

The world's best 'work from anywhere' cities



and the rise of the digital nomad

IWG

Regus SPACES. HQ Signature

Thanks to the flexibility enabled by hybrid working, increasing numbers of workers are embracing the growing trend of **‘Work from Anywhere’** and choosing to spend part of the year abroad in search of a better work-life balance and new experiences.

IWG’s exclusive study discovers the cities around the world that offer the optimum mix of high-quality places to work, affordability and memorable cultural and leisure activities.



“

Cloud technology now makes it possible to work from anywhere in the world, provided there’s a high-quality internet connection available. So it’s no wonder that more and more individuals are embracing the idea of combining work with travel, whether it’s a few days tacked on to the end of a vacation, a few weeks or months based in a new place or a long-term commitment to being a digital nomad. IWG’s rapidly expanding global network of flexible workspaces is helping to enable this trend, allowing individuals to seize exciting opportunities and embrace a more flexible and fulfilling work lifestyle.”

Mark Dixon, Founder & CEO, IWG

Have laptop – will travel

Horizons have expanded thanks to hybrid working



“The world is becoming more flexible about where people can work,” Airbnb co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky announced in an email to his company’s employees in 2022.

Chesky was talking from first-hand experience, having observed the trend in Airbnb’s business – during the second half of 2021, a fifth of the stays booked at the company’s properties were for longer than a month. As a result, he decided to introduce a new policy allowing Airbnb employees to move anywhere in their country of residence, and also to live and work in a different country for up to 90 days a year.

There was a time when the ability to work from anywhere in the world was pretty much the exclusive realm of a small band of ‘digital nomads’ – people who had made a major decision to pack their lives into a suitcase and travel the globe on a long-term basis, moving between whichever exotic locations afforded a half-decent WiFi connection. They tended to be self-employed twenty-somethings, usually in the IT sector.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, digital nomad numbers have mushroomed. In the US, for example, there was a threefold increase between 2019 and 2021 to more than 15 million. They still tend to be sole traders working mainly in IT and other tech sectors, but they now include older workers and people with families. In a recent survey, travel site Lonely Planet coined a new term for them: ‘anywhere workers’. Around a third of them like to move to a new destination every month or so, the survey found, but more than half (the ‘slo-mads’) prefer to stay at least three months in one place before moving on.

In response to the booming nomad trend, many countries have introduced special

visas and schemes to attract them. Google searches for the term ‘nomad visa’ have increased by 2,400% in the last five years.

More recently, the nomads have been joined by another itinerant tribe, the ‘workationers’, who prefer a mini adventure to a major life commitment. These individuals choose to experience the benefits of working in a foreign location on a more temporary basis before returning home – their trips last from a period of a few days up to a few months. Usually they’re fully employed, and working remotely with the blessings of their employer.



Another recent entrant into the work-from-anywhere (WFA) equation is the growing band of ‘flexcationers’, a term for those who extend a holiday in foreign climes for up to a week or two by working remotely. IWG research found that almost three in five respondents prolonged their vacations in this way in 2022.

(Continued next page →)

Digital nomads, workationers and flexcationers are all the product of a radically transformed, post-pandemic working landscape enabled by cloud computing. Workers are no longer shackled to a daily commute and can divide their working time between a central office HQ, home and a flexible workspace close to home – or in fact anywhere.

IWG's research shows that 88% of hybrid workers 'worked from anywhere' in some form in 2022. Employers' confidence in the benefits and practicalities of the hybrid model means they are far more likely than they would have been just a few years ago to agree to a WFA arrangement. For some companies, this means a policy such as that at Airbnb or Spotify, where employees can work anywhere they choose in their region of the world. For others, it means a relaxed attitude to workers requesting to uproot temporarily and work from a location in a foreign country.

The vast majority of companies are also happy to foot the bill for flex space for itinerant workers, according to recent research by travel industry news site Skift. It found that almost nine out of ten workers in the US and seven out of ten in the UK are reimbursed by their companies for the use of flex space while travelling for a mixture of business and leisure.

