



GLOBAL NURSING DESTINATION COMPARISON GUIDE

A STRAIGHT TALKING GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONALLY
EDUCATED NURSES WEIGHING UP THEIR OPTIONS



BEFORE YOU DECIDE, READ THIS.

Every year, thousands of internationally educated nurses face the same decision: which country gives you the best chance of building a real future, not just a good contract?

The answer depends on more than the salary number in a job advert. It depends on what you take home after tax, whether you can stay permanently, what happens to your family and whether you are still growing professionally in 10 years.

This guide covers 13 of the most commonly considered destinations, assessed across five things nurses consistently tell us matter most: salary, take-home pay after tax and cost of living, immigration pathway, career growth and family stability.

We are not here to decide for you. We are here to give you clear information so you can choose what is right for you.

COUNTRIES COVERED IN THIS GUIDE:

North America: USA, Canada

Middle East: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman

Europe: UK, Ireland, Germany

Asia-Pacific: Singapore, Australia, New Zealand

A NOTE ON THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

We know that some nurses are watching the U.S. closely right now, given ongoing political and economic news. We understand that the uncertainty is real.

Based on more than 20 years of placing nurses, we believe the long-term case for the U.S. remains strong. Demand is driven by population needs and a healthcare system that does not change quickly. This has remained true over time, and this guide reflects the long-term picture rather than short-term news.



SECTION 1: WHERE DO NURSES EARN THE MOST?

Salary is usually the first thing nurses look at, and that makes sense. When you compare countries, the U.S. stands out clearly.

TABLE 1: ANNUAL NURSING SALARIES BY COUNTRY (USD)

Country	General RN (USD)	ICU Nurse (USD)	ER Nurse (USD)	Paediatric Nurse (USD)
USA	\$60,000-\$95,000	\$80,000-\$110,000	\$60,000-\$102,000	\$60,000-\$95,000
Canada	\$48,000-\$70,000	\$60,000-\$83,000	\$45,000-\$68,000	\$50,000-\$62,000
UAE	\$20,000-\$55,000	\$26,000-\$38,000	\$26,000-\$38,000	\$30,000-\$38,000
Qatar	\$19,000-\$38,000	\$24,000-\$36,000	\$19,000-\$32,000	\$22,000-\$35,000
UK	\$34,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$72,000	~\$43,000	~\$60,000
Ireland	\$38,000-\$60,000	\$50,000-\$72,000	\$42,000-\$55,000	~\$35,000
Germany	\$35,000-\$53,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$43,000-\$65,000	\$38,000-\$60,000
Australia	\$46,000-\$73,000	\$50,000-\$66,000	\$46,000-\$66,000	\$43,000-\$60,000

Source: Glassdoor, Indeed, BLS (2024-25). Figures are averages and vary by experience, location and employer.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

A general RN in the U.S. earns **\$60,000-\$95,000** a year. That is **44%-98%** more than a nurse in Canada and three to five times the typical base salary in a Gulf state.

Across every specialty in the table, the U.S. advantage holds consistently.

Salary alone does not tell the full story, though. What matters is what that income actually lets you do, which brings us to take-home pay.



SECTION 2: WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY TAKE HOME?

A high salary can lose much of its advantage when a country's cost of living is equally high. A tax-free income sounds appealing until you account for rent, schooling and everyday costs. The table below shows approximate take-home pay after typical income tax, alongside whether permanent residency is available. Both of these factors shape what your income is actually worth over time.

TABLE 2: TAKE-HOME PAY AND RESIDENCY AT A GLANCE

Country	Typical Annual Salary	Approx. Take-Home After Tax	Income Tax Rate	Permanent Residency?
USA	\$80,000-\$95,000	~\$66,000-\$74,000	Up to 37% federal	Yes EB-3 Green Card
Canada	\$48,000-\$70,000	~\$40,000-\$57,000	Up to 33%	Yes, after 2-3 years
UAE	\$20,000-\$55,000	\$20,000-\$55,000 (no tax)	0%	No
Qatar	\$19,000-\$38,000	\$19,000-\$38,000 (no tax)	0%	No
UK	\$34,000-\$50,000	~\$25,000-\$36,000	Up to 45%	Yes, after 5 years
Ireland	\$38,000-\$60,000	~\$24,000-\$37,000	Up to 48%	Yes, after 2-5 years
Australia	\$46,000-\$73,000	~\$33,000-\$52,000	Up to 45%	Yes, competitive

Approximate take-home after income tax at median rates. Actual figures vary by state, province or region, individual circumstances and exchange rates. Source: Numbeo, OECD Taxing Wages 2025, World Bank.



