Guaranteed to get you talking

Fast Talk

German

Fast, fun and easy-to-use
Essential phrases to meet all your travel needs

Ask for advice
How to get local recommendations

Get your message across
Easy-to-use pronunciation guides

Language secrets uncovered
Expert tips to boost your confidence

25+ YEARS
Lonely Planet Phrasebooks have been connecting travellers and locals for over a quarter of a century

120+ LANGUAGES
Our phrasebooks and mobile apps cover more than any other publisher

2ND EDITION
Published May 2013
First Published March 2007

lonelyplanet.com
UK £2.50
USA $5.99

ISBN 978-1-74179-131-0
Before You Go

It is possible to travel in Germany without speaking a word of German, but just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience – you could discover a hidden Berlin bar, find the best new fashion boutiques, or be able to buy last-minute tickets to the opera.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

The sounds of German can almost all be found in English, and if you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English you’ll have no problems being understood. The stressed syllables are indicated with italics.

★ The few sounds that do differ from English include the ü (pronounced as the ‘ee’ in ‘see’ with rounded lips), plus kh (pronounced at the back of the throat, like in the Scottish loch) and r (also throaty, a bit like gargling).

★ Vowels are pronounced crisply and cleanly, with your mouth tenser than in English, eg Tee is pronounced tay, not tay·ee.

★ Note also that zh is pronounced as the ‘s’ in ‘pleasure’.

MUST-KNOW GRAMMAR

The structure of German holds no major surprises for English speakers since the two languages are quite closely related.

★ German has a formal and informal word for ‘you’ (Sie zee and du doo respectively). When talking to someone familiar or younger than you, use the informal du form.
Phrases in this book use the form that is appropriate to the situation. Where both forms can be used, they are indicated by pol and inf respectively.

istar German also distinguishes between masculine and feminine forms of words, eg Freund/Freundin froynt/froyn-din (friend), indicated in this book by m and f. German also has neuter nouns, indicated with n where required.

☆ German words can have a number of different endings, depending on their role in the sentence (it’s similar to some verbs in English, eg ‘I do’ vs ‘he/she does’). Travellers don’t need to worry too much about this though – if you use the dictionary form of a word in all contexts, you’ll still be understood.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR?

Numerous German words are already part of the English vocabulary – you’re sure to recognise kindergarten, kitsch, waltz, hamburger, poodle…

Fast Talk German

Don’t worry if you’ve never learnt German (Deutsch doytsh) before – it’s all about confidence. You don’t need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you’ll be amazed how many prompts you’ll get to help you build on those first words. You’ll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.
Do you accept credit cards?  
*Nehmen Sie Kreditkarten?*  
*nay·men zee kre·deet·kar·ten*

Cash payment is still common in Germany, so don’t assume you’ll be able to pay by credit card – it’s best to enquire first.

Which beer would you recommend?  
*Welches Bier empfehlen Sie?*  
*ve·l·khes beer emp·fa·len zee*

Who better to ask for advice on beer than the Germans, whether at a beer garden, hall, cellar or on a brewery tour?

Can I get this without meat?  
*Kann ich das ohne Fleisch bekommen?*  
*kan ikh das aw·ne fla·she be·ko·men*

In the land of *Wurst* and *Schnitzel* it may be difficult to find a variety of vegetarian meals, especially in smaller towns.

A (non)smoking table, please.  
*Einen (Nicht)Rauchertisch, bitte.*  
*ai·nen (nikht)·row·ker·tish bi·te*

Germany and Austria have only partial smoking bans, so you may want to choose where to sit in cafes, bars and restaurants.

Do you run original versions?  
*Spielen auch Originalversionen?*  
*shpee·len owkh o·ri·gi·nahl·fer·zi·aw·nen*

German cinemas usually run movies dubbed into German – look for a cinema that runs subtitled original versions.
Phrases to Sound Like a Local

Hey! | Hey! | hei

Great! | Toll! | tol

Cool! | Spitze! | shpi·tse

No problem. | Kein Problem. | kain pro·blaym

Sure. | Klar! | klaaehr

Maybe. | Vielleicht. | fi·laikht

No way! | Auf keinen Fall! | owf kai·nen fal

It’s OK. | Alles klar. | a·les klaaehr

What a pity! | Schade! | shah·de

Doesn’t matter. | Macht nichts. | makht nikhts