

Survival in Germany

Being an “expat” is not easy. Once the relocation service has completed its assignment, most expats are left to deal with new tasks which they feel helpless to handle (spouses and children are the most strongly affected.) It could be something small, but in foreign countries there are other rules to go by. What can you do about it? We recommend the following: First, RELAX. Stop and examine your “mountain” – it might just be a “molehill”. Nearly everyone has starting problems when they move to another country – there is a solution for them! Relocation to a foreign country presents you with new opportunities so take this chance and enjoy life. We would like to give you a few tips to deal with the new challenges.

10 reasons for living in a new country: Ranked in order from 1 to 10

1. Get used to change. You’ll be amazed at how many things there are you just expect to be the same and aren’t. If you don’t learn to adjust these can completely ruin this exciting time in your life.

2. Find a great relocation agent and after the company relocation service finishes you will need **further support** in everyday life. This will save you so much time, hassle, and stress, but only if you have a good service provider! (If you omit this step, then many additional steps are required to find the right place and contacts for your needs). A specialised language trainer could provide you with the right coaching.

For recommendations ask us!

3. Learn the language. Being able to communicate alleviates so many barriers. Start as soon as you know about your assignment. For recommendations ask us!

4. Get on the Net. This is a great source for research, but once you move it is also a lifeline to friends and family in your home country.

5. Research, research, research. The amount of information for expats is overwhelming, but try to identify GOOD resources first, then delve into those. There is A LOT of misleading information to sort through, so having a site like the AWC (American Women’s Club) or the BWC (British Women’s club) is very helpful.

6. Learn the new culture. This goes along with 3 and 4, but do focus on the differences, especially in the business world. It will reduce stress levels, especially when caused by misunderstandings.

7. Bring things that are familiar to you, e.g. photos. It is nice to be surrounded by your friends and family each day.

8. Recognize the stresses as they occur. It is easy to stay focused on work and let tension build. Remember that the divorce rate for expats DOUBLES! Keep this in mind.

9. Don’t JUST hang around with expats of your own nationality. The expat community is an enjoyable and friendly one, but breaking the barriers with people from other cultures is the real way to learn.

10. Take time to travel. This helps you to understand the culture, as well as giving you a break from normal expat stress.

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No matter where you come from, your own country has its special lifestyle and mentality. You know what is acceptable behaviour and how to deal with things there. Here, in Germany, you have similar things to do; but they are just dealt with differently. You don't know how? It doesn't matter, there are others here who know how to help you. Find out what you need to know – get information; ask people you know, or ask us. You now have **the chance** to try out new approaches, to introduce your home country to others, to experience your own traditions more intensively, and maybe you will be happier – who knows – perhaps you will enjoy it so much here that you want to stay...

Around 800,000 emigrants arrive in Germany every year and about 700,000 leave. Germany's culture and public life is enriched by its immigrants. The melting pot of cultures contribute new customs which can be experienced everywhere from festivals to the numerous international restaurants.

So what typical “German“ activities await you?

- Not just for men! - race your own car around the Nürnburgring, the national race track, (watch out though as your car is no longer insured!)
- Visit the Erzgebirge region
- Enjoy the freedom – there are lots of rules and regulations here (not only in German grammar), but some things remain unlimited such as driving at top speed along the highway.
- It's exceptionally safe getting out and about in Germany (of course there are exceptions – as in grammar rules: thieves and criminals are everywhere in the world so it always pays to be careful).
- There are extensive international exhibitions on a wide range of themes.
- What about the fantastic recreational opportunities such as:
- Indoor skiing in the Skihalle in Neuss,
- Water sports on rivers (Ruhr and Rhein) as well as local lakes (in Ratingen, Hattingen and Haltern)
- Huge zoos in Duisburg, Wuppertal and Münster
- Short distances to the Netherlands, Belgium and France, not to mention other European destinations.
- National parks, mountains, snow activities, hiking, mountain biking etc.
- There are well developed cycling trails everywhere.
- National and international airports close by.
- Worried about driving? Refresh your driving skills with a driving instructor who'll help boost your confidence.

Every European country contributes to multicultural Germany, both influencing the culture and enriching it.

Deutsche Sprache – schwere Sprache?: German – a difficult language? Not really - it's simpler than Russian, Chinese or Swedish.

Get language training ! You will be more independent; you can get about more easily and with more confidence. If you go out to work then you have a head start. You have your job to do, colleagues and one language that everyone speaks and understands. You have social contact every day and can always ask someone for advice. However, if you are at home the challenges are much more complex. You have to rely on your home environment for support. Shopping, a visit to the doctor's, buying a bus ticket, doing sports or just eating at a restaurant can all be hurdles – **but don't let yourself get discouraged !**

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Language training helps you to overcome your fears and prejudices. Not only are you learning to speak the language, but you are also given “survival” help to: develop email contacts, research in the Internet, get your telephone set up properly and of course understand the bill (so you can pay it and are not faced with it being cut off), use the right washing powder and so on. Travel information and intercultural competence are also an integral part of your training.

Should your German counterpart behave differently to what you expect this could mean that the situation is unknown on both sides. In this case, just ask. Most of the time you will experience friendliness and help. Don't worry that your language skills aren't perfect – just pluck up your courage! To be perfectly honest misunderstandings can be transformed into the funniest stories you would never have experienced had you stayed at home. Just try to speak German and you will fall into welcome arms – and lots of people do speak English as well.

Enjoy your life and your new cultural environment here. Support your partner and family too! They are dependent on you so ensure your family has positive experiences and everything flows much more easily. Reach out to your new country with pleasure, be ready to change – you'll find that learning the language and living in Germany isn't difficult. You will be surprised at your progress and the positive influences around you. And, you will always profit from your newly acquired survival skills – not just the linguistic ones.

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