As well as a happier and more fulfilled workforce, employers are seeing other positive impacts as a result of enlightened WFA policies. According to Accenture, 63% of high-growth firms have embraced 'productivity anywhere' models of working, while 69% of negative- or no-growth companies remain committed to dictating where people work from. Airbnb CFO Dave Stephenson says his business has "never performed better" since adopting its WFA policy. And improvements have not been

confined to the bottom line – job retention has also improved, he says. Spotify has seen similar positive results from its WFA policy; the time needed to fill a role at the company has decreased from an average of 48 days to 42.

Crucial to working from anywhere is access to high-quality professional workspaces, business centres and co-working desks, together with fast, reliable WiFi. These are the kinds of facilities offered by IWG in approximately 4,000 locations in 120 countries around the world. And they're easily accessible thanks to IWG's increasingly popular on-demand membership programme, which gives access to all of the group's global locations. Demand for the scheme rose by 93% around the world last year.

It makes sense for those who want to experience more of the world while also continuing to work as efficiently and as comfortably as they're accustomed to," says Mark Dixon, Founder and CEO of IWG. "On-demand membership takes all the uncertainty and stress out of finding a place to work that's not only got good WiFi, but also offers a host of other benefits."

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**Mark Dixon,
Founder & CEO, IWG**

Work From Anywhere in Figures

67% of workers believe they can effectively perform their jobs from abroad.



The perceived benefits of working from anywhere include:

76% Improved work-life balance.



52% Spending more time with family and friends abroad.



47% Saving money by travelling during off-peak times.



30% Enjoying longer holidays.



IWG Research, 2023

The Best 'Work from Anywhere' Cities

Where are the best locations to mix work and leisure?



There are a wide variety of factors that need to be taken into account when choosing a temporary working base in a different country. These range from the cost of living to the weather and the variety of things to do. Not to mention a suitable place to work.

IWG compared 25 leading cities around the world, scoring each out of ten for nine key criteria. Figures were then totalled to show the aggregate winners.

