



PRE DEPARTURE GUIDELINES AND TIPS



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

Dear Student,

That wonderful email in your inbox or letter in your letterbox confirming your admission to the German university of your choice is just the beginning of the long path of success you have set yourself onto. Right steps taken at the right time can go a long way in making this journey a smooth one. We hope that the information we have put together here helps you in planning your coming months more effectively.



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECK LIST

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WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE DEPARTURE?

■ Securing a student visa

Visit the website of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in your country for complete information about student visa. Prepare your documents and apply for your visa. You will have to appear for a personal interview either at the time of or after submitting your documents to the competent foreign office.

A passport is always necessary when you apply for visa. Make sure that you have applied for one well in time.

You will be required to get a regular overseas travel insurance that covers you from your departure for Germany till you formally register yourself at a university. From this point on, your travel insurance will no longer be valid, and you will have to get a German health insurance. The international office of your university can help you here in case of questions.

The entire visa procedure can take between eight and twelve weeks, so ideally, you should submit your application for a visa as soon as you have the letter of admission from the university.

■ Looking for an accommodation

It always helps to start looking for a place to stay as early as you can. Most affordable accommodations are quickly snapped up!

Your options are:

- **Students halls of residence:** Rooms here are provided by the Student Services Organisation (Studentenwerk) at your university. This kind of accommodation is extremely popular given its low cost and other advantages like internet connectivity and leisure activities that they offer. You quickly get to know your fellow students. Studentenwerke also offer Service Sets (Servicepaket) for foreign students which include accommodation, meals, procurement of insurance, excursions etc. The price of the Servicepaket varies depending upon the benefits included. There is only a limited number of Servicepakets available, so do get in touch with the responsible Studentenwerk in good time! You can find more information on www.internationale-studierende.de.
- **Shared Flats (Wohngemeinschaft – WG):** These are accommodations privately rented by students and shared. Normally everyone has their own room. Kitchen and bathroom as well as other utility rooms if any are shared, so are the rent, electricity, gas, water, internet etc. This arrangement certainly works out to be cheaper than living alone.
- **Private apartments:** You may prefer to rent private rooms or flats. These can be found with the help of the accommodation services offered by the Studentenwerk, the notice boards in the university foyers, the accommodation files with the student council or union (AStA) and of course the local media.
- At the time of renting any kind of accommodation, make sure that you completely understand the contract you are entering into with the landlord! Do ask what is covered in the rent. If it is the “Warmmiete” you are paying, it includes room heating and warm water, whereas the “Kaltmiete” does not cover these. Electricity is normally paid as per consumption. Do take a good look at the condition of the apartment; you will be expected to return it in the same condition in which it was handed over to you. [The](#) article will provide you more information about all the matters concerning accommodation.



■ Packing bags

Packing wisely helps you in more than one way. You can save on a lot of money and effort by knowing what is easily available in Germany and what is not!



Clothes: It gets really cold in Germany, so make sure that you have enough warm clothing to start with. Do carry some light clothing as well for summers are pleasant, and at times rather warm! It is always nice to have the right kind of clothes for the formal occasions and perhaps your traditional dress for special dos. It would also be good idea to pack a raincoat and an umbrella.

Students housing and most shared apartments do have washing machines and you are bound to find some laundry shops (Waschsalon) that charge 3-6 Euros per wash load. So, it would suffice if you packed enough clothes just for the first few days.



Medicines: Do carry a set of your basic medicines. In case you have any special medical requirements, ensure that you have the necessary supplies at least for the initial days together with the prescription. As a precaution, have a physician's prescription handy for all the drugs you are carrying.



Bedding: Pack your own blankets, bedlinen and towels. Your accommodation, even if it is furnished, will not provide you with these.



Documents and Cash: You will need to carry your passport, academic certificates, health-related papers etc. together with extra copies of these and some photographs. Carrying scanned copies of all these would also be a good idea. Keep some cash handy for the first few weeks – you will not only be spending on lodging-boarding and transport but also paying various deposits, advance rental etc.

