania work just slightly longer than the global average: full-time employees put in 43.5 hours a week (vs. 43.2 hours globally).

On the other hand, 39% of expats rate the local economy negatively (vs. 19% globally), and over one-third (36%) are unhappy with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally). Moreover, 22% of expats are dissatisfied with their job in general (vs. 16% globally). The top 3 fields that expats in Romania work in are IT (15% vs. 11% globally), manufacturing and engineering (15% vs. 7% globally), and finance (13% vs. 8% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Romania

The majority of expats in Romania (72%) says the pandemic has not affected the duration of their current stay abroad (vs. 63% globally). However, 14% of survey respondents in Romania think the

pandemic will affect their family life in the long run (vs. 9% globally). The top 3 sources of information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations for expats in Romania are the local news (53% vs. 47% globally), official government channels (36% vs. 48% globally), and social media (29% vs. 40% globally). While two-thirds of expats worldwide (66%) are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19, this is only the case for 52% of expats in Romania.

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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