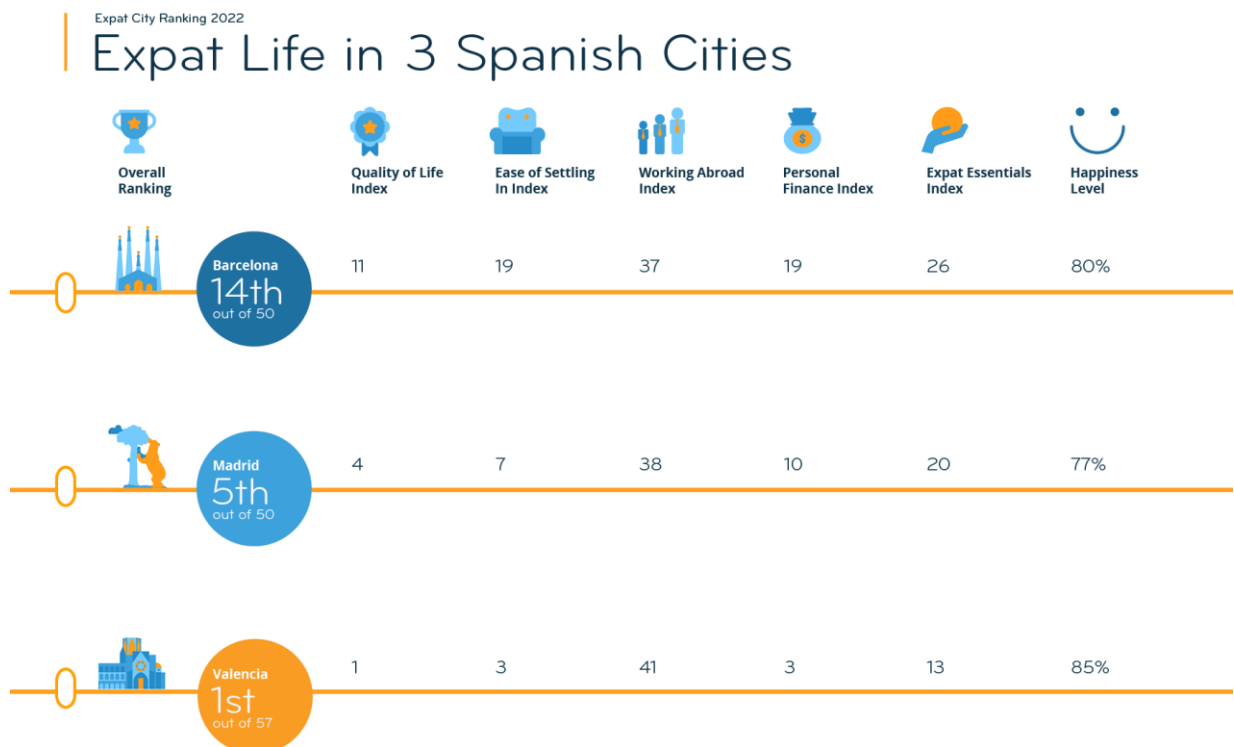


Spanish Cities Offer Expats Some of the Best Quality of Life Worldwide but Not Enough Career Opportunities

The Expat City Ranking 2022 reveals the best and worst cities for expats around the world, including Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia.

- Valencia comes 1st out of 50 cities worldwide in the Expat City Ranking 2022. With Madrid (5th), another Spanish city makes it into the global top 10, while Barcelona lags just slightly behind in 14th place.
- In 2022, Valencia (1st), Dubai, Mexico City, Lisbon, Madrid, Bangkok, Basel, Melbourne, Abu Dhabi, and Singapore (10th) are the top 10 cities for expats to live in.
- On the other hand, expats consider Johannesburg (50th), Frankfurt, Paris, Istanbul, Hong Kong, Hamburg, Milan, Vancouver, Tokyo, and Rome (41st) the world's worst cities to live in.

