

# IDENTITIES ABROAD: GERMANY\*



## IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Germany as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. IEGI understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Germany, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at [study.abroad@purchase.edu](mailto:study.abroad@purchase.edu) and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

### FAST FACTS:

**Capital:** Berlin

**Population:** 80,159,662 (July 2020 est.)

**Language(s):** German (official)

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 27.7%, Protestant 25.5%, Muslim 5.1%, Orthodox 1.9%, other Christian 1.1%, other .9%, none 37.8% (2018 est.)

**Ethnic groups:** German 87.2%, Turkish 1.8%, Polish 1%, Syrian 1%, other 9% (2017 est.)



With a wide range of education abroad options and easy access to northern and western Europe, it is not surprising that Germany is one of the top ten most-popular destinations for U.S. students who study abroad. Germany, a G8 nation, has by far the largest economy of the European Union. The country boasts a robust art scene, and one of the world's leading systems of higher education. For the most part, Germany is a liberal country with laws and policies to protect ethnic and religious minorities, gays, the disabled, and other groups from discrimination. The Germans view themselves as progressive and openly receive

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international visitors. Racism and bigotry are shunned. Religious freedom, LGBT and women's rights are embraced. While not every resident shares these ideals, U.S. students from diverse backgrounds can probably expect instances of ignorance and prejudice less frequently than in their home country. Students may encounter some negative sentiments regarding U.S. policies and government, but it is unlikely that it would be personally directed at the student.

Geographically, Germany is a mid-size country. Customs and beliefs are fairly consistent across its regions, with perhaps the greatest divide having existed along the divide between West and what was formerly East Germany. Despite overarching cultural similarities, differences in cuisine and local dialects are notable. Students inside and outside of the big cities can largely expect to encounter similar cultural circumstances.

Travelers can explore some of the [Best Places to Visit in Germany](#). Recognized as a [World Bank High-Income Country](#), the average [Numbeo Cost of Living in Germany](#) is 8% lower than in United States (aggregate data for all cities, rent is not taken into account). If you plan on renting, expect monthly costs for a single person to be around 33% lower than in United States.

On the micro level, the average cost for a three-course meal for 2 at a mid-range restaurant is between \$37-90 USD (about 30-80 EUR) while a meal at an inexpensive one might cost about \$12USD. Travelers should be able to enjoy a movie for around \$12USD.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Review current travel risks for Germany:

- [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)
- [Safe Travel to Germany](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors Report 2019, 12,250 students from the United States studied abroad in Germany, a roughly 2.7% decrease from the previous year recorded.

## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN GERMANY

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

Although the vast majority (91.5%) of Germans are of Germanic descent, the country has large Turkish, Middle Eastern, and North African communities, particularly in its urban areas.

German policy supports multiculturalism and so do many Germans. However, in recent years nationalist sentiment has grown, with resentment towards immigrant communities stirring a resurgence of extremist groups and political parties. However, travelers of color who visit Germany describe generally positive experiences.

U.S. students of color should not feel highly concerned about experiencing racist acts or discrimination in Germany. Still, this should not be interpreted to mean that prejudice and racism are nonexistent there.

### NOTES:

- Crime rates throughout Germany have been comparable to those in most developed countries, and comparative analysis of crime data for the U.S. and Germany reveals only marginal differences.
- The experience of U.S. students of color is likely to be fairly different than that of African or Middle Eastern immigrants to Germany, whose national origins may incur them additional stigma.
- Men and women of color have noted that, as a result of being an "other" in German society, they are saddled with racial stereotypes that result in excessive curiosity or exoticization. Men have described German women acting aggressively upon them and women of color occasionally being mistaken for prostitutes.
- The development of a new cultural center in Berlin has sparked a fiery debate surrounding illegally acquired artifacts from some of Germany's ex-colonies in Africa. In a recent article, [The Inconvenient Truth about Berlin's New Cultural Center](#), highlights the violent legacy of the objects on display.

