

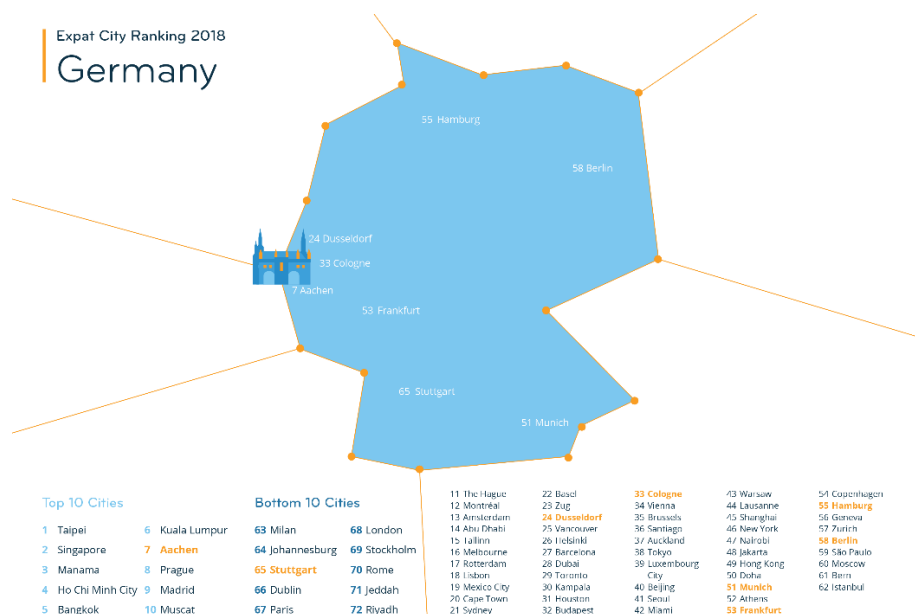
# Expat City Ranking 2018: Aachen Ranks Far Ahead of Other German Cities in the Eyes of Expats

While expats in German cities struggle to feel settled, they mostly experience a great urban work life and often earn more than at home.

- *Aachen (7th) ranks far ahead of Dusseldorf (24th), Cologne (33rd), Munich (51st), Frankfurt am Main (53rd), Hamburg (55th), Berlin (58th), and Stuttgart (65th) in the Expat City Ranking 2018 by InterNations. The top 10 cities for expats are Taipei, Singapore, Manama, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Aachen, Prague, Madrid, and Muscat.*
- *Finance & housing pose a problem in most German cities surveyed, with Stuttgart and Munich even ranking in the bottom 10 worldwide.*
- *Aside from Berlin, all German cities are praised for their urban work life. Aachen, Munich, Stuttgart, and Dusseldorf even make it into the global top 10 cities.*
- *German cities underperform when it comes to getting settled as an expat — Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, and Stuttgart rank in the bottom 10.*

Munich, 20 November 2018 — This year’s Expat City Ranking by InterNations reveals a varying picture within Germany, with cities in both the top 10 (Aachen: 7th) and bottom 10 (Stuttgart: 65th) out of 72 cities worldwide. Dusseldorf (24th), Cologne (33rd), Munich (51st), Frankfurt am Main (53rd), Hamburg (55th), and Berlin (58th) have average to low results. Overall, the German cities show a good performance in terms of quality of urban life, while expats’ financial situation differ.

The so-far unpublished Expat City Ranking 2018 is based on this year’s [Expat Insider survey](#), conducted by [InterNations](#), the largest expat community worldwide. With more than 18,000 respondents living and working abroad, it is one of the most extensive expat studies in the world. Apart from offering an in-depth analysis of expat life in 72 cities, the survey ranks them by a variety of factors such as quality of urban living, getting settled, urban work life, as well as finance & housing. The top 10 cities for expats in 2018 are Taipei, Singapore, Manama, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Aachen, Prague, Madrid, and Muscat.



