

## TRAVEL TIPS

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### | PASSPORTS

You need a valid U.S. passport in order to travel. Please make sure it is signed and that the expiration date is at least three months beyond your scheduled return date. Make copies of the inside page of your passport showing your name and passport number, and put them in your carry-on and in your suitcase in case you need to replace your passport while on tour. It is also wise to give a copy to someone back home. **Do not pack your passport in your suitcase!**

Please be sure you have at least two blank pages in your passport to allow for entry and exit stamps. If you do not have enough pages, you may be denied entry into Europe, so please apply for a new passport as soon as possible. As of January 1, 2016, it is no longer possible to add visa pages as inserts to an existing passport.

### | FREQUENT FLYER MILES

You will be flying with **Delta Air Lines**, a member of the Sky Team Alliance. If you are a member of Delta's SkyMiles program, you may be able to earn frequent flyer miles for your flights. We will give your frequent flyer number to the airlines if you e-mail it to us at [groups@wittetravel.com](mailto:groups@wittetravel.com). When you send the information, be sure to include your group leader's name and the dates you'll be traveling. It is a good idea to verify that the airlines have your frequent flyer number when you check in at the airport, and to save your boarding passes and passenger receipt until you have received your statement from the airlines showing your mileage credit. *Mileage credit is not guaranteed, and the amount of mileage earned may vary according to the airline's policy.*

### | LUGGAGE

- **One checked bag**, not to exceed 50 pounds and a total of 62 inches (height plus width plus depth). You will have to pay for extra weight, so go on the light side. The suitcase cannot be locked unless you use a TSA-approved lock, but can be secured to keep it from opening. You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage at airports and throughout the tour.
- **One carry-on bag** that can fit in the overhead compartment and does not exceed 15 pounds. If you wish to take any liquids, creams, toothpaste, or gels in your carry-on bag, put them in 3 oz. bottles or tubes and place them in one quart-sized, clear Ziploc bag (3-1-1 rule). For more information, please visit [www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/3-1-1-liquids-rule](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/3-1-1-liquids-rule).
- **One personal item** such as a purse, backpack, camera case, laptop case, or briefcase.

### | AT THE AIRPORT

- ✓ Please attach your Witte luggage tags to your suitcase before you arrive at the airport, even if you also already have your own, as this helps us identify our group and your luggage as belonging to it.
- ✓ If you have been approved for the TSA Pre✓ program and have been given a known traveler number (KTN), please e-mail it to us at [groups@wittetravel.com](mailto:groups@wittetravel.com) prior to your trip. For more information about TSA Pre✓, visit [www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck](http://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck).
- ✓ Follow the 3-1-1 rule, and make sure any liquids in your carry-on are easily accessible. You will need to take them out of your carry-on and place them in a bin when you go through security.
- ✓ To expedite the security check process, put any metal items (keys, jewelry, loose change, etc.) inside your carry-on bag.
- ✓ Keep in mind that you will need to remove your jacket, shoes, belt, and jewelry when you go through security, and avoid wearing clothing and accessories that contain metal.
- ✓ Remove any electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc.) from their cases and place them in a bin, separate from your carry-on bag.

**Note:** Airline procedures require the functionality of electronic devices, so be sure that your devices are fully charged before going to the airport for both your departure and return. Powerless devices may not be permitted on board.

## | WEATHER

Winter in Germany is beautiful, but chilly. Average daytime temperatures range from 28 - 37 °F, with cooler temperatures in the evenings. Snowfalls tend to be sporadic and rain is always a possibility, so be sure to pack a warm coat, waterproof shoes or boots, a hat, a scarf, mittens or gloves, and an umbrella just in case. Check [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for more details about the forecast as you are packing.

## | CLOTHING

Your director will advise you of appropriate performance attire. For your sightseeing days, we recommend that you bring comfortable, “nice casual” clothes that can be easily layered. You might consider taking along an additional dressier outfit for evening meals. **Please also pack good walking shoes, as you will be doing quite a bit of walking during your tour.**

## | MONEY

### Currency

The currency used in Germany is the Euro (EUR). The exchange rate is approximately \$1.00 USD = €1.14 EUR. This rate fluctuates, and may be different when you travel. To check the most recent exchange rates, visit [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter).

### Suggested Budget

Although most of your meals, sightseeing admissions, and tips are included in the cost of the tour, you will still need about \$25 - \$30 per day to cover your independent meals, snacks and beverages.

### Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are typically accepted at most upscale hotels, stores, and restaurants in major tourist areas, but it's best to use cash for purchases anywhere else. Be aware that most banks and credit card companies will charge fees for international transactions each time you use your card, so check with your bank first to find out what you can expect.

