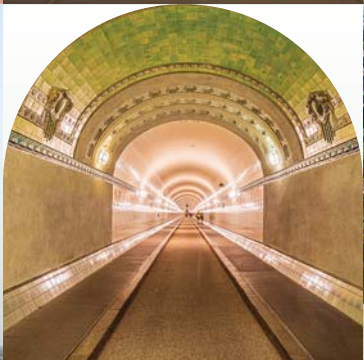


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PCS Guide 2026–2027

GERMANY



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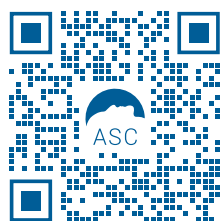
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WELCOME TO GERMANY



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

112 is the emergency phone number throughout Europe.

IN-PROCESSING

Ramstein AB Newcomers Information



Spangdahlem AB: Newcomers Information



USAG Ansbach Newcomers Guide



USAG Bavaria: Grafenwöhr, Garmisch, Vilseck, Hohenfels Newcomers Guide



USAG Rheinland-Pfalz: Baumholder Newcomers Guide



USAG Rheinland-Pfalz: Kaiserslautern Newcomers Guide



USAG Stuttgart Newcomers Guide



USAG Wiesbaden Newcomers Guide



FOOD DELIVERY

These services are common across Germany and will deliver meals to off-installation addresses from local restaurants.

- Lieferando
- Uber Eats
- Wolt

GROCERIES

► Grocery delivery

- Flink
- myTime
- REWE (also offers pickup service)

► Common small grocery stores

- Aldi
- Lidl
- Netto
- Norma
- REWE
- Wasgau: Primarily in the Rheinland-Pfalz

► Larger supermarkets

- Globus
- EDEKA
- Kaufland
- Marktkauf



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continued from page 6

THRIFT SHOPS

These on-installation thrift stores are often run by spouse clubs; no rank requirements apply.

► Ansbach

- Ansbach Spouses and Civilians Club Thrift Shop: asccbavaria.com

► Bavaria

- Hohenfels Thrift Shop—JMRC, Hohenfels: hohenfelscsc.org/thrift-shop
- BCSC Thrift Shop: Vilseck—Rose Barracks, Vilseck: facebook.com/vilseckthriftshop
- BCSC Thrift Shop: Grafenwöhr—Tower Barracks, Grafenwöhr: facebook.com/grafenwoehrthrift
- GCC Thrift Shop—Garmisch: garmischcommunityclub.com/thrift-shop

► Kaiserslautern Military Community

- SCSC Thrift Store—Spangdahlem (Also known as Penny Lane): sabcsc.org/scsc-thrift-store
- KLSA Thrift Shop—Landstuhl Base: klsa.org/thrift-shop
- RESA Thrift Shop—Ramstein Air Base: resa-rab.com/thrift-shop-1
- BCSC Thrift Store—Smith Barracks, Baumholder: baumholderspousesclub.com/bcsc-thrift-store

► Stuttgart

- Patch Thrift Shop—Patch Barracks: stuttgartspousesclub.org/Patch-Thrift-Shop

► Wiesbaden

- WCSC Thrift Store—Hainerberg: wiesbadenspousesclub.com/Thrift-Shop

Airman Attics: On-installation free stores available to service members and families; rank requirements may apply.

► Ramstein Air Base—Bldg. 2162

► Spangdahlem Air Base—Bldg. 441

Lending Closets and Loan Lockers: Borrow household items and appliances while waiting for household goods (or after you ship them back). Often associated with ACS on Army installations.

► Kaiserslautern Military Community

- Bldg. 3210—Kleber Kaserne, Kaiserslautern
- Bldg. 8666—Smith Barracks, Baumholder
- Bldg. 2162—Airman’s Attic, Ramstein AB
- Bldg. 307—AFRC, Spangdahlem AB

► USAG Ansbach

- Bldg. 5817A—Katterbach Kaserne, Ansbach

► USAG Bavaria

- Bldg. 244—Tower Barracks, Grafenwöhr
- Bldg. 322—Rose Barracks, Vilseck
- Bldg. 10—Camp Nainhof, Hohenfels
- Bldg. 203—Artillery Kaserne, Garmisch

► USAG Stuttgart

- Bldg. 2915—Panzer Kaserne, USAG Stuttgart

► USAG Wiesbaden

- Bldg. 7790—Hainerberg Housing Area, USAG Wiesbaden

YOUR LOCAL MWR AND FSS

- Ansbach MWR | ansbach.armymwr.com
- Baumholder MWR | baumholder.armymwr.com
- Bavaria MWR | grafenwoehr.armymwr.com
- Garmisch MWR | garmisch.armymwr.com
- Hohenfels MWR | hohenfels.armymwr.com
- Kaiserslautern MWR | kaiserslautern.armymwr.com
- Ramstein 86 FSS | www.86fss.com
- Spangdahlem 52 FSS | 52fss.com
- Stuttgart MWR | stuttgart.armymwr.com
- Wiesbaden MWR | wiesbaden.armymwr.com



CELL PHONES

Upon arrival, getting a cell phone set up is vital. There are a variety of options in Germany and plans tend to be affordable. When you arrive, put your phone in airplane mode to avoid unexpected charges prior to setting up a phone plan.

► Providers: Vodafone, Telekom, E-Plus, TKS, SIGA and O2, SimplyTel, Smartmobil

► Pre-pay options

Pre-pay options offer services without contracts and are available by most providers. They can be setup online, with a SIM card mailed to an off-installation residence, or by buying a SIM and top-up cards at grocery stores, retail centers and gas stations.

► Service contracts

Service contracted plans typically last two years, and are offered by both on and off-installation providers.

ON-INSTALLATION

On-installation Exchange Mobile Centers and TKS provide PCS/TDY cancellation terms for their customers. To set up a contract, you will need:

- ✓ PCS Orders
- ✓ Military ID
- ✓ APO Address
- ✓ German bank account information (IBAN)

OFF-INSTALLATION OR ONLINE

Off-installation providers will have very competitive rates, but high fees for breaking contracts. Renewals are often automatic. You can ask about military exceptions and look for “young” deals if under the age of 28. To set up a contract you can visit a provider’s store or use their website. You will need:

- Off-installation address (where SIM card will be mailed)
- German bank account information (IBAN)

► Apps to communicate internationally for free on Wi-Fi

- Facebook Messenger
- Facetime
- Google Voice
- WhatsApp

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continued from page 8

BANKING

Getting a European bank account with an International Bank Account Number (IBAN) is necessary for paying bills and transferring money. It is also helpful for making purchases, getting cash, and managing funds between dollars and euros.

VAT PROGRAM

The value added tax (VAT) program can help you save up to 19 percent off purchases in Germany. To use the program, visit your local VAT office to purchase VAT forms. The forms are then used when making purchases at German stores. You can purchase up to 10 VAT forms at a time.

► Acceptable uses

- Available for many products, services, hotels, vehicles, furniture, clothing, food and electronics.
- Businesses are not required to participate, so ask if VAT forms may be used before planning purchases.

► Unacceptable uses

- You cannot use a form once a product or service is ordered.
- Home renovations, major house repairs, cell phone contracts and internet services are not part of the program.

MILITARY INSTALLATION BANKING OPTIONS

► Andrews Federal Credit Union

- Branches in Wiesbaden
- Shared branching with Service Credit Union
- Provides online banking and bill pay

► Community Bank

Community Bank provides convenient and affordable banking services and financial information to help support service members, base organizations and mission readiness. Community Bank is located in 10 countries across the globe, with 60 Banking Centers and over 270 ATMs. They also provide interactive banking so you can easily access your account.

Call toll-free: 00-800-BANK-EASY (00-800-2265-3279) or DSN: 314-546-1892 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on German holidays.

► Keesler Federal Credit Union and Global Federal Credit Union

- Shared branching with Andrews Federal Credit Union and Service Credit Union (meaning free access to these branches).

► Service Credit Union

- Branches distributed throughout bases in Germany
- Check depositing from your smartphone
- Provides "Call 24," an automated phone teller that is available 24/7

PAYING BILLS

The German banking system differs from the U.S. Your IBAN is typically used to send money to people, to pay bills for German services or utilities and to pay invoices like medical bills or traffic fines.

You can set up automatic transfers, automatic direct debits or one-time payments using a fund transfer from your IBAN to the recipient. Most banks have an easy online form for transferring funds.

Check conversion rates before transferring large amounts between U.S. and euro accounts.

► To send money, or pay a bill you will need:

- ✓ The euro amount due
- ✓ The receiver's International Bank Account Number (IBAN)
- ✓ The receiver's Bank's Identifier Code (BIC)
- ✓ A reference number from your utility bill, service invoice, or other details for the reference section
- ✓ The payee's name

GETTING AN IBAN ACCOUNT

Here are some regional and online banks that can be a great tool to get local bills paid by offering an IBAN account and competitive exchange rates.

Note: The DOW will not deposit paychecks to European banks.

- **Bunq:** International banking brand where you can create an account to pay bills in euros. Visit bunq.com.
- **Deutsche Bank:** National bank with locations all over Germany and the globe as well as online banking options to pay bills in euros. Visit deutsche-bank.de/pk.html.

- **Wise:** International banking app that lets you create a local account to pay rent and bills in euros. Visit wise.com.

- **N26:** International banking app that lets you create a local account to pay rent and bills in euros. Visit n26.com.

EUROPEAN DEBIT CARDS

Some smaller shops only accept a European electronic cash (EC) card—also known as Girocard, VPAY or Maestro Card. It may come in handy and can be distributed through a local bank.

- Many German businesses, especially smaller ones, may not always take credit or debit cards.
- Always carry euros when off installation. ■



Financial Support for Your Life in Germany

Life overseas comes with unique financial needs. Andrews Federal Credit Union is here to help with convenient banking tools and services designed for military life.

- ▶ Setting up an IBAN so you can pay bills and manage finances
- ▶ Easily moving money with with Wise for international transfers and Zelle® for person-to-person transfers*
- ▶ Rewarding checking with no monthly maintenance fees and early direct deposit so you get paid sooner
- ▶ Digital Banking tools to give you 24/7 account access
- ▶ Loans for Euro spec vehicles

Two Locations in Germany to Serve You

Wiesbaden

Lucius D. Clay Kaserne, GEB 1021
65205 Erbenheim, Wiesbaden, Germany

Hainerberg

Washington Strasse, Building 7850
65189 Wiesbaden, Germany



Learn more at andrewsfcu.org/military.

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Exploring THE KMC

Welcome to the Rheinland-Pfalz, home to the largest forest in Germany: the Pfälzerwald. Bordering Belgium, Luxembourg and France, this place is chock full of medieval castles, delicious vineyards and wine festivals, and the joys of both the Rhine and Mosel Rivers. Here are some highlights to get you started!



REICHSBURG COCHEM

For the Kids

Gartenschau Kaiserslautern is open from April to October and is a great escape for a day trip. The changing programs and large number of offerings means you can return and see something new each time. Plus, it's a place that is truly for the whole family—enjoyable for all ages. The primary attraction is the large green space and adventure park called Neumühlepark, or Dinopark, filled with walking paths, exploratory playgrounds, swing sets, sandboxes, large dinosaur statues and beautiful gardens.

The **Kaiserslautern Zoo** brings you up close and personal with lemurs and wallabies. This quaint zoo makes for a great day outdoors. See the porcupine, meerkats, zebras, rabbits and more.

Festivals

The **Dürkheimer Wurstmatt** in Bad Dürkheim, widely regarded as the world's biggest wine fest, has been around for more than 600 years. It is a perfect pairing of both Volksfest and wine festival experience. It features adventurous rides, gaming booths, endless food stands, oompah bands, a market and the open heart of a wine fest.

Kaiserslautern's **Lautrer Kerwe** happens every year at the end of spring. Hop on a carnival ride, eat something deep fried and delicious and shop from vendors.

Castles

Every summer, traditionally on the first Saturdays of June, July and September, Heidelberg prepares a spectacular fireworks show centered on **Heidelberg's Castle** and **Old Bridge** (Alte Brücke). However, you can visit the castle and grounds year-round, which also houses one of the world's largest wine barrels.

Massive stone fireplaces, bristly wild boar heads, large metal tankards and long, wooden tables give **Reichsburg Cochem** a quirky, yet undeniably charming medieval hunting-lodge feel. This millennium-old castle keeping watch over the Mosel River Valley boasts a long and colorful history. ■



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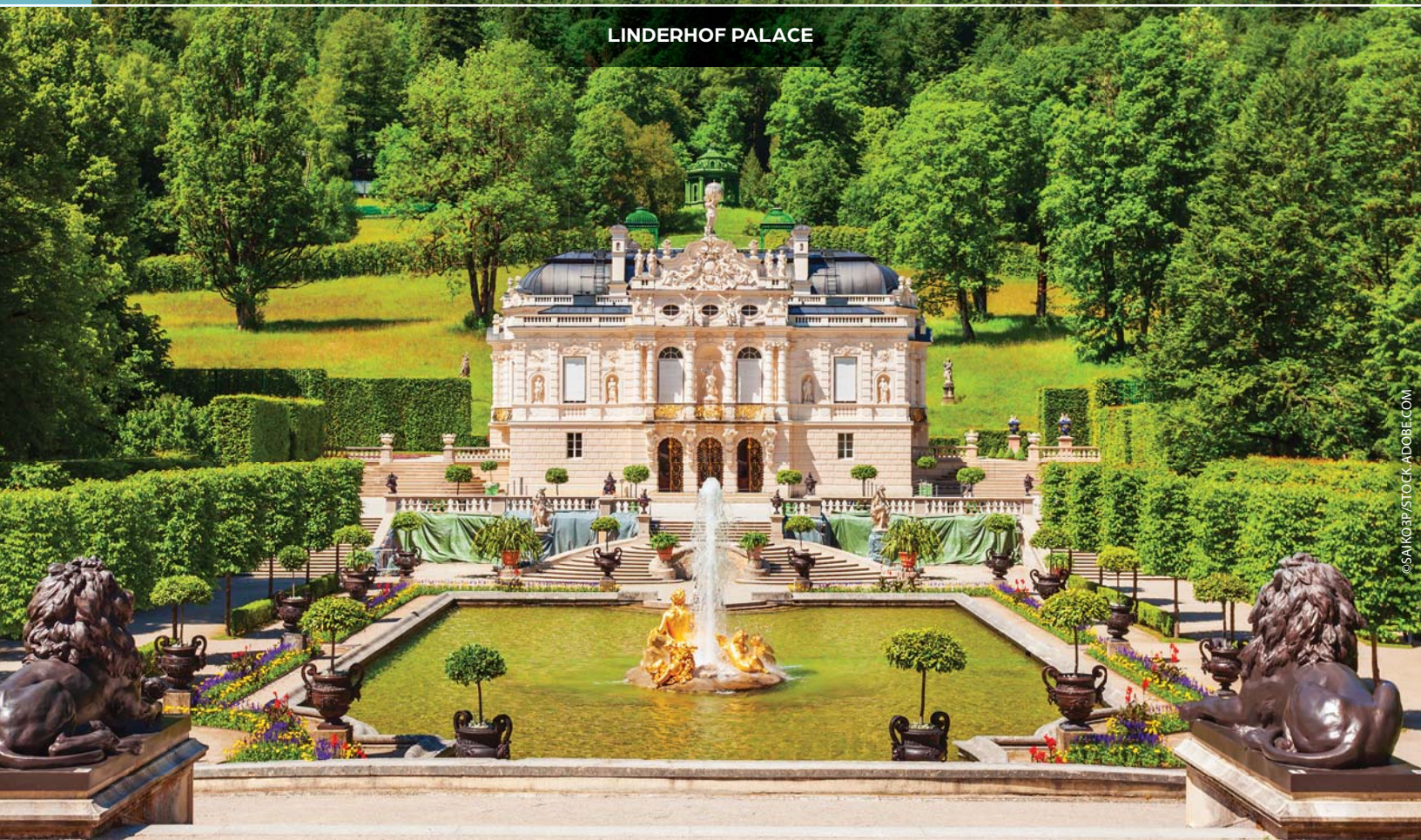
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FOR THE KIDS

At **Playmobil FunPark**, you can splash in the pools and slip into a mermaid fin for a picture in Mermaid Kingdom. Sift for treasures in the sand at the Gold Mine. Test your skills on the balancing course. With everything from hot dogs, hamburgers, pizza, pasta, ice cream and beer gardens on-site, there is something for everyone to chow down on and enjoy.