Munich, 29 November 2022 — Valencia ranks 1st out of 50 in the Expat City Ranking 2022 by [InterNations](https://www.internations.org/), the world's largest expat community with over 4.5 million members. It is followed by Madrid (5th) and Barcelona (14th). All Spanish cities do very well in the Quality of Life Index but show a below-average performance in the Working Abroad Index. In the Personal Finance Index, however, they rank highly again, especially regarding general living expenses. Though all three cities' results in the Expat Essentials Index are somewhat mixed, Valencia and Madrid have fairly affordable to very affordable housing in common. Last but not least, expats find it easy to get settled in all three destinations.



The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations. It is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, with 11,970 respondents in 2022. A total of 50 cities around the globe are featured this year, offering in-depth information about five areas of expat life: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Personal Finance, and the new Expat Essentials Index, which covers digital life, admin topics, housing, and language.

What Expats Think about Life in 3 Spanish Cities

1 | Valencia: Livable, Friendly & Affordable

Valencia places 1st out of 50 in the Expat City Ranking 2022, also ranking 1st in the **Quality of Life Index**. Expats love the infrastructure for Travel & Transit (3rd): 85% describe public transportation as affordable (vs. 70% globally). Valencia also offers great opportunities for recreational sports (92% happy vs. 75% globally), among other leisure activities. *"I love the opportunity to do activities in the outdoors regularly,"* says a UK expat. Moreover, the city ranks highly for Health & Well-Being (4th), due to affordable healthcare (2nd) and easy access to medical services (7th). Lastly, 92% of expats feel safe there (vs. 81% globally).

Valencia comes third in the **Ease of Settling In Index**: 74% of expats feel at home there (vs. 62% worldwide), ranking the city second for this factor. Only Mexico City does better in this regard. Expats describe the local residents as friendly (85% vs. 66% globally) and are happy with their social life (72% vs. 56% globally). The city ranks 3rd out of 50 in the **Personal Finance Index**, even placing 1st for cost of living: 83% of expats rate it positively, compared to 45% worldwide. About two-thirds (67%) are also happy with their financial situation (vs. 60% globally) — 38% are even *completely* satisfied with this factor (vs. 22% globally).

However, Valencia receives slightly mixed results in the **Expat Essentials Index** (13th). It does very well in the Housing Subcategory (3rd), even ranking first for affordable housing. But the local bureaucracy is not that easy to deal with: 52% of expats rate this factor negatively (vs. 39% globally). *"The government processes are pretty inefficient,"* says a New Zealand expat.

The **Working Abroad Index** (41st) is by far Valencia's weakest point. In fact, it places last for Career Prospects (50th): 50% of expats rate the local job market negatively (vs. 27% globally), and 30% judge their own career opportunities unfavorably (vs. 22% globally). Overall, just 56% are happy with their job in general, which is below the global average (64%). However, it should be noted that only 8% of respondents actually moved there for work-related reasons, compared to 36% globally. The most popular reasons for moving to Valencia are a better quality of life (23% vs. 7% globally) and the plan to retire abroad (23% vs. 3% globally).

5 | Madrid: Great Leisure Activities & a Welcoming Culture

In the Expat City Ranking 2022, Madrid places 5th out of 50. It performs best in the **Quality of Life Index** (4th). Expats love the climate and weather (88% happy vs. 62% globally) and their travel opportunities (95% vs. 82% globally). Madrid places third for Leisure Options, where expats are particularly happy with the available culture and nightlife (90% happy vs. 67% globally) and the culinary variety and dining options (92% vs. 77% globally).

