





## Expatriate Life in Basel, Geneva, Lausanne, and Zurich

The Expat City Ranking 2020 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including four Swiss cities.

- Out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020, Basel ranks 24th, followed by Lausanne (28th), Zurich (37th), and Geneva (48th).
- Valencia (1st), Alicante, Lisbon, Panama City, Singapore, Málaga, Buenos Aires, Kuala Lumpur, Madrid, and Abu Dhabi (10th) are the top 10 cities for expats to live in 2020.
- On the other hand, expats consider Salmiya in Kuwait (66th), Rome, Seoul, Milan, Nairobi, Paris, Johannesburg, Santiago, Dublin, and Hong Kong (57th) the world's worst cities to live in.

Munich, 26 November 2020 — Basel ranks 24th, followed by Lausanne (28th), Zurich (37th), and Geneva (48th) in the Expat City Ranking 2020 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members. While Lausanne, Zurich, and Basel rank among the global top 15 cities for the quality of urban living, Geneva (28th) lags behind. It is also the only Swiss city that ends up in the bottom 10 of the Finance & Housing and Local Cost of Living Indices. However, finances seem to be an issue in all Swiss cities featured in the ranking, except for Basel. In the end, Basel is voted the best Swiss city thanks to its good performance across the board, particularly its results in the Urban Work Life Index.

### Expat City Ranking 2020 Expatriate Life in 4 Swiss Cities

	Overall Ranking	Quality of Urban Living Index	Getting Settled Index	Urban Work Life Index	Finance & Housing Index	Local Cost of Living Index	Happiness Level
 Basel	24th	13th	56th	13th	24th	45th	78%
 Geneva	48th	28th	49th	31st	60th	65th	78%
 Lausanne	28th	7th	33rd	35th	43rd	51st	80%
 Zurich	37th	11th	58th	29th	41st	61st	77%

The Expat City Ranking 2020 covers 66 cities in total.

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations, which is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, with more than 15,000 respondents in 2020. This year, 66 cities around the globe are analyzed in the survey, which offers in-depth information about five areas of expat life: Quality of Urban Living,

Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, Finance & Housing, and Local Cost of Living. Together, the first four topics make up the Expat City Ranking, which reveals the best and worst cities for expats to live in. As the data was collected in March 2020, just before COVID-19 turned into a global pandemic, one question, however, remains: Will these cities still come out on top in a post-COVID world?

## What Expats Think about Life in 4 Swiss Cities

### **24. Basel Is the Most Affordable City for Expats in Switzerland**

Basel comes in 24th place out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020. Out of all the Swiss cities featured in the survey, Basel ranks best for urban work life (13th). Nearly all expats (97%) are satisfied with the state of the local economy (vs. 63% globally). The Swiss city also ranks 13th in the Quality of Urban Living Index: 95% of expats are happy with the public transportation system (vs. 66% globally), and 88% rate the urban environment positively (vs. 65% globally). Basel performs better than average in the Finance & Housing Index (24th) — well ahead of Geneva (60th), Lausanne (43th), and Zurich (41st). More than two in three expats in Basel (69%) rate their financial situation positively (vs. 61% globally). A Brazilian expat who lives in Basel lists *“the financial safety and the ease of traveling”* among the things he likes best about his life abroad.

However, Basel comes 56th in the Getting Settled Index, which is the second-worst result for Switzerland in this category. Moreover, the city is among the bottom 10 in both the Feeling Welcome and the Friends & Socializing subcategories (57th for both). Many expats do not feel at home in Basel (29% vs. 21% globally) and find it difficult to get used to the local culture (36% vs. 21% globally). *“Locals are not open to new friendships and it is difficult to be part of the local community,”* shares a Venezuelan expat. In fact, about four in seven expats (57%) have trouble finding new friends (vs. 33% globally), and 37% are unhappy with their social life (vs. 24% globally).

### **28. Expats Feel Safe in Lausanne and Love the Quality of Urban Living**

Ranking 28th overall, Lausanne is the second-best-ranking city in Switzerland, right after Basel (24th). It comes in the top 10 of the Quality of Urban Living Index (7th) and is even first worldwide in the Safety & Politics subcategory. All respondents in Lausanne feel safe there, compared to a global average of 82%. What is more, 90% also rate the quality of the urban environment positively (vs. 65% globally). However, Lausanne’s performance in the Getting Settled (33rd) and Urban Work Life Indices (35th) is just about average. A Dominican expat shares that she likes *“the security and economical opportunities”* most about life in Lausanne. In fact, 95% of expats are especially happy with the state of the local economy (vs. 63% globally). However, just 46% are happy with their career opportunities — which is only slightly above the average of 43%.

