





## **GERMANY**

**Region:** Western Europe

**Official Language:** German

**Population:** 82.5 million (UN estimate 2007)

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Area:** 357,022 sq km

**Capital:** Berlin

**Number of States:** 16

**Government:** Federal Parliamentary Republic

**Religion:** 31.2% Catholic, 30.5% Protestant and 38.3% other denominations (Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland estimate 2006)

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## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been designed to assist students of The University of Queensland who are planning to go on exchange to Germany through the UQ Abroad program. It contains practical, cultural and language-related information that is relevant to students.

For ease of reference some information in this booklet has been marked with symbols in highlight boxes :

 *Important tips.*

 *Interesting or unusual facts.*

 *Web links to relevant information.*

 *Glossaries and language information.*

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# PRACTICAL TIPS

## WEATHER

Germany has four distinct seasons, with snow across large parts of the country during winter and warm temperatures during summer.



During winter be mindful of icy roads. If you are driving ensure that you have winter tyres fitted and use an *Eiskratzer* (ice scraper) to remove ice from the windscreen and windows before driving. Tyre chains may be required in mountain regions with significant snow fall. There are often road signs to indicate when this is necessary.

Current weather and forecasts for Germany:  
[www.wetter.de](http://www.wetter.de)

## TIPPING

It is normal to tip for services in Germany if you receive good service. Tipping is usually 10% of the total restaurant bill. If it is a small bill or a taxi fare, simply round up payment to the nearest full Euro amount.

## MONEY

It is a good idea to set up a German bank account while studying in Germany to make withdrawing money and paying rent cheaper and easier, however some Australian banks have partnerships with German banks that may save you money on overseas ATM withdrawal fees and currency conversion fees.

Currency Converter:  
[www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)

## DRINKING WATER

Tap water is drinkable in Germany. Many Germans prefer to buy bottled sparkling mineral water. This is usually what you will be served in a restaurant if you don't specify that you would like *stilles Wasser* - still water. Restaurants and bars will not serve you tap water in a glass like they do in Australia, you are expected to buy bottled water.

## TIME

Germany uses Central European Standard Time and Central European Summer Time (Daylight Savings). You can use the below table to convert between German and Australian time.

Current times in all major world cities:  
[www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/)

### German Time

Monday 12:00pm  
(Midday)

### > What time of year is it?

**Central European Standard Time:**  
From the last Sunday in October to the last Sunday in March

**Central European Summer Time (Daylight Savings):**  
From the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October

### > Time in QLD, Australia

Monday 9:00pm (Add 9 Hours)

Monday 8:00pm (Add 8 Hours)

## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR GENERAL FACTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT GERMANY:

Facts About Germany  
[www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/)

Deutsche Bildungs Server  
(German Education Server)  
[www.bildungsserver.de/start\\_e.html](http://www.bildungsserver.de/start_e.html)

# PRACTICAL TIPS

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### STUDENT TICKETS

As a student in Germany you will be able to buy a public transport ticket for use in the regions around your host university at a heavily discounted price. This is usually valid for one semester and is called a *Semesterkarte* or *Semesterticket*. You will need a *Studentenausweis* (student ID card) to be able to purchase a *Semesterkarte*. At some universities the *Studentenausweis* acts as a *Semesterkarte*.

! *Make sure you purchase a student semester ticket if you are going to be using public transport regularly.*

## VENTURING FURTHER AFIELD

If you are travelling outside of the region in which your semester ticket is valid, you will need to purchase a normal ticket. If doing this regularly it might be worth considering buying a *BahnCard* to give you discounts on ticket prices. There are different types of *BahnCards*, so choose the one that best suits you. If travelling on a weekend, consider buying a *Wochenende Ticket*.

! *Showing your BahnCard when buying a ticket (or entering your BahnCard number when purchasing online) can give you up to 50% off your ticket price.*

## SUBWAYS, TRAMS AND BUSES

Larger cities in Germany usually have extensive subway, tram and bus networks and these work well for travel over shorter distances.

## TRAINS AND PLANES

Germany has an extensive train network with many fast trains, making this a great way to travel long distances. If you book early you are likely to get a cheaper ticket. It is worth comparing the price of going by train with going by air, as occasionally plane tickets are cheaper.



! *In Germany you can be fined for being drunk while riding a bicycle and for riding without lights in the dark!*

## BICYCLES

Bicycles are a popular, healthy and cheap way to get around in Germany. You can hire bicycles or buy second hand bicycles easily - check newspapers or notice boards at your host university student union. Wearing a helmet is recommended but not obligatory.

## TAXIS

Taxis are considerably more expensive than public transport, but may be your only option late at night. Round up to the nearest full Euro amount when paying.

## LOW FARE AIRLINES

- Ryan Air - [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)
- Easyjet - [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)
- Aerlingus - [www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com)
- Airberlin - [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)
- Germanwings - [www.germanwings.com](http://www.germanwings.com)
- Comparison website for low fare airlines - [www.billigairlines.de](http://www.billigairlines.de)  
[www.billigflieger.de](http://www.billigflieger.de)

## BUS LINES & TRAIN LINES

- Deutsche Bahn - [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)
- The Deutsche Bahn website will include trains, buses and trams from all over Germany when planning a journey for you. You can also purchase your tickets on the website.
- For specific bus and tram timetables you will need to visit the public transport website of the local area you are in. Ask at your host university for this information.

# PRACTICAL TIPS



More information on the German political system:  
[www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/political-system/](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/political-system/)

## POLITICS

Germany is a Federal Republic. The two houses of government are the Bundestag and the Bundesrat.

The Bundestag is the German Federal Parliament. It is made up of elected representatives from various political parties. The party that holds the majority (usually an alliance of several parties) in the Bundestag elects the Federal Chancellor (similar to the Prime Minister). Most bills that have passed through the Bundestag must also be approved by the Bundesrat, made up of representatives from the state governments.

A Federal President is also directly elected by the people, and fulfils a similar role to the Australian Governor-General.

