

Germany at a Glance: Welcome to Germany!

Germany is a country of diverse landscapes and exciting cities. Its economy is the largest in Europe and the fifth largest in the world. Many pioneering inventions come from Germany. Science and research have a long tradition and are highly valued today. Since opening its doors to immigrants in the 1960s, Germany has become a land of immigration. Germany is a cosmopolitan and tolerant country.

by the Editors



The Reichstag building in Berlin . © Sara Elizabeth/DAAD

Germany lies at the heart of Europe. More than 80 million people live here – the most populous country in the European Union. Germany is one of the European Union's founding members and works to promote closer integration among the countries of Europe.

Landscapes and Cities

The landscapes of Germany are diverse and charming. On the North and Baltic Seas, there are island chains with long sand dunes, swaths of heath and moorland. Dense forests and medieval castles are situated in the rolling mountains of central Germany. And in the south, the Alps with their sparkling lakes rise above the lowlands. This is where Germany's highest peak, the Zugspitze, towers at almost 3,000 metres above sea level.



Tübingen . © Vonderweiden/DAAD

Almost half of Germany's inhabitants live in some 75 cities with populations over 100,000. The largest German cities are Berlin (3.3 million), Hamburg (1.7 million) and Munich (1.3 million). In all [university towns](#) in Germany – from the large, pulsating cities to the quieter towns – you can discover much about their long history. Historic city centres are frequently well preserved, along with their city walls which date back to the Middle Ages. In some quarters, you can admire half-timbered houses or long boulevards lined with spacious and luxurious villas built during the “Gründerzeit”, the 19th-century period of German industrial expansion. Small towns and large cities offer an abundance of cultural highlights. Their event calendars are full of exhibitions, concerts, festivals, performances, trade fairs, sporting events, etc.

Politics

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was founded in 1949 as a parliamentary democracy. Its constitution guarantees basic rights to all people, such as freedom of religion, freedom of expression and equality before the law. Berlin was

selected as the nation's capital following the unification of East Germany (GDR) and West Germany (FRG) in October 1990.

Germany is divided into 16 federal states. Each state has its own political sphere of jurisdiction, e.g. in matters of culture and education. That is why Germany's educational system is decentralised. All 16 states have their own university regulations and guidelines. The universities themselves are largely independent which explains why there are no standard regulations which apply to all universities. As a result, you should always enquire about the specific study regulations at the university of your choice.



Lighthouse at the North Sea . © Günter Hommes/pixelio.de

Economic Strength

Germany's economy is the largest in Europe and the fifth largest in the world. In 2011 German companies exported goods valued at over one trillion euros. Most of Germany's exports are products made for the areas of electrical engineering, mechatronics, heavy machinery, the automotive industry, environmental technology, pharmaceuticals and chemicals. Consumers around the world recognise "Made in Germany" as a seal of quality. Germany is home to many trusted and renowned market leaders, such as Mercedes, BMW, Audi, Bayer, Siemens and many others. In the same way Germany fosters trade relations with partners around the world, German companies also work hard to promote the international exchange of qualified professionals.

Innovation and Creativity

Innovative ideas have strongly shaped Germany's past and will surely continue to do so in the future. Germany has produced a long list of revolutionary inventions, such as the automobile, the airbag, X-ray technology, Aspirin, the computer, the chip card and the MP3 data compression format. Science and research have a long tradition in Germany and are still highly valued today. The oldest German university was founded in Heidelberg in 1386. The list of German Nobel Prize winners is quite impressive as well. There are almost 70 German laureates in the natural sciences and medicine alone, such as Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, Robert Koch, Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard and Harald zur Hausen.



Goethe und Schiller monument in Weimar . © Peter von Bechen/pixelio.de

Germany isn't called the "land of poets and thinkers" for nothing. In addition to such illustrious figures as Kant, Hegel, Adorno, Goethe, Heine, Brecht, Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, many contemporary German designers, artists, actors, musicians and athletes are famous around the world.

Cosmopolitan

Germany has been a land of immigration since the 1960s. Today it is home to 6.9 million people of immigrant descent, approximately 8.5 percent of the total population. Most of them have come from Turkey, Italy and Poland. People from all nations, cultures and religions live together in peaceful coexistence. Germany is a tolerant and cosmopolitan country.