1 Sunshine hours per year 

2 Number of galleries and museums 

3 Accommodation costs 

4 Cost of a monthly transport pass 

5 Average price of a cup of coffee 

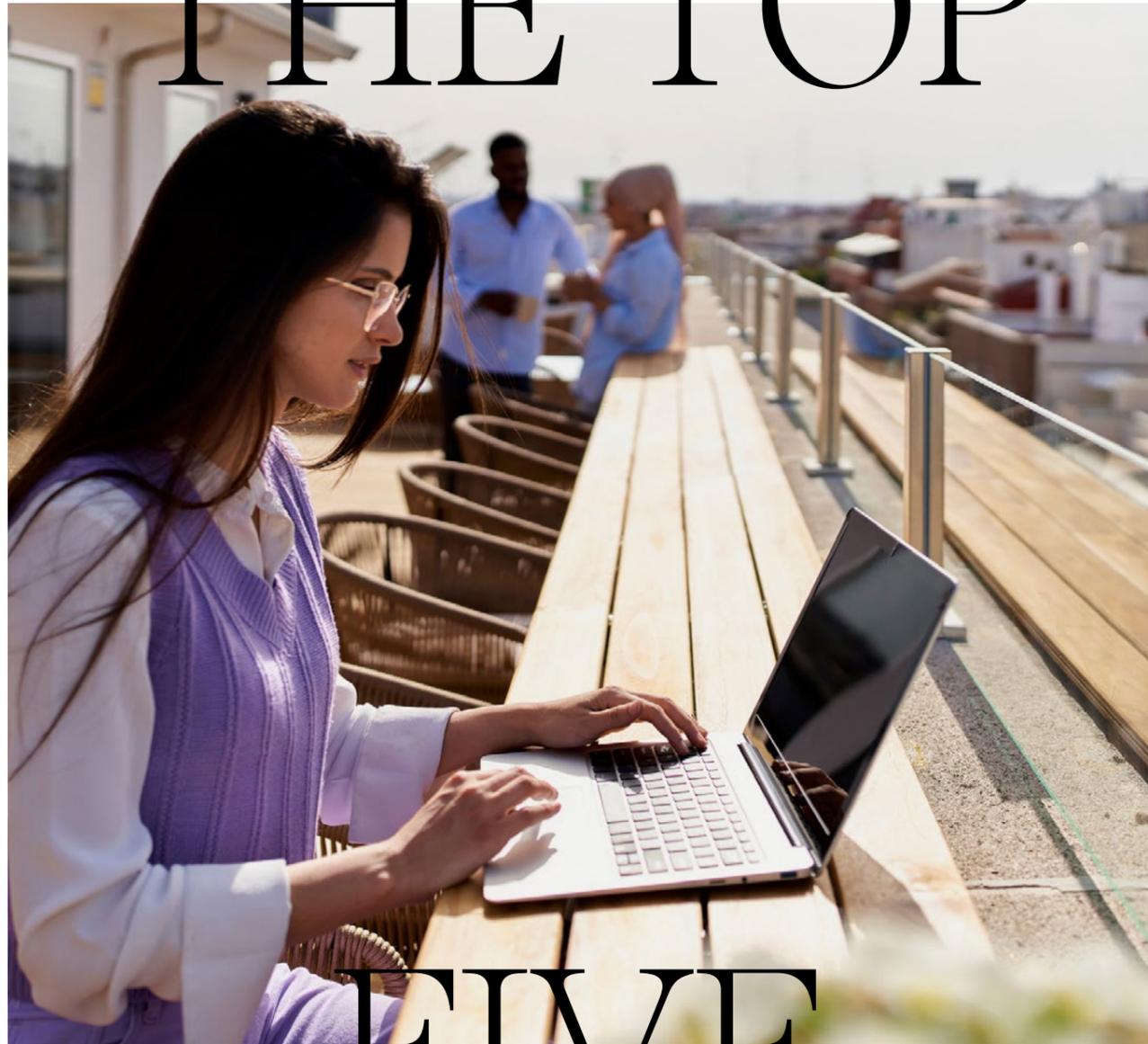
6 Average cost of lunch 

7 Broadband speed 

8 Happiness (according to the Happy City Index) 

9 Number of IWG locations 

THE TOP



FIVE

These are the cities that demonstrated the most **'work from anywhere'** attractions in IWG's survey.

Strengths

The Catalan capital scores particularly highly on affordability, offering good-value transport, accommodation and coffee. Its Mediterranean location also guarantees plenty of sunshine, and the city boasts Spain's fastest broadband speeds.

IWG locations: 21

Attractions

Barcelona offers a heady mix of great food, stunning architecture, vibrant culture... and a beach. It is also a great base for exploring the many charms of Catalonia, including the ancient cities of Girona and Tarragona and the more contemporary attractions of Sitges. For these reasons, as well as its laid-back lifestyle, it has long been a popular destination for workers from outside Spain – around 20% of the city's residents are foreign-born.



How long can you stay?

Spain recently introduced a one-year digital nomad visa, aimed at attracting more arrivals from outside the EU. Short-term visitors can stay for up to 90 days without a visa.

Flex space highlights

Built in 1992 to celebrate Barcelona's Olympic Games and recently refurbished, Spaces 22 Arroba Mar is located in one of the city's most vibrant business hubs, close to the Olympic Port and some of the best beaches. Regus Plaça de Catalunya 1 overlooks the vast square that is Barcelona's strongly beating heart and the starting point of landmark thoroughfare La Rambla, famed for its food kiosks, bars and entertainment. HQ Sants Station is conveniently situated close to the commercial hub of Las Arenas and right next to the main railway station Estació de Sants – the high-speed AVE train reaches Madrid in less than three hours.

Barcelona, Spain

1

Toronto, Canada



Strengths

Canada's largest city lodged its highest score in the happiness category. It also features strongly for affordable accommodation and flexible workspace options.

IWG locations: 64

Attractions

Multicultural Toronto is a soaring metropolis on the shore of Lake Ontario that offers a diverse range of attractions, from art and culture to major sporting events (take your pick from ice hockey, basketball, baseball and football). It's a city with an abundance of green space, but this is just a taster for the beauty of Ontario's natural landscape of lakes, maple hills and rocky ridges. A 90-minute drive will take you to Niagara Falls.



Flex space highlights

The newly opened and contemporary Spaces The Shift is located in the eye-catching EQ Bank Tower, just minutes away from Toronto Harbour. A modern alternative to traditional workspaces, Spaces The Junction can be found in a former industrial space on Toronto's West Side in an area Time Out named the city's coolest neighbourhood. Just a ten-minute drive from the terminals of Toronto Pearson International Airport, Regus Toronto Airport offers easy access to downtown and the surrounding areas.

