

Tips for all of us *US-Amerikaner* (as Statesiders are known in German)

Visas and Passports

IF you are an international student you already have secured your visa to enter Germany correct? We strongly suggest that you make a photocopy of your passport and visa and carry them with you **separate** from the real thing! There are no shots that are required for Germany.

As with all international travel, you should make sure your tetanus shot is up to date. The Yale Health Plan can assist you with getting your tetanus up to date; you don't need an appointment and you can drop by on the 4th floor of the Health Plan between 8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday.

~~~~~ Have identification tags on ALL your luggage~~~~~

We will be visiting cities that are very “walker friendly” so make sure you have comfortable walking shoes and throw in an umbrella! Some of our guided tours will have us walking outside so come rain or shine they will happen.

*There are some scheduled church services on our itinerary; please be respectful and appropriate in your attire!*

### **Emergency Phone Calls in Germany**

**Dial 112 for police or medical emergencies.**

### **MEDEX – Travel Assistance Program**

To promote safe travel, Yale University has purchased this travel assistance program on behalf of all students, scholars and employees through a program called MEDEX. Services include Personal & Travel Assistance, Emergency Medical Evacuation, Repatriation, Security & Political Evacuation and access to the online MEDEX Member Center.

The ISM will be providing each of you a MEDEX card to be carried at all times during the study tour. It is important to understand what MEDEX does and does not do, and the coverage terms, conditions and exclusions that apply as described in this guide. **This is a free travel assistance program for you and should not be confused with health or travel insurance.** Please consult your personal health care provider to confirm your health insurance coverage before traveling abroad.

[www.yale.edu/finance/controller/riskman/programs/medex.html](http://www.yale.edu/finance/controller/riskman/programs/medex.html)

The Yale in the World website is a gateway for essential international travel information. The site includes emergency travel procedures, preparation checklists, useful links and a travel registry, to be used by the University Secretary's Office to locate you in the event of an emergency. In the event of an emerging security situation, MEDEX will work in concert with our Secretary's Office to plan and arrange for safe evacuations that become necessary.

[http://world.yale.edu/abroad/travel\\_resources.html](http://world.yale.edu/abroad/travel_resources.html).

**Yale ID**

Don't forget to bring your Yale ID! As a student you will get a special rebate at museums and ticket counters, but you have to prove that you are a student with a valid ID.

### **Timing is everything.....**

Germany uses the 24-hour clock. For anything up to 12:00 noon it is the same as what we use in the US (10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m.), but after that it becomes 13:00 (1:00 p.m.), 14:00 (2:00 p.m.) and so on. Germany is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in the US.

### **Watt's Up?**

The electrical system in Germany provides 220V. For your North American plug on appliances like hairdryers, chargers, and laptops to fit into European outlets (which are two pronged) you will have to use an adapter, easily purchased at Target or Wal-Mart. As for the voltage, most newer electronics or hairdryers automatically convert the voltage – if you see a range of voltages printed on the item or its plug (such as “110-220”) it will work in Europe. Otherwise you can be a converter in the US, again at Target or Wal-Mart or a travel store.

### **Money Matters \$\$\$\$**

Germany uses the euro. It basically is 1 euro (€) = about \$ 1.50. In other words, to convert prices in Euros (EUR) to dollars add about 50%. To get the latest currency exchange rate visit <http://www.oanda.com/> . You'll find euro bills in denominations of €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200, and €500. A euro is broken down into 100 cents, and there are coins of 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents, 20 cents, 50 cents, €1, and €2. Note that it's called simply the euro — you won't win any friends by calling it the "Eurodollar."

Be sure to have some Euros with you before you enter Germany so you have some to tide you over until you can get to a bank or ATM in Germany. In the United States, they can be purchased at AAA, some local banks, and you can buy Euros from Bank of America if you have a checking, or savings account with them. See the link below.

<https://www5.bankofamerica.com/foreigncurrency/index.action>

Banks might not keep a large amount of Euros on hand so don't delay in getting some. Just compare exchange rates when purchasing them in the US as they can vary greatly. If you know someone going to Europe soon you could ask them to bring some back for you.

Though we don't know anything about this website, but only discovered it while searching the Internet, this is a place where you can order Euros online.

<http://www.ordercurrency.com/>

### **ATMS**

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (often referred to as cash machine or cashpoint) and there is an extensive network of them in Germany. The **CIRRUS** (800-424-7787) and **PLUS** (800-843-7587) networks span the globe. Check the back of your bank card to see which network you are in, and make sure you know your PIN (personal identification number) as that is required at an ATM. Know your PIN code in numbers; there are only numbers – no letters – on European keypads.

Try to use ATM machines attached to banks (these usually charge the least and give you the greatest withdrawal options)...many of the convenience ATMs have very strict limits on how much you can withdraw...much less than your bank allows, while hitting you with high fees. Know what your daily limit is for withdrawing cash!

