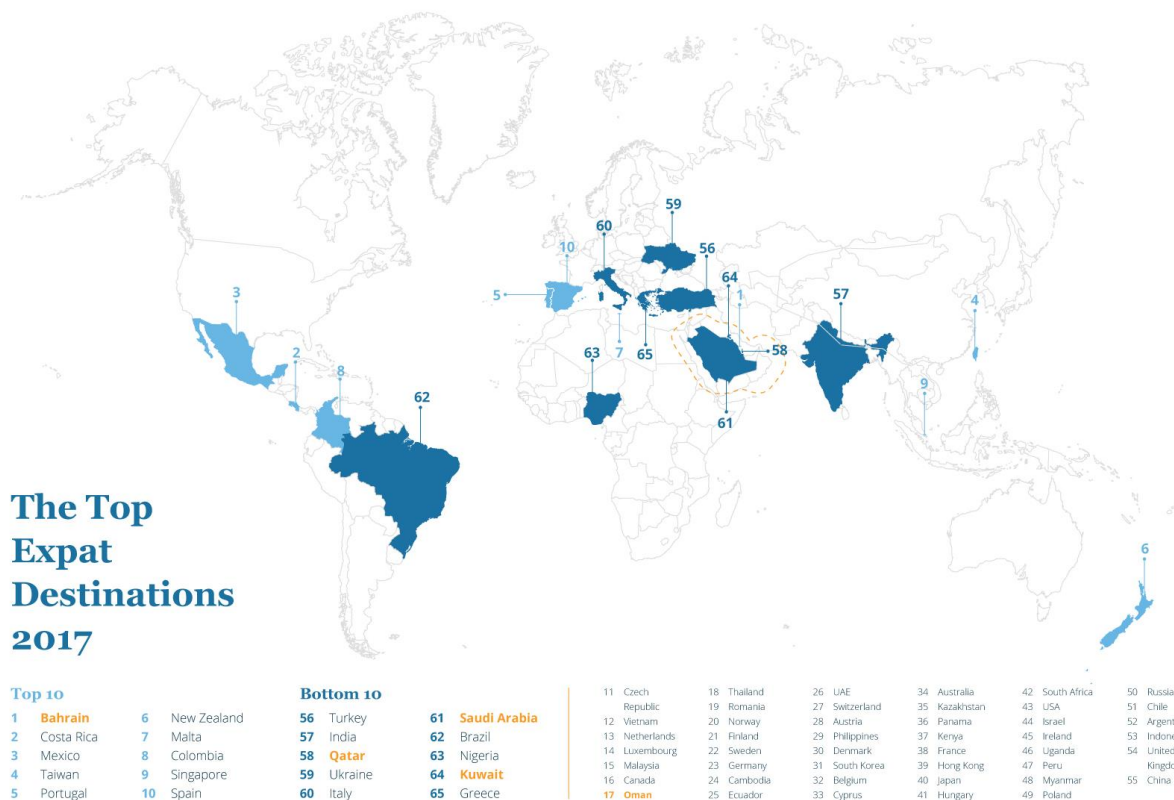


## Expatriate Insider 2017 Survey Reveals: Bahrain Is the Most Popular Destination in the World for Expats

While expats find it hard to settle in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, Bahrain offers everything they need.

- Surprise winner Bahrain improves by 19 places and becomes the best destination for expats in 2017, with nearly nine in ten expats (87%) stating to be happy with their life.
- The majority of expats in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia have an income of less than 50,000 USD per year — only in Qatar one-third has access to over 100,000 USD a year.
- Kuwait is seen as the unfriendliest country for foreign residents worldwide, but Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also challenging to settle in.

Munich, 06 September 2017 — While the Gulf States are close to each other in geographical terms, the local expat population sees them very differently. Bahrain is voted to be this year's best expat destination, and Oman ranks above the worldwide average on a solid 17th place, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait trail far behind in the bottom 10 of the worst destinations across the globe. The main issue in these countries seems to be a lack of friendliness towards foreign residents, as the [Expatriate Insider 2017](#) survey reveals. With nearly 13,000 respondents living and working abroad, it is one of the most extensive expat studies, conducted yearly by [InterNations](#), the largest expat community worldwide. Apart from offering an in-depth analysis of life abroad, the survey ranks 65 countries by a variety of factors such as quality of life, working abroad, and settling in. In addition to Bahrain, this year's top 10 destinations for expats are Costa Rica, Mexico, Taiwan, Portugal, New Zealand, Malta, Colombia, Singapore, and Spain.