Animal loving kids (and adults) will love the **WildPark Waldhaus Mehlmeisel**. Pet goats and sheep at the petting zoo. Marvel at the lynx, wild boars, wild cats and badgers. (The badgers are our favorite). There is also an environmental education center that helps put the work of German forestry into perspective.

FESTIVALS

We would be remiss not to mention the world famous, **Munich Oktoberfest**. Don your dirndl or lederhosen, reserve a table and drink beer that has been brewed following the same rules for more than 500 years every September (yes, Oktoberfest happens in September).

Make your way to the **German-American Volksfest** in Grafenwöhr. This USAG Bavaria-sponsored community festival is held every summer. There is live music, military vehicle exhibitions, local craft vendors, festival rides and food from all over the globe.

CASTLES

Following defeat in the war against Prussia in 1866, Bavarian ruler King Ludwig II lost his power to command troops in times of conflict. Ludwig dreamed of his own kingdom and began constructing **Neuschwanstein Castle**, a structure so grand that it inspired Disney's Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. Today, you can visit the castle grounds and take a guided tour of the interior.

Neuschwanstein isn't the only monument left by Ludwig II. Construction of **Linderhof Palace** began in the 1860s. Terraced gardens, stunning fountains, a music pavilion and statues greet you on the outskirts and entrance to the palace. Explore one of Ludwig II's "escape castles" or the "Moroccan House," which was acquired at the Paris World Exhibition in 1878. Find out why there is a gate known as the "Forbidden Gate," and take a stroll around Swan Pond. ■



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Sights & Sounds of STUTTGART

Welcome to the state of Baden-Württemberg, one of Germany's economic powerhouses. Bordered by the Rhine River and Black Forest and extending through the Swabian Jura mountains, this place has both incredible outdoor activities and popular urban sights, not to mention some of Germany's biggest fests. Here are some highlights to get you started!

FOR THE KIDS

One of the most popular amusement parks in Germany, **Europa-Park**, is only about two hours away. With 10 European country themed areas, rides galore and shows it's no wonder this park is a favorite. Tack on the indoor-outdoor water theme park, **Rulantica**, and you have a year-round fun family destination.

Not to be outdone, **LEGOLAND® Deutschland Resort** is nestled right along the eastern border of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, approximately halfway between Stuttgart and Augsburg. More than 55 million LEGO® bricks were used to create 10 fantastical lands throughout the area. There are a variety of rides, attractions and exhibits to discover for all thrill levels.

Make your way to Sindelfingen and go to **Sensapolis**. This indoor adventure park features a climbing wall, an art studio, ziplining, a fairytale castle, a fun shooter and so much more. There is something for everyone at Sensapolis.

FESTIVALS

For over 200 years, the **Cannstatter Volksfest** has wowed attendees in Stuttgart. Nine huge tents serve up beers and hearty fare; Göcklesmaier's roast chicken is the fest's signature dish. An outdoor French alpine village offers wine, crepes, flammkuchen and other treats. The midway has stomach-churning rides galore. Wine drinkers flock to the Canstatter Oberamt Tent, where local vintages flow.

Every spring, attendees can enjoy the local **Frühlingsfest**. Feel an adrenaline rush on dizzying thrill rides, or drink in a stunning view

of the city from the 47-meter-tall Ferris wheel. If all the excitement leaves you with a little vertigo, take a break and peruse one of the 50 vendors selling handcrafted wares. Or stop at one of the beer tents sponsored by Stuttgarter Hofbräu, Dinkelacker, or Schwabenbräu to enjoy a refreshing brew or two.

CASTLES

In the mid-1800s, Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia commissioned the present-day **Burg Hohenzollern**, incorporating the 15th-century chapel in the new design. The castle remains privately owned and houses an impressive collection of Prussian gold and silver objects and artwork.

Built in German medieval style in the 1840s by Count Wilhelm of Württemberg, **Lichtenstein Castle** is new by European standards. Called "Württemberg's fairy-tale castle," Lichtenstein's stunning architecture and scenic mountaintop location rival those of the world-famous Neuschwanstein Castle. The castle is only about an hour south of Stuttgart (and not in the country of Lichtenstein). It is open weekends February to November and seven days a week from April to October. ■

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THE BEST OF WIESBADEN



Taunus Wunderland

©TAUNUS WUNDERLAND

Welcome to the capital of Hessen, Germany's most forested state. With the big transit hub of Frankfurt nearby, Hessen is a popular tourist destination full of cute half-timbered villages and castles, vineyards along the Rhine and Main Rivers, palatial history, and is home to Germany's most famous Grimms' fairy tales. Here are some highlights to get you started!

FOR THE KIDS

Taunus Wunderland in Schlangenbad is an amusement park featuring rides, shows, animals and a petting zoo. Hours and holiday themes vary by season. The park is typically open from mid-March to mid-January.

The **Amerikanische Spielplatz Aukman** (American Playground) is on-installation at the Wiesbaden base and is for children ages 1–14. It features climbing equipment and bars, slides, swings and a "fall-proof" rubber ground all over the playground.

FESTIVALS

You don't have to travel to Munich for an Oktoberfest experience. Make your way to the **Frankfurt Oktoberfest** where you can drink beer, enjoy live music and eat delicious German food. Be sure to wear your traditional German *dirndl* or *lederhosen* and book tickets ahead of time for a seat in this massive tent.

Hanau is the home of the annual **Brothers Grimm Festival**. It takes place every summer and features theatrical performances taken straight from the brother's famous fairy tales. Hanau is also the starting point of the *Deutsch Märchenstrasse* (German Fairy Tale Route) as the birthplace of the Grimm brothers.

CASTLES

The picturesque location of **Eltz Castle** is a favorite among hikers. For beginners, there is an easy 800-meter stroll. For those looking for more of a challenge, there is a 12.6-kilometer hike that provides a fantastic panoramic view of the castle. Eltz Castle is open from April through October. There are tours every 10 to 15 minutes, lasting approximately 40 minutes.

Rheinstein Castle lies near the town of Trechtingshausen. The castle is known for its iron cage dangling dangerously over the river. This castle is one of the oldest and possesses a working drawbridge, beautiful garden and the impressive knights' hall with its antique stained glass windows. ■



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TRANSPORTATION

IN GERMANY

DRIVER'S LICENSES

You need a USAREUR license to drive in Germany. Not all NATO countries recognize USAREUR licenses, so you will need an International Driving Permit (IDP) to drive outside of Germany. Visit your driver testing center to learn how to get one locally.

To get your USAREUR license:

- ✓ Training and testing can be done on JKO (Joint Knowledge Online) no earlier than 60 days prior to your appointment date.
- ✓ You must pass both tests with a score of at least 85 percent.
- ✓ Bring JKO certificates, military orders, DOD ID and a valid U.S. license to the Driving Testing Center.
- ✓ The fee is \$30 payable by card, check, or money order—NO CASH PAYMENTS.
- ✓ You will receive a temporary license.
- ✓ A permanent license will be mailed to your APO.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION

Chances are your vehicle will arrive to Germany after you do. You may need to research the costs of a rental vehicle to ensure that you can get around if needed to go to work or find off-installation housing.

PICKING UP YOUR SHIPPED VEHICLE

- You should be prepared to have your car registered and inspected the day that you pick it up from the Vehicle Processing Center (VPC).
- Inspect your car thoroughly at the VPC to ensure that there is no damage.
- Ensure that your car is insured in Germany.
- Prepare for any issues that may occur with your vehicle in a new environment and after sitting for roughly three months on a boat. For example: a battery replacement.

REGISTRATION

For an initial registration, you will receive a 30-day temporary plate until the vehicle has been inspected.

Items required for a registration:

- ✓ ID card and USAREUR license (temporary is acceptable)
- ✓ Orders or employment letter
- ✓ Shipping documents from International Auto Logistics (IAL) or private shipping company
- ✓ Title or previous state registration
- ✓ Proof of insurance
- ✓ \$45—payable by check, money order or card

INSPECTION

On-installation inspection stations throughout Germany provide free vehicle inspections to SOFA members per IAW USAREUR 190-1. Inspections from local Technischer Überwachungsverein (TÜV) inspection sites are also accepted as long as they are not older than 60 days.

Items required for ALL Inspections:

- ✓ Registration (unexpired)
- ✓ Completed Form AE190-10 or AE190-1AA
- ✓ First Aid Kit (DIN 13164) [unexpired], with two medical masks, warning triangle and reflective safety vest
- ✓ License plates securely mounted to vehicle (screws, brackets, nuts and bolts)

BUYING A VEHICLE

USED VEHICLES

Check your installation's "lemon lot," local yard sale websites like Facebook marketplace or Bookoo, and local off-installation used car lots.

- Cars older than 10 years need to be inspected before a sale between ID cardholders.
- Cars less than 10 years old must have at least 60 days left on the registration to retain the current inspection expiration date.
- It's helpful to ask the current owner to complete an inspection before de-registration.
- Get proof of exhaust emission testing, service record, previous vehicle defects and inspection pass guarantee from a local TÜV.
- Have the current owner keep insurance until registration is transferred.
- Sales between government ID cardholders requires the presence of all buyers and sellers.

Required for registering a used vehicle:

- ✓ Same documents as shipped POV, minus shipping document.
- ✓ U.S. title/registration document is needed for U.S. specification vehicles.
- ✓ A Bill of Sale with signatures of the seller and buyer, as well as the vehicle's make, model, year and chassis number.
- ✓ Sales between ID cardholders may also require a lien release.

NEW VEHICLES

It is beneficial to buy new cars from a dealer participating in the Military Car Sales Program (Military AutoSource or MAS). Benefits can include tax-free transactions, worldwide shipping, U.S. specifications and prices lower than U.S. MSRP prices.

Required for registering a new vehicle:

- ✓ Same as shipped POV, minus U.S. title/registration and shipping document.
- ✓ Bill of Sale or purchase order with names and signatures of seller and buyer, as well as the vehicle's make, model, year and chassis number.
- ✓ You have 60 days to provide additional documentation, such as the German title book and customs form.



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WWW.RAMSTEINUSEDCARS.COM | 06371960330 | INFO@RAMSTEINUSEDCARS.COM

continued from page 20

FUEL CARDS

To save money on gas, sign up for the duty-free fuel card program managed by AAFES.

The fuel card is required to purchase fuel in Germany at on-installation AAFES facilities. It is also valid for a discount at off-installation Esso fuel stations via a prepaid card.

- Registered vehicles have a monthly ration based on the size and weight noted on your vehicle registration. Each vehicle must be registered for its own fuel card.
- Fuel may only be purchased by the ID card holders (up to two) assigned to the registration for each vehicle.
- Fuel cards can only be used in Germany.
- The prepaid cash balance is shared across owners and vehicles.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

These apps and websites can help you navigate the public transit systems here in Germany.

- **DB Navigator** is a free app where you can book tickets, get up-to-date information concerning delays/canceled trains, and, best of all, use the fare saver finder to look for the cheapest fares available. You can also use the Bahn website at www.bahn.de.
- **VRN** offers apps for the Rhein-Neckar region which gives real-time schedules for regional buses, pedestrian routes, ticket prices and local traffic. You can find out which bus number to take, when it departs and where to get on/off.

- **TaxiFareFinder.com** is a website that helps those who want to calculate taxi fares between two destinations. For example, the estimated fare (at the time of publishing) from Ramstein Air Base to Kaiserslautern is 30.69 euros.

► Using the Fuel Card

- Pump gas, then take the fuel card, vehicle registration and ID card to the attendant for payment. The amount purchased is deducted from the monthly ration.
- On installation you can use your prepaid balance Esso card or another form of payment like cash or debit card.
- Off installation you must use the prepaid balance Esso card. You must know your four-digit PIN.

► Good to know

- Ration and card balances can be checked online at odin.aafes.com/esso, or via the toll-free number on the card.
- Add money instantly to your prepaid balance with cash, check, Military Star card, debit card or by calling the toll-free number on the card. You can also transfer money from a bank account via odin.aafes.com/esso, expect this to take three to five days.
- Lost or stolen card must immediately be reported to AAFES at 0800-181-9945. ■

Check out our European Road Guide

This useful guide is loaded with detailed information about driving laws throughout Europe. It includes rules of the road, road signs, accident procedures and how to register vehicles. Bonus content includes key phrases in other languages and a chart of European road signs to make sure you're ready to hit the road.





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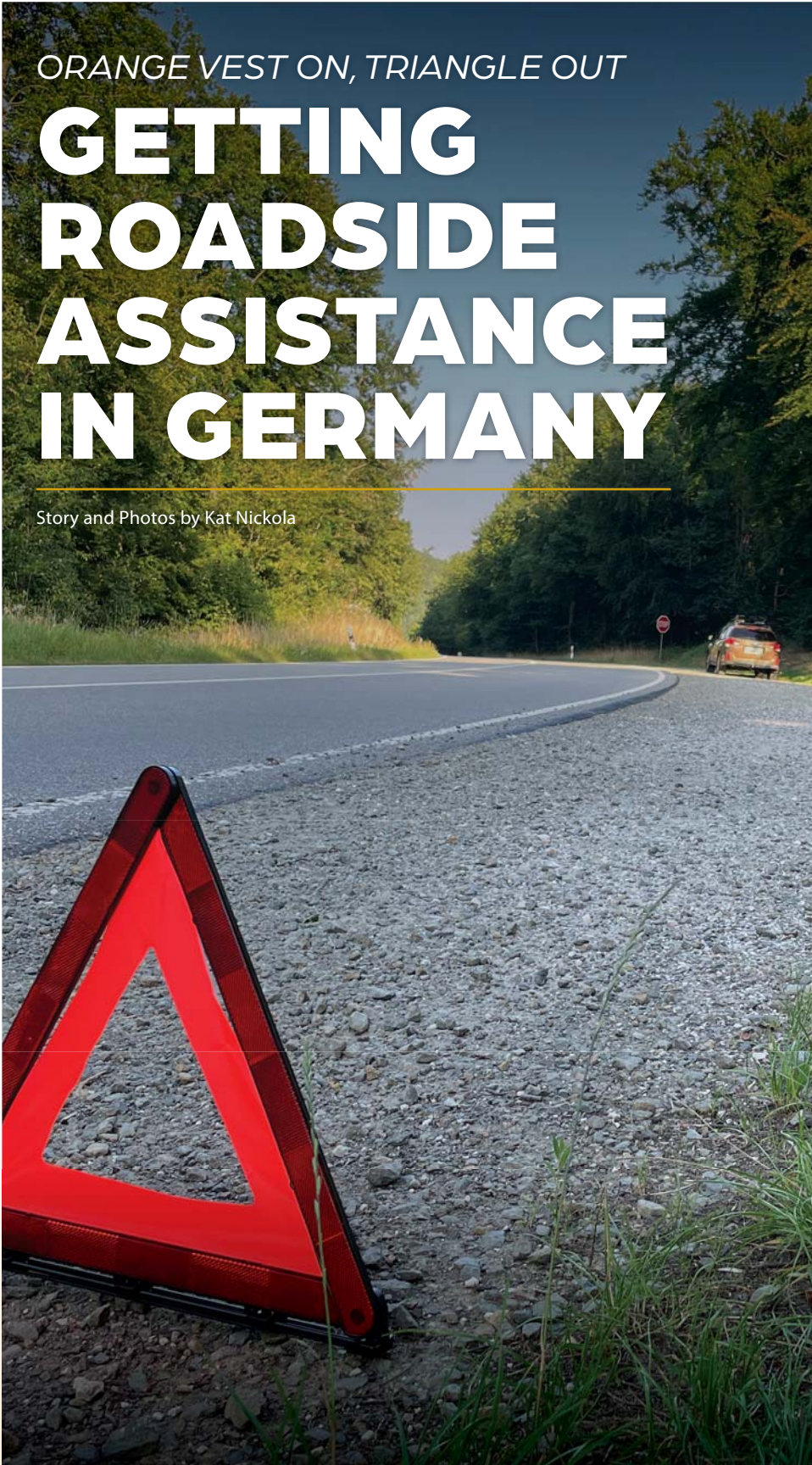
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ORANGE VEST ON, TRIANGLE OUT

GETTING ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE IN GERMANY

Story and Photos by Kat Nickola



After the smell of burning oil, the flashing dashboard lights and, well, was that interior fog? I knew the car and I needed some serious help.

