WELCOME GUIDE
SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN REGION
Have you just arrived in Südniedersachsen and would like to find your way around quickly? The Welcome Centre is here to lend a helping hand. As the central contact point for specialists and executives from Germany and abroad, we will assist you with your transition and answer all your questions about getting settled in the region. Please get in touch with us!
WELCOME TO SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN!

It is a great pleasure for us to welcome you to our diverse region.

Wonderful, varied landscapes, picturesque half-timbered towns and the research location of Göttingen make Südniedersachsen a place to live and love. Tourist and cultural highlights can be found in the cities as well as in the countryside. The advantages of these rural areas, such as the high quality of living at reasonable rents, are combined with the colourful life of the small and medium-sized towns. Above all, discover the many possibilities for leisure activities!

Located in the heart of Germany and in Europe, our region is easily accessible by train and car, making it an ideal starting point for trips to the rest of Europe. Göttingen, known as the city that creates knowledge, represents the cultural and economic centre of the region as a first-class location for research and education. The city and region are closely interwoven and work together to combine their strengths.

The business sectors also reflect this diversity. From innovative sole proprietorships to globally operating large companies, our region has a strong and diverse corporate culture.

For you as a new specialist or manager in business, administration, research or teaching, the Welcome Centre is the first port of call for the Göttingen Campus and the Südniedersachsen region at numerous locations in our region. Here you will receive comprehensive support before and after your arrival in Südniedersachsen. The people at the Welcome Centre will be happy to assist you with any questions you may have about your private and professional relocation and will be happy to help you at any time.

In this brochure, we give you an introduction to the topics that frequently affect people moving in.

Take advantage of our services, become part of a strong network and benefit from numerous advantages. The Welcome Centre is there for you to ensure that your arrival in Südniedersachsen is a complete success.

We hope that you will quickly feel at home with us and wish you a successful start in our region!
We are pleased to welcome you!

A move to a new city or a new country is always associated with challenges: How do I find a suitable place to live? Where can I find childcare? How can my partner find work? Where can I meet nice people who have maybe just recently moved here, too?

The staff of the Welcome Centre are here to answer your questions, help you arrive safely and provide advice and practical assistance with your first steps in Südniedersachsen. Our services range from consultation in the search for finding suitable accommodation, a kindergarten or school, assistance with official steps such as registering with the residents’ registration office (Einwohnermeldeamt), to advice on visa and residence issues and information on the German banking and insurance system.

With our regional offices, we are happy to help you in person at ten locations in Südniedersachsen. Write to us, call us or drop by - we look forward to helping you!

The Welcome Centre offers two printed Welcome Guide brochures:

Welcome Guide Südniedersachsen Region — this guide is intended for everyone who works and lives in Südniedersachsen. It provides useful general information about moving to Germany and living in the Südniedersachsen region.

Welcome Guide Göttingen Campus — this guide is intended for international academics and staff working within the Göttingen Campus and provides information about the Campus and its extensive provisions and services.

With our regional offices, we are happy to help you in person at ten locations in Südniedersachsen. Write to us, call us or drop by - we look forward to helping you!

Our offices in the region

Your first contact in the region
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LIVING IN SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN

Südniedersachsen is a region with a high quality of life. Here you will find charming landscapes, international flair, medieval towns, modern infrastructure, and diverse cultural opportunities, not to mention, the best drinking water from the Solling and Harz Mountains!
Welcome to Südniedersachsen! The unique blend of tradition and modernity at the intersection of industry and research is what makes our region so special. Südniedersachsen has attractive towns and landscapes with a broad range of cultural and leisure activities as well as excellent career opportunities—all in the heart of Germany and Europe. There are no limits to your personal and professional future here.

We are international

For many centuries, Südniedersachsen has been home to people from all parts of the world who live and work together here. Universities and companies are multicultural and connect students, scientists, scholars and specialists from all continents. The renowned Goethe-Institute in Göttingen has been a partner of international exchange programmes for more than 30 years and brings people from different cultural backgrounds to the region. The cosmopolitan attitude of Südniedersachsen is particularly enriched by these creative minds and artists themselves. The diverse range of intellectually stimulating cultural offerings includes international music festivals as well as world-renowned book publishers. Our international worldview is also demonstrated by the peaceful coexistence of different philosophies and religions. This region is home to Christians, atheists, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists.

We are well-connected

Thanks to its central location in Germany, the Südniedersachsen region has excellent travel connections. The A7 and A38 motorways and the Göttingen train station link the region with major cities such as Berlin, Frankfurt and Hamburg, which can be reached within two hours by ICE train. Hannover Airport is also easy to reach from Göttingen with a travel time of approximately 90 minutes. The freight transport centre brings together the logistical axes of the region.

The Südniedersachsen region is also well-connected through partnerships in industry, countless scientific research and interest groups, university cooperations in Germany and abroad, international student associations, alumni associations and specialist networks. For example, the Südniedersachsen Innovation Campus (SNIC) connects qualified university graduates and companies in the region and makes them attractive for skilled employees.

We are innovative

Over 40,000 companies are based in Südniedersachsen. Driven by the research and teaching departments of the University of Göttingen and the universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) inventions, developments and the patenting of products, processes or services are a daily reality. In some industries, our companies are among the global market leaders.

The largest companies in Südniedersachsen include:

- pharmaceutical and laboratory equipment supplier Sartorius
- global seed manufacturer and plant breeder KWS SAAT SE
- automotive supplier A. Kayser Automotive Systems
- distiller and producer of spirits Hardenberg-Wilthen
- production metrology company Mahr
The Göttingen Campus is also of outstanding importance as a regional employer. It is comprised of the University of Göttingen, the University Medical Center and eight non-university research institutions: five Max Planck Institutes, the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the German Primate Center and the German Aerospace Center. The Göttingen Campus is complemented by commercial enterprises and other public institutions as associated partners. Clausthal University of Technology is a partner of the Welcome Centre and part of the region’s scientific landscape.

We are socially and environmentally aware

Family and children have a solid place in our region. We attach great importance to an excellent preschool and primary school education. The number of available places in crèches, daycare centres and kindergartens is well above the German average. Our grammar schools and comprehensive schools offer quality and meet international standards; vocational schools impress with their practical relevance and excellent facilities. Several independent schools complement the broad range of services offered. Industrial, trade and service enterprises in the region invest with great commitment in knowledge and education and cooperate with local schools.

