

Entry

Whether you need to apply for a **visa** to enter Germany depends on which country you are from. Nationals of member states of the **European Union (EU)** or the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** may enter Germany **without a visa** and are permitted to live and work in our region. Currently, EFTA members are the four states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Nationals of the „**best friends**“ states, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, UK and the USA may also enter **without a visa**. However, if they wish to work in Germany, they must apply for a residence permit at the relevant Immigration Authority.

Other nationals require a visa before entry.

People with an **EU Schengen visa** have the option of visiting Germany as a tourist for 90 days. They are not permitted to work or study during this time. If they wish to live and work in Germany, they must apply for the relevant visa at the German Embassy.

First Steps

The first step after arriving in the region is to **register your address**. This must be done at your local **citizens' centre/registration office** or town hall within two weeks of moving in. This step is **obligatory** for everyone living in Germany.

In addition, if you have entered Germany on a visa, you must register with the relevant **Immigration Authority**. Visas are only valid for entry and therefore only for the first six months. You will receive the residence permit you have applied for from the Immigration Authorities. If you do not speak sufficient German, you should take someone with you who speaks German. The official language at all authorities is German only.

Driving licences from EU member states, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland are valid in Germany. All other licences are valid for six months from the date of registration in Germany. After that you need a German licence. Further information can be obtained from your local driving licence authority. If you own a car, it must be registered at your local **vehicle registration office**.

Visa Process

Each visa for Germany has special **criteria**. Therefore, check in advance which visa you may apply for at the Germany Embassy, and whether you fulfil the requirements.

A visa in Germany is always **bound to a specific purpose**. This means that you cannot apply for a general visa. For example, for a **work visa** you will first of all need a job offer from Germany in writing. For a **study visa** you need confirmation of a place at university, and for a **vocational training visa** you need confirmation of a training place from the company.

A further option is to apply for a **jobseeker visa**. This visa enables you to look for a suitable job in Germany for six months. A similar **visa** is available **to look for a place to study or to look for vocational training**. More information can be found on our [website](#).

Good to know!

Important documents for a longer stay in Germany

Birth certificate, school reports/degree/diploma, including an overview of marks and subjects, work references.

Health insurance

Health insurance is obligatory in Germany and must be valid from the date of entry.

Banking

Once you have registered your address, you can open a bank account.

Access

If you would like to work in our region, you should check in advance whether your residence status **allows you to work** in Germany. You will find this information on the residence permit in your passport. It is important to note that a work permit may be limited to a specific job, sector or company.

For some jobs you need **official recognition** in order to work in that field. They are e.g. jobs in healthcare, education and some branches of engineering.

However, for most jobs you do not need official recognition. When looking for jobs, it is an advantage to have an **assessment of equivalence** (Gleichwertigkeitsprüfung) or an **evaluation of your qualifications** (Zeugnisbewertung). Further information on this can be found on [IQ Netzwerk](#).

Bear in mind, that in most cases German is the working language as well as the company language. Therefore, a **knowledge of German** is always very important for work. The earlier you start learning German, the better you will be able to speak it, and the better chance you will have of finding work in our region.

Legalities

A **work contract** may be limited to a period of time or unlimited. Make sure that the details in your contract are accurate and also check whether your visa requires an unlimited work contract. In general, the contract will specify a **fixed probation period**. During this time, you or your employer may terminate your contract without notice. After the probation period, special notice periods apply which are specified in your work contract. In addition, you will find important information in your contract regarding **working hours, holiday entitlement** and the **level of your salary**.

In Germany, income tax and proportional obligatory insurance contributions (health insurance, nursing care insurance, unemployment insurance, state pension) are automatically deducted from your **gross salary**. Your **net salary**, which is transferred to your bank account, is therefore less than the gross salary stated in your work contract. The amount of income tax you pay depends on your tax bracket and whether you are single or married. Having children is also an advantage as child allowance reduces your taxable income.

Job Search & Applications

There are a lot of general **job portals** online, as well as some catering to specific sectors. Many companies also publish open vacancies on their own website. Small and medium-sized companies, in particular, are interesting employers who offer great job opportunities. If you are already in Germany, you can register with the **Employment Agency** to receive support and advice on looking for a job.

Applications for jobs in Germany always include a **CV** in tabular form and copies of your **degree/diploma** and **certificates**. In addition, a **cover letter**, a letter of motivation, is required by some companies. Any other documents that are needed will be specified in the job advertisement.

If a company is interested in you, you will be invited for an **interview** or a selection process. In the end, the company will decide if you are suitable for the job advertised. Depending on the sector, the whole process can take from one to three months and may consist of several selection interviews.

Good to know !

Self-marketing

You should actively market yourself in your job applications on the job market. Self-marketing means a CV which is interesting both content-wise and visually, as well as an authentic letter of motivation, specifically targeted at the individual job advertisement. It should be clear why you are the right person for that job and that company.

Importance of Qualifications

The local job market is very formal and requires official qualifications. Remember to include your documents as well as your job references in your job applications.

Language Courses

Make sure that language courses lead to a qualification that is officially recognised. Further information can be found [here](#).

Housing & Schooling

The FrankfurtRheinMain region offers various **housing options** that extend far beyond the well-known cities. It is worth considering the smaller towns or municipalities nearby as rental prices tend to be lower and the larger towns can be easily reached by public transport.

