



Germany 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Fraud; Drug Trafficking; Murder; Burglary; Religious Terrorism; Right-wing; Left-wing; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Other; Economic Espionage; Rape/Sexual Violence

Europe > Germany; Europe > Germany > Berlin; Europe > Germany > Frankfurt; Europe > Germany > Hamburg; Europe > Germany > Leipzig; Europe > Germany > Munich

2/9/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Historically, crime rates throughout Germany have been comparable to those in most first-world countries, including the U.S., and comparative analysis of crime data for the U.S. and Germany reveals only marginal differences. The Bundeskriminalamt's (BKA) 2014 Police Crime Statistics for Germany indicated only minor changes in the number of most of the recorded offenses over 2013. There were, however, some exceptions. Most notably there was a seven percent increase in bicycle theft and a 16 percent increase in the number of pickpocket cases reported. There were also marked increases in the various categories related to credit card fraud. While the 2014 statistics (the latest available) for Germany are of interest, they fail to capture any effect that the approximately one million refugees and asylum

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seekers who arrived in country in 2015 may have had on crime.

According to the very latest available statistics for Berlin, specifically the first quarter of 2015, there were significant increases in a number of crime categories over 2014. These increases included: drug related crime 19 percent; pickpocketing 24 percent; homicide 33 percent; and burglary 43 percent. Although more recent statistics have yet to be made available, police report there were significant increases in some crimes such as burglary and pickpocketing Berlin in 2015 compared to 2014.

Visiting American tourists and expatriates have been infrequent victims of crime. Occasionally, Americans have had purses snatched and pockets picked in high traffic and tourist areas (e.g., in train stations, Internet cafes, crowded restaurants, and outdoor market places), but violent crimes against Americans have been relatively infrequent. While personal assaults do occur, there is no reason to believe these crimes are driven by anti-American sentiment, but are rather the result of opportunity and convenience.

OSAC members and individuals planning to visit Germany can find extensive information regarding crime statistics and German crime prevention programs on the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt) website at <http://www.bka.de>. A number of ranking police officers have questioned the accuracy of the statistics being provided, specifically related to crimes taking place within refugee camps or being committed by refugees.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions vary significantly from region to region but are generally fair to good. One should exercise caution, however, while traveling on older roads, particularly in eastern Germany. Drivers should always remember that road conditions can and do deteriorate quickly with rain, ice, and snow. Consequently, minor and major traffic accidents occur frequently on many major highways, and delays can last hours.

Road construction and road wear also present unique safety challenges. In general, road maintenance is a lower priority in Germany than in other well-developed countries (much of the infrastructure budget is spent on public transportation services, road/sidewalk environmental clean-up, and other non-maintenance items and services). As such, many roads experience deep and uneven rutting, causing grooves to form on seemingly flat and level road surfaces. This often results in hard and unexpected steering pull, which can lead to motor vehicle accidents for drivers unaccustomed to, or unaware of, such conditions.

Compared to speed limits for major roads and highways in the U.S., speed limits in most German cities are relatively low. The average speed limit throughout Germany is 50 kph (~30 mph) but drops to 30 kph in most residential areas and in school zones. There are also posted speed limits on large stretches of the Autobahn, mostly when traveling through urban areas and on stretches of where road curves are more frequent.

The leading causes of motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents involving U.S. citizens are driver error (e.g., unfamiliar road signs, unusual driving customs and courtesies, etc.) and

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bicyclist hazards. Driver error can be directly attributed to simple confusion by American motorists driving in a foreign country. For example, even though double parking is illegal in most German cities, the practice is an everyday occurrence on most German streets. It is very common for lane traffic to stop abruptly when a delivery truck parks unexpectedly in a travel lane to unload cargo, or when a German driver places their car in reverse to occupy a street-side parking space. Thus, motorists must remain alert and attentive at all times, even when driving in seemingly well-moving traffic.

