11.1 Doctors and Pharmacies

You will find a complete list of doctors, arranged according to field of specialisation, in your local classified directory, “Gelbe Seiten” (Yellow Pages), in print or online. It is often a good idea to go to a general practitioner, often referred to as a “Hausarzt”, first of all. This doctor will then transfer you to a consultant, if necessary. You should always ring the doctor’s surgery in advance to make an appointment. In case of accident or emergency you will be given an appointment on the same day. Otherwise, you will probably have to wait a couple of days or even weeks for an appointment.

Local hospitals do not usually run surgeries for outpatients. If you are ill, your first port of call is a general practitioner. Only go to hospital if there is an emergency or you need treatment following an accident. You will need to present your health insurance card or European health insurance card, EHIC, to receive treatment. If you have private insurance cover, you will receive a bill after the visit to the doctor.

Surgery opening hours vary considerably. Most surgeries are closed at the weekend and on Wednesday afternoon.

Emergency Services

If you urgently need a doctor outside normal surgery hours, you will have to turn to the “ärztlicher Notdienst” or “ärztlicher Bereitschaftsdienst” (emergency services). You can also ring a doctor: the answering phone will usually tell you which doctor is currently on stand-by duty.

Pharmacies

You will not usually be given medicines at the doctor’s surgery. The doctor will write a prescription which you take to a pharmacy where you may have to pay towards the cost of the item. Some medicines can be purchased at the pharmacy without a prescription. If you need medicines at night or at the weekend you should enquire about the “Apotheken-Notdienst” (emergency pharmacy service). You can discover which pharmacy is open all night on which specific day in the local daily newspaper, online or on lists posted visibly at every pharmacy.

Emergency services

General emergency practice at St. Josef-Hospital
Ehrenbrunnenstr. 96
44791 Bochum

Opening hours
Mon, Tue, Thu: 6 pm to 10 pm
Wed, Fri: 1 pm to 10 pm
Sat, Sun, public holidays: 8 am to 10 pm

Emergency services for children and young people in Bochum and Herne
www.kind-bochum.de/kind/K.I.N.D..html

Apothekennotdienst
www.apotheke.com > Notdienst
> enter postal code or city > search...
Costs of medical treatment

Statutory health insurance
If you are not a private patient your doctor will invoice your statutory health insurance provider directly. All you need to do is to present your health insurance card at the surgery. However, for some treatment and services, such as certain dental fillings, dentures, spectacles, contact lenses and particular medicines, you have to pay an additional fee even if you are not a private patient. The doctor is obliged to inform you about the costs (see Chapter 8).

Private health insurance
If you have a contract with a private health insurance provider, please enquire about the payment procedure before you consult the doctor. You may have to pay the costs for treatment and medicines yourself and then submit the invoices to the insurance provider for reimbursement. Take careful note of the conditions of your health insurance which stipulate whether the provider will reimburse your costs and at what level. Depending on your insurance premium, certain treatment may be excluded or you may be required to pay part of the costs yourself. See Chapter 8 for additional information.

11.2 Emergency Telephone Numbers

Important emergency telephone numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency/ambulance</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning</td>
<td>0228/1 92 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral advice</td>
<td>0800/1 110 -111 (oder -222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central telephone number to block credit cards</td>
<td>116 116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important information in emergency situations

In an emergency, please be prepared to answer the following questions:
- Who are you?
- Where has the emergency occurred (address, floor, ...)?
- What has happened?
- How many people are involved?
- What are the injuries / illness / symptoms?
- Wait for answers!
11.3 Banks and “Sparkassen”

If you are staying in Germany for an extended period, are receiving a regular salary or fellowship and have to pay rent, it is a good idea to open a current account at a bank. To do so, you will need to present your passport or identity card and confirmation from the “Einwohnermeldeamt” (Residents’ Registration Office) that you are registered. Some banks will also require you to present your residence permit from the “Ausländerbüro” (local Immigration Office) or proof that you have a regular income. There are hardly any differences between the banks in respect of the services they offer, but there are differences in the charges you have to pay, so you should be sure to check in advance. You will be issued with a debit card called a “Euro-Cheque-Karte” (EC card) for your current account which will allow you to draw cash from a cashpoint (ATM). This service is free if you use cashpoints belonging to your own bank but incurs charges if the cashpoints are maintained by other banks. Most banks are open from Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 4 pm.

