Germany

Overview

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- AIG Travel rates Germany a LOW risk location due to minimal crime and civil unrest, in addition to general economic prosperity.

Germany, located in central Europe, is the most populous EU member state with more than 82 million people. It shares a border with Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. Germany is an economically prosperous country with one of the highest GDPs in the world.

Germany, a federal republic composed of 16 constituent states, is a stable democracy with LOW political concerns. The president, currently Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has mostly ceremonial duties. The head of government is Chancellor Angela Merkel, who came to power in 2005. Her party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) also won the largest share of votes in the September 2017 federal election. Corruption concerns are MINOR. Civil unrest is a LOW concern, as protests and demonstrations – generally regarding domestic political issues – are common in Germany, especially in the capital Berlin, but are peaceful in most cases.

Crime is a LOW concern in Germany. Petty crime is common in major cities, especially in crowded areas such as airports, shopping centers and on public transport. Rates of violent crime are low and primarily concentrated in large cities. Germany has a MODERATE risk of terrorism. Security forces are especially concerned about German nationals that left the country to fight alongside extremist forces in the Middle East and returned to Germany. Additionally, risks are elevated due to the large military presence the United States maintains in Germany.

Infrastructure in Germany is generally of very high quality. Internet and cellular services are universally available. Provision of electricity and other utilities is reliable. The road network is extensive and well-maintained, although roads may be in moderate condition in eastern Germany. Healthcare is of high quality throughout the country.

Political conditions

Political

- Political risks are a LOW concern in Germany, which is a stable democracy.
Germany is a stable federal republic consisting of 16 states. Federalism is well entrenched in Germany as the states share power with the national government on certain matters such as civil law, education and public health. States have complete authority over media regulation and laws relating to local culture; however, national defense, foreign affairs and transportation are the sole domain of the national government.

Two bodies comprise the legislature of Germany – the Bundestag represents the people and the Bundesrat represents state governments. The Bundestag is the primary legislative body in Germany, although the Bundesrat also plays a subordinate role in passing laws. While politics in Germany have traditionally been dominated by the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), minor parties also play a large role in government. These groups gain a voice through coalition governments, which are common in Germany as one party rarely wins a majority of seats, making single party rule impossible. The chancellor, who heads the government and holds most executive authority, is generally the head of the chief party in the governing coalition.

The president and head of state is Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who was elected in February 2017. Although Steinmeier is a member of the SPD, the office of the president has traditionally been non-partisan, and presidents are not expected to be active members of political parties. His candidacy was effectively endorsed by all major parties, as the CDU chose not to field a candidate.

The chancellor, who serves as head of government and holds most executive power, is Angela Merkel. Merkel came to power after the 2005 federal election and retained the post of chancellor in the 2009, 2013 and 2017 elections. The next federal election is scheduled for 2021. Following significant delays in building a new government after the September 2017 vote, the CDU and the SPD agreed to form a new grand coalition government. Talks regarding the formation of a government also included the CDU’s regional partner and center-right party Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU). The announcement was made following prolonged talks overnight between the parties in which both sides agreed in principle to not raise taxes should they form a government together. The two parties also reportedly provisionally agreed to progressively abolish a tax to support the country’s poorer eastern states, to limit asylum-seeker arrivals into the country, to further reduce overseas arms exports and to facilitate talks aimed at increasing ties between Turkey and the European Union.

The power of Merkel’s coalition continues to face problems as European Parliament elections brought widespread losses among the CDU and CSU parties, along with their coalition partner in Berlin, the SPD. Given the continued decrease in support for their parties, the coalition has weakened and some suggest the SPD may leave the coalition in a bid for new elections. Merkel has since announced her resignation as party leader of the CDU, a role overtaken by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer in December 2018. Despite Kramp’s new role in party leadership Angela Merkel has maintained that she will continue her role as Chancellor until the next election, which is expected by October 2021.

Domestically, the Merkel government has pursued economic reforms aimed at boosting the economy and addressing issues related to Germany’s aging population, such as cuts to social spending and tax rates, as well as working towards a balanced budget. Such measures are intended to boost the economy and increase prosperity. Germany has begun a policy to phase out its nuclear power plants, coal and natural gas in favor of green and alternative power generation. Internationally, the government has continued to pursue previous government policies of maintaining stable, amicable relations with foreign governments; Germany is not involved in any international disputes with neighboring countries.