THIS IS WHERE YOUR FUTURE STARTS.

Gulf state tax-free salaries are one of the most frequently cited reasons nurses consider the Middle East, and the numbers can look compelling on paper.

Here is the fuller picture:

- A nurse earning \$40,000 tax-free in the UAE takes home \$40,000, but has no pathway to permanent residency, limited career autonomy and typically capped salary growth.
- A nurse earning \$85,000 in Texas, after an effective tax rate of around 22%, takes home approximately \$66,000-\$74,000, with full legal rights, property ownership options and a clear path to a Green Card.

Over a 20-year career, those differences compound significantly. The gap is not just annual income, it is wealth, security and what you are able to build.

A REAL CHALLENGE WORTH NAMING



The U.S. does have a higher cost of living in some cities and states. Healthcare costs, if you go beyond your employer plan, can also be higher than in countries with universal systems. These are real factors and worth understanding before you decide.

Your Experience Consultant can walk you through what living costs look like in specific states and hospital locations. For most nurses, the higher salary still makes it worthwhile, but it is important to understand the full picture before you decide.



SECTION 3: CAN YOU ACTUALLY STAY?

For most nurses planning their future, not just a two-year contract, the immigration pathway matters as much as the salary. This is where the U.S. holds its clearest advantage over every other destination in this guide.

TABLE 3: IMMIGRATION PATHWAYS COMPARED

Country	Visa / Immigration Route	Permanent Residency?	Family Included?	Spouse Can Work?
USA	EB-3 Green Card (employer sponsored)	Yes - from point of hire	Yes	Yes
Canada	Work Permit to Express Entry	Yes, after 2-3 years	Yes	Yes
UAE / Qatar	Employer sponsored permit	No	Dependent visa only	Limited
UK	Health and Care Worker Visa	Yes, after 5 years	Yes	Yes
Ireland	Critical Skills Employment Permit	Yes, after 2-5 years	Yes	Yes
Germany	Skilled Workers Immigration Act	Yes, after 4 years	Yes	Yes
Australia	Skilled Migration (points based)	Yes, competitive	Yes	Yes

Source: USCIS, UKVI, IRCC, Department of Home Affairs. Routes and timelines subject to change – your Experience Coordinator will have current processing information.

THE EB-3 GREEN CARD: WHY IT IS DIFFERENT?

The EB-3 is the only immigration route in this entire table that gives you permanent residency directly linked to your employment, from the point of hire, not two or five years later on a temporary visa.

In practical terms, that means:

- Permanent residency, once the process is completed, not temporary permission to stay
- Eligibility for U.S. citizenship after five years
- The ability to change employers within nursing without losing your immigration status
- Full legal and property rights in the U.S.
- Your spouse and children are included in the process

NO OTHER DESTINATION IN THIS GUIDE OFFERS ALL OF THESE THINGS FROM DAY ONE OF YOUR EMPLOYMENT.

For nurses making long-term plans, this difference is fundamental.



ONE THING TO PLAN FOR: VISA TIMELINES

The full process, from credential verification through to visa processing and hospital placement, **typically takes 12-24 months**. That is real waiting time and we will not pretend otherwise.

What we can tell you is that Conexus manages every stage of that process for you, keeps you informed at each step and has a team whose job it is to make sure nothing stalls unnecessarily. Your Experience Consultant will give you a realistic, personalized timeline from your very first conversation.



SECTION 4: WHAT DOES YOUR CAREER LOOK LIKE IN 10 YEARS?

Salary and residency tell you what day one looks like. Career trajectory tells you what years five, 10 and 15 look like. This is where the scale of the U.S. healthcare system creates advantages that are harder to put in a table, but no less real.



THE U.S. HEALTHCARE SYSTEM: WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR CAREER

The U.S. has the largest healthcare system in the world. Demand for nurses is projected to grow consistently throughout the next decade, driven by an ageing population and sustained retirements from the current nursing workforce.

The American Hospital Association estimates that nearly 800,000 nurses plan to retire by 2027, which means demand for internationally educated nurses is not a temporary gap, it is structural.

