

# TOP 11 HOTSPOTS





**Austin, U.S.A.**

What is Austin without live music? From the annual South by Southwest festival to the clubs and venues dotting 6th Street, this town does music better than anyone. The town wears its hippie heart on its sleeves but is also an amazing place to get some work done and mingle with a growing community of nomads and entrepreneurs.

Austin has grown beyond its college town roots into a haven for techies and millennials soaking up post-college life without doing too much of that whole 'settling down' thing. Locals pride themselves on being different than any preconceived Texas stereotypes, and they have the chops to hold up their claims. Come for the music, stay for the barbecue.

### The highs

- There isn't an ounce of this city that isn't chock- full of culture and excitement. Restaurants and bars across town host live music every night and there is always something going on if you're looking to entertain.
- On that note, the town was practically built for digital nomads. Working spaces abound and are full of bright minds with bright ideas. The icing on the cake is that they're eager to swap ideas back and forth over happy hour and ribs.
- The city is more compact than nearby Dallas and Houston, and very bike-able.

### The lows

- Traffic is terrible. Fortunately, you're planning to bike everywhere.
- Much like Colorado and other trendy places, locals are beginning to feel overcrowded. Announcing that you just moved to town isn't always the best idea.

The break down	
Cup of coffee:	\$2-3
Meals:	\$8-10 at a standard restaurant or barbecue joint.
Transportation:	A single ride on Capital Metro, the public transit system, is \$1.25 and a day pass is \$2.50, cheaper than many American cities.
Rent:	\$1500 for a 1 bedroom apartment, much cheaper with roommates.
<b>Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):</b> \$2600/month	



**Barcelona, Spain**

Western Europe is just so . . . trendy? Expensive? Familiar? For the adventurous nomad, parking yourself in a major Western European city might not seem like much of an uprooting from the lifestyle back home. If it's somewhere your parents have been or want to go, it's just not balls-y enough, right? If this is true, Barcelona is the exception. Spanish culture moves slow, is extremely warm and, like any place worth deep exploration, is very food-centric.

Additionally, the Iberian Peninsula is significantly more affordable than Paris or London. While it's not as cheap as Southeast Asia, the overall cost of living is more affordable than most major US cities. Because much of the sightseeing and cultural activities in and around Barcelona are outdoors, they are either free or way cheaper than many European staples such as the Louvre.

### The highs

- Barcelona has plenty of Wi-Fi-accessible work spaces. The increasing popularity of the city among digital nomads ensures that that trend won't be slowing down anytime soon. The city center is very walkable.
- Nightlife and dining. Get accustomed to afternoon naps and all-night parties.
- Progressiveness. Barcelona is very gay-friendly and accepting.

### The lows

- Locals can get fed up with tourists, and may come across as rude in certain situations. Even with this, the city is very safe.
- Air pollution can be significant. Check [this site](#) for stats on air and water.

The break down	
Cup of coffee:	\$1-2
Meals:	\$5-13, depending on which meal and the type of establishment.
Transportation:	Metro ride costs \$2.31. Taxis are slightly more expensive.
Rent:	\$749/month for 1-bedroom apartment. Co-living can make this much cheaper.
<b>Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):</b> \$2000/month	



**Berlin, Germany**

Berlin may not have made the list for its cost of living (similar or slightly cheaper than many US cities), but the German capital has plenty going on for digital nomads. Excellent nightlife, modern amenities, and readily available Wi-Fi throughout the city are major benefits of Berlin living. Berlin is a haven of modern ideals, known for its friendliness towards a bohemian lifestyle and a great online start-up scene. Take advantage of European nightlife (plenty of options for those looking to dance the night away or relax over a couple pints) and ample workspaces, and a community of excited nomads seeking to squeeze every bit of enjoyment out of this chic, hopping metropolis.

### The highs

- Communication is relatively simple, even in situations where English is not spoken.
- Events, nightlife, and Germany's renowned beer culture will keep you occupied when it's time to put the laptop away.
- A quality of life familiar to American expats.

### The lows

- Seasonal weather with cloudy and cool winters. They say glum weather can increase productivity. . .
- Berliner Schnauze- locals' direct and often blunt attitude towards newcomers and, in particular, 'dumb questions'.