It all started one sunny August evening as I was driving home to Kaiserslautern from a weekend visit to my sister; she also lives in Germany.

The engine in our 15-year-old Outback had been rebuilt last year. So, even with some glitchy behavior, we figured we had bought another few years with the good 'ole Sube. Sadly, this proved to be wrong and, though I didn't know it at the time, this would be my final outing with our long-suffering car. But this isn't just a story about my beloved family vehicle, it's really about how the car and I were rescued.

Only an hour from home, I started noticing a burning oil smell and glanced down in time to see all the dashboard warning lights flash on. Being on the small, two-lane Route 270 meant there was no berm and a four-foot drop off into farm fields at the road's edge. I put on my four-ways and slowed down, eyes peeled for any place to safely pull over.

After a few kilometers of over-cautious, slow, paranoid driving, hands cramped on the steering wheel, I noticed a weird fog inside and then light smoke escaping from under the hood.

I put all the windows down and started a slightly panicked discussion with myself about how I NEEDED a place to pull over. Luckily, around the next bend, the sun shone on a beautiful, large layby.

Once I stopped the car, I opened the hood to allow a billow of white smoke to escape. It quickly dissipated as the engine cooled, but the damage was done. The faithful Outback, who had traversed oceans on PCS moves to Korea, then Spain, the U.S. and on to Germany, finally needed rescuing.

MAKING THE CALL

After calling my husband to give him the bad news, it was time to call a tow truck. Since moving to Germany, my family has paid for roadside assistance with ADAC. The acronym stands for the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club*, which means the general (or public) German automobile club. It is quite similar to AAA in the States, but can be even more substantial, depending on your plan.

I found our digital ADAC card on my phone's wallet app and clicked the three small dots for "Pass Details." There were multiple phone options. I tapped the first number for *Pannenhilfe Deutschland* (Breakdown Assistance in Germany) and nervously called. My German is bare bones and the recorded message at the beginning left me feeling stressed and concerned that I wouldn't be able to navigate the call. However, after that brief 30-second message a real person answered. "Hallo. Sprechen Sie Englisch?" I asked. "Of course. I will try," she replied.

I explained the situation: lights and smoke in my precious brown beast. Then, I gave her my membership number, and she asked the toughest question of all: "Where are you?"

I knew I was on Route 270 and Google Maps placed me near a hamlet called Oberreidenbach. After unsuccessfully attempting to pronounce that village name (we laughed about it together), I looked around and found an emergency sign. Across Germany, especially in the forests, there are small green placards with white crosses. These *Rettungsfahrzeuge*, or emergency rescue points, have unique number identifiers and are managed by the *Feuerwehr*, or fire department, as a way to help locate people during emergencies. I told the dispatcher the number from the placard, and

she located me right away. My incident was officially reported! I instantly received a text with a link to the website where I could see real-time updates of my incident report. Before hanging up, the dispatcher told me it was time to do the unthinkable: open my emergency kit.



SETTING OUT THE TRIANGLE

I opened the car and unwrapped the packaging from the emergency kit that has rolled around in my trunk for years. It was surprisingly fun to actually put on the orange vest that I have so frequently seen others wearing at the side of the road. My little warning triangle was easy to stand up, and I walked as far as I could behind the car—perhaps 50 meters—along the layby to place it. When the first vehicle sped by, saw the triangle and slowed. I, oddly excited, thought "Wow! It worked!"

Less than five minutes later, my phone rang. It was the tow truck driver who told me, in English, that he was on the way and it would be roughly 45 minutes. He asked if I had a preference for where to get towed, so I requested drop-off in Kaiserslautern near the Pulaski Barracks Main Gate. As a Premium ADAC

member, I could be towed to the workshop of my choice within 100km (standard coverage is to the nearest workshop).

Then, I waited on the little embankment beside the sad car. My phone was running low on battery, so I spent a significant amount of time creating a nice, cozy, stable log bench.

TOW TRUCK TO THE RESCUE

When the pleasant tow truck driver arrived (on time), he went straight to work getting the car loaded onto the flatbed. I retrieved my warning triangle and soon we were heading down the 270 toward Kaiserslautern. We chatted for a bit—he had been to the Wacken Open Air music festival a few times and the Rock am Ring, so there were some heavy metal stories to tell. Mostly, though, we sat and listened to Metallica for the hour-long drive.

My husband met us at the Pulaski gate. The driver unloaded the car and packed up to go. After he and my husband took one last look under the Outback in a hopeful attempt to identify something fixable (a lost cause), the driver turned to go.

I did tip him 10 euro. My German brother-in-law had replied to my frantic "Do I tip the tow driver?!" text with "I'm sure he'd appreciate it! I don't think you have to, though." The driver was very surprised, and hesitated to take the money until I said, "It's what we do in America." He chuckled and thanked me; it was obviously awkward and unexpected.

We braved driving the car the short stint into Pulaski Auto Skills Center, where, a few days later, we ended up having to donate her for parts. While it isn't a totally happy ending, I was quite pleased with our roadside rescue. ■



HOUSING IN GERMANY



ON-INSTALLATION HOUSING

No matter where you live in Germany, on-installation housing is based on rank and family size. Typically, service members and families are required to live on installation unless housing is at or near capacity (the percentage varies by area, but it is roughly 95 percent). Unaccompanied service members are typically assigned to barracks, dorms or Officers' Quarters.

Kaiserslautern Military Community

- ▶ **Baumholder:** Wetzel Family housing, Smith Family housing, and unaccompanied service member housing in barracks
- ▶ **Germersheim:** No on-installation housing. All personnel have off-post housing services from the Kaiserslautern Housing Services Office on Kleber Kaserne.
- ▶ **Kleber Kaserne:** Unaccompanied E-6 and below service member housing
- ▶ **Landstuhl:** Family housing
- ▶ **Ramstein:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Sembach:** Unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Vogelweh:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing

Spangdahlem Air Base

- ▶ There is family housing and unaccompanied service member housing.

USAG Ansbach

- ▶ **Katterbach Kaserne:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Bleidorn Kaserne:** Family housing
- ▶ **Urlas Kaserne:** Family housing
- ▶ **Bismark Kaserne:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing

USAG Bavaria

- ▶ **Breitenau (Artillery Kaserne):** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Garmisch:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Hohenfels:** On-installation units are available only for grades E1-E6.
- ▶ **Netzaberg:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Rose Barracks (Vilseck):** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing

USAG Stuttgart

- ▶ **Kelley Barracks:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Robinson Barracks:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Patch Barracks:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Panzer Kaserne:** Family housing

USAG Wiesbaden

- ▶ **Aukamm:** Family housing
- ▶ **Clay Kaserne & Newman Village:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Crestview:** Family housing and unaccompanied service member housing
- ▶ **Hainerberg:** Family housing

HOUSING OFFICES

- ▶ **Ramstein and Vogelweh**
0631-536-6672



- ▶ **Spangdahlem**
06565-61-1110



- ▶ **USAG Ansbach**
09641-70-587-1704



- ▶ **USAG Bavaria**
 - Grafenwöhr and Vilseck: 09641-70-526-4347
 - Garmisch: 08821-750-3531 or -3660
 - Hohenfels: 09472-708-8513



- ▶ **USAG Rheinland-Pfalz**
 - Kaiserslautern: 0611-143-541-5202
 - Baumholder: 0611-143-531-2978



- ▶ **USAG Stuttgart**
09641-70-596-2230



- ▶ **USAG Wiesbaden**
 - Clay: 0611-143-548-4433/4438/4441/4436
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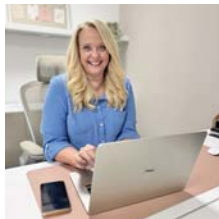
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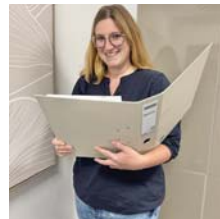
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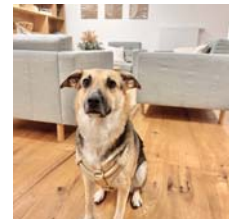
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SCAN
THE CODE
TO CONTACT US

continued from page 26



OFF-INSTALLATION HOUSING

A majority of military families live off-installation in Germany. Living “on the economy,” is a wonderful way to truly embrace living overseas.

Finding a Home

Your installation’s housing office will help you with finding a home. In general, the process is the same throughout Germany.

1. Search for homes.

- Visit www.homes.mil to see approved available properties.
- You may also find homes available from third-party listing websites, realty websites or via social media.

2. Schedule viewings to see houses you are interested in. A few things to consider:

- Distance to work or school.
- Check the cellphone reception while at the house.
- Heating costs: Natural gas tends to be cheaper. Oil can be expensive and requires scheduling time to fill tanks.
- Ask about internet service options.
- Consider how much yard or snow removal upkeep the home requires.

3. Once you’ve decided on a home, schedule an appointment with your housing office.

- All homes must be approved by the housing office.
- Only the approved military Housing Rental Contract may be used.
- Homes may need an inspection.

Loaner furniture and appliances

Temporary loaner furniture is available at most installations. This includes tables, chairs, sofas, beds and dressers. In addition, major appliances like washers, dryers, and some transformers are available to borrow for the duration of your tour. Schedule delivery of loaner furniture as soon as you’ve found a home.

UTILITIES

The Utilities Tax Avoidance Program (UTAP) helps to offset the taxes added to German utility bills and is available through most installations in Germany. Water, electricity and natural gas can be included in UTAP; garbage, cable/satellite TV, sewage, telephone, internet, heating oil or propane gas deliveries cannot be included in UTAP (see VAT office for exceptions). Signup at your on-installation UTAP office.

Savings

- Electricity: 19 percent VAT and energy tax
- Natural gas: 19 percent VAT and energy tax
- Water: 7 percent VAT
- Deposits waived

INTERNET SERVICE

If you live on-installation, your internet choices may be limited to the one that the installation has a contract with. Also, if you live in a smaller village off-installation, you may only have one or two choices for internet.

- ▶ **Digital Subscriber Line (DSL):** Many providers offer plans with flat-rate monthly fees based on transmission speeds.
- ▶ **Cable internet:** Offers high-speed access and continuous connectivity but is not as widely available as DSL.

TELEVISION AND STREAMING SERVICES

AFN (American Forces Network)

Provides programming from current U.S. networks, movies, and sports programming via its streaming service at AFN Now. Download the App and sign up at afn-now.myafn.mil.

Streaming services

Show availability will be based on your location. Example providers include Amazon Prime, Netflix and Hulu. ■



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Gynecology / Obstetrics

Chief Physician M. Al-Alime
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HEALTHCARE IN GERMANY

EMERGENCY CARE

In an emergency dial 112 for an ambulance, fire and Polizei (German Police)

- Call the 24-hour nurse line at 0800 825 1600 for healthcare advice.
- While traveling, all TRICARE beneficiaries can call the International SOS at 0800-723-4214 or +44-20-8762-8133.



Scan this QR code for a digital version of our Germany Medical Guide where you can read about off-installation care, giving birth in Germany, Tricare Overseas, German veterinarians, and use our directory to find off-installation medical and dental providers.



MEDICAL FACILITIES

- ▶ **Ansbach U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/ansbach
- ▶ **Baumholder U.S. Army Health Clinic Baumholder:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/baumholder
- ▶ **Garmisch:** There are no American medical facilities on installation at Garmisch or at the Edelweiss Resort.
- ▶ **Geilenkirchen Clinic:** spangdahlem.tricare.mil/Geilenkirchen
- ▶ **Grafenwöhr U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/grafenwoehr
- ▶ **Hohenfels U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/hohenfels
- ▶ **Kaiserslautern U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/kaiserslautern
- ▶ **Landstuhl Regional Medical Center:** landstuhl.tricare.mil

LRMC is the primary U.S. hospital outside the United States where it serves as the sole military medical center for more than 205,000 beneficiaries throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Specialty and emergency care are available here.

- ▶ **Ramstein Clinic:** ramstein.tricare.mil
- ▶ **Spangdahlem Clinic:** spangdahlem.tricare.mil
- ▶ **Stuttgart U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/Stuttgart
- ▶ **Vilseck U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/Vilseck
- ▶ **Wiesbaden U.S. Army Health Clinic:** mhs-europe.tricare.mil/Wiesbaden

OFF-INSTALLATION MEDICAL TREATMENT

Medical care off-installation in Germany is modern and may include a combination of homeopathic, Eastern and traditional care. For most installations, emergency care will be through an off-installation hospital or clinic. Please visit your clinic's website to learn more about the emergency care options available to you.

Patient Liaisons

Patient liaisons are available to help patients with off-installation care. They help with translation services, insurance forms and can help you navigate German hospitals. Patient liaisons are at each local health clinic. Call your designated clinic to make an appointment.

If you are admitted to a hospital in an emergency, notify your installation clinic's patient liaison team so they can arrange assistance.