How long can you stay?

A recently announced digital nomad visa allows those working for a foreign employer to live and work in Canada for up to six months. Short-term visitors require an Electronic Travel Authorisation.



2

Strengths

The Chinese capital scored a perfect ten for its cultural offerings, and also rated highly for its affordable accommodation and sunny climate.

IWG locations: 15



Attractions

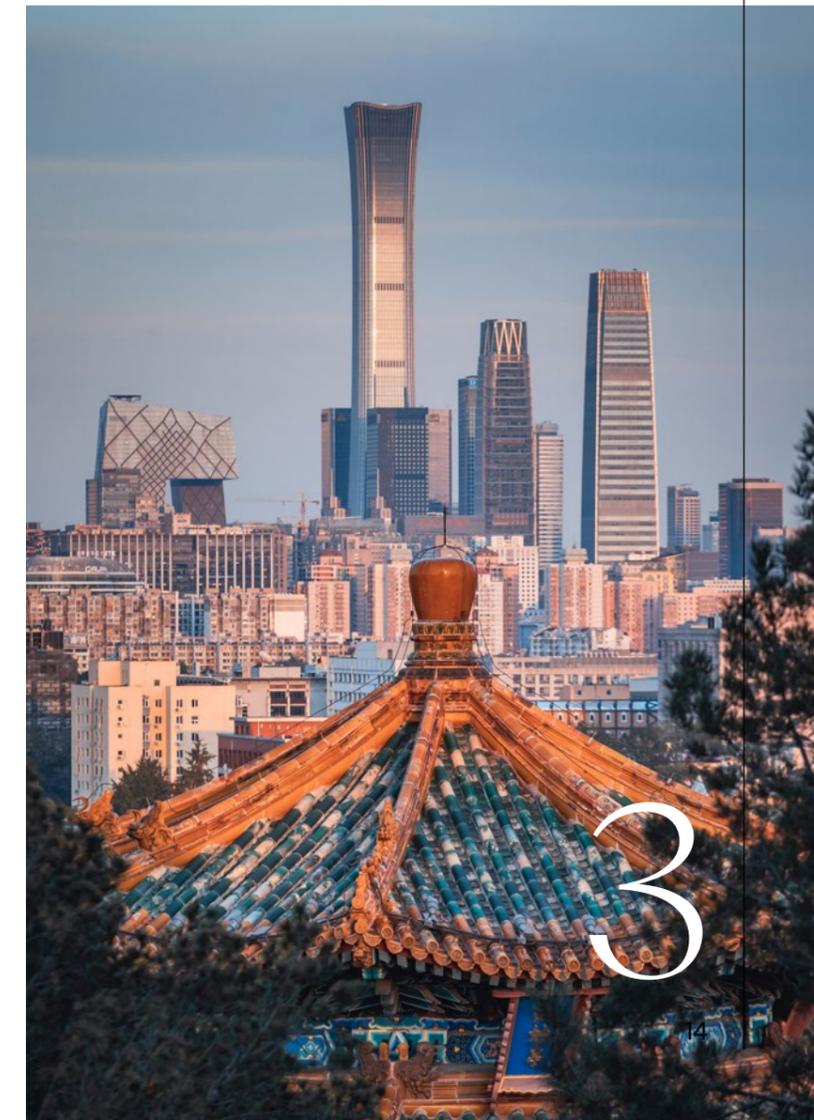
The Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Great Wall: the historic attractions in and beyond Beijing are world renowned. But more modern experiences are increasingly vying for visitors' attention, such as the hip creative spaces of the 798 Art District and the striking architecture of the Olympic Park. China is one of the most digitally advanced countries in the world, and Beijing has a thriving startup scene.

Flex space highlights

Bang in the middle of Beijing's equivalent of Wall Street, Regus Financial Street Excel Centre offers inspiring views of the city and is just a 15-minute drive from the Forbidden City or the famous Liulichang Market. Regus Lei Shing Hong ticks both business and hipster boxes, situated close to both a vibrant commercial hub and the 798 Art District. Offering easy access to Beijing's central business district and the Zhongguancun Hi-Tech Zone, Regus Global Trade Centre is also just ten minutes from the Olympic Park.

