

Dear Aspirant,

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

We have arranged this information in the following manner:

I. What all can and should I do while I am still in my country?

1. Securing a student visa
2. Looking for an accommodation in your university town
3. Packing your bags
4. Arranging the travel to your university town

II. What do I start with now that I am in Germany?

1. Procuring a health insurance
2. Registering yourself at the university
3. Getting a residence permit
4. Opening a bank account

III. What is life in Germany like?

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2. Your communication needs
3. Leisure activities
4. Travelling and commuting

I. What all can and should I do while I am still in my country?

1. Securing a student visa

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

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

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

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

2. Looking for an accommodation in your university town

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

Students halls of residence: Rooms here are provided by the Student Services Organisation (Studentenwerk) at your university. This kind of accommodation is extremely popular given its low cost and other advantages like internet connectivity and leisure activities that they offer. You also quickly get to know your fellow students. Studentenwerke also offer Service Sets (Servicepaket) for foreign students which include accommodation, meals, procurement of insurance, excursions etc. The price of the Servicepaket varies between Euro 158 to Euro 358 depending upon the benefits included. There is only a limited number of Servicepakets available, so do get in touch with the responsible Studentenwerk in good time! You can find more information on <http://www.internationale-studierende.de> .

Shared flats (Wohngemeinschaft – WG): As the name suggests, these are accommodations privately rented by students and shared. Normally everyone has their own room. Kitchen and bathroom as well as other utility rooms if any are shared, so are the rent, electricity, gas, water, internet etc. This arrangement certainly works out to be cheaper than living alone. Useful websites: www.easywg.de, www.wohngemeinschaft.de, www.studenten-wg.de, www.web-wohnungssuche.de, www.zwischenmiete.de

Private apartments: You may prefer to rent private rooms or flats. These can be found with the help of the accommodation services offered by the Studentenwerk, the notice boards in the university foyers, the accommodation files with the student council or union (AStA) and of course the local media.

Useful websites: www.studenten-wohnung.de , www.studentenwohnungsmarkt.de , www.studentenwohnungen.de

At the time of renting any kind of accommodation, make sure that you completely understand the contract you are entering into with the landlord! Do ask what is covered in the rent. If it is the “Warmmiete” you are paying, it includes room heating and warm water, whereas the “Kaltmiete” does not cover these. Electricity is normally paid as per consumption. Do take a good look at the condition of the apartment; you will be expected to return it in the same condition in which it was handed over to you. The weblink <http://www.daad.de/deutschland/deutschland/leben-in-deutschland/06188.en.html> will provide you more information about all the matters concerning accommodation.

3. Packing your bags

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

Clothes: It gets really cold in Germany, so make sure that you have enough warm clothing to start with. Do carry some light clothing as well for summers are pleasant, and at times rather warm! It is always nice to have the right kind of clothes for the formal occasions and perhaps your traditional dress for special dos. It would also be good idea to pack a raincoat and an umbrella. Students housing and most shared apartments do have washing machines and you are bound to find some laundry shops (Waschsalon) that charge 3-6 Euros per washload. So it would suffice if you packed enough clothes just for the first few days.

Medicines: Do carry a set of your basic medicines. In case you have any special medical requirements, ensure that you have the necessary supplies at least for the initial days together

with the prescription. As a precaution, have a physician's prescription handy for all the drugs you are carrying.

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

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

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

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

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

4. Arranging the travel to your university town

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

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

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

Most importantly, check the date of registration at the university. You must arrive in Germany in good time for the beginning of term; you can no longer enroll after the deadline specified by the university has passed.

II. What do I do now that I am in Germany?

Assuming that you have your accommodation matters sorted out while in your home country, the formalities you need to take care of as soon as you are in Germany are your health insurance, registration at the university, extension of your visa and of course opening a bank account!

1. Procuring a health insurance

While your overseas travel insurance was sufficient till you reached Germany, a German insurance for the duration of your stay will be not only more convenient, but also legally necessary. You cannot be enrolled at the university unless you have a German insurance. There are two kinds of health insurance: compulsory / public and private. Till the age of 30 or till your 14th semester of study, you need to have a compulsory insurance. After that or in exceptional cases you may opt for a private one. In any case, a compulsory insurance is likely to be more economical (approx. Euro 55) than a private insurance. Just remember that you cannot go back to a compulsory insurance after having opted for a private one. The social help desk in the Studentenwerk or the International Office of your university can give you more information about insurance providers. You can read more about this on

<http://www.daad.de/deutschland/deutschland/leben-in-deutschland/06266.en.html>

2. Registering yourself at the university

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

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

3. Obtaining a residence permit

While in your home country, you applied for a long-term visa. Now you need to apply for a residence permit. For this you have to approach the Aliens Department in your city of residence with the certificate of enrolment from the university, registration from the authorities, proof of finance, a valid German health insurance among others.

