



## Pre-Trip Checklist

\*Official travel guidelines from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Mission in Germany, German Missions in the U.S., and the CDC Travelers' Health.

- [U.S. Department of State](#): Provides the most accurate, up-to-date travel advisories, visa requirements, and safety information.
- [U.S. Mission in Germany](#): Offers crucial updates on entry procedures, including the new Entry/Exit System (EES) and security messages.
- [German Missions in the U.S.](#): The official source for visa regulations, entry requirements, and citizenship information.
- [CDC Travelers' Health – Germany](#): Provides health recommendations and mandatory vaccination requirements.

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

### 60 Days Before Departure: Documentation and Logistics

#### LEAP Specific Trip Action Items

- Join “LEAP Germany Nursery Automation Tour Community” on WhatsApp to get trip reminders and group plans in country. This will be our primary communication platform while in Germany.
  - Link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/KRmB6Vp0S59liLZyKhtlaq>
- Please keep an eye out for an email from [ashender@ncsu.edu](mailto:ashender@ncsu.edu) containing a required form to collect passport details necessary for hotel registrations as well as emergency contact information to be kept on file by trip leads in case of an emergency.
- LEAP will reimburse specific expenses incurred during international travel status (May 30 – June 5, 2026). Reimbursable items include:
  - Parking or rideshares (Uber/Lyft) to and from your local U.S. airport.
  - Transportation to and from the Hamburg airport and the hotel.
  - Individual meals not already included in the trip itinerary and meals purchased on international travel days 30 May and 5 June 2026.
- To receive reimbursement for travel expenses, you must register as an NC State Vendor before departure.
  - Check your inbox for a PaymentWorks invitation from [csdavi25@ncsu.edu](mailto:csdavi25@ncsu.edu).
  - The invitation will be sent to the email address you used for trip registration.
- If you do not see any emails from the ncsu.edu addresses, check your junk or spam folder.



## Passport & Visa Requirements

- ❑ Passports must be valid for at least 3 months beyond your planned departure date from Germany (6 months is strongly recommended to avoid any issues with airlines).
- ❑ You must have at least 2 completely blank pages for entry of stamps/biometrics.
- ❑ Non-US citizens: Holders of Indian, Chinese, and many other non-Western passports require a Schengen Visa (apply at the German Mission Consulate in the US).
- ❑ [European Travel Information and Authorization System \(ETIAS\)](#) travel authorization is not required for Summer 2026 (in effect late 2026).

## The New Biometric Border (EES)

- ❑ EES (Entry/Exit System): All non-EU citizens (including Americans) will have their fingerprints scanned and a facial photo taken at the border (in effect as of April 2026).
  - *Note:* Expect longer-than-usual wait times at passport control during your first entry (causing significant queues of up to 2+ hours at major hubs like Frankfurt, Munich, and Amsterdam)
- ❑ Kiosk vs. Booth: If your passport has the "gold camera" logo (biometric), look for self-service EES kiosks. They are faster, though you will still likely need a final check by a border officer.
- ❑ The "Travel to Europe" App: If you are flying into or through Sweden or Portugal, download the official EU "Travel to Europe" app. It allows you to pre-submit your passport data and selfie up to 72 hours in advance, which can save you time at the physical border.
  - *Note:* Check the app for the latest list of participating countries.

## Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) for United Kingdom

- ❑ If your flight to or from Germany has a layover in the United Kingdom, you must have a UK Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) before you arrive at the airport.
  - **Mandatory:** Required for all U.S. Citizens (and other visa-waiver nationals) as of January.
  - **Cost:** £10 (approx. \$13 USD), 72 hours before departure processing time.
  - **Coverage:** Valid for two years. You cannot board your flight without it.
  - **Non-US Citizens:** If your passport usually requires a visa for the UK, you still need a full Standard Visitor Visa; the ETA does not replace a visa for those nationalities.

## Medication and Health Pre-Check

- ❑ **Legal check:** Some US over the counter (OTC) meds are controlled in Germany. If taking narcotics or strong stimulants (like ADHD meds), you must carry a doctor's note.
  - Check the [BfArM website](#) for specifics.
  - Link: [https://www.bfarm.de/EN/Home/\\_node.html](https://www.bfarm.de/EN/Home/_node.html)
- ❑ **Vaccinations:** Please be up to date on all your routine vaccinations. Extra precautions can be taken for illnesses below but are not required.



- Level 2 Practice Enhanced Precautions for [Global Polio](#).
- Level 1 Practice Usual Precautions for [Global Measles i.e. measles-mumps-rubella \(MMR\)](#)
- ❑ Medicare & Medicaid: These do not provide coverage outside of the United States.
- ❑ US private insurance: Most US health insurance plans (e.g., BlueCross, Aetna, United) are considered "out-of-network" in Germany so any medical issues will need to be paid upfront at time of services delivered.
- ❑ German hospitals will treat non-emergency visits (i.e. sinus infection) as a "private patient." You will be expected to pay via Credit Card or Cash at the time of service.
- ❑ Travel insurance suggestions: Low-cost "Travel Medical" policy (e.g., Allianz, GeoBlue, or World Nomads).
- ❑ Documentation to carry:
  - Physical Insurance Card: Both your US card and Travel Insurance card.
  - Digital copy of your US provider's "International Claim Form" just in case.