What that means for you in practice:

- Access to clinical specialization across a broader range of specialties than most markets offer
- Clear pathways into advanced practice and leadership roles
- Salary progression tied to experience and specialization, not fixed pay bands
- Modern healthcare environments with structured training and professional development
- Hospital systems that actively invest in keeping experienced nurses, which means investing in you

CAREER GROWTH IN OTHER MARKETS: AN HONEST COMPARISON

Canada offers strong working conditions and good career development, though salary growth typically levels off sooner than in the U.S. The UK NHS has structured career bands, but real wages fell in real terms through the 2010s and early 2020s, limiting earning growth even for experienced nurses.

Gulf states offer limited specialist development opportunities and career ceilings are reached quickly. Australia has a strong nursing environment but senior salaries tend to cap at levels below comparable U.S. roles.

None of these markets is without merit. But if long-term professional growth and financial progression are priorities for you, the U.S. system consistently offers more.



SECTION 5: WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY?

For most nurses, the decision to move internationally is not just a personal one. It involves a partner, children or parents and what happens to my family is one of the most common questions our team hears.



YOUR SPOUSE AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED IN YOUR EB-3 GREEN CARD PETITION



YOUR SPOUSE RECEIVES WORK AUTHORIZATION, MEANING THEY CAN TAKE EMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S.



YOUR CHILDREN CAN ACCESS PUBLIC SCHOOLING AT NO ADDITIONAL COST



THE ENTIRE FAMILY IS ON THE PATH TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP AFTER FIVE YEARS

On arrival, Conexus nurses also become part of an established community of internationally educated healthcare professionals across the U.S.: colleagues who have made the same journey and understand what the transition involves. That network matters, particularly in the early months.

A GENUINE CHALLENGE: BEING FAR FROM HOME

One of the most consistent things nurses tell us about moving to the U.S. is that the distance from extended family, parents, siblings and the community you grew up in, can be genuinely hard, particularly in the early months. This is not something we want to minimize.

What we can say honestly is that the nurses who navigate this best tend to be the ones who went in with clear expectations, maintained strong connections with home and found a community where they landed. Your Experience Consultant stays with you through all of this, not just the paperwork, but the real experience of settling into a new country.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS.

Data and tables tell you the numbers. But the most useful thing we can share is what nurses who have already made this move, across different countries, specialties and circumstances, actually say about it. These are their words.

CARLO: PHILIPPINES TO THE UK TO THE U.S.

Carlo's path to the U.S. was anything but direct. He applied through Conexus in 2014 and spent years waiting, working in the Philippines. When his U.S. visa application was refused, he moved to the UK during COVID and spent more than a year nursing in the NHS at Queens Hospital.

When Conexus finally called to say his U.S. application had been approved, he didn't hesitate. He is now working in the U.S. as a travel nurse, and his experience of both systems makes his perspective particularly useful for nurses weighing up the same decision.



IN MY EXPERIENCE, CONEXUS IS VERY RELIABLE. THEY'VE BEEN IN THIS BUSINESS FOR YEARS AND THEY KNOW THEIR THING. WE'RE NOT TRIALS AND ERRORS TO THEM; THEY'VE BEEN SENDING NURSES AND MEDICAL TECHNOLOGISTS TO THE U.S. FOR YEARS. THEY HAVE A VERY COMPETENT IMMIGRATION TEAM.

Carlo, RN, Philippines, Queens Hospital NHS to the U.S.

HERMATON: KENYA TO IOWA

Hermaton made the move from Kenya to Des Moines, Iowa. His advice to nurses still in the waiting stage is the kind of thing that is easier to hear from someone who has been through it than from anyone else.



THE JOURNEY TO AMERICA AS A NURSE IS HARD AND TIRESOME. IT REQUIRES PATIENCE, HARD WORK, RESILIENCE AND A GOOD AGENT. CONEXUS MEDSTAFF IS THERE FOR YOU. THEY WILL HOLD YOUR HAND, GUIDE YOU AND BRING YOU HERE. JUST NEVER GIVE UP; KEEP MOVING.

Hermaton, RN, Kenya, now working in Des Moines, Iowa

RICHARD: GHANA TO THE U.S.

Richard came from Ghana and describes something that matters as much as any data point: the feeling that the process was built around him, not the other way around.



MY EXPERIENCE WITH CONEXUS SINCE I FIRST SIGNED UP HAS BEEN AMAZING. THEY UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS AND WILL BE WITH YOU IN EACH STEP OF THE JOURNEY. THEY'RE THERE TO HELP AND PUTTING YOU FIRST IS THEIR PRIORITY. I CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY THAT THE ENTIRE PROCESS IS DESIGNED WITH ME IN MIND.

