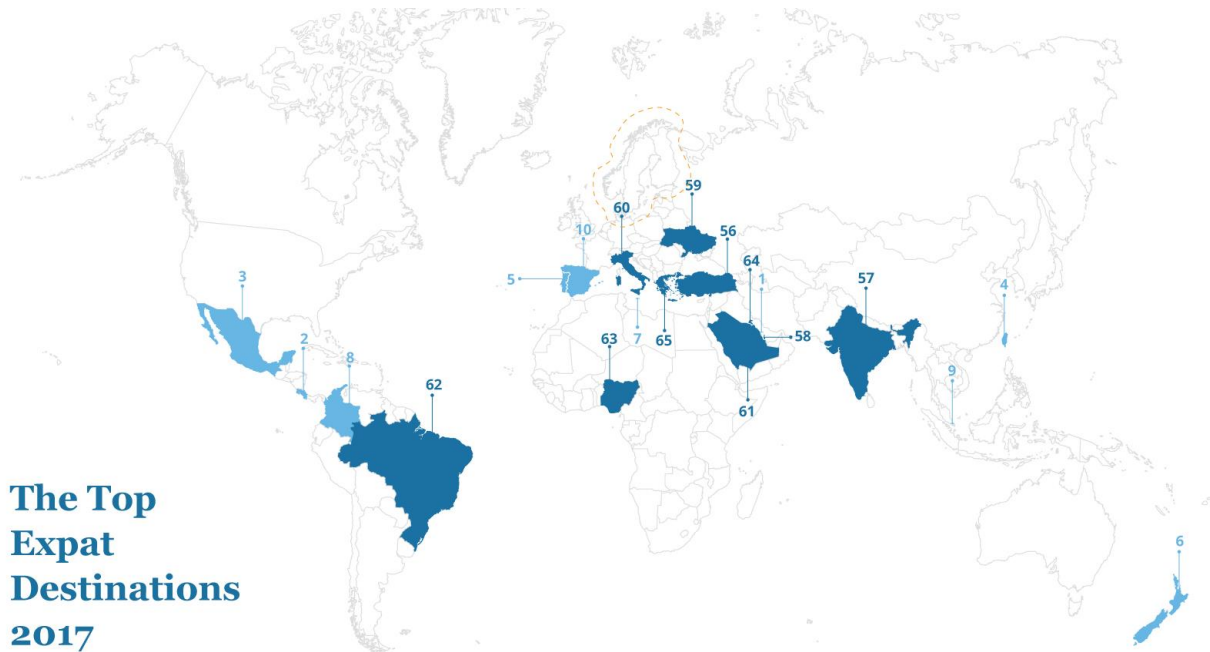


Expatriate Insider 2017 Survey Reveals: Nordic Countries Are the Worst for Finding Friends

Denmark trails behind Norway, Finland, and Sweden in terms of popularity among expats, but all fail to welcome foreigners with open arms.

- The Nordic countries rank among the top 5 destinations for expat families and among the top 10 for health and well-being worldwide.
- Norway, Denmark, and Sweden take up the bottom 3 places for finding friends: more than six in ten expats find it hard to build friendships with the distant local residents.
- Work weeks are up to 5.8 hours shorter in the Nordic countries than the global average, but about three in ten expats in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark think that their household income is not enough.

Munich, 06 September 2017 — The Nordic countries continue to shine with outstanding results in terms of education, childcare, and healthcare. Moreover, the highly satisfying work-life balance supports family life and allows foreign residents to enjoy a more laid-back lifestyle. High costs of living and a distant local population are, however, real concerns for expats, 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. While Norway (20th), Finland (21st), Sweden (22nd), and Denmark (30th) all rank slightly above average, this year's top 10 destinations for expats are Bahrain, Costa Rica, Mexico, Taiwan, Portugal, New Zealand, Malta, Colombia, Singapore, and Spain.