Bicyclists and bicycle traffic also pose a heightened risk for American motorists and pedestrians. Many sidewalks have dedicated bike lanes. Be aware that bicycles have priority use of these lanes. If you are walking, watch for bicyclists before crossing or stepping into bike lanes. Bicyclists also have priority over cars when turning onto side streets. If you are driving, check whether a bicyclist is approaching from either direction before attempting to enter side streets, even when the light is in your favor. If you are turning onto a side street and strike a bicyclist using a marked bike lane, you will be held responsible for any injury or damage caused.

Right-of-way and so-called yield laws are similar to those in rural U.S. cities but can seem awkward and confusing for drivers accustomed to driving in larger metropolitan areas. Unless you are traveling on a priority road, vehicles coming from the directional right have the right-of-way. As an aside, it is also generally illegal to pass vehicles on the right side.

It is illegal to leave the scene of a motor vehicle accident until both parties agree that it is alright to do so, and before both parties have verified the validity of the other party's insurance information. Drivers who leave the scene of an accident are frequently referred for prosecution by German law enforcement authorities.

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It is also illegal to use cell phones while driving. Police can detain and fine persons engaging in this practice.

Public Transportation Conditions

Transportation centers and trains are historically an appealing target for terrorists. Despite any enhanced security, these venues remain a soft target. Be ever vigilant while using public transportation and transiting stations or airports.

For more information on travel within Germany, contact the German National Tourist Board Office in New York at (212) 661-7200, or via fax at (212) 661-7174.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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Several international terrorist groups that target U.S. government personnel and interests have a presence and operate in Germany, including ISIL, al-Qa'ida, Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), Kongra Gel (former Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK), Hizballah, and Hamas. The large number of official U.S. government personnel in Germany creates a significant potential target for terrorist groups. Additionally, continued government reporting reiterates the growing concern for the expanding international and indigenous radical Islamist presence. Interior Ministry officials estimate that there over 1,100 residents who can be described as potentially violent Islamist extremists, 430 of whom are considered to be at a high risk of involvement in a serious crime or violent act.

Security officials estimate over 790 residents of Germany have departed the country since 2012 to participate in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, the majority of whom joined violent Islamist extremist groups in the fighting there. Some 100 are estimated to have died there. A third of the total group (or roughly 270) have returned to Germany. German officials actively investigate these returnees for any terrorist threat resulting from their experience abroad and possible desire to continue to support violent extremist causes. Prior groups of German "foreign terrorist fighters" traveled to Egypt, Somalia, and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, particularly during 2010-2013, many of whom attended terrorist training camps. The total number of these travelers was less than 50.

ISIL and other groups continued to call on followers throughout 2015 to carry out attacks in Europe, including in Germany. In 2013, Islamist extremists publicly issued death threats against German politicians, including Chancellor Angela Merkel. The government has employed legal tools to ban these organizations and their affiliates, including the September 2014 ban on ISIL, a ban on two Islamist extremist groups in March 2015, and a ban on three ultra-conservative Salafist groups in March 2013. Following each of these bans, authorities carried out raids of residences of suspected Islamist extremists and the seizure of property linked to their activities, including personal computers, phones, cash, and extremist propaganda in both German and Arabic. During 2015, prosecutors obtained convictions against nine individuals on terrorism-related charges; at the end of 2015, over 300 individuals

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were under active investigation or prosecution on charges related to Islamist-inspired terrorism.

Terrorists may elect to use a variety of means and weapons to target both official and private interests. U.S. citizens are reminded of the potential for terrorist attacks against public transportation systems and other tourism infrastructure and should take every precaution to be aware of their surroundings and to adopt appropriate safety measures to protect themselves when traveling.

The U.S. continues to work closely with European allies on the threat from international terrorism, including al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Information is routinely shared between the U.S. and its key partners in order to disrupt terrorist plotting, identify, take action against potential operatives, and strengthen defenses against potential threats. German authorities continue to investigate extremist groups, deport or arrest individuals considered dangerous, and they conduct raids on suspected groups throughout the country.