### **Expats Rate Aachen (7th) the World's Best City for Urban Work Life**

Aachen ranks 7th out of 72 cities in this year's Expat City Ranking. As such, it is the best performing German city, scoring well across the board. It comes in first worldwide for urban work life, with more than four in five expats (83%) satisfied with both their job security and their job overall (vs. a global 59% and 65%, respectively). The most common fields of work in Aachen are IT and manufacturing & engineering, with 30 percent of expats naming each respectively (vs. 12% and 8% globally). One Latvian expat points out the *"exciting possibilities for engineers"* in the city.

Over seven in ten working expats (72%) think that their income in Aachen is higher than what they would make in a similar position at home, compared to just about half the expats globally (53%). The city also boasts exceptional results for the local cost of living: ranking second worldwide in this regard, four in five expats in Aachen (80%) rate this aspect positively. This is 22 percentage points higher than the share of expats that rate the general cost of living in Germany positively (58%).

One of the city's main stumbling blocks seem to be transportation: not quite four in five expats (79%) rate the local transportation in Aachen positively, which is twelve percentage points less than the average satisfaction regarding the transportation infrastructure across Germany (91%). *"Local transportation is excellent,"* shares an Indian expat living in Aachen, *"not within the city, but the whole country"*.

Just 28 percent of expats find it easy to make local friends in Aachen, which is 17 percentage points less than the global average (45%). However, within Germany, Aachen still features the second largest proportion of expats feeling at home in their city, only beaten by Cologne (61% vs. 69% respectively).

### **Expats in Dusseldorf (24th) Feel Safe and Are Satisfied with Their Finances**

Dusseldorf is the second-best German city in the Expat City Ranking 2018, coming in 24th out of 72 cities worldwide. Exactly four in five expats (80%) are satisfied with their job security (vs. 59% globally), and more than three in five (62%) rate the local career opportunities favorably (vs. 51% globally). However, German cities do well for the latter across the board, ranking Dusseldorf just 5th within the country, beaten by Stuttgart (4th), Munich (10th), Hamburg (14th), and Frankfurt (16th).

Dusseldorf performs a lot better in terms of income in relation to costs, losing out only to Aachen within Germany: four in five expats in Dusseldorf (80%) think their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover their daily needs (vs. 78% globally and 90% in Aachen). It might be no surprise then that almost two-thirds of expats in Dusseldorf (64%) are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 58% worldwide). One Australian expat points out that she *"never feels ripped off"* in the city.

Additionally, the city seems to be a very safe place for expats: like in Munich, 92 percent of expats in Dusseldorf rate their personal safety positively. One Belgian expat likes that it is *"very secure and easy to travel"*. Like most other German cities, Dusseldorf does exceptionally well for local transportation, with more than nine in ten (91%) rating this factor positively, compared to just 70 percent globally.

### **Cologne (33rd) Offers a Good Work Life but It Is Hard to Get Settled**

Cologne is a fairly average player within Germany, ranking in the midfield for most topics surveyed and coming in 33rd out of 72 cities overall: it performs best in terms of urban work life (14th) and worst for getting settled (44th). The most common reason for expats relocating to Cologne is finding a job on their own (20%). It seems like the move for work was a good decision: more than three-

quarters (76%) state to be generally satisfied with their jobs, compared to 68 percent across Germany, and over seven in ten (71%) are satisfied with their job security (vs. 59% globally).

Expats' financial situation do not leave much to be desired, as 68 percent believe that they earn more than they would in a similar position back home (vs. 53% globally). This higher income might be why 84 percent find that their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover their daily needs, compared to 78 percent globally. One Portuguese expat appreciates that the *"relation between cost of living and salaries is extremely good"* in Cologne. However, while more than half (54%) rate the local cost of living well (vs. 44% globally), only around a quarter (27%) find housing affordable (vs. 37% worldwide).