How long can you stay?

After almost three years of restrictions, China has now fully reopened its borders for international visitors. Visas are normally issued for a stay of up to 30 days, but can be extended before the expiration date.



Beijing, China

3

Milan, Italy



Strengths

Milan scored highly across all cost of living indices – and it’s also a pretty happy place.

IWG locations: 28

Attractions

This global fashion and financial hub’s stylish way of life is surprisingly affordable. From its huge Gothic cathedral to its world-renowned opera house and Leonardo’s Last Supper, Milan’s historic cultural tapestry is many-splendoured. More worldly pleasures can be indulged via the city’s traditional cuisine, which includes minestrone Milanese, osso bucco and of course the local gorgonzola cheese. There are plenty of fashion shops, too.

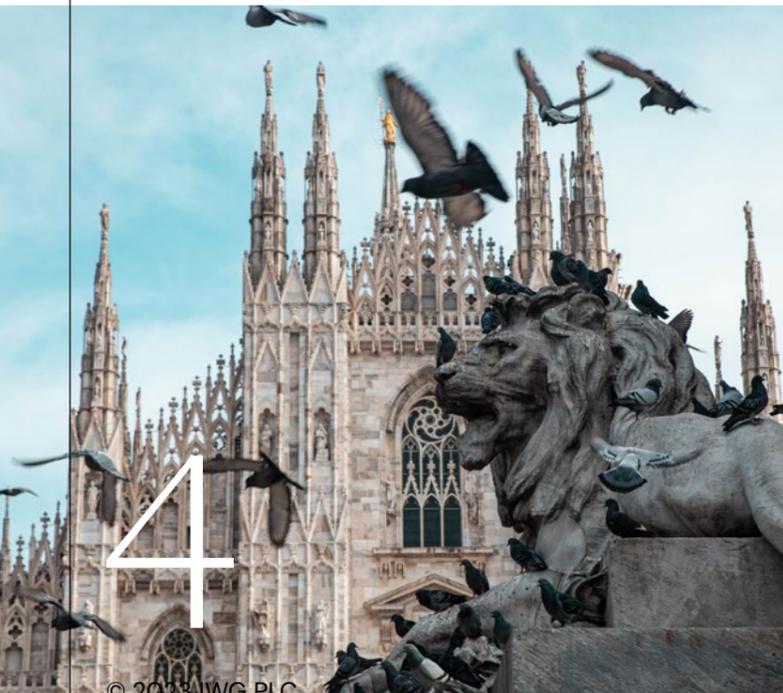
How long can you stay?

A proposed digital nomad visa is currently going through governmental processes. In the meantime, non-EU visitors can stay for up to 90 days as tourists, and upon arrival they can apply for residence of up to two years as a self-employed person.



Flex space highlights

Located right next to Piazza del Duomo, Signature Duomo boasts a blend of classic and contemporary design, and its rooftop terrace offers a stunning view of Milan’s cathedral. A few steps from the Central Station, Copernico Zuretti offers a creative and welcoming atmosphere and cutting-edge Italian design. The picturesque city of Como lies 50 minutes north of Milan on the shore of the eponymous lake, and Regus Via Cecilio 2 offers visitors a bright, modern working environment in the heart of its commercial district.



Strengths

The Big Apple scored top marks for both its culture and its state of happiness. Climate and broadband speed also scored highly.

IWG locations: 70



Attractions

Who doesn’t love NY? The Met, MOMA, the Guggenheim, Central Park, the Empire State Building... culturally rich and diverse, New York’s attractions are as varied as they are world famous. Throw in a tasty melting pot of world cuisines, a thriving arts scene and some serious shopping opportunities, plus the fact that New York is a major business and financial centre, and it’s easy to see the attraction for those who want to stay here for more than a long weekend.