The break down	
Cup of coffee:	\$2-3
Meals:	\$6-8
Transportation:	A day ticket on public transit costs about \$8. Single ride is around \$2. The city is walkable and bike able.
Rent:	\$749 for a one bedroom apartment, cheaper to have roommates.
<b>Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):</b> \$2000/month	





## Chiang Mai, Thailand

Chiang Mai is legendary among digital nomads. Cheap living, a thriving community of online entrepreneurs, and ample khao soi make living in this city a productive and enjoyable experience. The core of the city center is walled off, and this area is where much of the tourist activity, some of the temples, and many trendy restaurants and bars are located. However, the true digital nomad experience is extending outside the walled city. Rent is slightly cheaper, and there are ample co-working spaces and coffeehouses to network and get ideas flowing. The night market is a hopping place, as are the bars that sit just outside the city walls. Getting around town is a breeze - with time, you'll become a master at negotiating with tuk tuk drivers and will get rides around town for very cheap (less than 50c in many cases).

### The highs

- The cost of living is cheap. Chiang Mai is great for beginning nomads building their business.
- The community of entrepreneurs is strong. Striking up a business or lifestyle conversation at many of the bars and cafes is common, and a great way to get into the social scene.
- As far as cities go, Chiang Mai is on the smaller end. While any city in Asia can be frantic for new arrivals, Chiang Mai is on the mellow end compared to major capitals like Bangkok or Hanoi.

### The lows

- Hordes of high-emission tuk tuks and trucks combine with intense heat to make for sweltering conditions during May and other times when the weather is exceptionally hot.
- Speaking English isn't a guarantee (although I've never had major problems communicating, as locals are accustomed to tourists). Neither is peace and quiet. I always keep headphones with me in Chiang Mai, particularly for working in cafes.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	Less than \$1
Meals:	\$1-3 for budget, up to \$8 at nicer restaurants.
Transportation:	\$30/month
Rent:	\$250-300/month

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$600/month



## Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Formerly known as Saigon, HCM is a swarming metropolis full of activity. Vietnam is experiencing an entrepreneurial renaissance of sorts, as the government recently loosened regulations on foreign businesses and housing. The city is popular with nomads because of the ample places to work and great cultural scene, in addition to a low cost of living.

### The highs

- Overall, HCM is a fun and thriving city. Nightlife is strong and the food scene is great.
- More and more online entrepreneurs are basing themselves in Vietnam, resulting in an increasingly supportive community.
- Getting around by motorbike or on foot is easy and affordable, although getting used to driving in Vietnam is an experience in itself (be thankful you're not learning in Hanoi).

### The lows

- Vietnam is not known for freedom of speech or for progressive social values. It is important to become accustomed to the local culture.
- English is not widely spoken among Vietnamese.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	Less than 50c
Meals:	\$2-3, less for very budget friendly, slightly more for nicer restaurants.
Transportation:	Buy a motorbike for \$200-300. Be sure to obtain a Vietnamese motorcycle license and insurance. Once these steps are taken care of, transportation costs are very minimal. Visit <a href="#">this site</a> for more info.
Rent:	\$400-500/month

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$900/month



## Lisbon, Portugal

In Lisbon, cobblestone streets, ancient cathedrals, boundless culture and history, and bumping nightlife complement a cost of living far cheaper than many Western European cities. The Sao Jorge Castle overlooks this coastal city, and the hills will make for hours of breathtaking walks. The growing co-working scene means you likely won't have to take the stroll by yourself. Western Europe's pricey-ness can intimidate digital nomads looking for a long-term base, but Lisbon masterfully retains affordability while sitting a short flight away from cities like Paris, Madrid, and London. Also, if you're a fan of cod, there is literally no better place in the world to get your fix.

### The highs

- English is widely spoken in the city center, though the friendly locals love it when foreigners make the effort of learning a few basic Portuguese phrases.
- Strong LGBT and cultural scenes in the city are welcoming and inclusive.
- An influx of online entrepreneurs is leading to a growing network of cafes and workspaces that cater to our line of work.

