



Travelling in Germany

General Info:

Population: 81.8m

Area: 357,021 sq. km

Currency: Euro (100 cents) - EUR (€)

Top 10 popular attractions: Rügen Cliffs
Romantic Rhine
Frauenkirche
Lindau
Oktoberfest
Cologne Cathedral
Holstentor
Heidelberg Old City
Brandenburg Gate
Neuschwanstein

Essentials:

Driving licence:

Visitors riding or driving in Germany must have reached the minimum age required to drive/ride a vehicle of equivalent category even if they are qualified to drive at a lower age in their country of residence.

Driving licences issued in EU and EEA countries are accepted. Motorists must carry their driving licence with them when driving and show it to any authorised person on request.

International driving permits are recognised but not required.

Important documents:

Vehicles from the UK may be imported into Germany for up to 6 months in any period of 12 months. When driving in Germany the following documents should be carried:

- Full, valid driving licence* (with paper counterpart)
- Proof of insurance (third party or above)
- Proof of ID (Passport)
- Proof of ownership (V5C Certificate)

**International Driving Permits are recognised but not compulsory*

Whilst driving in Germany you are required by law to carry the following items. Hefty on-the-spot fines can be issued for failing to carry specific items:

- Reflective jackets (The requirement to have a reflective jacket in all vehicles is being discussed)
- Warning triangle (Compulsory in every vehicle with 4 wheels or more)
- Headlamp beam deflectors (Depending on your car, you will either need deflector stickers or have to adjust the beam manually)
- First aid kit (Recommended)
- Motorcyclists (Safety helmets are compulsory for drivers and passengers of mopeds and motorcycles)

Our Driving in Europe kit has all the essentials for people heading to Germany & is available from the RAC shop (www.RACShop.co.uk)

Are you covered?

Don't forget to buy your RAC European Breakdown cover on: 0800 015 6000.

Useful Numbers:

Emergency Services: 112 (SMS 114)

RAC Breakdown Europe: 00 33 472 43 52 44

Useful Links:

- <http://www.rac.co.uk/breakdown-cover/european-breakdown-cover/>
- <http://www.racshop.co.uk/driving-in-europe.html>

Rules of the road & regulations:

Rules of the road:

- **Overtaking & passing**

Inside and outside built-up areas, where heavy traffic has built up into queues and two or more lanes of traffic are travelling in the same direction, vehicles on the right may overtake those on the left.

Trams in motion must be overtaken on the right. If the space on the right is inadequate, they may be overtaken on the left. In one-way streets, trams may be overtaken on either side. Priority must be given to passengers boarding or alighting from stationary trams.

The meaning of the "no overtaking sign" is that it is prohibited to overtake a vehicle with more than two wheels, e.g. a car driver may overtake a motorcycle, but a motorcyclist may not overtake a car.

- **Priority**

At crossroads and junctions, traffic coming from the right has priority.

All road users must give way to fire engines, ambulances and police vehicles which have blue flashing lights, irrespective of whether there is an audible warning signal or not.

Traffic in a roundabout has right of way, except when signs indicate otherwise. Drivers must not indicate as they enter a roundabout; they must, however, use their indicators before leaving the roundabout.

- **Warning of approach**

Light signals and audible signals should only be given when overtaking outside built-up areas or in case of imminent danger.

Towing:

Caravans, camper vans, luggage and boat trailers may be temporarily imported into Germany without formality.

No inventory is required for normal camping equipment in caravans. If the caravan contains expensive or unusual items, an inventory in duplicate is required.

The following dimensions for vehicles with trailers must not be exceeded:

Height: 4 m
Overall width: 2.5 m (1 m if towed by motorcycle)
Overall length: 12 m
Length of car + caravan: 18.75 m

Cars towing a caravan must be equipped with 2-side rear-view mirrors, which may exceed the overall width of the caravan, but which must be foldable.

Seat belts:

Drivers and all passengers on both front and rear seats of German and foreign registered cars must wear seat belts if the vehicle is equipped with belts. A fine of €30 may be imposed for not wearing a seat belt and €30-40 for transporting an unsecured child. A fine of €30-35 is incurred when the child's restraint system is not correct.

Travelling with children:

Children 3 years and over must be transported on the rear seats of vehicles. A child under 12 years of age and measuring less than 1.50m travelling in any type of vehicle must be seated in a child seat or child restraint. Where a child restraint/seat is not available, a child 3 years and over must use a seat belt or other safety device attached to the seat. A child under 3 years old may not be transported in a vehicle without child restraint/seat.

All child restraints/seats used must conform to the ECE 44/03 norm.

It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all children are safely restrained.

Speed Limits:

Source: All information in this document is sourced from the AIT (Alliance Internationale de Tourisme) & the FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile) and, to the best of the RAC's knowledge, is correct at the time of publication (August 2013).

The following national speed limits apply:

	Motorways	Other roads
Normal traffic conditions	130 km/h	100 km/h
Bad weather conditions	50 km/h	50 km/h
Visibility less than 50m	50 km/h	50 km/h

A "100 km/h" sticker has to be affixed on the back of the caravan/trailer.

Radar detectors are prohibited. If they are part of the car satellite navigation system, the POI function must be deactivated.

