

GLOBL TRAVEL PRESENTS

GERMANY

THE COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE

Everything you need. Nothing you don't.

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Beer, Properly
And where you may bring your own food



The Christmas Markets
Germany invented them, in 1434



Bavaria & the Alps
Castles, lakes and the Zugspitze

What this guide covers

All sixteen states, organised the way people actually travel: **Berlin, Munich and Bavaria, the Rhine and the west, and the north and east** — plus full sections on the two things Germany is genuinely unmatched at, and which have rules nobody explains to you before you arrive.

Quick-Start Essentials

CURRENCY

EUR €

Carry cash. Bakeries, market stalls, beer gardens and many restaurants still take nothing else.

PLUG TYPE

🔌 Type C / F

230 V, two round pins. UK and US visitors need an adaptor.

EMERGENCY

112 · 110

112 for fire and ambulance, 110 for police. Both free from any phone.

TIME ZONE

CET

UTC+1 in winter, UTC+2 from late March to late October.

DRIVING

Right side

No motorway toll for cars — but you need an emissions sticker for most cities. See p.7.

TAP WATER

Safe ✓

Excellent everywhere. Restaurants will not offer it, and mostly charge for bottled.

WHEN TO GO

Late Nov–23 Dec The Christmas markets, and the single best reason to visit in winter. Most close on the 23rd or 24th.

Jan–Mar Cold, grey and cheap. Museums are empty, the Alps have snow, the cities are for indoors.

May–Jun The sweet spot. Long days, everything open, beer gardens full, no August crowds.

Jul–Aug Hot, busy and the school holidays. The lakes and the coast come into their own.

Sep–Oct Wine harvest on the Rhine, Oktoberfest in Munich, and the best light of the year.

TWO THINGS THAT SHUT

Sundays Supermarkets and almost every shop, by law. Restaurants, cafés, museums and markets stay open.

The exceptions Shops inside main railway stations, petrol stations, and bakeries for a few hours in the morning.

Public holidays The same again, and they differ by state — Bavaria has several the north does not.

Ruhezeit **ROO-eh-tsité** Quiet hours, 22:00–06:00 and all day Sunday. Enforced by neighbours.

Plan Saturday Everyone shops on Saturday morning and it shows. Go early or go Friday evening.



⚠️ The cash thing is real, and it surprises people

Germany is a wealthy, technically advanced country where a bakery will refuse your card for a €3 pastry. It has improved a great deal, but **assume cash** at bakeries, market stalls, beer gardens, small restaurants, taxis and Christmas markets. Look for *Nur Barzahlung* — cash only — on the door. Free-standing cash machines in tourist streets charge a fee; bank-branded ones mostly do not.

Pfand — the money in your empty bottle

Most drinks bottles and cans carry a deposit, up to **€0.25** on a single-use plastic bottle or can. Feed it into the reverse-vending machine at any supermarket entrance and take the slip to the till. Leave the bottle in a bin and you have thrown away a quarter of what the drink cost.

Language & Phrases

THE ONES THAT ACTUALLY GET USED

Hallo / Guten Tag	Hi / good day HA-lo / GOO-ten TAHK	Danke / Bitte	Thank you / please DUN-keh / BIT-teh
Entschuldigung	Sorry / excuse me ent-SHOOL-dee-goong	Sprechen Sie Englisch?	Do you speak English? SHPREKH-en zee ENG-lish
Zahlen, bitte	The bill, please TSAH-len BIT-teh	Ein Bier, bitte	A beer, please ine BEER BIT-teh
Prost!	Cheers! PROHST	Tschüss	Bye, informal CHUSS

WORDS YOU WILL MEET ON SIGNS AND MENUS

Ausgang / Eingang	Exit / entrance OWS-gang / INE-gang	Bahnhof	Railway station BAHN-hohf
Gleis	 Unlocks when you buy the guide		Till or ticket desk KASS-eh
Pfand	Bottle deposit PFANT	Ruhetag	Closing day — the day it is shut ROO-eh-tahk
Stammtisch	Regulars' table. Do not sit there SHTAM-tish	Selbstbedienung	Self-service ZELPST-be-dee-noong
Kein Trinkwasser	Not drinking water kine TRINK-vass-er	Feiertag	Public holiday — everything shuts FIRE-er-tahk

PLACE NAMES PEOPLE GET WRONG

 One thing that is a criminal offence, not a faux pas

Safety in Germany

OVERALL RATING

Very safe

Among the safest large countries in the world, with excellent emergency services.

