

ROCKET INTERNET

# Getting Ready

for Rocket Internet Berlin



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# Introduction

Berlin is Germany's political, cultural and historical heart.

Whether you enjoy fine dining, trendy shopping, museums, an active nightlife or just soaking up history, Berlin is a great place to be. The German capital sits in the heart of Europe, so however you choose to travel - air, land or sea - there's always a way to get to Berlin.

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## **After arriving in Berlin you will need to:**

- Find a temporary/permanent place to stay
  - Register at the local resident's registration office and get a tax ID
  - Get a German phone number
  - Open a German bank account
  - Get a German social security card and a German health insurance
- 

## **Tip**

Germany is a country with a well-earned reputation for valuing process, punctuality, and bureaucracy - so make sure you are on time (or early) for all appointments, you have filled in all forms correctly, and you have all the required paperwork with you. Be thorough, and be prepared!

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# Accomodation

Berlin offers a wide variety of accommodation, and while the market can be quite competitive, it isn't difficult to find good quality rental properties. Most rental properties in Berlin are flats in a shared building. While house rentals are also an option, it is worth noting that the market is very limited, and rentals are often located in outer suburbs.

To give yourself enough time to find the right place, allow at least one month to hunt for a flat. Rocket's HR team can give you some links to look at.

Our experience tells us that it takes some time to schedule visits, have your application reviewed by the landlord, and approve your rental contract. Make sure you get all the relevant forms, read them carefully, and fill them out correctly - not doing so can cause delays, or even mean that you lose out on a flat you have applied for. We advise you get in contact with the agency responsible for the flat in advance, and have the paperwork ready before you decide to apply. Even if you are the first applicant for a flat, sometimes the landlord may choose an applicant who they consider to be in better financial shape.

When looking for an apartment, it might be convenient for you to look close to Rocket Headquarters. Our office is located in the center of Berlin in the district called Kreuzberg, and nearby districts are Wedding, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, Mitte, and Tiergarten.

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## Resources

Germany's largest property website (German only) for apartments and homes	<b>ImmobilienScout24</b>
German webpage that offers apartments and houses for rent	<b>Immonet</b>

**Furnished apartments can be rented by the following agencies:**

<b>City Wohnen</b>	<b>Coming Home</b>
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**Daily rented apartments or rooms:**

Wimdu offer a discount to Rocket employees. Please contact them directly for details.	<b>Wimdu</b>
One of the largest rental platforms on the internet	<b>Airbnb</b>

### **Apartments for students and interns at Rocket:**

We suggest looking for furnished apartments at the following internet pages. The time frame for renting is flexible, you are mostly in direct contact with the roommates. The apartments are (mostly) shared with other students or interns. You don't have to pay a commission fee, but keep in mind that you have to pay a deposit (one month's rent).

Online platform for students to find share accommodation (Wohngemeinschaft, "WG") - Only in German	<b>Studenten-WG</b>
In English, German and Mandarin	<b>Studentenwerk</b>
In English and German	<b>WG Gesucht</b>
In English and German	<b>Easy Living 4U</b>

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## Cost of Renting in Berlin

Rent (“Miete” or “Monatsmiete” in German) is the amount paid by the tenant (“Mieter”) to the landlord (“Vermieter”) every month for the apartment. This is known as “Nettokaltmiete” (“nett cold rent”), which usually only includes the apartment itself, and does not usually include any services (such as building cleaning, garbage disposal, yard maintenance) or utilities (such as water and heating). Utility costs are charged on the basis of actual consumption; other costs are charged depending on the size of the apartment, the number of occupants, and the building. Electricity and telephone (always), as well as gas (usually), are not paid through the landlord but are charged directly on the basis of your contract with the provider. You might have a choice of providers. The agent or landlord will discuss which utility and service costs are included in the total rent (“Warmmiete”).

Basic rent (Miete / Nettokaltmiete) = the residence

Utilities and services (Nebenkosten) = garbage, street and building cleaning, heating, water supply.