Penalties:

- **On-the-spot fines**

The German police are empowered to impose and collect fines of up to €35 on the spot in the case of violation of traffic regulations. The motorist must pay the fine during the following week otherwise legal proceedings will start.

The German police are also empowered to collect an amount exceeding €35 as security deposit for a higher expected fine, and in that case, legal proceedings will start.

- **Fines**

The German police can ask a foreign motorist to deposit a sum of money. If he refuses or is unable to pay, the vehicle can be confiscated. If his driving licence is suspended, a note indicating the period during which he is not allowed to drive in Germany appears on the licence.

- **Confiscation of vehicles**

For serious incidents, the police are allowed to confiscate vehicles of foreign motorists.

Parking:

- **Parking regulations**

A vehicle is considered to be parked if it remains in the same place for more than 3 minutes. Standing and parking are usually allowed only on the right except in a one-way street.

Waiting is prohibited:

- At places indicated by the sign "waiting and parking prohibited"; at places indicated by the sign "parking prohibited", except to allow passengers to board or alight, and to load or unload goods
- Within 5m of a pedestrian crossing
- In narrow roads or where visibility is not sufficient
- Less than 10m before traffic lights, "give-way" and "stop" signs if these would be concealed by the vehicle
- At the entry or in front of fire stations
- Where zig-zag lines are painted on the carriageway (bus stops, narrow roads and places with poor visibility)
- On taxi ranks

Parking is prohibited:

- At places indicated by the sign "parking prohibited"
- Within 5m of pedestrian crossings and intersections
- Less than 10m before traffic light signals
- Within 15m of a sign indicating a public vehicle stop
- In front of vehicle entries to properties and, in narrow streets, opposite these entries
- On the carriageway of priority roads outside built-up areas
- Along the kerb, facing oncoming traffic
- For trailers with an admissible total weight of more than 2 tonnes in residential areas, health resorts, recreation and hospital areas between 2200 hours and 0600 hours and 24 hours a day on Sundays and public holidays

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Restricted parking zones:

- Parking meters (if the meter is out of order, the driver must use a parking disc); drivers can park free for the first half hour
- Parking disc zones: these areas are indicated by the sign C,18 on a white square, with a parking disc in a corner of the square
- Residents' parking zones: these areas are indicated by sign C,18 on a white square accompanied by the words "Anwohner mit Parkausweis Nr. ... frei" (except for holders of parking permits No. ...); the times during which the restriction applies are indicated on an additional panel
 - At night, any vehicle, including a trailer, parked on the public highway must be illuminated at the front and the rear. However, in built-up areas, motor vehicles of less than 2.8 tonnes are exempt from this requirement if they are sufficiently illuminated by street lighting or if they are parked in an authorised parking place. Trailers must always show lights.
 - A caravan trailer may not be left in a public parking space for more than 2 weeks.

- **Enforcement of parking regulations**

Wheel clamps are not used in Germany, but vehicles causing an obstruction can be towed away.

Fines of €10 to €35 are imposed for parking offences. The cost of retrieving an impounded car varies from €100 to 300.

- **Disabled parking access**

The following concessions are granted to disabled motorists. The same concessions apply to foreign badge holders:

- Free parking for up to 3 hours in a restricted or no parking zone (the arrival time should be indicated by a parking disc which should be clearly displayed on the windscreen)
- Free unlimited parking at meters and pay and display spaces
- Up to 3 hours' parking in a space reserved for resident permit holders
- Parking permitted in pedestrian zones during loading and unloading times

These concessions apply if there are no other parking facilities in the vicinity.

Traffic lights:

- **Traffic lights**

The international 3-colour system is in use. A red light with a green arrow pointing to the right allows motorists to turn right on condition that they give way to other road users and pedestrians.

At railway level crossings, a red flashing light signals the approach of a train.

Drink/drug driving

The maximum level of alcohol in the blood is 0.05% for drivers of private vehicles.

However, for novice drivers who have held a driving licence less than 2 years and for young drivers aged less than 21 years, the blood alcohol limit is 0%. Absolutely no alcohol is tolerated when driving.

If a novice driver is tested with even a small amount of alcohol in his/her blood, the fine is €250, 2 penalty points and a further extension of the probationary period by 2 years.

The police can ask a driver to undergo a breath test if there is a definite suspicion that he is under the influence of alcohol. The driver can refuse but is then compelled to undergo a blood test.

Roads & fuel

No tolls are levied on private cars.

Service areas

There are many service areas in Germany. Most of them are administered by Autobahn Tank und Rast AG

Availability of fuel

Most petrol stations are open from 0800 to 2000 hours. In large cities some are open 24 hours a day. On motorways, service stations are open day and night.

- **Price of fuel
(April 2014)**

Unleaded petrol (95 octane)	1.536 EUR per litre
Unleaded petrol (98 octane)	1.551 EUR per litre
Diesel	1.344 EUR per litre
LPG	0.692 EUR per litre

- **Means of payment**

Most petrol stations accept credit cards and travellers' cheques.

- **Automatic petrol pumps**

At some petrol stations, pumps operate using credit cards.

Emergencies

In the case of injury or serious damage to vehicles the police must be called.

Accidents involving personal injury have to be reported to your insurance company within 3 days. Accidents with material damage only have to be reported within one week.