CRIME RISK

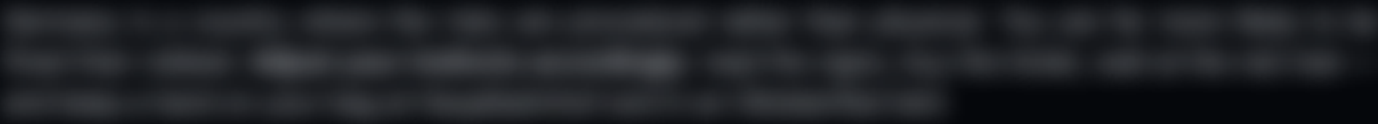
Low

Pickpocketing at major stations and festivals is the realistic risk, not violence.

⚠️ CARRY ID

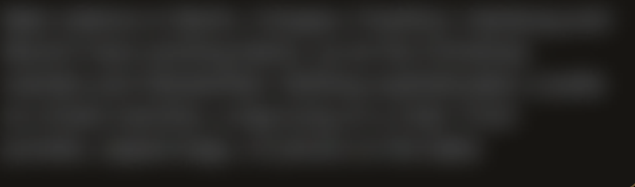
Legally

You must be able to identify yourself. A passport photo on your phone is not enough.



THE FOUR THINGS THAT ACTUALLY CATCH VISITORS

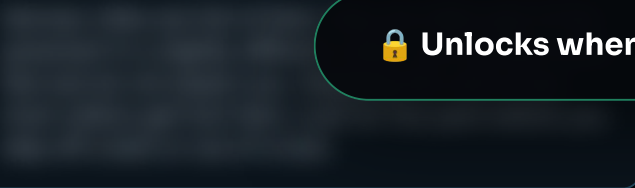
Station pickpockets



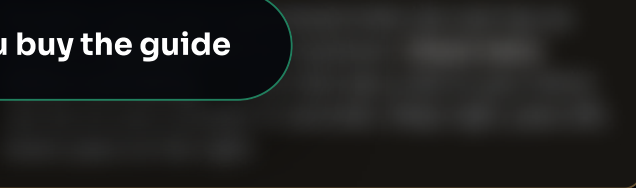
Riding without a valid ticket



Cycle lanes



The Autobahn



Unlocks when you buy the guide

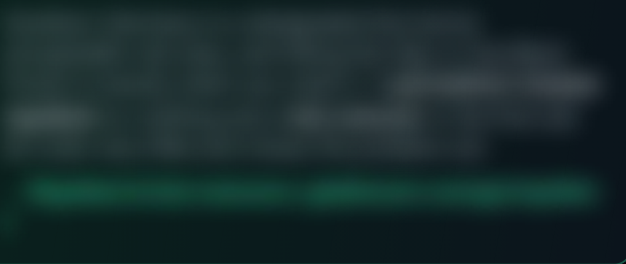
HEALTH & THE OUTDOORS

Ticks Tick-borne encephalitis is a real risk in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, spring to autumn. Check yourself after long grass.

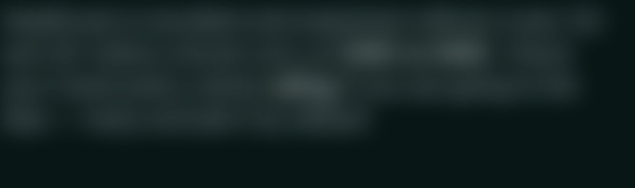
Pharmacies *Apotheke*, with a red gothic A. Excellent advice, and one in every town is open overnight on a rota posted in the window.



Ticks, and the ten-euro fix



Healthcare & insurance



Drink-driving



Connectivity & Apps

 **Get your Germany eSIM before you land**

⚠ CRITICAL — DOWNLOAD FIRST

DB Navigator

Deutsche Bahn's own app: every train in the country, live platforms, live delays, and the only sane place to buy tickets. German trains are late often enough that the live view is not optional.

NINA

The federal emergency warning app — storms, floods, incidents, by location. Free and official.

GETTING AROUND TOWN

BVG / MVG / HVV

Berlin, Munich and Hamburg each have their own. Buy and validate in the app and the ticket problem goes away.

Google Maps

Unusually good on German public transport, and the fastest way to read a connection.