Apart from cash, most shops, restaurants and firms accept debit and, in some cases, credit cards. In Germany, smaller sums, in cafés for example, are usually paid in cash.

Transferring money abroad can be expensive. You should enquire about the conditions with your own bank at home and possibly choose a bank in Germany that cooperates with your bank at home.

There are hardly any differences between the banks in respect of the services they offer, but there are differences in the charges you have to pay, so you should be sure to check in advance. You will be issued with a debit card called a “Euro-Cheque-Karte” (EC card) for your current account which will allow you to draw cash from a cashpoint (ATM). This service is free if you use cashpoints belonging to your own bank but incurs charges if the cashpoints are maintained by other banks. Most banks are open from Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 4 pm.

11.4 Means of Transportation

Germany has a good public transport system. You can easily get almost everywhere you want to go by train or bus, train or underground.

Deutsche Bahn

“Deutsche Bahn” (German Rail) connects all the larger and many of the smaller towns locally, regionally and long-distance. If you use the “Deutsche Bahn” on a regular basis, the purchase of a so-called “Bahn-Card” may pay off, because you can get discounts when booking tickets. Furthermore, there are special discounts for groups and advance bookings.

Buy your ticket before you get on the train. You can purchase tickets online, or there are ticket machines or ticket offices at the station. If you are in a hurry you can buy your ticket from the ticket collector on long-distance trains. But this is more expensive. Please note: on local and “S-Bahn” trains you have to buy your ticket before you enter the train. There are ticket inspections on trains and buses, and travelling without a valid ticket (“Schwarzfahren” – fare dodging) might prove expensive. If you are embarking on a longer journey, particularly at the weekend, you should reserve a seat. On some routes, the trains get very full.
There is plenty of local transport in Germany – buses, trams and underground. During the day it is often quicker and easier to travel by bus or tram than by car, particularly in the larger towns. You can usually buy tickets at ticket machines on the platform or inside the trams and underground trains; in buses the drivers often sell tickets, too. However, what is true for one town is not necessarily true for another so you should enquire locally.

“Mehrfahrtenkarten” (multi-trip tickets) are cheaper than individual tickets and can usually be purchased at ticket machines. If you are staying in one place for a longer period and intend using public transport regularly, it may well be worth buying a weekly or monthly season ticket. They are available at the local transport company’s ticket offices which are usually situated near the railway station.

In Bochum

Bochum’s local transport system is run by BOGESTRA AG. You can find their service centre on the “Verteilerebene” of Bochum main station.

www.bogestra.de

The regional provider for local transport is the “Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr (VRR)”

www.vrr.de/en

Here you will also be able to find out about the various tickets.

Bochum itself is in price category A. If you are intending to use the bus or tram regularly in Bochum it is worth purchasing a monthly season ticket (Ticket 1000 or 2000). For longer journeys and excursions there is a wide selection of tickets with special deals for groups and weekend trips.

If you are registered as a PhD student at RUB you will receive a ticket for the local public transport.

Cycling

In many towns there is a good network of cycle paths. If you like cycling this can be a practical alternative to public transport or driving. Bicycles are also good for discovering the area in your spare time. Many of the tourist attractions in the Ruhr Area are connected by cycle paths which frequently follow former railway tracks. One such, the “Ruhrtalradweg”, follows the river for 230 km from the source in the Sauerland to the mouth at Duisburg.

Taxis

Taxis are relatively expensive in Germany and many people only use them in exceptional circumstances – at night, for example, or when they have a lot of luggage. Prices are regulated. You pay a fixed basic charge plus a specified sum per kilometre.

“Mitfahrzentrale”

One alternative to public transport, especially for long journeys, is the “Mitfahrzentrale” (car sharing agency). Drivers who are going on long journeys often register at a car sharing agency and offer to take passengers. The offers are sorted according to destination and date and you can find out about them online or by telephone.