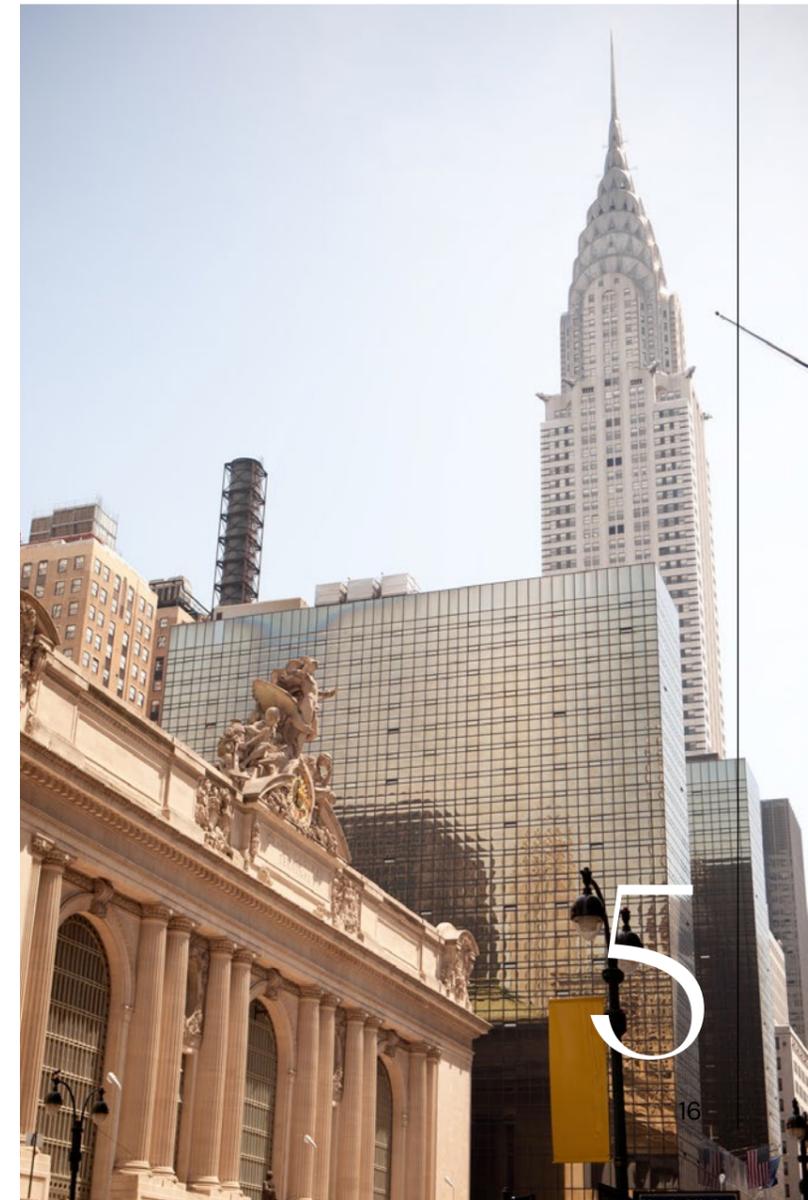
Flex space highlights

If you’re looking for a workspace in one of New York’s most iconic buildings, look no further than Spaces Chrysler Building, four floors of designer coolness accessed via an exclusive elevator. For a world-class address, try Regus 250 Park Avenue, located close to Grand Central Station and the designer stores of Fifth Avenue. In stark contrast, over the river in Brooklyn, Spaces DUMBO is surrounded by New York’s highest concentration of tech firms and has become a byword for ‘startup-friendly’.



How long can you stay?

The US Visa Waiver Program allows most citizens from participating countries to visit for up to 90 days for tourism or business purposes without needing a visa.



New York, USA

Mentioned in Despatches

These five cities have plenty to offer but narrowly failed to make it into the Top Five.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The affordable cost of living makes Rio a strong contender in the work-from-anywhere stakes. Coffee is particularly good value here, as is accommodation.

IWG locations: 18

Amsterdam, Netherlands

The commercial capital of the Netherlands is one of the most picturesque cities in Europe, which perhaps explains its high score for happiness.

IWG locations: 66

Paris, France

Not surprisingly, the City of Light scores ten out of ten for its cultural attractions. It's also a happy place and generally affordable.

IWG locations: 69

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia's sunny capital scores full marks for the affordability of both its accommodation and its transport, and its food and drink are also good value.

IWG locations: 20

Lisbon, Portugal

Portugal's capital city must be one of Europe's hilliest, so it's good to see that public transport here is very affordable – as is the cost of living in general.