Nextbike / Lime

Bike hire everywhere. Germany is a genuinely cycleable country.

MONEY & EVERYDAY

Wise / Revolut

Best rates, and worth having because you will be taking out cash more than you expect.

Too Good To Go

Founded in Denmark, enormous in Germany. Bakery surplus for about a third of the price.

Wetter DWD

The national weather service. Better than Apple's, especially in the Alps.

DRIVING

ADAC Drive

The motoring club's app — traffic, breakdown, fuel prices, and where the emissions zones start.

Parkopedia / EasyPark

City parking is metered, complicated and enforced with enthusiasm.

FOOD & DRINK

 **Unlocks when you buy the guide**

Lieferando

The delivery app that matters here. Others barely operate.

HappyCow

Germany is one of the best countries in Europe for vegetarians and does not advertise it.

CULTURE

Museum passes

Berlin, Munich and Dresden all sell multi-museum cards in their own apps. See p.18.

Google Translate

Download German offline. The camera mode on a menu earns its place at dinner.

Signal, realistically



Getting There & Around

FLY INTO THE AIRPORT THAT MATCHES YOUR TRIP

FRA Frankfurt — the big hub, with its own long-distance rail station under it.	DUS / CGN Düsseldorf and Cologne — the Rhine, the west, and the market cities.
MUC Munich — for Bavaria, the Alps and Oktoberfest. Excellent airport.	HAM Hamburg — the north, the coast and the Baltic.
BER Berlin Brandenburg — for the capital and the east.	HHN / FMM Hahn and Memmingen — budget airlines call these "Frankfurt" and "Munich". They are not.

The Deutschlandticket, and when it is the whole answer

ONCE YOU'RE THERE

- **Book long-distance trains early.** *Sparpreis* fares start around €18 and are released six months ahead; the same seat on the day can be €150. They are tied to one train. **Flexpreis** costs more and lets you take any train, which is worth it if your plans are loose.
- **German trains are often late.** This is a national joke with a real edge — roughly a third of long-distance trains miss their scheduled time. Do not book a tight connection. **🔓 Unlocks when you buy the guide** before leaving the hotel.
- **Validate every paper ticket.** Regional and city tickets need stamping in the small machine on the platform or inside the tram. App tickets do not. See p.5 for what an unstamped one costs.
- **Cities are better without a car.** Public transport is comprehensive, parking is expensive, and every large city has an emissions zone you need a sticker for.
- **FlixBus is the cheap floor.** Slower than the train, far cheaper, and it reaches towns the railway abandoned.

The emissions sticker — the fine visitors get

Winter tyres, and the Autobahn



Berlin

GREAT SOLO

HISTORY, SERIOUSLY

NIGHTLIFE



TOP HIGHLIGHTS

- **The Reichstag dome** — Norman Foster's glass dome over the parliament chamber, with a spiral ramp to the top and a view across the city. Free, and you  **Unlocks when you buy the guide** in summer.
- **Museum Island** — Five museums on one island in the Spree, a UNESCO site. The Pergamon is partly closed for a long restoration; the **Neues Museum**, holding Nefertiti, is the one to prioritise.
- **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe** — 2,711 concrete blocks on a sloping field beside the Brandenburg Gate. Free, always open, and the underground information centre beneath it is the part people skip and shouldn't.
- **Topography of Terror** — Built on the site of the Gestapo headquarters, along a surviving stretch of the Wall. Free, and the most clear-eyed museum of the Nazi state anywhere.
- **Tempelhof Field** — A whole disused airport turned into a public park. People cycle down the runways. Free, and unlike anywhere else on earth.
- **Berghain, and the rest** — Berlin's club culture is real and the door at the famous one is genuinely selective. Plenty of other clubs are not, and the city's nightlife runs from Friday to Monday morning without pausing.



Where to actually see the Wall

Munich & Bavaria

GREAT WITH CHILDREN

CASTLES & LAKES

ALPS ON THE DOORSTEP



MUNICH

- **The Englischer Garten** — Bigger than Central Park, with a standing river wave that surfers ride all year at the *Eisbach*, and a beer garden under chestnut trees at the Chinese Tower.
- **The Residenz** — The Wittelsbach city palace, and one of the great interiors in Europe. Vast; take the short route unless you have half a day.
- **Deutsches Museum** — The largest science and technology museum in the world, with real aircraft, submarines and mines you walk through. The best rainy day in Germany.
- **Viktualienmarkt** — The daily food market in the centre, with a beer garden in the middle of it that rotates which brewery it pours.