## LAW

German laws are similar to those of Australia, however here are some to be aware of as they may differ:

- German police can ask for identification. It is advisable to carry some form of ID at all times.
- The use or display of any Nazi symbols, salutes, songs or material (e.g. flags, memorabilia) is illegal.
- The legal minimum drinking age for distilled alcoholic beverages is 18. For other alcoholic beverages it is 16, unless supervised by a legal guardian.
- The legal blood alcohol limit for learner drivers, drivers who have been licensed for less than 2 years and all drivers under the age of 21, is 0.00%. For all

other drivers it is 0.05%.

- The minimum driving age in Germany is 18. Even if you have a valid Australian licence you will not be allowed to drive a car if you are under 18.
- Making loud noise (e.g. mowing the lawn) on Sundays and after a certain time at night is forbidden in some states and towns.

## SAFETY

Germany has a low incidence of violent crime. Street crime (such as pick-pocketing and theft from vehicles) does occur. German police can be approached with confidence, reports of corruption are low.



## ! SAFETY TIPS

**Bicycles** - Avoid walking on bicycle pathways. Collisions between cyclists and pedestrians are common - cyclists travel fast and have right of way. When driving also be mindful of cyclists.

**Look Left!** - Traffic travels on the right-hand side of the road in Germany, so remember to look left first when crossing the street.

**When Out at Night** - If you are in a larger city consider asking a friend which suburbs and areas to avoid visiting alone or at night.

**Passports and Tickets** - It is a good idea to scan or photocopy your passport and tickets and keep these copies in a safe place in case of loss.

**Credit Cards** - Write down your card number and relevant information and keep it in a safe place. If you lose the card, you can cancel it easily.

For emergency phone numbers go to page **13**

More safety advice and current warnings:  
[www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/?topic=Germany](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/?topic=Germany)

# PRACTICAL TIPS

## PHONING

### Phoning Germany From Australia:

0011 + 49 + State Code (without the 0) + Phone Number

### Phoning Australia from Germany:

00 + 61 + State Code (without the 0) + Phone Number

*In Germany there are often special codes you can enter to make calling internationally much cheaper. For a list of the codes for calling Australia, visit: [www.billiger-telefonieren.de/laender/australien](http://www.billiger-telefonieren.de/laender/australien)*

## USING A MOBILE PHONE IN GERMANY

Using your Australian mobile in Germany is likely to be expensive and requires international roaming. If you want to use a mobile phone, there are cheaper options:

- Buy a mobile phone in Germany.
- Bring an unlocked GSM phone and buy a SIM card in Germany.

Using prepaid credit is the best option for exchange students because you are not locked into a plan. Once you have set up a prepaid account with a company, you can buy cards to top up your phone credit or buy credit online.

*Compare German mobile phone plans:  
[www.billiger-telefonieren.de/handytarife/](http://www.billiger-telefonieren.de/handytarife/)*

*List of German service providers:  
[www.billiger-telefonieren.de/handy-provider/](http://www.billiger-telefonieren.de/handy-provider/)*



## ELECTRICITY

Germany uses plugs with two round prongs - these plugs are used across most of continental Europe. German outlets emit the same voltage as Australian outlets, so you only need an adaptor (not a voltage transformer) to use your Australian appliances.

*Buy an Australian power board and take it with you. This way you only need one adaptor to charge or use several of your Australian appliances at once.*

## ! IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- 110** - Police
- 112** - Firefighters
- 112 or 19222** - Ambulance
- 11880** - Operator
- 11833** - Germany Directory Assistance
- 11834** - International Directory Assistance
- (30) 880 0880** - Australian Embassy Germany



# CULTURE & CUSTOMS



## CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING



*“Culture is the lens through which we see the world.”*

*[Kevin Avruch, John Paul Lederach]*

It is important not to view a person as a stereotype of a culture, but rather as an individual that is influenced by the values of the culture or cultures in which they grew up. If you understand and respect these cultural values, it is easier to avoid misunderstanding and conflict.

## WHAT IS ‘NORMAL’?

As someone who is influenced by your own culture and upbringing, you will judge behaviour as ‘normal’ or acceptable because of your own cultural values. Self-reflection is one of the best ways to understand cultural differences, so consider what some typical Australian values might be, how your behaviour and attitudes are influenced by these and how these might differ to those of your host culture. You can use the cultural values list on the opposite page to get ideas.

## AUSTRALIANISMS

Here are a few Australian habits that are sometimes misinterpreted by or seem strange to other cultures:

- Poking fun at people and using sarcasm.
- Using ‘sorry’ frequently, often in minor situations where other cultures might use ‘excuse-me’.
- Using first names and an informal tone even when speaking to figures of authority or strangers.
- Directness or frankness when speaking to others.

Don’t stress about memorising long lists of customs and etiquette rules from your host country. You can often observe other people and follow their example, and simply understanding the core values of your host culture will help you judge appropriate behaviour.

## CULTURE SHOCK

When studying abroad, students often experience an initial period of elation and excitement, followed by an emotional crash known as ‘culture shock’. The constant challenge of new situations and obstacles can become exhausting and depressing. It is normal to experience this feeling and it usually improves over time once you start to feel more accustomed to the host country.



## CULTURAL VALUES

Cultures often have different values or customs in relation to the following:

- Social hierarchies and authority.
- Family and family responsibilities.
- The degree of formality/informality required in different social situations.
- The importance of the individual as opposed to the group or community.
- Gender roles and interaction between people of different genders.
- Attitudes to time and the importance of the past, present and future.
- The importance of written codes, laws and contracts as opposed to verbal agreements and generally understood practices.

Try to recognise the positive intentions of the attitudes and customs of other cultures, rather than dismissing them as ‘backward,’ silly or archaic.

# CULTURE & CUSTOMS



**!** Make sure you use 'Sie' unless you are addressing fellow students or friends.

## GREETINGS

Shaking hands when greeting somebody is customary in Germany. Between close friends, a hug is well practised. Titles are used in formal situations: *Herr* or *Frau* followed by the surname. In German there are two ways of addressing people - *Sie* ('you' formal) and *Du* ('you' informal).

## SHARING A MEAL

Germans are famous for their *Gemütlichkeit* (being sociable and welcoming). If you are invited - *eingeladen* - out to dinner, your host expects to pay the bill. If you are among fellow students/peers or sharing a casual meal, everyone usually pays for themselves. It is considered rude to begin eating before everyone else has been served. If visiting someone's home for dinner, bringing a gift of wine, chocolate or flowers is a good idea.