Long-distance coaches

Long-distance coaches are more reasonable than rail travel. A long-distance coach may take longer than a train, but the tickets are relatively cheap by comparison.
Air travel

Some airlines offer special rates on certain routes. You may well be able to fly to other European countries very reasonably, and even within Germany air travel may be cheaper than rail travel. However, on domestic routes you may not save much time if you add the time spent getting to the airport and waiting for the flight. Most large towns have good connections to the nearest airports by public transport.

Your own vehicle

Some researchers bring a car with them from home or buy one in Germany. If you are only staying up to six months this is relatively uncomplicated. If you are planning to stay for longer, however, you should consult the “Straßeverkehrsamt” (road traffic agency) on the relevant formalities.

Visit the EURAXESS Germany website for more information on taxation and insurance, the validity of your driving licence and how you can get a German driving licence.

International airports

Düsseldorf
www.dus.com/de-de
Düsseldorf-Weeze:
www.airport-weeze.de/en
Cologne Bonn
www.kln-bonn-airport.de
Frankfurt
www.frankfurt-airport.com/content/frankfurt_airport/en.html
Dortmund
www.die-tmusd-airport.de
Amsterdam
www.schiphol.nl

If you bring your own vehicle with you, you should not forget the following documents:

• international driving licence or a licence issued abroad; depending on country, it should include a German translation (after 6 months at the latest you will have to apply for a German driving licence)
• green insurance card (confirming German insurance cover)
• confirmation from your third-party insurance provider at home that you have not had any accidents (this should entitle you to a rebate on your German third-party insurance policy)

Automobile associations

The “Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club” (ADAC) is the largest automobile association in Germany. You can also join the “AutoClub Europe” (ACE) or the “Automobilclub von Deutschland (AvD)”. They provide services in case of breakdown. You can call them for help if you get stuck on the road somewhere. This service is usually free of charge if you are a member. Non-members have to pay.

Driving licence and vehicle registration

The agency responsible for everything to do with driving licences and vehicle registration:

Straßenverkehrsamt Bochum
Bulksmühle 17
44809 Bochum
Tel.: 02 34 / 9 10-82 00
eduroam (education roaming) is a European initiative to facilitate wireless internet access at universities. Students and university staff can use it to access the internet not only at their own universities but at other universities/organisations (during conferences, for example) that participate in the system as well. Visit www.eduroam.org > Where can I eduroam (see Chapter 2.5) for more information.

11.5 Internet, Telecommunications, TV

TV and radio: licensing fees

Just as in other European countries, the state charges a fee for the use of radios and televisions which finances the public broadcasting services. This fee is collected by an agency belonging to the broadcasters ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio. Currently, the monthly fee is 17.98 euro per household irrespective of the number of people and pieces of equipment in the household. You can find more information online by visiting the fee collection service of ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio.

Telephone

There are various providers operating the telephone service in Germany. Most firms offer different tariffs and services, for example various telephone, mobile and internet packages. It is worth comparing. You can register or cancel a landline in the providers’ outlets which can be found in nearly every town. Check on the various offers and tariffs – such as cheap calls abroad.

Charges for telephone calls vary significantly according to provider, time of day and distance. You can use cheaper providers on a call by call basis (by pre-dialling a specific code) from private telephones. The differences may be substantial if you are phoning abroad.

Mobile phone

There are any number of mobile phone providers with different tariffs and packages. Prepaid tariffs allow you to use a mobile and top up your credit as required without having to sign a contract. Read the small print carefully before you do sign a contract.

Internet

In order to access the internet at home you can get a DSL connection and tariff from your landline provider. You can often buy a package from your provider covering landline, internet and additional services. If you want to use wifi at home for laptops, mobiles and tablets you should ask your internet provider about a wireless router.

If you decide not to go for a landline and DSL connection, you can also access the internet using a wireless adapter, known in Germany as a “Surfstick”. They can be purchased in computer shops and supermarkets.