Unlocks when you buy the guide

BAVARIA BEYOND THE CITY

- **Neuschwanstein** — The castle on the cover, built by a king who barely lived in it and never finished it. **Timed tickets only, book weeks ahead**, and the classic view is from the Marienbrücke bridge, not the castle. Two hours from Munich.
- **The Zugspitze** — Germany's highest point at 2,962m, reached by cog railway and cable car from Garmisch. On a clear day you see four countries; on a poor one you see a car park in cloud, so go when the forecast is good.
- **Berchtesgaden and the Königssee** — An emerald fjord-like lake under vertical rock, crossed by electric boats that stop so the crew can play a flugelhorn at the cliff for the echo. It sounds like a gimmick and is genuinely lovely.
- **Bamberg, Regensburg and Würzburg** — Three intact old towns, all UNESCO sites, all far quieter than Rothenburg and better for it.

The regional ticket that beats them all in Bavaria

The Rhine & the West

ROMANTIC

WINE

EASY BY TRAIN



COLOGNE

- **The Dom** — Begun 1248, finished 1880, and it survived the war standing while the city around it did not. Free to enter; 533 steps up the south tower.
- **Kölsch** — The city's own beer, and the rules are on p.14. It matters more here than the cathedral does to some people.
- **Ludwig Museum** — Pop art and one of the best Picasso collections in Europe, right beside the cathedral.



Unlocks when you buy the guide

THE RHINE ITSELF

- **Take the train, not the boat** — The regional line from Koblenz to Bingen runs at the water's edge past every castle, for a few euros, hourly.
- **Burg Eltz** — The one castle that was never destroyed, hidden in a side valley and still owned by the same family after 850 years.
- **Riesling** — The Mosel and Rheingau slopes make the best of it anywhere. Dry *trocken* unless you want it sweet.

ALSO IN THE WEST

The market cities, in one loop

Hamburg, Dresden & the North

MARITIME

CONCERTS & GALLERIES

CHEAPEST CITIES



HAMBURG

- **The Elbphilharmonie** — A glass wave dropped on a brick warehouse, and one of the best concert halls built this century. **The public plaza halfway up is free** — collect a timed ticket at the door and go for the view even if you are not hearing a concert.
- **Speicherstadt and HafenCity** — Canals, red brick and iron bridges, best at dusk. Miniatur Wunderland, the world's largest model railway, is here and is far better than it has any right to be.
- **The Fischmarkt** — Sunday, 05:00 to 09:30, where the night out ends and the fish sellers shout. A genuine Hamburg institution rather than a staged one.



Unlocks when you buy the guide

DRESDEN, LEIPZIG AND THE EAST

- **Dresden** — Destroyed in 1945 and rebuilt stone by stone, the Frauenkirche only finishing in 2005. The **Green Vault** holds the Saxon treasury and needs booking; the Zwinger and the Old Masters gallery are next door.
- **Leipzig** — Bach's church, a serious music tradition, and the city where the 1989 demonstrations that ended East Germany began. Younger and cheaper than Berlin, and increasingly where people move instead.
- **Saxon Switzerland** — Sandstone towers and gorges an hour from Dresden, with the Bastei bridge running between the pinnacles. Superb walking, and free.

The coast, and the islands

The Great Experiences



 **Oktoberfest**



 **The Christmas markets**

 **Unlocks when you buy the guide**

 **The Romantic Road**

 **The Rhine by rail**

 **The Black Forest**

 **A stretch of Autobahn**

 **A concert, cheaply**

How to book without overpaying

THE THING GERMANY DOES BETTER THAN ANYONE

Beer, Properly

Which beer belongs to which city, why a Cologne waiter keeps replacing your glass without asking, and the beer-garden rule that lets you bring your own dinner.



Unlocks when you buy the guide

BREWERIES

~1,500

More than the rest of Europe put together, and half of them in Bavaria.

THE PURITY LAW

1516

The Reinheitsgebot. Water, barley and hops — yeast was not known about yet.

A MASS

1 litre

The Bavarian measure. Roughly two and a quarter pints, and stronger than you expect.

What to order, and where

BY CITY, BY NAME

Kölsch — Cologne Pale, light, served in a slim 0.2l *Stange*. Protected by law: it can only be brewed here.

