

Frequently Asked Questions

What about passports and/or visa? You will obviously need a valid passport to board the plane and to enter Germany. Your passport must be valid for at least three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen area. There are no exceptions to the rule and you will be denied boarding if your passport doesn't comply. You must also have at least one blank page for your entry stamp. No visa is currently required for US Citizens who stay under 90 Days

What's the best way to get Euros? We strongly recommend that you plan on using your ATM card once you arrive in Munich. Although your bank will charge you an access fee, you will get a better exchange rate going this route. Caution: You should notify your bank that you will be travelling in Europe. Plus, banks have a daily limit on how much you can take out – request that they raise this to \$500. Also, be aware that German banks no longer accept \$100 US bills because they are so often counterfeited. And, Traveler's Checks are not accepted these days. Some people order Euros through American Express or their bank. Though they claim not to charge any fees, they give you a lousy exchange rate. Be sure to test your ATM card at home and be sure that you know your PIN! Lately many machines in Germany have a limit on how much cash one customer can take out – this may require you to make more frequent withdrawals of a lesser sum.

What about Credit Cards? Germany remains a cash based society. Only high-end establishments will accept a Visa (even rarer is MasterCard and American Express). If you are planning on doing any big ticket shopping, get a card like Capital One since most others charge a 2% - 3% fee on any foreign transactions. For the rare places that do accept a credit card, they usually have a minimum purchase amount and make it highly inconvenient to use a card, thereby discouraging its use. Europe also has a different security standard on their cards which features a computer chip on board – many merchants and automated machines can no longer accept the North American cards.

How much cash will I need? This is always a hard one to answer, but the only things you have to buy each day are beverages and 1 meal, and an occasional tip. A typical nice lunch should run you around 10-15 Euros. Beer is usually cheaper than the water and runs about 4 Euro for a ½ liter. So, a comfortable number to work with is about 50-60 Euros per day, per person. At festivals, beer costs about € 11 per liter. You are on your own for meals, but we typically pay as a group and then you reimburse us – this helps everything go a bit faster.

What are the tipping customs? When you pay at a restaurant, you should just round up the bill and the total tip amount should be about 10%. So, if your bill is 14.25, you would give the waiter/waitress 15 or 16. When we have booked tours with other guides, it's typical to tip the guide 1 or 2 Euro per person. I will typically let you know when it's expected. At the end of the tour, Vonia and I also appreciate tips if you feel we've done a good job.

What's the weather like? I promise it will rain. Temperatures can really vary, especially near the mountains. Typically we leave the hotel and it's in the low 40's, but by afternoon it can sometimes be 60 F (with a little luck!). When we go into the beer halls and tents it's 95F. So, dressing in layers is very important. You will definitely need waterproof shoes, and a warm, water-proof jacket. Get an umbrella or buy one here. Resist the urge to over pack! If you have Lederhosen/Dirndl you will have several chances to wear this in Munich.

How much luggage can I bring? In our experience, almost everyone packs too much! The airlines will limit you to one checked bag and 1 carry on. We recommend that your carry on be a back-pack so you can use it as a day pack during the trip. Also have a look at my FAQ's on the website: [What to wear](#) and [What to bring](#). Keep in mind that you will have to get your luggage to and from the train station, up and down stairs, and up to your room. St. Paul has a tiny elevator and Fässla has nothing but a very steep staircase. Also, the guest rooms are significantly smaller than in the USA which can be challenging with big suitcases. Have a look at [Rick Steve's video](#) on this topic! **TIP: Leave your big bag at Hotel St. Paul for the time we are outside of Munich – bring a backpack for these things.**

How do I stay connected? Check with your provider, but we know that today's modern smart phones work just fine. However, you'll likely want to get an international plan for your phone. Also be aware that "Free WiFi" (WLAN) is rare in Germany. Most hotels have service, but it is often only in the common areas and may involve a fee. You will rarely find an open "hot-spot."

If your cellphone or tablet is "unlocked" you can buy a German SIM card from [Travel SIM Germany](#). You can order your SIM from home and have it sent to my address in Munich. When I meet you at the airport, you are activated and ready to go. If you decide to use this option, have the SIM sent to Scott Stephens; Ledererstrasse 2, 80331 München. However, please be aware that I don't represent that company and don't provide technical support! **Fässla has no WiFi!**

Emergency numbers? Feel free to give our German number as an emergency number to your family.