Both right-wing and left-wing extremists have carried out violent acts in recent years. Right-wing extremism remains a center-stage issue and is on the rise. Far-right extremists committed more than 16,000 crimes in 2014, including 990 violent crimes. Authorities estimate that there are nearly 22,000 right-wing extremists in the country, of whom 10,000 are considered potentially violent. The trial of a right-wing extremist accused of participating in a group that murdered at least 10 German nationals over a 13-year period began in 2013 and is ongoing. In January 2016, the Federal Public Prosecutor brought charges against four suspected neo-Nazi supporters for allegedly establishing and supporting a terrorist association and plotting to carry out an explosive attack on a refugee housing center. Also in January, unknown assailants threw a live grenade at another refugee housing center; media researchers reported a total of 222 attacks on such centers during 2015 that resulted in

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injuries or put individuals at risk of injury. To help mitigate the threat of right-wing extremism, the government maintains a central database for monitoring violent right-wing extremists and has proposed a ban on the neo-Nazi political party. If the ban is passed, the National Democratic Party (NPD) — the official name for the neo-Nazi party — would lose more than one million Euros (1,000,000€) in government funding. The government has issued bans against other right-wing extremist structures, including an online media platform used by a number of neo-Nazi groups (January 2016).

Left-wing extremists committed 4,400 crimes in 2014, of which 995 were violent. Both figures represented a decrease from prior years, though authorities reported a higher number of violent acts against police by leftist extremists, including seven attempted murders. The left-wing extremist scenes in Berlin and Hamburg are particularly significant. Right- and left-wing extremists have increasingly come into direct conflict with each other, as in a December 2015 incident in Leipzig in which left-wing extremists rioted after a day of escalating demonstrations and counter-demonstrations between the two groups.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Demonstrations with an anti-American sentiment remain common, but most always nonviolent. Themes have included Guantanamo Bay (GITMO prison facility), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (many Germans and European citizens demanded a cessation of the free trade talks between the U.S. and the European Union after allegations of alleged spying on European allies by the U.S.), Leonard Peltier (convicted and sentenced to two consecutive terms of life imprisonment for first degree murder in the shooting of two Federal Bureau of Investigation agents during a 1975 conflict on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation), the U.S. drone policy (the use of drone strikes against terrorist leaders and organizations operating and/or hiding in other countries), President Obama and his first visit to Berlin (related to the President's decreasing popularity among Germans and the President's

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overall U.S./European foreign policy), asylum for Edward Snowden (the former NSA contractor who leaked Top Secret national security material to world media outlets in an effort to expose the alleged illegal spying activities of the U.S.'s National Security Agency [NSA]), the NSA and its intelligence collection methods and programs (for its alleged spying on German nationals), and U.S. involvement in Syria.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Many well-planned and publicized demonstrations protesting government policies draw thousands of participants, and spontaneous demonstrations concerning education and other economic and social issues occur almost daily. Such demonstrations in Berlin typically take place on Unter den Linden near the Brandenburg Gate, in Munich at Marienplatz, and in Frankfurt at the Roemer City Hall and Opernplatz. No matter what the theme is of a given demonstration, such events can turn violent very quickly and should be avoided.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

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Throughout 2015, there were numerous demonstrations related to the German refugee policy, both for and against. Anti-refugee demonstrations, frequently related to the neo-Nazi and PEGIDA movements have been particularly problematic, resulting in violent confrontation with police authorities. PEGIDA is an acronym for the “Patriot Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident” – an anti-Islamic political movement. One such demonstration in 2015 occurred in Leipzig and resulted in the injury of 69 police officers.

There have been several reports of riots and conflicts between different religious and ethnic groups within the numerous refugee centers throughout Germany. These conflicts have not spilled into the general community.

Post-specific Concerns

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Every American business is susceptible to industrial espionage. There are many specialists around the world who are capable of gathering information, especially through unprotected computer networks. Businesses should take effective measures to protect their information and their personnel. These measures could include, but are not limited to: video monitoring, alarm systems, and computer network protection programs. Companies can reduce their vulnerability with proper planning by verifying the bona fides of potential partners and by conducting thorough pre-employment screening and background checks on all potential partners and staff.