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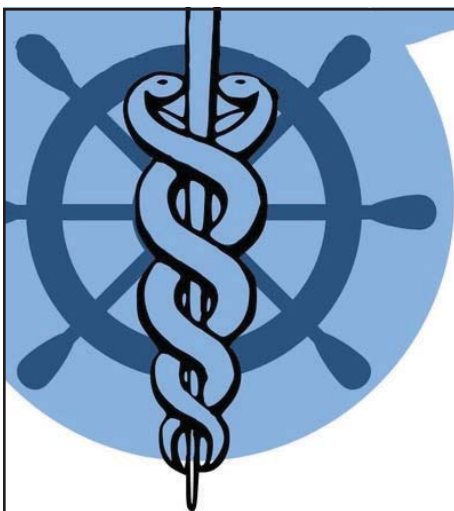
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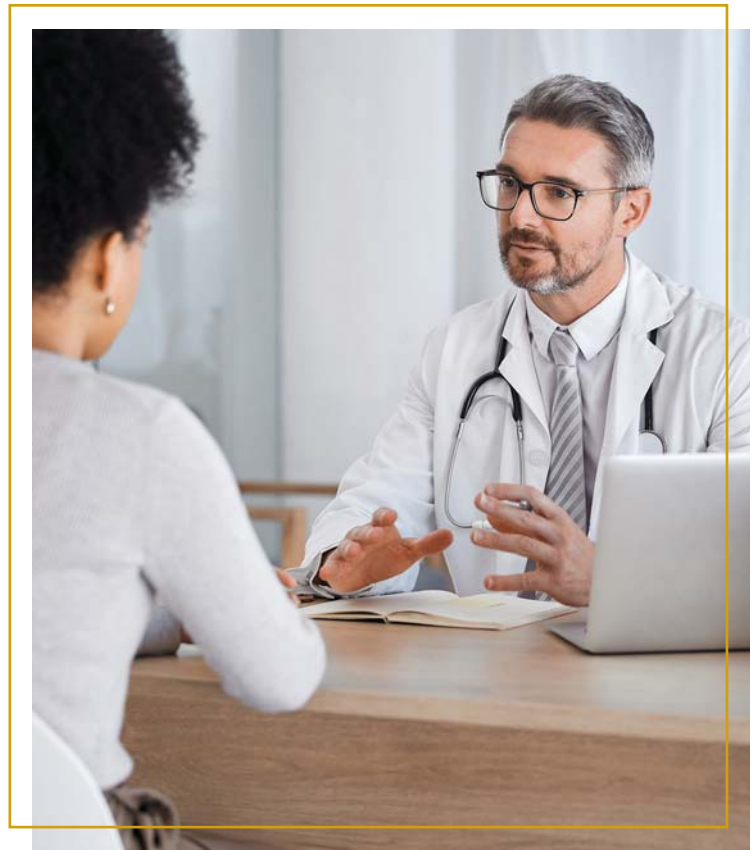


<https://www.facebook.com/flynnfamilymedicine/>

continued from page 30

MENTAL HEALTH

- ▶ **Military & Family Life Counselors (MFLCs)** provide free non-medical sessions with child behavioral specialists that are anonymous and may occur in individual, couple, family or group settings.
 - Contact your local Army Community Services (ACS) office or your Military and Family Readiness Center (M&FRC) to connect with an MFLC.
 - MFLC services are also offered for children through DoWEA schools and youth programs.
- ▶ **Chaplains** offer counseling for adults on both religious and non-religious issues for all personnel regardless of religious preference. Discussions with chaplains are 100 percent confidential.
- ▶ **Adolescent Support and Counseling Services (ASCS)** provide confidential counseling and educational prevention-based services for students in grades 6 to 12. Offices can be found inside your local DoWEA school.
- ▶ **Military OneSource** offers 12 free sessions for individual, couple, family or group settings. Learn more at militaryonesource.mil/non-medical-counseling.
- ▶ **The Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) and Military Crisis Line (MCL)** are available 24/7 for free confidential mental health support.
 - Call: 844-702-5495
 - DSN: 988
 - Text: 838255
 - Online chat: www.veteranscrisisline.net
- ▶ **Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)**
 WWP offers a range of free mental health programs for active-duty servicemembers, Post-9/11 veterans, and their families. WWP is a private, non-profit organization, and participation in its mental health programs is confidential. Services include a non-clinical telephonic supportive "Talk" program and virtual clinical counseling for individuals, couples, families and children over seven. WWP offers two-week, in-person clinical treatment programs in the U.S. for active-duty personnel and post-9/11 veterans that are free of charge, including travel, meals and lodging, and WWP can assist with removing barriers to attendance. In Europe, Project Odyssey is a 12-week mental health program for warriors or couples, using an adventure-based learning model with both virtual and in-person components.
 - www.woundedwarriorproject.org



DENTAL CARE

- Dental care for dependents is offered on a space available basis. If space is not available at installation dental clinics, dependents must rely on German providers.
- Through a voluntary dental insurance program with TRICARE, military family members can receive affordable dental care. To locate a preferred provider, visit uccitdp.com/tp2opd.
- For information about Tricare Dental Program (TDP) enrollment, claims or covered benefits, visit the TDP website, tricare.mil/CoveredServices/Dental/TDP. ■



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SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

AFN

The American Forces Network (AFN) broadcasts locally and online via the AFN Go app available at afngo.net/afneurope.

- Amberg—89.9 FM
- Ansbach—107.3 FM
- Baumholder—106.1 FM
- Garmisch—90.3 FM
- Grafenwoehr—98.5 FM
- Hohenfels—93.5 FM
- Illesheim—98.5 FM
- Kaiserslautern, Ramstein—105.1 FM
- Spangdahlem—105.1 FM
- Stuttgart—102.3 FM
- Vilseck—107.7 FM
- Wiesbaden—103.7 FM

AMERICAN RED CROSS

The Red Cross offers well-being services for all members of the military community. They have training and certification courses in babysitting and CPR, blood drives, scholarships, and community programs like reading with dogs at the library and craft times for kids. The Hero Care Network offers assistance for emergency needs, call 314-480-0422 (DSN), 06371-47-0422 (Germany) or 1-877-272-7337 (US).

- Ansbach, Katterbach: Bldg. 5817 B, ansbach@redcross.org
- Baumholder, Clinic Kaserne: Bldg. 8743, baumholder@redcross.org
- Clay Kaserne: Bldg. 1201, wiesbaden@redcross.org
- Garmisch: Bldg. 203
- Grafenwöhr: Bldg. 150, vilseck@redcross.org
- Hohenfels, Camp Nainhof: Bldg. 359
- Kleber Kaserne: Bldg. 3245

- Landstuhl Regional Medical Center: Bldg. 3794, landstuhl@redcross.org
- Panzer Kaserne: Bldg. 2948, stuttgart@redcross.org
- Ramstein Air Base: Bldg. 2118, ramstein@redcross.org
- Spangdahlem Air Base: Bldg. 441, spangdahlemAB@redcross.org
- Vilseck: Bldg. 162, vilseck@redcross.org

POST OFFICES

Military postal facilities use gateways in the United States to connect your mail with the United States Postal Service (USPS). Shipping costs and procedures are roughly the same as those in America. All mail must have the following to be sent or received:

- First and last names of both sender and receiver.
- Recipient or sender names must match those affiliated with the military postal box.
- A customs form to ensure the contents abide by local area restrictions.

Visit www.usps.com/international/customs-forms.htm to fill and print a customs form. Post Office personnel can also help you fill out a customs form at the facility; however, this can be time-consuming. Click-N-Ship services are also available at many military postal facilities.

- ▶ **Kaiserslautern Military Community**
 - Ramstein Air Base and Kapaun: 86fss.com/post-offices
 - ◆ Bldg. 426, Northside
 - ◆ Bldg. 2110, Southside
 - ◆ Bldg. 2767, Kapaun
 - USAG Rheinland-Pfalz: home.army.mil/rheinland-pfalz/usag-rheinland-pfalz/all-services/postal-operations
 - ◆ Baumholder: Bldg. 8661, Smith Barracks
 - ◆ Landstuhl: Bldg. 3723
 - ◆ Kleber: Bldg. 3243
 - ◆ ROB: Bldg. 291
 - ◆ Sembach: Bldg. 222

- ▶ **Spangdahlem Air Base:** 52fss.com/post-office
 - Bldg. 224

- ▶ **USAG Ansbach:** home.army.mil/ansbach/about/Garrison/human-resources/post-office
 - Katterbach: Bldg. 5817
 - Storck: Bldg. 6208

- ▶ **USAG Bavaria:** home.army.mil/bavaria/postal
 - Garmisch: Bldg. 251
 - Grafenwöhr: Bldg. 141
 - Hohenfels: Bldgs. 327 and 328
 - Vilseck: Bldgs. 338 and 339

- ▶ **USAG Stuttgart:** home.army.mil/stuttgart/postal
 - Kelley Barracks: Bldg. 3312
 - Panzer Kaserne: Bldg. 2915
 - Patch Barracks: Bldg. 2325
 - Robinson Barracks: Bldg. 169

- ▶ **USAG Wiesbaden:** home.army.mil/wiesbaden/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-human-resources/postalservices
 - Clay Kaserne: Bldg. 1030

USO

The United Services Organization (USO) offers family programs, seasonal and weekly events, local area information and much more. There is often a snack bar, computers, DSN access, printers, Wi-Fi, gaming and a place to relax.

- ▶ **Ansbach USO:** bavaria.uso.org/uso-ansbach
 - Katterbach Kaserne Bldg. 5510
- ▶ **Bavaria USO:** bavaria.uso.org
 - USO Camp Aachen, Grafenwöhr
 - USO Camp Albertshof Bldg. 1161, Hohenfels
 - USO Grafenwöhr Bldg. 150, Grafenwöhr
- ▶ **Kaiserslautern USO:** kaiserslautern.uso.org
 - USO Baumholder, Smith Barracks Bldg. 8106
 - USO Ramstein Bldg. 3333
 - USO Spangdahlem Bldg. 126
 - USO Warrior Center, LRMC Bldg. 3750

► **Stuttgart USO:** stuttgart.uso.org

- Panzer Kaserne, Bldg. 2915

► **Wiesbaden USO:** wiesbaden.uso.org

- USO Wiesbaden, Clay Kaserne Bldg. 1023W
- USO Wiesbaden, Exchange

VOTING OVERSEAS

Register to vote at FVAP.gov. At the website, you can select your state of residency and request an absentee ballot.

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT (WWP)

The primary mission of WWP is to honor and empower wounded warriors and their family members through a lifetime of free, supportive programs. In Europe, the WWP team's mission is assisting active-duty patients receiving care at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC). The Germany team also supports active-duty servicemembers, Post 9/11 veterans, and their families stationed and living in Europe through a variety of programs, all at no cost.

- **Lifelong, free support:** Post 9/11 veterans and active duty servicemembers are encouraged to register at www.woundedwarriorproject.org, to have easy access to services when a need arises.
- **Social connection:** WWP offers in-person and virtual family events, alumni outings and peer support groups in Germany and Italy.
- **Mental health:** Free virtual clinical counseling is available for individual, couples, family and children over age 7 of registered warriors.
- **Financial wellness:** Licensed Veteran Service Officers work virtually with active-duty and Post 9/11 veterans to help with filing claims and utilizing VA benefits, plus WWP offers financial education and career assistance for both warriors and their families.
- **Physical wellness:** While limited in Europe, it is possible to participate in virtual and stateside adaptive sports, physical fitness, nutrition coaching programs, and Soldier Ride®. ■



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RESOURCES

FOR KIDS



Children may think of moving to Germany as an exciting new adventure. They may also struggle with the big change. Luckily, every installation has resources available to help your kids settle into their new home.

Your installation's offerings may vary, but many programs are available through Force Support Squadrons (FSS) or Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) services.

- ▶ **Child Development Center (CDC)**—These centers offer weekday childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Visit www.militarychildcare.com to register for care.
- ▶ **School-Age Care (SAC) or the School-Age Program (SAP)** is available for students in first through fifth grade. The programs offer before and after school care with homework help, clubs and structured activities. Visit www.militarychildcare.com to register.
- ▶ **Family Child Care (FCC)** providers are certified and regulated by the DOW to care for children in their homes. Some offer extended hours. Visit your local MWR or CYS office or visit www.militarychildcare.com to get details.

YOUTH PROGRAMS AND CENTERS

Youth and Teen Centers provide a place for older kids to meet up, hang out, get homework help or learn something new. Take part in a movie night, learn karate, join a club and so much more.

▶ KMC

- Ramstein Air Base Youth Center: Bldg. 411
- Rhine Ordnance Barracks: Bldg. 162
- Vogelweh Air Base Teen Center: Bldg. 2059
- Vogelweh Air Base Youth Center: Bldg. 1057
- Wetzlar Barracks (Baumholder): Bldg. 8875
- Wilson Barracks (Landstuhl): Bldg. 93812

▶ Spangdahlem AB: Bldg. 457

▶ USAG Ansbach: Katterbach Kaserne: Bldg. 5984

▶ USAG Bavaria

- Breitenau Kaserne (Garmisch): Bldg. 723
- Camp Nainhof (Hohenfels): Bldg. 72
- Netzaberg (Grafenwöhr): Bldg. 9080
- Rose Barracks (Vilseck): Bldg. 1706

▶ USAG Stuttgart

- Patch Barracks: Bldg. 2337
- Panzer Kaserne: Bldg. 2998

▶ USAG Wiesbaden: Hainerburg Housing: Bldg. 7884 ■



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SCHOOL OPTIONS



Your installation's School Liaison Program staff are a good first resource for any questions regarding school options while stationed in Germany. While most students attend a Department of War Education Activity (DoWEA) school, homeschooling, private international schools, and local German schools are available.

SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICERS

- ▶ **Ansbach** | 0611-143-587-2175
Katterbach Kaserne, Bldg. 9028, Room 7B
ansbach.armymwr.com/programs/slo-ansbach
- ▶ **Garmisch** | 08821-750-2266 | Breitenau
Kaserne, Bldg. 723 | garmisch.armymwr.com/programs/school-support-service
- ▶ **Grafenwöhr and Vilseck** | 09641-70-526-9042
Tower Barracks, Bldg 539
grafenwoehr.armymwr.com/directory/65550
- ▶ **Hohenfels** | 09472 708-2082 | Camp Nainhof,
Bldg. 10 | hohenfels.armymwr.com/programs/school-liaison-officer-slo
- ▶ **KMC** | 0611-143-541-9061 | Rhine Ordnance
Barracks (R.O.B.) Bldg. 162, Room 102
kaiserslautern.armymwr.com/programs/school-liaison-officer-slo
- ▶ **Ramstein** | 06371-47-9374 | Bldg. 2303,
Room 111 | www.ramstein.af.mil/86MSGSLO
- ▶ **Spangdahlem** | 06565-61-5340 | Bldg. 151,
Room 206 | www.spangdahlem.af.mil/Contact-Us/School-Liaison-Office
- ▶ **Stuttgart** | 09641-70-596-9009 | Patch
Barracks, Bldg. 2347, 2nd Floor
stuttgart.armymwr.com/directory/68545
- ▶ **Wiesbaden** | 0611-143-548-9305 | Hainerberg
Housing, Bldg. 7790 | wiesbaden.armymwr.com/happenings/school-liaison-office



Understanding
the role of **School
Liaison Officers**

DOWEA SCHOOLS

Department of War Education Activity (DoWEA) schools accept enrollment throughout the year to accommodate military families.

