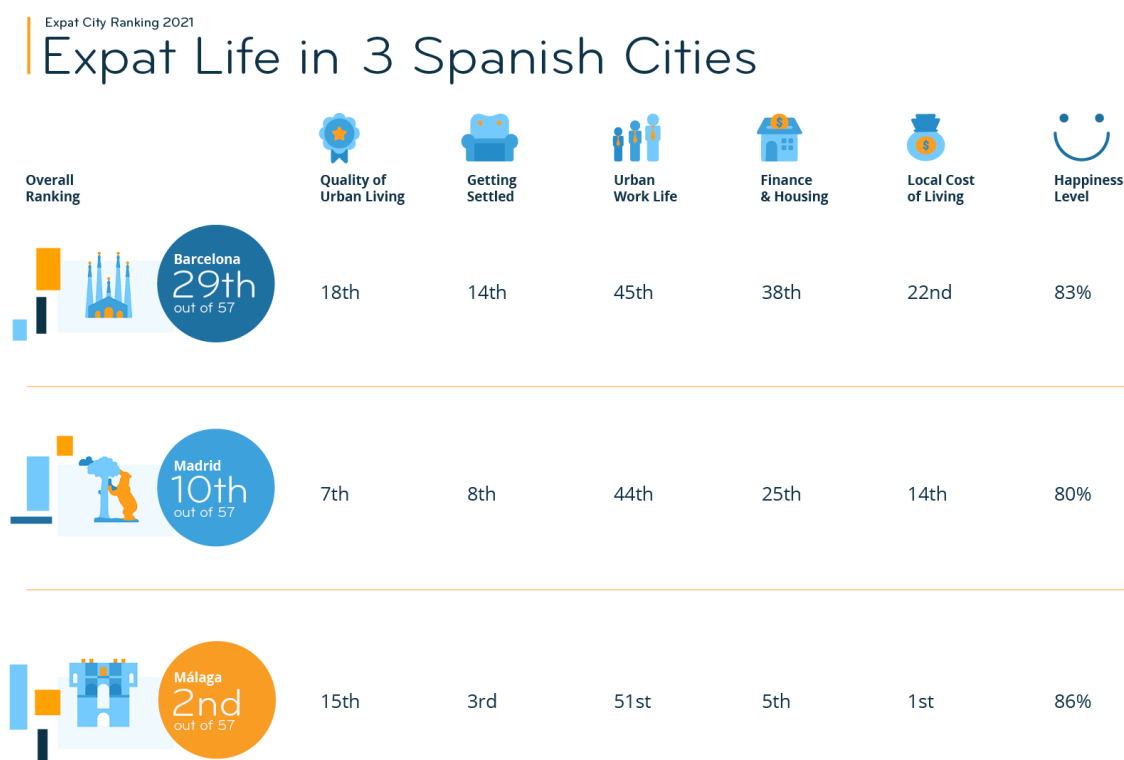


How Expats Rate Their Life in Barcelona, Madrid, and Málaga

The Expat City Ranking 2021 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including Barcelona, Madrid, and Málaga.

- Out of 57 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Málaga ranks 2nd, followed by Madrid (10th) and Barcelona (29th).
- 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 — Three Spanish cities are featured in the Expat City Ranking 2021 by [InterNations](#), the world's largest expat community with over 4 million members: Málaga ranks 2nd, followed by Madrid (10th) and Barcelona (29th). While they all rank very well for the quality of life and the ease of getting settled, expats are unhappy with their working life in these cities. When it comes to the local cost of living, as well as finances and housing, Málaga outperforms Madrid and Barcelona, both of which receive mediocre to poor results.



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 3 Spanish Cities

2 | Málaga: The Best City for Making Friends and Socializing

Málaga comes 2nd out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021 — and even 1st in the **Local Cost of Living Index**: 86% of expats rate this factor positively (vs. 48% globally). It also does very well in the **Finance & Housing Index** (5th), far ahead of Madrid (25th) and Barcelona (38th). This is mainly due to the Housing Subcategory (3rd). Expats say that housing is both affordable (67% vs. 42% globally) and easy to find (70% vs. 60% globally).