While just about half the respondents in Germany (53%) feel at home in the country, a much larger share of expats feels at home in Cologne (69%). However, this does not seem to mean that making friends with Germans is easy. In fact, 44 percent of expats in Cologne are mainly friends with other expats (vs. 34% globally). One Dutch expat explains: *"Most of my local friends are Europeans, but not Germans. It seems to be more difficult to make German friends."*

### **Munich's (51st) High Cost of Living Frustrates Expats**

Munich ranks 51st out of 72 cities overall, receiving its worst ratings in terms of finance & housing and does not do particularly well for cost of living either — within Germany, it even comes in last for both topics. Almost three in five expats in Munich (59%) rate the local cost of living negatively (vs. 37% globally), and 16 percent even give it the worst possible rating, which is double the global average (8%). Across Germany, just 21 percent are generally unhappy with the general cost of living, and only two percent give this factor the worst possible rating! One Indian expat bemoans that the *"cost of living is high, and accommodation is incredibly expensive"* in Munich. In fact, 75 percent say it is hard to find housing in Munich (vs. 30% globally), and another 85 percent say it is hard to afford (vs. 44% globally).

Though life in Munich is costly, expats do seem to enjoy the perks as well: coming in 12th worldwide in terms of quality of urban living, Munich is the best German city for this topic. More than nine in ten (91%) are happy with the quality of the urban environment, compared to seven in ten (70%) worldwide — 58 percent of expats in Munich even give this the best rating possible (vs. 32% globally). Moreover, Munich boasts favorable leisure options, with 82 percent rating them positively, compared to less than three-quarters (74%) globally.

When it comes to the urban work life, expats rank Munich 5th out of 72 cities worldwide. Losing out only to Stuttgart (4th worldwide), Munich (10th) is the second-best German city for local career opportunities: 70 percent rate this aspect positively (vs. 51% globally). The Bavarian city even ranks third in the world for job security, only beaten by Stuttgart and Aachen — however, job security seems to be a general perk of life in Germany.

Lastly, expats in Munich seem to struggle with making friends with the locals: just about one in five (22%) find this easy (vs. 45% globally). Moreover, a third of respondents in Munich (33%) even feel that local residents are generally unfriendly, compared to 21 percent globally. One Canadian states that *"local people are not welcoming and fairly cold — I only made friends with expats."* In fact, 43 percent say their friends are mostly other expats, while this is only the case for 34 percent of expats globally.

### **Frankfurt's (53rd) Offers a Great Work Life but with Few Friends for Expats**

Ranking just 53rd out of 72 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2018, Frankfurt's best feature is urban work life (16th worldwide). However, even in this aspect, Aachen (1st), Munich (5th), Stuttgart (6th), Dusseldorf (8th), and Cologne (14th) are still rated better. When it comes to the local career opportunities, Frankfurt comes in 4th out of the German cities, with 69 percent of expats rating this aspect favorably. This is 18 percentage points more than the global average (51%). Close to three-quarters of expats (73%) are satisfied with their jobs overall, which is again higher than the global average (65%).

Being known as Germany's financial capital, it might be no surprise that Frankfurt has the highest share of expats working in finance (18%) within Germany, though IT is still the most common field of work in both Frankfurt (21%) and Germany (20%). The majority of expats in Frankfurt (63%) is satisfied with their financial situation and one Irish expat highlights their "*financial security*" as a key advantage of life in Frankfurt. This is besides the fact that almost half the expats in Frankfurt (47%) rate the local cost of living negatively, compared to 37 percent of expats worldwide.

Although 64 percent of expats in the city are satisfied with their work-life balance (vs. 61% globally), it does not seem like expats can fully exploit their leisure time: Frankfurt ranks 42nd out of 72 cities worldwide for the quality of urban living and even last within Germany. Less than two-thirds of expats in Frankfurt (64%) rate their local leisure options positively (vs. 74% globally), ranking the city 58th worldwide and second-to-last within Germany, only better than Stuttgart (68th).

Expats in Frankfurt are also unsatisfied with their social life, ranking the city 63rd worldwide, only ahead of Berlin (65th) across Germany. In fact, 33 percent rate this factor negatively, compared to 26 percent globally. Less than one in ten (9%) is completely satisfied with that aspect of life in Frankfurt, which is less than half the global average (20%).