In the **Ease of Settling In Index** (7th), Madrid also shines, particularly in the Culture & Welcome Subcategory (4th). Expats find it easy to get used to the local culture (77% happy vs. 62% globally) and feel welcome (77% vs. 66% globally). Moreover, 71% have a personal support network in Madrid (vs. 59% globally). *"It was so easy to get integrated and be a part of local life!"* a French expat comments. The city makes it into the top 10 of the **Personal Finance Index** (10th) as well. This is mainly due to the cost of living (7th), rated positively by 69% (vs. 45% globally). However, only 74% say that their household income is enough or more than enough for a comfortable life, about the same as the global average (72%).

Madrid comes in an above-average 20th place in the **Expat Essentials Index**. It does really well for some factors, such as affordable housing (45% happy vs. 39% globally) or high-speed internet access (89% vs. 79% globally). But expats are more critical of some other aspects, for example, the availability of government services online (29% unhappy vs. 21% globally).

Like all the Spanish cities in this ranking, Madrid performs worst in the **Working Abroad Index** (38th). Among other things, expats disagree that the local business culture promotes flat hierarchies (36% unhappy vs. 28% globally) and are worried about their job security (27% vs. 20% globally). *"The economy does not allow for many work opportunities here,"* an expat from Canada shares. In fact, 22% find that moving to the city has *not* improved their career prospects (vs. 18% globally).

14 | Barcelona: Best Leisure Options Worldwide, Few Career Prospects

Among the Spanish destinations in the Expat City Ranking, Barcelona is the only one not featured in the global top 10. It still lands in an above-average 14th place.

Though Barcelona narrowly misses out on the top 10 in the **Quality of Life Index** (11th), it does best worldwide for Leisure Options (1st). Expats appreciate the city's culinary variety and dining options (97% happy vs. 77% globally), its culture and nightlife (93% vs. 67% globally), as well as the opportunities for recreational sports (91% vs. 75% globally). *"I love the culture, the climate, the sea, and the quality of the food,"* says an expat from Macedonia. However, in comparison with Valencia (9th) and Madrid (22nd), Barcelona performs worse in the Safety & Security Subcategory (32nd): 78% of expats do feel safe there, but that is slightly less than the global average of 81%.

Barcelona scores lower in the **Ease of Settling In** and **Personal Finance Indices** than Madrid and Valencia as well. It ranks 19th in both. Nevertheless, 54% rate the cost of living positively (vs. 45% globally), and 78% find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 62% globally). But Barcelona gets slightly less outstanding results for Local Friendliness (22nd). For example, two in three expats (67%) describe the local population as generally friendly towards foreign residents, just about the same as the global average of 65%.

In the **Expat Essentials Index**, Barcelona comes in a slightly below-average 26th place. Local housing seems still affordable (21st), but less so than in Madrid (14th) and Valencia (1st). Again, the **Working Abroad Index** (37th) is the biggest issue for expats, though. For example, 30% of expats believe that moving to Barcelona has *not* improved their career prospects (vs. 18% globally), and 22% do not feel paid fairly for their work (vs. 20% globally). *"It is impossible to earn a competitive salary here,"* a respondent from Panama complains.

You can find out more about the 50 cities featured in the Expat City Ranking in the full report as well as in the press release about the best and worst destinations worldwide (both available under “Downloads” in the email).

About the Expat City Ranking 2022

The [Expat City Ranking](#) is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations. For the survey, InterNations asked 11,970 expats representing 177 nationalities and living in 181 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 up to 56 different aspects of urban life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized their personal satisfaction with these aspects, considering both emotional topics and more factual aspects with equal weight. The individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 16 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up five topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Personal Finance, and Expat Essentials. These were further averaged — together with the responses to the question “All things considered, how happy are you with your life abroad in general?” — to create the Expat City Ranking. In 2022, the top 10 cities for expats are Valencia (1st), Dubai, Mexico City, Lisbon, Madrid, Bangkok, Basel, Melbourne, Abu Dhabi, and Singapore (10th).

For a city to be featured in the Expat City Ranking 2022, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per destination was required. In total, 50 cities met this requirement.

About InterNations

With more than 4.5 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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