The total rent (Warmmiete) is paid to the landlord. Electricity, telephone, internet and natural gas are paid directly to the particular providers.

If you plan on renting a flat, the rent prices may vary depending on the district, the demand, proximity of services, and prestige. In June 2015, the average rental price per square metre is 9.85€. Keep in mind that the rental prices and the cost of living is fairly moderate in comparison to other larger cities in Germany or even other capital cities. More detail on costs in different districts of Berlin can be found [here](#).

Generally speaking, the closer to the city center, the higher the cost of renting and higher the demand. Renting a single room in a shared apartment (WG, Wohngemeinschaft) can be more affordable and a good option when you first move to Berlin.

## Documents usually required for renting an apartment

- Copies of photo ID and any residence permits or visas
- Employment contract or/and salary records of the last 3 months(Gehaltsnachweis)
- Written confirmation from your last landlord which confirms that you don't have any outstanding rent debts, preferably in German but an English version might be accepted as well (Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung)
- SCHUFA Auskunft: The SCHUFA Auskunft (Schutzgemeinschaft für allgemeine Kreditsicherung) is a credit report agency which provides contract partners such as (private) credit institutions, trading companies or other service providers information about your financial solvency. Most agencies and landlords require a report from the SCHUFA.

MORE INFORMATION ———>



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# Obligatory/Mandatory registration

This is the first step before opening a bank account or getting a tax-ID. You must register at the local resident's registration office (Bürgeramt) which is often located in the local town hall (Rathaus) within 14 days of finding permanent or temporary accommodation. The registration takes place at the Bürgeramt and is free of charge. Please note that all of the registration offices now proceed only via online appointments: check your local [Bürgeramt's website](#) for details on making an appointment or contact the HR team to help you with that. You can pick whichever Bürgeramt offers the most convenient time slot for you, you're not limited to the Bürgeramt located in your district

When you go for your appointment, make sure you arrive as early as possible - punctuality is a virtue in Germany, and if you miss your appointment time you will most likely need to register for a new appointment, which will delay the registration process.

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## Required documents for your registration:

- Valid passport or identification card
- „Einzugsbestätigung des Wohnungsgebers (Vermieter)“ (confirmation that you have moved in from your landlord/ owner of the apartment that has to be handed over to you within the first two weeks after moving in)
- A completed registration form (Anmeldeformular) which you will obtain at the local town hall, here (English version) or from the HR team, who will also help you fill it out
- If you're married, bring your marriage certificate
- If you have children, bring their birth certificates

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Marriage and birth certificates need to be in German - if you have these documents in another language, please get a certified translation beforehand.

If you have all of your documents in order, you will usually directly receive your registration document (Anmeldebescheinigung). It is important that you make sure to store the registration document carefully, since you may need it at other government offices.

During the registration process, you will also be issued a tax-ID, which will arrive roughly 2 weeks after your registration via post. This is one of the three most important documents you will need to receive your salary in Germany. Please note: If you are staying in a temporary apartment, renting a room in a shared apartment, etc. it is important to put a note on the post box in order to receive the tax-ID.

Every time you move to a new residence within Germany, you must report your new address to the registration offices.

Make sure to contact the HR team to help you prepare all documents and to prep you for the appointment at the registration office.

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# How to Open a German Bank Account

In order to receive your salary, you will need to have a bank account within the European Union. For other payments within Germany it may be advisable to even have a German bank account. Generally, you can apply for a German bank account once you have received your proof of residence (Anmeldebescheinigung) from the Bürgeramt.

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## The following documents are required:

- The registration form
  - Passport
  - Proof of residence (Anmeldebescheinigung)
- 

## Some of the major German banks are:

Deutsche Bank

Sparkasse

Commerzbank

Postbank

Berliner Volksbank

Deutsche Kreditbank

Details for opening your bank account can be found on the bank's website. You will most likely need to make an appointment to apply, however some banks (e.g. Deutsche Kreditbank) will also allow you to open a German bank account online.

