

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. Preparation and Move.....	3
1. Books.....	4
a. General Expat Books	4
b. Books about Living in Germany.....	5
c. Travel Guides.....	6
2. Internet.....	8
a. Expat Links.....	8
b. Germany-related links.....	8
c. Regional links.....	8
3. Clubs.....	9
4. Companies (in case of an international assignment).....	10
5. Relocation Agencies.....	11
6. Universities and Academic Exchange Agencies.....	12
7. House Hunting	13
a. Buying or Renting.....	13
b. Buying.....	13
c. Renting.....	14
d. Rent Contract (Mietvertrag) and Rent Law (Mietrecht).....	17
e. Utilities.....	19
III. First Impressions & General Information about Germany.....	21
1. First Impressions	21
2. The Basics about Germany.....	23
3. A Short Overview of German History.....	26
a. The Beginning (pre-historical times – 482).....	27
b. From the Franconian Empire to the first German Empire (482 – 919).....	28
c. The Crusades and the High Middle Ages (919 – 1273).....	30
d. The Habsburg Family and the Late Middle Ages (1273 – 1490).....	31
e. The Renaissance, the 30-year War and its Consequences (1490 – 1701 AD).....	32
f. Preußen (Prussia) – A New Power (1701 – 1815).....	35
g. The Wiener Kongreß and the Fight for German Unity (1815 – 1871).....	38
h. The German Empire (1871 – 1918).....	41
i. The Way into World War II and the Destruction of Germany (1918 – 1945).....	45
j. The Division and Reunification of Germany; Germany Today (1945 – 2009).....	47
IV. Culture Shock.....	53
1. What is Culture Shock?.....	53
2. How to Overcome Culture Shock.....	57
3. Culture Shock? What Culture Shock? By Patricia Bartholomew.....	62
4. Peculiarities of German Culture.....	65
a. Unfriendly and private Germans?.....	65
b. Hierarchical and Formal Structures.....	68
c. The state will take care of it.....	70
d. Separation of work and private life.....	72
e. The positive and negative aspects of thorough organization and planning ahead.....	73
f. Employee-oriented Employment Law.....	74
g. Punctuality.....	75
h. „It’s not even their business, is it?“ – The habit of correcting others	76
i. The liberal German.....	77
j. Shop opening hours and holidays	78
k. Lunch and dinner – eating patterns.....	80
l. Karneval, Spargelzeit, Weinprobe, Christmas – a German year.....	80
m. Coffee and cake.....	83

V. Bureaucracy and Laws.....	84
1. First impressions and tips.....	84
2. Immigration and Work Permit Laws.....	86
a. Entering Germany.....	86
i) EU-citizens.....	86
ii) Citizens of countries listed in the “Visum-Positivliste”	87
iii) Citizens of other countries.....	87
b. Living and working in Germany.....	88
i) EU-citizens.....	88
ii) Non EU-citizens.....	88
3. Special German Laws.....	90
a. An- and Abmeldung (Registration and De-registration).....	90
b. Ruhezeit (Quiet Period).....	91
c. Garbage separation.....	92
d. Buying, driving and maintaining a car.....	95
i) Driver’s license.....	95
ii) Been there, done that, got the license.....	97
iii) Buying a car.....	99
iv) Registration, insurance and TÜV.....	100
v) Automobile Clubs.....	101
e. Traffic rules.....	102
i) Speed limit.....	102
ii) Overtaking.....	103
iii) Breakdowns.....	103
iv) Good Samaritan Law.....	103
v) Alcohol.....	103
vi) Seat Belt.....	103
vii) Right of way.....	104
viii) Pedestrian crossings.....	104
ix) Feinstaubplakette (Emissions control sticker).....	104
f. Kirchensteuer (Church tax).....	104
g. GEZ (Television fees).....	105
VI. Leisure and Social Life in Germany.....	106
1. Leisure in Germany	106
a. German Gemütlichkeit	106
b. Beer gardens and pubs.....	107
c. Dining and wining.....	107
d. Town festivals.....	110
e. Clubs.....	110
f. Spazieren gehen.....	110
g. Stammtisch-Culture.....	111
h. Sports.....	111
i. English cinemas, theaters and libraries.....	111
2. Sightseeing	111
a. North Germany.....	112
b. Central Germany.....	113
c. East Germany.....	114
d. South Germany.....	115
e. Themed tourist routes.....	116
3. Meeting Germans and other Expats	119
a. “It just takes a while.”.....	119
b. The language issue.....	120
c. Where to meet people.....	121
d. Some closing advice on social life in Germany from other expats.....	123

VII. Daily Life.....	123
1. Shopping.....	124
a. General information	124
b. Food shopping.....	126
c. Aldi and the German shopping culture by Isabelle dePommereau.....	132
2. Health Care	135
a. Health insurance system.....	135
b. Prescriptions and medication.....	138
c. Finding an English-speaking doctor and making an appointment.....	140
d. Emergencies and Medical Treatment outside Consultation Hours.....	141
3. “Did you try to learn German?” – “Absolutely!”.....	141
a. Where to Learn German.....	142
b. Germans’ attitudes towards non-German speakers.....	145
4. Banks.....	147
a. Opening a Bank Account.....	147
b. Methods of Payment.....	149
5. The Postal Service.....	150
a. Postal Charges for mail within Germany.....	151
b. Stamps.....	152
c. Post Boxes.....	152
6. Working	153
a. Finding employment in Germany.....	153
b. Applying for a job.....	156
i) Cover letter.....	156
ii) Photo.....	157
iii) Resume.....	158
iv) Diplomas.....	159
v) Reference letters.....	159
c. Relevant Employment Law.....	160
i) Legal basis.....	160
ii) General principles.....	161
iii) Probationary period (Probezeit).....	161
iv) Salary deductions.....	162
v) Part time.....	163
vi) The protection of pregnant employees and working mothers.....	164
vii) Continuation of salary payments during sickness.....	165
viii) Warning notice (Abmahnung).....	165
ix) Dismissals.....	166
x) Reference letter (Zeugnis).....	168
d. Social and cultural aspects of the working environment.....	169
e. Volunteer, self-employed and freelance work.....	173
VIII. The situation of the accompanying spouse.....	175
1. Getting information.....	175
2. Sacrifices that will need to be made.....	176
3. Overcoming obstacles	179
IX. International Children.....	183
1. Moving Abroad with Children.....	183
2. The Graceful Art of In-Between by Nina Scheicher.....	186
X. In a Nutshell.....	192
XI. Closing Words from Expats in Germany.....	194