The city performs worse in the Finance & Housing Index (43rd): 61% of respondents say it is difficult for expats to find housing (vs. 27% globally). Additionally, only 17% of expats think housing in Lausanne is affordable (vs. 41% globally). *“Housing is not very affordable, and the real estate agencies are horrible across the board,”* says an Italian expat. On the upside, Lausanne ranks 4th in the Finance subcategory, with 80% of survey respondents happy with their financial situation (vs. 61% globally). Moreover, more than two in three expats in Lausanne (68%) say that their disposable household income is more than enough to cover their living expenses (vs. 51%

globally). But this does not seem to compensate entirely for the high cost of living in Lausanne (51st), which 64% of expats rate negatively (vs. 36% globally).

### **37. Finding New Friends Seems to Be Nearly Impossible in Zurich**

Zurich comes in 37th place out of 66 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2020 but is one of the worst-performing destinations worldwide in the Getting Settled Index (58th). Many expats do not feel at home in Zurich (30% vs. 21% globally) and find it difficult to get used to the local culture (42% vs. 21% globally). A Dutch expat thinks the city cultivates a “*stiff and closed culture*”, and a South African expat does not like the “*exclusive culture*” that makes it “*hard to fit in*”. Moreover, three in five expats (60%) say it is challenging to find new friends (vs. 33% globally) — the city ranks 64th for this factor, only ahead of Copenhagen (65th) and Stockholm (66th). This might be one reason why more than a third of respondents (34%) are unhappy with their social life (vs. 24% globally). The city also ranks among the bottom 10 in the Local Cost of Living Index (61st), with 74% of survey respondents rating this factor negatively (vs. 36% globally).

However, Zurich performs much better in the Quality of Urban Living Index (11th), where it even ranks 6th for both the Transportation and the Safety & Politics subcategories. More than nine in ten expats (94%) feel safe in Zurich (vs. 82% globally). “*I feel fairly safe,*” says a Polish expat and adds: “*The transport is also great, which is a big plus if you do not have a car.*” In fact, 94% of expats are happy with Zurich’s public transportation system, compared to 66% globally. Switzerland’s largest city also ranks above the average in the Urban Work Life Index (29th): 54% of expats in Zurich are satisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 43% globally), and 91% rate the local economy positively (vs. 63% globally).

### **48. Geneva Is One of the World’s Worst Cities for the Local Cost of Living**

Coming 48th out of 66 cities worldwide, Geneva ranks among the bottom 5 in the Local Cost of Living Index (65th), with only Hong Kong (66th) performing worse. More than four in five expats (81%) rate the local cost of living negatively (vs. 36% globally). “*The cost of living is very high, and the Swiss Franc is way overvalued so that things cost much more than they would elsewhere,*” says a US American expat living in Geneva. It is hardly a surprise then that the city also performs badly in the Finance & Housing Index (60th), especially because of its poor results in the Housing subcategory (63rd). Close to four in five survey respondents (78%) find housing in Geneva unaffordable (vs. 41% globally), and 64% say it is difficult to even find housing (vs. 27% globally).

While Geneva also ranks low in the Getting Settled Index (49th), it performs better in the Urban Work Life (31st) and Quality of Urban Living Indices (28th). Similar to the other cities in Switzerland, most expats in Geneva (94%) rate the political stability positively (vs. 61% globally). A French expat says that “*the direct democracy*” is what he likes most about living in Geneva, and an expat from Canada is happy about the “*good bike lanes and excellent transportation infrastructure*”. In fact, 89% of expats are also happy with the city’s public transportation system (vs. 66% globally).

### **About the Expat City Ranking 2020**

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations. For the survey, more than 15,000 expatriates representing 173 nationalities and living in 181 countries or territories provided information on various aspects of expat life. In addition to their satisfaction with life in their host country, 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, 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 four topical indices: Quality of Urban Living, Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, and Finance & Housing. These were further averaged in order to rank 66 cities worldwide. In 2020, the top 10 cities for expats are Valencia, Alicante, Lisbon, Panama City, Singapore, Málaga, Buenos Aires, Kuala Lumpur, Madrid, and Abu Dhabi. The survey also includes a Local Cost of Living Index, which does, however, not factor into the overall ranking to avoid overrepresenting financial aspects.

For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2020, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per city was required.

### **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.

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