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Personnel-Background Concerns

The arrival to Germany of refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 has become increasingly controversial. While one might argue that the documented conflicts are merely growing pains, others claim that it represents a clash of cultures. Whatever the assessment, there is little dispute that not all of the refugees may be integrating into German society as quickly as one might have hoped. Furthermore, there is evidence indicating that not all are as tolerant and accepting as the majority of their hosts.

There have been multiple media accounts of conflicts between male refugees and women. Most notably, the well-publicized December 31, 2015, assault of women by an estimated 1,000 men at a Cologne New Year's celebration led to over 800 complaints being filed by victims. The crimes alleged range from robbery to sexual assault. Reports indicate that the police were ill-prepared for the event and participated in deliberate obfuscation of the details of the event and the national origin of the majority of the suspects. Media report that similar crime sprees occurred at events throughout Germany.

There have been multiple reports of inappropriate behavior by suspected refugees at public pools and spas. The alleged behavior involves, but it not limited to, the unlawful touching of women.

In addition to gender, there have also been reports of assaults or harassment against people related to other factors, such as sexual orientation or nationality. One such report involved suspects throwing rocks at a transgender individual.

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Drug-related Crimes

Illegal drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and marijuana, are widely available. The illegal sale and distribution of these and other drugs often occur near major train stations, public parks, and nightclubs. While drug-related activity does not usually affect American tourists or business travelers, Americans should be aware that Germany has the same types of drug-related crime as those encountered in any major U.S. city.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

American tourists should contact the closest U.S. Embassy/Consulate if they are detained or harassed by local or national police.

Crime Victim Assistance

Victims of crime are encouraged to contact the local police by dialing 110 countrywide and to

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contact the closest American Citizen Services office for possible assistance.

American tourists are encouraged to contact the local police (dial 110 nationwide or 112 for Fire/Medical assistance) if they are involved in an accident or become the victim of a crime and to contact the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate for possible assistance. That said, authorities often contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate when an incident involving American tourists occurs.

Police/Security Agencies

There are two primary police agencies: the LKA and the BKA. The LKA is the local police agency responsible for traffic accidents, investigating crimes, enforcing local laws and ordinances, and responding to local emergencies. The BKA is the federal police agency responsible for higher-level law enforcement actions, such as ambassadorial and Heads of State protection, national-level crime investigation (terrorist-related), collecting and analyzing national crime data, and other issues of national importance.

Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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The fire department and ambulance service may be reached by dialing 112. Germany has several university hospitals that provide state-of-the-art medical care in most fields of medicine, including advanced cardiac surgery. Some of the largest hospitals (by region) are:

Berlin

Charite Campus Benjamin Franklin Freie Universitatklinikum, Hindenburgdamm 30, Steglitz - Tel: 8445-0 (two helipads)

Charité Campus Virchow-Klinikum, Faculty of Humboldt University, Augusteburger Platz 1, Wedding - Tel: 450-50 (two helipads)

Charité Campus Mitte, Faculty of Humboldt University, Schumann Strauss 20-21, Mitte - Tel: 450-50

Krankenhaus Waldfriede, Argentinische Allee 40, D-14163 Berlin-Zehlendorf, Tel: +49 (0)30. 81 810-0

Dusseldorf

Universitaetklinikum, Mooren Strasse # 5, Dusseldorf - Tel: 49 0211-8100

Frankfurt

St. Markus-Krankenhaus, Wilhelm-Epstein Strasse #2, Frankfurt - Tel: 069-95330

Unfall Klinik (Trauma Hospital), Friedberger Landstrasse 430, Frankfurt - Tel: 49 69-4750 (two

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trauma rooms)

Hamburg

UKE Eppendorf Hospital, Martinistrasse 52, Hamburg - Tel: 040-428030 <http://www.uke.uni-hamburg.de>

Leipzig

Universitaetsklinikum Leipzig, Liebigstrasse 20, 04103 Leipzig - Tel: (0341)97-17300

Munich

Klinikum Rechts der Isar, Ismaningerstrasse 22, Munich - Tel: 089-4140-2090

Available Air Ambulance Services

There are many worldwide air ambulance services that operate in and out of Germany and Europe, including:

Surgical Experts: based in Germany, +49 176 2028 2223

European Air Ambulance: based in Luxembourg, +49 711 7007 7007

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International SOS: based in Germany, +49 6102 3588 100

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides health-related travel information on their website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/germany.htm>. For additional information, travelers may contact the CDC directly at 1-800-232-4636.

