



Welcome to Germany and how to survive here

Address of Schorlemer Stiftung

Schorlemer Stiftung des DBV
Claire-Waldoff-Straße 7
10117 Berlin
Germany

Contact person at the office

Lisa Sbitnew
l.sbitnew@bauernverband.net
030-31904311

Johannes Leberer
j.leberer@bauernverband.net
030-31904312

Zora Böttcher
z.boettcher@bauernverband.net
030-31904321

Welcome to Germany

In your first days in Germany, everything is new to you. During the next months, you will live in rural areas, where you will get to know another type of agriculture. You will have the chance to share experiences, build good friendships and enjoy your travels here.

It doesn't matter really, if you don't know many words in German or if you feel that your German is not that good. Just try to learn it as much as possible. Even though in Germany almost everybody knows some English, try to learn some German. If you can't find the right word, try to describe it and you will find the right word together with your conversation partner and you'll learn the language faster. Also be aware, that sometimes it will be hard to understand everything, but never give up on improving.

If you ever have any questions or if you are not sure about something, speak to your host first. If you cannot explain your concern, contact the Schorlemer Stiftung. We will try to help you.

Facts about Germany

Capital - Berlin

Area - 357.021 km²

Population - 82.79 Million (2017) within the EU it is the highest population

Form of Government - Federal Republic with 16 federal states, democracy

Head of Government - Federal Chancellor (since 2005 Angela Merkel)

Climate - winters are mild, summer can be cool, but also very hot (30-33 degree Celsius)

German Values

Germans place a high priority on structure, privacy and punctuality. The German people embrace the values of thriftiness, hard work and industriousness and there is great emphasis on making sure that "the trains run on time." Time, therefore, is managed carefully, and calendars, schedules and agendas must be respected.

Most Germans can be described like a coconut with a hard skin but a soft inside. In the beginning, Germans may seem reserved and suspicious but usually it doesn't take long to get to know them and German friendships are very deep and long lasting. A keen sense of community, social conscience and a desire to belong are key German values beside the well-known stereotypes.

Etiquette

The dress code can vary pretty much in Germany depending on what occasion, which place or with what people you are with. Some people are putting more value in formal clothes than others but as long as you wear clean and tidy clothes you should be fine most of the time.

Punctuality is actually a German stereotype that is very true. It is considered to be disrespectful to let people wait for you. If you will be late, at least inform the person you had an appointment with.

If Germans see people for the first time, they usually shake hands and introduce each other

properly.

Germans value their clean cities and countryside so never throw your trash just somewhere. Always find a trashcan or the proper container for it. Germans enjoy quietness and privacy. They may thus often close their doors but will be happy to receive you if you knock on the door. A closed door doesn't necessarily mean that the person cannot be disturbed. Likewise a closed bathroom door in somebody's house does not mean the bathroom is occupied.

Don't feel insulted by German directness. That's just how they are and maybe you can see the benefits of it one day.

A short history of Germany

Germany's struggle for a unified identity has a long history marked by numerous politically and religiously motivated wars. Only in 1871, did the loose confederation of separate states and territories with an ever-changing set of allies and enemies become unified by Prussia's military power rather than a sense of belonging. The new nation was consumed by a thirst for power and expansion which directly led to the outbreak of World War I. Both Germany and Austria were defeated and had to accept a peace agreement disastrous for their economies. The result was a Germany ruled by civil unrest and a desire for revenge. An easy target for Adolph Hitler to prey on. He was able to turn general social disaffection into the focused lunacy of the Third Reich and World War II. This was one of the most horrifying but also most important chapters of German history and Germans are eager to never forget the atrocities committed by Germans in order to prevent such horrible events from happening ever again.

After Germany lost World War II., with the intention of preventing it from being in command of comparable economic and military power, the allied forces divided the country in two hostile states; the parts held by the Western powers were developed into the Federal Republic of Germany, while the eastern zone occupied by the Soviets became the German Democratic Republic. Berlin, the capital and an obvious bone of contention, was divided by along the same lines.