The Deutsche Bank has a special offer for all Rocket-employees: a free German bank account without any additional costs. When you apply for an account, please present a copy of your work contract for further details on the offer.

When choosing your bank, keep in mind that once you have registered with one bank you may have to pay an extra fee if you use the ATM or cash machine of another bank. Some banks can often be found and have lots of local affiliates (i.e. Sparkasse with 25,000 ATM and branches in Germany). Other banks have set up a cooperation between them to eliminate or reduce the fees (i.e. "Cash Group" which includes Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank).

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# German Health Insurance Registration

Germany has an excellent universal public health system, where all employees provide 50% of their contributions, and their employer the other 50%. As an employee with a valid German work contract, it is mandatory to have German health insurance (Krankenversicherung). The benefits from all the health insurances are standardized, however, there are some differences regarding customer service, additional benefits, discounts and optional premiums.

You can choose whichever statutory health insurance company you like. To help make your decision, you can find some useful information [here](#).

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**Some of the best-known German health insurance companies include:**

**Techniker Krankenkasse (TK)**

**AOK**

**Barmer GEK**

**BKK**

As Rocket has a close relationship with the TK, because they provide all services also in English, this is the health insurer we recommend. To find out more, please contact the Rocket Payroll team at [payroll@rocket-internet.com](mailto:payroll@rocket-internet.com) and they will assist you with your request.

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## The Third-party Private Liability Insurance

The second most important and yet the least expensive insurance which you will need in Germany is the third-party private liability insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung). It will cover damages you or any insured member of your family may cause. This insurance is also useful in case of any act that the German court would consider ordinarily negligent.

There are many insurance companies that offer Haftpflichtversicherung, including Allianz, Axa, Cosmosdirekt, etc. You can also use a comparison website like [Check24](#) or [Transparo](#).

For more information, please click [here](#)

Because these kind of insurance policies tend to be very elaborate you may want to seek an Insurance Consultant to help you in choosing the right one for your needs. Most insurance consultancies provide their services free of charge to you and have a wide selection of insurance companies that they cooperate with.

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# Wage Tax

During your registration at the Bürgeramt, you will automatically apply for a Tax Identification Number (Steueridentifikationsnummer). This will be issued within 2 weeks of your registration and sent directly to the address you applied at the registration office. Please note that until you have provided the tax-ID to Rocket's HR Finance team or Venture Payroll team, you will be placed in Tax Class 6, which deducts the highest amount of taxes from your salary. Therefore it is crucial that register yourself at the Bürgeramt as soon as possible.

If you haven't received your tax-ID after 3 weeks, please contact your local Tax Office (Finanzamt). Because data protection laws prohibit Tax Offices to inform you of your tax-ID via telephone, you must register online (BZSt-Portal) and the tax-ID will be sent to you within 4 weeks. To obtain the ID faster, you may want to go to the Tax Office personally and request it on site. Although you don't need an appointment and can usually ask for it at the information desk, they are not obligated to do so. In urgent cases it's still worth trying.

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**When visiting the Tax Office personally, make sure to bring the following documents along with you:**

- Passport
- Residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis)
- Registration certificate (Meldebescheinigung)
- Work contract

**If you are married and/or have children you are entitled to some tax benefits.**

If you are married and your spouse came with you to Germany, you will need to present the following documents at the Bürgeramt in order to be able to claim additional benefits:

- Marriage certificate including a certified translation into German
  - Your spouse's passport (with residence permit) and registration certificate
- 

**If you have children and brought them with you to Germany, you will need to provide:**

- Birth certificate(s) including a certified translation into German
  - Children's passport(s) (with residence permit) and registration certificate
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For more detailed information about taxes in Germany, please get in touch with your local Finanzamt or read online (Federal Central Tax Office Germany)



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# Get a German Mobile Phone Number

There are four main mobile phone (“Handy” in German) service providers in Germany:

**T-Mobile**

**Vodafone**

**E-Plus**

**O2**

Germany operates on a GSM network, so if you're coming from Europe, Africa, Australia or Asia, your current mobile should be able to access the network in Germany. If you are coming from North America, parts of South America or some parts of Asia, you may have a CDMA phone which will not work - check with your current service provider or your local telecommunications authority for advice.

