

How Expats Rate Their Life in 4 African Cities












The Expat City Ranking 2021 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including Nairobi, Cape Town, Cairo, and Johannesburg.

- Out of 57 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Nairobi ranks 12th, followed by Cape Town (41st), Cairo (52nd), and Johannesburg (55th).
- Kuala Lumpur (1st), Málaga, Dubai, Sydney, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Prague, Mexico City, Basel, and Madrid (10th) are the top 10 cities for expats to live in 2021.
- On the other hand, expats consider Rome (57th), Milan, Johannesburg, Istanbul, Tokyo, Cairo, Paris, Maastricht, Moscow, and New York (48th) the world's worst cities to live in.

Munich, 1 December 2021 — Four African cities are featured in the Expat City Ranking 2021 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with over 4 million members: Nairobi ranks 12th, followed by Cape Town (41st), Cairo (52nd), and Johannesburg (55th). All of them rank among the bottom 10 in the Quality of Urban Living and Urban Work Life Indices — except for Nairobi, which lands in 34th place in the latter index. Nairobi also outperforms the other cities when it comes to the ease of getting settled, as well as finances and housing.

Expat City Ranking 2021

Expat Life in 4 African Cities

	 Cairo, Egypt	 Cape Town, South Africa	 Johannesburg, South Africa	 Nairobi, Kenya
 Overall Ranking	52nd	41st	55th	12th
 Quality of Urban Living	56th	51st	57th	50th
 Getting Settled	26th	15th	29th	4th
 Urban Work Life	53rd	54th	52nd	34th
 Finance & Housing	19th	13th	24th	6th
 Local Cost of Living	7th	18th	19th	23rd
 Happiness Level	61%	78%	57%	78%

The Expat City Ranking 2021 covers 57 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 12,420 respondents in 2021. This year, 57 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.

What Expats Think about Life in 4 African Cities

12 | Nairobi: A Friendly and Welcoming Destination for Expats

Nairobi ranks 12th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, placing the highest out of the African cities included in the report. It does especially well in the Getting Settled Index (4th): nearly four in five expats in Nairobi (78%) describe the local residents as generally friendly (vs. 69% globally), and 62% find it easy to make new friends (vs. 48% globally). *"The people are welcoming and friendly,"* says an Indian expat, adding that he greatly enjoys his *"good social life"*. Expats in Nairobi agree: 74% are happy with their social life, 17 percentage points more than the global average (57%).

Nairobi also lands among the global top 10 in the Finance & Housing Index (6th): 82% of expats have no trouble finding housing, compared to 60% globally. Additionally, close to half the respondents (49%) find housing affordable (vs. 42% globally). And while nearly one in five expats globally (19%) are dissatisfied with their financial situation, this is only the case for 9% of expats in Nairobi. Interestingly, 42% still rate the local cost of living negatively (vs. 34% globally), ranking the city 23rd in the Local Cost of Living Index.

However, Nairobi ends up in the bottom 10 in the Quality of Urban Living Index (50th). The availability (48th) and quality of medical care (50th) are particular lowlights. In addition, 36% are unhappy with the local transportation infrastructure (vs. 15% globally). A Dutch expat even says that the *"poor maintenance of local roads"* is one of the things he dislikes most about life in Nairobi. Nairobi's performance in the Urban Work Life Index (34th) is an interesting mix: the city ranks 49th worldwide for the state of the local economy (30% unhappy vs. 19% globally) but 9th for overall job satisfaction (73% happy vs. 68% globally).

41 | Cape Town: Great Climate but Little Personal Safety

Cape Town ranks 41st out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021. The city performs particularly poorly in the Urban Work Life Index (54th): expats are unhappy with their job security (38% vs. 20% globally) and the state of the local economy (53% vs. 19% globally). A German expat highlights the *"local economic problems"*, while a Namibian respondent mentions the *"high unemployment rate"*.

Cape Town also lands in the bottom 10 of the Quality of Urban Living Index (51st) — with especially low results in the Safety & Politics Subcategory (56th), where only Johannesburg (57th) performs worse. In fact, 42% of expats in Cape Town are dissatisfied with the political stability (vs. 16% globally), and 43% worry about their personal safety (vs. 8% globally). While the public transportation system is another lowlight (52% negative ratings vs. 20% globally), 93% enjoy the climate and weather (vs. 66% globally). Cape Town even places 3rd in the Leisure & Climate Subcategory: 81% are satisfied with the local leisure options (vs. 72% globally). A British expat notes that there is a *"great outdoor lifestyle due to the good weather"*.