Enroll at: www.dodea.edu/registration

▶ KMC

Baumholder Middle/High School | Grades 6–12 | baumholdermhs.dodea.edu

Landstuhl Elementary School | Grades PK–5
landstuhles.dodea.edu

Kaiserslautern Elementary School
Grades PK–5 | kaiserslauternes.dodea.edu

Kaiserslautern Middle School | Grades 6–8
kaiserslauternms.dodea.edu

Kaiserslautern High School | Grades 9–12
kaiserslauternhs.dodea.edu

Ramstein Elementary School | Grades PK–2
ramsteines.dodea.edu

Ramstein Intermediate School | Grades 3–5
ramsteinis.dodea.edu

Ramstein Middle School | Grades 6–8
ramsteinms.dodea.edu

Ramstein High School | Grades 9–12
ramsteinhs.dodea.edu

Sembach Elementary School | Grades PK–5
sembaches.dodea.edu

Smith Elementary School (Baumholder)
Grades PK–5 | smithes.dodea.edu

Vogelweh Elementary School | Grades PK–5
vogelwehes.dodea.edu

▶ Spangdahlem AB

Spangdahlem Elementary School | Grades PK–5 | spangdahlemes.dodea.edu

Spangdahlem Middle School | Grades 6–8
spangdahlemms.dodea.edu

Spangdahlem High School | Grades 9–12
spangdahlemhs.dodea.edu

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FOR TRIAL
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continued from page 40

► USAG Ansbach

Ansbach Elementary School | Grades PK–5
ansbaches.dodea.edu

Ansbach Middle/ High School | Grades 6–12
ansbachmhs.dodea.edu

► USAG Bavaria

Garmisch Elementary Middle School | Grades K–8 | garmischems.dodea.edu

Grafenwöhr Elementary School | Grades PK–5
grafenwoehres.dodea.edu

Hohenfels Elementary School | Grades PK–5
hohenfels.dodea.edu

Hohenfels Middle/High School | Grades 6–12
hohenfelismhs.dodea.edu

Netzberg Elementary School | Grades PK–5
netzberges.dodea.edu

Netzberg Middle School | Grades 6–8
netzbergms.dodea.edu

Vilseck Elementary School | Grades PK–5
vilseckes.dodea.edu

Vilseck High School | Grades 9–12
vilseckhs.dodea.edu

Garmisch high school-aged students do not have a local DoWEA school. Instead, they may attend the DoWEA Virtual School (dvhs.dodea.edu) or participate in the Non-DoW School Program (NDSP) which helps fund home-schooling, boarding or international schools. In addition, students may choose to attend a local German school.

► USAG Stuttgart

Patch Elementary School | Grades PK–5
patches.dodea.edu

Patch Middle School | Grades 6–8
patchms.dodea.edu

Robinson Barracks Elementary School
 Grades K–5 | robinsonbarrackses.dodea.edu

Stuttgart Elementary School | Grades K–5
stuttgartes.dodea.edu

Stuttgart High School | Grades 9–12
stuttgarths.dodea.edu

► USAG Wiesbaden

Aukamm Elementary | Grades K–5
aukammes.dodea.edu

Wiesbaden Elementary School | Grades PK–5
wiesbadenes.dodea.edu

Wiesbaden Middle School | Grades 6–8
wiesbadenms.dodea.edu

Wiesbaden High School | Grades 9–12
wiesbadenhs.dodea.edu

HOME-SCHOOLING

You can homeschool if you live on or off-installation. Schooling your child at home is a legal option open to all SOFA-sponsored active-duty military, DOW civilians and contractors. Your children may be eligible for auxiliary services offered by DoWEA Europe. Contact your SLO for more information and to connect with home-school groups.

GERMAN SCHOOLS

While stationed in Germany, you have the choice to have your children attend German schools. It's strongly recommended to discuss this option thoroughly with your installation's SLO before applying.

Key Differences

- American holidays are not granted off, and schools have breaks spread throughout the school year instead of a long summer holiday.
- Attendance is heavily monitored with fines for unexcused absences (including for vacation).
- Hiring a tutor for extra language support is highly recommended as German as a second language classes are limited in scope.

German School System Structure

- **Kita (Kindertagesstätte)** is a collective term for both daycare and preschool.
 - **Daycare (Kinderkrippe)** is generally not available for Americans as it is competitively offered at specific rates to qualified dual-income German households.
 - **Preschools (Kindergärten)** may offer spaces to American students aged 3–6 (or 7) on a space-available basis. You must apply for a spot at the Kita of your choosing. Some states like Rheinland-Pfalz do not charge tuition, while most states, like Bavaria, do.

- **Grundschule:** Students in grades 1–4 usually walk or bike to their local Grundschule, which typically operate from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. with all-day (Ganztag) care available. Some Grundschule will allow for American students on a space-available basis.

- **Grades 5 and up** are tracked into three options.

- **Realschule** is for students in grades 5–10 who will likely attend a trade or skills school following graduation.
- **International Gesamtschule (IGS)** allows for students to either graduate at 10th grade or (given high enough scores) they may enter the Abitur program to earn a university entrance diploma. An IGS will have multiple levels for coursework.
- **Gymnasiums** are for students in grades 5–13 whose goal is to earn an Abitur for university entrance. A Gymnasium will typically only have high level coursework.

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Another option is sending your child to a private international school. Many of these schools have day and/or boarding options. They also offer English-language instruction and make a good alternative to German public schools for students not eligible for DoWEA attendance. Contact your installation's SLO to learn about the international school options in your area. ■



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GERMAN HOLIDAY SEASONS



KARNEVAL, OR FASCHING SEASON

Known as Germany's "fifth season," *Karneval*, or *Fasching*, is a blend of winter revelry with a traditional religious background.

In many Christian-based faiths, parishioners observe a 40-day period prior to Easter, called Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time of introspection, repentance and fasting. Over time, the impending period of restrictions led to a preparatory celebration beforehand: known as Mardi-Gras in the U.S. and Carnival in Brazil, the German tradition of *Karneval* is all about excess and having a good time in the dark days of winter.

The *Karneval* season technically begins on Nov. 11, the feast day of Saint Martin. It is broken up by the Christmas season and resumes again on Jan. 6, Epiphany. This is when the party plans truly begin, but the celebrations don't come into full swing until later.

There are often six days associated with *Karneval*:

Fett Donnerstag: The Thursday before Ash Wednesday serves as an unofficial holiday in many regions of Germany. Parties, music, parades and celebrations often start on Thursday, and won't end until Tuesday. Thursday is a happy day that's celebrated under several names, such as Fat (*Fett*), Greasy (*Schmotziger*) or Nonsensical (*Unsinniger*) Thursday. In many villages, women flood the town square to celebrate Old Women's *Fasching*, as *Weiberfastnacht*, where they will cut neckties from men, but reward them with a kiss.

Russiger Freitag: On Sooty Friday (*Russiger Freitag*), prime TV stations broadcast several "Royal" *Fasching* programs. In January, cities elect a *Fasching* Prince and Princess, and assemble a "royal" 11-member council called the *Elferrat*. This royalty takes over prime-time television Friday evening. Programs feature a four-hour show filled with all things *Karneval* to include dancing, parodies and of course, lots of comedy routines.

Nelkensamstag: Carnation Saturday (*Nelkensamstag*) or Greasy Saturday (*Schmalziger Samstag*) is traditionally a day of smaller

parades. Spectators often dress in costume and bring bags to catch any candy that might be thrown during the parade.

Tulpensonntag: The "biggest" *Karneval* parades are held Sunday or Monday, depending on the region. Southern regions celebrating *Fasching*, use Tulip Sunday (*Tulpensonntag*) for their largest parades, notably Munich and Würzburg.

Rosenmontag: Northern regions celebrating *Karneval* designate Rose Monday, (*Rosenmontag*) for their parades, most notably Cologne. Fit in with the locals by donning masks or costumes—and don't forget a bag for candy and trinkets tossed from the parade floats!

Fasnachtsdienstag: The last days of revelry are coming to a close on Shrove Tuesday, (*Fasnachtsdienstag*). The evening is often marked with gorgeous masquerade balls, where attendees unveil their masks at midnight to symbolically reveal their true identities "hidden" during the costumes of carnival. Bonfires are also common, and straw figurines (often witches) are tossed into the flames to burn away any sins committed during carnival.



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continued from page 44

KERWE SEASON

For nearly a millennium, Catholics have been celebrating the day on which a town church was consecrated by the bishop or priest. Known as the *Kirchweihfest*, the consecration involved a church official cleansing the new church of any demons. Historically, this day was followed by a town folk festival, the *Kerwe* (pronounced care-vah) which continues to be celebrated annually.

Traditionally, the Kerwe lasted two days and included a Sunday visit to Church followed by a town procession, a large meal ending with coffee and cake (hence the days of cooking and baking) and dancing in the town square. People put out the "Kirchweih Tree" and decorate festively with flowers and paper. There were also many games and competitions played throughout the day including wrestling, running, sack racing, bird shooting, cattle driving and flag dances.

Today, there isn't much of a religious tone to these events. However, the celebrations are as festive as ever. At a large Kerwe, you will find merry-go-rounds and other traditional fair rides such as Ferris wheels and perhaps a roller coaster or two. Some towns still put up a Kirchweih Tree. There are usually local vendors selling homemade items and crafts.

You will find plenty of beer tents and occasionally wine and cocktail stands. At a Kerwe, you may find sausage, pommes (French fry), pretzel and *Lebkuchenherzen* vendors. *Lebkuchenherzen* are large heart-shaped gingerbread cookies that are decorated with icing usually with German words and phrases.

Depending on the size of the town or village, the event may last from one weekend to two weeks. They occur across Germany from spring to autumn and cities with more than one medieval church may even hold one in the spring and another in the fall.



ADVENT SEASON

In Germany, the time leading up to Christmas is celebrated as Advent and follows a traditional religious calendar. The season begins four Sundays prior to Christmas day, and many Germans will have a tabletop Advent wreath with four candles, each to be lit on a Sunday in advent.

Prior to Advent, you will notice an abundance of Christmas-themed foods, decorations and Advent calendars in shops across Germany. Decorations will not be lit in cities and homes before Advent officially starts. Christmas trees will also go on sale in lots at grocery stores, home improvement stores or at farms in the country at the beginning of advent. Traditionally German families wait until Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, to put up the tree they bought (it will be kept outside until that day) to be left up until Jan. 6—Epiphany. But that timeframe has become increasingly flexible and less tied to Christian calendar dates.

Advent calendars are a big tradition in Germany, and with 24 days of small gifts to be opened leading up to Christmas, these are not just for kids. Beyond the chocolate, you will find them themed for every taste, from LEGO® and PLAY-MOBIL® to cosmetics and tools. There are beer and liquor Advent calendars, gamified escape room calendars and even store-brand calendars that include the potential for winning big prizes.

Advent season is also the time when Christmas markets are set up in towns across Germany. In larger cities, the markets will run daily for the entire season, while smaller towns may only offer opening hours on weekends. A small, local village market may only open for a single weekend and will typically deconflict with surrounding villages to offer locals a nearby option each of the four advent weekends. Christmas markets are traditionally a place for community members to gather for some festive food and drinks, providing a social outlet during the darkest days of the year. In modern times, they have become destinations with tourists trav-

eling to the big or notable markets in order to soak in the holiday atmosphere. There are tasty foods like roasted almonds, potato pancakes, bratwurst and smoked salmon. Sipping on hot winter beverages like *Glühwein* (spiced wine) and *Feuerzangenbowle* (flaming rum) while shopping market stalls is a holiday staple.

As Advent season progresses, the first big holy day for Germans is the feast day of Saint Nicholas. Dec. 6, marks the celebration of St. Nick, and much like American kids putting out a stocking for Santa, German families put out a shoe for Saint Nicholas. On Dec. 5, kids are found cleaning their best pair of boots or shoes and placing them outside their door in hopes that the kind old bishop will leave them some candy and maybe a little gift. In alpine traditions, St. Nicholas is accompanied by a goat-man character named Krampus whose role has evolved into being the one who punishes the naughty kids. On or around St. Nicholas day, you may see a Krampus character playing pranks at Christmas markets, and in mountain towns of Germany and Austria, there will be Krampus parades.

In many German homes, *Heiligabend* (Holy Evening, or Christmas Eve) is the night of gift giving. Families who attend church often go to an afternoon mass or nativity play prior to the evening festivities. On this night, family and friends gather for a special meal and the tree is brought inside and decorated. In many families, the kids are sent to their rooms while the *Christkind* (Christ child) or the *Weihnachtsmann* (Santa) lays out gifts below the tree. When the kids are called back in, the glow of the tree and excitement of gifts makes for a magical evening.

The following two days, Dec. 25 and 26, are celebrated as Christmas holidays. These are days for large feasts, with traditional foods like duck, goose, potato dumplings and gingerbread being popular. Christmas days are also a time for visiting family or going out with friends. ■

GERMAN PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day

Jan. 1

Epiphany

Jan. 6

Easter holidays

April 3–6, 2026 | March 26–29, 2027

Labor Day

May 1

Ascension Day

May 14, 2026 | May 6, 2027

Whit holidays

May 24-25, 2026 | May 16-17, 2027

Corpus Christi

June 4, 2026 | May 27, 2027

Assumption Day

Aug. 15

Day of German Unity

Oct. 3

Reformation Day

Oct. 31

All Saint's Day

Nov. 1

Christmas holidays

Dec. 25–26



NEIGHBOR NOTES

NEIGHBORHOOD COURTESY

If you are living in a local German town, there are cultural norms that your German neighbors will expect.

- Keep your section of sidewalk and street gutter free of debris or snow and ice.
- Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Refrain from loud chores on Sundays and German holidays. For example, avoid vacuuming if you live in an apartment, or leaf-blowing and mowing the lawn if you have a yard.

LEARNING GERMAN

Make the most of your tour in Germany by trying to learn the language. Here are a list of resources to help you learn the German language.

APPS AND WEBSITES

- **Google Translate**
This app allows you to type or speak words in German to see and hear translations. You can also turn on the image feature and hover your phone over the German text to translate in real-time.
- **Duolingo**
Duolingo provides you with a pre-test so you can begin your training wherever you are in your German learning. It has a gamified technique to help you learn and practice.
- **Mango Languages**
Through Army MWR or USAFE Libraries' websites, you can access Mango Language courses to learn German for free on your computer or mobile device.
- **Langster and Readle**
These apps provide free news articles from A1 (Beginner) to B2 (Upper Intermediate). You simply read the article and click on any word to see the translation.

- **Deutsche Welle (DW)**
The DW website (learngerman.dw.com) has multiple free web-based courses to help you learn German. There are traditional-style language classes, story-based or music-based learning, news articles in basic German and a placement test to help you find the right resource.

IN-PERSON CLASSES

- Your local ACS, MWR or FSS will often offer free or low-cost classes.
- German community colleges or "Volkshochschulen" have semester-long courses of all levels.
- International language institutes, such as inlingua (www.inlingua.com), German Online Institute (germanonlineinstitute.com) or Berlitz International (www.berlitz.com).
- Local tutoring centers or "Nachhilfe" will also sometimes offer classes specifically designed for American learners. ■

RECYCLING IN GERMANY

Recycling is a requirement in Germany. Each town has a unique trash and recycle pick-up schedule, which can usually be accessed online, via mobile app or by asking your landlord. Holidays will shift regular pick-up days.

PFAND

Many plastic, metal and glass recyclable drink containers in Germany have Pfand. This is an additional fee (typically €0.25) that is included in the total cost but treated like a deposit on the container.

You will recognize pfand containers by the small logo.



Do not throw away these containers! Instead, bring them to your favorite grocery or drinks store and deposit them into the return pfand machine. You can do many at once, and then you will receive euro credit to use in the store.

BLACK BINS—RESIDUAL WASTE

Everyday trash that does not fit into one of the above recyclable categories.

BROWN BINS—BIOLOGICAL WASTE

Do not use plastic bags of any kind, even those labeled "compostable."

Food waste
Egg shells
Coffee grounds
Fruit and vegetable scraps
Grass and yard clippings
Leaves
Cooled grill ashes

BLUE BINS—PAPER AND CARDBOARD

Flattened cardboard boxes
Containers
Paper bags
Newspaper
Books and magazines
Printer paper
Wrapping paper
Paperback books

GLASS

You must take glass to your nearest neighborhood glass recycling bins. There it must be separated by color: typically clear, brown and green. Do not put in any metal lids, ceramics or porcelain.

