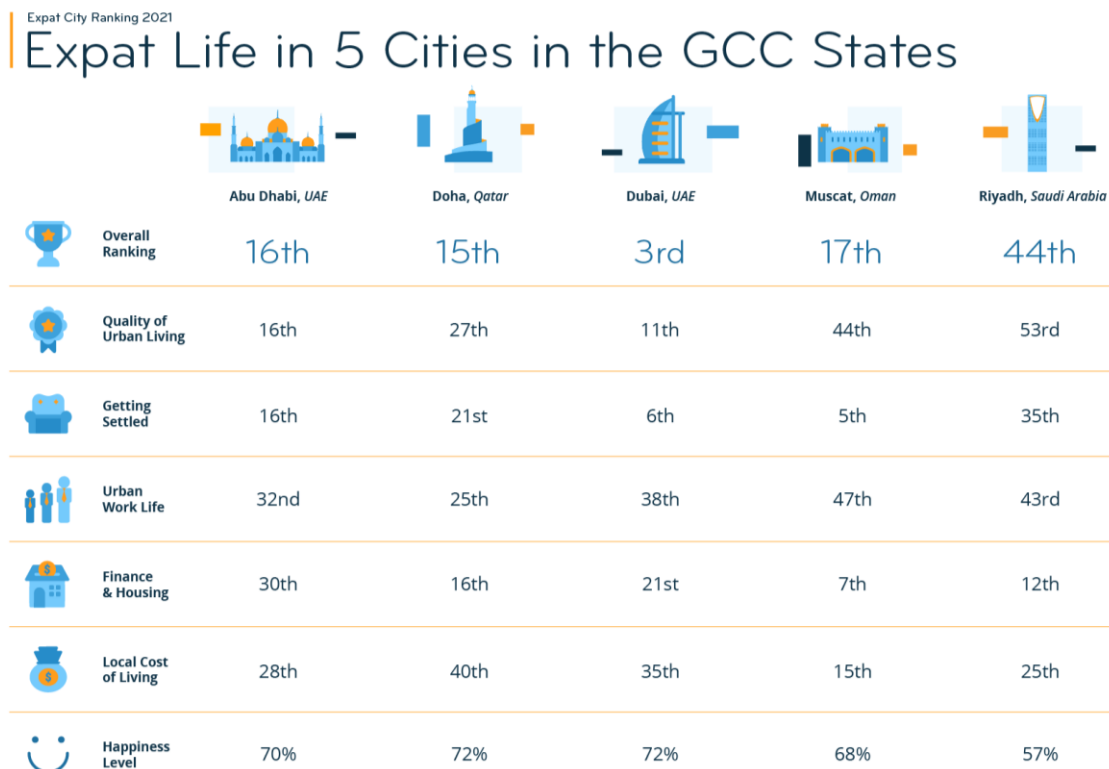


How Expats Rate Their Life in 5 Cities in the GCC States

The Expat City Ranking 2021 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, and Riyadh.

- Out of 57 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Dubai ranks 3rd, followed by Doha (15th), Abu Dhabi (16th), Muscat (17th), and Riyadh (44th).
- 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 — Five cities in the GCC States are featured in the Expat City Ranking 2021 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with over 4 million members: Dubai ranks 3rd, followed by Doha (15th), Abu Dhabi (16th), Muscat (17th), and Riyadh (44th). All cities have an average to poor performance in the Urban Work Life Index, but each has its own highlights to offer. Dubai and Muscat rank among the top 10 worldwide for the ease of getting settled, while expats in Dubai and Abu Dhabi point out the high quality of life. However, Muscat, Riyadh, and Doha outperform them in the Finances & Housing Index.



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 5 Cities in the GCC States

3 | Dubai: Easy for Settling In but Hard to Afford

Dubai ranks 3rd out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, placing highest of all GCC cities included in this report. It receives its best results in the Getting Settled Index (6th), making it into the top 10 of every subcategory: Local Language (4th), Friends & Socializing (7th), Local Friendliness (7th), and Feeling Welcome (10th). Dubai is the easiest city in the world to live in without speaking the local language (94% vs. 54% globally). Moreover, 81% describe the local people as generally friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). *"They are warm, welcoming, and friendly,"* says an Indian expat. Maybe this is why expats feel at home in Dubai (75% vs. 65% globally) and find it easy to make new friends (59% vs. 48% globally).

Dubai also performs very well in the Quality of Urban Living Index (11th). Expats are particularly happy with the political stability (90% vs. 64% globally), and nearly all of them (97%) feel safe (vs. 84% globally). However, Dubai falls behind in the Urban Work Life Index (38th). It even ranks among the bottom 10 for job security (51st): 32% are dissatisfied with this factor (vs. 20% globally). Expats are also unhappy with their work-life balance (22% vs. 17% globally), and fewer than two in three (65%) are satisfied with their job in general (vs. 68% globally).

Lastly, Dubai gets mixed results in the Finance & Housing Index (21st). It ranks well in the Housing Subcategory (12th): 86% say that housing is easy to find (vs. 60% globally). However, 41% find it unaffordable (vs. 39% globally), and the city does poorly in the Finance Subcategory (49th): 28% rate their financial situation negatively (vs. 19% globally), and 31% say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover expenses (vs. 23% globally).

15 | Doha: A Peaceful and Affordable Destination for Expats

Coming 15th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Doha does best in the Finance & Housing Index (16th): 80% of expats say it is easy to find housing in Doha (vs. 60% globally), and 70% are happy with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally). A Russian expat mentions her *"financial conditions"* as a personal highlight of living in Doha. Nevertheless, 52% rate the local cost of living negatively (vs. 34% globally), with the city landing in 40th place in the Local Cost of Living Index.