## MULTICULTURALISM

Germany borders nine countries, and immigration has brought increasing cultural diversity to the country. Immigrants come largely from the following countries:

- Turkey
- Italy
- Greece
- Poland
- Russia
- Serbia
- Croatia
- Spain
- Ukraine
- Romania
- Iran
- Iraq
- Morocco



Turkish immigrants form the largest ethnic group in Germany, and this has had a strong influence on German culture. Differences between German and Turkish culture and the assimilation of Turkish immigrants into society are often topical issues in the media.



## GLOSSARY

- Auf Wiedersehen* - Good-bye
- Bis gleich* - See you soon
- Bis später* - See you later
- Dankeschön / Danke* - Thank you / Thanks
- Entschuldigung!* - Sorry / Excuse-me
- Essen / Mahlzeit* - Food / Meal
- Es tut mir leid!* - Sorry (stronger)
- der Gast* - Guest
- Gesundheit!* - Bless you (after sneezing)
- Guten Morgen* - Good morning
- Gute Nacht* - Good night
- Grüß Gott* - Hello (in Southern Germany)
- Hallo* - Hello (on the phone)
- Herr / Frau* - Mr. / Mrs.
- Jemanden einladen* - To invite / shout somebody
- Jemanden vorstellen* - To introduce somebody
- Können wir uns duzen?* - Can we use du with each other (instigated by the more senior person)
- Schön, Sie kennen zu lernen* - Nice to meet you
- Zum Wohl! / Prost!* - Cheers (toasting drinks)

# CULTURE & CUSTOMS

## TRADITION & RELIGION

More than 60% of the German population is Christian, with approximately equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants. Many German traditions and celebrations are of Christian origin.

## PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is important in Germany. You should ring and let someone know if you are going to be late, even if it is only 10 or 15 minutes.

**!** *If you are going to be more than 5 minutes late, ring and let the person you are meeting know.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Germany has a strong tradition of caring for the environment, recycling and developing renewable energies. These things are often very important to Germans. The following activities, which might be normal in Australia, are likely to upset people in Germany (you may even be told off for doing them!):

- Not recycling rubbish correctly (recycling is usually sorted into several different bins).
- Not disposing of batteries, oil and hazardous waste correctly.
- Leaving your car engine running while you are parked/waiting for someone.
- Not switching off lights when you leave a room.
- Not switching off appliances and computers after you have finished using them.
- Littering.

## HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Germany has a long and varied history, and historical consciousness is an integral part of German culture. Germany has had a tumultuous modern history, with the Second World War, the Holocaust and the division

of the country into east and west. As a result Germans place a strong importance on being well educated about historical events and learning from them.

## EAST & WEST

From 1949 to 1990 Germany was divided into two states - a western democratic state and an eastern communist state. The different ideologies and long separation naturally caused cultural differences, and even though the country has been reunited since 1990, Germans still perceive differences between eastern and western German attitudes and behaviours.

**!** *You may hear the slang terms 'Ossi' (eastern German) and the 'Wessi' (western German) used. When in doubt it is best to avoid using these as they can often be seen as rude, simplistic or divisive.*

BERLINER MAUER 1961 - 1989

## AUSTRALIA FEVER

In Germany there is a peculiar fascination with all things Australian. Many Germans travel to Australia, and it is not uncommon to find articles and information about Australia regularly in German newspapers and magazines.

There is even a quarterly German magazine named 'Australien' solely dedicated to information on travel, culture and the economy in Australia:

 [www.australien.net](http://www.australien.net)

So don't be surprised if people know more about Australia than you'd imagined!

# CULTURE & CUSTOMS

## SOME NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS & HOLIDAYS

### VOLKSFEST (*Folk Festivals and Fairs*)

Every German town/region tends to have its own unique celebration days or festivals, and these are a great chance to experience local traditions and culture.

### NEW YEARS EVE (*Silvester*)

*Silvester* is a time for partying with friends. People are also allowed to set off their own fireworks.



*Germans maintain the unusual tradition of watching 'Dinner for One' (an old comedy skit in English) on television every year on New Year's Eve.*

### GRÜNKOHLESSEN (*Green Cabbage Dinner*)

In the winter months following the harvest of *Grünkohl*, many northern Germans will gather with groups of friends and walk through the countryside to a village pub. On this walk - known as a *Kohlfahrt* - they play various games and bring a cart of alcohol to drink while walking. This walk culminates in the *Grünkohlessen* at the pub/restaurant, where they eat a traditional meal of green cabbage, sausages and potatoes and appoint a *Kohlkönigspaar* to organise next year's *Grünkohlessen*.

### THE EIPHANY (*Dreikönigstag*)

*Dreikönigstag*, on January 6th, celebrates the visit of the *Magis* (the Three Kings) to the baby Jesus. Children

go from house to house dressed as the *Magis*, singing hymns and writing the letters 'CMB' in chalk on the door frames. They will ask for a donation of money for a charity, and people also often give them sweets.

Some believe 'CMB' stands for Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar (the names of the kings), while the church maintains it represents the Latin 'Christus Mansionem Benedictat' - may Christ bless this home.

### EASTER (*Ostern*)

Germans usually celebrate *Ostern* with Easter eggs, good food and (if Christian) attending church. Easter comes at the beginning of spring, so new branches and flowers are often brought inside to decorate houses.



## GLOSSARY

*der Feiertag* - Holiday

*das Feuerwerk* - Fireworks

*Frohe Ostern!* - Happy Easter

*Frohes Neues Jahr!* - Happy New Year!

*Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag!* / *Alles Gute zum Geburtstag!* - Happy birthday!