Prepaid phone cards

Many supermarkets in Germany sell pre-paid phone cards at reasonable prices. Most of the tariffs available at supermarkets can be purchased for short visits lasting a month.

Cheaper telephone and internet access

Using the following links you can compare the current charges levied by the various providers. As the charges are always changing it is worth taking a look every so often.

www.biliger-telefonieren.de
www.biliger-wurfen.de

Searching for telephone numbers online

www.dastelefonbuch.de
www.teleauskunft.de
www.gelbeseiten.de

11

Prepaid phone cards

Many supermarkets in Germany sell pre-paid phone cards at reasonable prices. Most of the tariffs available at supermarkets can be purchased for short visits lasting a month.

Cheaper telephone and internet access

Using the following links you can compare the current charges levied by the various providers. As the charges are always changing it is worth taking a look every so often.

www.biliger-telefonieren.de
www.biliger-wurfen.de

Searching for telephone numbers online

www.dastelefonbuch.de
www.teleauskunft.de
www.gelbeseiten.de

11

Cheaper telephone and internet access

Using the following links you can compare the current charges levied by the various providers. As the charges are always changing it is worth taking a look every so often.

www.biliger-telefonieren.de
www.biliger-wurfen.de

Searching for telephone numbers online

www.dastelefonbuch.de
www.teleauskunft.de
www.gelbeseiten.de
11.6 Public Libraries

Most larger towns in Germany have a “Stadtbibliothek” or “Stadtbücherei”, i.e. public libraries which are usually operated by the municipal or local authorities. They serve a general educational purpose, provide information and are a cultural facility for local residents. Apart from specialist and non-fiction works they usually have a comprehensive collection of light reading as well as books for children and young people. They often also stock light reading in foreign languages. Most libraries lend films, CDs, DVDs and games as well as books and magazines.

In order to use the library and borrow books and other media you will need a library card. You can register at the library by presenting your passport and proof that you are registered in the locality. Libraries often charge a modest fee for membership.

Bochum Public Library
The central library is located close to the City Hall in the city centre. A district library can also be found in the Uni-Centre.
www.bochum.de/stadtbuecherei

11.7 Religion and Public Holidays

Religion

Article 4 of the German “Grundgesetz” (Basic Law) guarantees the freedom of belief: every person is free to choose and practise his or her own religion. Equally, every person has the freedom not to practise a religion, to leave a religious community or to join another religious community.

There is no state church in Germany. The state and the churches or religious communities are not allowed to enter into institutional association; they are, however, allowed to cooperate provided that the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination are upheld. This means that churches are expected to make statements on social issues and be involved in bodies and commissions like ethics councils. The state and the churches have also come to agreements on religious instruction in state schools and the collection of church tax by state financial authorities (see Chapter 9.5).

Today, some 30 per cent of the population in Germany is Roman Catholic, another 30 per cent is Protestant and roughly four per cent is Moslem. Just less than two per cent of the population belongs to other religious communities and more than 30 per cent is not affiliated to any religious group. Altogether, there are more than 160 different religious communities in Germany which contribute to the religious diversity of the country.
Public holidays

The following public holidays are observed in the whole of Germany:

- 1 January: New Year’s Day
- Friday before Easter: Good Friday
- End March/Beginning April: Easter Sunday and Easter Monday
- 1 May: International Labour Day
- 10 days before Whit Sunday: Ascension Day
- June: Whit Sunday and Whit Monday
- 1 October: German Unity Day
- 24 December (afternoon): Christmas Eve
- 25 December: Christmas Day and Boxing Day
- 31 December (afternoon): New Year’s Eve

Additional public holidays in NRW:

- 2nd Thursday after Whitsun: Corpus Christi
- 1 November: All Hallows’ Day
- 31 December (afternoon): New Year’s Eve

Carnival

Particularly in the Rheinland and in Mainz, February and March are known as the “fifth season”. This is when “Karneval” or “Fastnacht” is celebrated. In the strongholds of carnival most employers give their staff a couple of extra days’ holiday. “Weiberfastnacht” (Women’s Carnival Day) warrants an afternoon and “Rosenmontag” (Carnival Monday) an entire day.

