

# Expat City Ranking 2017: Beijing and Shanghai Are Good for Expats' Careers, but Not for Their Health

A poor quality of the environment makes Beijing unattractive, while expats in Shanghai work especially long hours.

- *Four in five expats in Beijing and more than six in ten in Shanghai (64%) are unhappy with the state of the urban environment such as the quality of air and water.*
- *Life without speaking the local language is difficult for 73 percent of expats in Beijing — but only for 34 percent in Shanghai.*
- *Expats in Shanghai have the second-longest work week worldwide with an average of 48.2 hours, only beaten by Tokyo (50.8h).*

Munich, 14 November 2017 — China's metropoles, Beijing and Shanghai, rank a low 37th and 41st out of 51 destinations in this year's Expat City Ranking: both cities receive especially low ratings in terms of getting settled. However, while expats in Shanghai are somewhat more satisfied with the quality of urban living, Beijing offers a slightly better work-life balance, as the so-far unpublished [Expat City Ranking 2017](#) reveals. The ranking is based on data collected in the annual *Expat Insider* survey, conducted by [InterNations](#), the largest expat community worldwide. With nearly 13,000 respondents living and working abroad, *Expat Insider 2017* is one of the most extensive expat studies worldwide. Apart from offering an in-depth analysis of expat life in 51 cities, the survey ranks them by a variety of factors from the areas quality of urban living, getting settled, urban work life, as well as finance and housing. According to all these rating factors, the top 10 cities for expats are Manama, Prague, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Johannesburg, Bangkok, Basel, and Frankfurt am Main.



## Poor Quality of Urban Living Drags Beijing and Shanghai Down

While Beijing and Shanghai both perform poorly in regard to both the quality of urban living and the ease of getting settled, Shanghai (30th and 38th) still manages to rank a little bit ahead of Beijing (37th and 44th). In fact, the urban environment in Beijing is rated the worst out of 51 cities globally: 80 percent of expats are unhappy about the quality of water, air, and the amount of green spaces in the city, compared to 64 percent in Shanghai. However, both cities do very badly in comparison with the global average (21% negative ratings).

Additionally, settling in seems to be a challenge in both Chinese metropoles: about half the expats surveyed in Beijing (49%) and Shanghai (48%) find it hard to get used to the local culture, compared to a global average of only 20 percent. Interestingly, the local language only seems to be a major issue in Beijing: while nearly three-quarters of expats there (73%) find it hard to live in the city without speaking the local language, only 34 percent see this as a problem in Shanghai. Nonetheless, the majority of expats in both Beijing (61%) and Shanghai (67%) are mainly friends with other expats, which is a significantly higher percentage than the global average (33%).

## Attractive Local Career Opportunities and Financial Security

While the urban environment in Shanghai is slightly better than in Beijing, expats looking for a balanced work life should better head to the latter. Coming in 10th out of 51 cities for their work life, Beijing ranks 12 places ahead of Shanghai (22nd). Both cities are valued for local career opportunities (70% each) as well as job security (67% positive ratings in Beijing and 66% in Shanghai) — but only 25 percent of expats in Beijing are dissatisfied with their working hours, compared to 32 percent in Shanghai. However, these shares are both higher than the global average of 20 percent negative ratings. This is no surprise, as expats in Shanghai work an average of 48.2 hours per week, compared to 45.3 hours in Beijing and 44.3 hours globally. Only expats in Tokyo work longer than that (50.8h per week). However, working in these two Chinese cities may be worth it, as they both rank among the top 10 cities with a healthy disposable household income: nearly six in ten expats in Beijing (57%) and an even higher share in Shanghai (67%) have more than is required to cover everything they need in daily life, compared to a global average of only 48 percent. A French expat living in Shanghai likes having "*an income that allows me to go out to bars and restaurants as often as I like*".

	Beijing	Shanghai
 Overall City Ranking	37	41
 Quality of Urban Living Index	37	30
 Getting Settled Index	44	38
 Urban Work Life Index	10	22
 Finance & Housing Index	25	32

## Top 5 Cities Make It Easy for Expats to Get Settled and Enjoy a Great Work Life

Manama, Prague, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur, and Amsterdam top the list of the best cities for expats: while Prague lags behind on 35th place for getting settled, the other four cities receive good to excellent ratings in this respect. A South African expat living in Kuala Lumpur likes "*the easy-going temperament and friendliness of the local people*" while an expat from the Philippines appreciates the "*very friendly and helpful locals*" in Manama. The majority of expats rates the general friendliness towards foreign residents positively in Manama (84%), Amsterdam (83%), Kuala Lumpur (78%), and Madrid (74%), compared to a

global average of 67 percent. Prague, however, performs below average here: only about half the expats living there (49%) are satisfied with this factor. Nonetheless, the capital of the Czech Republic is one of the top destinations for expats in 2017, particularly due to its outstanding ratings in terms of work: nearly seven in ten expats (68%) are satisfied with local career opportunities in Prague — 19 percentage points more than the global average.

### InterNations Communities in China

Out of 2.8 million members in 390 cities around the world, there are more than 66,000 InterNations members in China: about 28,000 of them live in Shanghai and about 21,000 in Beijing, making these cities the largest expat communities in China, followed by Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Suzhou.

Learn more about the InterNations Communities in [Beijing](#), [Shanghai](#) and [China](#) online!

### Interested in Talking to Expats in Your City?



Visit an InterNations Official Event and personally meet expats from all over the world who will share their stories with you. Find out [here](#) when and where the next official event in your community will take place.

To receive a personal press invitation including free access to the event and interview opportunities with InterNations members, please contact [press@internations.org](mailto:press@internations.org) or +49 (0)89 461 3324 79 and let us know which event you would like to attend.

### Read More about the Expat City Ranking 2017



[The Best and Worst Cities](#)



[Quality of Urban Living](#)



[Getting Settled](#)



[Urban Work Life](#)



[Finance & Housing](#)

### About the Expat City Ranking 2017

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. In 2017, the fourth year the survey was conducted, respondents were also invited to share their opinions on the city they are currently living in.

Participants were asked to rate more than 25 different aspects of urban 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 13 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up four topical indices: Quality of Urban Living, Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, and Finance & Housing. These were further averaged in order to rank



51 cities worldwide. In 2017, the top 10 cities for expats are Manama, Prague, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Johannesburg, Bangkok, Basel, and Frankfurt am Main.

For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2017, a sample size of at least 45 survey participants per city was required. In total, the responses used for the city ranking represent 7,985 expats living in 40 countries.

### 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 5,000 monthly events and activities, expatriates have the opportunity to meet 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 the local job or housing search. 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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