It always helps to have the contact details of the Embassy of your country handy!



Other Items: This may include your laptop, chargers, mobile phones, any specific gadgets and instruments you can't do without! Germany mostly has two-pin sockets – so carry suitable adaptors.

And perhaps also some of your special spices and favourite munch for your initial days!

■ Arranging the travel

Major international airports in Germany are at Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg and Dusseldorf. You can either take a connecting flight or a train to your town. Germany has an excellent railway network that connects all cities, however big or small. You can find the train schedule on www.bahn.de and book tickets online using a credit card. Look out for the special offers and discounts!

Reaching your university town during day hours will surely make things simpler for you. However, you can always stay at a youth hostel if you reach in the late hours. You can find out more about Youth Hostels at www.jugendherberge.de/en

Some universities offer services like pick-up – do check them out!



WHAT SHOULD I DO ON ARRIVAL IN GERMANY?

The formalities you need to take care of as soon as you are in Germany are your health insurance, registration at the university, extension of your visa and of course opening a bank account!

■ Procuring a health insurance

While your overseas travel insurance was sufficient till you reached Germany, you cannot be enrolled at the university unless you have a German insurance. There are two kinds of health insurance: public and private. Till the age of 30 or till your 14th semester of study, you need to have a compulsory insurance- student tariff comes about Euro 110/ per month. After that or in exceptional cases you may opt for a private one. In any case, a compulsory insurance is likely to be more economical than a private insurance. Just remember that you cannot go back to a public insurance after having opted for a private one. The social help desk in the Studentenwerk or the International Office of your university can give you more information about insurance providers. Read more about [health insurance](#).

■ Registering at the university

What you received in your home country was a letter of admission. What you need to do now in Germany is to enroll yourself formally at your university. Make sure of the exact dates of enrollment as they vary from university to university and late enrollment is generally not possible. Ensure that you have all the documents ready, which may include the German health insurance, notification of admission, receipt of your payment to the Student Organization, a passport size photograph, your passport with visa / note of residence and possibly your original certificates among others.

After enrolment you will receive confirmation of matriculation and a student ID card. This ID card might help you in getting discounts at cinemas, sport, newspaper subscriptions etc. – always keep it handy!

■ Obtaining a residence permit

As you have already applied for a long term visa in your home country, its time to apply for a residence permit. For this approach the Aliens Department in your city of residence with the certificate of enrolment from the university, registration from the authorities, proof of

accommodation, proof of finance, a valid German health insurance among others.

Just like the visa, a residence permit is granted for a specific purpose. International students can get a residence permit either as an applicant for a university place, as a participant on a language course or as a student.

A residence permit for the purpose of studying is issued for a period of two years and must always be extended before the two years run out. The extension depends on how you conduct your studies, i.e. whether you take examinations and obtain certificates.

■ Bank account

Your bank account will make organizing monthly payments such as rent and insurance much easier for you. Most banks offer current accounts free of charge for students.

In Germany people tend to pay in cash - especially for small amounts. Credit cards are relatively widespread but are not often used for everyday purchases. On the other hand, payment by cash card is very common.



WHAT IS LIFE IN GERMANY LIKE?

■ Food concerns

As a student in Germany, you are not likely to have the luxury of a “hostel-mess” that served almost four warm meals a day! You will find yourself eating your lunch at the university “Mensa” or cafeterias. For other meals of the day, you may check out the snack bars or “Imbiss” that serve international food and are often located near the city centre. And of course, you will always have access to a shared kitchen whether you are staying at the students’ hall of residence or in a WG. You will find lots of cafes and restaurants in Germany serving different kinds of cuisine, south Asian including. It is normal to leave a tip at such places and at bars or for taxi drivers.

Groceries and daily necessities can be bought from a whole range of pocket-friendly supermarkets in every city. You can also easily buy Asian products at “Asia-Shops”. When you set out for shopping, do ensure that you carry a shopping bag with you, otherwise you will have to buy one!

