

## Cultural Comparisons: Daily Life in the USA vs. Germany • Part 1 of 5 (Category 1)

In the chart below you'll find a simplified comparison of various customs and everyday culture in the United States and Germany (*Deutschland*). For more, see [www.german-way.com](http://www.german-way.com).

1. DRIVING	
USA	GERMANY
Traffic regulated by many signs (stop, yield, etc.).	Driver coming from the right has right of way; fewer signs.
Passing on the right is OK on the Interstate.	Passing on the right is verboten on the autobahn.
Highway directional signs refer to east, west, north, south – and the next city.	Highway directional signs refer to the next town or city, never mentioning compass directions.
Speed limits are posted everywhere on streets and highways.	No speed limit on some autobahn stretches; standard 50 km/h (31 mph) limit on city streets unless posted otherwise.
The highway patrol is highly visible and uses radar to catch speeders. Automatic radar cameras are not that common.	The <i>Autobahnpolizei</i> is less visible, but many automatic radar cameras also help catch speeders.
It is rare to see a low speed limit zone in cities for noise reduction.	The so-called “30 zone” is very common in towns and cities, limiting speed to 30 km/h (18 mph) for noise reduction and child safety.
Most people use regular or “all-weather” tires. Changing to winter tires is only common in regions with harsh winter weather.	There is no such thing as “all-weather” tires. Motorists are required to switch to winter (M+S) tires in late fall.
Gasoline is relatively cheap, with a low tax rate.	Gasoline costs twice the US rate; fuel tax is high.
Diesel fuel for cars is sometimes hard to find.	Diesel fuel for cars is available at almost any gas station.
Most cars have an automatic transmission. “Stick-shift,” manual-transmission cars are rare.	Most cars have a “stick-shift,” manual transmission. Cars with automatic shift are rare.
Most people learn to drive from their parents; license must be renewed periodically.	Drivers must take lessons from a <i>Fahrschule</i> (driving school); license can cost up to \$3,000! Driver's license is good for life.
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## Cultural Comparisons: Daily Life in the USA vs. Germany • Part 1 of 5 (Category 2)

In the chart below you'll find a simplified comparison of various customs and everyday culture in the United States and Germany (*Deutschland*). For more, see [www.german-way.com](http://www.german-way.com).

2. RESTAURANTS and DINING	
USA	GERMANY
Wait to be seated by host/hostess.	Seat yourself.
Automatic glass of water (with ice) served, except in drought-stricken areas	No water served unless you order it (in a bottle); no ice cubes
Soft drinks are served with lots of ice.	Soft drinks are usually served without ice.
Tip is left on the table or added to credit card bill.	Tip is given directly to food-server; credit cards not always accepted.
Sharing a restaurant table with strangers is rare.	Sharing a table (longer, family-style tables) is common when a restaurant is crowded.
Most restaurants are non-smoking. Many US states have made all restaurants and bars non-smoking.	Smoking is still more common, but Germany has improved a great deal in this area. Even Oktoberfest began banning smoking in 2010.
Steak houses, serving US corn-fed beef are very popular.	German steak houses (Asado, Block House, Maredo, etc.) usually serve Argentinian beef. High-end steak houses like Ruth's Chris or Mortons are rare.
Many kinds of international cuisine and restaurants are available.	More limited selection of world cuisine. Good Asian, Indian, Greek and Italian restaurants.
Mexican restaurants are common and very popular.	German "Mexican" restaurants serve cuisine that is not really Mexican.
McDonald's, Burger King, Subway and other fast food restaurants are ubiquitous.	In addition to McDonald's, Burger King and Subway, Turkish <i>Döner Kabap</i> , a sort of shish kebab in pita bread, is the "German" fast food.
Your food-server will gladly put leftovers in a box to take home.	Asking to take leftovers home from a restaurant is just not done.
In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, the sweet-and-sour sauce is colored red. There is always hot mustard.	In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, the sweet-and-sour sauce is not colored red. There is rarely any hot mustard.
<p><b>McCafé and Starbucks:</b> The Vienna coffee house may be the old world tradition, but McDonald's Germany introduced its McCafé coffee bars in Germany in 2003, long before they were seen widely across the US. Today there are over 500 McCafés in Germany and 100+ in Austria. (The very first one was in Australia in 1993.) Starbucks also has a large presence in Germany. As in the US, Starbucks and McCafé are big rivals in Germany and Europe.</p>	