For a GSM phone you should check with your current provider if your phone is unlocked, as some phones are locked to a specific network or region. If your phone isn't locked, you just need a new SIM card.

You can purchase a SIM card from any of the major chain supermarkets, drugstores, petrol stations or electronics/homeware retailers (such as Saturn or Mediamarkt), or of course you can contact one of the mobile phone service providers above, and they will send you everything you need. Often these will be near the cashier or in the electronics department. Keep an eye out for the following:

<b>Telekom</b>	<b>Vodafone</b>	<b>E-plus / Base</b>	<b>O2</b>
Congstar	Fyve	Aldi Talk	Fonic
Lebara mobile	klarmobil	Blau	Lidl mobile
Ja! mobil	Edeka Mobil	Ortel Mobile	Netzclub
Penny Mobil	Lycamobile	Whatsapp SIM	

If you need to purchase a new mobile phone, you can find a wide variety in stores such as Mediamarkt and Saturn, Real, larger chain supermarkets, or at a retail outlet for one of the main mobile phone service providers. Online, you can also purchase phones from larger retailers such as Amazon, Apple, or a local mobile phone service provider.

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# Relocation

Rocket offers relocation packages through our partner agency Progedo. For engineering staff and their families, the relocation package, at no cost, includes:

- ✓ Complete handling of the visa process, including escort to the Bürgeramt & Labo
- ✓ Assistance with opening a German bank account, including accompaniment to the bank
- ✓ Accommodation search by specialised consultants, including:
  - viewing and consulting for up to 8 apartments/houses
  - assistance with rental contract, apartment handover, and liaising with the rental agency
- ✓ Temporary accommodation for 14 days during the search for permanent accommodation

Progedo also offer more services in addition to the above, which can be requested at additional cost. You will need to contact Progedo personally, and they will discuss further options.

A broad range of websites also offer up to date information about housing, taxes, insurances, tips and other relevant topics.

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**You may also find below some useful links for relocation:**

[Expatistan](#)

[Internations](#)

[German Way](#)

[Expatica](#)

[Berlin Anglo Info](#)

[SympatMe](#)

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# Visas

Visas are normally issued outside of Germany for a limited period of time, for a very specific purpose and normally have strict regulations regarding the length of the stay as well as the number of times you can leave and re-enter Germany during the duration of validity of the visa.

EU citizens and those of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein do not need to apply for a visa. You can find more information on visas for Germany at [auswaertiges-amt.de](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de) (Federal Foreign Office).

For a visa application, your university degree needs to be recognized by ZAV, the Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung (“International Placement Office”). For a ZAV application a copy of your degree is necessary, with a certified translation in German or English, along with a copy of your work contract and your CV. The application form is filled in by your employer within Germany, so in this case Rocket or one of the Rocket companies. After receiving ZAV approval, you will receive a document confirming the ZAV has approved your degree, which you are required to take during your appointment at the German embassy.

## **You will eventually have to present some or all of the following documents**

- Passport with at least 3 months validity beyond the end of the visa validity period (a blank page in your passport is required for the visa)
- Application form(s); the number of application forms depends on the nationality of the applicant.
- 3 passport pictures
- Proof of adequate means to finance your stay (usually this is your work contract)
- Proof of qualification (a copy of your university degree, with approval by ZAV)
- Proof of health insurance
- Job description and letter of employer (usually this is your work contract)
- Work contract
- CV

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## Residence

Non-EU nationals planning to stay in Germany for more than 90 days, must obtain a residence title (Aufenthaltstitel) prior to moving to Germany. This can be done in conjunction with the required visa application. (Exceptions: Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and the United States may apply for the necessary permit after arrival in Germany).

You need to apply for a residence permit at the local Foreigners Office LABO (Ausländerbehörde) if you have a valid visa for Germany, you registered in Berlin and can provide confirmation of your German health insurance. Rocket will help you with all this.