- Despite evidence showing that Blacks have been living in Germany for more than 400 years, some segments of society believe [being black means you can't be German](#). Students of color should be aware that the Afro-Deutsch history and movement has not been traditionally part of the educational system curriculum.
- Students of color should carry a copy of identification (or information confirming the traveler's purpose in the county) to show authorities in the event of being racially profiled.
- Students of color report generally feeling welcomed in the country and incidents of discrimination on tourists are rare.
- According to the 2018 Annual Report on Hate Crimes published by the National Police, authorities recorded 8,113 hate crimes reported by police. The report categorized 1,955 of the hate crimes as motivated by racism and xenophobia. Data on government effectively investigating hate crimes and prosecuted the perpetrators is not reported.
- There has been [a reported increase in the threat of extremist, right-wing violence](#). Students should avoid political demonstrations in case they become violent.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018](#), (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuse, and Trafficking in Persons; National Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US. Department of State
- [IES Abroad Germany Diversity resources](#) (see "Race, Ethnicity & National Identity")
- [What's life really like for black people in Germany?](#)
- [Racism in Germany: A Chinese-American reckoning](#)
- First-person narrative by Noaquia Callahan at the Fulbright- [It Must Be Schicksal \(Destiny\): One African American Woman's](#) Extraordinary Study Abroad Journey

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN GERMANY

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

Germany is a popular destination for LGBT students because of its tolerant environment. It has long been one of the most progressive countries in the world with respect to gay rights. Robust anti-discrimination laws have helped foster a prominent gay community.

U.S. students participating in education abroad programs in Germany can generally expect to find a campus environment that is at least as tolerant of and accommodating to the LGBT community as their home campus.

#### NOTES:

- Student support is readily available through community organizations and groups both on and off campus in most university cities.
- Many establishments exist to serve local gay communities across Germany, especially in Berlin.
- Berlin hosts the annual [Lesbisch-Schwules Stadtfest \(Lesbian and Gay City Festival\)](#) - it's billed as Europe's largest such event.
- Berlin celebrates gay pride in June during its famous Christopher Street Day and the festivities that take place over the course of the preceding week

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses and Trafficking in Persons; Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity)
- [Global Gayz](#), a gay-owned charitable travel and culture website focused on LGBT life in countries around the world
- [LGBT Travel Information, U.S. Passports & International Travel](#) (see Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association \(IGLTA\)](#), the Leading Global Resource in the LGBT Tourism Industry
- [LGBTQIA rights and resources](#) gathered on an (incomplete) map of the world, many popular study abroad destinations are featured - UC Davis
- [Lonely Planet LGBTQ Traveler guide](#) for Germany
- [IES Abroad Germany Diversity resources](#) (see "Gender & Sexuality")

## PHYSICAL DISABILITY IN GERMANY

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

Certain areas of German cities boast highly modern infrastructure with buildings and transportation systems accessible to people with physical limitations. Students can feel confident in their capacity to access most areas of major cities.

Older city sections and more rural towns are less accessible due to centuries-old architecture, which promises cobblestone streets, narrow staircase entry-ways, and small indoor spaces.

Germany offers services for people who are mobility, sight, or hearing impaired including advice centers, transport services, and travel aid and itineraries. Universities may offer necessary services to accommodate hearing and sight impaired students. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in several sectors or the provision of other state services.

### NOTES:

- [Barrier Free Tourism in Germany](#) and Barrier Free Destinations in Germany offered by the German National Tourism Board.
- [Visit Berlin](#) offers a guide for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Germany does not quarantine cats and dogs that meet the certain requirements from approved countries ([Pet Travel](#)). All requirements also [apply to service and emotional support animals when traveling abroad](#).
- Germany has good medical care and facilities. If you are not a resident of Germany, doctors and hospitals may expect immediate payment in cash. Most doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies do not accept credit cards.
- Although you can purchase many prescription and non-prescription medications at pharmacies, some common U.S. medications may not be available and thus it is recommended by the [U.S. Dept. of State Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) that travelers carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with a doctor's prescription. As a precaution, travelers should check with the [U.S. Embassy website](#) to find a list of medical facilities.
- Due to Germany's strict customs regulations, you are not allowed to receive prescription medication by mail without special permission. For more information, please visit the [German Customs website](#) regarding medicine.
- Travelers should check with their health insurance policy to see if they are covered abroad. If not, it is advised that travelers acquire supplemental insurance or travel insurance because they could be responsible for all medical costs. U.S. Medicare does not cover travelers overseas. Local healthcare facilities might demand on-the-spot cash payment if your insurance doesn't cover the cost of treatment.
- If students are hearing impaired, or traveling with someone who has a hearing impairment, they should check with potential hosts to determine whether they have: visual adaptation aids for telephone ringers, smoke alarms, fire alarms, doorbell, audio loop systems, amplification on telephone handsets and televisions with teletext.
- For travelers with visual impairment, it is important to check whether accommodations welcome their guide dog, as well as: having markings denoting changes in floor space and height, braille instructions for appliances and controls and use of large print.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA, Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities](#)
- The Lonely Planet, [Traveling with a disability in Germany](#)
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019](#), (see Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Persons with Disabilities)
- Food Allergies - [Select Wisely](#)
- [Frommer's Tips for Travelers with Disabilities - Germany](#)
- [Travel in Germany: Accessibility and Barriers, Wheelchair Traveling](#)

