

Land und Leute



Freizeit



Segeln ist ein beliebter Sport in Deutschland. (Wannsee, Berlin)

Although the Germans have a reputation for being industrious, they are also known as the world champions in leisure time (**Freizeitweltmeister**). Germany ranks near the top among the industrialized nations in paid vacation time (**Urlaub**). The European Union requires its member states to offer a minimum of four weeks vacation to workers, but in Germany 70% of all employees enjoy at least six weeks of paid vacation. In addition to paid vacation time, many German companies pay their employees a vacation bonus (**Urlaubsgeld**) of several hundred euros. Vacation time in Austria is five weeks and in Switzerland four weeks. The

United States and Canada are at the bottom in number of vacation days with 19 on the average in Canada and 15 days in the United States.

Many Germans spend much of their free time taking vacation trips abroad. The most popular European destinations for Germans are Spain, Italy, and Austria. Outside of Europe, the favorite destinations are the United States and Canada. About one-third of the vacation trips are taken in Germany.

Land und Leute



Fernsehen



Die Fernsehmoderatorin Maybritt Illner in ihrer politischen Talkshow im Gespräch mit Politikern.

Germany has both public (**öffentlich-rechtlich**) and private (**privat**) television. The public channels are run as nonprofit public corporations and supervised by broadcasting councils. Their programming is financed primarily by fees collected from all owners of televisions and radios. The fee for radio and TV is 51.09 euros for three months. (Radio alone is 16.56 euros for three months.) Each community has access to two national public channels and at least one regional channel. Commercials on these channels are usually shown in two to three clusters per evening and are restricted to a maximum of twenty minutes per workday. There are no commercials after 8 PM or on Sundays or holidays. The private stations, which are available through subscription via cable,

have become strong competitors to the public TV stations. Cable TV costs the viewer 16.90 to 27.80 euros per month in addition to the regular TV fees. Viewers find cable stations attractive because they offer more light entertainment and feature films than the public stations, whose schedule consists of around 44% informational programs.

Popular programs on German TV include news shows (**Nachrichten**), game shows, sports (**Sportsendungen**), movies (**Spielfilme**), and series (**Serien**) such as situation comedies or detective shows (**Krimis**)—many of which are co-productions with Swiss and Austrian television or imported from the United States. Most movies and sitcoms are American-made with dubbed voices; many game shows are based on American models. American and other foreign films are usually with dubbed voices rather than subtitles. For many programs, stereo broadcasting makes it possible to hear the soundtrack either in German or in the original.



Land und Leute

Der Führerschein

The minimum age for an unrestricted driver's license (**Führerschein**) in the German-speaking countries is eighteen, although exceptions are sometimes made for people as young as sixteen who need a car to make a living. In Germany and Austria, drivers aged seventeen may drive as long as an adult licensed driver is also in the car.

To obtain a license one must attend a private driving school (**Fahrschule**). In Germany a driving course for a passenger car consists of a minimum of fourteen 90-minute classes of theoretical instruction and a minimum of twelve hours of driving lessons (**Fahrstunden**). The driving lessons include practice in city driving, on the highway (**Autobahn**) and night-time driving. At the end of the course, every student must pass both a theoretical test and a driving test. Approximately one-third of the students fail the test the first time. Each candidate must also complete a course in first aid before being issued a driver's license. The **Führerschein** is then issued temporarily for two years, after which time the driver can obtain it for life, if the driving record shows no entries for drunk driving or other at-fault violations. The total cost of the driving lessons plus the test fees can easily exceed 1,000 euros.

The member nations of the EU have agreed to standards that apply to all member countries. Therefore, national driver's licenses are valid in all EU countries.

However, laws and regulations are not uniform in the EU countries. Switzerland and Austria charge a fee for using the **Autobahnen**. In Germany there is a fee for large trucks, but none for small trucks or passenger cars. Germany has no speed limit on 70% of the **Autobahnen**, while Austria has a speed limit of 130 km/h and Switzerland 120 km/h. In Germany, truck traffic is forbidden on Sundays and holidays, as well as on Saturdays at the height of the vacation season. Austria, Switzerland, and Germany have laws prohibiting speaking on hand-held phones while driving.



Fahrschule Hahn ist nur eine der vielen Hamburger Fahrschulen.