

Germany Facts For Students

1. Restaurants:

There are NO FREE REFILLS. A large Coke (or water!!) for example can cost around 5 Euros (\$7-\$8). Multiply that by 3 or 4 refills, and you have a very expensive bill. Also, water is carbonated (unless you ask for "still" water) and costs money. Make sure to ask for water from the faucet (however, this may also cost money). If you're not careful, your drink orders can cost more than your entire meal!

Tipping is not such a sensitive subject in Europe as it is in America. The general rule of thumb is not to tip if you "do the work" – like buy drinks from a bar yourself – but definitely to tip if a waiter or waitress delivers food or drinks to your table (between 10% and 15% usually as long as you were happy with the service provided). Moreover, only limited tipping will be expected from juveniles. Depending on the total amount, it will suffice to round it up to the next half/full Euro (e.g.: 7.30 Euro to 7.50 Euro, or 3.70 Euro to 4.00 Euro. Waiters in Germany are much better paid than in the USA!!!!!!

- Most places will put no ice in your drinks unless you ask for it.
- Ketchup at fast food places, such as McDonalds (don't eat there!), costs money.
- Your fees for the trip pays for the first drink. Participants will pay for all drinks after the initial one.

2. Stores

Stores are not open 24 hours. Monday – Friday: Most open in the morning (around 10:00) and close around 7 or 8 pm. Super markets open at 8:00 or 9:00 and close at 8:00 pm. On Saturdays, most stores are open until 4:00-6:00 pm. Sunday, stores are closed. Bakeries are open Sunday mornings (until noon). Gas stations are normally open on Sundays and carry a lot of goods like drinks, sweets and junk food.

3. German Meals

The main meal of the day in Germany tends to be lunch with a light snack eaten at about seven in the evening. Breakfasts, served in hotels consist usually of a boiled egg, bread rolls with jam, honey, cold cuts and cheese slices.

4. Money

There will be opportunities for shopping, refreshments, and specific meals not included in the trip cost. The cost depends on the individual. However, the trip costs pay for sightseeing entry fees, most dinners/all breakfasts, and the bus.

All of the major stores accept the most popular Credit Cards – Visa and Mastercard – although some balk a little at American Express because of their higher commission. You will need cash in smaller stores and with street vendors. Paying by credit card attracts the best exchange rates. Banks all have ATMs and this is a good way of obtaining currency at favorable rates. Make sure you know your 4 digit PIN number! Also, make sure you check with your bank to find out how much the fee is for getting money out of an ATM in Germany.

If you do not want to end up bankrupt ☺ get your child some kind of credit card with a financial limit on it. "Limited Value Credit Card" or "A Credit Card for Kids". Fyi: The

Visa gift cards do not work in Germany. You will need actual credit cards, cash or ATM cards. I suggest not using traveler checks.

You can take cash, but Euros are better because you'll need to exchange (extra work). The money can be exchanged in Germany, and the airport can be expensive. How much money to bring is up to you, but we suggest an average of \$25-\$30 a day*. Also bring a little extra money for souvenirs. It is recommended that you get at least \$200 of Euros to get you through the first couple of days.

Currency: EURO

Credit Cards: Credit Cards are accepted in 60%+ of establishments. Americans will find less credit card availability than they are used to and it is advisable to carry cash.

Banking Hours: Generally 8:30am-1pm, 2-2:30pm-4-5:30pm Monday to Friday; Thursday 2:30-6pm. Main branches do not close for lunch. Bureaux de change in airports and main railway stations are open 6am-10pm.

5. Weather

In the summer, the weather should be great in Germany. You should need mostly shorts and shirts. It can still get pretty cold when some rain comes in, so make sure that you take some long pants and sweaters (It could be in the 50's!) and a light jacket as well, but also some sunscreen. You just never know!

6. Laundry

There are launderettes available. Please do not send detergent! We will buy it in Germany.

- Bring Febreze!
- Bring a mesh laundry bag and have as many items as possible labeled with names/initials.

7. Luggage

Luggage size and weight restrictions: 1 piece of luggage to check in at 50 lbs max each and one piece of carry-on (backpack). We suggest you pack into your carry-on bag a change of clothing, toiletries & personal care items, important documents & passports and medical items. In case of lost luggage, plane carry-on should include a change of clothes, medication, and whatever needed for a night.