Following right behind Kuala Lumpur (1st) and Mexico City (2nd), Málaga ranks 3rd in the **Getting Settled Index** and 1st in the Friends & Socializing Subcategory: 69% find it easy to make new friends (vs. 48% globally), and 78% are happy with their social life (vs. 57% globally). *“The locals are friendly and cheerful people,”* says an expat from the UK. Many expats describe the local population as friendly in general (86% vs. 69% globally) and towards foreign residents in particular (82% vs. 67% globally).

Coming 15th in the **Quality of Urban Living Index**, Málaga earns another top rank in the Leisure & Climate Subcategory. Not a single expat (0%) is unhappy with the weather (vs. 17% globally), and 86% rate the local leisure options favorably (vs. 72% globally). *“Málaga has everything to offer for downtime,”* says an Australian expat. However, expats are less happy with the transportation system (35th) and the urban environment (34th).

Lastly, Málaga lands among the bottom 10 worldwide in the **Urban Work Life Index** (51st). While it ranks in an average 32nd place in the Work-Life Balance Subcategory, it performs poorly in both the Job & Career (56th) and the Job Security (50th) Subcategories: 55% rate the local career opportunities negatively (vs. 33% globally), and 30% are unhappy with their job security (vs. 20% globally).

10 | Madrid: A Welcoming City with a High Quality of Life

Ranking 10th out of 57 in the overall Expat City Ranking 2021, Madrid performs best in the **Quality of Urban Living Index** (7th). It lands among the top 10 in both the Leisure & Climate (4th) and the Health & Environment (5th) Subcategories: expats are very happy with the climate (92% vs. 66% globally) and the local leisure options (87% vs. 72% globally). *“I like the good access to entertainment, cultural activities, and various food options,”* says an expat from the UK. Expats also rate the affordability (86% vs. 61% globally) and availability (90% vs. 76% globally) of healthcare positively. They are happy with the quality of medical care (89% vs. 71% globally) as well.

Madrid ranks nearly as well in the **Getting Settled Index** (8th): 85% of expats find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 65% globally) — only expats in Mexico City (93%) find this even easier. More than four in five (81%) also feel at home in Madrid (vs. 65% globally), and 73% are happy with their social life (vs. 57% globally). It might help that expats describe the local population as both friendly in general (85% vs. 69% globally) and towards foreign residents in particular (79% vs. 67% globally). *“The locals are quite friendly to foreigners, even when they struggle with the local language,”* says a British expat.

While Madrid still does well in the **Local Cost of Living** (14th) and **Finance & Housing** (25th) **Indices**, it performs poorly in the **Urban Work Life Index** (44th). More than one in five expats in Madrid (22%) are unhappy with their job in general (vs. 16% globally). They are particularly dissatisfied with their working hours (25% vs. 16% globally), the state of the local economy (24% vs. 19% globally), and the local career opportunities (38% vs. 33% globally).

29 | Barcelona: Expats Feel at Home but Worry about Their Safety

With a mediocre 29th place out of 57, Barcelona is the only Spanish city in the Expat City Ranking 2021 that does not rank among the top 10. It performs best in the **Getting Settled Index** (14th). Nearly three-quarters of expats (73%) feel at home in Barcelona, eight percentage points more than the global average (65%). *"I love the culture of enjoying life,"* says an Italian expat. In fact, another 73% find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 65% globally), and 67% are happy with their social life (vs. 57% globally).

While the city also does well in the **Quality of Urban Living Index** (18th), it gets some mixed results. Barcelona comes 2nd worldwide in the Leisure & Climate Subcategory, beaten only by Málaga (1st). The majority of expats is satisfied with the leisure options (89% vs. 72% globally), as well as the climate and weather (94% vs. 66% globally). However, the city ends up in the bottom 10 of the Safety & Politics Subcategory (50th), since 13% of expats do not feel safe in Barcelona (vs. 8% globally). A Polish expat notes that she *"has not felt very safe or secure in the last few years"*.

When it comes to finance, Barcelona is the worst Spanish city in the report: it ranks 22nd in the **Local Cost of Living Index**, while Madrid ranks 14th and Málaga even 1st. And it places 38th in the **Finance & Housing Index**, far behind Madrid (25th) and Málaga (5th). Barcelona even lands among the bottom 10 worldwide in the Finance Subcategory (48th): 30% are unhappy with their financial situation (vs. 19% globally). Barcelona also has a below-average performance in the **Urban Work Life Index** (45th): 39% of expats are dissatisfied with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally), and 20% rate their working hours negatively (vs. 16% 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](#).

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