**Economy**

Germany has a large financial sector, with the European Central Bank based in Frankfurt. Germany’s well-educated workforce enables it to be a world leader in several areas of advanced manufacturing, such as aerospace and technology products. Germany is also a leading manufacturer of cars, heavy machinery and chemicals. With manufacturing such a prominent part of the economy, exports account for a large share of GDP.
Corruption

- Corruption in Germany is a MINOR concern. Levels of petty and administrative bribery are uncommon.

Corruption in Germany is generally a minor concern. Bribery and other forms of petty corruption occur infrequently. Public bodies and government agencies are generally committed to professionalism and transparency. There are strong institutions in place to combat corruption when it occurs.

Transparency International, a non-governmental organization that monitors global corruption, gave Germany a score of 80 out of 100 in its 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures levels of perceived corruption ranging from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (extremely transparent). Germany’s score suggests minor levels of corruption, and the country was rated as the 11th least corrupt out of 180 surveyed.

Security issues

General crime

- Crime is an area of LOW concern in Germany due to low, stable crime rates and effective law enforcement.

Germany experiences low rates of crime, both violent and nonviolent, and crime rates have remained largely stable. Crime is concentrated in large cities, which can be attributed to population density rather than specific local factors. The most common crime in Germany is theft, such as pick-pocketing and bag-snatching. Petty crime is most common after dark in crowded public areas, including public transportation, shopping malls and locations frequented by tourists. Individuals are often targeted due to perceived affluence.

Germany has low rates of violent crime. The murder rate is among the lowest in Europe, and rates of assault are also below average for the European Union. Alcohol is often a factor in violent crime. While uncommon, German nationalist extremists have harassed or carried out violent attacks on individuals perceived as foreign. This occurs more often in the states that formerly comprised East Germany, but these attacks have happened throughout the country. Additionally, Germany has recently seen a rise in harassment or attacks on individuals perceived to be Jewish.

Organized criminal groups are active in Germany, as it is a destination country for illicit drugs and human trafficking. These syndicates are also involved in extortion, money laundering and the sex trade. In addition to indigenous organizations, the Italian, Russian and Albanian mafias operate in Germany. Occasional violence between rival organizations does occur, but generally individuals unaffiliated with organized crime remain unaffected. The Federal Criminal Police Office, or Bundeskriminalamt, has been tasked with combating organized criminal groups in the country and continues to do so. In December 2018 security officials conducted a number of raids on suspected organized crime locations, arresting 90 and eventually prosecuting 47 for crimes relating to money laundering and the drug trade.

Terrorism

- Terrorism is a MODERATE concern, as there is a risk associated with U.S. military facilities in the country and from affiliates or sympathizers of transnational terror groups.

Germany has a moderate risk of being targeted for terrorist attacks stemming primarily from threats made by transnational groups. This threat also exists for U.S. military bases and personnel. Military bases, in addition to nightclubs and other locations frequented by U.S. military personnel, have been targeted for terrorist attacks in the past. Civilians in Germany are not specifically targeted, but may be affected by indiscriminate
attacks.

Few terrorist and mass casualty attacks have taken place in Germany in recent years. A Syrian refugee blew himself up outside of a music festival in Ansbach in July 2016, while a Tunisian refugee stole a truck and drove it into a Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016. Additional attacks, perpetrated by Kurdish youth, occurred in March 2018 against Turkish businesses, mosques and housing due to ongoing Turkish-Kurdish tensions. These attacks have led to an elevated security posture by intelligence services and have also led to a rise in anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Right-wing extremist attacks largely comprise the remainder of terrorist attacks in Germany. Knife attacks, bombings and car ramming incidents have all been used by right-wing extremists in Germany. Right-wing extremism continues to be a concern for German authorities.

**Civil unrest**

- Civil unrest is an area of LOW concern in Germany, as regular peaceful demonstrations and rallies take place in Berlin and other large cities, along with occasional strikes.

Demonstrations and rallies occur relatively often, especially in Berlin, but are generally peaceful. They occur most commonly near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, at the Roemer City Hall in Frankfurt and at the Marienplatz in Munich. German police deploy extra security forces in areas near demonstrations to maintain order.