### **Hamburg (55th) Has Poor Weather but a Great Quality of Environment**

Ranking a low 55th out of 72 cities in this year's Expat City Ranking, Hamburg is rated the world's worst city for climate and weather. "*Hamburg has terrible weather a lot of the time,*" states a US American expat. Almost seven in ten expats in Hamburg (68%) are unhappy with the local climate and weather, while around a quarter of expats globally (27%) say the same. Moreover, this is 29 percentage points higher than expat's general dissatisfaction with the weather in Germany (39%). Despite that, Hamburg ranks 23rd out of 72 cities worldwide for its quality of urban living: well over nine in ten (94%) are happy with the quality of the urban environment (vs. 70% globally), for example. "*There are lots of nice parks and green areas,*" says an expat from the UK, "*and they care a lot about the environment*". Hamburg also excels in quality of medical care, as more than four in five (81%) rate this factor positively, compared to two-thirds (67%) globally.

Hamburg claims the worst position out of the German cities for work-life balance (55th worldwide) with barely half (51%) rating this factor positively, compared to 63 percent of expats across Germany. Perhaps this is due to the poor working hours, where Hamburg also ranks worst in the country (48th worldwide). The work at least seems to pay off: close to two in five expats (37%) state that their current income is *a lot higher* than what they would make in a similar position back home (vs. 25% globally). Nevertheless, less than three-quarters (73%) say that their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover everything they need for daily life, which is below the global average (78%). This might be due to the high cost of living that expats in Hamburg report: over a third (34%) are not satisfied with this factor, compared to 21 percent of expats in all of Germany who rate the

general cost of living negatively.

Not only the weather in Hamburg seems to be cold, but also the northern Germans: the general friendliness of local residents is given the top rating by only eight percent of expats in Hamburg (vs. 23% globally), and a third (33%) even rate this factor negatively (vs. 21% globally). One Mexican expat explains that *"Germans can be very cold. Friendly, but cold. They remain acquaintances but never become friends."* In fact, almost half of the expats in Hamburg (48%) say their friends are mostly other expats (vs. 34% globally). The lack on integration into local social circles could be a reason for expats' dissatisfaction with their social life: more than a third (36%) are not happy with theirs, ten percentage points higher than the global average (26%).

### **Berlin (58th) Is Exciting but Not Welcoming towards Expats**

Berlin is the second-worst rated German city in this year's Expat City Ranking, displaying a subpar performance overall (58th out of 72 cities worldwide). Barely half of the expats (53%) feel at home in Berlin, which is nine percentage points less than the global average (62%). Just three in ten (30%) find it easy to make new friends, compared to 46 percent globally. *"Germans are not friendly, especially with foreign people,"* shares a Spanish expat living in Berlin. In fact, 37 percent of expats find the local residents in Berlin generally unfriendly, compared to 30 percent of expats that say the same about the general friendliness of the German population. Maybe this is the reason why 43 percent of expats in Berlin are mostly friends with other expats (vs. 34% globally), and just 45 percent of expats are happy with their social life (vs. 57% globally).

While expats are unhappy with their social life in Berlin — the capital ranks 65th worldwide and worst in Germany — they are happy with their leisure options: Berlin comes in 18th worldwide for this topic and is the best city in Germany. One Dutch expats finds that *"Berlin is a very exciting city"*. In fact, almost nine in ten (87%) rate the local leisure options in Berlin positively, compared to 74 percent globally.

Berlin is by far the worst city in Germany for work life, coming in 48th worldwide and 22 ranks behind the second-worst German city (Hamburg: 26th). It receives low ratings for almost every aspect: less than half (49%) are happy with the local career opportunities in Berlin, compared to more than three in five expats (62%) that are satisfied with the career prospects in Germany. Expats in Berlin do, however, enjoy a shorter work week — they spend an average of just about 38.2 hours a week at work, compared to 39.6 hours across Germany and 40.8 hours globally.

### **Expats in Stuttgart (65th) Earn More, but Life Is More Expensive and Lonely**

Stuttgart is rated the worst city for expats within Germany, coming in 65th out of 72 worldwide. Getting settled seems to be impossible in Stuttgart (last worldwide): two-thirds (67%) find it hard to make local friends in Stuttgart, for example, which is eleven percentage points more than the average within Germany (56%) and almost double the global average (36%). One Brazilian expat states to struggle with the *"coldness of the people"* in Stuttgart, while another one from Congo says that *"people are too closed to make new friends."* What is more, Stuttgart is the toughest city in the world to get by without speaking the local language (72nd).