*die heiligen drei Könige / Magis* - The three kings

*das Jesuskind / das Christkind* - The Baby Jesus

*Karfreitag* - Good Friday

*das Osterei* - Easter egg

*die Osternachtfeier / Ostermesse* - Easter Vigil

>> JANUARY

>> FEBRUARY

>> MARCH

>> APRIL

>> MAY

>> JUNE

>> JULY

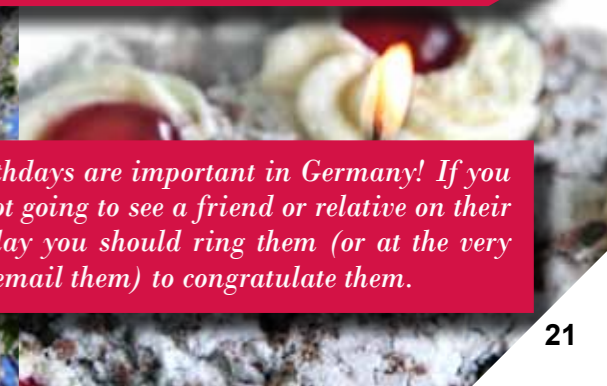
>> AUGUST



'Dinner for One' New Year's Video:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1v4BYV-YvA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1v4BYV-YvA)



*Walpurgisnacht* is also celebrated in Germany on the 30th of April. For more information see:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walpurgis\\_Night](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walpurgis_Night)



**!** Birthdays are important in Germany! If you are not going to see a friend or relative on their birthday you should ring them (or at the very least email them) to congratulate them.

# CULTURE & CUSTOMS

## OKTOBERFEST

The Oktoberfest is internationally one of the most well known German festivals. This Bavarian festival originated in Munich and is still celebrated here every year. From late September to early October, large beer tents are set up in the *Theresienwiese* area and the drinking, eating, dancing and music begins!

Oktoberfest is best known for its array of German beers served in *Steins*, waitresses and waiters wearing *Dirndls* and *Lederhosen*, traditional Bavarian foods and *Schlager* (a style of light folksy pop music).

Official Oktoberfest Website:  
[www.oktoberfest.de/en/](http://www.oktoberfest.de/en/)

## GERMAN UNITY DAY (*Tag der Deutschen Einheit*)

On October 3rd Germans celebrate the signing of the treaty that reunified East and West Germany in 1990. There are celebrations and ceremonies all over Germany, however the widest variety of celebrations and parades occurs in Berlin.

## KARNEVAL / FASCHING

*Karneval*, also known as *Fasching*, *Fastnachtzeit*, the fifth season and *die Verrückte Jahreszeit*, is a season of celebrations and parades that occur all over Germany. While the season officially begins on the 11th of November at 11:11am and ends on Ash Wednesday in February, most of the parades and celebrations

take place in February. These celebrations have been occurring since the 14th century, and while every town has its own parades and traditions, they generally all involve dressing up in silly costumes, making noise and parading through the streets.

The highlight of *Karneval* is *Rosenmontag*, where millions of people gather in Köln (Cologne) and other cities to watch the parade go by. Other special days include *Faschingsdienstag* and *Schmutziger Donnerstag*. In some towns on *Weiberfastnacht* - women's day - women storm the mayor's office and throw everyone out, appointing a *Karneval* princess to preside over the region until the festival is over.

Official Köln Karneval Website:  
[www.koelnerkarneval.de](http://www.koelnerkarneval.de)

## GLOSSARY

- das Bierzelt* - Beer tent
- Brezn* - Bavarian pretzel
- Dirndl* - A Bavarian dress
- der Kellner / die Kellnerin* - Waiter / waitress
- das Lebkuchenherz* - Gingerbread heart
- Lederhosen* - Bavarian suspender pants
- das Maskenkostüm* - Fancy-dress costume
- die Maske* - Mask
- der Schlager* - Folksy pop music
- der Umzug* - Parade

>> SEPTEMBER

>> OCTOBER

>> NOVEMBER



! If you wear a tie in Germany on *Weiberfastnacht* it is likely to be destroyed - women go around cutting off men's ties with scissors (and sometimes expect a kiss in return!).

# CULTURE & CUSTOMS

## SAINT NICHOLAS DAY

On the 6th of December Germans celebrate *Nikolaustag*. On the eve of this day, children leave out shoes for Saint Nikolaus, which traditionally are either filled with presents and sweets if they have been good, or a lump of coal/bundle of twigs if they have been bad.



*The modern Santa Claus story originated from the tradition of Saint Nikolaus, a long-bearded man in bishops robes that visited children and gave them gifts if they had been well behaved. The jolly red Santa we know today was drawn by illustrator Thomas Nast, and made popular by Coca Cola.*

## CHRISTMAS

Many Christmas traditions originated in Germany and it is a great place to enjoy the Christmas season!

On the first Sunday of Advent, many families will place an advent wreath - *Adventskranz* - in their house, and on each Sunday leading up to Christmas they will light a candle on the wreath, until they have lit four candles for the four Sundays. Some families also have advent calendars with treats for each day of advent.

During the lead up to Christmas there are Christmas markets - *Weihnachtsmarkt* - in most German cities and towns. These markets are a chance to sip some *Glühwein* (hot mulled wine) in the winter cold, buy

German sausages or *Lebkuchen* (ginger bread) at the food stalls, and collect all manner of craft wares.



*The Christmas tree originated in Germany and is traditionally adorned with real candles.*

On *Heiligabend* - Christmas Eve - German families enjoy dinner together (usually roast goose or fish), open their presents around *der Tannenbaum* - the Christmas tree - and stay up late celebrating. It is usually either the *Weihnachtsmann* (Santa Claus) or the *Christkind* (baby Jesus), that is said to have brought children their presents. Families also usually go to a Christmas mass/service either before or after the evening celebrations.



## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (Gesetzliche Feiertage)

- 1st Jan - New Year's Day
- 6th Jan\* - Epiphany / *Heilige Drei Könige*
- March/April° - Good Friday / *Karfreitag*
- March/April° - Easter Monday / *Ostermontag*
- 1st May - Labour Day / *Tag der Arbeit*
- May/June° - Ascension Day / *Christi Himmelfahrt*
- May/June° - Whit Monday / *Pfingstmontag*
- May/June° - Corpus Christi / *Fronleichnam*
- 15Aug\* - Assumption / *Mariähimmelfahrt*
- 3rd Oct - Day of German Unity / *Tag der Deutschen Einheit*
- 31st Oct\* - Day of Reformation / *Reformationstag*
- 1st Nov\* - All Saints' Day / *Allerheiligen*
- November°\* - Repentance Day / *Buß und Betttag*
- 25th Dec - Christmas Day / *Weihnachtstag*
- 26th December - Boxing Day / *Zweiter Weihnachtsfeiertag*

\*Only a holiday in some states  
°Dates vary from year to year

More information on German public holidays:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public\\_holidays\\_in\\_Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_holidays_in_Germany)

## >> DECEMBER



## THE DEGREE SYSTEM

The German degree system is similar to the Australian system in that there are three main degree levels:

- Bachelor's Degree (*der Bachelor-Abschluss*)
- Master's Degree (*der Master-Abschluss*)
- Doctorate (*die Doktorarbeit*)

Bachelor's degrees usually last for 3 years, Master's degrees for 1-2 years. There is no equivalent to an Australian honours degree. German students must complete a Masters to continue on to a Doctorate.