YELLOW BINS / BAGS RECYCLABLE PACKAGING

Metal cans & lids
Plastic bottles & caps
Plastic food containers
Plastic bags
Plastic film & packaging
Polystyrene and Styrofoam
Net produce bags
Tetra packs from liquids
Foil

Adventures in the Shadow of Castles

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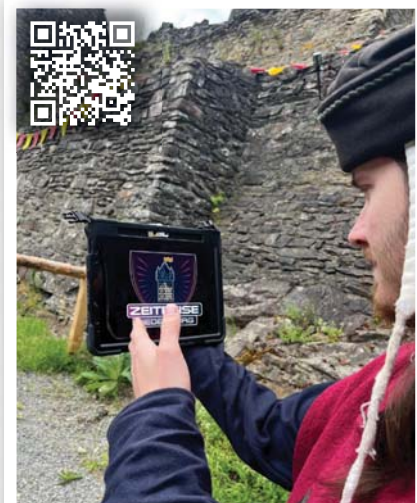
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SHOPPING & DINING IN GERMANY

By Tamala Malerk

Moving to Germany is an exciting and wonderful experience full of places to go, including new places to shop. Here are some German stores to get you started.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

If you are used to heading down to Home Depot or Lowes for fresh paint or a new light fixture, all of your home improvement needs can be found at your local OBI, Toom, Hornbach or Globus Baumarkt. My spouse spent years working at both of the big American hardware retailers and when we needed a specific screw to install our German washing machine, he quickly noted, "It doesn't matter if it is American or German, all of these DIY stores are designed the same." He quickly found his way to the needed item without asking an associate a single question. Both OBI and Hornbach consistently rank as "best home improvement store" for the Stars and Stripes Best of Germany. They have shops across many European countries, while Toom is

a German staple; all three have extensive DIY offerings and garden centers. Globus has both DIY shops and hypermarkets with groceries.

LOW-COST LARGE RETAIL

When I was younger, I would go to Walmart, grab a DVD out of the \$5 bin and head over to the snack aisle for cheap boxes of candy and bags of chips for a frugal movie night at home. Giant big box stores are not popular here, but close equivalents in Germany are Kaufland and Globus. With items such as food, beer, exercise equipment, home decor, outdoor furniture and hardware tools, you will find everything you need these shops, for a great price.

BOOKS

If cozying up in a chair with a cup of coffee and the latest bestseller in a Barnes & Noble or Books-a-Million is one of your favorite American pastimes, fear not. Germany has both Thalia and Mayersche for all your bookworm needs. Owned by the same company, there are roughly 300 of these large bookshops across Germany that offer multi-storied book selections, on-site cafes and coffee shops, books in English and huge magazine selections.



©BJÖRN WYLEZICH/STOCKADOB.E.COM

DISCOUNT CLOTHING

If finding a \$3 tank top in the clearance rack at Burlington or T.J. Maxx gives you the biggest rush, do not worry. Cute, comfortable and affordable clothing is not a foreign idea in Germany. Head to a T.K. Maxx, Primark, C&A and H&M for reasonable prices on quality items. If you are aiming for super-low prices on basic items, visit a Woolworth or KiK. KiK is an acronym for “Kunde ist König,” which translates to the “customer is king.”

HOBBY AND CRAFTS

If your ideal Saturday is spent picking up supplies at Hobby Lobby or Michaels for your next knitting, painting or crafting project, it can be a challenge to find a German equivalent. You can find the *idee Creativmarkt* in larger cities, which are crammed with all kinds of upscale craft and party supplies. In addition, the discount shop Tedi and cosmetics shop Müller both have cheap crafting sections.

SELF-CARE

Instead of heading to a CVS for cosmetics, some snacks and self-care items, try visiting a *Rossmann*, *Müller* or *DM-drogerie* shops. They act as a drugstore, offering vitamins, healing teas and also toiletries, but without the medicinal items that are only available at an *Apotheke* (pharmacy).

Remember that shops will all be closed on Sundays and any federal or local holiday, which can be a bit of culture shock. Hopefully having these stores makes the adjustment easier.

Grocery Shopping

In Germany, fresh baked goods, dairy products and ripe ready-to-eat produce are readily available and do not have the same preservatives as in the U.S., meaning that the shelf-life for these goods is only a few days. This, combined with housing differences like small kitchens and close proximity to markets, means that many Germans will grocery shop frequently, if not daily, throughout the week.

- You'll need a 50 cent or 1 euro coin to use a shopping cart.
- Some stores require you to weigh and label your produce.
- Bring your own bag or buy one at the register.

Large chain stores for big lists, international foods or first-time grocery shopping off base in Germany.

- Globus
- EDEKA
- Kaufland
- Marktkauf

Smaller, local grocery stores that are great for frequent grocery shopping.

- Aldi
- Lidl
- Netto
- Norma
- REWE
- Wasgau (Primarily in the Rheinland-Pfalz)

Dining Out

When eating out in Germany, expect evening meals to last a couple of hours. Be sure to close your menus to signal that you are ready to order. You will need to ask for additional drinks and signal your server to pay your check at the end. Some restaurants are cash-only, which is often clearly displayed at the entrance.

Here are a few local restaurants we can recommend for your first authentic German schnitzel:

- Stuttgart—*Brauhaus Schönbuch* or *Onkel Otto*
- Wiesbaden—*Brauhaus Castel* or *Der Andechser im Ratskeller*
- Kaiserslautern—*Big Emma* or *Brauhaus am Markt*
- Bavaria—*Gastof Hammer* or *Schinderhannes Weiden* ■

IN DER BÄCKEREI

A Taste of German Bread Culture

By Kat Nickola



As I walk through the door, a cozy smell of grain, yeast, coffee and warmth envelope me like a hug. I'm at my local Bäckerei, taking in the selection of daily breads behind the counter and eyeing the treats in the display case. I shake off the morning's winter cold and glance around at the bustling employees and tables of patrons—a few workmen in coveralls, a group of police in uniforms, older adults socializing and teens hurrying off to school.

The server behind the bakery counter looks at me expectantly. "Bitteschön?"

I'm too slow. I need to peruse the options, weigh my choices and decide on two things: what I'm going to eat now, and what I'll take home for the family. We are having pumpkin soup for dinner, and we need a hearty loaf or two to go with it.

I make eye contact with the server. "Einen Moment, bitte," I say and gesture for another patron to go ahead. That bought me about two minutes; time to decide what I'd like...

Bakery Culture

Bread holds a place of prominence on the German table. It has been a staple of the European diet since people began agriculturally settling the area during the Neolithic period, about 7,000 years ago. Ancient varieties of wheat and barley grew and developed, eventually forming the basis of a culture built on bread (and that other wheat product: beer).

Bread was made in the home while subsistence farming ruled the ancient world. However, as towns grew in the Middle Ages, local households shared communal ovens. Baking as a profession was first recognized in the 10th century when guilds ensured quality and training. Still, many peasants couldn't afford to purchase bread, so communal bakehouses were still used into the early 1900s. They were places to share stories, chat and build community.

Becoming a baker in Germany requires a three-year apprenticeship after getting a standard high school diploma (10th grade). The training combines vocational coursework with paid practical training at a bakery. Once bakers have five years of experience, they can choose to begin the intensive two-year studies to become a Meisterbäcker (master baker).

Though production at now occurs at centralized bakeries and throughout the day, bread is traditionally baked in the dark early morning hours. This means that the best selection is available when shops open, and shelves can be a bit picked over by the afternoon.

Types of Bakeries

Independent bakeries are now hard to find but will often be named for the Meisterbäcker. They are locally run with the baked goods being primarily made from scratch onsite.

Bakery chains are the most common place to find good quality baked goods. The bread and rolls will be baked fresh onsite, but all the products—from bread dough to cakes—are made at a central production kitchen and distributed daily to shops.

Grocery store bakeries offer consistent products made and frozen at a central kitchen, then distributed to the store to bake fresh before selling.



What's in a loaf?

At the bakery, I decide on Sonnenblumenbrot and a round Weißbrot. They are freshly baked, so whatever we don't eat with this evening's meal will make good toast tomorrow morning at breakfast, but beyond that it will soon be stale and on its way to my compost bin.

While that may seem wasteful, I doubt there will be more than a small crust leftover. Bakery breads in Germany do not contain the same additives and preservatives that exist in the US; they are simply flour, yeast, salt and water, plus any herbs, seeds, nuts, spices or sweeteners needed to make specialty loaves. There is a natural tastiness to this fresh bread that sets it apart from shelf-stable bread. Even the pickiest of my teenagers devour it.

I also grab a coffee and my favorite treat: a buttered pretzel with chives. "Einen Kaffee und Schnittlauch Brezel, bitte."

As I sit down, a neighbor wanders in, and I am reminded of the old communal bakehouses. A German bakery is still a vibrant place that brings people together. In 2014, German bread culture was even recognized as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, and as I bite into my pretzel I'm happy to be part of it. ■



PET INFORMATION



If you've brought your furry friend to Germany, you must register them at your installation's veterinary clinic within the first 14 days of arriving.

PET TRANSPORTATION ALLOWANCE

When PCSing overseas or outside the continental United States, service members may be authorized a reimbursement for the transportation costs of one pet. The reimbursement cap is \$2,000 and it cannot be shared to cover multiple pets.

Pet Arrival

All pets imported into Germany must have:

- A 15-digit international microchip
- Rabies vaccination older than 21 days
- EU health certificate from a USDA veterinarian (on-installation veterinarians qualify) issued within ten days of arrival

If your pet arrives at Frankfurt or Ramstein, you'll be charged an importation fee. Contact the Frankfurt Airport's animal protection officer at +49 (0) 696-902-1366 if your pet will be arriving unaccompanied. Pet travel during extreme summer and winter temperatures may be prohibited, depending on the breed and airline. Dogs descending from dangerous breeds may be forbidden from importation.

GERMAN VETERINARY CLINICS

Installation vet offices do not provide after-hours emergency care, so ask for a list of clinics (Tierarztpraxis) on the German economy. Many German veterinarians have English-speaking staff and accept VAT forms.

Make an appointment with a local German veterinarian soon after arrival to get your pet's EU Pet Passport. Bring all their paperwork. The pet passport serves as a record of veterinary treatment and is required to be kept up to date in order to travel with your pet.

VACCINATIONS AND PREVENTATIVES

German veterinarians can guide you on what vaccinations and preventative treatments your animals will need each year. Most vet clinics will want to make sure your dog is protected against distemper, parvovirus, leptospirosis, rabies, hepatitis and kennel cough. In addition, flea and tick treatment is highly recommended.

GERMAN PET REGULATIONS

- Animals must never be left tied up and unattended.
- Keep your dog leashed in populated areas and anytime someone approaches.
- Shelter must always be provided for your pet.
- Food and water must always be easily accessible for your pet.
- You are expected to give your dog adequate attention and exercise.
- Barking, howling or whining for 10 minutes continuously, or more than 30 minutes total, per day is considered a noise disturbance.
- Electric disciplinary devices are not permitted.

TRAVELING WITH YOUR PET

If you will be traveling outside of Germany with your pet, be sure to bring their EU Pet Passport. Depending on your pet's size, you may need to book them a ticket on trains. Typically, pets in under-the-seat sized carriers do not need tickets. Animals must be contained while riding in vehicles (carrier or harness). ■



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for more about pets in Europe.



It's a DOG'S LIFE in Germany



By Slim Jim

PHOTO BY KAT NICKOLA

Slim Jim's List of Good-Dog Manners in Germany

As a proud mixed-breed mutt from the streets of Tucson, it took some time before I understood all the rules here in Germany. So, to help you new pups, here is a list of important things I've learned along the way.

IN URBAN AREAS:

- Always stay on a leash in towns and cities.
- Resist pulling to go sniff other dogs unless your Boss asks their Boss first.
- If you whine, bark or pull, then other dogs will think you are being rude and their Bosses will NOT let you play or sniff.
- Those bowls of water outside bakeries, cafes and shops are for you. Drink!
- When you poo, give your Boss time to properly pick it up and toss it in the trash. They can be fined if you drag them away and it gets left behind.
- Sitting or sleeping calmly under a table at a cafe is next-level good dog behavior and the best way to show your manners.
- Taking the German train is fun; little dogs like me who can ride in a bag are free, but all you big dogs out there need to remind your Boss to buy you a dog ticket.
- NEVER even think about biting or being aggressive. I don't even want to talk about the dire consequences. At best, your Boss will get sued: They should have liability insurance just in case your tail gets overly excited and accidentally breaks something.
- Don't bark or howl for no reason, even in your own backyard. This is especially rude during quiet hours or for more than 10 minutes, which means your Boss may get in trouble with the neighbors. Save it for when you mean it.

IN THE FOREST OR FIELDS:

- It's fun to run off leash in forests or on rural dirt roads and trails, but you must ALWAYS run straight back to your Boss if they call. NEVER wander far.
- Near most U.S. military bases, you can go for walks off leash in the forest all year, but in some states, like Saarland, it's not allowed during hunting season. In other states, mostly in northern Germany, it's never allowed. Have your Boss check www.leinenpflicht.com before traveling.
- Even if you are super-good, it is polite to put your leash back on if you pass another leashed dog.
- Don't ever run up to another dog, especially one who is on a leash. Your Boss needs to ask their Boss first.
- NEVER hunt forest animals or the local human hunter may hunt you.
- Unless there are signs saying otherwise, it's okay to jump into the ponds or lakes you find on doggie walks! ■

"Slim Jim, come!" Boss Mom yells. I pause, sniffing the local dog tree-stump-message-board and consider delaying just long enough to squat and leave my own note, but instead, I run to her side. "Such a good boy!"

A new friend is walking up the dirt trail in the forest behind our house. She looks so friendly that I whine and pull on my lead. I want to run and play with her!

"Slim Jim, sit." Boss Mom stands in front of me, so I look at her instead of the fluffy dog. I sit and calm down, then peek around her legs.

Fluffy is trotting along beside her Boss without a leash. She doesn't even look at me as I whine again. I want so badly to go, but I try hard to be calm. Once they are past, Boss Mom gives me a treat, she unhooks me, and I bolt back to pee on the tree stump.

I've been working hard on my manners since moving to Germany. It's tough for an adopted Strassenhund like myself. That's what Boss Mom calls me when we make new friends: "Er ist ein Strassenhund." This tells them that I'm a former stray mutt.

It also answers the two first questions most German dog people ask:

"Ist dein Hund ein Junge oder ein Mädchen?" (Is your dog a boy or girl?)
 "Was für ein Hund ist er?" (What kind of dog is he?)

They are always super impressed because there are not a lot of stray dogs in Germany and most pet dogs are particular breeds. So, they think a good-boy Strassenhund like me is quite special!

Are you also an American dog new to Germany? Once you've nailed down your good manners, you'll love going out and about here. Everyone loves dogs!

PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

EMPLOYMENT

ON-INSTALLATION JOBS

A majority of spouses who look for employment while being stationed in Germany choose to limit their search to jobs on military installations that do not fall under German taxation laws.