The contest between the two states was fierce albeit unequal: The German Democratic Republic was forced to adopt the Communist system at odds with the national character and was never able to break free from being a satellite state of the Soviet Union. The Federal Republic considered itself to be the natural successor to the old Reich and was able to build and sustain a democratic society. Its economy boomed if only with considerable financial help from the USA.

Eventually the German Democratic Republic fell so far behind that emigration became a severe issue between the two countries. In 1961 the GDR authorities came up with the horrible idea of walling in their population and built an electrified barbed-wire frontier which became part of the so called 'iron curtain'. The Berlin Wall cemented the partition of Germany's capital. The strict separation of the two German states symbolized the differences and tensions between the USA and the USSR - the Cold War.

In 1989 the tensions became too much and the unstoppable momentum of events in the wake of the 'Wende' (change) took its course. A peaceful revolution toppled the German Democratic Republic's Communist regime leading to the downfall of the Berlin Wall celebrated in the most exciting party the city had ever seen: East Germans were welcomed with flowers and 'begrüßungsgeld', a welcome gift of money to introduce them to capitalist joys like shopping, dining out and so on. The Wall was brought down by a singing and dancing crowd. It was eventually taken down by both official staff and the human 'woodpeckers' alike.

In less than a year Germany was reunified on paper if not yet in the minds of its population. The unification process led to a myriad of economic, political and social problems and tensions which are to this day far from solved.

The German Reichstag, almost destroyed by a fire deliberately set by Nazis in 1933, has been recently renovated. Its renovation began after Germany's reunion and the building is topped by a marvellous dome of glass. This dome has become an international symbol for a unified Germany.

The 1980s

It is the decade in which a new political force appears in Germany. The Greens, the party that grew out of the peace movement and environmental groups, is founded in 1980. Just three years later, it enters the Bundestag for the first time – with knitted sweaters and sunflowers. It was a culture shock for the established parties. Helmut Kohl (CDU) has been Federal Chancellor since 1982. He was elected head of government by the Bundestag when the FDP left the SPD-FDP coalition under Helmut Schmidt (SPD) and formed a new coalition with the CDU/CSU.

However, all the decade's domestic policy events are outshone by the autumn of its last year: the Berlin Wall falls on 9 November 1989. What Germans in east and west had come to regard as almost impossible now happens: under pressure exerted by its own population, the GDR opens the crossing points to the west. The era of German division comes to an end. This event was preceded by the weeks of the peaceful revolution in the GDR: the reforms of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the movements for democracy in Hungary and Poland have created an atmosphere in which many people in the GDR can also openly express their dissatisfaction with the government: by fleeing via Hungary and Czechoslovakia – and through participation in the Monday demonstrations that begin in September 1989 in front of the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig. Both these events shake GDR structures so powerfully that Erich Honecker resigns as SED General Secretary and Chairman of the State Council on 18 October 1989.

On the evening of 9 November, at a press conference, Politburo member Günter Schabowski surprisingly announces radical relaxations in travel restrictions for private travellers that enter into force "immediately, without delay". The very same night, thousands of GDR citizens rush to the border with West Berlin, where GDR border guards open numerous crossings without clear orders: the Wall collapses. In December, representatives of the GDR citizen's movements negotiate on a democratic restructuring of the GDR. At the same time, however, more and more Germans in the east demand German reunification at demonstrations.