*German universities completed the change to the bachelors/masters system in 2010, as part of an effort across Europe to implement uniform, internationally recognised degrees. The old Diplom/Magister system required undergraduate students to study for longer and was structured differently.*

## THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The German academic year begins in October but follows a similar pattern to Australian universities. The two semesters are called winter and summer semester.

**Sep / Oct** - Winter Semester Begins

**Dec** - Christmas break (2 weeks)

**Jan / Feb** - Winter Break Begins

**Mar / Apr** - Summer Semester Begins

**Mar / Apr** - Easter break (1 week)

**July** - Summer Break Begins



*Use a formal title and last name when addressing lecturers (i.e. 'Herr \_,' 'Frau \_,' 'Herr Professor\_,' or 'Herr Doktor\_') unless the lecturer indicates that using their first name is OK.*



## UNIVERSITY CLASSES

Studying in Germany can involve completing any of the following types of classes / course components:

**Lectures** (*Vorlesungen*)

**Seminars** (*Seminare*) these allow for class discussions. Students are often required to present papers.

**Class exercises / Tutorials** (*Übungen / Tutorien*)

**Internships** (*Praktika*)

**Field Trips** (*Exkursionen*)



## GLOSSARY

*der Abschluss* - Degree

*das Akademische Auslandsamt* - International Student Office

*die Ausbildung* - Education

*der/die Austauschstudent(in)* - Exchange student

*der Dozent / die Dozentin* - Lecturer

*das Fach* - Unit / Subject

*die Fachschaft* - Student guild

*die Hausarbeit / Studienarbeit* - Assignment

*die Hochschulausbildung* - Tertiary Education

*die Klausur* - Exam

*die Mensa* - Student cafeteria

*die Note* - Mark (i.e. course or exam result)

*der Professor / die Professorin* - Professor

*das Schwarze Brett* - Student Notice Board

*der Student / die Studentin* - Student

*das Studentenwerk* - Student services

*der Studiengang* - Course

*die Universität* - University

*die vorlesungsfreie Zeit* - Summer or winter break





## EXAMS AND STUDY LOADS

In Germany you acquire credit points for the classes you attend and the assignments and exams you successfully complete. You must gain a certain amount of credit points to achieve a degree. The grading scale for exams is as follows:

- 0,7 - 1,5 Excellent
- 1,6 - 2 Very Good
- 2,1 - 3 Good
- 3,1 - 3,5 Satisfactory
- 3,6 - 4 Sufficient
- 4,1 - 5 Fail

**!** Remember, in Germany a comma is equivalent to an Australian decimal point!

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There are different types of higher education providers in Germany, and choosing the right one often depends on your field of study and learning preferences.

Information on UQ partner universities in Germany:  
[www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/germany](http://www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/germany)

- **Universität** - Traditional university (more focus on theory and research).
- **Technische Universität** - Technology University (traditional university with a strong technical orientation).
- **Fachhochschule** - University of applied sciences (strong practical orientation and ties with the workforce).
- **Kunst-, Musik- und Filmhochschule** - Colleges of art, music and film.
- **Private Hochschulen** - Private colleges (strong ties with industry and practical orientation). Be sure to check if the institution is state recognised.
- **Berufsakademie** - Vocational training.



For rankings comparing German speaking universities across a wide variety of subjects:  
[www.che-concept.de](http://www.che-concept.de)

## FOREIGN STUDENTS

German universities are becoming increasingly popular with international students, particularly with students from China, Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and the US.



## GLOSSARY

die Fakultät / der Fachbereich - Faculty

## FACULTIES AND SUBJECTS:

Chemie - Chemistry

Geisteswissenschaften - Arts

Informatik - Information Technology

Ingenieurwesen - Engineering

Jura / Rechtswissenschaft - Law

Kulturwissenschaft - Cultural Studies

Kunstwissenschaft - Fine Arts

Mathematik - Mathematics

Medizin - Medicine

Pädagogik - Education and Social Work

Philologie - Languages

Philosophie - Philosophy

Physik - Physics

Psychologie - Psychology

Sozialwissenschaft - Social science

Theologie - Theology

Wirtschaft - Economics and Business

## WHAT DO GERMAN STUDENTS DO WITH THEIR FREE TIME?

### STUDENT JOBS

The majority of German students work while they are studying, and it is also very common for students to complete internships related to their field of study.

International students can also work (though the number of hours is limited - check the current student visa regulations). The university *Studentenwerk* may be able to give you help and advice on finding jobs.

German Federal Employment Office:  
[www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)

Popular jobs for international students include bartending, working at weekly market stalls, working as a student assistant (*Hiwi-job*) or translation.

German men are required to complete compulsory military service after they finish high school. If they object to military service they may choose community service instead. As a result men usually start university up to a year later than women in Germany.

### LEISURE

Like most Germans, students often enjoy watching soccer, whether in the stadium itself, at a party, in a bar or on the university campus. With the *Bundesliga* (German National League), the Champions League, the *Europameisterschaft* (Euro Cup) and the *Fußballweltmeisterschaft* (The World Cup) there is no shortage of matches to watch. Tennis, ice hockey, basketball, cycling, skiing, bowling and hiking are also popular German sports.

Latest German sports news:  
[www.kicker.de](http://www.kicker.de)  
[www.sport1.de](http://www.sport1.de)

In university towns there are usually an array of student pubs. These often offer cheap food and drinks and attract a young student crowd. Clubs and live music venues are also popular among students.