The easiest way to find a flat in the region is via **housing advertisements** on online portals. It is important to note that you often have to apply for a flat in advance before you are given an appointment. To do so you need a folder with all of the important documents such as proof of salary, insurance or creditworthiness.

Another factor which may be important when choosing a place to live is **childcare facilities** and **schools**. It is important to note that there is a three-tier school system in Germany. To help ease integration, state schools often offer **language support for children** with limited or no knowledge of German. In addition, there is a wide range of international and bilingual schools and childcare facilities in the region. An overview can be found here.

Rules

Recycling and protecting the environment are an important topic in Germany. Most waste is either recycled or composted. Each household is responsible for **separating** its own **waste**, which is sorted according to materials in up to four different bins. Some towns also have yellow bags. Further information on recycling as well as the collection schedule for the different bins can be found on the website of your local town or municipality. Further information on recycling can be found here.

There are also certain rules for living together. **Quiet time** starts at 10 p.m. and ends at 6 or 7 a.m. as well as all day on Sundays and public holidays. During this time, activities involving loud noise should be avoided e.g. very loud music or manual tasks such as drilling.

Another peculiarity is the **TV licence**, which finances public service TV and radio channels. It must be paid by each household. Generally, you will receive a letter to register for the TV licence a few weeks after you have registered your address with the citizens' centre /registration office or town hall.

Integration

A **knowledge of German** is very important to help you integrate. For every day use, a basic knowledge at A2 level is often sufficient to get by and make some contacts. In order to work and study, however, you will need at least B1 level of German. In addition, the official language at all authorities is German only.

A particularity of the German language is the personal form of address with **„Du“** or **„Sie“**. „Sie“ is the polite form which is often used in a business context or when you do not know the other person very well. „Du“ tends to be used when you have known someone a long time and are on more familiar terms. The older or more senior person will let you know if you can say „Du“.

Another way to make new contacts and help you integrate are **international communities**. The FRM region is well-known for being international: people from over 180 different nations live here. International Communities help newcomers to make contacts and find their way in their new home. You will find cultural societies here as well as business networks. Joining a club can help you to make new contacts as common interests in German sports and social clubs connect people. You can find an overview here.

Good to know !

Housing

It is important to note that a kitchen and bathroom do not count as an extra room. In housing advertisements, the kitchen and bathroom are in addition to the number of rooms indicated. A fitted kitchen is not always included. You either have to buy one or you may buy the kitchen from the previous tenant. Housing advertisements contain a lot of abbreviations which are explained again in detail here.

Deposit and rental contract

When renting a flat, you will have to pay a deposit. This may be up to three times the basic monthly rent and serves as security for the landlord. If there is no damage to the flat when you move out, you will receive your deposit back. A rental contract should be thoroughly checked before signing, in particular, the minimum rental period, the level of service charges and the notice period. Further help and advice can be obtained from the local Tenants' Protection Association (Mieterschutzbund).

Opening hours

Please note that most shops are closed on Sundays and public holidays.

Nature

A great way to discover nature in the FrankfurtRheinMain region are the **Regionalpark Routes**. The cycle routes connect many of our towns and municipalities in the region and show its splendid scenery. The network of routes stretches from the green belt in Frankfurt am Main to Rüdesheim in the Rheingau in the west, to the Wetterau in the north, and from the Hessische Ried in the south well into the Kinzigtal in the east. Another good way to discover the region is not just by bicycle but also by hiking.

The region has numerous **hiking trails** for beginners as well as for more experienced hikers. Thanks to the public transport network, you can reach the countryside within a short period of time from every large town. Popular hikes are in the Taunus, Rheinhessen, Odenwald und Bergstraße. An overview of local recreation areas can be found [here](#).

The many castles and zoos in the region are also popular **destinations**. In addition, there are numerous smaller and bigger museums. You will find an overview on the tourist websites of the individual towns.

Urban

Urban life in the FrankfurtRheinMain region has much to offer. In the larger towns, in particular, **farmers' markets** are not just for your weekly groceries but are a popular place to meet up to try the many wines of the region. Farmers' Markets generally take place once or twice a week in the region. Seasonal and local produce is sold, often directly from the farmers.

In addition, the region is well-known for its numerous **cultural events, street festivals** and **open air events**. Almost every weekend in the summer there are festivals and events in the open air to suit every taste and age-group. An overview of current events can be found on the website of the individual towns.

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Mobility

Public transport is very well developed in the region. The **Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund** (RMV) has U-Bahn, S-Bahn and regional trains (RB) as well as trams and buses. RMV connects the entire FrankfurtRheinMain area and does not just cover the State of Hessen, but also parts of the neighbouring states. Further information on tickets as well as the network can be found [here](#).

It is not just public transport that is well-developed in the region, but also **cycle paths**. There are numerous recreational routes such as the Regionalpark Rundroute (Round Trip) or the MainRadweg (Main Cycle Path), which invite you to discover the region. Please note that traffic regulations also apply to cyclists.

Good to know!

Public transport

If you are taking public transport in the region, it is worth buying a group ticket for groups of up to five people.

International Stammtisch

The International Stammtisch is a great way to make international contacts. It generally takes place on the first Monday of the month in Frankfurt. Further information can be found [here](#).

Intercultural Week

The Intercultural Week (interkulturelle Woche) is a festival that takes place every year to celebrate cultural diversity and communities. During this week many different events take place in the participating towns. More information can be found [here](#).

Newcomers Festival

The Newcomers Festival is an informative fair for expats and takes place in September in Frankfurt. More information can be found [here](#).