## Low Taxes and Personal Safety in the Gulf States

Expats see both the lack of personal income tax and the economy in the GCC member states as potential benefits prior to moving there. After their arrival, one-third of expats working in Qatar have a household income of more than 100,000 USD a year, which is significantly more than in the other GCC member states. In fact, more than five in ten expats in Bahrain (53%), Kuwait (62%), Oman (63%), and Saudi Arabia (52%) only have a yearly income of less than 50,000 USD. However, most expats seem to be satisfied with their annual household income, as the majority in each country states it is enough or more than enough to cover their daily expenses. In Saudi Arabia, over one in five expats (22%) even have a lot more than what they need. Additionally, more than six in ten expats in each Gulf State (from 63% in Oman to 76% in Qatar) believe that their income is a lot higher than what they would earn in a similar position back home. An Indian expat living in Saudi Arabia states that the *"cost of living is low and the income is good compared with my home country"*. Apart from the economy, the political stability is also rated positively across all Gulf States: in fact, fewer respondents in each country are unsatisfied with this factor than the global average of 23 percent (except for Saudi Arabia, where the level of dissatisfaction is about average at 24 percent). Oman and Qatar in particular stand out with only four and three percent respectively rating the local economy negatively. However, it needs to be mentioned that the *Expat Insider 2017* survey was conducted before Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE cut ties with Qatar.

## A Cool Welcome in the Desert

Aside from "hard" factors such as economy and politics, Bahrain also scores with regard to topics involving "softer" factors, like friendliness, family life, and personal happiness. While more than eight in ten expats in Bahrain (87%) are happy with their life in general, only about half of the expats in Kuwait (49%) agree. This makes Kuwait the country with the unhappiest expats worldwide! One of the reason for this low ranking might be that Kuwait also receives the most negative rating for friendliness towards foreign residents. An Indian expat in Kuwait hopes that *"Kuwait in general will become more welcoming to expats and understand the importance of different cultures in society"*. In addition, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are particularly challenging places to settle in: more than a third of expats (37% and 38% respectively) do not feel at home in the local culture and 11 and 16 percent respectively believe they never will. These results are clearly above the global average of only 7 percent of all expats feeling this way about their respective destination. The contrast is even more striking compared to Bahrain: exactly one-quarter of expats in Bahrain felt at home there nearly right away, and another 58 percent started feeling this way within the first two years. This impressive result might be, among other things, due to a warm welcome by the local population. Nearly nine out of ten expats in Bahrain (86%) rate the factor friendliness towards foreign residents positively.

## Bahrain Is This Year's Place to Be

Bahrain is the star among the GCC member states: jumping from rank 19 to 1 overall, the country improved significantly compared to last year's *Expat Insider* survey, especially in terms of personal finance, working abroad, and ease of settling in. In fact, the small country even beats Mexico, which has ranked first in terms of settling in ever since the first *Expat Insider* survey was conducted in 2014. Bahrain is also excellent for finding friends as 73 percent of expats living there are satisfied with making new friends abroad. A Philippian expat living in Bahrain says it is a *"home away from home. The locals are very friendly and helpful."* Even though Bahrain is among the five expat-friendliest countries worldwide, only three percent of

### Life in the GCC States

	Bahrain	KSA	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	UAE
<b>Overall Rank*</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>26</b>
Quality of Life*	32	59	63	26	46	18
Ease of Settling In*	1	57	63	6	47	21
Working Abroad*	3	50	54	27	45	38
Family Life <small>(out of 45 countries)</small>	10	44	N/A	32	37	29
Personal Finance*	13	11	55	29	34	46
Cost of Living*	28	20	49	29	61	47

\*out of 65 countries

### Expats in the GCC States

#### Average age



41.8 years

43.2 Bahrain	39.9 Kuwait	43.4 Qatar
42.1 KSA	42.5 Oman	40.9 UAE

#### Top nationality



Indian

30% Bahrain	22% Kuwait	13% Qatar
13% KSA	33% Oman	16% UAE

expats are mostly friends with locals. In fact, 45 percent are mostly friends with other expats, and 53 percent state that they belong to a fairly mixed social circle. The simple fact that foreign nationals make up an estimated 30 to more than 80 percent of the population in the various GCC member states, might explain this result. All in all, expats seem to enjoy life in Bahrain and nearly a third (32%) plan to stay longer than five years, while eleven percent can even imagine staying forever.