- **Federal Positions (NAF and GS):** Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) positions are offered with MWR, FSS and other on-installation organizations. Hours range from full-time to flexible part-time with varying employment benefits. General Schedule (GS) positions are offered through government organizations on installations and can be part or full-time. Search for NAF and GS positions at usajobs.gov.
- **DoWEA Europe:** On-installation schools offer full and part-time employment as support staff, substitute teachers and administrative employees. Find certified teaching positions at: dodea.edu/offices/HR. Find local support positions at usajobs.gov.
- **Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES):** For positions at AAFES facilities like the Exchange and food courts, visit aafes.com/Applymyexchange.
- **Defense Commissary Agency (DECA):** Jobs at usajobs.gov.
- **Defense Contractors:** Job opportunities in technology, management, accounting and administration are available with contracting firms. Your installation's contracting office and M&FRC or ACS office may have information about vacancies.

Check websites and offices for new openings frequently—a job can stay posted for as little as three business days.

HOME-BASED BUSINESSES

Operating a business of any kind in Germany requires that you follow German law. This includes private home-based business on or off U.S. military installations even if they only service U.S. citizens and/or DOW ID card holders.

- You cannot use military privileges such as APO, BX, Commissary or USAREUR-plated car to support your business.
- To operate a business on an installation, you must seek permission from the installation commander and follow regulations regarding advertising and solicitation.
- Whether your business is on or off an installation, you are subject to German taxes and regulations. Find a German tax adviser (Steuerberater). Even if you don't need a German business license you will need a tax number. Check with your local German trade office, "Gewerbeamt," to see if you need a German business license.

OFF-INSTALLATION JOBS

The SOFA in Germany permits military spouses to work on the local economy. You will be subject to German laws and taxes.

EDUCATION

Thinking about pursuing a college degree? Visit your Education Center to speak with a professional about the college and university options available on your installation.

- **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**
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- **University of Maryland Global Campus**
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- **Other schools with online coursework:**
www.military.com/education or www.militaryonesource.mil
Many U.S.-based colleges and universities offer online courses and discounts for military-affiliated students.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

- **The National Military Family Association (NMFA)** www.militaryfamily.org/programs/spouses-scholarships
Applications are open year-round; the scholarship covers fees related to degrees from GEDs to Ph.D.s., professional licensing and certification, clinical hours, business expenses and more.
- **My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA)** mycaa.militaryone.source.mil/mycaa
Open to spouses of active-duty service members between the ranks of E-1 to E-6, W-1 to W-2 and O-1 to O-3 pursuing or maintaining a license or certification or an associate degree.
- **Fischer House Scholarships for Service** search.militaryscholar.org
This search engine sorts scholarship opportunities for military-affiliated students. In addition, Fisher House offers scholarships for military children.
- **Pat Tillman Foundation** pattillmanfoundation.org/apply
Open to service members, veterans and military spouses pursuing a four-year undergraduate or graduate degree, worth around \$10,000.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a wonderful way to get involved in your community. It is also a great way to keep your resume up-to-date and your skills sharp when you are not working a regular job. Start by making connections.

- Visit your installation's M&FRC/ACS, Post Office, the American Red Cross and the USO.
- Search the Volunteer Management Information System on the Army Family Web portal for volunteer positions. armyfamilywebportal.com.
- Do you enjoy writing or photography? Learn how to contribute for Stars & Stripes Europe at stripeseurope.com/lifestyle/submissions.
- Find local spouses clubs, spouse and family readiness groups (SFRGs), interest groups or sports organizations to volunteer with. ■



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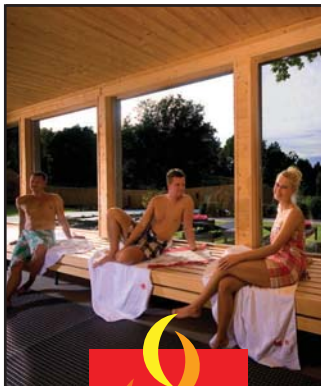


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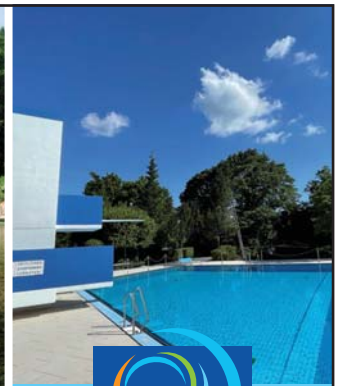
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OKTOBERFEST SURVIVAL GUIDE

By Emma Bareihs and Kat Nickola

Oktoberfest is the largest folk festival in the world. It brings thousands of people together in celebration of... a wedding. In 1810, the event was held to mark the wedding of Bavarian crown prince Ludwig I to princess Therese from Thuringia. Nowadays, beer is the center of attention. Over two weeks you'll find massive tents full of songs and beer, plus parades, carnival rides and food. Most events take place at the Theresienwiese, or Therese's Meadow, often shortened to Wiesn or just "the meadow."

WHAT TO EXPECT

There are 17 big beer tents in the Wiesn, each with a different atmosphere. The Schottenhamel is where the first beer of the season is poured. The Ochsenbraterie prides itself in honoring each ox grilled on the huge rotisserie. The Armbrustschützenzelt was founded by the crossbow guild and still has shooting competitions. There are also 21 small tents that tend to be more orderly and themed around foods like Alpine cheese or wild game.

Tables inside the tents are shared, so get to know the people sitting next to you. At a table there will be a server to take your drink (or food) orders. For those without a seat, there are lines at booth windows for ordering. Beer is only served in a one-liter mass, not a stein. The camaraderie is often focused on drinking songs and cheers, and "Ein Prosit" is a great one to learn. Locals typically attend on weekdays as it is less crowded than weekends.

CRUCIAL KNOW-HOW

- **Download the Oktoberfest app.**

The app has tent descriptions and a handy map. Find a link to the official app via oktoberfest.de.

- **Public transportation is your best friend.**

If you drive, utilize a Park + Ride (P+R) station like the one in Lochhausen and take public transit to one of the many train stations that surround the fest.

- **Bring cash!**

Oktoberfest is a cash-only event, and it is expensive. Beer prices range around 15 euro, rides range from 3-9 euros while a pretzel

will be around 3 euro. General entry is free; however the "Oide Wiesn" historical area costs 4 euro to enter. If you don't have cash, there are 12 ATMs dispersed around the grounds.

- **Security is tight.**

The entire festival is fenced with controlled entry points and monitored by police. Bags must be less than three liters in volume and smaller than 20 cm x 15 cm x 10 cm (approximately 8 in x 6 in x 4 in). Do not bring glass, knives or sprays of any kind. There is large bag storage for a fee. Lost and found is in the service tent.

- **Pets are not allowed.**

- **Table reservations are a big plus.**

To guarantee a seat, get on Oktoberfest.de to reserve table space. Reservations open in spring. No reservation? Fear not! 25 percent of tables are usually set aside for walk-in guests. However, you will want to arrive early to snag a spot. On the weekends, most tents fill prior to 11 a.m.

- **Wearing Tracht (traditional Bavarian clothing) is the norm.**

Dirndls and lederhosen abound at Oktoberfest, and while tourists are not expected to dress up, many do. Be sure to wear closed-toed shoes to protect yourself from broken glass and spilling drinks.

- **Hotels in Munich sell out a year in advance.**

Dachau, Nuremberg, Bamberg and Augsburg have good train connections, or book in one of the smaller towns around Munich and use Park and Ride (P+R).



ALTERNATIVE OKTOBERFEST

Munich's Oktoberfest is world-renowned but try one of these alternatives and you may come away with a more authentically local experience.

1. Cannstatter Volksfest, Stuttgart

This is another enormous event that combines a fair with markets, parades, shows, and eight beer tents to choose from. www.cannstatter-volksfest.de/en

2. Vienna Oktoberfest

Austria's biggest beer festival is known for its long lineup of modern folk bands that play on the outdoor stage, plus three big beer tents. www.kaiserwiesn.at

3. Züri Wiesn, Switzerland

Reservations are a must at this beer festival held at main hall of the Zurich train station. www.zueri-wiesn.ch

4. Frankfurter Oktoberfest

Your entry fee includes drink credits and table seats at this huge fest hall south of the city. www.frankfurter-oktoberfest.de

5. Spreewiesn, Berlin

Berlin's Oktoberfest is setup in a tent adjacent to the eastern painted section of the Berlin Wall and features traditional weekends and themed weekday nights. www.spreewiesn-berlin.de ■

5 AMAZING PLACES TO HIKE IN GERMANY

By Rebecca Utz

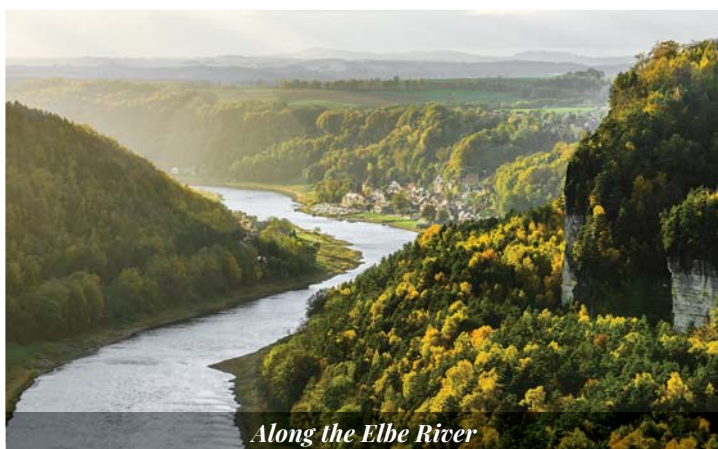
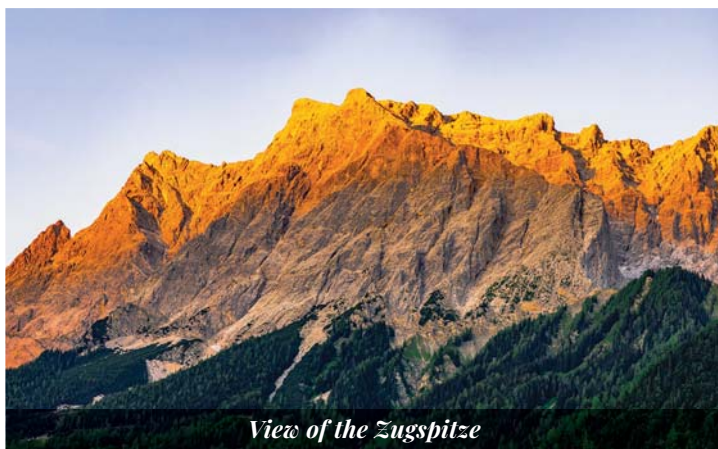
Hiking is a popular pastime in Germany and for good reason. Besides being good for your health, hiking (“Wandern” in German) is a great way to connect with nature and discover more about your area. Trails (“Wanderweg” in German) are plentiful in Germany. These routes can be found in rural, forested, mountainous or even suburban areas. While there are plenty of interesting trails to explore in Germany, here are just a few of the country’s hiking highlights.

Berchtesgaden

Located near the Austrian border is a region called Berchtesgadener Land. This mountainous area is home to a section of the Alps and a large national park. Within the park are 143 miles of hiking trails. A good beginner’s hike in the national park is the two-kilometer trail from St. Bartholomew’s church to Watzmann-Ostwand along the picturesque Königsee (King’s Lake).

Hitler’s Eagle’s Nest (Kehlsteinhaus) is also located in Berchtesgadener Land. This famous mountaintop retreat has incredible panoramic views of the Alps. There are two trails you can hike up to the Eagle’s Nest, which take between 1.5 and 3 hours to complete.

The Eagle’s Nest

*Along the Elbe River**View of the Zugspitze**RheinSteig**Jakobszweg*

Malerweg

In an area called “Saxon Switzerland” is the 112-kilometer trail known as the Malerweg (Painter’s Way). The Elbe Sandstone Mountains Malerweg trail is just south of Dresden and follows a path through rocky landscapes. This region and its landscape inspired 18th century writers and painters, hence the name Painter’s Way.

The Malerweg route guides hikers through the most picturesque spots in the region, including by castles and the famous Bastei (a towering rock formation with a bridge over the Elbe River). In fact, the trail now features signposts of paintings inspired by the landscape.

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Garmisch-Partenkirchen is home to the highest peak in Germany, the Zugspitze. From Garmisch, you can begin trekking into the beautiful Bavarian Alps, summiting this famous peak isn’t required to experience some amazing scenery. Along the various routes (categorized by difficulty) there are guesthouses open in summer where you can have refreshments or spend the night.

In total, the region around these two southern Bavaria towns have 300 kilometers of marked footpaths to explore. A short hike from the village of Garmisch is the Partnach Gorge, a natural monument. Partnach Gorge is home to waterfalls, tunnels and rushing glacial blue waters.

RheinSteig

The RheinSteig is a trail from Bonn to Wiesbaden along the Rhine River. The 320-kilometer trail runs along the east bank of the river and is elevated in most sections. The narrow route runs by forests, vineyards and castles, and was the first long-distance trail in Germany to win the Tour Natur (most beautiful hiking trail).

Villages along the RheinSteig are well connected by public transportation. If you aren’t in it for the long haul, you can do the sections you like, then use public transport (boat, train or bus) to return to your starting point.

Jakobszweg

The most famous pilgrimage route in the world, El Camino de Santiago, has numerous trails that run through Germany. There are 30 routes in Germany that head toward the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela where the grave of the Apostle St. James is located. This route is known as Jakobszweg in German. These paths are marked with a drawing of a scallop shell.

Jakobszweg runs on a network of different trails in Germany leading to the pilgrimage site in Spain. Some of the trails cross through cities like Freiburg, Nuremberg, Speyer and Rothenburg ob der Tauber. In some German cities, you will find gold-plated shells on the ground marking the route. ■

STOLPERSTEINE

Europe's Memorial Stumbling Stones

Story and Photo by Kat Nickola

HIER WOHNTE
BERTHA WERLE
GEB. GRÜNEWALD
JG. 1874
DEPORTIERT 1940
GURS
INTERNIERT NOE
SEIT 1943 MIT HILFE
ÜBERLEBT

While walking through Kaiserslautern one day, I noticed a small brass cobblestone in the street. Coming nearer to it, I could see that it had an inscription. It read, "Heir Wohnte BERTHA WERLE Geb. Grünwald Jg. 1874 Deportiert 1940 gurs interniert Noe seit 1943 mit hilfe überlebt." In English, it says, "Here lived Bertha Werle (née Grünewald) born 1874, deported in 1940 and interned at the Noe camp until 1943; survived with help."

It was a **Stolperstein**; a stumble stone, one of thousands that dot cities across Europe to memorialize former citizens who were victims of Nazi persecution. They are placed in front of former residences or businesses and researched in detail to tell the individual stories of people who lived and worked at those locations and to hold the atrocities of the Holocaust in memory.

Kaiserslautern, like many European towns, does not have a history of tolerance. In 1349, Jewish residents were technically expelled from the city and, though it was largely ignored at first, by 1388 the expulsion was enforced. It was only in the 1800s during the French occupation of the area did a Jewish population return. They eventually built a new synagogue in 1886, the remnants of which have been preserved as a memorial. It was destroyed in the summer of 1938, preceding the November 9 *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) in which all the known homes and businesses of Jewish people were destroyed by Nazi hoards and 192 Kaiserslautern residents were rounded up and taken to the train station for deportation to death camps.

In Kaiserslautern, there are 163 Stolpersteine placed for Jewish victims, eight for political victims, six for nonconformists, two for homosexuals, two for people with disabilities and one for a Jehovah's Witness. Werle was arrested for being of Jewish decent. Visit stolpersteine-kl.de to understand more about the individuals who are remembered and to see where the Stolpersteine are placed.

Why Stumbling Stones?

