



# Germany



## Welcome

Welcome your German guests by saying *Willkommen* 'vil-koh-men', meaning 'welcome'. This greeting is followed by the guest's title and surname unless you know them well. Using the German version of their title will be especially appreciated, so 'Herr' (Hair) for 'Mr' or 'Frau' (Frow) for 'Mrs/Ms' followed by their surname, e.g. *Willkommen Herr Schmidt*. It is also customary to greet guests including children, with a quick, firm handshake.

**'Welcome!'**  
*Hairts-likh vill-koh-men*  
Herzlich Willkommen!

Germans like to travel more than any other European nationality and the United Kingdom is a popular destination. Most Germans' knowledge of other countries, including the United Kingdom, is good and they have a keen interest in other cultures and societies.

## The Language

### Hello

*Goo-ten targ*  
Guten Tag

### Goodbye

*Owf vee-der-zay-en*  
Auf Wiedersehen

### Please

*Bi-ter*  
Bitte

### Thank you

*Dan-ker*  
Danke

English is taught at school in Germany and most young people will be very comfortable speaking it. Be patient with the older generation, who may be slightly more hesitant. Although their level of English is generally good, they may struggle to understand a strong accent or idiom.

German is the second most widely-spoken language in the European Union, one of the official languages of the European Commission and the third most popular foreign language taught around the world.

### Did you know?

Karl Benz is generally acknowledged as the inventor of the automobile, which he first built in 1885.



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## The Culture

In public, good manners and a serious attitude, avoiding displays of emotion, are the norm. Fairness, equality and honesty are highly valued. Directness is a feature of German conversation, in stark contrast with the convoluted British way of talking (“Would you mind terribly if ...?”). This can come across as blunt or impolite, but it is not generally intended in this way.

There is a clear separation between work and home life: socialising tends to revolve around the family.

The Germans value their national identity, and are very proud of their reputation for hard work, efficiency and the achievements that are associated with their country. These include good beer, engineering, medical and scientific goods, car manufacturing and being a member of a united Europe.

There is a great affection for the British and their sense of humour.

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## Customer Service Advice

Good customer service, characterised by punctuality, efficiency and organisation, is very important. This means that they expect you to be *exactly* on time. For example, if you agree to lead a tour at 10.00, you should be ready to start at precisely 10.00, not 10.05. If you are late, even if it's only a couple of minutes, a German customer may think you cannot manage your time very well.



You are expected to act professionally, to be fully informed and prepared for all eventualities. If you have forgotten something that prevents you from delivering your service precisely as agreed, they may question your ability to provide the service at all.

Misinformation, a change of plans or starting a new task before finishing the first one may frustrate or annoy a German customer: for example, if the entry fee to a tourist attraction is not displayed or the price of a tube fare is not made clear.



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- **DO** provide detailed information on all aspects of their stay. Written materials like brochures are especially useful.
- **DO** ensure that the establishment is clean and well organised
- **DO** provide recycling facilities for German customers as they are very environmentally aware.
- **DO** be prepared for a much more direct communication style.

## Germany Reunited

Germany has the largest population in the European Union and has 16 regions. Its economy is the world's third largest, after the US and Japan.

Germany has led the way in developing relationships with many of the EU's newest members, especially those in Eastern Europe. Germany is the home to the largest number of immigrants in Europe, both in terms of the proportion and number of people in the population.

### Key Facts

- **Population** – approx 82,200,000
- **Capital City** – Berlin (since reunification in 1990)
- **Language** – German
- **Religions** – Protestants 31%, Catholics 31%, Muslims 4%, others 8%, agnostics 30%
- **Currency** – Euro
- **Exchange Rate** – €1.34 = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +49
- **Time Difference** – GMT+1



## Where to go next

For more information about welcoming international visitors to London, visit [www.rln-london.com/welcoming](http://www.rln-london.com/welcoming)

RLN London's *Service Finder* can help you find language and cultural services – including translation, detailed cultural briefing and language training. [www.rln-london.com/servicefinder](http://www.rln-london.com/servicefinder)

*'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. RLN London has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of RLN London.*

### Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. They can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.