Due to the German industrial policy of having labor representation on executive boards, strikes are less common in Germany than in neighboring countries. Despite this, strikes do occasionally take place but are rarely disruptive. Transportation strikes over working conditions are an exception to this norm and have proven disruptive to local travel in the past. However, such strikes are generally announced in advance, allowing individuals to make contingency plans.

The ongoing influx of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa into Germany has increased the frequency of civil unrest actions. The issue of migration continues to prompt rallies in most cities either for or against accepting asylum seekers. Related nationalist rallies have become more common in the country in recent years. These demonstrations are sometimes attacked by left-wing anti-fascist groups, resulting in minor injuries and arrests of disorderly individuals. Large numbers of police are typically deployed to such protests. When these incidents do occur police routinely use water cannons, tear gas and other anti-riot tactics to disperse crowds. Moreover, ethnic nationalists have reportedly carried out violent attacks on people believed to be non-European as well as at locations designated to become a temporary shelter for asylum seekers. The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party commonly schedules rallies protesting the government’s ongoing migration policies. These and related rallies are often the site of civil unrest.

**Travel logistics**

**Entering the country**

**Entry Requirements**

- Citizens of EU countries require only a valid passport or a national ID card to enter Germany.
- Citizens from countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States need passports valid for three to six months beyond date of entry for visits fewer than 90 days.
- Travelers who are not citizens of the EU and whose countries of residence do not have visa-free access to the Schengen countries are required to have a valid passport as well as a valid Schengen visa or a valid EU residency permit to enter Germany.
Political/Security Risks
AIG Travel rates Germany a LOW risk location due to minimal crime and civil unrest, in addition to general economic prosperity.

- Political risk is a LOW concern in Germany, which is a stable democracy.
- Corruption in Germany is a MINOR concern. Levels of petty and administrative bribery are uncommon.
- Crime is an area of LOW concern in Germany due to low, stable crime rates and effective law enforcement.
- Terrorism is a MODERATE concern, as there is a risk associated with U.S. military facilities in the country and from affiliates or sympathizers of transnational terror groups.
- Civil unrest is an area of LOW concern in Germany, as regular peaceful demonstrations and rallies take place in Berlin and other large cities, along with occasional strikes.

Infrastructure
Germany has a modern infrastructure that presents MINOR risks.

- The road network is extensive and well-maintained, both in urban and rural areas.
- Rail transportation is fast, and large cities have excellent public transportation options.
- Water, electricity and other public utilities are adequate throughout the country.
- Telecommunications services, such as internet and cellular networks, are ubiquitous and of good quality.

Air travel
The busiest airport in Germany is Frankfurt Airport (EDFF/FRA), approximately 7 mi (12 km) southwest of the Frankfurt city center. The facilities at the airport are modern and include a variety of shops, restaurants and currency exchanges. The airport is connected to the city center by road, including by bus, and by train.

Munich Airport (EDDM/MUC) is the second-busiest airport in Germany. The airport is located 18 mi (29 km) northeast of Munich and is connected to the city by road and rail. Facilities at Munich Airport are modern, with shops, ATMs and currency exchanges.

Berlin-Tegel Airport (EDDT/TXL) is located in the suburb of Tegel, 5 mi (8 km) northwest of the city center. The airport was recently renovated and contains facilities such as banks, shops, ATMs and a post office. The airport can be reached by road, but there are no rail links between the airport and the city of Berlin.

Getting around
Germany’s extensive network of air, road and rail transport is efficient and modern.

- **Road** – Germany’s roads are generally in good condition. Traffic drives on the right.
  - **Self-Driving** - All valid foreign, non-EU drivers’ licenses are accepted for up to six months. While there is no federally mandated speed limit on the Autobahn – the interstate highway system – individual states have the power to set speed limits. These exist primarily within and on approach to urban areas. Germany has strict laws against drunk driving and a low legal limit for what constitutes drunk driving.
  - **Bus** - Intra-city buses are common throughout Germany, with regular service running during the weekday. Service may be limited on evenings and weekends, especially outside of major urban areas. Inter-city bus service is available.
  - **Taxi** - Metered taxis are widely available throughout Germany.
• **Rail** – National rail operator Deutsche Bahn runs regular train service throughout Germany. High speed rail connects most major cities, and regional trains connect smaller locations with regional hubs. Commuter rail is widely available in major cities. Germany’s rail system is well-integrated into the greater network of international rail that exists in Europe.