Concern for the environment is clearly demonstrated by a variety of modern environmental projects and the love of nature shown by people in our region. Bioenergy and renewable raw materials are used by private households and industrial enterprises in numerous projects that attract nationwide attention.

We are geographically diverse

With its many mountains, lakes and valleys, our region is geographically varied and a pleasant place to live. Northern Germany’s largest mountain range, the Harz, extends across the east of Südniedersachsen and offer the highest peaks in the region. To the west of it lies the Solling, another mountainous region whose rolling hills line the river Weser. The hills of the Leinebergland extend between the Harz Mountains and the Weserbergland. South of the Harz Mountains lies the Eichsfeld and the Goldene Mark, which leads to Thuringia. Numerous picturesque half-timbered towns with decorative façades as well as modern architecture can be discovered here and make Südniedersachsen an attractive and inviting region.
District of Göttingen

Göttingen

The motto of the city, “die Stadt, die Wissen schafft” or “the city that creates knowledge”, is a play on words where “Wissen schafft” also means “science and scholarship”. Göttingen is a modern university town with three universities of applied sciences, which offers a wide range of educational opportunities. Founded in 1737, the University attracts many young people and international scientists and scholars every year. At the same time, the city is a vibrant cultural centre where diversity is a way of life and innovative companies thrive.

Bad Lauterberg im Harz

Bad Lauterberg, a former mining town in the southern Harz Mountains and Germany’s oldest water spa. The city is located 300 to 450 metres above sea level. Mountain lakes, rivers and mixed forests provide a varied landscape around the town. Sports and wellness facilities make Bad Lauterberg a popular excursion destination. Charming alleys with many half-timbered houses adorn the picturesque, old town.

Duderstadt

Duderstadt lies in the heart of the Unterachsfield. The town experienced its heyday in the Middle Ages during the times of the Hanseatic League. With over 600 colourful and splendidly decorated half-timbered houses, Duderstadt is one of the most beautiful half-timbered towns in Germany. The old town is surrounded by the historic green rampart. In the surrounding area, there are numerous excursion possibilities to discover.

Osterode am Harz

Osterode am Harz lies between the Söse reservoir (Sösestausee), the southern Harz karst mountains and the Lerbach valley. The landmark of the town is the Alte Burg castle, which sits on the mountain spur between Sösetal and Lerbachtal. The lively heart of the town is the Kornmarkt, Osterode’s pedestrian zone lined with half-timbered houses. The popular market is held here twice a week.

Hann. Münden

Where the rivers Werra and Fulda meet, a new river is created: the Weser. This is where the town of Hann. Münden is located. More than 700 half-timbered houses from six different centuries characterise the picturesque old town and make Hann. Münden a half-timbered town of European significance. The impressive Welf Castle in the Weser Renaissance style offers a picturesque view.

Herzberg am Harz

Herzberg am Harz lies on the southern edge of the Harz Mountains and borders directly on the Harz National Park. The town is overlooked by the 16th century Welf Castle, where the “Herzberg Castle Concerts” are held every year from April to January. Numerous hiking trails in the national park beckon those who enjoy outdoor recreation. Excursions such as the Rhume Spring and the Einhornhöhle or “Unicorn Cave” in Schrøtter, one of the oldest dolomite caves in Europe, are nearby.
District of Northeim

Bad Gandersheim

The historic salt water spa Bad Gandersheim is situated between Leinebergland, Weserbergland and Harzvorland. The Gandersheim Cathedral Festival, the largest open-air theatre in Lower Saxony, is held every summer in front of the portal of the impressive Collegiate Church, a Romanesque basilica with a double-spired west transept. Gandersheim also became famous through Roswitha von Gandersheim, the first female German author. An annual literature prize for women is awarded in memory of her.

Einbeck

Einbeck is situated in the Leinebergland and offers a variety of scenic and historical sights. The town has been known for its beer and textiles since the 12th century, and the merchant August Stukenbrok founded Germany’s first mail-order company here. The tradition of the Einbeck style of brewing lives on to this day, and the Einbeck blueprint is also known far beyond the borders of the town. The new PS.SPEICHER motorcycle and automobile museum is unique and has recently drawn many classic car fans and technology enthusiasts to the half-timbered town with its hands-on exhibition.

Northeim

Northeim in Südniedersachsen is the town of half-timbered architecture, masks and water sports. The puppet theatre “Theater der Nacht” has its venue here in an unusual building. It is a national cultural attraction with over 200 performances, courses, exhibitions and lectures every year. The Northeim lake district was created as a result of gravel mining. It consists of twelve artificial lakes and is an essential part of cultural and leisure life.

Uslar

Uslar is known as the “gateway to Solling” and is situated in the middle of the Solling-Vogler Nature Park. The town has a beautiful old town, the eye-catcher of which is the Old Town Hall. The town is the starting point for numerous leisure activities that the nearby Weserbergland has to offer. In the ErlebnisWald Solling adventure forest, which was created on the occasion of Expo 2000, the University of Göttingen continues to research the role of the forest in ecology and with respect to climate change.
FORMALITIES

Visa, registration, residence permit: When you move to a new city or country, you often have to complete many formalities. Here you can read about some important points to bear in mind.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us!
VISA MATTERS

General information

Whether you can enter Germany with or without a visa and work here depends on your country of origin. It may take several weeks to arrange an appointment and process your visa application. We therefore recommend that you submit the application as soon as possible. The visa application must be submitted together with all the necessary documents by you personally at the German embassy or consulate in your current country of residence.

The website of the Federal Foreign Office lists the addresses and contact details of the German missions abroad as well as detailed information on entry requirements: www.auswaertiges-amt.de

If you are coming to Germany with your family, we recommend that you apply for the necessary visas for all family members at the same time. This is also advisable if your family is to join you at a later date. Please note that the diplomatic missions and consular posts are exclusively by appointment only and are sometimes booked out months in advance.

Nationals of EU and EEA countries and of Switzerland

EU citizens enjoy what is known as freedom of movement. This means that they have unrestricted access to the German labour market. They do not need a visa or residence permit. The same applies to citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway (EEA states) and Switzerland. If you intend to stay in Germany for longer than three months, you must register at the Einwohnermeldeamt (Residents’ Registration Office).