**The Rocket Internet relocation team will provide support and advice for your relocation.**

**For example, this includes:**

- Supporting your application for a visa, work permit, and all related documents
- Helping you find accommodation
- Helping you apply for health insurance
- Registering in Germany and opening a bank account

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Note: Please contact the relocation team ([relocation@rocket-internet.de](mailto:relocation@rocket-internet.de)) before you make an appointment at the local embassy. They will provide you with the necessary forms. You can also already check [this homepage](#) for getting more information about working in Germany.

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# Getting to know the Rocket Community

At Rocket Internet, you can expect an international and entrepreneurial business environment as well as the opportunity to be part of the development of a fast-growing company. You will work in a team of creative minds and high achievers with a passion for building new ventures. Flat hierarchies and a highly professional, but informal working atmosphere is characteristic – we don't need suits and ties to be professional! Furthermore, Rocket offers you an attractive workplace in the heart of Berlin, one of the most exciting cities in the world!

## **What is the dress code?**

There is no dress code. Employees can wear whatever they are most comfortable in, although it would be wise to take cues from your colleagues as to what is acceptable.

## **Do you provide any benefits?**

Rocket Internet offers quite a range of benefits, with cereals, fresh fruit and beverages, to a monthly breakfast for all employees. Our headquarters has a lounge on the top floor where you can enjoy a banana, coffee, or some fresh air with a view over the rooftops of Berlin. The lounge has a full kitchen where you can prepare lunch or breakfast. As well as this, Rocket employees are a sociable bunch, and you can take part in different social activities including our monthly Rocket Thursday mixer.

**Rocket employees can also benefit from discounts and vouchers with a number of businesses, including:**

- Drive Now (Carsharing)
- Fitness First
- Rocket GYM
- Discounts for companies within the Rocket network, including Home24, Westwing, HelloFresh, Zalando, and more.

For more information about Rocket and our benefits please visit our intranet “[Rocket Internet Inside](#)” once you have your new email address.

Rocket also runs free German classes for it’s employees, conducted in English and accommodating levels from German beginners (A1) to people with intermediate skills (B2).

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**It is well-known that learning German will:**

- help you integrate better into German society
  - give you the opportunity to meet other Rockets who are learning German
  - make you 25% more attractive
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If you have any further questions regarding your start in Berlin, feel free to contact your HR team who will be happy to assist you.

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# Childcare in Berlin

If you have children under the age of six years old and they are going to be living in Germany, you should enrol them in a local Kita (pre-school) as soon as possible. Going to a Kita will help your child make friends, learn German, and adjust to living in Germany. Kitas are located all over Berlin, however some areas popular with younger families (such as Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg) may have higher demand than others, and there may be no places in the short term.

You are not required to register with a Kita in your area, so you can look for a Kita that suits your circumstances (e.g. near your or your spouse's workplace). A good resource for locating a Kita is [kita.de](http://kita.de)

Once you have located a Kita, you should make contact by visiting the Kita, and registering your interest. They can provide further information on the application process, eligibility, and what the Kita can offer.

To register for a Kita, you must have a Kitagutschein ("pre-school voucher"), which you can obtain from your local Jugendamt (youth welfare office). You can find your local Jugendamt [here](#).

The cost of a Kita is usually free for the three years prior to your child starting school, however you are expected to pay a nominal fee for food or additional services (like extra classes). This can vary depending on the Kita, so it is best to enquire with the Kita.

Further information about Kitas can be found [here](#).



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# Kindergeld / Children Allowance

As a taxpaying resident of Germany, you are entitled to claim an allowance from the German government called Kindergeld (“children allowance”). This is a small monthly amount to help support families by offsetting the cost of raising children. This is paid up until your children turn 18, or up to 25 if they are continuing in formal schooling. The amount is between 184 € per and 215 € per month, depending on the number of children (current June 2015).

