

Germany

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Best Places to Eat

- » Cafe Jacques (p178)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Circus Hotel (p175)
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- » Hotel Elch (p229)

Why Go?

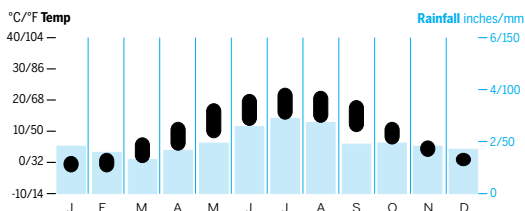
Beer or wine? That sums up the German conundrum. One is at the heart of a pilsner-swilling culture, is the very reason for one of the world's great parties (Oktoberfest) and is consumed with pleasure across the land. The other is responsible for gorgeous vine-covered valleys, comes in myriad forms and is enjoyed everywhere, often from cute little green-stemmed glasses.

And the questions about Germany continue. Berlin or Munich? Castle or club? Ski or hike? East or west? BMW or Mercedes? In fact, the answers are simple: both. Why decide? The beauty of Germany is that rather than choosing, you can revel in the contrasts.

Berlin, edgy and vibrant, is a grand capital in a constant state of reinvention. Munich rules Bavaria, the centre of national traditions. Half-timbered villages bring smiles as you wander the cobblestoned and castle-shadowed lanes. Exploring this country and all its facets keeps visitors happy for weeks.

When to Go

Berlin



Jun–Aug Warm summers cause Germans to shed their clothes; night never seems to come.

Sep The real month of Oktoberfest; autumn celebrations are found throughout Bavaria.

Dec It's icy, it's cold and you can drink hot wine at Christmas markets country-wide.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** euro (€)
- » **Language** German
- » **Money** ATMs common, cash preferred for most purchases
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 356,866 sq km
- » **Capital** Berlin
- » **Country code** ☎49
- » **Emergency** ☎112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82
Canada	C\$1	€0.77
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €80
- » **Two-course meal** €15-25
- » **1L of beer** €6-8
- » **Bottle of wine in shop** from €4
- » **U-Bahn ticket** around €2

Resources

- » **German National Tourist Office** (www.germany.travel)
- » **Online German Course** (www.deutsch-lernen.com)
- » **Facts About Germany** (www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de) Info on all aspects of German society.
- » **Deutschland Online** (www.magazine-deutschland.de) Insightful features on culture, business and politics.

Connections

At the heart of Europe, Germany has a superb railway network that's well linked to surrounding countries. Freiburg and Stuttgart have services south to Switzerland and Italy, Munich is close to the Czech Republic and Austria (including Salzburg and Innsbruck), Berlin is close to Poland, Hamburg has frequent services to Denmark, Cologne is good for fast trains to the Netherlands and Belgium (including Brussels for Eurostar to London), and Frankfurt is the base for high-speed trains to Paris, Strasbourg and other parts of France.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend three days in and around Berlin (eg Potsdam), then marvel at Dresden's rebirth and Nuremberg's historical pedigree before wrapping up your journey with a couple of days in Munich.

Two Weeks

Start in Munich for some Bavarian joy followed by an Alpine side trip to the top of Germany – the Zugspitze – aboard a spectacular train–cable-car combo. Admire the sugary confection of Schloss Neuschwanstein before dipping into medieval times along the Romantic Road and being enchanted by Heidelberg. The Romantic Rhine delivers fine wine and ancient castles galore. Climb the grand cathedral in charismatic Cologne and finish it all in Berlin.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Sausage** (*Wurst*) More than 1500 types are made countrywide. From sweet, smoky and tiny Nürnbergers, to crunchy Thüringers, to that fast-food remedy for the munchies, the sliced and tomato-sauce-drowned *currywurst*.
- » **Mustard** (*Senf*) The perfect accompaniment to sausages, schnitzels and more, German mustards can be hot, laced with horseradish or rich with seeds – or all three.
- » **Bread** (*Brot*) Get Germans talking about bread and often their eyes will water as they describe their favourite type – usually hearty and wholegrained in infinite variations.
- » **Cakes** (*Kuchen*) From the confectionery fantasy of the Black Forest cake to all manner of apple-laden, crumb-covered delights, sweet tooths never feel ignored.
- » **Beer** (*Bier*) For most Germans, intensely hoppy pilsner is the poison of choice, although wheat beer is popular in summer and regional varieties abound, such as Kölsch in Cologne and Rauchbier in Bamberg.
- » **Wine** (*Wein*) Winning competitions and critics' praises, German wine in the 21st century is leagues removed from that cloyingly sweet stuff of yore. The country's crisp rieslings are the world's best.