Nationals of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Korea and the USA

Nationals of these countries generally do not need a visa to enter Germany. However, you do need a residence permit if you want to work in Germany or if you want to stay longer than three months. You can apply for a residence permit directly after your arrival in Germany. Depending on your place of residence, the immigration authorities of the districts of Northeim, Göttingen or the city of Göttingen are responsible for the Südniedersachsen region.

Tip: If you wish to take up work shortly after arrival, it is advisable to apply for a visa before entering Germany because of the processing times.

Nationals of other non-EU countries

Nationals of other non-EU countries require a visa for the commencement of work, which must be applied for prior to entering Germany. For short stays that do not include the commencement of work there are exceptions for some countries. Further information is available on the website of the Federal Foreign Office: www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

Your length of stay and the reason for your stay in Germany determine which visa you require. Be advised of the distinction between the following visas:

C visa (Schengen visa): For stays of up to 90 days per 180 days in the Schengen area. This visa cannot be extended or amended and does not entitle the holder to work.

D visa: National visa for stays of more than three months or to take up gainful employment. Subject to approval by the Federal Employment Agency and other authorities. Allows you to travel up to three months per half year in the Schengen area with a valid travel document.
Special regulations for Western Balkan countries

Since 2016, the Western Balkans Agreement has enabled immigrants from the Western Balkans to work in Germany. You need a visa, a work permit and a job/a concrete job offer. A professional qualification, a minimum income or German language skills are not required. From 1 January 2016 to 31 January 2020, people from these countries can obtain a residence permit in Germany for any concrete job offer. The only exception is temporary work. (It is also a prerequisite that the employees have not received any benefits under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act in Germany within 24 months of filing the application.)

Tips and information on entry regulations

- Before entering Germany, verify all visa requirements on the website of the relevant embassy or consulate
- Book a visa application appointment with the appropriate German mission as early as possible. The appointment waiting times for some embassies and consulates may be several weeks, in many countries even several months.
- A visa is always linked to a specific purpose. If you want to work in Germany, you need a visa “for the purpose of gainful employment”.
- If you are planning for your family to join you, all individuals, partners and children must apply for their own visa. Due to the processing times, the application should be submitted at the same time as the employee’s application, even if your family plans to join you at a later date.
- Please note that, depending on the type of visa, proof of German language skills is required. This also applies to partners joining you at a later date.
- If you can enter without a visa as a non-EU national, please pay attention to your travel route. If you make stopovers in other countries, especially non-EU countries, it may be advisable and necessary to apply for a visa for Germany before travelling.

Are you a scientist or scholar? Information on special entry requirements for scientists and scholars can be found in our Welcome Guide Göttingen Campus.

If you are unsure or have any questions about entry requirements, please contact the Welcome Centre - we will be happy to help.

RESIDENTS’ REGISTRATION OFFICE (‘EINWOHNERMELDEAMT’)

If you move to a new city, you must register with the Residents’ Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt, sometimes also called Bürgerbüro) of your new place of residence within two weeks of moving.

Registration at the Residents’ Registration Office is required if you are coming from abroad and

- will stay in Germany for more than three months,
- would like to open a German bank account,
- would like to apply for a residence permit, or if you have a contract of employment.

In order to register with the Residents’ Registration Office, you and all your family members usually have to appear in person.

There are 52 Residents’ Registration Offices in Süd niedersachsen. They are usually located in the town halls or Bürgerbüros. Contact the Welcome Centre if you need help locating your office.
The EU Blue Card is a residence permit for the purpose of employment. It is intended for non-EU nationals. The EU Blue Card enables non-EU nationals who hold a university degree recognised in Germany or a comparable qualification to obtain a residence permit for the purpose of employment commensurate with their qualification. When first issued, the residence permit is limited to a maximum of four years. If the duration of the employment contract is less than four years, the EU Blue Card is issued for the duration of the employment contract plus three months.

Advantages of the Blue Card are:
- You receive a settlement permit more quickly
- You are mobile inside and outside the EU
- Your family can join you more easily
- You and your family members do not have to provide proof of German language skills

In order to receive the EU Blue Card, an employment contract or a binding job offer must be submitted, together with proof in principle of an annual minimum gross salary of €53,600. In the case of occupations that are known as shortage occupations (MINT), an annual gross income of €41,808 is sufficient. In these cases, the Federal Employment Agency must approve the employment (as of 2019).

In some cases, it may be necessary for you to undergo further training in order to obtain full recognition (e.g., an occupation- al activity as part of a transition period). In this case you can obtain a residence permit for up to 18 months (Section 17a Residence Act) in Germany. In addition to your training, you can also work during this period in a job that matches your desired professional profile.

Settlement permit (Section 9 Residence Act)
A settlement permit is valid for an unlimited period of time and entitles the holder to take up gainful employment. You can generally apply for it at the earliest after five years. If you are a national of a non-EU country, you can apply for a settlement permit under the following conditions:
- You have held a residence permit for at least 5 years
- Your livelihood does not depend on public funds
- You have paid compulsory contributions or voluntary contributions to the statutory pension insurance for at least 60 months
- You are entitled to engage in gainful employment
- You have sufficient knowledge of German and basic knowledge of the German legal and social systems and living conditions in Germany
- You have enough living space for yourself and your family members

You can obtain a settlement permit under simplified conditions if you belong to one of the following groups of persons:
- Holders of an EU Blue Card
- Graduates of German universities
- Highly qualified individuals (Section 19 Residence Act)
- Self-employed individuals

Permission for permanent residence EU, Section 9a Residence Act, an unlimited residence title, is equal to a settlement permit.
VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND DRIVING LICENCE

If you are an EU citizen moving to Germany and would like to bring your own car with you, you must register it as soon as possible at the vehicle registration office responsible for your place of residence. Special requirements apply to vehicles older than three years.

Driving licence from EU or EEA countries

If you have a foreign driving licence from an EU member state or EEA state, you may drive motor vehicles in Germany to the extent specified in your licence. A conversion to a German driving licence is not required. The scope of the driving licence in Germany corresponds to the scope of the foreign driving licence. This means that any conditions or restrictions also apply to the right to drive in Germany. If you have held your driving licence for less than two years and are a resident of Germany, the German probationary period rules apply to you.