Table soccer is popular in bars. You place a coin on the table to indicate you are next in line to play. Remember, 'spinning' (using the palm of your hand to swiftly spin the bar around) is against the rules, and you are likely to be told off for doing this!

Regular student parties and activities are often organised by different university departments or the student union. Check notice boards on campus to find out about these.

Thursday is usually student day in Germany. Some venues offer students cheaper entry, special deals on food / drinks, or music that caters to student tastes.

### SIGN UP! - STUDENT SOCIETIES

There are a wide variety of student societies at German universities that you can join. Some have stricter rules and requirements for becoming a member than others.

### USEFUL LINKS FOR STUDENTS

German Academic Exchange Service  
- [www.daad.de/en](http://www.daad.de/en)  
- [www.study-in.de/en/](http://www.study-in.de/en/)

Information for foreign students about German universities and studying in Germany.

Young Germany  
- [www.young-germany.de/](http://www.young-germany.de/)

Interesting articles, news and information for students and young people about studying, living, working and going out in Germany.

Facts About Germany  
- [www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/)

Concise information about German foreign policy, economy, modern life, politics, culture, media, society, history, education and environment.

National Association for Student Affairs  
- [www.studentenwerk.de](http://www.studentenwerk.de)

Association of German student service groups that provides services for the social, cultural, medical and financial support of students.

# UNIVERSITY LIFE

## CAMPUS FACILITIES

German university campuses have similar facilities to those in Australia, with banks, ATMs, food outlets and sporting facilities readily available.

**!** *Most German students will go to the Mensa (student cafeteria) for lunch. The Mensa offers a wide variety of meals and snacks at cheap prices.*

## STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

### STUDENTENWOHNHEIM (STUDENT DORMS)

A *Studentenwohnheim* is like a college or student dormitory. A large proportion of German students live in these *Studentenwohnheimen* because they are usually cheap, include basic furniture, are close to the university and are a great way to meet other students. The university's *Studentenwerk* organises this kind of accommodation, so contact them if you are interested.

### WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT (SHARE HOUSE)

Another popular type of accommodation among students is the *Wohngemeinschaft* ('WG') - a share house where everyone rents their own room. You can find these advertised in newspapers, on the student notice board, or online. It is also possible to rent private apartments and houses.

**!** *In Germany there are also Studentenverbindungen (fraternities). Like those in the USA, these fraternities have their own traditions, rules, events and housing.*

**!** *Useful websites for finding share accommodation:*  
*www.wg-gesucht.de*  
*www.studenten-wg.de*  
*www.wg-welt.de*  
*www.diewohnung.de*  
*www.studentenwohnungsmarkt.de*  
*www.studenten-wohnung.de*

**!** *Information on renting and a glossary of German rental advertisement abbreviations:*  
*www.toytowngermany.com/wiki/Apartment\_rental*

## **!** FREEBIES & DISCOUNTS!

- There are websites that offer *Studentenrabatte* (student discounts):
  - [www.allstudents.de](http://www.allstudents.de)
  - [www.studentenrabatte.de](http://www.studentenrabatte.de)
- Booklets of discount vouchers are often given out at universities at the beginning of semester.
- Thursday is often 'student day' see what special deals and events might be happening at your university or in local clubs and pubs.
- Cinemas often have '2 for 1' days. Find out which day is '2 for 1' day in your area.
- Find out about cultural events in your city. There are often free public exhibitions, festivals, theatre shows and concerts.
- Explore historic local castles, monuments and churches. It often won't cost you anything unless you decide to see a special inner chamber, pay for a tour or climb a tower.
- Consider going outside the cities. Germany has beautiful mountains, forests, rivers and lakes. Go for walks, cycle, swim... you don't need a lot of money to have fun!





*Germans are very keen on seasonal local produce, so don't be surprised when many restaurants offer asparagus meals during asparagus season, cabbage meals during cabbage season and strawberry tarts and desserts during strawberry season.*



## GERMAN FOOD - MORE THAN MEAT

Don't panic, contrary to popular belief you won't have to survive on only meat and bread while in Germany! There are plenty of international food options, and Germans actually do love their fruits and vegetables! However, if you would like to try some traditional, hearty and delicious German foods there are plenty of restaurants and pubs that will serve these things.

Typical dishes usually include bread, German pasta or potato chips/dumplings as the staple, accompanied by meats, creamy sauces and pickled or fresh vegetables.

A typical German breakfast usually involves yoghurt,

muesli or bread with cured meats.

Typical German dishes are diverse and depend on the region you are visiting, but some that you are likely to encounter have been listed on the following page.



*Dishes vary from region to region, so don't presume that all German food is going to be like the Bavarian dishes you may have encountered at the Oktoberfest.*