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

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

4. Bank account

Opening a bank account as soon as possible after your arrival will make organising monthly payments such as rent and insurance much easier for you. Check with the bank of your choice about the procedure and charges. Most banks offer current accounts free of charge for students. In Germany people tend to pay in cash - especially for small amounts. Credit cards are relatively widespread but are not often used for everyday purchases. On the other hand, payment by cash card is very common.

III. What is life in Germany like?

1. Your food concerns

As a student in Germany you are not likely to have the luxury of a “hostel-mess” that served almost four warm meals a day! You will find yourself eating your lunch at the university “Mensa” or cafeterias. For other meals of the day, you may check out the snack bars or “Imbiss” that serve international food and are often located near the city centre. And of course you will always have access to a shared kitchen whether you are staying at the students hall of residence or in a WG. You will find lots of cafes and restaurants in Germany serving different kinds of cuisine, south Asian including. It is normal to leave a tip at such places and also at bars or for taxi drivers. Groceries and daily necessities can be bought from a whole range of pocket-friendly supermarkets like Aldi, Lidl, Plus, PennyMarket, Spar, Walmart etc. You can also easily buy Asian products at “Asia-Shops”. When you set out for shopping, do ensure that you carrying a shopping bag with you, otherwise you will have to buy one!

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

2. Your communication needs

Telephone: Germany operates on GSM network, so the phone you use in your country is very likely to work in Germany. You can easily buy prepaid cards for your cell phone (or "Handy" as it is called there) from phone shops as well as supermarkets and drug stores. The main providers in Germany are T-Mobile, Vodafone, E-Plus and O2 – do check out what kind of deals they are offering before investing, at times handsets come free with certain connections.

For long-distance calls, you may want to try out international phone centres or internet cafes for they often offer the cheapest rates.

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

3. Leisure activities

While studying in Germany is a serious business, it does give you some leisure time. The Office of Student Affairs and Studentenwerk often offer evening activities like cinema, theater, workshops as well as excursions. "Freundeskreis" i.e. groups of DAAD alumni offer leisure activities as well, which you can check out at www.daad.de. Theatres and museums offer students discounts, so remember to carry your students ID card all the time with you. It is also a safety precaution and can come in handy in times of emergency of any kind. And needless to say, Germany is heaven for sports-buffs!

4. Traveling and commuting

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

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

For longer distances you may take the ICE or Regional trains. Check out for options like Laender-Tickets (around 30 Euros, up to 5 persons, covering one to three states in all local trains, valid for 1 day) or Weekend-Tickets (around 40 Euros, up to 5 persons, covering whole Germany in all local trains, valid for 1 day). You can find information about train connections as well as special offers on www.bahn.de

You may also want to check out low-cost airlines like TUIfly, Germanwings, Air Berlin, Easy Jet and Ryanair.

Surely you have many other questions! So why not check out students' blogs at www.study-in.de? Or check out the DAAD primer for international students at http://www.daad.de/imperia/md/content/de/deutschland/downloads/daad_sid_brosch_auf13_in_en_090826_dl.pdf? Or visit the website of your city in Germany for information about weather, tourism, life etc.? Or the website of your university for information about the campus and offers for international students? Or websites like <http://www.goethe.de/ges/enindex.htm> to find out about people of Germany and their ways?

Information abounds! Just get browsing, reading and asking!

All the best!

DAAD Regional Office New Delhi
Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka

Useful Weblinks:

Embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany:

1. Bangladesh: <http://www.dhaka.diplo.de>
2. Bhutan: <http://www.new-delhi.diplo.de/Vertretung/newdelhi/en/02/Embassy.html>
3. India: <http://www.new-delhi.diplo.de/Vertretung/newdelhi/en/02/Embassy.html>
4. Nepal: <http://www.kathmandu.diplo.de>
5. Sri Lanka: <http://www.colombo.diplo.de>

Student Services Organisation (Studentenwerk):

<http://www.internationale-studierende.de>

Living in Germany:

<http://www.daad.de/deutschland/deutschland/leben-in-deutschland/06188.en.html>

Studying in Germany:

www.study-in.de

Shared Flats (Wohngemeinschaft – WG):

www.easywg.de, www.wohngemeinschaft.de, www.studenten-wg.de, www.web-wohnungssuche.de, www.zwischenmiete.de

Private Apartments:

www.studenten-wohnung.de , www.studentenwohnungsmarkt.de , www.studentenwohnungen.de

Youth Hostels in Germany:

www.jugendherberge.de/en
www.hostelgermany.com

Deutsch Bahn (Railways):

www.bahn.de

Mitfahrzentrale (Agency for arranging shared travel):

<http://www.mitfahrzentrale.de>

Goethe-Institut (German language and culture):

<http://www.goethe.de>

Comprehensive primer to studying and living in Germany:

http://www.daad.de/imperia/md/content/de/deutschland/downloads/daad_sid_brosch_auf13_in_en_090826_dl.pdf