Driving licence from non-EU countries

Valid driving licences from countries that do not belong to the EU or the EEA must generally be converted into a German driving licence for longer stays in Germany. Foreign driving licences are valid for six months after the establishment of proper residence in Germany. If you intend to drive a car in Germany after six months, your driving licence must be exchanged for a German driving licence. In many cases, a new written and practical driving exam must be taken in Germany. The details depend on the respective agreement between Germany and the state in which your driving licence was issued.
When you are in a new place, you want to feel at home as soon as possible. Are you searching for accommodation? In Südniedersachsen, you can live in the city or in the countryside. Think "outside the box": especially in the smaller towns and rural areas of the region, you can find attractive properties at reasonable prices.
HOUSING SEARCH AND RENTED HOUSING

Housing market

The German housing market offers various forms of housing. These range from single apartments, (a self-contained residential unit consisting of a room with kitchenette, WC and bathroom) to apartments with kitchen, bathroom and separate living rooms and bedrooms of various sizes, to single-family houses.

In order to find suitable accommodation, local newspapers and numerous Internet portals (available at https://www.immobilienportale.com/ueber-sicht-immobilienportale/) or Facebook groups provide information about the current housing market and the available options. If you would like personal assistance in finding accommodation, you can hire a real estate agency for a fee. The Welcome Centre will be happy to provide guidance in your search for accommodation.

Rental and purchase prices are the highest in central Göttingen. In many places throughout the region, you can find affordable housing with rural charm.

A popular option - especially for young people - is living in a shared flat (Wohngemeinschaft, also called ‘WG’). Here you share a flat and rental costs with other people. In addition, you can meet new people in your home quickly. Each person has their own bedroom, whilst the bathroom, kitchen and living/dining room are shared. A popular portal for finding a suitable WGs is www.wg-gesucht.de. The WG search can sometimes be a bit lengthy, as many WGs hold a ‘casting call’ before they decide on an applicant. Don’t be discouraged!

Housing cooperatives (Wohnungsgenossenschaft) often offer comparatively cheap accommodation in cities. Housing co-ops are organisations that rent out their apartments to members at attractive prices. However, living space is in high demand, and members sometimes have to wait a long time for an apartment.

By purchasing a stake in the co-op, you become a member and can benefit from the advantages. You also have a vote in the general meeting. The acquired share earns interest and is repaid on moving out of the apartment or leaving the co-op.

If you are urgently searching for an apartment, an enquiry with a housing co-op can be worthwhile. Apartments currently not required by members are often advertised on the websites of the co-ops. If you find an interesting property this way, membership can be an option worth considering.
Base rent and rent including heating

In Germany, a distinction is made between base rent (Kaltmiete) and rent including heating (Warmmiete). The base rent is the rental price that you pay the landlord for the use of the rental property. The Warmmiete consists of the base rent plus ancillary costs, paid directly to the landlord. Electricity and Internet are typically set up separately and paid directly to the provider.

Furnished, unfurnished

A distinction is also made between furnished and unfurnished accommodation. In Germany, apartments are usually let unfurnished, that means you must equip the apartment with your own furnishings, which includes light fixtures, in addition to furniture and all appliances. A fully furnished and equipped apartment is considered to be furnished.

If you are looking for an apartment that “Einbauküche” (“fitted kitchen”), “EB-Küche” or “EBK” is indicated in the description of the apartment.

Temporary, unlimited

Tenancy agreements can be signed for a temporary or unlimited period. A fixed-term tenancy agreement makes sense if you know that you will only be staying in Germany for a certain period of time.

If the end of the rental period has not been determined, either party may terminate the tenancy agreement in accordance with the statutory provisions, i.e. by ordinary or extraordinary termination without notice for good cause. The statutory period of notice for ordinary termination is three months. Please note that a notice of termination is only valid if it is in writing and signed.

Security deposit

The landlord will usually require you to provide a rental deposit for the rented property. This can take the form of a deposit or a guarantee (typically from a third party who would be responsible for settling any outstanding debts). A deposit is the payment of the rent security in the form of a sum of money. This may not be more than three times the amount of the cold rent per month and may be paid in three equal monthly installments. When the tenancy ends, the deposit will be returned to you, less any owed funds. In the case of housing cooperatives, the security deposit is covered by the cooperative shares acquired.

Ancillary costs

The ancillary costs usually include heating, water and sewage costs, costs for street cleaning and waste collection, house cleaning, garden maintenance, building insurance and property tax. Once a year, you will receive an ancillary costs statement in which the actual consumption and expenses are compared with your payments made for the ancillary costs. This can lead to additional payments or refunds. You should always check the service charge settlement carefully.

Electricity contract

When you move into a new apartment, you have to select an electricity provider. It is a good idea to first compare local electricity providers before selecting a suitable one. Many electricity providers offer the option to sign up for an electricity contract online. You will pay a monthly flat-rate fee, which is typically drawn directly from your current account. An itemised statement will be provided every year.

WELCOME GUIDE SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN REGION | ACCOMMODATION

HOUSING SEARCH AND RENTED HOUSING
Subletting

If you would like to sublet your accommodation, entirely or in part, to a third party, you need the permission of the landlord. Please note: the unauthorised transfer of use to a third party may, in some cases, constitute good cause for extraordinary termination without notice!

Minor repairs and renovation

The tenancy agreement usually specifies the type of repairs required before moving out. In general, this covers everything that was subject to wear and tear whilst the apartment was occupied and that can be easily repaired. This includes wallpapering, painting walls, patching holes, painting radiators as well as internal doors and windows.

Pets

Whether you are allowed to keep a pet in your rented property depends on the type of pet you have and the permission of your landlord. In principle, all small animals may be kept without the landlord’s permission. Small animals are all animals which, due to their nature and behaviour, do not disturb other tenants and do not cause any damage. These include guinea pigs, hamsters, fish and ornamental birds.

However, you may only keep dogs and cats with the landlord’s permission.

List of abbreviations

Housing listings in Germany often contain abbreviations. These are the most important ones:

- ZKB: 1 room, kitchen, bathroom
- 2-Zi-Whg: 2-room apartment
- 3 ZKBB: 3 rooms, kitchen, bathroom, balcony
- WG: shared flat
- EFH: single-family house
- (may be detached or semi-detached)
- MFH: apartment building
- App: apartment
- mbl: furnished
- EG: ground floor (street level)
- OG: upper floor
- DG: top floor
- m²: square metres
- WR: living area
- KM: base rent
- WM: rent including ancillary costs
- NK: ancillary costs
- HK: heating costs
- ZH: central heating
- DU: shower
- EBK: fitted kitchen
- NR: non-smokers
- Stelpl: parking space
- TG: underground car park
- Bk: balcony

WELCOME GUIDE SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN REGION | ACCOMMODATION

HOUSING SEARCH AND RENTED HOUSING
PURCHASING PROPERTY

If you wish to buy a property, whether apartment or house, you should consider the following points:

1. Use the information provided by the relevant Internet portals to get an overview of the regional property market (https://www.immobilienportale.com/uebersichtimmobilienportale/). Find out more about real estate agencies in the region. Tell your friends, acquaintances and colleagues that you are looking for a property. Take walks through residential areas that are of interest to you and, if possible, speak to people who live there.

