

EUROPE · CITY BREAKS · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · CULTURE · HIKING · NIGHTLIFE

 Germany

Germany is far more varied than its beer-hall image: Berlin's layered 20th-century history and nightlife, Bavaria's Alpine villages and Neuschwanstein, castles above the Rhine and Moselle vineyards, and Hamburg's port. Fast trains link it all, and in December Christmas markets turn even small towns into a destination worth the trip.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Germany and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Berlin	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	 LANGUAGE German	 BEST TIME May–Sep, Dec
 DAILY BUDGET £60–£280 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 1h 35m direct ~£70–£250 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Germany's federal history left it without a single dominant city, so a first trip is usually a rail loop between very different regions. Berlin is sprawling, creative and political; Munich and Bavaria bring Alpine scenery, baroque churches and Neuschwanstein; the Rhine Gorge and Moselle offer castles and riesling; Hamburg is a wealthy port city; and smaller places such as Bamberg, Heidelberg, Dresden and Lübeck often impress first-timers most. Ten days typically covers Berlin, Dresden or Leipzig, Bavaria and the Rhine, with a Romantic Road detour by car.

Germany is cheaper than its reputation, especially compared with London: hostels, bakeries and beer gardens keep daily costs reasonable, though Munich hotel prices spike during Oktoberfest and big trade fairs. Many shops close on Sundays, cash is still used more than in Britain, and trains, though extensive, run late more often than Germans would like. Locals take rules seriously, from cycle lanes to quiet hours, but are direct and helpful once asked. It suits rail travellers, history lovers, hikers, families and anyone planning a winter city break around the markets.

Top 5 highlights

1

ARCHITECTURE

Neuschwanstein Castle

Ludwig II's 19th-century fantasy castle above the Pöllat gorge, often cited as the inspiration for Disney's Sleeping Beauty castle. Book timed tickets online well ahead and walk to the Marienbrücke for the classic view.

2

HISTORY

Berlin Wall Memorial

On Bernauer Strasse, the most complete surviving stretch of the border strip, with a preserved watchtower, the 'death strip' and open-air exhibits on escapes and tunnels. Free, sobering and essential context for the city.

3

HISTORY

Rhine Gorge

The UNESCO-listed stretch of river between Bingen and Koblenz packs around 40 castles and medieval wine towns into 65 km of steep vineyards. Take a river boat past the Lorelei rock and stay overnight in Bacharach.

4

SACRED SITE

Cologne Cathedral

Begun in 1248 and finished only in 1880, the twin-spired Gothic cathedral survived wartime bombing beside the main railway station. Climb the 533 steps of the south tower for views over the Rhine.

5

ARCHITECTURE

Dresden's Altstadt

Rebuilt after the 1945 firebombing, Dresden's baroque skyline centres on the Frauenkirche, reconsecrated in 2005 after reconstruction. The Zwinger palace and the Green Vault treasury hold some of Europe's finest collections.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Berlin

≈ 5 million people

The Wall, the Reichstag dome and Museum Island need days on their own; then come Kreuzberg and Neukölln's bars and techno clubs that run from Saturday night into Monday.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Hamburg

≈ 3.2 million people

A prosperous maritime city of canals and red-brick warehouses in the UNESCO-listed Speicherstadt, with the Elbphilharmonie concert hall, a Sunday fish market and the St Pauli nightlife where the Beatles honed their act.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Munich

≈ 2.8 million people

Bavaria's capital has superb art in the Pinakotheken, beer halls and gardens, surfers riding the Eisbach wave in the English Garden, and easy day trips to the Alps, Neuschwanstein and the Dachau memorial.

Figures are for metropolitan (functional urban) areas; within city limits Berlin has about 3.9 million people, Hamburg 1.9 million and Munich 1.5 million. The Ruhr's chain of cities from Duisburg to Dortmund has a combined population similar to Berlin's, but no single Ruhr city comes close.