OSAC Country Council Information

Regional Security Officers (RSOs) are located in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich to assist OSAC constituents. There is no OSAC Country Council in Berlin. There are OSAC Country Councils located in Munich and Frankfurt.

To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

United States Embassy Berlin

Pariser Platz 2

10117 Berlin

Federal Republic of Germany

Closed on American and German holidays

United States Embassy Berlin, Consular Annex at Clayallee:

Clayallee 170

14195 Berlin

Federal Republic of Germany

Embassy Contact Numbers

Routine American Citizen Services calls: (030) 8305-1200, 2:00-4:00 pm, Monday—Thursday.

Emergencies only: (030) 8305-0

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Fax: (030) 8305-1215

Website: <http://www.usembassy.de/>

Nearby Posts

Consulate General Munich: <http://munich.usconsulate.gov>

Consulate General Frankfurt: <http://frankfurt.usconsulate.gov>

Consulate General Hamburg: <http://hamburg.usconsulate.gov>

Consulate General Leipzig: <http://leipzig.usconsulate.gov>

Consulate General Dusseldorf: <http://duesseldorf.usconsulate.gov>

Consular Agency Bremen: <http://germany.usembassy.gov/acs/bremenacs/>

Embassy Guidance

The Department of State main website (<http://travel.state.gov>) provides access to all U.S. Embassy websites, as well as travel warnings and security alerts.

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Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Visitors should be aware of "distraction crimes." Strangers will attempt to engage victims in conversation, or otherwise distract their attention, so that their accomplices may more easily snatch bags or parcels or pick the victims' pockets. Avoiding such distractions and maintaining situational awareness will help to deter such crimes.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Crimes throughout the country, especially those targeting tourists, are as common as in any large European city. Visitors and residents should exercise the same level of care as they would in any major city in the U.S.

In high-volume tourist areas, visitors are encouraged to safeguard their valuables and not to carry large amounts of cash or unneeded credit cards. Visitors should be particularly careful on crowded streets and other high-density areas (entertainment areas, department stores, restaurants, underground pedestrian street-crossings, on crowded public transportation). Visitors are encouraged to keep their bags where they can be seen rather than slung over a shoulder. Slung bags or purses should be slung across the chest and carried so that the zipper or opening securely fits under the arm. Visitors carrying backpacks should not place valuables, including passports, in external pockets and should consider keeping wallets, cash, credit cards and passports in a front pants' pocket. Should a criminal attempt to snatch or

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otherwise forcefully take a bag, one should not attempt to struggle, and visitors should pack day bags or backpacks such that there is nothing in them for which it is worth being injured.

When withdrawing money from an automated teller machine (ATM), especially one on a public street, try to do so with a companion. Avoid using ATMs that located in poorly illuminated areas. ATM skimming devices, installed by criminals to capture data from cards, are a threat throughout Europe, and users should inspect the ATM's card reader for signs of tampering or other abnormalities before inserting their bank cards. In addition, all ATM users should be careful to protect their personal identification numbers (PIN) from "shoulder surfers" who may attempt to observe the PIN surreptitiously.

Pay particular attention to personal belongings in busy bars or restaurants. Thieves use snatch-and-grab techniques to steal laptops, purses, shopping bags, and other valuables. In restaurants, bars, and theaters, bags should not be placed on the floor or hung on a chair but should be kept in sight.

Transportation offers an appealing and soft target for terrorists. Remain ever vigilant while using public transportation or transiting stations or airports.

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