

Singapore

Prior to moving to any foreign country, it is advisable to do extensive research on up-to-date legal requirements and some cultural norms that you may have to be aware of. Seek professional legal information on tax and work eligibility and certification requirements. Also, learn about what kind of financial, social ramifications your decision to live abroad will have.

Working in Singapore

1. **WORK CULTURE:** *Review Singaporean Employment Act for most accurate and up to date information on your rights as an employee.*
 - a. **Hierarchical relationships:** there is usually a high power distance from people at lower levels, who are expected to be more subordinate and respect formal hierarchical authority. People seldom violate chains of command and don't openly question decisions by superiors. Some examples of these are:
 - i. Treat employers and superiors with utmost respect
 - ii. Refrain from using first names
 - iii. Practice "arrive before the boss, leave after the boss" work hours.
 - b. **Dress code:** business dress code is really important and it depends on the job itself. Regular business attire includes long sleeved shirts, dark pants, and a tie for men. Women usually wear blouses, skirts or dressy slacks.
 - c. **Days off:** Regular business days are 9am-6pm, and punctuality is very important. Ten holidays are usually ubiquitously observed, including Good Friday, Chinese New Year, New Year's Day, Labor Day, Vesak Day National Day, Hari Raya Puasa, Hari Raya, Hajo, Deepavali, and Christmas Day.
 - d. **Family balance:** Studies have shown that female middle managers in Singapore businesses face a glass ceiling in their working environment and sometimes there are restricted promotions of women. This is partly due to a view of women being more suited for domestic duties. Previously, work was viewed as being of paramount importance in Singapore, and this was to the detriment of all family obligations, many women chose to quit day jobs in order to have a family. Lately many companies are offering work-life harmony schemes like flexible work hours and
 - e. **Discrimination:** there are no anti-discrimination laws in place to protect employees from discriminations based on gender, race or disability.
2. **QUALITY OF LIFE:**
 - a. **Healthcare:** Quality healthcare in Singapore is affordable, compared to a place like the United States, whether one has insurance or not. Even if not a permanent resident, healthcare in Singapore is reasonably priced (permanent residents and Singaporeans have access to Singapore's heavily subsidized public healthcare system). However, an unexpected trip to the doctor can be a bit expensive if they do not accept direct bill settlement from the insurance company, and the patient is left having to pay the bill on the spot. If the doctor does not accept direct bill settlement, the patient is expected to

pay for the consultation and any other services provided at the time of visit, including prescriptions for medication. These medical bills can usually be reimbursed by the insurance company, but that surprise medical bill can come as a shock if one is living on a budget. Contact the insurance company to see which doctors have a direct settlement option.

- b. **Safety:** crime rates are low in Singapore, and there is a zero tolerance policy on drugs, walking home late at night is not a dangerous thing. However, there is a high rate of pedestrian and cyclist casualties, and accidents.
 - c. **Social Life:** the social scene and night life tends to be a bit on the pricey side
 - d. **Housing:** housing is relatively more expensive than most other countries in that region. There is a restriction on which breeds of dog you can bring into the country. There is also a limitation on the number and type of animals you are allowed to own depending upon the building in which you live
 - e. **Education:** schools in Singapore are of high quality, and the curriculums are extensive and robust. Schools can be highly competitive and hard to get into and private schools can be very expensive.
 - f. **Weather:** Singapore is hot when it's hot and can turn rainy and stormy suddenly.
 - g. **Transportation:** Public transportation runs very efficiently, and on time. If you want to own a car, it can get expensive. Left hand drive cars are not allowed in Singapore and there is therefore no point in importing any type of left hand drive vehicle. You may drive in Singapore on your own license for up to one year but after this period you will be required to convert to a Singapore license.
3. **TAXES;** *it is best to do extensive research and ask a legal professional for the most accurate and current information on taxes.*
- a. In Singapore you are required to pay a tax in order to own a television (the license fee).
 - b. A non-resident is a foreigner working or living in Singapore for less than 183 days per year and employment income is taxed at 15% or at the resident rate, whichever is higher. Workers on an Employment Pass will be taxed regardless of time spent in Singapore.
 - c. CPF is a comprehensive social security savings scheme to which both employers and employees have to contribute. CPF takes care of members' needs in retirement, healthcare, home ownership, family protection and asset enhancement.
4. **DOCUMENTATION:** *please contact an immigration lawyer if you can for the most accurate information on documentation and working in a foreign country.*
- a. **Work Permit:** The Employment Pass is a work permit for foreign professionals working in managerial, executive or specialized jobs. Foreigners interested in work and with a job offer may apply for one. Applicants need to earn at least \$3,000 and possess acceptable qualifications.
 - b. Mid-level skilled workers (eg technicians) who wish to work in Singapore may apply for an **S Pass**. Applicants are assessed on a points system that takes into account multiple criteria, including minimum salary, educational qualifications, technical certificates and years of relevant work experience.

- c. It is crucial to note that, unlike many other countries, a foreign spouse who wishes to work in Singapore cannot do so without their own valid employment pass and this takes weeks to process.