When to go to Germany

Best time: **May–Sep, Dec.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

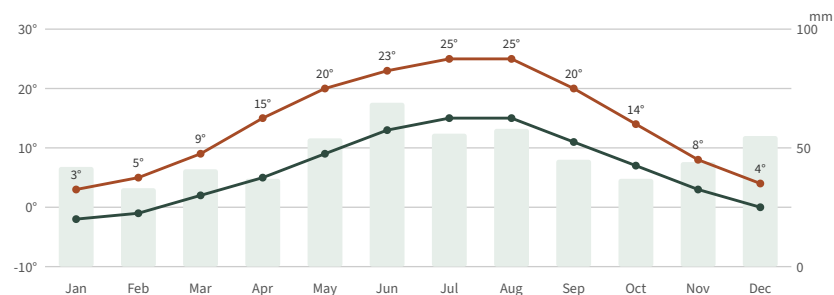
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Berlin

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	Cologne Carnival The 'fifth season' peaks in the week before Lent, when costumed crowds take over the streets from Weiberfastnacht and the Rose Monday parade showers spectators with sweets.
Sep-Oct	Oktoberfest Munich's beer festival runs for 16–18 days from mid-September to early October, with Munich breweries serving in vast tents on the Theresienwiese. Book accommodation many months ahead.
Nov-Dec	Christmas markets From late November, squares from Nuremberg to tiny Bavarian villages fill with wooden stalls selling Glühwein, gingerbread and bratwurst; Dresden's Striezelmarkt dates back to 1434.

How much does Germany cost?

SHOESTRING £60 per person / day ≈ €71.42 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £130 per person / day ≈ €155 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £280 per person / day ≈ €333 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

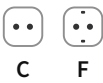
Sauerbraten Beef marinated for days in vinegar, wine and spices, then slow-braised; Rhineland versions add raisins and gingerbread to the gravy. Served with red cabbage and potato dumplings.	Currywurst Sliced pork sausage under curry-spiced ketchup, usually with chips; a Berlin street-food invention from 1949, best eaten standing at an Imbiss kiosk.	Käsespätzle Swabian and Allgäu egg noodles layered with melted mountain cheese and crisp fried onions; heavy, cheap and ideal after an Alpine hike.
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Getting around

Deutsche Bahn's ICE trains link major cities at up to 300 km/h and regional trains reach almost everywhere; the Deutschlandticket subscription covers unlimited local and regional travel for a monthly fee. Book ICE saver fares early and allow for delays. FlixBus is the budget alternative. Hire a car for the Romantic Road and Alpine villages: some autobahn stretches have no speed limit, but many cities have low-emission zones.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **112**

Fire: **112**

Police: **110**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

DIALLING CODE

+49

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Round up or add 5–10% in restaurants, saying the total aloud when you pay rather than leaving money on the table; round up taxi fares.

ETIQUETTE

Greet with a handshake and 'Guten Tag', be punctual, and use 'Sie' with strangers. Keep out of cycle lanes, wait for the green man at crossings, and respect Sunday quiet.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Frankfurt Airport (FRA), Frankfurt; Munich Airport (MUC), Munich; Berlin Brandenburg Airport (BER), Berlin

Visas & entry for Germany

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Germany, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Germany are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Polio

Bat Lyssavirus

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Germany

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Second Day of Christmas
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Mon 17 May 2027	Pentecost Monday
Sun 3 Oct 2027	German Unity Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in German

ENGLISH	GERMAN	SAY IT
Hello	Guten Tag	<i>GOO-ten tahk</i>
Thank you	Danke	<i>DAN-keh</i>
Please	Bitte	<i>BIT-teh</i>
Excuse me	Entschuldigung	<i>ent-SHOOL-dee-goong</i>
How much is this?	Wie viel kostet das?	<i>vee feel KOS-tet dass</i>

Know before you go

Carry some cash: many bakeries, beer gardens, kiosks and small restaurants still prefer it or refuse cards, although contactless payment has spread quickly in recent years.

Book Deutsche Bahn saver fares in the DB Navigator app weeks ahead, and add a seat reservation for busy Friday and Sunday ICE services.

Most shops and supermarkets close on Sundays and public holidays, so stock up on Saturday; shops in larger railway stations and airports are the main exception.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.