2. Think about how to finance the purchase as early as possible. Make appointments with banks and financial service providers. Obtain detailed advice and ask for offers to be prepared.

3. A notarised deed is required for the conclusion of a purchase agreement for a property. The conveyance, i.e. the agreement required for the transfer of the property, must also be declared before a notary or another competent authority. The legal change must be entered in the land register. Registration is performed by the land registry office upon application.

4. Pay attention to the location of the property. Analyse the value development in the area. In the best case, this may allow you to make a profit in the case of a possible resale.

5. Have the property inspected by a professional expert. Construction defects are often not evident to laypersons.

6. Ask the seller for an energy certificate. He is obliged to provide this document to you. The energy certificate tells you what running costs you can expect.

7. Look at the land register record. For example, it reveals restrictions relating to the property.

8. Also, review the development plan for the area. Otherwise, it is possible that the unobstructed view of the woods will be obscured by a shopping centre in a few years’ time.

9. Note the infrastructure: How is the area connected? What shopping facilities are there? Which schools are nearby?

10. Visit the property several times. You do not always immediately notice nuisances caused by construction noise or agricultural businesses.

11. Get to know your potential new neighbours.

12. If you want to make modifications to the property, check whether there are restrictions such as protected historic building status that may be an issue.

13. If you want to buy a flat, you should consider other important documents. The declaration of division, business plan, management contract and the minutes of the last owners’ meetings provide information as to whether the property is well-managed and whether there are any disputes between the owners.

Please note that there are additional costs in addition to the purchase price:

- Ancillary costs
- Notary costs
- Land transfer tax
- Estate agent fees if applicable
WASTE SEPARATION AND DISPOSAL

Waste reduction is an important topic in Germany. In order to properly recycle the household waste that is nevertheless produced, the waste must be sorted or separated. For each type of waste there are either collection containers available, or the waste is collected regularly in front of your house. The waste containers are provided by your local waste disposal company. If your accommodation is rented, the landlord ensures that bins are provided. The dates for waste collection and more detailed information on disposal procedures can be found in the waste schedule of your place of residence. You can obtain the schedule from the Bürgerbüro or from your landlord. The schedule is also available online at the local waste disposal companies or from the district or town council.

“Yellow bag” or “Gelber Sack”: Light packaging made of plastic, aluminium, tin or composite materials bearing the symbol “Der Grüne Punkt”.

Glass: Empty non-returnable glass bottles and jars are taken to the glass recycling receptacles and sorted into white, green and brown glass. Bottle banks can be found at central collection points, e.g. near supermarkets. The following materials do not belong in the waste glass: Ceramics, porcelain, stoneware, light bulbs, drinking glasses, flat glass (e.g. window panes or mirrors).

Waste paper: Paper, card and cardboard. For waste paper, there is often a blue (or differently labelled) bin available at your property, which is emptied at regular intervals. In some places, the waste paper is simply bundled and placed on the street for collection.

Organic waste (Compost): Organic waste such as food leftovers, potted plants, potato peels, tea bags etc. but also garden waste such as windfall, leaves, grass and shrub cuttings. Organic waste is disposed of in the green (or otherwise labelled) bin.

Residual waste: Residual waste is defined as all types of waste that do not belong to one of the above groups. Residual waste is disposed of in the black bin.

Bulky waste and large household appliances: Bulky waste includes waste from private households that does not fit into the residual waste bin due to its bulkiness or weight. Large household appliances are collected together with refrigerators. The collection can be ordered with the bulk waste card of your municipality or directly online.

Electrical appliances: Under no circumstances should you dispose of any devices with cables, rechargeable or disposable batteries with your household waste. Either hand them in at an electrical store or take them to the recycling centre.

Deposit bottles: Returnable bottles are marked with a logo (Mehrwegflasche) to distinguish them from disposable bottles. When you buy a returnable bottle, you pay a deposit. If you return the bottle afterwards, you will get your deposit back. Most supermarkets have deposit machines where you can return the bottles.
In Germany, your income is taxed as a matter of principle. If you are self-employed, you have to pay tax on it yourself; as an employee, the wage tax, solidarity surcharge and a possible church tax will be deducted from your salary and forwarded directly to the tax office. Additionally, the contributions for pension, health and unemployment insurance are paid directly. Your employer will transfer the remaining net amount of your salary to your account. Read more about taxes, finance and insurance in this chapter.
TAXATION

Types of taxes

In Germany, there are different types of taxes that are levied in different ways. The best known tax is income tax, which is deducted from your monthly gross salary.

Income tax

Income tax is payable on all income in a calendar year. For all employees there is the basic allowance, which is intended to secure the minimum subsistence level. No income tax is levied on taxable income up to the amount of the basic allowance. The basic allowance for 2019 is € 9,168 for single persons and € 18,336 for a married couple. How much tax you have to pay depends on your income; it is usually between 14 and 45 percent of your income. The higher your income, the more tax you pay. In the case of employees, income tax is paid directly by the employer to the tax office. The amount of income tax depends on your marital status and the number of children entered on the income tax card.

Church tax

If you belong to a church or denomination that levies church tax, you must pay church tax. In Germany, these are primarily the two large churches, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Church. In Lower Saxony, the tax amounts to 9% of income and is paid directly by the employer to the tax office.

Motor vehicle tax

The motor vehicle tax is a federal tax that you have to pay annually if you own a motor vehicle. The state uses the revenues for a number of things, including road construction. The tax is calculated according to engine type and size, CO₂ emissions and year of construction. Disabled persons can be exempted from motor vehicle tax or receive a tax reduction of 50 percent. Owners of electric vehicles registered before 31 December 2020 are also exempt from motor vehicle tax for 5 years.

Sales tax (value-added tax)

Value-added tax is the tax levied on goods and services. In Germany, sales tax is currently 19 percent. A reduced tax rate of 7 percent applies to food and books.