### The lows

- A main complaint of Lisbon is that it's dirty. Much of this is subjective to an individual's taste.
- The pace of life is very slow, particularly for those used to the hustle and bustle of American cities. The opposite can be said, however, for driving in Lisbon, which can be quite dangerous.
- Taxes are high. The tax on \$100,000 is \$52,994.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	\$1
Meals:	\$5-7 for a basic meal out.
Transportation:	Public transit is reliable and cheap. A metro ticket is about \$1.60. If you see a funicular and haven't ridden one before, get your camera out and jump on!
Rent:	\$539 for a one bedroom apartment.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$1600/month



## Medellin, Colombia

South American cities are a sight to behold, Medellín in particular. Certainly not afraid of climbing up for a better view, much of Medellín is built on hillsides and elevated areas, resulting in a strikingly beautiful cityscape. Rugged peaks surround the city, forcing construction up instead of out- the sheer power of the high-rise buildings is captivating.

### The highs

- Good number of places to work from, and spots to grab a beer and do some networking afterward.
- Coworking groups such as Wi-Fi Tribe are stretching into Medellín and bringing the city towards to forefront of the digital nomad movement.
- The food and nightlife culture is incredible. Arepas and Ajiaco are great dishes to try right away. Food is also very cheap.

### The lows

- A historic truce between the government and the rebel group, the FARC, was signed last August. Stability in the country can still be tumultuous and unpredictable, however.
- Wi-Fi can be inconsistent. Once you find a good spot to work, don't forget how to get there!

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	\$1
Meals:	\$1.75-6, depending on where and what you're eating.
Transportation:	The metro system is very efficient. The metro cable car system is an experience in itself, transporting citizens up steep hillsides lining the city. The city center is very walkable, as well.
Rent:	\$861/month for a one bedroom apartment. Co-living makes this much cheaper.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$1400/month



## Playa Del Carmen, Mexico

If diving and snorkeling are hobbies of yours (or you would like them to be!) and beach culture is the ultimate dream, there isn't a better spot to park yourself than Playa. The town itself boasts a Euro-style hipness that casually takes in cruise ships and an ever-growing number of tourists, gives them their fill, and then sends them back out again while holding its best treasures for those choosing to stick around a while.

Cancun's international airport is close, as are the Mayan ruins in Tulum and the island of Cozumel just off the coast. Cost of living is much cheaper than in the United States.

### The highs

- Excellent weather and the ability to pursue nearly any beach or ocean related activity.
- Tacos. On the beach. Every single day.
- Locals are very familiar with foreigners and adjustment for Americans is relatively easy.

### The lows

- Daily cruise ships clog the main city center. Stay a few blocks west of the strip to avoid the crowds.
- Free Wi-Fi is not a guarantee anywhere. The town is built more for tourists dropping coin on daily or weekly excursions more-so than long term visitors.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	less than \$1
Meals:	\$3-5 as long as you stay out of the vacation resorts.
Transportation:	Colectivos, which are small mini-buses, are available to get to regional attractions. Buses and taxis are readily available throughout town as well. Best advice? Buy a bicycle and then do your daily routines that way.
Rent:	\$340/month for a one bedroom apartment.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$1600/month



## Prague, Czech Republic

An incredible beer culture and some of Europe's most sunning gothic architecture keep Prague on the list of not-to-be-missed European cities. Art galleries and sculptures are aplenty around town, and the cost of living is much cheaper than Paris or London.

A wide selection of places to work from will keep you exploring Prague's beautiful neighborhoods, while the expat community is strong and punctuated by student groups and tourists wanting to experience the city's unique bohemian culture.

### The highs

- It's nearly impossible to become bored in Prague. There is so much to take in, even just a daily walk to a new part of town will keep you inspired.
- The city center is riddled with coffee shops and workspaces, and in true European fashion, the café culture here is strong.
- The city is very walkable and bike-able.

### The lows

- Air quality is poor, and this issue extends into the city's water. Identify places where bottled or filtered water is available.
- Rent for foreigners can be more expensive than rent for locals.
- Bureaucracy can be tough to deal with. Allow ample time for any visa or state-regulated requests.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	\$1
Meals:	\$3-6, more in nicer restaurants.
Transportation:	Public transit (subway, bus, etc.) is solid and charges based on travel time. A 30-minute ticket is just under \$1, while a 90-minute ticket is about \$1.25. Like many European cities, buying a bicycle is a great option for daily commutes.
Rent:	\$399/month for a one bedroom apartment.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$1300/month



## Sofia, Bulgaria

If this were a list of the most overlooked cultural hotspots in the world, Sofia would rank number 1. Home to numerous museums and galleries and boasting a laid-back restaurant and nightlife scene, Sofia is a thriving capital city that is frequently skipped over by tourists heading to the ski slopes or the coast.