Expats in Stuttgart also struggle financially. Half of them (50%) rate the local cost of living negatively, while just over one-fifth (21%) say the same about the general cost of living in Germany. One Romanian expat is unhappy with the *"cost of living, specifically rent"* in Stuttgart. Not only is housing in Stuttgart expensive according to 68 percent of respondents, finding accommodation is also difficult: in fact, not a single respondent says that this is *very easy* for expats (vs. 18% globally), while 73 percent



find it hard (vs. 30% globally).

Despite high prices, the city seems to offer a comparatively low quality of urban living (41st worldwide), only better than Frankfurt (42nd) within Germany. Less than half the expats (46%) are happy with the local leisure options in Stuttgart, compared to almost three-quarters (74%) globally. Beating only Aachen (41st) and Frankfurt (39th), Stuttgart is also among the worst-performing German cities in terms of transportation (38th worldwide). More than three-quarters (76%) rate the local transportation favorably — while this is more than the global average (70%), Stuttgart underperforms compared to the share of expats that rate the transportation infrastructure well across Germany (91%).

Stuttgart redeems itself when it comes to urban work life, ranking 6th out of 72 cities worldwide, only beaten by Aachen (1st) and Munich (5th) within Germany. Stuttgart is even rated the best city in the world regarding job security, with 77 percent of expats satisfied with this factor (vs. 59% globally). Stuttgart performs well in terms of working hours, too: 73 percent of expats are satisfied with their working hours, which is eleven percentage points more than the global average (62%). One Egyptian expat explains that *"you are not forced to work for extra hours until late"*. Expats also seem to be compensated well for their time: almost seven in ten (69%) say they earn more than they would in a similar job in their home country, compared to 58 percent across Germany and 53 percent of expats globally.

### The Best and Worst Cities for Expats

Taipei (1st), Singapore (2nd), and Manama (3rd) top the list of the Expat City Ranking 2018. This is largely due to how easy expats find it to settle in to life in these cities. This might be related to the friendliness of the local population and the personal safety in the cities. In fact, Taipei is rated the world's friendliest city by expats, with 94 percent finding the local residents friendly. *"People here are so friendly and always want to help,"* shares an expat from the Netherlands. The majority of expats in Manama (87%) also agrees that there is a friendly attitude toward foreign residents in the city, compared to 62 percent globally. Personal safety is one of the biggest perks of expat life in Singapore: 88 percent state to feel completely safe in the city (vs. 48% globally). *"It is easy for everyone to enjoy life here without worrying about safety,"* shares an expat from India.

On the other hand, Riyadh (72nd), Jeddah (71st), and Rome (70th) rank at the bottom of the list. While all three cities receive low ratings across the board, they seem to be particularly disappointing in terms of urban work life: close to three in five expats in Rome (58%) are dissatisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 27% globally). An Albanian expat states that *"career opportunities are non-existent"*. Meanwhile, Jeddah and Riyadh are rated the two worst cities in the world for work-life balance: 34 and 38 percent, respectively, are unsatisfied with this factor (vs. 20% globally).

### Read More about the Best and Worst Cities for Expats



Best & Worst  
Cities for Expats



Quality of Urban  
Living Index



Getting Settled  
Index



Urban Work Life  
Index



Finance &  
Housing Index

### About the Expat City Ranking 2018

For its annual [Expat Insider survey](#), InterNations asked more than 18,000 expatriates representing 178 nationalities and living in 187 countries or territories to provide information on various aspects of expat life, as well as their gender, age, and nationality. In 2018, the fifth 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 72 cities worldwide. In 2018, the top 10 cities for expats are Taipei, Singapore, Manama, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Aachen, Prague, Madrid, and Muscat.

In total, the responses used for the city ranking represent 11,966 expats living in 55 countries. For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2018, a sample size of at least 45 survey participants per city was required; 72 cities in 47 different countries made this threshold in 2018.

### About InterNations

With 3.3 million members in 420 cities around the world, InterNations ([www.internations.org](http://www.internations.org)) is the largest global community 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 official events and activities per month, 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](#).

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#### 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: <http://www.internations.org/press>