**Culture**

• German cities are cosmopolitan, and widespread cultural tensions are not commonplace. However, there are small cohorts of extremist nationalists that have been carrying out attacks against individuals perceived as foreign. This occurs most commonly in the former East Germany, but attacks have occurred throughout the country.
• Additionally, increasing tensions between immigrant communities of various ethnic groups and denominations have led to incidents of violence in several metropolitan areas.
• Business culture in Germany is conducted in a very formal manner. Colleagues, even those who have known one another for years, commonly refer to one another by title and surname.
• Punctuality is very important, and even minor lateness is perceived as rude. Regular lateness may be perceived as deliberately insulting.
• Blunt honesty is not generally viewed as rude or insulting in Germany.
• It is against the law in Germany to display any symbols associated with Nazism, including swastikas and the Nazi salute.

**Important Dates in 2019**

• 1 January – New Year’s Day
• 6 January – Epiphany, Three Kings’ Day
• 4 March – Fasching
• 19 April – Good Friday
• 21 April – Easter Day
• 22 April – Easter Monday
• 1 May – Labor Day
• 30 May – Ascension Day
• 9 June – Whit Sunday
• 10 June – Whit Monday
• 20 June – Corpus Christi
• 15 August – Assumption Day
• 3 October – German Unity Day
• 5 October – Oktoberfest
• 31 October – Reformation Day
• 1 November – All Saints Day
• 25 December – Christmas
• 26 December – St. Stephen’s Day

**Health concerns**

The standard of medical facilities and care is generally excellent countrywide. Most medical personnel have a good knowledge of the English language. Citizens of European nations holding a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are entitled to free emergency medical assistance in European countries, including Germany. It should be noted that the EHIC only provides entitlement to emergency treatments in state-run medical facilities. Fully comprehensive medical insurance is recommended. Emergency treatment is free for travelers, but doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for any other medical services from those that have no permanent address in Germany. Pharmacies are available in all cities and towns, and all basic medical supplies are readily available.
Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Ixodes ticks. TBE is a risk between March and November each year, especially in the states of Baden-Wurttemberg, Bavaria, Hessen and Thuringen. Travelers engaging in prolonged outdoor activities in forested areas are particularly at risk.

Vaccinations are recommended against hepatitis A, hepatitis B, measles and rabies.

Travelers should ensure that their routine vaccinations are up to date for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. Individuals should visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This timeframe should allow any prescribed vaccinations to take effect. Travelers should visit a medical professional even if their departure is within four weeks. Comprehensive medical insurance, including provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers should bring with them an appropriate supply of any prescription medication accompanied by written doctor's instructions that explain the purpose and justify the quantities.

There have been no recent outbreaks reported in country.

Travelers should consume only sterilized or bottled water; this precaution extends to water used for brushing teeth, making ice and washing foods. Individuals should not bathe or swim in rivers or lakes. Unpasteurized milk should be avoided, and fruits and vegetables should be consumed only if they have been peeled or cooked. Food from street vendors and undercooked meat and fish should be avoided.

The emergency number for an ambulance, police and fire and rescue services in Germany is 112. The services provide good coverage and response times countrywide.

Natural hazards

Avalanches and other accidents related to mountain areas are common in the southern Alpine region. Flash flooding often occurs during the summer months. Large-scale flooding has taken place in the past, causing several deaths.

Money

- **Currency** – The euro (EUR) is the official currency of Germany. The euro is divided into 100 cents. Banknotes are issued in 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euro denominations. Coins are issued in 1 and 2 euros and 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents.
- **Foreign exchange** – Currency exchange locations are available at banks, airports and many hotels. Smaller hotels may not be able to exchange large amounts of money.
- **ATMs/Credit Cards** – ATMs are widely available, including at popular tourist locations, shopping complexes, large international hotels and throughout most cities and towns. Major international credit cards are accepted at most large hotels, shops and restaurants. However, many shops and restaurants may insist on cash.
- **Tipping** – Tipping is not expected in restaurants; although a small tip of five to ten percent is customary if the service was satisfactory. Taxi drivers and delivery drivers expect a tip of five to ten percent, or at least one euro.
- **Business hours** – Banks are generally open Monday through Friday from 08:30 – 17:00. Banks in airports or major train stations may be open Monday through Friday from 06:30 – 22:30.