If you're looking to base yourself near the mountains, a few hours' drive to the Black Sea and the coastal town of Burgas, and convenient access to many regional hotspots including Greece and Istanbul, Sofia will make a solid base.

### The highs

- The cost of living in Eastern Europe is cheaper than many western European cities.
- Sofia is relatively small and compact for a capital city, and easily walkable.
- It's not as hyped as Bali, Thailand, or other spots in warmer climates so you'll be ahead of the curve in that respect.

### The lows

- Bulgaria doesn't have the greatest track record for freedom of speech, however progress is being made.
- Locals aren't as accustomed to the digital nomad culture as they are in Bali or Thailand, although the scene is growing.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	\$1
Meals:	\$5-7
Transportation:	With a metro system and adequate bus and tram service, getting around Sofia is cheap and easy. A fare typically costs less than \$1.
Rent:	\$331/month for a one-bedroom apartment.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$1,500/month.



## Ubud & Canggu, Indonesia

Bali. The beaches, the tropical weather, the dreams formed while reading Eat, Pray, Love. Ubud is a renowned spiritual haven, where yoga and meditation practices dominate daily routines. The expat community is alive and well in bustling co-working spots nearby serene rice fields and the often crowded Jl Raya Ubud.

In Canggu, the peaceful stretch between Kerobokan and Echo Beach, a prospering community digital nomads soak in the sun and waves while enjoying the cafes and bars of Jl Pantai Berawa and Jl Pantai Batu Bolong. If you follow any location independence-themed podcasts or blogs, you've likely heard stories of expats coming to Bali to check it out and never leaving – you'll understand the moment you step off the plane.

### The highs

- Bali is everything you imagine in a tropical paradise. Street food near the beach, a laid-back atmosphere that values peace and quality of life over status, and long conversations over fruity cocktails.
- Getting around is simple. Drivers are cheap, and taxis are readily available as well.
- Bali provides the opportunity for a mental reset. Perhaps you'll stumble onto newfound motivation and outlook while incorporating yoga and beach time into each day's work.

### The lows

- The Island of the Gods, as Bali is called, is just that: an island. Wi-Fi is typically available but not always guaranteed.
- It's easy to get distracted in paradise.

### The break down

Cup of coffee:	\$1 or less
Meals:	\$2-4, depending on location and style.
Transportation:	Motorbike rental or purchase, or take a cab. Having access to a motorbike is best for those planning to stay awhile. Rental costs \$8-10 per day.
Rent:	\$400-500/month for a one-bedroom apartment.

**Overall cost of living (including a beer at the end of the day):**  
\$950/month

# HONORABLE MENTIONS



## San Diego, U.S.A

San Diego ranks high in every category except cost of living (over \$3,000/month). A great beach and outdoors-y culture mixes with a laid-back SoCal vibe without the expansive and congested mess you'll run into after heading north on Interstate 5.



## Budapest, Hungary

Another city with stunning architecture, Budapest is affordable (\$1,100/month) and endlessly captivating. Coworking spaces are readily available and cheap, just like the meals and the beer.



## Cape Town, South Africa

A city that celebrates life as well as outdoor activities, Cape Town is one of the most beautiful places on the planet. Easy to get around and easy to work from, photos of yourself in front of Table Mountain or at the beach will impress friends, family, and Instagram followers.



## TOP 11 LOCATION INDIE HOTSPOTS

Compiled by Location Indie member Tim Wenger, founder of Inkwell Media Services. Contact Tim at [inkwellmediaservices@gmail.com](mailto:inkwellmediaservices@gmail.com)

Photo credits:

Austin: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Barcelona: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Berlin: [Wikipedia](#)

Chiang Mai: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

HCM: [Pixabay](#)

Lisbon: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Medellin: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Playa del Carmen: [Flickr / Carolyn Coles](#)

Prague: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Sofia: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Bali: [Pixabay](#)

San Diego: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Budapest: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Cape Town: [Pixabay](#)

\*Cost of living and financial information from [nomadlist.com](#) and personal experience.

\*City info and opinions based on personal experience with some help from [Lonely Planet](#).