- Carry-on restrictions (Allergy medication, contact solution): Please refer to your airline.
- Clearly mark your luggage with your name & address, maybe a colored tag for recognition.

8. Medicine

If you take specific medications, please ensure you bring enough with you on tour – it is also a good idea to bring a repeat / copy of your prescription with you and a letter from your doctor in case you need another supply or lose your existing medication.

Germany does not sell as much medication over the counter as the US, so if you have allergies/headaches/etc, please be prepared.

9. Electricity

Voltage is 220 volts ac in Germany. The plugs in Germany are 2 round pins. For non-dual voltage items (110V only), you will need a converter which is available for purchase.

10. Insurance/Health

If you haven't had a tetanus shot currently, plan on it!

Please contact your health insurance to make sure that you are covered abroad. If you are not covered, please purchase a form of travel insurance so you are fully protected, should you need emergency assistance. Please research a policy of your own, of course – all we advise is that you take out a comprehensive form of travel policy for overseas travel!

As participants in the Germany Youth Tour you are asked to sign a Medical Release Form – this ensures that if you become injured or need urgent medical attention, it can be provided for you.

In case of an emergency, never hesitate to call or email.

11. Time Difference

The time in Germany is 7 hours later than Central Time.

12. Packing List

Most of what is forgotten can be purchased in Germany.

SUITCASE / HOLD BAGGAGE

- Jeans / trousers
- Waterproof Jacket
- Trip Shirts
- Laundry Bag
- Shirts / tops
- Alarm Clock
- Underwear
- Deodorant
- Contact Lens care kit
- Socks
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Spare contacts/glasses
- Sweatshirts
- Toothbrush & paste
- Personal care items
- Casual shoes & Tennis/Running Shoes

Continued

- Water bottle (collapsible is perfect)
- Contact care kit
- Waterproof jacket
- Hair care items
- Washcloth
- Aspirin /Meds
- Extra T-shirts
- Towels (2)
- Sun protection
- Pajamas
- Bathing Suit
- Hairbrush & Hairdryer 220V
- Plug Adaptor(s)
- Anything else you can think of!

13. Day of Take-Off

Since we are traveling as a group, arrive early. Current security measures increase time needed to check in. Keep your passport handy, as you will need to show it to various people during your journey.

After you have gone through the procedure of showing passports at check-in etc., we suggest a nominated adult collects the passports from the players for safekeeping. In the rigors of international travel, people easily become disoriented and can easily lose things! (Suggestion: Leave one photocopy of your passport/credit card/other important documents at home.)

14. Folder

A folder/electronic pictures will be kept with the group – name list, code of conduct, authorization to treat minor, passport photocopies and travel insurance certificate (the original) for each group member.

15. Walkie-talkies

We will have Walkie-talkies for each group they can use while they tour the town.

16. Pictures

Take lots of pictures and post to Facebook, Instagram, or whatever makes you happy for parents and friends!

17. Cell Phones

The use of Cell phones is strictly forbidden during the day (texting and phone calls), until permission is given (at night). Not only can it be expensive to call and text depending on your plan, it also takes away from the enjoyment of the trip. If the players bury their head into their phones, the time we are in Germany will fly by before they know it and they will miss many of things going on around them. SPEND TIME MAKING FRIENDS!

If cell phones are taken, cell phones must be in “AIRPLANE MODE”. Data Roaming is to be turned off. Phone calls and texting are allowed to be made after we are back at the hostels and the players are “released” to do so (speak with your child as to what you allow). Any deviation from this and the cell phones will be confiscated, and we are not responsible for any cell phones left in our care.

18. Wifi

It is spotty at best, but each place of stay has wifi that cost money (2-3 Euros a day, but it just depends)

19. Places of Stay

The ones we are staying at are very nice and there are rules at each one. For example – all have curfews where you must be quiet (quiet time), doors lock after a certain time, and they must be cleaned before leaving.