The 1990s

The first free elections to the GDR People's Chamber take place on 18 March. The election campaign focused mainly on the shape and speed of unification with the Federal Republic. The election result, a victory for the conservative Alliance for Germany, is a clear vote in favour of the fastest possible unification and the introduction of a social market economy. The integration of the GDR into the Federal Republic is practically completed following the creation of an economic, currency and social union in May. In foreign policy terms, the road to German unification requires the consent of the four victorious powers of the Second World War: the United States, the Soviet Union, France and the United Kingdom consult with the two German states on the arrangements in the Two Plus Four talks. The Two Plus Four Agreement is signed in Moscow on 12 September 1990. United Germany gains full sovereignty and the Allies territorial rights end on 3 October 1990. Germany's unity is achieved on the same day following the accession of the GDR in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law. The first all-German Bundestag elections are held in December 1990: Helmut Kohl (CDU) is the first Federal Chancellor of reunified Germany. The foreign policy of the Federal Republic strongly supports the deepening of the European community: in 1995, Germany is among the first countries of the Schengen Agreement, which abolishes border controls between its members.

The 1990s are strongly marked by the economic consequences of unification and the reconstruction in eastern Germany. Federal and State Governments conclude a solidarity pact to even out the differences arising from 40 years of division. Additionally, a Solidarity Tax is levied in

east and west to benefit the reconstruction of eastern Germany. Berlin has been Germany's capital since unification; it also becomes the seat of government following a decision by the Bundestag. The Bundestag, the Federal Government and most of the ministries move from Bonn to Berlin in 1999. Gerhard Schröder (SPD) moves into the new Chancellery: he has been at the head of the first SPD-Green coalition at federal level since the 1998 elections.

The 2000s

The first decade of the new millennium presents a number of occasions for the world to look towards Germany. The first World Exposition of the century is held in Hanover: Expo 2000 is the first at which presentations focus on the themes of sustainability and a balance between humankind, nature and technology. That is appropriate in a new era with new coordinates: globalization moves the world closer together, both economically and politically – at the end of the decade it will also present its downside in the form of the global financial crisis.

The 2006 World Cup puts the country into optimistic party mood. The "summer fairytale" changes the image of Germans for many people abroad: they are cordial hosts and know how to relax and celebrate. The European Union also celebrates its 50th birthday in 2007 during the German EU Presidency in Berlin. The Berlin Declaration recalls the accomplishments of the EU and the shared values and roots of the member states. In 2004 and 2007 the community grows by 12 countries to reach a total of 27 member states. The new members are primarily central European countries. In the same year the G8 also meets in Germany: new impetus for global climate protection, Africa policy and cooperation with the newly industrialized countries come from Heiligendamm. In domestic policy, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, at the head of a coalition of SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens, sets out to implement reforms of the welfare system and combat unemployment with the Agenda 2010 programme. In foreign policy, during this decade Germany frequently demonstrates its readiness to assume wide-ranging international responsibilities within the framework of the international community to contribute to solving conflicts and promoting civil society. In November 2005, a woman becomes government leader for the first time: Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel governs with the votes of a CDU/CSU and SPD Grand Coalition.

Administration in Germany for foreigners

All residents in Germany are required by law to register at the registration office of the town they move to within one week after their arrival. Usually your host will support you and you will not have to do that by yourself.

Your working visa and residence permit are very important for your ability to work here and to open a bank account. If you travel within Germany and Europe, always take care of your passport and your residency card.

You need your residency registration first in order to apply for the residence permit. Once you have obtained the confirmation form (Anmeldebestätigung), take it to the immigration office to get your residence permit. The Schorlemer Stiftung of the DBV e.V. will take care of your visa and work/residence permit and will assist you in obtaining it.

Useful numbers

Police - 110

Ambulance - 112

Fire station - 112

Local transport

Germany has a good public transportation system. The modes of public transport include trams (also called Straßenbahn), underground train (U-Bahn), busses and taxis. You can pick up a list of bus connections and time tables at your local transport ticket office. Or you can use a navigator app ("DB Navigator" works for all public transport in Germany) on your mobile phone.

Germany-wide transport/EU

If you plan journeys that are further away, try to book early, as the fares are less expensive. The app DB Navigator can help you to find the right route to your destination within Germany. This app is free. In Germany you have different types of trains. There is the ICE (Inter City Express), IC (Inter City) or RB (Regionalbahn). The ICE is the fastest to travel with. To travel within the EU you can also use the EC (EuroCity).