The city performs above the global average in the Getting Settled Index (21st). Similar to Dubai, Doha makes it easy for expats to live there without speaking the local language (90% vs. 54% globally). Expats also find it easy to make new friends (53% vs. 48% globally) and are happy with their social life (64% vs. 57% globally). In the Urban Work Life Index (25th), Doha stands out for the state of its local economy (6th), which receives the best results out of all GCC cities featured in the survey. However, expats are dissatisfied with their job security (23% vs. 20% globally) and working hours (21% vs. 16% globally).

Lastly, Doha ranks 27th in the Quality of Urban Living Index. However, it ends up in the bottom 10 for local leisure options (52nd). Close to one in five (19%) rate this factor negatively (vs. 14% globally). On the upside, the city ranks 1st out of 57 for the availability of healthcare, with 90% rating this factor positively (vs. 76% globally). A high majority also find it affordable (83% vs. 61% globally) and are happy with its quality (91% vs. 71% worldwide). *"I feel extremely safe here with a good healthcare system,"* says

a US American expat. In fact, 93% of expats feel safe in Doha in general (vs. 84% globally).

16 | Abu Dhabi: A Good Quality of Life but a Poor Work-Life Balance

Coming 16th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Abu Dhabi performs best in the Getting Settled and Quality of Urban Living Indices (16th for each). Regarding the quality of living, it stands out in the Safety & Politics (4th) and Health & Environment (9th) Subcategories. Expats rate the political stability positively (90% vs. 64% globally) and feel safe in Abu Dhabi (93% vs. 84% globally). *"It is safe for my daughters and me here, and the healthcare is of high quality and efficient,"* a Kenyan expat notes. In fact, expats are very satisfied with the availability (88% vs. 76% globally) and quality (90% vs. 71% globally) of medical care. In terms of getting settled, expats find it easy to live in Abu Dhabi without speaking the local language (90% vs. 54% globally) and describe the local people as generally friendly towards foreign residents (73% vs. 67% globally).

While Abu Dhabi ranks midfield in the Local Cost of Living (28th) and Finance & Housing (30th) Indices, it lands in the bottom 10 of the Finance Subcategory (51st). About three in ten expats are unhappy with their financial situation (29% vs. 19% globally) and say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover expenses (31% vs. 23% globally). While housing is also considered unaffordable (51% vs. 39% globally), 73% say that it is at least easy to find (vs. 60% globally).

The city ranks slightly worse in the Urban Work Life Index (32nd), with especially poor results for work-life balance: only 55% are happy with this factor, compared to 66% globally. While 22% also rate their job security negatively (vs. 20% globally), more than half (52%) are happy with the local career opportunities (vs. 45% globally).

17 | Muscat: Easy to Get Settled and Find Affordable Housing

Muscat ranks 17th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, receiving excellent results in the Getting Settled Index (5th). The city even ranks 1st worldwide for both the general friendliness of its local residents (88% happy vs. 69% globally) and the friendliness towards foreign residents in particular (85% vs. 67% globally). *"The local people are so kind and friendly,"* says an expat from India. It is hardly a surprise that 73% of expats feel at home in Muscat (vs. 65% globally), while 69% find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 65% globally).

Muscat's top 10 rank in the Finance & Housing Index (7th) is mainly due to the Housing Subcategory (4th). In fact, 80% of expats have no difficulties finding housing there (vs. 60% globally), and 48% consider it affordable (vs. 42% globally). But the city performs below the global average in the Finance Subcategory (37th): only 54% are happy with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally). Another 29% say that their disposable household income is not enough to cover expenses (vs. 23% globally) — even though Muscat ranks 15th in the Local Cost of Living Index, with 53% rating this aspect positively (vs. 48% globally).

With a below-average result in the Quality of Urban Living Index (44th), Muscat is rated poorly for its public transportation system (41% unhappy vs. 20% globally) and the quality of medical care (22% vs. 14% globally). On the upside, 95% of expats feel safe in Muscat (vs. 84% globally). Lastly, the city does worst in the Urban Work Life Index (47th). Expats are particularly unhappy with their job security (33% vs. 20% globally) and local career opportunities (47% vs. 33% globally). In fact, Muscat ranks second to last worldwide for the latter, only ahead of Rome (57th).

44 | Riyadh: An Affordable Destination — With a Poor Quality of Life

Placing 44th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Riyadh lags far behind the other cities from the GCC region that are featured in the survey. It performs especially poorly in the Quality of Urban Living Index (53rd), only ahead of Dublin, Rome, Cairo, and Johannesburg (57th), even ranking last worldwide in the Leisure & Climate Subcategory (57th): 27% rate the climate and weather negatively (vs. 17% globally), and 37% are dissatisfied with the local leisure options (vs. 14% globally). Expats are also unhappy with the public transportation system (45% vs. 20% globally) and the urban environment (33% vs. 16% globally).

Riyadh does not fare much better in the Urban Work Life Index (43rd), where it lands in the bottom 5 of the Work-Life Balance Subcategory (54th): about one in three expats are unhappy with both their work-life balance (31% vs. 17% globally) and their working hours (33% vs. 16% globally). More than one-quarter (26%) also rate their job security negatively, compared to 20% globally. While its overall performance in the Getting Settled Index (35th) is about average, Riyadh ranks 55th for expats' satisfaction with their social life. Close to two in five (39%) rate this negatively — only in Dusseldorf and Stockholm are expats less satisfied. What is more, 30% do not feel at home in Riyadh (vs. 19% globally).

While Riyadh does alright in the Local Cost of Living Index (25th), it performs best in the Finance & Housing Index (12th). More than seven in ten expats (72%) have no difficulty finding housing in Riyadh (vs. 60% globally), and 38% find it affordable, which is just below the global average (42%).

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](#).

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