Contact Information

- International dialing code: +49
- International dialing prefix: 00
Cultural factors

Cultural tension

German cities are cosmopolitan, and widespread cultural tensions are not commonplace. However, there are small cohorts of extremist nationalists that have been carrying out attacks against individuals perceived as foreign. This occurs most commonly in the former East Germany, but attacks have occurred throughout the country.

Additionally, increasing tensions between immigrant communities of various ethnic groups and denominations have led to incidents of violence in several metropolitan areas. In the past, those incidents were mainly connected to developments in the Middle East, such as the rise of the Islamic State (IS) militias, the Syrian civil war, or issues surrounding the Kurdish population in Turkey. Tensions are also increasing between different ethnicities within migrant shelters, which have led to instances of violence at multiple locations.

Etiquette and norms

- Business culture in Germany is conducted in a very formal manner. Colleagues, even those who have known one another for years, commonly refer to one another by title and surname.
- Punctuality is very important, and even minor lateness is perceived as rude. Regular lateness may be perceived as deliberately insulting.
- Blunt honesty is not generally viewed as rude or insulting in Germany.

Dos and donts

- It is against the law in Germany to display any symbols associated with Nazism, including swastikas and the Nazi salute.

Useful information

Useful information

- Public holidays
- Weather forecast
- Maps
- Germany Tourism
- Electricity: 230 volts, 50 Hz; for the most commonly used plug types, please click here.

Contact details

Important contact details

- International dialing code: +49
- International dialing prefix: 00

Emergency numbers
Police: 110, 112
Ambulance: 112
Fire: 112

Embassies

**Australian Embassy**
Wallstrasse 76-79
10179 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 880 088 0
Fax: +49 30 880 088 210
Email: info.berlin@dfat.gov.au

**British Embassy**
Wilhelmstrasse 70-71
10117 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 204 570
Email: ukingermany@fco.gov.uk

**Chinese Embassy**
Markisches Ufer 54
10179 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 275 880
Fax: +49 30 275 882 21
Email: de@mofcom.gov.cn

**French Embassy**
Pariser Platz 5
10117 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 590 039 000

**Japanese Embassy**
Hiroshimastrasse 6
10785 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 210 940
Fax: +49 30 210 942 22
Email: info@bo.mofa.go.jp

**Mexican Embassy**
Klingelhoeferstrasse 3
10785 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 269 323 0
Fax: +49 30 269 323 700
Email: mexale@sre.gob.mx

**Saudi Arabian Embassy**
Tiergartenstrasse 33-34
10785 Berlin
Tel: +49 30 889 250
Fax: +49 30 889 251 79
Email: deemb@mofa.gov.sa

**South African Embassy**
Health advisory

Health infrastructure

The standard of medical facilities and care is generally excellent countrywide. Most medical personnel have a good knowledge of the English language. Citizens of European nations holding a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are entitled to free emergency medical assistance in European countries, including Germany. It should be noted that the EHIC only provides entitlement to emergency treatments in state-run medical facilities. Fully comprehensive medical insurance is recommended. Emergency treatment is free for travelers, but doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for any other medical services from those that have no permanent address in Germany. Pharmacies are available in all cities and towns, and all basic medical supplies are readily available.

Pre-travel recommendations

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to Germany:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Measles (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)

Travelers should ensure that their routine vaccinations are up to date for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Individuals should visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This timeframe should allow any prescribed vaccinations to take effect. Travelers should visit a medical professional even if their departure is within four weeks.

Comprehensive medical insurance, including provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers should bring with them an appropriate supply of any prescription medication accompanied by written doctor’s instructions that explain the purpose and justify the quantities.

Significant diseases

The following is a significant disease that may affect travelers to Germany:

- Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Ixodes ticks. TBE is a risk between March and November each year, especially in the states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hessen and Thuringen. Travelers engaging in prolonged outdoor activities in forested areas are particularly at risk.
Recent outbreaks

- There have been no recent outbreaks reported in country.

Food and water safety

Travelers should consume only sterilized or bottled water; this precaution extends to water used for brushing teeth, making ice and washing foods. Individuals should not bathe or swim in rivers or lakes. Unpasteurized milk should be avoided, and fruits and vegetables should be consumed only if they have been peeled or cooked. Food from street vendors and undercooked meat and fish should be avoided.

Emergency response

The emergency number for an ambulance, police and fire and rescue services in Germany is 112. The services provide good coverage and response times countrywide.