Richard, RN, Ghana

EVANS: KENYA TO THE U.S.

Evans joined Conexus as a medical laboratory scientist from Kenya. What he describes is what long-term support looks like in practice, not just at the point of placement, but throughout.



WORKING WITH CONEXUS HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE. THEIR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE JOURNEY, FROM IMMIGRATION TO PROFESSIONAL ADJUSTMENT, HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONAL. THE TEAM IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE, RESPONSIVE AND GENUINELY INVESTED IN MY SUCCESS. CONEXUS HAS TRULY BEEN A GUIDING PARTNER IN HELPING ME BUILD A COMFORTABLE AND FULFILLING LIFE HERE IN THE U.S.

Evans, MLS, Kenya

These nurses came from different countries, took different routes and arrived at different stages in their careers. What they share is a realistic experience, including the hard parts, and a decision made with full information.

If you would like to speak directly to a Conexus nurse who has already made the move from your country or region, ask your Experience Consultant.

That is a conversation we can always arrange.



SECTION 6: THE SUMMARY PICTURE.

The table below brings together all five dimensions across the most commonly considered destinations. Five stars reflects the strongest position in this comparison, it is not an absolute score.

TABLE 4: DESTINATION COMPARISON SCORECARD

Country	Salary	Take-Home Pay	Permanent Residency	Career Growth	Family Stability
USA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Canada	★★★★☆☆	★★★★☆☆	★★★★☆☆	★★★★☆☆	★★★★☆☆
UAE / Qatar	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆
UK	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆
Australia	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆☆

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

No destination is without its trade-offs and the right choice will always depend on your individual circumstances, career goals and what matters most to your family.

When we look across all five dimensions together, the consistent picture is this: for internationally educated nurses who have completed their NCLEX and are planning for the long term, the U.S. offers the most complete combination of salary, take-home pay, permanent residency, career progression and family stability.

That is not a sales pitch. It is what more than 20 years of data and placement outcomes consistently shows.



HOW CONEXUS WORKS WITH YOU.

Understanding the global picture is one thing. Getting through the practical reality of licensing, immigration and relocation is another and doing it right matters. Getting any stage wrong can add months to a timeline or create avoidable complications.

Conexus has been guiding internationally educated nurses through this process for more than 20 years. Our team includes former international healthcare professionals who have made this journey themselves, alongside immigration specialists, clinical educators and relocation coordinators.

What we do for you

- U.S. readiness support
- Credential verification and state licensing coordination
- Full EB-3 immigration management, from I-140 petition to Green Card
- Hospital matching and placement support
- Relocation, housing guidance and post-arrival care
- Ongoing support for your career and your family throughout your contract and beyond

THE TEAM BEHIND YOUR JOURNEY.

When you work with Conexus, you get one main point of contact who stays with you from your first conversation to your first shift and beyond.

Behind them is an immigration team with decades of experience, a clinical education team and a people team on the ground once you arrive.

The vast majority of Conexus nurses choose to continue with us after their first placement. What happens after the offer is made matters just as much as the offer itself.



WHAT DOES IT COST?

Reputable employers cover the majority of immigration and placement costs. You should be cautious of any agency requesting large upfront fees from you personally. This is not standard practice and is not how Conexus operates.



WHAT THE TIMELINE LOOKS LIKE.

The full process, including credential verification, licensing requirements, visa processing and hospital placement, typically takes 12-24 months. We set a realistic, personalized expectation from your first conversation, while keeping you informed at every stage.

We will not pretend the process is quick. What we can tell you is that you will not be navigating any stage alone.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

You do not need to have everything figured out before you get in touch. Most nurses who start a conversation with us are at exactly the stage you might be now: interested, but with a lot of questions still to answer. That is exactly what we are here for.

Whether you are at the very beginning of thinking about this or further along and ready to start formally, the first step is the same: talk to our team. There are no silly questions and no pressure. Your first conversation is simply a chance to understand what is possible for you specifically with your credentials, specialty, family situation and timeline.

Visit conexusmedstaff.com to begin your application or reach out to our team directly. Every nurse who made it to the U.S. with Conexus started exactly where you are now.

W: [CONEXUSMEDSTAFF.COM](https://conexusmedstaff.com) E: [INFO@CONEXUSMEDSTAFF.COM](mailto:info@conexusmedstaff.com)