Dog tax

The dog tax is levied by the municipalities and varies greatly from municipality to municipality. In order to individually determine the amount of the tax, the size of the dog and whether it is a so-called “dangerous dog” are taken into account.
Tax classes

Income tax payers are divided into six groups. These income tax classes determine how much income tax, solidarity surcharge and church tax, if any, are deducted from your gross salary. The tax class into which you are classified depends on your personal circumstances.

- **Tax class I**: Single, divorced and widowed or permanently separated spouses. Persons from non-EU countries whose family still lives in the country of origin, even if they are married, will be allocated tax class I.

- **Tax class II**: Single, divorced and widowed persons with at least one child for whom they have a child allowance.

- **Tax class III**: Married and registered civil partners with only one partner receiving a wage (single earner couple), or with both partners working (double earner couple) and one of them choosing tax class V. Choosing income tax class II/V is usually advantageous if one partner contributes at least 60 percent to the joint income.

- **Tax class IV**: Married persons and persons living in a registered civil partnership, both of whom receive a wage. Tax class IV is worthwhile for married couples and registered civil partners who earn approximately the same amount.

- **Tax class V**: If both partners of a married couple or a couple living in a registered civil partnership receive a wage, the higher earner can choose tax class III and the lower earner can choose tax class V.

- **Tax class VI**: If several employment relationships exist. Tax class VI is the highest income tax rate, since the basic allowance taken into account in I - V no longer applies here.

Tax allowances

**Joint deductions for married couples (Ehegattensplitting)**

Married couples and couples in registered partnerships are able to file a joint tax return and thus have a joint assessment made. In the case of a joint assessment the ‘splitting tariff’ applies, which can result in a significant tax advantage compared to an individual assessment. The greater the income difference of the partners and the higher the tax rate, the greater the financial advantage of the ‘splitting tariff’. If the income difference is zero, there is no splitting advantage. You can apply for a joint on the first page of the standard form of the tax return.

**Child allowance**

The child allowance is an alternative to child benefit. Unlike child benefit, the child allowance is not paid to the parent or guardian, but deducted from taxable income. This reduces the income tax owed. The entitlement to child allowance begins from the month of the child’s birth and is valid as long as there is an entitlement to child benefit. The tax office automatically determines which alternative is more advantageous to you – child benefit or child allowance – in the annual calculation of income tax. A separate application for the allowance is therefore not necessary.

Income tax return

A tax return is a document in which you state your income situation. In the income tax return, the taxable income is determined by determining the total income and deducting special expenses, unusual burdens and tax allowances. The income tax to be paid is determined by the tax office applying the appropriate tax rate to the taxable income.

You can submit your income tax return in paper form on forms from the tax office or electronically, using the “ElsterFormular“. The ElsterForm is free software provided by the tax authorities (www.elster.de). The abbreviation ELSTER stands for electronic tax return.

Convention for the avoidance of double taxation

There is a risk that your income will be taxed twice because two countries have the right to tax your income, for example, if

- you work in Germany but live in another EU country,
- you have been seconded to Germany for a short period of time (up to 2 years),
- you are looking for work in Germany but you receive unemployment benefits from your home country.

Germany has signed agreements with numerous countries to avoid double taxation. Accordingly, tax paid abroad can be offset against your domestic tax liability. This applies in particular to income tax and corporation tax. Double taxation occurs when different national jurisdictions may tax the same person in the same or a similar manner for the same taxable object for the same period. More detailed information on the individual agreements with non-EU countries is available on the website of the Federal Ministry of Finance.

You can also obtain information from the tax offices

in Bad Gandersheim, Göttingen, Herzberg am Harz and Northeim. The Northeim tax office also offers consultations in Duderstadt.
INSURANCES

In Germany, some insurance policies are compulsory, while others may be obtained voluntarily.

Social security system

Social security is a statutory insurance system in Germany and is mandatory for every citizen. Employees are generally subject to compulsory insurance; they have to take out policies in the various insurance classes. There are exceptions, for example, for freelancers, the self-employed, civil servants, and part-time employees. Social security is comprised of five pillars:

- Health insurance
- Long-term care insurance
- Pension insurance
- Unemployment insurance
- Accident insurance

The social security system is financed by contributions from employers and employees, usually in equal amounts. Only accident insurance contributions are fully covered by the employer.

Health insurance

Health insurance ensures that the insured person is fully or partially reimbursed for the cost of medical treatment.

There are two types of health insurance in Germany: statutory and private. With your employment contract, you are generally compulsorily insured in the statutory health insurance fund. Above a certain gross income, however, you are free to take out private health insurance. Whatever you choose - health insurance is mandatory.

There is a big difference between private and statutory health insurance. The contributions to the statutory health insurance funds are calculated as a percentage of the insured person's monthly income up to a maximum contribution. Irrespective of this contribution, everyone receives a legally guaranteed benefit.

Private health insurance, on the other hand, is based exclusively on a contract between the insurance company and the policyholder which guarantees the policyholder certain benefits. The contributions are therefore based on the agreed catalogue of benefits and are independent of the insured person's income. In the event of increased health risks or advanced age of the policyholder, these premiums can rise sharply.

There are also differences in waiting times for an appointment, in the waiting room and in the type of treatment. Chief physician treatment, for example, is reserved for private patients, unless you book this service through an additional insurance policy.

Statutory health insurance

The statutory health insurance (gesetzliche Krankenversicherung, GKV) is a compulsory insurance. Affected persons, i.e. employees whose salary is below the compulsory insurance limit, must take out insurance with a statutory health insurance provider of their choice. The GKV contribution rate is a percentage of your income. The cheapest GKV contribution is 14.99 percent, the most expensive is 16.20 percent. You share this contribution rate with your employer, which is why you only have to pay half of the contribution.

A comparison between the statutory health insurance providers can be worthwhile, because in addition to the services prescribed by statute, many statutory health insurance providers pay for additional services. The statutory health insurance providers may also differ considerably in the additional contribution. The additional contributions are to be paid 50 percent each by you as an employee and by your employer.
private health insurance

If you are self-employed or your annual earned income is higher than the compulsory insurance limit (as of 2019: € 60,750), you can decide whether you want to take out statutory or private insurance. In order to take out private insurance, you must undergo a medical examination. This determines any health risks and is the basis on which the insurance premium is calculated. Private health insurance often offers an extended range of services, such as chief physician treatment, payment for alternative practitioner treatment or payment for extensive dental treatment. As a privately insured person, you will be reimbursed for the costs to which you are contractually entitled under the insurance contract. When paying the doctor’s bills and purchasing medication, you will first have to pay in advance. You then submit the invoices to the insurance company and the amount will subsequently be refunded to you. It is also worth comparing private health insurance companies before you take out a policy.