Brezel



Schweinshaxe mit Knödel



Bratwurst



Leberkäse / Fleischkäse



Roulade



Schnitzel



Kartoffelsalat



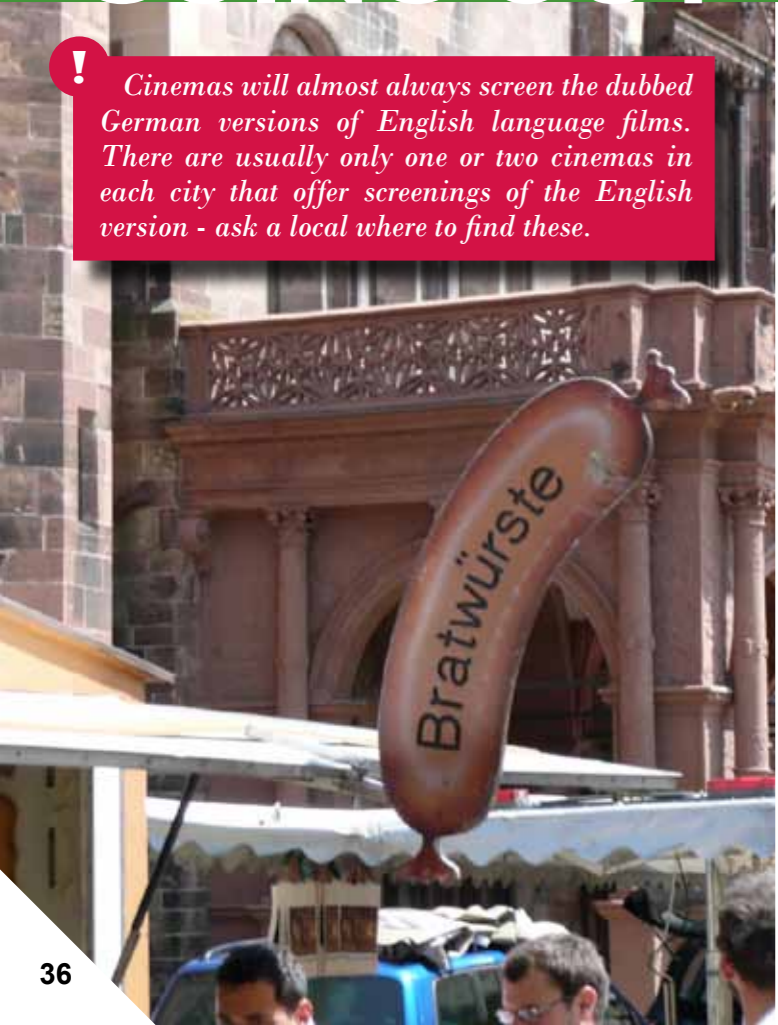
Currywurst



## SOME TYPICAL DISHES

- *Bratkartoffeln*: fried potatoes.
- *Bratwurst*: a popular type of sausage.
- *Brezeln*: salty bread twisted into a circular shape with a brown surface and soft interior.
- *Currywurst*: sausage with spicy curry sauce.
- *Heringssalat*: marinated fish in a creamy salad.
- *Kartoffelsalat*: potato salad.
- *Knödel*: potato dumplings.
- *Kohlroulade*: cabbage rolls.
- *Leberkäse / Fleischkäse*: sausage loaf.
- *Leberwurst*: spiced liver pâté.
- *Roulade*: rolls of bacon, onions and meat.
- *Sauerbraten*: marinated beef pot roast.
- *Sauerkraut*: pickled cabbage.
- *Schnitzel*: crumbed fried veal, chicken or pork, often served with sauce and potato chips.
- *Schweinshaxe*: roasted pork hock (knuckle).
- *Spätzle*: German egg noodles.
- *Wurstsalat*: sausage salad (shaved meat with pickles and dressing served cold).

! *Cinemas will almost always screen the dubbed German versions of English language films. There are usually only one or two cinemas in each city that offer screenings of the English version - ask a local where to find these.*



## EATING OUT

If meeting with friends for a coffee or a casual meal, there are plenty of pubs and cafés in Germany with generous meals at reasonable prices. There are also many high quality restaurants with delicious food and great wines. Don't forget to tip!

Kebab shops ('Dönerbuden') and pizza shops are also very common in Germany, and a popular cheap and easy option for students. At sporting events and markets you will find *Imbissbuden* - fast food stalls where you can buy sausages, other fast food and sweets. You do not tip at these type of food outlets.

## THINGS TO DO

Local cinemas, concerts, theatres and sporting events are fun places to spend an evening.

During the day, try exploring local museums, castles, historic buildings, art galleries, shopping districts and markets. Christmas markets take place in December and often run till late at night; normal markets run during the day. Alternatively, get involved in local sports and outdoor activities.

Each city should have a local event guide online which will give you tips on what to see and do in the area.



! *It is customary to tip in Germany, so in restaurants you should tip approximately 10% of your bill.*

## 🚩 SOME TRADITIONAL GERMAN & AUSTRIAN SWEETS:

- *Apfelstrudel*: apple strudel.
- *Bienenstich*: bee sting cake (made with honey, nuts & custard).
- *Erdbeerkuchen*: strawberry pie.
- *Käsekuchen*: baked cheese cake.
- *Lebkuchen*: ginger bread.
- *Linzertorte*: spiced tart made with jam & nuts.
- *Marzipan*: sugar and almond paste - popular in sweets, cakes and chocolates.
- *Mohnstriezel*: sweet poppy seed roll.
- *Rote Grütze*: red fruit pudding.
- *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*: black forest cake.
- *Stollen*: Christmas fruit bread with icing sugar.



*Stollen*

## DRINKS ANYONE?

German beers are world famous. Due to the *Reinheitsgebot* ('purity order') a drink cannot be labelled a beer in Germany if it has been brewed using ingredients other than water, hops, barley, yeast and in some cases, sugar. There are many local breweries across the country, and sometimes taverns and bars will also sell their own house brew.



*Jägermeister, a famous German liquor made from herbs and spices, was traditionally consumed as a digestif. Marketing of the drink as a shot or mixer to a younger crowd through event sponsorship and advertising has boosted popularity and caused sales in the USA to outstrip those in Germany.*

*Schnaps* is a popular liquor, usually made from peaches or cherries and drunk after a meal. There are also many high quality German wines, the most famous German grape variety being *Riesling*.

More recently it has become popular to mix beer with different types of juices and soft drinks. A *Radler* is a mixture of beer and lemonade and is a popular lighter and less alcoholic alternative to straight beer.

## BARS, CLUBS & CASINOS

If you fancy going out for a drink or to a club, there are many choices in large cities to suit all tastes in music and atmosphere. These are often cheaper for students on Thursdays (student night), and *Studentenkneipen* (student bars) cater specifically to students.

Clubs usually have a cover charge, though they often offer student deals. Some will have live music.



*If you are going out to clubs, dress appropriately. Men should wear a long-sleeved shirt and shoes. If you wear sneakers or sandals you may be turned away at the door.*

To get into a casino you will usually need to wear a full suit if you are a man or a formal dress/outfit if you are a woman, and be over the age of 18 (though some casinos have a higher age limit of 21). It is best to check specific dress and age requirements in advance.



*When toasting in Germany, you should look the person in the eyes as you touch your glasses together, rather than looking at the glass.*



## SOME TYPICAL DRINKS

- *Altbier*: dark beer popular in Düsseldorf.
- *Apfelschorle*: apple juice mixed with mineral water.
- *Bananenweizen*: wheat beer mixed with banana juice.
- *Feuerzangenbowle*: spiced wine & citrus fruit heated in a pot. A cone of sugar doused in rum is then set alight above the pot and allowed to melt in. *Feuerzangenbowle* parties are popular in winter, and have been made famous by the movie with the same name.
- *Glühwein*: spiced mulled wine served hot in the Christmas season.
- *Jägermeister*: liquor made from herbs and spices.
- *Kölsch*: light beer popular in Cologne.
- *Radler* (sometimes called 'Alster' in Northern Germany): mix of lemonade and beer (shandy).
- *Schnaps*: liquor distilled from fermented fruit.
- *Weizenbier / Weißbier*: wheat beer.
- *Weizenbock*: strong, dark wheat beer.

