

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.