Dialed from the USA, it is 011 49 170 70 75 410 and Vonio's is 011491712825693. If you are using a cellphone in Germany, you should be able to program our numbers as +491707075410 and +491712825693. Typically, we don't carry our US phones, so don't rely on that number.

Is it safe? Germany remains one of the world's safest countries. However, bad things can happen anywhere at any time, so it's wise to be prepared. We recommend that you register in the US State Department's Safe Traveler Program – [click here](#). We also recommend storing the emergency numbers in your cell phone: US Consulate in Munich +498928880 and Police at 110 and Fire/Ambulance at 112.

Before leaving home, clean out your wallet and bring only the credit cards and items you are sure you will need. Make copies of them all - front and back and copies of your passport. Pack one copy in your suitcase lining and leave one at home with someone. Better yet, put copies of all this on a service like Drop Box. Make sure you have the bank/card telephone numbers in the event you lose them! A money belt or neck safe is a good investment and make sure your money and credit cards and split up amongst you and your partner.

What's The Regensburg Dult like? It's definitely fun, but it is a crowded place and you need to stay aware. It's hot, it's cramped, and you need to be vigilant. We have to have 10 people at each table and it can be cramped for the first hour or so. After that, people start having to visit the toilet, so the seating loosens up. As for security, do not bring your passport – just have a copy of the main page on your person; do not bring your credit cards, and only enough cash to get you through the day. Do not bring a fancy camera here and do not bring or wear anything you can't stand to have doused with beer or chicken grease. Happily, we have never had anything bad happen with any of our guests, but we do want to warn you that wherever there are crowds – and boisterous people – there is inherently some risk.

Be aware that **NO BACKPACKS ALLOWED** and purses must be under a volume of 2 liters and will be searched.

Is Tracht common? If you have Lederhosen and Dirndl, you should plan on wearing them! The traditional Bavarian dress will be commonly seen at the Viehscheid and all the Oktoberfest visits. If

you don't have Tracht, you can buy from my buddy, Andi, at [Bavarian Specialties](#). Or, you can buy it when you get here. Expect to spend at least € 199 for the guys (with shoes) and about the same for ladies, without shoes.

Is there lots of walking? We will do lots of walking each day. Many of the areas we are in are pedestrian-only areas, so walking is the only way to see them. Through the course of a day, we will do many miles of walking. Caution: Neuschwanstein Castle is physically challenging. During the tour, you must go up 165 steps and down 181 steps. Duration of the tour is approx. 35 minutes. To reach the castle, you must walk uphill for approximately 40 minutes. Alternatively, you can take a horse drawn carriage for a fee of €6 Euros per person, one way. You will still need to walk uphill approximately 15 minutes. However, the lines for the carriages are often quite long and if you miss your designated tour time, you have lost out and there's nothing that can be done.

Handicap accessibility: Europe can be a tough place for anyone with a Handicap. None of the hotels we use are wheel chair accessible. If you have any concerns, please speak with us directly

How closely do you follow the schedule? We operate "German-Style" which means that 9:00 AM is 9:00 AM and not 9:02 AM. Our belief is that it isn't fair to the other travelers to wait for people who are late. Be aware that the schedule sometime changes at the last minute, so pay attention to the tour leaders for audible instructions! I'm a stickler about this and have left people behind – therefore it's important to have the itinerary and be prepared to find your own way to the next destination. We aren't the Marines – we will leave a man behind!

Any Shopping Tips? Many people are interested in buying souvenirs from their trip and we are very happy to help you find just the right thing. If there is something in particular that you want, let us know and we can guide you to the best place to buy it. Shopping in the smaller towns is typically easier and less expensive than in Munich. One of our favorite shops for gourmet foods is called [Dallmayr](#) and we also like the uniquely Bavarian souvenirs at [Servus Heimat](#). We also have a post office very close to our apartment in Munich and DHL does offer a flat rate service to ship items back to the USA. A common item of interest is beer steins – my advice is focus on the brands not available in the USA and Bamberg has a lot of great ones!

If you haven't done so already, have a look at my FAQ page on the website for more information. Some of the topics you might find interesting: [Safety and Security](#), [Accommodations](#), and [Food & Drink](#). You can also see my blog entries, if you want more insight into what awaits you!