### **A Heartwarming Welcome Leads Bahrain, Costa Rica, and Mexico to the Top**

For the first time since the *Expat Insider* survey was introduced, none of the previous year's top 3 destinations lead the ranking: Surprise winner Bahrain even leaps from 19th position to 1st place, winning the overall ranking. The Gulf State makes it easy for expats to feel at home due to its friendly local residents — nearly nine out of ten expats (86%) rate the friendly attitude of Bahrainis towards expats positively. In addition, about three-quarters of expats in Bahrain (73%) are satisfied with their jobs, compared to a global average of 64 percent. Runner-up Costa Rica and Mexico on third place also rank among the top 20 in terms of working abroad, but are even more valued for their extremely friendly local population. In fact, nearly nine in ten expats (87%) rate the friendly attitude of locals towards foreign residents positively in both countries, compared to a global average of only 67 percent of expats feeling this way about their destination.

### **Greece, Kuwait, and Nigeria Are the Worst Destinations for Expats Again**

The countries featured in the bottom 3, on the other hand, have remained the same for the third year in a row: Greece has now hit rock bottom, ranking last overall, as well as in terms of working abroad, personal finance, and family life. Half of the respondents in Greece say that their household income is not enough to cover their daily expenses, which is more than twice the global average (23%). The main issue in Nigeria and Kuwait, 63rd and 64th out of 65 countries, remains the constant struggle with the quality of life: more than two in ten expats in Kuwait (23%) are unhappy with their life in general, compared to only 10 percent of expats worldwide. In Nigeria, safety and security cause additional problems, with nearly seven out of ten (68%) rating their personal safety negatively.

### **About the InterNations *Expat Insider* 2017 Survey**

For its annual [\*Expat Insider\* survey](#), InterNations asked about 13,000 expatriates representing 166 nationalities and living in 188 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 43 different aspects of life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized the respondents' personal satisfaction with these aspects and considered both emotional topics as well as more factual aspects with equal weight. The respondents' ratings of the individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 16 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up six topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Family Life, Personal Finance, and Cost of Living Index. Except for the latter, all indices were further averaged in order to rank 65 expatriate destinations around the world. In 2017 the top 10 were Bahrain, Costa Rica, Mexico, Taiwan, Portugal, New Zealand, Malta, Colombia, Singapore, and Spain.

For a country to be featured in the indices and consequently in the overall ranking, a sample size of at least 75 survey participants per country was necessary. The only exception to this is the Family Life Index, where a sample size of more than 40 respondents raising children abroad was required. In 2017, 65 and 45 countries respectively met these requirements. However, in most countries the sample size exceeded 100 participants.

## About InterNations

With 2.8 million members in 390 cities around the world, InterNations (<http://www.internations.org>) is the largest global network and information site for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking both online and face-to-face. At around 6,000 monthly events and activities, expatriates have the opportunity to meet with other global minds. Online services include country and city guides created by a team of professional writers, guest contributions about life abroad, and discussion forums to help members with topics such as local housing and job searching. InterNations membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust.

The InterNations app is available for Android and iOS and can be downloaded for free on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#).

Find more information about InterNations on our [press pages](#), [company website](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), or in our [Expat Magazine](#).

### Press Contact

Vera Grossmann  
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH  
Schwanthalerstrasse 39  
80336 Munich, Germany

Tel: +49 (0)89 461 3324 79  
Fax: +49 (0)89 461 3324 99  
Email: [press@internations.org](mailto:press@internations.org)  
Homepage: [www.internations.org/press](http://www.internations.org/press)