**The Top
Expatriate
Destinations
2017**

Top 10

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1 Bahrain | 6 New Zealand |
| 2 Costa Rica | 7 Malta |
| 3 Mexico | 8 Colombia |
| 4 Taiwan | 9 Singapore |
| 5 Portugal | 10 Spain |

Bottom 10

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| 56 Turkey | 61 Saudi Arabia |
| 57 India | 62 Brazil |
| 58 Qatar | 63 Nigeria |
| 59 Ukraine | 64 Kuwait |
| 60 Italy | 65 Greece |

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 11 Czech Republic | 18 Thailand | 26 UAE | 34 Australia | 42 South Africa | 50 Russia |
| 12 Vietnam | 19 Romania | 27 Switzerland | 35 Kazakhstan | 43 USA | 51 Chile |
| 13 Netherlands | 20 Norway | 28 Austria | 36 Panama | 44 Israel | 52 Argentina |
| 14 Luxembourg | 21 Finland | 29 Philippines | 37 Kenya | 45 Ireland | 53 Indonesia |
| 15 Malaysia | 22 Sweden | 30 Denmark | 38 France | 46 Uganda | 54 United Kingdom |
| 16 Canada | 23 Germany | 31 South Korea | 39 Hong Kong | 47 Peru | 55 China |
| 17 Oman | 24 Cambodia | 32 Belgium | 40 Japan | 48 Myanmar | |
| | 25 Ecuador | 33 Cyprus | 41 Hungary | 49 Poland | |

A Heaven for Expat Families

Together with the Czech Republic, the four Nordic countries make up the top 5 destinations for expat families in 2017. Finland is especially appreciated for its high quality of education (91% of parents satisfied): according to a 2016 report by the World Economic Forum, the country's gap between its weakest and strongest students is the smallest in the world. Moreover, a large majority of expat parents are satisfied with childcare options, ranking from 75 percent in Norway to 85 percent in Finland and Sweden. The latter also outranks its neighbors when it comes to the affordability of childcare, as nine out of ten expat parents in Sweden are satisfied with this factor, compared to a global average of only 42 percent. Besides doing well with regard to education and childcare, most Nordic countries also have impressive results for children's health: in fact, 96 percent of expat parents in Norway rate this factor positively, and so do 91 percent in both Sweden and Finland, compared to 75 percent of expat parents worldwide. A US American expat in Finland says it is *"one of the best places on earth to raise kids"*, while a British expat in Denmark thinks that *"Denmark is a very family-friendly country and the workplace culture is very supportive of families"*.

Nordic People are Hard to Be Friends With

Despite their great performance regarding family life abroad, the Nordic countries rank among the bottom 10 for finding friends, with Norway, Denmark, and Sweden even taking up the last three spots. About half the foreign residents describe the local population in all the four countries as more distant than welcoming, and more than seven in ten consider them reserved rather than outgoing. A British expat in Sweden states that *"as in most Nordic countries, people here are quite private, closed, and not that open to conversations with newcomers"*. This might be one of the reasons why 55 percent of expats in Finland and 63 percent in Norway, as well as more than seven in ten in both Denmark (71%) and Sweden (72%), find it hard to make local friends. In fact, an above-average percentage of expats living in the latter two are mainly friends with other expatriates (46% in Denmark and 40% in Sweden vs. 33% worldwide). As two potential reasons, respondents cite the language barrier and especially cultural issues. These obstacles might help explain why more than three out of ten expats in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark do not feel at home in the local culture, compared to only 23 percent worldwide. Moreover, an above-average percentage of expats in these three countries are not feeling at home in their new home yet — only Finland is on par with the worldwide average of 14 percent. However, even there, one in eight respondents believes that they will never feel at home in their host country.

A Laid-Back Working Life at a Price

Scandinavia being famous for supporting its residents with combining family and work, it comes as no surprise that Denmark, Norway, and Sweden rank among the top 10 for work-life balance worldwide. Coming in 12th out of 65 destinations, Finland does not follow far behind. About seven in ten expats in each country rate their work-life balance positively — an Indonesian expat in Denmark even states it is a *"work-life balance that I do not get anywhere else"*. This might be due to the shorter-than-average working hours for full-time employees in Finland (38.5 hours per week vs. 44.3 worldwide), Denmark (39.7), Sweden (42.3), and Norway (42.9). However, expats across these countries tend to have lots of leisure time, but not enough money. About three in ten expats in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark think that their disposable household income is not enough to cover everything they need. The

Life in the Nordic Countries

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Overall Rank*	30	21	20	22
Quality of Life*	12	16	22	14
Ease of Settling In*	65	60	50	49
Working Abroad*	9	22	8	10
Family Life (out of 45 countries)	4	1	5	2
Personal Finance*	56	53	51	50
Cost of Living*	55	51	62	50

*out of 65 countries

Expats in the Nordic Countries



main reason is probably the high cost of living, which is rated negatively by about half the expats in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. In Norway, a staggering 71 percent judge this factor less than favorably — 36 percentage points more than the global average.

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](#).

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