# SHOPPING

As a student in Germany you will probably be wondering where the most *günstig, billig & preiswert* (cheap / good value) deals are to be found. Here are some suggestions for places to shop in Germany:

## SOUVENIRS

If you are looking for a gift to bring back home, Germany boasts many hand crafted items and regional specialities. A bottle of *Schnaps*, a wooden children's toy or a typical gift from the region you are in would make a good gift. Arts and crafts markets are usually the cheapest option to find unique souvenirs and gifts.



! *Some shops, even large department stores, will not accept credit cards, so it is good to always have cash or a savings card handy.*

## GROCERIES

Supermarkets are a cheap and convenient option for doing your grocery shopping. Some low-cost chains are *Aldi, Lidl* and *Netto*. Other supermarket chains include *Real, Rewe, Tengelmann, Edeka* and *Plus*.

! *At German supermarkets you will need to use a €1 or €0,50 coin to get a shopping trolley, which you will get back once you return the trolley. You will not be given plastic bags, so bring your own reusable bags. Some supermarkets require you to weigh your own fruit and vegetables using the machines provided.*

Many German towns also have open markets once a week. These are a great option for fresh local produce.

Don't forget, local bakeries and butchers provide fresh, high quality German meats and breads. If you are feeling adventurous why not try some *Brezeln* (pretzel bread) and *Leberwurst* (liver pâté).

! *Organic foods are popular in Germany. There are many Bioläden (organic stores) where you can buy organic goods at reasonable prices.*

## APPLIANCES

For electrical appliances at good prices try *Media Markt, Saturn* or a local electrical store.

## STATIONERY

Try stores on your university campus. Large department stores and supermarkets are also a good option.

## MANCHESTER

Try large department stores and supermarkets such as *Aldi, Lidl, Netto, Tengelmann, Real, Rewe, Edeka* and *Plus*.

## CLOTHING

If you are looking to buy clothing, chains like *s.Oliver, H&M, Xanada, Zara* and *Esprit* are student favourites.

## BOOKS & MEDIA

Good places to buy books, CDs and DVDs are *Media Markt* and *Saturn*. *Thalia* is good for books and *World of Music (WOM)* is good for CDs.

! *When you enter a shop it is customary to greet the shop owner with "Guten Tag" before asking for something, and say "Auf Wiedersehen" when leaving.*

## 🚩 OPENING HOURS

Generally stores in Germany are open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm (though many stay open till 8 or 10pm) and are closed for lunch from 1pm-2pm. Normal Saturday hours are 9am-4pm, and most stores are closed on Sundays. Below is an approximate guide for opening hours by store type:

- **Banks:** Mon-Fri 8:30am-4pm. Some are open till 5:30pm on Thursdays. Smaller branches close for lunch from 1pm-2pm.
- **Supermarkets:** Mon-Sat 8am-8/10pm. Some are open 24hrs.
- **Shopping malls:** all retail stores must close before 8pm. Smaller stores often close at 6pm during the week, and at 2 or 4pm on Saturday.
- **Pharmacies:** Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat 8am-1pm. One pharmacy in each region is open for emergencies after hours. This is called the *Notdienst* if you are looking it up online.
- **Petrol Stations:** 24/7.
- **Fast Food Outlets:** Often 24/7 or till late at night (anywhere between 8pm and 1am).

# LANGUAGE

## GERMAN

The official language of Germany is German. Many Germans, particularly those of the younger generation, speak English well and enjoy a chance to practise. However this is not true of everyone, and not everything will be written or announced in English for your benefit, so take the opportunity to improve your German and don't be afraid to practise speaking it!

## DIALECTS

All Germans are able to communicate with one another in *Hochdeutsch* - high German. However, different regions in Germany have different dialects (*Dialekte / Mundarten*) which can be hard to understand for outsiders as they differ in accent, vocabulary and grammar from *Hochdeutsch*. These dialects are a remnant of a time when Germany was made up of various tribes and smaller kingdoms.

Info on German dialects, including vocabulary lists and sound bites:  
[www6.dw-world.de/de/dialekt.php](http://www6.dw-world.de/de/dialekt.php)

A lot of German comedy acts play with the use of different accents and dialects to create humour, but be careful not to insult someone's way of speaking as Germans are usually very proud of their local dialect.

## SLANG

Most German slang is specific to a particular region because it is derived from dialect, however on the opposite page we have listed some slang words that are used more widely. Be careful of using slang terms as they can sometimes be seen as rude or offensive.

A great English/German online dictionary:  
[www.leo.org/index\\_en.html](http://www.leo.org/index_en.html)



## GERMAN SLANG & COLLOQUIALISMS

- abpoofen* - to take a nap (implies laziness)
- abschädeln* - to booze
- amtlich* - proper / good
- anmachen / angraben / anbaggern* - to flirt / hit on / give the eye
- der Bert* - idiot
- die Braut* - bride / cute girl
- dicht* - drunk
- dummschwallen* - to talk nonsense
- die Dumpfbacke* - dimwit (very colloquial)
- der Fischkopf* - "Fishhead" Somebody from northern Germany
- die Flocken / die Mäuse / das Moos / die Patte / die Kohle* - money

- das Gebrabbel / Gesabbel / Geschwalle / Gesülze* - nonsense, stupid talk
- geil / fett* - great / funny
- Ische* - girl / woman / girlfriend
- das Kaff* - small and boring town (derogatory)
- die Kippe* - cigarette
- die Klampfe* - guitar
- das Klo* - loo
- Kübeln / reihern* - to vomit
- der Lappen* - drivers license (literally: rag, cloth)
- die Ödbacke* - boring person
- die Schnitte* - chick (girl)
- die Tussi* - broad / bird (girl)
- das Weichei* - chicken (coward)



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