**Note: If your credit/debit cards do not have an EMV chip, contact your bank immediately to request replacements.** Much of Europe has switched over to “chip and PIN” credit card systems, so credit/debit cards that use a magnetic stripe rather than EMV chip may not be accepted at ATMs or used to make purchases.

### Cash

The easiest and cheapest way to obtain foreign currency is by using a debit card to withdraw cash from an ATM, where you'll get the wholesale exchange rate. You should know that most banks charge a small transaction fee for international withdrawals; typically either a flat rate of a few dollars, or a small percentage (1-3%) of your withdrawal. For this reason, you may want to make a few larger withdrawals to avoid racking up lots of fees for frequent transactions—just be careful not to withdraw more money than you need, as you will lose money trying to change it back to U.S. dollars. It's also wise to withdraw cash in uneven amounts (for example, 180 euros instead of 200) so you don't end up with several very large bills that will be difficult to break later on.

Before you leave, call the number on the back of your credit/debit card to notify the bank/credit card company that you will be traveling. Otherwise, your foreign transactions may appear to be fraudulent, which could result in your account being frozen and leaving you unable to access your money.

### Tipping

Tipping for group services, including tour guides, drivers, and wait staff at group meals, is already included in the tour cost. However, since you will be paying for your independent meals and beverages, you may be wondering about appropriate tipping etiquette.

Service workers in Europe are paid a livable wage, and therefore do not rely on tips as heavily as service workers do in the U.S. Leaving 5-10% is considered a very good tip if you've had a pleasant dining experience. It's usually preferred that you tip in cash (using local currency) whenever possible. To ensure that your tip makes it to the right person, always give your tip directly to your server rather than leaving it on the table. We also suggest leaving €1 on your hotel pillow each day for the person cleaning your room.

## | SECURITY

Germany is a safe country, but as with any large city or tourist destination, pickpocketing and theft is not uncommon. However, you can easily minimize your risk by taking a few simple precautions. Before you leave for your tour, go through your purse or wallet and take out any ID cards and credit cards that you will not need for your trip, and keep your expensive jewelry and watches at home. Don't leave any valuables lying around your hotel room while you are out for the day; hotel rooms usually have a safe where you can keep most of your money, documents, and other valuables, but don't forget to empty it before checking out.

You may find it economical to use cash for most of your purchases, but be cautious when using ATMs to withdraw large amounts, as carrying a lot of cash can make you a potential target for pickpockets. Always cover the keypad when you are entering your PIN, and be discreet about the amount that you are withdrawing. Whenever possible, leave most of your money in your hotel safe and carry only enough money needed for the day in a neck pouch, money belt, or travel wallet that can be worn underneath your clothing.

Write down the telephone numbers of your credit card companies in case you need to cancel them, and keep those in your suitcase. Be careful about how you carry your purse or backpack; always keep them zipped or closed, and carry them under your arm. Don't hang them on the back of your chair where they are easy to access, and never leave your belongings unattended, even for a minute.

## | ELECTRONICS

**Adapters:** The outlets in Europe are shaped differently from the outlets that we use in the United States, so you will need the correct adapter in order to plug in your device. We recommend that you invest in an international plug adapter set like this one: [www.amazon.com/International-Adapter-Pacific-America-Lenmar/dp/B00013BL18](http://www.amazon.com/International-Adapter-Pacific-America-Lenmar/dp/B00013BL18). They usually cost between \$10-15, and include adapters for Europe; Middle East & Africa; Asia Pacific; South America; & South Pacific.

**Converters:** The electric current in Europe is 220-240v. American appliances run on 110 volts, although many newer electronic devices are "dual voltage" and can operate on both currents. However, be sure to check your chargers and electronics beforehand—if your electronic device only operates on 110–120v, then you will need a converter to avoid damaging your device.

## | TIME DIFFERENCE

Germany is 6 hours ahead of New York (EST), 7 hours ahead of Chicago (CST), 8 hours ahead of Denver (MST), and 9 hours ahead of Los Angeles (PST).

## | HEALTH

Before you leave, check with your health insurance provider for their policy on coverage during international travel. Some insurance companies reimburse any health care expenses while abroad, so should you need medical care while traveling, be sure to keep any receipts or invoices. Carry your prescription drugs in the original containers and always pack them in your carry-on bag. You might also bring along your health insurance card and your doctor's phone number, as well as a small first-aid kit that includes bandages, anti-bacterial ointment, hand sanitizer, ibuprofen / Tylenol, anti-diarrheal, and cold medicine. Since no one likes getting sick while traveling, we recommend that you get a flu shot before your trip, and make sure to drink lots of water and get plenty of rest during the tour.

