

Interesting FACTS *about the* GERMAN PEOPLE

- ❖ Germans tend to make eye contact often, so try to maintain it when it is made with you. This is a sign of attentiveness, so don't be quick to assume it is a threatening gesture. As this is just part of the culture it is not uncommon for eye contact to be made on the street as well, again with no aggression intended.
- ❖ Public gestures of affection tend to be reserved for close family and friends. Germans will usually smile at strangers (in a shop for example) to be polite, but don't be offended if they don't - this is just part of their generally reserved culture.
- ❖ Try to avoid making a scene in public, by shouting for example, as this is commonly considered to be impolite behavior.
- ❖ Despite Germany being regarded as a very formal society, it is not uncommon for people to push and jostle when in lines.
- ❖ Making the "O.K." sign (forming a circle with the thumb and forefinger) should be avoided.
- ❖ As with many countries, there is a large contingent of aggressive drivers in Germany, but don't be surprised if this is slightly more widespread than you are used to.
- ❖ An invitation to a German home is a major courtesy; if invited to your German neighbors and / or friends' home, you should bring a gift for the hostess.

PROPER WAYS OF INTRODUCTIONS:

- ❖ Use the German titles “Herr” (to mean Mr.) and “Frau” (to mean Mrs. or Ms.) when addressing individuals.
- ❖ Addressing a woman as *Fräulein* is inappropriate in most cases; address all women as Frau (followed by a name).
- ❖ Among the older generations, be careful not to use the informal *Du* (you) or a first name without being invited to do so. *Du* is appropriate when addressing fellow students and friends, or when addressing children. In all other circumstances, use the formal *Sie* for “you,” as in the question “*Sprechen Sie Englisch?*” (Do you speak English?)
- ❖ First names are generally reserved for family members and close friends, particularly in German business.
- ❖ It is appreciated if you try to use at least basic German expressions. The phrase “*Guten Tag*” is the German equivalent of “Hello” and “*Auf Wiedersehen*” means “Goodbye”. “*Bitte*” is used to say “Please” as well as “Your Welcome”, and “*Danke*” for saying “Thank you”.
- ❖ When answering the telephone, you should use your last name.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION:

- ❖ Try to avoid intrusive questions about personal matters, for example family life, as Germans tend to be rather private about such things. If you have spent time with the family it is unlikely to cause problems if you politely enquire about them.
- ❖ When discussing sports, Germans prefer to talk about sports such as soccer, cycling, skiing, or tennis.

- ❖ Germans enjoy talking about beer and wines. It is always difficult to talk to Germans who have trusted Christ as their Savior about the evils of alcohol. For Germans, their alcohol is their life. When a German, who is saved, gets rid of their alcohol, then you know they are making large steps in their spiritual life.
- ❖ World War II and the Holocaust may be uncomfortable topics for some Germans, particularly elder individuals. If such matters come up in conversation try to speak sensitively and/or neutrally, if you don't want to risk causing offense. It may be prudent to avoid initiating such a discussion unless you are confident your company would be agreeable to it.

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE GERMAN PEOPLE:

- ❖ Nearly half of all Germans are fluent in English, but only 3% of Germans speak French fluently.
- ❖ Most Germans take environmental issues seriously. Public recycling bins can be found in all towns and cities. This attitude is also reflected in the policies of the Green Party, a political party that stresses environmental issues.
- ❖ Germans value punctuality. In Germany, if guests are invited for dinner at 8 p.m., they will arrive at 8 p.m., whereas in Canada it is considered polite to arrive a few minutes after the hour.
- ❖ Germans wear their wedding rings on their right hands, not on the left as Americans do.
- ❖ The modern printed book was invented in Mainz, Germany, in the 15th century by Johannes Gutenberg, who created a printing press that used movable metal type.

- ❖ In 1632, the villagers of Oberammergau in Bavaria promised to perform a Passion Play if the village was spared from the plague that was killing many Europeans. No one in the village died from the plague and the villagers have performed the play every ten years since then. Almost everyone in the village takes part.

- ❖ The Christmas tree tradition is believed to have originated in Germany in the 17th century. German Christmas trees are often decorated with real candles.

- ❖ King Ludwig ruled over the German region of Bavaria from 1864 to 1886. He had many beautiful fairy-tale castles built throughout Bavaria during his reign. He spent huge amounts of money to build them and it was because of this that his subjects called him “Mad” King Ludwig. Today, these castles are visited by millions of tourists.