Altbier — Düsseldorf Copper-coloured and maltier. Forty minutes up the river and a completely different beer, which the two cities enjoy about as much as you would expect.

Weissbier — Bavaria Cloudy wheat beer in a tall vase-shaped half-litre. Banana and clove, and the classic breakfast beer.

Helles — Munich The everyday Bavarian lager, and what a *Maß* is usually full of.

Pils — the north Drier and more bitter. Poured slowly, and a proper one takes seven minutes.

Berliner Weisse — Berlin Sour wheat beer, served green or red with syrup. An acquired taste, acquired quickly.

Rauchbier — Bamberg Smoked malt. Tastes of bacon, and is not a joke — go to Schlenkerla and have two.

THE RULES NOBODY TELLS YOU

The Cologne tally A waiter (*Köbes*) replaces your empty *Stange* without being asked and marks your beer mat. **To stop, put the mat on top of the glass.** Nothing else works.

Bring your own food In a traditional Bavarian beer garden — the part with plain wooden tables and no cloth — you may legally **bring your own picnic** and buy only the beer. The tables with cloths are table service and you may not.

Look people in the eye Clinking glasses and saying *Prost* without eye contact is genuinely rude, and Germans will hold your gaze until you do it.

Never sit at the Stammtisch The table with a sign or a brass plaque belongs to the regulars. It will be free and it is not for you.

Radler Beer and lemonade, half and half. Entirely respectable at lunchtime, and how locals drink through a hot afternoon.



Unlocks when you buy the guide

Beer halls worth the detour

⚠️ A Maß is not a pint



The Christmas Markets



The mug, and the deposit



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THE ONES WORTH THE JOURNEY

Nuremberg The *Christkindlesmarkt*, and the strictest: no plastic, no fairy lights, **handmade goods only**, and a jury rejects stalls that fall short.

Dresden The oldest, since 1434, with a 14m Christmas pyramid and a giant *Stollen* paraded through the city on the second Saturday of Advent.

Cologne Seven markets in one city, one of them directly under the cathedral, all linked by a day ticket.

Rothenburg A walled medieval town that already looks like a Christmas card, with snow more often than not.

Leipzig & Erfurt Big, historic, far cheaper and far less crowded than the famous three.

WHAT TO EAT AND DRINK

Glühwein **GLEW-vine** Hot spiced red wine. Ask for it *mit Schuss* and it comes with a shot of rum in it.

Feuerzangenbowle Glühwein with a rum-soaked sugarloaf set alight above it. Theatre, and strong.

Lebkuchen Nuremberg's soft spiced gingerbread, protected by origin. The *Elisenlebkuchen* grade is the good one.

Bratwurst Nuremberg's are finger-sized and sold three in a roll. Thuringian ones are long and better.

Stollen Dresden's fruit loaf under a crust of icing sugar. Buy it from a baker, not a stall.

Timing, honestly

Food & Drink

MUST-TRY GERMAN FOOD

Schweinshaxe

Currywurst

Käsespätzle

Brot, seriously

 **Unlocks when you buy the guide**

DRINKING, BEYOND BEER

EATING CHEAP

Riesling The Mosel and Rheingau make the world's best. Ask for *trocken* — dry — unless you want it sweet.

Apfelschorle Apple juice and sparkling water. The national soft drink, and genuinely good.

Sparkling water by default Ask for *stilles Wasser* if you do not want bubbles, and *Leitungswasser* if you want tap.

Coffee and cake *Kaffee und Kuchen*, mid-afternoon, is a real institution and a good cheap meal.

Mittagstisch The weekday set lunch, €9–14. The same kitchen at half the evening price.

Bäckerei Bakeries do filled rolls all day for a few euros, and they are open on Sunday mornings when nothing else is.

Imbiss The street kiosk. Currywurst, döner, chips. Fast, cash, and open late.

Mensa University canteens serve anyone who walks in, for very little.