- [Wheelchair Accessible Travel Guide, Wheelchair Travel in Germany](#)
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications, Transportation Security Administration](#)
- [Accessible Journeys, a vacation planner and tour operator making the world more Wheelchair accessible](#)

## RELIGION IN GERMANY

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

The German government legally respects and protects religious freedom through the establishment and enforcement of nondiscriminatory laws and policies. Germany is actively making efforts to better integrate minority groups into society through tolerance education and public outreach.

Students should feel well-supported and protected regardless of religious affiliation. Unfortunately, not all German residents share tolerant and liberal perspectives. Hate and politically motivated crimes by such groups as right-wing extremists and Muslim immigrant youth do occur, if infrequently.

### NOTES:

- Germany is religiously diverse. Houses of worship for Christians, Jews, and Muslims can be found in most urban areas of Germany.
- My Jewish Learning Offers [Jews in Germany Today](#)
- Recent immigration patterns and changes in demographics may have put prejudice and hatred in mainstream society, especially with [negative consequences for Muslims](#). While some discrimination based on religion is rare; freedom and tolerance of various religions is widely accepted and practiced.
- Religious travelers should feel encouraged to celebrate their personal religious beliefs.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [International Religious Freedom Report for 2019](#), the U.S. Department of State
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Yeah That's Kosher, Kosher things While Abroad](#)
- [Synagogues in the Germany](#), Kosher Delight
- [Islam in Germany](#), Euro-Islam Country Info
- [Jewish Virtual Library, The Jewish Virtual Library \(JVL\)](#), a source for information about Jewish history, Israel, U.S.-Israel relations, the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and Judaism
- [Prayer Times in Germany](#), Islamic Finder
- [Directory of Catholic Churches](#) in Germany
- [IES Abroad Germany Diversity resources](#) (see "Religion & Spirituality")

## WOMEN IN GERMANY

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

Women are regarded as equal and the legal structure and protections offered assure this level of respect. Women are likely to be able to find necessary feminine hygiene products.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically low, attacks do occur. Female students should take the usual precautions at bars and clubs where alcohol is served. It is preferred for women to dress in more modest fashion when out in regardless of the weather.

### NOTES:

- Female students who travel to Germany can expect a level of protection and respect equivalent to the U.S.
- [African Women in Germany Speak Out](#), Deutsche Welle-Germany's International Broadcaster
- First-person narrative by Noaquia Callahan at the Fulbright- [It Must Be Schicksal \(Destiny\): One African American Woman's Extraordinary Study Abroad Journey](#)

- Germany ranked 14th (out of 149 countries) in the [2018 Global Gender Gap Index](#) conducted by the World Economic Forum.
- On #WorldHijabDay, TRTworld asked Muslim women what hijab means to them. [Here's what they had to say.](#)
- Germany is usually safe to travel around alone, including for women travelers. However, since women travelers have been more likely to be targets of high risk crimes, it is recommended that travelers are vigilant of their surroundings and make a conscious effort to travel in groups as often as possible.
- The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape and prohibits sexual harassment and provides civil penalties.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices For 2019](#), (See Section 6 Subheading for Women), U.S. Department Of State
- Everything women travelers in Germany need to know about health, romance, women's rights and safety. [Pink Pangea](#), The Community for Women Who Love to Travel
- Go World Travel Magazine: For Those Who Love to Travel - Germany
- What to do while in Germany, Lonely Planet
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Why More African-American Women Need to Travel Around Europe](#), The Huffington Post

#### REFERENCES

Maps, flag and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook 2019](#) Online  
[CIA World Factbook](#) | [IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Germany](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in July 2020 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Purchase Office for Global Education.