If you require medication before your arrival due to illness, it is advisable to stock up. Private health insurance usually does not cover medication you are taking due to an illness diagnosed in your home country. The same applies to maternity care if you have become pregnant in your home country. In order to avoid uncertainties regarding the assumption of costs, it is best to contact your insurance company directly.

long-term care insurance

Long-term care insurance is another pillar of the social security system. Long-term care insurance comes into effect if you are no longer able to provide for yourself and need help due to illness or old age. In contrast to health insurance, long-term care insurance does not cover all costs, but provides partial coverage. You can take out additional private long-term care insurance to close the gaps in coverage. Persons with private health insurance must take out private long-term care insurance.

Pension insurance

Pension insurance provides financial security in old age. Pension insurance is also mandatory for employees. Freelancers and the self-employed can take out voluntary pension insurance. There is also the possibility of a private pension plan.

Pension insurance provides the insured persons or their surviving dependants with a pension as soon as they are no longer able to work. This can happen through age, an accident or death.

The statutory pension insurance is financed through what is known as the generation contract. This means that the current contributions of workers ensure that today’s pensioners can receive benefits. The amount of the pension entitlement depends on how many years and at what amount you have paid into the insurance.

In the case of compulsorily insured employees, half the contributions are paid by the employee and half by the employer. There are pension agreements between Germany and the EU states as well as other states that guarantee cross-border recognition of pension entitlements. If you have worked in different countries during your working life, you should therefore contact the pension institution in your home country at an early stage to ensure that all pension contribution years are taken into account. If there is no social security agreement between your home country and Germany, you can request repayment of your pension contributions. Further information is available at: www.deutscherentenversicherung.de

Unemployment insurance

Statutory unemployment insurance is another component of the social security system in Germany. If you become unemployed and have worked for at least one year as an employee within the last two years, you will receive unemployment benefits. You will also receive compensation in the event of reduced working hours, loss of working hours due to weather conditions and the insolvency of your employer. Self-employed individuals cannot take out statutory insurance against the risk of unemployment. Unlike other branches of social security, there is no comparable private unemployment insurance.

Accident insurance

The statutory accident insurance protects against the costs and financial consequences of accidents in the workplace. However, it does not provide comprehensive protection. Employees are only covered on their way to work and during working hours. The statutory accident insurance only applies within Germany. In contrast to the other branches of social insurance, the employer pays the full amount of contributions here. In addition to the statutory accident insurance, there is the possibility of a private supplemental insurance. In contrast to the statutory accident insurance, the private accident insurance also protects you in the event of accidents outside your working hours and worldwide.

Motor vehicle insurance

In Germany, as the owner of a car, motorcycle, quad or moped, you are obliged to take out motor vehicle liability insurance if you drive on the road. The motor vehicle liability insurance compensates accident victims. It covers, among other things, damage to third-party vehicles, property damage and personal injury. There is a statutory minimum amount which is covered by the insurance. Often this sum is not sufficient to cover all damages. Therefore, it is also possible to obtain supplementary insurance, either partial or fully comprehensive insurance. The partial insurance covers damage to your own vehicle such as glass breakage, damage caused by wild animals, theft. In addition to the benefits of partial coverage, fully comprehensive insurance also covers damage caused by vandalism and damage to your own vehicle due to an accident for which you are responsible.

Other insurances

Other insurances that might be useful for you are private liability insurance, household insurance and legal protection insurance. These insurances are very common in Germany and are recommended to have. If you are interested, the Welcome Centre will be happy to provide you the addresses of insurance companies or insurance brokers.
FINANCES

Banking

There are three types of banks in Germany that differ in their legal status and business models. There are cooperative banks, institutions under public law (in particular the Sparkassen) and private commercial banks (including major banks).

Cooperative banks

Cooperative banks are organised as credit cooperatives. This means that their legal status is that of a cooperative or a corporation, so that customers can also become shareholders at the same time and then obtain a right of co-determination. As full-service institutions, cooperative banks in Germany offer their customers a wide range of financial services. The goal of the cooperative banks is to support their members.

Private commercial banks

Maximising profits is the first goal of private banks. This category includes the major German banks. In addition to customer business, capital market business is therefore also an important business segment for private commercial banks. The proportion of voting rights held by private bank shareholders is determined by the number of their shares.

Sparkassen

The Sparkassen are mostly owned by cities and municipalities and are therefore credit institutions under public law. Through this public mandate, they often concentrate on traditional tasks such as investment or lending. The business activities of the Sparkassen may differ from state to state. Since Sparkassen are often regionally based, you will also find a variety of Sparkassen in Südniedersachsen, such as the Sparkasse Göttingen, Northeim, Duderstadt, Einbeck or Osterode.

In principle, Sparkassen and banks offer the same range of services, it will therefore make almost no difference to you in everyday life where you have your account. If you change your place of residence within Germany, you can take your bank account number with you if you bank with a nationwide bank, but not with a regional bank.

Current account

If you work in Germany, it is important that you open a current account with a German bank as soon as possible so that your employer can transfer your salary to you. All banks offer a similar service, but the fees sometimes differ considerably. Withdrawing money from your own bank’s cash points (ATMs) is free of charge, other banks usually charge a fee. This does not apply to banks that form a cash group.

Most banks are open from Monday to Friday between 9 am and 4 pm. Cash withdrawals from cash points are normally possible around the clock.

In Germany, money transfers are often made directly from one current account to another. Cheques are very uncommon. Transferring money to non-EU countries can be expensive. Therefore, please ensure you inform yourself regarding the terms and conditions in advance and find a bank in Germany that cooperates with the bank in your home country.

Credit card

Credit cards are now accepted almost everywhere in Germany. However, smaller shops and owner-managed businesses usually do not accept credit cards. The most common are MasterCard and Visa. American Express is also frequently accepted.