You will find an overview of the current public holiday dates and school holiday dates, organised according to Federal State, on the following websites:

- www.feiertage.net
- www.ferienkalender.com
- www.schulferien-und-feiertage.de

11.8 Good to know – A to Z of Useful Information

Addressing people: “Du” and “Sie”

The polite form “Sie” plus surname is the way you address people you do not know in Germany – officially all those over the age of 15. Many Germans who work together in the same office every day still use this form. In order to move on to the more personal “Du”, you usually wait for a suitable occasion. The “Du” is “offered” by one person to another. Traditionally, the older or more senior person makes the offer. However, younger people (up to about the age of 30) are less formal. They often use the “Du” plus first name from the very first meeting. If you are unsure, it is probably best to wait until the person you are talking to has addressed you and respond accordingly.

Electricity

German electrical power points use 220 V and 50 Hz alternating current. Euronorm plugs fit all power points. Depending on where you come from you may have to use an adapter or transformer.

Shopping

Generally, shops are open in Germany from Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 8 pm. Supermarkets and large shopping centres sometimes have longer opening hours. Smaller shops, on the other hand, often shut during the week between 6 pm and 7 pm and around lunchtime on Saturdays. All shops close on Sundays and public holidays, with the exception of bakeries which often open in the mornings on those days. You can usually find a modest selection of groceries and other articles at petrol stations which sometimes stay open 24/7.

Flea markets

A “Flohmarkt” or “Trödelmarkt” is a market selling second-hand goods and bric-a-brac. The sellers are often private individuals and the markets are usually held on Saturdays or Sundays.
Cinema

In Germany, foreign films and television series are often dubbed. If there is no reference to the language in the programme you can assume that the film will be in German. However, quite a few of the smaller independent cinemas show films in the original language (OV) or in the original language with subtitles (OmU).

Purchase tax

Purchase tax, often referred to as “Mehrwertsteuer” (value added tax), has to be paid to the financial authorities on the sale of goods and services. In Germany, the rate is 19 percent. There is a reduced rate of 7 percent on foodstuffs, magazines and books as well as artistic services. Value added tax (MWSt.) is included in all stated prices and invoices.

Separating waste / recycling

Environmental consciousness in Germany is comparatively strong, an attitude that is reflected in the separation and recycling of waste. In most towns you have individual, colour-coded dustbins or skips for landfill (grey), paper (blue), plastics/composites (yellow) and compost/garden waste (green or brown). In addition, there are also public bottle banks for glass and collection points for batteries and electrical waste. Many empty bottles and cans are refundable: if you take them back to the supermarket you will be given a refund. Non-refundable bottles, like wine bottles, belong in the bottle bank.

Strikes

Trades Unions are voluntary organisations which represent the interests of workers vis-à-vis employers. If unions and employers are unable to come to an agreement, this may lead to strikes which can affect services provided by companies and public authorities.

No smoking

In Germany, smoking is prohibited in all public buildings under the authority of the state, such as stations, airports and public transport, as well as cultural, leisure and sports facilities. An exception is made for separate areas and rooms which are specifically designated. As gastronomy is not regulated by the central authorities in Germany, no-smoking rules are applied differently in the various Federal States. You are not usually allowed to smoke in restaurants and bars.

Tipping

It is usual to give a tip in restaurants and cafés and for certain other services in recognition of good service. The standard sum is about 10 percent; usually you round up the amount to be paid. If you pay in cash and do not have the right amount plus tip it is quite normal to ask the waiter or taxi driver to round the sum up to the amount you wish to pay. You can either state the amount or say how much change you want back. When you go out to restaurants or cafés with friends or acquaintances it is quite usual in Germany to ask for separate bills and pay separately.

Weather

The weather is often changeable. You have to be prepared for cold spells and rain even in summer. You are, therefore, recommended to bring at least a few warm clothes with you from home.

For additional information and links on life and culture in Germany visit the EURAXESS Germany website: www.euraxess.de/portal/home_en.html