## | PHONE & INTERNET

**Internet:** Most hotels will have WiFi internet, but some may charge you a fee to access it.

**Phones:** Using your phone abroad can be very expensive (possibly more than \$3 per minute!), but if you must use your phone while traveling, there are things that you can do to significantly reduce the cost.

- Avoid making phone calls from your hotel room.
- Before you leave the United States, be sure that you turn off your cellular data to avoid costly roaming charges.
- If you need to be reachable at all times or expect to make a lot of calls during your trip, you might consider signing up for an international plan with your service provider. Many providers offer international calling, texting, or data plans that will allow you to use your phone abroad for reduced rates. Check with your service provider to learn more about what international plans they offer, and then simply cancel international service once you return home.
- If you can be flexible about when and how you can be reached on your phone while traveling, there are lots of alternative options that allow you to use your smartphone abroad for free or at a significantly lower cost. We suggest downloading the Skype app ([www.skype.com/en](http://www.skype.com/en)), which will allow you to call, text, and video chat with other Skype users internationally for free over WiFi. You can also use Skype to call landlines and other cell phones internationally for just pennies per minute.

For more information about using your smartphone abroad, check out our blog post ([www.witte travel.com/blog/2015/06/12/using-your-smartphone-abroad](http://www.witte travel.com/blog/2015/06/12/using-your-smartphone-abroad)) or go to [www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech](http://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech).

## | FOOD & DRINK

### Popular Dishes

The food in Germany is rich and hearty, with lots of meat (pork, beef, and chicken), potatoes, root vegetables, briny cabbage, crusty breads, and many varieties of sausage (*würst*). Breakfast often consists of breads and rolls, cold deli meats, cheese, jam, and hard-boiled eggs. Soft pretzels and *würst* from a street vendor make for a filling, inexpensive lunch. Dumplings, stews, and pastries are common dinner fares. Germany is also known for having a wide variety of superior quality beer.

### Water

Tap water in Germany is perfectly safe to drink.

### Group Meals

Breakfast is included in the tour cost, and will be served “buffet-style” at your hotel each morning. The rest of your group meals will mostly be plated dishes that have been pre-ordered at the hotel or at a restaurant.

### Food Allergies / Dietary Restrictions

If you have any food allergies or dietary restrictions that you did not list on your application, please confirm them with Witte Tours as soon as possible.

## | RESTROOMS

All of your hotels will have modern facilities with private bathrooms. Public restrooms in Europe tend to be clean and readily available—look around for a sign that says WC (short for “water closet”), or ask for the “Toilette” (pronounced *twah-leh-tah*). Women’s toilets are usually marked with an “F” for *Frauen* or “D” for *Damen*, and men’s toilets are labeled with an “H” for *Herren*. Some places may charge you to use the bathroom, so always carry some change with you for this purpose. Your motorcoach will have a toilet, but it is intended only for emergencies.

## | PHYSICAL ACTIVITY / PREPARATION

Exercise regularly prior to the trip so that you are physically prepared to walk 3-5 miles per day. Very few places in Europe are accessible “just off the bus.”

## | LANGUAGE

As you might expect, German is the official language of Germany. In large cities, you’ll find that a lot of people speak and understand English, although English is limited in smaller, more rural areas.

### Popular phrases:

Hello	<b>Guten tag</b> ( <i>GOOT-en tahg</i> ) or <b>Hallo</b> ( <i>ha-low</i> )
Goodbye	<b>Auf wiedersehen</b> ( <i>owf VEE-der-zen</i> ) or <b>tschüss</b> ( <i>choos</i> )
Yes	<b>Ja</b> ( <i>yah</i> )
No	<b>Nein</b> ( <i>nine</i> )
How are you?	<b>Wie geht es Ihnen?</b> ( <i>vee gayt ess een-en</i> )
Please	<b>Bitte</b> ( <i>BITT-uh</i> ) or <b>bitte schön</b> ( <i>BITT-uh shoon</i> )
Thank you	<b>Danke</b> ( <i>DAH-keh</i> ) or <b>danke schön</b> ( <i>DAH-keh shoon</i> )
You’re welcome	<b>Bitte</b> ( <i>BITT-uh</i> )
Do you speak English?	<b>Sprechen Sie Englisch?</b> ( <i>SPREK-en zee eng-lish</i> )
I don’t understand	<b>Ich verstehe nicht</b> ( <i>ick fair-shtay-er nickt</i> )

### Additional Resources:

[www.frommers.com/destinations/germany](http://www.frommers.com/destinations/germany)

[www.fodors.com/world/europe/germany/travel-tips](http://www.fodors.com/world/europe/germany/travel-tips)