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**For more advice on Kindergeld, please see:**

**BMFSFJ - Familie**

**Sozial Leistungen -  
Kindergeld**

**Steuertipps - Kinder,  
Familie und Ehe**

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# Schooling in Germany

The schooling system in Germany can be a little unfamiliar to people from other countries. By law, children from the age of 6 to 15 must attend school in Germany.

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**More information about schooling in Berlin can be found here:**

**[berlin.de - Schools](#)**

**[The german school system](#)**

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# Surviving in Berlin

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## Grocery Shopping

There are a dizzying number of supermarket chains that operate in Germany, but the good news is that they offer very similar experiences which are more dependent on the location of the store, rather than the perceived quality of their brand. Most supermarkets are open between 8am and 10pm, although some remain open until midnight.

Most shops - including supermarkets - are closed on Sundays and public holidays, so make sure you stock up beforehand. If you are desperate, you can find supermarkets at S-Bahn Friedrichstraße (Edeka), Ostbahnhof (Rewe and Lidl) and near S-Bahn Zoologischer Garten (Ullrich) that are open all-year round. Petrol stations (Tankstellen) and convenience stores (Späti, or Spätkauf) are usually open on Sundays, and offer a limited range of groceries with varying degrees of affordability.

Aldi, Lidl, Kaisers, Netto, Edeka, Reichelt, and Rewe are small to medium supermarkets which are found in all suburbs and locations throughout Berlin. Larger supermarkets include Real and Kaufland, which are usually located in larger shopping centres - as well as groceries, they offer homewares, furniture, clothes, and bulk goods.

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## Public Transport in Berlin

Public Transport in Berlin is cheap, comprehensive, and a little complicated when it comes to working out tariffs. The main options are: suburban trains (S-Bahn), underground trains (U-Bahn), trams (Straßenbahn - mostly in the eastern half of the city), buses, and limited ferry services. Berlin's train and bus system services all corners of the city, including some neighbouring locations such as Hennigsdorf and Potsdam.

**There are three zones:**

- A** the inner city and suburbs, encircled by a ring route (Ringbahn)
- B** suburbs that fall outside the ring
- C** areas that fall outside the city boundary (e.g. Potsdam, Schönefeld airport)

Depending on your needs, you can purchase tickets that are a combination of zones (AB, BC, ABC), and for durations from 2 hours, daily, weekly, and monthly. Best value is a monthly ticket, which can be paid for annually at a reduced cost. More information about tariffs can be found [here](#).

More general information about public transport can be found [here](#).

Advice: For the love of puppies and bikes, buy a ticket! Unlike in many countries, stations in Germany are barrier-free. Don't take this as a challenge: the authorities take fare evasion seriously, and you will likely end up with a hefty fine from one of the random (and unexpectedly frequent) authorised transport officers. You have been warned.

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## Tips (Trinkgeld) in Restaurants

While it is a matter of personal choice, it is normal to tip for good service in Germany. A general rule is to “round up” your order to the nearest Euro for simple service and small orders (i.e. your Beer cost 3.60€, you make this 4€ to include the tip), or tip 10% for more elaborate service at dinner or for larger orders.

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## How to be Polite on Stairs or an Escalator

Something many non-Germans should adjust to is staircase etiquette - in Germany, it is correct to keep to the right of a staircase or escalator to allow people to pass you on the left. If you are in a hurry, switch to the left and you will find your way unblocked. Simple!

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## Berlin has no Curfew

That's right: Berlin is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (except for shops on Sundays and public holidays - see above). There is no curfew in Berlin, so you are free to come and go whenever you please, although it is wise to exercise caution after dark. Between 1am and 4am, public transport becomes less frequent, or may even stop altogether, so it is best to familiarise yourself with your local routes and operating hours on [vbb](#) or [bvg](#).

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## Visiting a Pharmacy (Apotheke)

A small piece of advice: if you need to visit a pharmacy (Apotheke) to pick up medication, they will offer you a bag (Tüte) for your purchase. Make sure you say yes, as you will likely find they have filled it with lollies, a packet of tissues, a small pocket calendar, cosmetic samples, or a magazine.