The first 22 Stolpersteine were placed in 1993 in the city of Köln by the artist Gunter Demnig. The idea for the stumbling stones rose from a single brass, engraved cobblestone Demnig had set in the ground at the Köln Rathaus in 1992. It was a memorial honoring the memory of the 1,000 Sinti and Roma people who were deported to Auschwitz by the Nazi government 50 years prior.

Following the trial run in Köln, Demnig began the Stolpersteine Project with the goal of restoring the names of Nazi victims back to the places where they lived. Since then, the wide-reaching memorial installations have expanded to include thousands of stones across cities throughout Europe.

The name stumble stone is not to be taken literally; the brass cobbles are laid smoothly into the surrounding surface. Instead, Demnig is quoted as saying you are intended to “stumble with your head and with your heart.” Happening upon a stone, whether touring a famous city or wandering a tiny village, is a heart-rending reminder of how deeply local but paradoxically wide-reaching the impact of Nazi ideology was. Each represents a human life.

Before a stone is installed, the victim's life is researched, and surviving family members are involved in the process of memorializing. Local interest groups typically take the reins for bringing the project into their town, applying for approval by the city government, and often involving high school groups to aid in the research process.

There have been some cities and individuals that choose not to have the Stolpersteine Project install memorials. Notably, the city of München has rejected the installation of stumbling stone memorials, citing concerns that it is disrespectful to step on victim names. Instead, other commemorative pieces are used.

Visit www.stolpersteine.eu for more details about the Stolpersteine Project.

Stumbling Stones Near You

Because installation of the brass markers a local project, databases for the memorial stumbling stones may be held at the local interest group level, by a local government or even by the state.

"Stolpersteine" in Germany

- Ansbach: www.synagoge-ansbach.de
- Frankfurt: www.stolpersteine-frankfurt.de
- Heidelberg: www.stolpersteine-heidelberg.de
- Kaiserslautern: stolpersteine-kl.de
- State of North Rhine-Westphalia: stolpersteine.wdr.de
- Nürnberg: www.stolpersteine-nuernberg.de
- Stuttgart: www.stolpersteine-stuttgart.de
- Wiesbaden: www.am-spiegelgasse.de ■

By Mary Del Rosario

GERMANY'S THEMED ROADS



Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Though the German autobahn may be infamous for its never-ending construction and sneaky speed cameras, it's also famous for its limitless speeding sections. However, you aren't seeing much when racing down the autobahn; sometimes it's nice to take the slow route and these themed roads are the perfect way to see Germany close-up.

Romantic Road

Originally created by English-speaking travel agents in the 1950s, the Romantische Strasse is located in the states of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. This famous route stretches for 261 miles and highlights major scenic experiences such as visiting the **Franconian wine country** and Neuschwanstein Castle.

As you look out the car window, you will catch striking views of the Bavarian countryside. Be sure to stop and roam the quaint towns, castles and monasteries along the way.

Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a well-known and well-preserved medieval town in Bavaria's Franconian region, is a pit-stop you must take! For the history buffs, visit Germany's oldest city, **Augsburg**, which dates back 2,000 years. In this historic city, a 1,000-year-old castle, **Burg Colmberg**, calls its visitors to relive the medieval era.

Fairytale Road

Ever hear of the Brothers Grimm? If the name doesn't ring a bell, fairytales such as Cinderella, Snow White and Hansel and Gretel were first penned by academics Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Along the Deutsche Märchenstrasse, which starts in **Hanau**, witness the towns and landscapes that inspired the brothers to write down the folktales from the region.

Adventure awaits as this 370-mile-long expedition and allows you to hunt the Big Bad Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood's forest and ask Rapunzel to let her hair down in her famous tower. This trip in particular is perfect for children as they can appreciate real life fairytales that are imbedded in the magical towns that are filled with puppet shows, parades and even statues of popular characters.



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Hanau



Mummelsee



Castle Hornberg



Bad Dürkheim

The Black Forest High Road

The Black Forest is synonymous with cuckoo clocks and deliciously deep dark woods. It is home to the beautiful Schwarzwaldhochstraße, an adventurous 44-mile-long drive bursting with stunning mountain views and nature. The journey starts in **Freudenstadt** and runs north through the Schliffkopf and Kniebis mountain ranges. In order to catch a breathtaking view over the Rhine Valley, hike up the newly opened path on the **Bühlerhöhe**.

For those who enjoy skiing, this road trip is a great way to hit the many winter ski-lifts or to connect to the **Nordschwarzwald** cross-country skiing trail. **Mummelsee**, a serene lake at the western side of Hornisgrinde, is also a popular tourist attraction that brings its admirers to be one with nature. The **Hornisgrinde tower** provides picturesque views from the highest mountain in the Northern Black Forest area.

The Castle Road

It's hard not to marvel at all the castles Germany has to offer. Luckily, the Burgenstraße allows us to see many of these ancient fortresses in a short amount of time. Stretching over 625 miles, Castle Road consists of winding and small back roads, typical of Europe, that is dotted with over 70 castles to include ruins.

The road starts in **Mannheim** and ends in **Prague**. You can spend days exploring and taking yourself back in time to when knights and lords ruled the land. Ever wanted to feel like royalty? Stay in a castle hotel! **Castle Hornberg** is a four-star accommodation that will make you forget what century you're in!

The German Wine Route

Immerse yourself on wine culture and become a true connoisseur by driving along the Deutsche Weinstraße. This 50-mile-long drive traverses the Rheinland-Pfalz wine region between **Schweigen-Rechtenbach** and **Bockenheim**. Grape vines hanging at the center of charming wine villages, local foods and farmer's markets are all perks as you stop by local weingut, or wineries.

One destination along this road is **Bad Dürkheim** which is not only home to one of the biggest wine barrels in the world but is also a spa town. This town is synonymous for its famous **Wurstmarkt**, a massive sausage and wine fest that takes places every September. ■

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The Nürburgring Racetrack

By Tamala Malerk



HISTORY

In the immortal words of Ricky Bobby, "If you're not first, you're last." Since 1927, people have been racing for first place at this iconic German racetrack.

In 1925, the Nürburgring groundbreaking ceremony was held, and it took two years and 14 million Reichsmark, which would be over 100 million dollars today (based on my rough inflation conversions and calculations) to get to the first race going on its 28 kilometers of track.

During World War II, racing had to stop, the on-site hotel was converted to a military hospital and a division headquarters, and in 1943, the fencing around the Ring was taken down and had to be handed over to the arms industry. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, racing grew in popularity and the drivers themselves were treated like pop stars. However, the rise in popularity also brought attention to the dangers of the sport.

In the late 1960s and early 70s, drivers demanded that changes be made to the most treacherous of tracks and safety features such as fences, crash barriers and emergency lanes were installed. Throughout the years, motorcycle, truck, Formula One and Grand Prix racing were all added to the list of spectacles, and today, the racetrack serves not only as a place to view racing but one to partake in the driving yourself.

EVENTS

There is so much to see at the Nürburgring racetrack. Here are a few of their biggest events.

- **Nürburgring Classic:** For the ultimate nostalgic event, this race mimics the inaugural race from 1927. No roll bars or special racing equipment is allowed.
- **International ADAC Truck Grand Prix:** The semi-trucks start their engines and race it out all weekend long and compete for European Championship points.
- **BELMOT Oldtimer Grand Prix:** Vehicles up to 100 years old duke it out on the track. This race also features a variety of vehicles and drivers, from first timers to current and retired drivers.
- **ADAC 1000km Race:** This historic long-distance race was first held in 1953 and revived in 2021.
- **Nürburgring Family Day:** Okay, so this one is less about racing and more about just bringing out the kids for a day of fun which includes the "ring°kids Grand Prixm" test sitting in racing cars, a surf simulator and other interactive stations.

DRIVING EXPERIENCES

If just sitting in the stands isn't for you, fret not, the Nürburgring racetrack has different opportunities to let you race on the track too.

- **BYO Vehicle:** Drive your own car or motorcycle on the legendary Grand Prix or Nordschleife Track. You must register online and book credits or a season ticket to do this. Keep in mind that these "tourist drives" are closed periodically.
- **Driving Academy:** Learn how to drive from actual professional drivers! There are a variety of trainings to suit your interest: Formula Training, Sports Driver Training and, for those not quite ready to get in the driver's seat, the co-pilot ride in the Mercedes-AMG GT R PRO.
- **Special Events:** These include the After Work Classics for older cars, the Caterham Drift Experience as well as safety and drifting trainings and much more. ■



Cycling Through Stuttgart's Wine Hills

Story and Photos by Joe LaForest



Nothing is better than a Sunday bike ride through Stuttgart's wine hills, where spring sun, history, and a chilled glass of white wine come together.

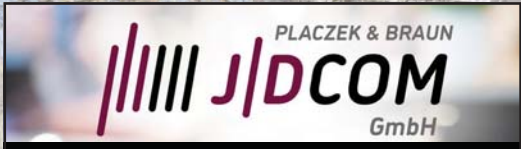
One of the perks of biking in Stuttgart is how easy it is to get around. Both the U-Bahn and S-Bahn networks are bike friendly, allowing for seamless travel to and from different parts of the city. Whether you start riding in a village or bike out to the Neckar, it's easy to hop on public transit with your bike in tow.

It was the kind of Sunday afternoon you wish you could bottle, in the mid-60s with clear skies and the faint smell of blooming vines in the air. I started my ride in **Obertürkheim**, just as the village was shaking off its quiet morning stillness. My goal was simple: follow the wine trail, take in the views and let the afternoon unfold at its own pace.

The climb began gently and the scenery rolled out like a painting. Vineyards draped across the hillsides, their early spring green just beginning to pop. Before long, I coasted into **Uhlbach**, where a festive town square had sprung to life. A German band played under the open sky, people gathered at long tables and the first round of local wine was already flowing. The sound of laughter and clinking glasses filled the village, so I paused to take it all in.



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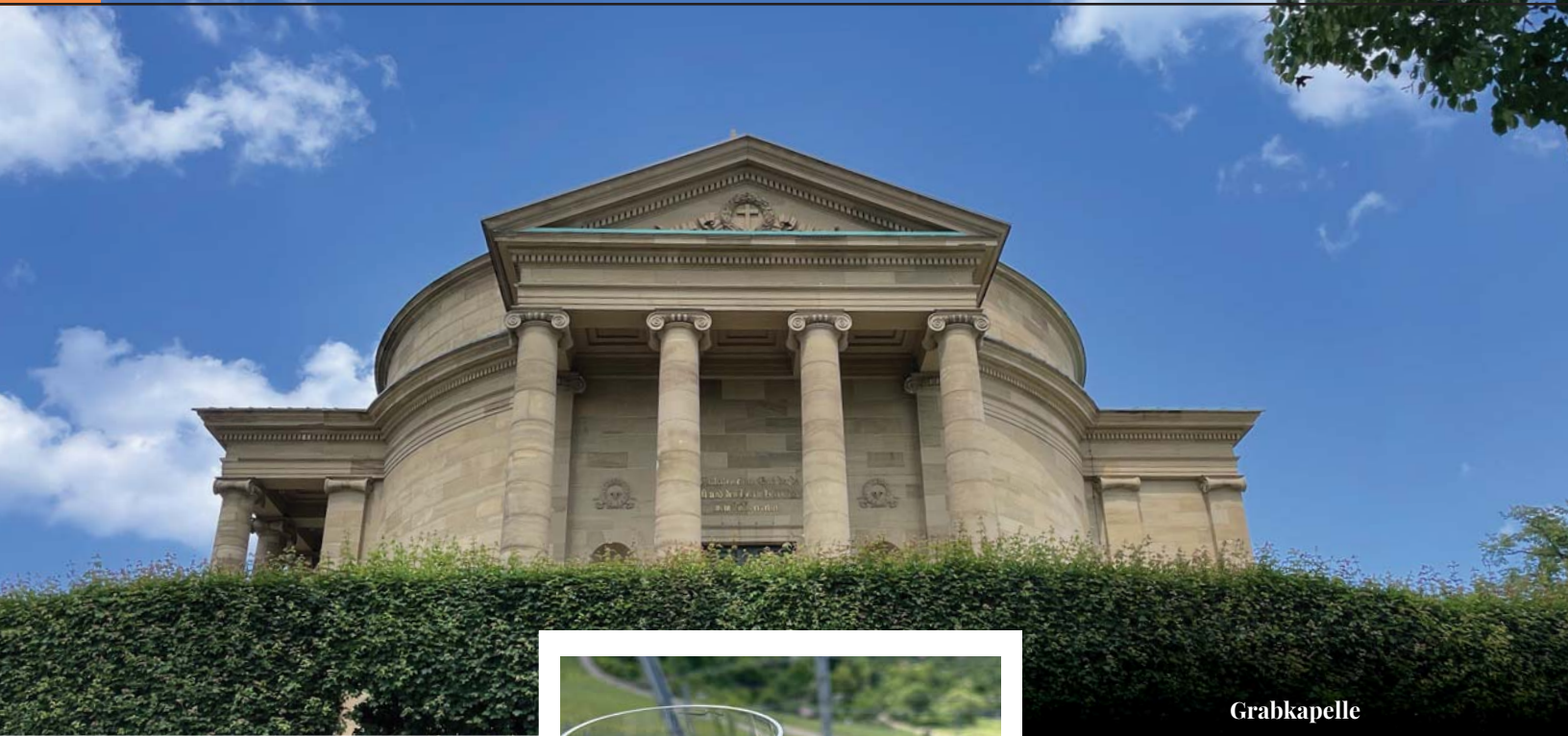
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Grabkapelle

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In Uhlbach, I found the perfect blend of history and refreshment. The **Weinbaumuseum Stuttgart**, housed in a 17th-century wine press house, shares its space with a wine tasting room—both run by the same local winemakers. I stepped inside, ordered a glass of Aldinger's VDP, and brought it out to the courtyard. The music still played, people laughed and lingered, and I sipped slowly, soaking in the scene. Afterward, I strolled through the museum exhibits, learning about the tools, traditions and stories behind the vineyards that lined my route. It was a moment when past and present folded together: wine in one hand, heritage in the other.

Back on my bike, a real climb came next: up to **Rotenberg** and the iconic **Grabkapelle**. The neoclassical chapel, built by King Wilhelm I as a tribute to his wife, sits like a crown on the hill. Just before reaching the top, I stopped for a second glass of wine. This time, a refreshing Sauvignon Blanc that cut perfectly through the climb's effort. The view from the top was worth every pedal stroke. I could see the patchwork of vineyards, the winding Neckar River and the city fading into the distance. I rested there for a while, grateful for the quiet.



As I rolled closer to the Neckar, the bike path quieted. On one side, riverside reeds swayed in the breeze; on the other, the edge of the city peeked through. It was a smooth, contemplative finish to a day shaped by sunlight, grapevines and good wine.

The ride ended the way perfect afternoons should: quietly, with tired legs, a full heart and the lingering taste of good wine. If you're looking for a local adventure that blends nature, history and culture, a ride through Stuttgart's wine country offers all three. Just bring a bike, an open schedule and maybe an empty glass.

Much of Stuttgart's wine trail weaves through sloped vineyards connected by cutback paths which are tight switchbacks carved into the hillside and likely once used by vineyard workers hauling baskets of grapes. These paths offer alternating glimpses of old stone walls, resting benches and sudden panoramic views of the Neckar valley below. Riding through them isn't just scenic—it's immersive. You're pedaling through the backbone of Württemberg's wine country, with every turn a chance to pause, breathe and take in a new layer of the landscape. ■



Weinbaumuseum Stuttgart

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