Where the good food actually is

Cultural Etiquette

- **Directness is not rudeness.** Germans say what they mean without softening it, and read English hedging as evasive rather than polite. A flat "no, that is wrong" is information, not an attack.
- **Punctuality is a moral category.** Five minutes late needs an apology; fifteen needs a message sent in advance. Trains are the country's own running joke precisely because of this.
- **Wait at the red man.** Crossing on red is fineable and, more to the point, someone will tell you off in front of your children. Germans wait at 2am on an empty street.
- **Shake hands, and use surnames.** *Herr* and *Frau* plus surname, and *Sie*, until you are invited otherwise. That invitation is a small formal moment, not an accident.
- **Sort your rubbish.** Paper, packaging, glass by colour, organic, residual. Getting it wrong in a shared building is noticed and mentioned.
- **Quiet hours are law-adjacent.** 22:00–06:00 and all day Sunday: no drilling, no loud music, no washing machine in many buildings.
- **Tip by telling the total.** Round up 5–10% and say the whole figure as you hand over the money — "twenty-two, please" on a €19.80 bill. Do not leave coins on the table.
- **Bring your own bag** and expect to pack your own shopping, fast. German checkout speed is a genuine cultural experience.

The sauna, without embarrassing yourself



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Photography, and the law



The thing to actually get right

Packing, Itineraries & Money

PACKING LIST

What to bring

- Comfortable walking shoes — cobbles everywhere
- A rain layer, in any month
- Cash, and a coin purse for the deposits
- Type C/F adaptor · power bank
- A folding shopping bag
- Swimsuit — lakes and hotel pools
- Tick remover if you are hiking in the south
- Something smart for a concert
- Winter: proper coat, hat, gloves, warm boots
- Christmas markets: gloves you can hold a mug in
- Refillable bottle — the tap water is excellent
- Photo ID on you, not in the hotel safe



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MONEY

Where the savings actually are

Deutschlandticket €63 for a month of every regional and city service in the country. Cancel by the 10th.

Book rail six months out €18 advance against €150 on the day, Munich to Berlin.

Regional day tickets The Bayern-Ticket and its equivalents cover a group for barely more than one fare.

Eat the Mittagstisch The same kitchen at lunch for half the dinner price.

Return your Pfand Up to €0.25 a bottle. It adds up faster than you would think over a fortnight.

City museum cards Pay for themselves on the second museum.

Claim your VAT Non-EU residents, on receipts above €50 from one shop.

the Reichstag dome · the Holocaust Memorial · Topography of Terror · Tempelhof Field · Cologne Cathedral · every Christmas market · the Elbphilharmonie plaza

SAMPLE ITINERARIES

How long do you have? Tap any route to open the whole trip, in order, in Google Maps.

4
DAYS

Berlin, properly

The Reichstag dome · Museum Island · Bernauer Strasse and the Topography of Terror · a day at Potsdam.

Open route

7
DAYS

Munich, the castles and the Alps

Three nights in Munich, a day at Neuschwanstein, a day on the Zugspitze, then the Königssee.

Open route

10
DAYS

The Christmas market run

Cologne and its seven markets, the Rhine by train, Nuremberg's Christkindlesmarkt, Rothenburg overnight, then Dresden's Striezelmarkt.

Open route

14
DAYS

The full country

Berlin and Dresden in the east, Nuremberg and Munich in the south, the Romantic Road, then the Rhine and Cologne. All of it by train.

Open route

Where to Book & Maps

Everything you need to plan your trip to Germany is in one place. From flights to hotels, car hire to activities, we've got you covered. And with our interactive maps, you can explore the country and plan your itinerary all in one place.

Flights to Germany

Find the best flights to Germany from all over the world. Compare prices and book your flight in one place.

Hotels & apartments

Find the best hotels and apartments in Germany. Compare prices and book your accommodation in one place.

Germany eSIM

Get a Germany eSIM for your phone. Make calls and use data while you travel.

Car hire

Find the best car hire in Germany. Compare prices and book your car in one place.

Activities & tours

Find the best activities and tours in Germany. Compare prices and book your activity in one place.

Trains & transfers

Find the best trains and transfers in Germany. Compare prices and book your train in one place.

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THE WHOLE COUNTRY, ON YOUR PHONE

Germany in Google Maps



Open the map

The one booking rule for Germany

There's one rule you need to know when booking in Germany. It's simple, but it's important.

Using the itinerary maps

Our itinerary maps are a great way to plan your trip. They show you the best places to visit and the best way to get there.



Everything you need. Nothing you don't.

This guide is one of a series — a complete, honest handbook for every country worth going to, written to be read on your phone while you're actually there.

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OPEN GERMANY IN GOOGLE MAPS

Open the map →

www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Germany

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Prices, opening hours and operators change. Verify anything time-critical before you travel.

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