Also, most bottled beverages attract the so called “Pfand” which is a refundable deposit of about 8 – 25 cents. You will not have to buy bottled water as you can drink regular tap water unless it explicitly says “Kein Trinkwasser”.

■ Communication needs



Telephone: Germany operates on GSM network, so the phone you use in your country is very likely to work in Germany. You can easily buy prepaid cards for your cell phone (or “Handy” as it is called there) from phone shops as well as supermarkets and drug stores. There are many providers in Germany: do check out what kind of deals they are offering before investing, at times handsets come free with certain connections.



Internet: All student housing facilities and most shared apartments have paid internet. You can also use computer pools in the university. Internet cafes in Germany charge on an hourly basis and can be expensive.

■ Leisure activities

While studying in Germany is a serious business, it does give you some leisure time. The Office of Student Affairs and Studentenwerk often offer evening activities

like cinema, theater, workshops as well as excursions. “Freundeskreis” i.e., groups of DAAD alumni offer leisure activities as well, which you can check out. Theatres and museums offer students discounts, so remember to carry your students ID card all the time with you. It is also a safety precaution and can come in handy in times of emergency of any kind.

And needless to say, Germany is heaven for sports-buffs!

■ Traveling and commuting

For commuting within the city, bus, metro or bicycle would be your best bet. If you are dependent on public transport, make sure that you check the timetables well as frequency of buses/metros is low during late hours and on holidays like Christmas.

Be prepared to walk a lot when in Germany. Autorickshaws or tuk-tuks are not available there and taxis are rather heavy on the pocket.

Travelling by train in Germany is usually quick and convenient. Tickets for fast trains such as the Intercityexpress (ICE), Intercity (IC) or Eurocity (EC) are more expensive than the tickets for local trains. Local train services include the Interregio (IR), the Regional Express (RE) and the Regionalbahn (RB).

If you take the train frequently, consider purchasing a BahnCard. The card entitles you to a discount of 25, 50, or 100% off the normal fare, depending on which card you purchase. There are also many special offers, such as weekend tickets, which allow up to five people to travel on local transport for a whole day at the weekend. Another offer is the Quer-durchs-Land-Ticket. This allows you to travel with up to four friends for a day on all regional trains across Germany.

You can find information about train connections as well as special offers on www.bahn.de

You may also want to check out availability of low-cost airlines.



SURELY YOU MIGHT HAVE MANY OTHER QUESTIONS. HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Check out students' blogs, videos etc. at www.study-in-germany.de/en/
- Connect with DAAD Young Ambassadors who have studied or are studying in Germany www.daad.in/ya
- Get in touch with students' association of your country.
- Visit the website of your city in Germany for information about weather, tourism, life etc.
- Website of your university for information about the campus and offers for international students
Websites like www.goethe.de/ges/enindex.htm to find out about people of Germany and their ways

Information abounds! Just get browsing, reading and asking!

Good luck!!

DAAD Regional Office New Delhi

India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal & Sri Lanka

USEFUL WEBLINKS

DAAD Regional Office New Delhi (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal & Sri Lanka)	www.daad.in
Embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany in the region	www.india.diplo.de www.dhaka.diplo.de www.kathmandu.diplo.de www.colombo.diplo.de
Accommodation	www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/plan-your-studies/renting-a-room www.internationale-studierende.de/en www.studentenwerke.de/en
Studying in Germany	www.study-in-germany.de/en
Youth hostels in Germany	www.jugendherberge.de/en www.hostelgermany.com
Deutsch Bahn (Railways)	www.bahn.de
Goethe-Institut (German language and culture)	www.goethe.de
Indian Students Organisations in Germany (An initiative of the Embassy of India, Berlin)	www.indianstudentsgermany.org
Embassy of your country in Germany	www.indianembassyberlin.gov.in www.bangladeshembassy.de de.nepalembassy.gov.np www.srilanka-botschaft.de

