

## Plus3 Germany Study Abroad Program

### Travel Tips

#### WEATHER

May in Augsburg, Germany is fairly similar to May in Pittsburgh. But of course, weather is variable, so be prepared for rain or shine. It is wise to pack clothing that can be layered, as well as a rain jacket and small umbrella. Check [weather.com](http://weather.com) prior to departure for the 10-day forecast.

#### TIME DIFFERENCE

In May there will be a six hour time difference between the East coast of the U.S. and Germany, e.g., if it is 1:00 p.m. in New York it will be 7:00 p.m. in Germany.

#### TELEPHONES/EMAIL

There will be phones in the hotel room, but these will be very expensive to call internationally and any charges are the student's responsibility. Purchase a phone card for the pay phones on the street or use email. If you are considering bringing a mobile phone, contact your service provider to see if your phone will work in Germany. Even if it does, it will be an expensive rate per minute.

#### PASSPORTS/CREDIT CARDS

Make a copy of your passport and credit/debit/ATM cards. Leave a copy of the credit cards with your parents and take a copy with you. Bring a copy of your passport. Keep these copies well protected and separate from the originals.

#### MONEY

Germany uses the euro. As of April 2017, the exchange rate was \$1 equals 0.91 euro. This is the wholesale rate; if you change money at a bank or at a currency exchange company, you will get fewer euro for each dollar. You will get a somewhat better rate with an ATM card or a credit card. Also, the market value of the euro could appreciate or depreciate between now and our trip and even during our trip. You can check on the rate before you leave at [oanda.com/convert/classic](http://oanda.com/convert/classic) and also cut out a little conversion table to take with you.

We suggest that you take an ATM card, a credit card, and cash. You can use credit cards for purchases in stores and in some restaurants but in many restaurants, cafes, and bars you will need to pay cash. You may want to alert your credit card company and your bank that you will be going to Germany. ATMs are widespread and you get a good exchange rate from an ATM, but you may be charged a usage fee. Traveler's checks are somewhat hard to cash. You may want to get a money belt (not a fanny pack).

You will need money for meals on your own as well as for souvenirs and entertainment. Students on this trip last year spent roughly \$500, but the dollar has depreciated since then.

#### ELECTRICITY

The US uses 100 volt 60 cycle current with a US plug. Germany uses 220 volt 50 cycle current with a European plug (two round prongs). In order to use your electronics in these countries, you need to convert the current from 220 to 110 volts and you need to convert your plug with a European adapter. Some products such as laptops and some hairdryers can handle either voltage. Laptops usually adjust automatically; hairdryers have a switch. For most other products you will need a transformer that you can buy separately to change 220 to 110 volts. Even for the laptop and the hairdryer, you will need to adapt your US plug to a European plug so that you can plug your device into the wall. You can usually find these at luggage stores, Brookstone's, hardware stores, and even Target. Do not wait to buy them in Germany!! You may not find them there.

#### PACKING

Please pack light! You will be the one lugging what you bring. Please make sure you can carry all of it. You are advised to bring one suitcase plus a backpack or sports bag for carry-on. You might want to take an empty duffel bag (packed inside your suitcase) for souvenirs.

Do not pack valuables in your suitcase and do not lock it as it must be inspected. It would be useful to take a lock for your suitcase; however, so that you can lock your valuables in it in the hotel room. Please do not bring things you cannot afford to lose. There are internet cafes and you will be able to use the computer lab at the university.

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Put your camera, laptop, medicine and other valuables in your carry-on. You might also put in your carry-on a change of underwear and a toothbrush as luggage is frequently delayed and occasionally lost. Please do not bring expensive items like jewelry.

Don't forget to bring a travel alarm clock and watch. Your cell phone may not work as a clock/watch there and if it gets stolen, it will be more expensive than a clock to replace.

Also useful is a German phrasebook and perhaps a guidebook.

### **CLOTHING**

You will need clothing that is acceptable for the business visits. For men this means slacks, button-down shirts, and a tie. For women, slacks or skirts are fine, but nothing too short or revealing. Please be sure that your shoes are comfortable. Flip-flops are not appropriate. We will be doing a great deal of walking, even on the business visits. Try to bring clothes that mix and match, do not show dirt, are easy to wash and do not have to be ironed.

For casual wear, you probably should not wear gym-type clothing. However, you may want to bring some gym-type clothing along for jogging or sports activities. Shorts are not usually worn except in sports activities. Since you will be in a foreign country, we recommend that you dress conservatively. It is best for young women not to wear very revealing clothes.

### **PERSONAL ITEMS**

If you take prescription medications, you should take enough for the entire duration of the program. If you take over-the-counter medications, you should pack them as well. You might want to take your favorite cold and stomach remedies as well. You will be able to buy film and batteries in Germany, but they may cost more.

### **FOOD AND WATER**

German tap water is safe to drink. When buying bottled water, if you don't like the bubbles ask for water without gas. You might want to buy snack food and bottled water for downtime if you don't feel like going out.

### **TIPPING**

If a restaurant bill says Bedienung, that means a service charge has already been added so just round up to the nearest Euro. You almost always just round up to the nearest euro in restaurant situations. Round up to the nearest euro for taxis. Source: Frommer's Munich and the Bavarian Alps. Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2007.

### **SAFETY**

Make sure your family has your contact and flight information.

Please do not walk around Augsburg at night by yourself or go to Munich by yourself. Have a "buddy" and take care of each other. Even though Germany is very safe, you need to be aware of your circumstances at all times and alert to pickpockets and dangerous neighborhoods. Please do not invite anyone other than your Pitt colleagues into your hotel room. Meet and leave visitors at the reception area.

### **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**

The legal drinking age is 16, and the legal purchasing age is 18; however, you need to be careful not to drink to excess. The primary reason is your personal safety. In addition, being hung over or tired on company visits, lectures, etc. will embarrass the group and damage Pitt's reputation; consequently it will also reduce your grade in the course. If the German students smoke or drink to excess, they do not need to be your role model. Remember that you are an ambassador of the University of Pittsburgh and the United States. Serious abuse of alcohol or any drug use will lead to your being sent home at your own cost and failing the course.

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### Basic German

The following links are for some basic German:

- <http://www.ielanguages.com/German.html>
- <http://www.deutsch-lernen.com/learn-german-online/beginners/summary.php>

The following link actually has some basic phrases where, if you click on the phrase, you can hear how it is pronounced:

- <http://german.about.com/library/anfang/blanfang01.htm>