Bank of America has a reciprocal arrangement with Deutsche Bank, so that BoA account holders can use DB bank machines without transaction fees.

### **Credit Cards in Germany**

For purchases, VISA and MasterCard are more commonly accepted than American Express. Like at home, credit and debit cards work at larger hotels and shops, but smaller businesses and restaurants prefer or only accept payment in local currency. . . Be sure to have two cards (just in case one gets swallowed at the ATM or won't work) and be sure your bank knows that you will be making purchases in Europe and when you are traveling.

It is very important to call your debit and credit card companies to let them know the countries you will be visiting and when so they will accept (and not deny!) your international charges. Confirm your daily cash withdrawal limits and be sure and ask about international transaction fees so there are no nasty surprises. These can typically be 1-3% of the purchase amount plus \$ 5 per transaction!

### **Telecommunications**

Just be sure and check what your cell phone plan covers for travel in Europe. Cell phone roaming charges MAY apply even with a global plan in many cases. *Roaming charges can sneak up if you are not aware of what your plan has!*

**Dining out in Germany:** <http://www.german-way.com/dine.html>

**CREDIT CARDS for dining purposes:** Probably the most important thing to learn about dining in Germany is that, although almost unheard of in North America, many many restaurants in the German-speaking world, even some very fine ones, do not accept credit cards of any kind. Euros only! **It is wise to always check about plastic payment — before you order.** If you don't see any credit card logos—the familiar-looking ones for Visa, MasterCard, American Express, etc.—then be sure to ask the waiter.

[Don't be surprised if the waiter comes with a portable credit card reader to your table.](#)  
[Some Germans are afraid to give their credit cards away and insist on making the transactions at their table.](#)

**WATER** | For some strange reason Americans expect a glass of water, suitably chilled, to automatically appear at their table in a restaurant. However, most Europeans avoid drinking tap water in general—not because it isn't safe; they just don't want to spoil a perfectly good meal with such a bland liquid! After all, there are so many better things to drink! If water is desired, you have to purchase it and it is almost always bottled **Mineralwasser** (sparkling mineral water), not out of the tap. Most Americans who somehow learned the German phrase for “tap water, please” (“Leitungswasser bitte.”) rarely use the phrase a second time. The puzzled look of disgust on the server's face is usually enough to discourage all but the most emboldened from any second attempt. It is a look that says: “Ordinary water is fine for bathing, but only a moron would drink it!”

[Americans are used to getting refills on their soft drinks and on coffee. In Germany you will have to pay for every glass of soda and every cup of coffee. Refills don't exist.](#)

**Tips on Paying the Check and Tipping at a restaurant:** Payment of the check is almost always done at the table, and the server usually carries a money pouch. Tipping in Germany isn't as automatic and generous as it is in the United States. Tipping is an issue only at restaurants that have table service – not at counter service. At restaurants that have a wait staff, a service charge of 15% is automatically included in the bill, although it is common to round up after a good meal (usually 5-10%; so for an € 18.50 meal pay € 20.00.) Give the tip directly to the server instead of leaving the tip on the table, and rather than leaving coins for a tip, Germans usually pay with paper currency, saying how much they'd like the bill to be (for example for an € 8.10 meal give a € 20 bill and ask for € 11 in change.) *Tip more for exceptional service.....*

If you are paying by credit card (**much less common in Germany!**), the procedure is the same as in the U.S. Just don't add too much since the total already includes the aforementioned 15%.

**FINDING A SEAT** | Upon entering [most](#) German dining establishments do not wait to be seated. It could be a long wait. Diners are expected to find their own table. If you see a sign (in German, of course) that says “Please wait to be seated,” you have chosen an exclusive and probably very expensive spot to dine. Most of the time you just find your own seat.

**STRANGERS AND OTHER MATTERS (as in NO FREE ROLLS)** | The German custom of sitting with perfect (or imperfect) strangers is really very practical. The first time it happens can be a little unnerving for an *Ami* but after a while it makes a lot of

sense. Usually you politely ignore each other. Sometimes the Germans may want to try out their English on you, but an American is no rarity in Germany.

Like most Americans, the Germans also believe there is no free lunch—or at least no free bread rolls. Feel free to partake, but the rolls aren't free. Nor the butter. (Each pad is carefully counted.) But before you show your American indignation, remember—there is no free lunch. Or dinner. In the States (you'll get used to that phrase) the rolls and butter are included in the price of your meal (as mediocre as it may be). Because it's "free" you gobble up some rolls you may or may not really want. In Europe they are more honest about it. You pay for what you consume. You really have to be hungry to eat rolls you know you're going to pay for.

**Taxi Tipping:**

To tip the cabbie, round up 5-10% for a typical cab ride. *Tip more for exceptional service.....*

**Souvenir Shopping - Note German shops are closed on Sundays and some on Saturday afternoons!**

In Germany, much shopping/living/eating-dining is still done with cash, i.e. you can't assume that you can pay with credit cards. Be prepared!

We encourage you to start following German NEWS, online, e.g. <http://www.spiegel.de/>. There is stuff brewing in Germany that isn't being reported here in the United States, and also, it's good to see how other cultures have very different priorities and perspectives, news-wise, from the U.S.