Maybe the leisure options help expats socialize: they find it easy to make new friends (53% vs. 48% globally) and feel at home in Cape Town (72% vs. 65% globally). This leads to a good ranking in the Getting Settled Index (15th). Cape Town also performs well in the Local Cost of Living (18th) and the Finance & Housing (13th) Indices. The latter is mainly due to the housing situation: expats say housing is easy to find (78% vs. 60% globally), but just 40% find it affordable, slightly less than the global average (42%). In fact, 29% say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover all expenses (vs. 23% globally).

52 | Cairo: Affordable but with a Very Poor Quality of Life

Cairo ranks 52nd out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021. It ends up in the bottom 10 of the overall ranking, as well as in two indices. In the Quality of Urban Living Index (56th), expats rank transportation (52nd) and health & environment (57th) especially poorly. In fact, 67% of expats in Cairo are not satisfied with the urban environment, compared to 16% globally. An Afghan expat says that the *“poor air quality and lack of green spaces”* are what he dislikes most about life in Cairo. Additionally, nearly one in three (32%) rate the quality of medical care negatively (vs. 14% globally).

In the Urban Work Life Index (53rd), Cairo does not fare much better, coming 52nd in the Job Security Subcategory and 53rd in the Job & Career Subcategory. Expats are unhappy with their job in general (22% vs. 16% globally) and the local career opportunities (42% vs. 33% globally).

On the upside, the city performs much better in the Getting Settled Index (26th): nearly three in five expats (57%) say finding friends in Cairo is easy (vs. 48% globally), and 70% describe the local residents as generally friendly (vs. 69% globally). More than two in five (41%) even think that they could not be any friendlier, compared to 28% globally. Ranking the city 19th in the Finance & Housing Index, expats say that housing in Cairo is both easy to find (67% vs. 60% globally) and to afford (52% vs. 42% globally). The city even ranks 10th worldwide for the latter but receives its best results in the Local Cost of Living Index (7th): 63% of expats rate this factor positively (vs. 48% globally). *“I like how cheap it is to live here,”* says a Burundian expat. *“It is an advantage for someone who is looking to settle in Egypt.”*

55 | Johannesburg: Issues with Safety, Work, and Finances

Johannesburg (55th out of 57) is one of the worst cities for expats worldwide, according to the Expat City Ranking 2021. Overall, it ranks 14 places below Cape Town, even coming last in the Quality of Urban Living Index (57th) and two out of its four subcategories: Transportation (57th) and Safety & Politics (57th). Around two-thirds each are unsatisfied with the public transportation system (63% vs. 20% globally) and worry about their personal safety (68% vs. 8% globally). An Irish expat feels that he must *“always be on guard due to security issues”*. Moreover, Johannesburg ranks 52nd in the Health & Environment Subcategory: 32% are unhappy with the urban environment (vs. 16% globally), and expats consider healthcare to be neither available (20% vs. 11% globally) nor affordable (40% vs. 21% globally).

The city also ends up in the bottom 10 of the Urban Work Life Index (52nd): 41% are dissatisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally). A Kenyan expat shares: *“The amount of time it took to find a job has been stressful, overwhelming, and frightening.”* Expats also rate the job security (29% vs. 20% globally) and state of the local economy (48% vs. 19% globally) negatively.

Johannesburg performs a lot better in the Getting Settled (29th) and the Finance & Housing (24th) Indices. However, the latter has some very mixed results, with the city ranking 56th in the Finance Subcategory and 10th in the Housing Subcategory. Over half the expats in Johannesburg (52%) find housing affordable (vs. 42% globally), while 70% say it is easy to find (vs. 60% globally). But 28% are unhappy with their financial situation (vs. 19% globally), and 42% say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover all expenses (vs. 23% globally).

About the Expat City Ranking 2021

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations. For the survey, InterNations asked 12,420 expats representing 174 nationalities and living in 186 countries or territories to provide information on various aspects of expat life, as well as their gender, age, and nationality. 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 all cities worldwide that had the required number of participants for the minimum sample size. (The survey also includes a Local Cost of Living Index, which does, however, not factor into the overall ranking to avoid overrepresenting financial aspects.) In 2021, the top 10 cities for expats are Kuala Lumpur (1st), Málaga, Dubai, Sydney, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Prague, Mexico City, Basel, and Madrid (10th).

For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2021, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per city was required. In total, 57 cities met this requirement.

About InterNations

With more than 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.

Find more information about InterNations on our [press page](#), [in our company blog](#), or in our [magazine](#).

Press Contact

Stephanie Anko-Hubik
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH
Schwanthalerstrasse 39
80336 Munich, Germany

Email: press@internations.org
Homepage: <https://www.internations.org/press>