Another option is to travel by bus. The best offers you can get with FlixBus or other long distance bus companies. Please try not to hitch hike.

Using the car in Germany

If you wish to drive a car in Germany, you need to have a valid international driver's license. With your driver's license issued in your home country, you are allowed to drive up to six months in Germany. For longer periods, you are required to apply for an international driver's license. You can enquire about the specific formalities at your national automobile association or visit the ADAC website.

In some cases it might happen, that your host provides you a vehicle. Please be aware that you will be driving someone else's car and treat it accordingly.

Internet and mobile providers

Before you chose a provider, please check if it is a mobile plan with a duration of two years or a pre-paid offer. Please chose a **pre-paid** offer for your time here. All mobile websites are in German. So ask your host or a colleague for assistance. In most rural areas the best provider is Telekom or Vodafone. Both providers also have discount rates.

Please notice: In Germany, downloading movies or music is illegal and can lead to high costs or other charges. Please also don't use websites like "Torrent".

Recycling in Germany

Recycling is Germany's contribution to the global battle for the environment. Understanding recycling is something, locals have to learn over the time. The trash is separated in four different kinds: Paper (blue bin), house trash (black bin), plastic (yellow bags or bin) and organic house trash (brown bin). Please ask your host, in which way they are separating their trash and try to adjust to it.

Batteries and glass are recycled in public dumping containers. Batteries are disposed of separately at supermarkets and shopping malls. For bottles we have a certain recycling system. All beverages that you can buy in a supermarket or local store have a deposit. When you buy a bottle or can, always add either 0,08€ (mostly glass bottles with a crown cap), 0,15€ (mostly glass bottles with a twist cap) or 0,25€ (mostly plastic bottles and cans) deposit on top of the price. You will receive the money back, when you bring it back to the collection point in the supermarket. The machine will print out a voucher for you that you can use for your payment. This applies also to the crates for bottles (1,50€ deposit). Sometimes there are also bottles that can only be used once. These bottles are called "Einwegflasche" and belong into the yellow bag/bin.

Food in Germany

German cuisine is rich and meaty. Nowadays in Germany there are a lot of different types of international kitchens, which offer a wide range of food. You can find the Turkish Döner Kebab on almost every corner, vegetarian food, and Asian cuisine. In supermarkets you can find ingredients to cook by yourselves. Most of them have special weeks, where you can get food from around the world.

The common supermarkets are: Edeka, Rewe, Lidl, Aldi, Netto and Penny.

Typical dishes are:

Schnitzel (a thin slice of veal that is breaded, fried and garnished combined with potatoes)

Wurst (sausages in any variety such as Bockwurst, Knackwurst, Wiener Wurst, Bratwurst,

Weisswurst, Leberkäse, Blutwurst, Curry Wurst)

Maultaschen (Pasta dough which encloses a filling traditionally made of minced meat, smoked meat, spinach, bread crumbs and onions and served in a broth)

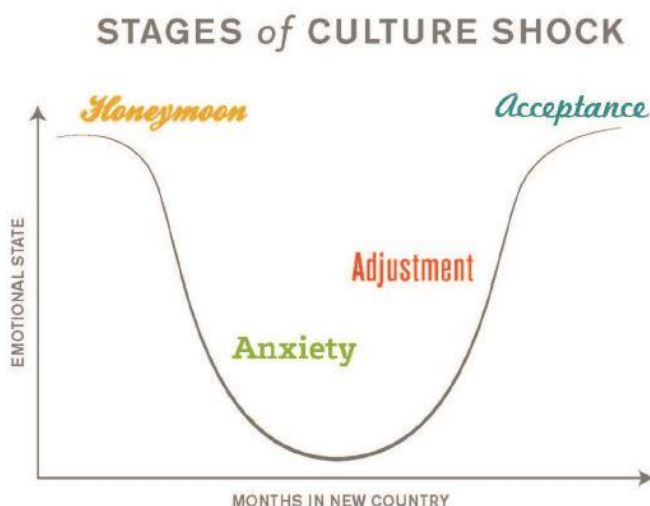
Spätzle (traditional egg noodles mostly with cheese and onions)