- Each room has an electronic key card. Each key cost up to 5 Euros (\$7), and when a key is lost, the players are responsible for the fee.
- Each room will be inspected before we leave to make sure it is clean. If there is any damage to the rooms, the players/parents staying in those rooms will be responsible for the fees.
- All the possible fees above are not part of the security deposit and are paid by the individuals involved.

20. Security Deposit

The security deposit of \$200 is used in cases of damage to bus, or other equipment that the group uses throughout the trip.

- In the past, a majority of the money has been returned to each individual.

21. Trip is made up of 3 parts

Rhein/Stuttgart/Munich

22. Dress-Code.

For the girls they need to have the proper clothing while we are sight-seeing. I would recommend them NOT bringing flip-flops (we do lots of walking), no dresses, and absolutely NO short shorts (something that comes close to the knees should be sufficient. Capri's are fine). Germans dress more conservatively than US. Shorts need to follow school dress code (finger tip length). Your daughter's beloved running shorts and shortie short should stay at home.

For the boys, shorts, jeans, or warm up pants are fine with t-shirts and sweatshirts/jackets. Dress casually, but like you are at school.

25. Trip T-Shirts

Every Trip we get trip t-shirts for each student and parent attending. There is an option to buy more. The shirts will be worn on the plane the plane to Germany, and for special events during the tour.

26. Meeting up in Frankfurt, Germany

Those on the trip are expected to meet at the airport in Frankfurt on specific trip day at 12 noon. Location at airport will be communicated at later date for those traveling on their own. For those with arrangements, we will meet each participant at their arrival gate.

27. Research Paper

Each participant is expected to write a short research paper on a Germany specific topic to present to the group. This list will come out to each participant before the trip.

28. Passports

After the players have cleared immigration, up until we depart, we will hold onto the passports away from the players to ensure that we still have them by the time everyone wants to leave. (Passports were lost years ago, but found, but it caused an additional expense of \$20 to recover it, and headaches).

- Participants should take a picture of their passport and medical card for back-up.

29. Watch What You Say!!!

Almost everyone speaks (or at least understands it very well) English. Don't go into a shop and talk badly about what the shop is selling. The owner may be behind you! Also, during the after game meals with the other team, just remember everyone knows what you're saying even though they may not be speaking English.

30. You Tube Videos – U.S. vs Germany

Check out You Tube links to watch that compares USA vs Germany ways. There are many cultural differences that the girls will be surprised to find (ie drink refills are not free, typical breakfast)

- Here is one example, but be sure to subscribe and watch more!:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sivltQeBloI>

31. Summary and Extra Fyi's

- Participants shouldn't spend no more than \$500 the entire trip but that may vary depending on their shopping. Use a Debit Card.
- 1 check in bag, can't be over 50lbs or you will get charges, 62 linear inches for dimensions, 1 carry on like your soccer bag with items in it, refer to the packing list in handout. Checked baggage (1) on international flights is free.
- Good to have \$200 euros prior to trip and \$275 usd – don't convert at the airport if you can help it, they usually have the worst rates
- Journals – great way for the girls to write down each evening what they did that day because there is so much and that way they will have the memories
- Good to have 2 laundry net bags, one for socks/underwear, the other for clothes, be prepared to wear some things twice/three + times (jeans for example), just bring some Febreze being laundry is limited and lengthy, time wise, to do.
- Good to communicate back home around 10-12pm Germany time (3-5pm Houston time), Germany is 7 hours ahead in time
- 1 euro=? (check online to find current rates)
- NO FREE REFILLS ON DRINKS
- Most places will have Wi-Fi, some places (hotels) it will have to be paid for, and most Wi-Fi is in the lobbies. Good to download Viber, Vonage, Talktone, WhatsApp on your mobile phones for free texting and calls using Wi-Fi.
- When it is time to eat, the girls must not be goofing around, you must eat when told because everything is hand prepared and takes awhile and when it's time to leave, we leave. Carry around snacks in your backpack too because we go a couple hours in travel sometimes and convenience stores and quick stops are on each corner like in the US
- Bring all medications like Advil, Tylenol, etc being Germany doesn't sell as much over the counter, it is more of a homeopathic country
- Get adapters/converters for all mobile devices, hairdryers, etc.....

- Participants may use mobile phones for camera or listening to music but no texting, etc but, they can play with them during downtime at night back at the hostel.