Driving licence & car

Have you obtained your driving licence outside Germany? Here you will find all the information you need to drive a car in Germany.

Driving a car: Is my driving licence valid in Germany?

Many people in Germany have their own car, but if you prefer not to, you can easily rent a car on demand through car sharing.

Car sharing and carpooling sites

In urban areas, there are many car-sharing services from different providers. You will need the appropriate app to make bookings. Car sharing saves on running costs such as insurance, motor vehicle tax and parking, and helps the environment. You can hire vehicles not only for short trips around the city, but also for longer periods and journeys. You have the option of returning the vehicle to another city.

If you prefer not to drive yourself, there are several carpooling sites (Mitfahrportale) on the internet. Carpooling, which can oftcity butanged spontaneously, can also be used to travel long distances. If you are unable to book early, long-distance coach and train fares will increase, especially on weekends and on public holidays.

Driving licences

If you hold a driving licence issued in your home country, different rules apply in Germany depending on the country where you originally obtained your driving licence.

Driving licences issued in the EU, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland:

Your driving licence is valid without restrictions. You do not need to have anything amended or exchanged.

Driving licences issued in another country:

You can use your driving licence to drive in Germany for **six months** (from the time you register your place of residence in Germany). An official German translation of your driving licence is also required for almost all countries of origin. After this six-month period, you will then need a German driving licence. Whether you will need to take another driving test in Germany to obtain a German driving licence depends on the country in which you obtained your driving licence. Your local **Driving Licence Authority** (Fahrerlaubnisbehörde) or **Driving Licence Office** (Führerscheinstelle) is responsible. To obtain a German driving licence, you must also have a valid eye test and confirmation of participation in a first aid course.

You will find more information on the validity of driving licences issued abroad **here**.

To obtain a driving licence in Germany, you must attend a driving school and pass a theoretical and practical driving test. Fees vary depending on the number of driving lessons you need before taking the test and whether you pass at the first attempt. However, a certain number of lessons are compulsory.

Do you have your own car?

Registration

You must register your car at a **Motor Vehicle Registration Office** (Kraftfahrzeug-Zulassungsbehörde). You will need your vehicle registration document (Fahrzeugschein) and your car insurance policy. If you are bringing your car from abroad, check with the Registration Office to see if you need any additional documents.

General inspection (Periodical Technical Inspection)

In addition to registration, every car in Germany has to pass a general inspection (Hauptuntersuchung – HU) every two years. A sticker (*Plakette*) on your registration plate (number plate) shows when your next general

inspection is due. The inspector from the officially recognised inspection organisation (e.g. DEKRA) or technical inspection organisation (e.g. TÜV) checks the vehicle's roadworthiness and exhaust and emissions performance. You must arrange and pay for this inspection yourself. If your vehicle has any defects, a new sticker will not be issued until the defects have been rectified.

Insurance

There are different types of insurance for your car.

- All cars in Germany must have motor vehicle **liability insurance**. This insurance pays for damages if you cause an accident with your car or injure someone. It does not cover the cost of repairing your own car.
- If you want to cover damage to your own car, you can take out **fully comprehensive insurance**.
- If you have **accident and breakdown cover**, your insurer will pay for things like towing or a hire car if you break down or have an accident. A slightly more expensive option than accident and breakdown cover is to join an automobile association. However, you will receive many additional benefits, which are particularly worthwhile if you drive a lot.

Motor vehicle tax

If you own a car in Germany, you must pay motor vehicle tax (Kfz-Steuer). Registration for payment of motor vehicle tax takes place at the relevant Registration Office as part of the vehicle registration process (see above). You can find more information on the export or import of vehicles as well as tax matters on the **German Customs** website.

What else should I be aware of when driving in Germany?

Right-hand driving is compulsory in Germany, as are seat belts, winter tyres and child seats. You must also carry your driving licence, vehicle registration document and identity card with you at all times when driving. If you are involved in a car accident, call the emergency number 110 (police emergency number). There are also strict alcohol limits for drivers in Germany.

For serious traffic offences, such as speeding, penalty points are recorded in the **Register of Driver Fitness (points system)** in Flensburg. If you have eight points in Flensburg, your driving licence can be revoked.

Many German cities have established low emission zones in order to improve the air quality. If you want to drive in a **low emission zone**, you are only allowed to do so with an emissions-control sticker attached to your windscreen. You can obtain an **emissions-control sticker** at motor vehicle registration offices, technical inspection organisations or in repair shops authorised to carry out exhaust emission tests (AU), if your car complies with **certain emission standards.** You can find more information on the emissions-control sticker on the website of the **Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection**.

Information on the web

German Customs

Information on motor vehicle tax

Handbook Germany

Information on the validity of foreign driving licences

German Road Safety

An overview of the most important rules of the road in Germany

International Organization for Migration | IOM, UN Migration

Resources for Navigating Life in Germany: Workbook & Digital Companion App

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