Schweinshaxe (pork knuckle - be careful this are often very big meals)

Gulasch (paprika spices stew served with potatoes or Spätzle)

Cultural Shock

The cultural shock is the difficulty people have while adjusting to a new culture. For example, some of the well-known German stereotypes are punctuality, ambition and discipline. Of course that is not the way it is. You should try to be flexible and open-minded, accepting rules and socially acceptable behaviour in Germany. Try to actively listen to people in a new surrounding and learn from them. Have in mind that the most successful people are those who are able to listen carefully. Your ability to learn and understand new things are largely influenced by your ability to listen to other people. And very important: If you didn't understand something very well, don't be afraid to ask again instead of pretending to have understood. No-one blames you for asking for another explanation but if you make people believe you understood and in fact you didn't, it can lead to problems.



Here are phases that might happen:

1. **Honeymoon Period:** Initially, you will probably be fascinated and excited by everything new.
2. **Culture Shock:** You arrive riding on the emotional high of meeting new friends and seeing new places. But you are stressed out from jet lag, time changes, and other travel stress. You might feel very tired of speaking and hearing German and English all of the time. You may become irritable, aggressive, overly critical, depressed or emotionally on edge. You might think something like "They don't do things the right way over here!" (not a good reaction but normal). Because we learn our own culture at an early age, we tend to assume that most of our beliefs and behaviours are "natural"; that is, universally experienced. In fact, there are many ways of doing things.
3. **Initial Adjustment:** Everyday activities are no longer major problems. Your emotions are no longer going crazy and you feel much more stable again. You try to do things "their way", however, you still feel that "their way" is the hard way and you just don't understand why they don't do things like they are done at home.

4. **Acceptance and Integration:** A routine has been established. You accept the habits, customs, food and characteristics of your German friends. Cultural self-awareness allows us to see that our way of doing things is but one of the many different, equally “natural” ways. The ability to accept these differences helps in building relationships with people from other cultures.
5. **Return Anxiety, Re-entry Shock, and Reintegration:** The shock of returning home can be more difficult than the initial culture shock partly because people do not expect to feel like a foreigner in their own home environment. Things won’t be the same when you get home and you will miss your new German friends and family. Also, you have found a new way to do the everyday things at home but you may feel that no one at home understands.
6. **Resolution:** You do some things the old way and some things the new way. Remember your parents and others around you didn’t experience the things you did in the last several months, so don’t expect them to change things just because you think they should.

Dealing with challenging situations

It could happen that you will face some trouble or challenging situations. Please do not be scared, because you are in a new environment and you feel alone. You will always have people around you that are happy to help.

During your internship in Germany you might come across a conflict on your farm. So how can you deal with it?

When you find yourself in a situation, you must decide how to solve it with a minimal consequence. Decide whether you want to risk a conflict with another person and be careful on how you express yourself towards others. Listen to other people carefully and try to understand their point of view. Express also interest in what other people are saying and acknowledge ideas. Try to communicate as clearly as possible and make sure you are also making compromises in difficult situations.

Speak to your host about problems or difficulties with co-workers. During your internship you might be assigned with some tasks that you don’t find very interesting or that the internship doesn’t match your expectations. Regardless everything, try to be patient. If something isn’t as you have imagined it, don’t rush your decision, but give it a chance and take some time. And always remember: in case you don’t feel listened to by your host family or you can’t find a way to solve a conflict you can always contact the Schorlemer Stiftung. They are happy to assist you anytime.