

Germany



Welcome



Where is Germany?

Germany is in Europe and its nine neighbouring countries are Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria and France.



Time difference

South Africa is one hour ahead of Germany. Clocks are turned forward by an hour at the end of March and back by an hour at the end of October, although these dates may vary slightly.



Population

82.6-million



Language

German is the official language.



Economy

With a GDP of US\$3.747-trillion, Germany is the fourth-largest economy in the world. Major contributor sectors to the country's economy are: automobile and automotive manufacturing, machinery, precision equipment, technology and software.



German etiquette

Restaurants

Germans rarely eat with their hands, unless attending an outdoor "grill party". In a restaurant everything is eaten with a knife and fork, even pizza. Even when tap water is safe to drink, Germans prefer sparkling or still mineral water.

Beer and wine accompany evening meals, while brandy, cognac, grappa or a herbal liqueur like Jägermeister may be enjoyed after dinner. Germans don't arrive "fashionably late" and they respect people who arrive at the agreed time.

Germans consider business meals as formal affairs. Do not lapse into first-name familiarity at the table. They always wait for their host to indicate where they should be seated.

Professionalism

Business attire for men is dark suits and ties. Women wear dresses, suits, pantsuits, skirts and blouses. Germans value timeous delivery of information, products and proposals.

If you want to impress a German businessman, make sure all your presentations are supported by statistics and charts. Strict hierarchy is observed, with deference to authority. Business dealings follow a logical, methodical "by the book" approach. Hard-sell or ambush tactics are unlikely to be successful. Germans are serious when it comes to business and don't usually indulge in humour in the workplace. Presenting English business cards is acceptable when meeting with German business people.

It's a good idea to forward your credentials ahead of a meeting with German colleagues to establish credibility. The first few minutes of a meeting may be devoted to general discussion before the issues of the day are raised.

Phone calls

If you're answering a call from a German, introduce yourself by using your surname. End a call with "Auf Wiederhören" rather than the more informal "Auf Wiedersehen".

Show respect for others in a meeting by not texting or taking calls. Never talk too loudly on a cellphone. When in the company of others, allow calls to go to voicemail.



How to make a German visitor's day

Formal greeting

"Guten Morgen" means "good morning" and is used until noon.

"Guten Tag" means "good day" and can be used until 6pm.

"Guten Abend" means "good evening" and is used after 6pm.

Research indicates that German visitors enjoy sampling South African wines, so suggest wine tours if you're in the right part of the country.

Germans also enjoy beer, so suggesting a visit to some of South Africa's emerging craft breweries is likely to be welcomed with enthusiasm.

South Africa's scenery, wildlife and culture are highly rated by German visitors, so outings to the countryside, game viewing and visits to cultural villages are all good ideas.

Fact Sheet

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