

TOURISM GEOGRAPHY OF GERMANY

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Abstract: *This article discusses the major features of the tourist industries of Germany, Austria and Switzerland and considers demand for domestic and international travel in these countries. Apart from the relatively short German coastline, this part of Europe is landlocked. Physically, three regions can be identified: the Northern Lowlands, the Central Uplands and the Alps. These are reflected in the main tourist regions, comprised of the coasts of northern Germany with its islands and resorts, the Central Uplands of Germany, including the Rhineland and the Black Forest, and the Alpine area of all three countries with its opportunities for both winter and summer tourism.*

Keywords: *tourism in Germany, tourist attractions, sightseeing places, statistics of tourism in Germany*

Germany has a wealth of fantastic tourist sights and attractions, which people travel from all over the world to see. Germany is the eighth-most-visited country in the world, [1][2] with a total of 407.26 million overnights during 2012. [3] This number includes 68.83 million nights by foreign visitors, the majority of foreign tourists in 2009 coming from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland (see table). Additionally, more than 30% of Germans spend their holiday in their own country. According to Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Reports, Germany is ranked 3 out of 136 countries in the 2017 report, and is rated as one of the safest travel destinations worldwide. In 2012, over 30.4 million international tourists arrived in Germany, bringing over US\$38 billion in international tourism receipts to the country. [4] Domestic and international travel and tourism combined directly to contribute over EUR43.2 billion to the German GDP. Including indirect and induced impacts, the industry contributes 4.5% of German GDP and supports 2 million jobs (4.8% of total employment). [5] The ITB Berlin is the world's leading tourism trade fair. [6] According to surveys, the top three reasons for tourists to come to Germany, are the German culture, outdoor activities, the countryside and rural areas, and the German cities. Transportation is well developed overall but has to overcome the harsh physical conditions and topography of the Alps. Forests, lakes and spas are important tourism resources throughout the region. Germany and Austria have made great contributions to

music and art, attracting cultural tourists worldwide; the towns and cities in all three nations are important for sightseeing and as business travel centres. Highly developed economies and standards of living have resulted in a considerable demand for tourism and recreation. Of particular note is the importance of Germany as one of the world's leading generators of international tourists. The stagnation of international demand in the 1990s has led to the restructuring of national tourism organisations and the federal organisation of the three countries has led to considerable devolution of tourism powers to the states in Germany, provinces in Austria and cantons in Switzerland.

The history of tourism in Germany goes back to cities and landscapes being visited for education and recreation. From the late 18th century onwards, cities like Dresden, Munich, Weimar and Berlin were major stops on a European Grand tour.

Spas and Seaside resorts on the North and Baltic Sea (e.g. Rugia and Usedom islands, Heiligendamm, the islands Norderney and Sylt) particularly developed during the 19th and early 20th century, when major train routes were built to connect the seaside spas to urban centers. An extensive bathing and recreation industry materialized in Germany around 1900. At rivers and close to natural landscapes (along the Middle Rhine valley and in Saxon Switzerland for example) many health spas, hotels and recreational facilities were established since the 19th century.

Since the end of World War II tourism has expanded greatly, as many tourists visit Germany to experience a sense of European history and the diverse German landscape. The country features 14 national parks, including the Jasmund National Park, the Vorpommern Lagoon Area National Park, the Müritzer National Park, the Wadden Sea National Parks, the Harz National Park, the Hainich National Park, the Saxon Switzerland National Park, the Bavarian Forest National Park and the Berchtesgaden National Park. In addition, there are 14 Biosphere Reserves, as well as 98 nature parks. The countryside has a pastoral aura, while the bigger cities exhibit both a modern and classical feel. Small and medium-sized cities often preserved their historical appearance and have old towns with remarkable architectural heritage – these are called Altstadt in German.

The table below shows the distribution of national and international visitor nights spent in each of the sixteen states of Germany in 2017.

Germany overall had 178.23 million visitor nights in 2017, of which 37.45 million were of foreign guests (21.01 percent). With 94.3 million nights spent in hotels, hostels or clinics, Bavaria has the most visitors. With 18.472 nights per 1.000 inhabitants, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has the highest density of tourists per population (German median: 5.568 nights per 1.000 people). The official body for tourism in Germany is the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), represented worldwide by National Tourist Offices in 29 countries. Surveys by the GNTB include perceptions and reasons for holidaying in Germany, which are as follows: culture (75%), outdoors/countryside (59%), cities (59%), cleanliness (47%), security (41%), modernity (36%), good hotels (35%), good gastronomy/cuisine (34%), good

accessibility (30%), cosmopolitanism/hospitality (27%), good shopping opportunities (21%), exciting nightlife (17%) and good price/performance ratio (10%) (multiple answers were possible). Germany recorded a total of twelve million tourists in 2020, ranking 20th in the world in absolute terms. The fact that larger countries regularly perform better in a comparison of the absolute number of guests is obvious. By putting the tourist numbers in relation to the population of Germany, the result is much more comparable picture: With 0.15 tourists per resident, Germany ranked 103rd in the world. In Western Europe, it ranked 9th. In 2019, Germany generated around 58.37 billion US dollars in the tourism sector alone. This corresponds to 1.4 percent of its the gross domestic product and approximately 27 percent of all international tourism receipts in Western Europe.

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