Thursday, April 30, 2026

## **30 Days Before Departure: Financials and Driving**

### Money and Banking

- ❑ Exchange rates through your personal bank are significantly better than airport kiosks.
  - Most banks require 7–14 business days to process and ship physical currency to your local branch. Plan to place your order at least 3 weeks before departure.
- ❑ Travel notifications: Log in to your banking app or call your credit card provider to set up a Travel Notice.
  - Inform them of your specific dates and that you will be traveling through Germany (and any layover countries). This prevents your card from being flagged for fraud or blocked during your first transaction abroad.
- ❑ Verify limits: While setting your travel notice, confirm your daily ATM withdrawal limit. You may want to temporarily increase it, as you'll likely rely on cash for smaller German establishments and "Pay-to-Pee" restrooms.
- ❑ Smaller German shops, bakeries, and public restrooms often require cash.
  - Bathroom: Most public restrooms cost €0.50 to €1.00. Some accept contactless cards but keep €0.50 coins handy just in case.
  - Be sure to buy something shortly upon arrival to break up your cash.
- ❑ If carrying more than €10,000 (or equivalent in USD) in cash, you must declare it upon entry and exit.



## Driving Preparations

- ❑ International Driving Permit (IDP): Those who plan to drive, get an IDP from AAA. While not always asked for at rental counters, it is legally required if you are pulled over.
  - Link: <https://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html>
- ❑ Strict Traffic Laws:
  - \* The "Right-Hand" rule: At intersections without signs, the person coming from the right has the right-of-way.
  - Autobahn Etiquette: Passing on the right is strictly illegal and dangerous. The left lane is for passing only.
  - Emergency Lane: If traffic stops on a highway, cars in the left lane move far left, and all others move right to create a "rescue lane" in the middle.
  - If you're in a traffic accident, even a minor one, you must wait with your vehicle and for the police to arrive.
  - It is illegal to use your cell phone while driving in Germany.
  - Except on priority roads, vehicles coming from the right have the right-of-way.
  - It is illegal in Germany to pass vehicles on the right.
  - Germans strictly observe the 'slower traffic keep right' rule.
  - It is illegal to operate a vehicle if your blood alcohol level is 0.05% or higher.

Saturday, May 16-23, 2026

## 1–2 Weeks Before Departure: Packing and Final Checks

### Tech and Apps

- ❑ STEP enrollment: All US Citizens should register with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#).
  - Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals to enroll their trip abroad so the Department of State can accurately and quickly contact them in case of emergency.
  - Link: <https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>
- ❑ Essential apps
  - [DB Navigator](#): For all train/bus schedules.
  - [Uber/FreeNow](#): Uber works in many German cities, but FreeNow is the local equivalent often used for taxis.
  - Emergency numbers: Save 112 (Ambulance/Fire) and 110 (Police) on your phone.
- ❑ Purchase international data/calling plan
  - *Note:* We've built dedicated windows into each day's schedule specifically during U.S. business hours to allow you all to check in, make calls, or "reach back to headquarters" without feeling totally out of contact.



## Packing Checklist

- Power: Germany uses Type F plugs. Bring an adapter.
  - [Type F power outlets](#) (also called Schuko or CEE 7/3 sockets) found on Amazon.
  - Bring adapters so that USB-C can go into larger old USB chargers on the plane.
- Layers for Hamburg/Oldenburg: June weather is known to fluctuate.
  - Highs: 18°C–22°C (65°F–72°F)
  - Lows: 7°C–12°C (45°F–54°F)
  - *Tip:* Bring a light rain jacket or windbreaker; Hamburg is known for its drizzling weather.
- Check with the [German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices](#) to ensure any prescription medication you take is legal to bring in.
  - Link: [https://www.bfarm.de/EN/Home/\\_node.html](https://www.bfarm.de/EN/Home/_node.html)
- Suitcase tip: Avoid bags used for hunting or range shooting to prevent "false positives" on gunpowder residue sensors at security.
- Electronic device searches: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and international border authorities have the legal authority to search all electronic devices (phones, laptops, tablets) without a warrant. This includes reviewing files, photos, and social media. Ensure your devices are charged, as authorities may ask you to power them on during inspection.
  - <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/cbp-search-authority/border-search-electronic-devices>

## Hard-to-Find Items (Bring from US)

- Pepto-Bismol: Practically non-existent in German pharmacies.
- Benadryl (Diphenhydramine): Hard to find OTC; Germans use different antihistamines.
- Melatonin: Available, but often in much lower dosages than in the U.S.

## Emergency Financial Assistance for U.S. Citizens Abroad

- Link: <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/help-abroad/financial.html>

## Landing in Germany

- Exiting the plane: Look for signs that say Exit, Baggage Claim, or Passkontrolle (Passport Control).
  - Entry/Exit System (EES). Instead of just a human looking at your passport, you'll likely use self-service kiosks.
  - Scan your passport, and the kiosk will take a digital photo of your face and scan your fingerprints.
  - After the kiosk, you'll speak to a border officer. Possible questions asked:
    - What is the purpose of your visit?
    - Where are you staying?
    - When are you leaving?



- ❑ Baggage claim: Once through passport control, follow signs for the Gepäckausgabe.
  - Check the overhead monitors for your flight number; it will tell you which "Belt" or "Carousel" your luggage will arrive on.
  - International bags can take 20–40 minutes to come out.
- ❑ Customs (Green & Red Doors): After you get your bags, you'll walk through a final exit area with two colored channels.
  - Green Channel (nothing to declare): If you just have your clothes, personal electronics, and standard travel gear, walk through here. You don't need to stop or talk to anyone unless an officer specifically flags you down.
  - Red Channel (goods to declare): Only go here if you are carrying more than €10,000 in cash or large quantities of items to sell (ex: 50 cartons of cigarettes).
- ❑ Post security: After Customs, you are officially through security, this area usually has:
  - ATMs (Geldautomat): Get some Euros, recommend having €50–€100 in hand.
  - SIM Cards: Look for "Telekom" or "O2" shops if you need a local data plan.