IWG locations: 16



Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Paris, France



Jakarta, Indonesia



Amsterdam, Netherlands



Lisbon, Portugal

BEST FOR...

These are the cities that topped the list in each of the IWG research categories.



Best for climate

Thanks to their long, hot summers, Los Angeles and Tel Aviv came at the top of this category, which is based on the total number of sunshine hours per year. Close behind came Jakarta, followed by Sydney.

Best for affordable accommodation

Cities in warmer climates tended to do best when it came to the cheapest average monthly rent. Jakarta, Manila and Mumbai topped the list in this category – together with Sofia. Budapest, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires were close behind.



Best for culture

Art lovers and history buffs should head to Beijing, New York or Paris. All three topped the list for cities with the highest number of galleries and museums – and next came Brussels and London.

Best for affordable public transport

The cost of a monthly travel pass is most affordable in Jakarta, Manila, Buenos Aires and Mumbai. There are cheap rides to be found in Budapest, Warsaw and Sofia, too.



Best for food

Jakarta is the best city for an affordable lunch. Lisbon's next when it comes to reasonably priced eats, followed by Manila.



Best for happiness

According to the Happy City Index, New York is the best by smiles, scoring a perfect ten. You'll also find plenty of good vibes in Toronto and Amsterdam.



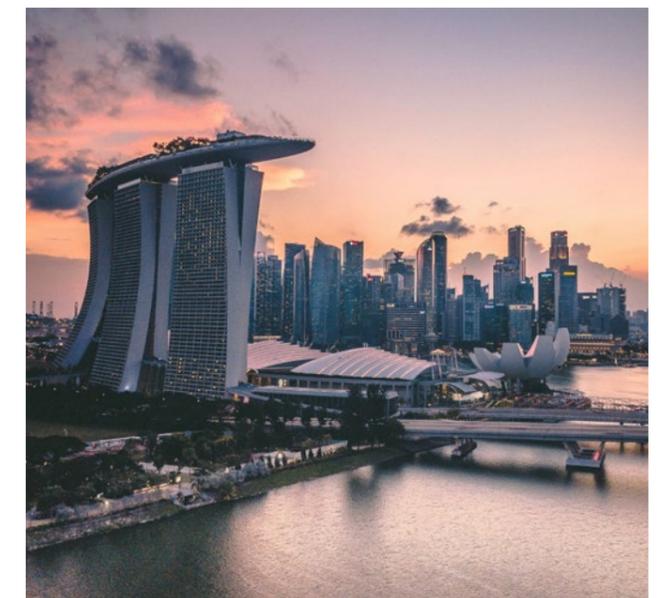
Best for coffee

Where will you find the cheapest coffee? Take a bow, South America; Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro offer the best value for a shot of caffeine. Additionally, an espresso or cappuccino in Milan is also very affordable.



Best for broadband speed

Tech-friendly Singapore boasts the fastest broadband speeds among the 25 cities in IWG's survey. New York also offers particularly speedy downloads, together with Copenhagen and Hong Kong.



Best for flexible workspace availability

London topped the list for flex space options, with an impressive 115 IWG locations around the metropolis. Next, all with more than 60 locations, come Toronto, New York, Amsterdam, Paris and Los Angeles.

Conclusion

The Work from Anywhere trend is a strong one and it is growing at a considerable pace. Its benefits for employees are plain to see – most significantly in terms of work-life balance and general wellbeing. Companies offering WFA policies can also benefit from increased productivity, and greater talent attraction and retention.

“We will undoubtedly continue to see more and more companies embracing work-from-anywhere policies as they realise that the horizons of today’s workers are no longer confined to their own countries,” says Dixon.

“As our survey of world cities shows, every destination has its own special charms, and the potential for mixing work with travel is endless. At IWG we are committed to supporting those who

choose to enrich their lives by working in another country, whether it’s for a few days, a few months or longer. We have an unrivalled, growing network of high-quality locations around the globe and an on-demand membership programme that offers easy access to them.”

We support a network of more than eight million hybrid workers in approximately 4,000 locations, spanning more than 120 countries.

**Find out more
about what we do at
[iwgplc.com](https://www.iwgplc.com)**