Cash payment

You will notice that cash is still frequently used for payment in Germany. Most shops accept card payments, but in some cases there is a minimum purchase amount. However, in bakeries as well as in smaller cafes and bars, payment is usually made in cash and often no card reader is available at all. If you are unsure, you should ask when requesting the bill whether card payment is possible.
Families with children receive support from the state. Do you need childcare for your child? Do you have any questions about the school system? Would you like to continue your education? Do you have relatives in need of care? In this chapter you will find valuable tips.
State support for starting a family:
Child benefit, parental benefit, parental leave

The Federal Government promotes families through various measures and is committed to improving the conditions for families.

Child benefit
Child benefit is paid to parents for children up to the age of 18. It can be claimed up to the age of 25 if the child is still in school or vocational training or is registered as seeking work or vocational training. There is a special allowance for disabled children. The entitlement to child benefit begins automatically from the month of the child’s birth, but requires a written application to the relevant Familienkasse. The legal guardians are entitled to apply. Submit the application as soon as possible, as the child benefit will only be paid retroactively for a maximum of six months.

Child benefit is subject to
• the child living in the household of the family/legal guardian.
• the legal guardian’s residence or current whereabouts being in Germany.
• if there is no residence/current stay in Germany, the unlimited tax liability of the legal guardian in Germany.

The responsible Familienkasse in the Südniedersachsen region:
Bahnhofsallee 5
37081 Göttingen
www.kindergeld.org/familienkassen/niedersachsen/goettingen.html

Special regulations
The Familienkasse is not responsible for civil servants and public sector employees. They must apply for child benefit from their employer. This is paid monthly to the beneficiary together with their salary.

Nationals of the EU and the EEA member states are entitled to the same child benefit as Germans. The claim begins in the month in which the applicant family establishes their residence or current stay in Germany. An application for child benefit can be made even if only one parent works in Germany.

Whether it is granted depends on whether payments have already been received in the home country. The claim is also subject to German law if the children live in another EU or EEA member state.

As an international employee not entitled to freedom of movement, you will receive full child benefit if your children live in Germany and you hold one of the following residence permits:
• Settlement permit pursuant to the Residence Act
• Residence permit entitling you to engage in a gainful employment

The entitlement begins when the residence permit is issued.
There are special arrangements for nationals of Turkey, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia under intergovernmental agreements. We would be happy to discuss this with you in person or advise you by telephone.

Parental allowance

The parental allowance is intended to provide financial compensation and secure the family's economic livelihood while the parents care for the child after birth and as a result interrupt or restrict their employment. If both parents look after the child and lose income as a result, they are entitled to a parental allowance for a total of 14 months. One parent can claim a minimum of two months, but a maximum of twelve months. Single parents can claim the full 14 months. The amount of the parental allowance depends on the monthly net income. The "Elterngeld Digital" portal supports parents in their family planning by providing further information and a parental allowance calculator. In addition, the functionality to complete the application online and to submit the application electronically is in the process of being made available to all of Germany (www.elterngeld-digital.de).

Parental leave

Parental leave allows parents to temporarily interrupt their employment to care for and raise their child until the child reaches the age of three. During this time, they are protected against dismissal. For children born after 01 July 2015, mothers and fathers may also transfer 24 months of parental leave, instead of twelve months, to the period between the child’s third birthday and the age of eight. The employer’s consent is not required for this. Parental leave can generally be divided into three periods. A division into further periods requires the consent of the employer.

Additional measures

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) provides comprehensive information on other measures such as maternity pay, the Maternity Protection Act (MuSchG), child allowances, etc. (https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/familie/familienleistungen).

Childcare

If you are looking for childcare, you can choose between daycare centres and childminders. Every child is entitled to a place in a daycare centre or at a childminder from the age of one until the age of three. The extent of the daily support depends on the individual need. In Lower Saxony, every child from the age of three years attends a crèche or a daycare centre free of charge. You only have to pay the costs for food and childcare during special opening hours. Please note: It is very important that you apply for a place as soon as possible, as there is often a waiting list at some popular locations.

Kinderkrippe

Kinderkrippe are daycare facilities for children up to the age of three that provide supplementary childcare for parents. The childcare takes place in small groups and provides early childhood education. A normal day consists of communal meals, games, educational activities for early learning and naps.
Kindergarten

Kindergartens are daycare facilities for children between the age of three and school age. Kindergarten attendance in Germany is voluntary, but all children from the age of 3 and up to the age of 6 are entitled to a kindergarten place. Kindergarten starts in the morning and usually ends at noon or in the afternoon.

Childminder (Tagesmutter/-vater)

A childminder provides childcare in a family setting. Many municipalities in Südniedersachsen offer assistance in finding a childminder. Childminders have been assessed for their professional and personal suitability, have undergone comprehensive training which is concluded with a recognised certificate, and are regularly further trained and provided expert advice.

School system

As a result of the cultural sovereignty of the individual federal states in Germany, each federal state is responsible for the legislation and administration of its schools and universities. Here is a brief overview of the school system in Lower Saxony.

Compulsory schooling in Lower Saxony begins for all children who have had their sixth birthday before the start of the school year, or who will turn six by 30 September. Compulsory schooling in Lower Saxony ends after 12 years of school attendance.

After four years of primary school, the parents decide which secondary school their children should attend. This decision is supported by consultations with the teachers and should be based on the well-being and interests of the child. Secondary schools in Lower Saxony include Hauptschule, Realschule, Oberschule, Gesamtschule and Gymnasium.

Due to growing demand, many schools in Lower Saxony provide afternoon care and activities, which are constantly being expanded. The activities are partly voluntary, partly compulsory. Standard lessons do not take place in the lower classes, instead there are activities such as sports, music, cooking, etc.

Primary school (Grundschule)

Lower Saxony’s primary schools are dependable. This means that all pupils are guaranteed at least five hours of schooling per day. Many primary schools offer an all-day school programme with lunch. Participation in the afternoon activities is voluntary. Primary schools have defined school districts, i.e., which school your child goes to depends on their place of residence. English is taught in primary schools from the 3rd grade onwards.

Hauptschule

At Hauptschulen, students are prepared for vocational training and receive basic general education as well as instruction in practical subjects. The attendance of the Hauptschule ends after the 9th (or 10th) grade. The course ends with the ‘(erweiterte) Hauptschulabschluss’ (extended) lower secondary school leaving certificate.

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Bestehende Kooperative Gesamtschulen haben nach NSchG § 183 b Bestandsschutz.
Realschule

Realschulen provide their students with an individual focus in foreign languages, economics, technology or health and social matters. The students can decide for themselves in which area they would like to focus. In order to make the choice easier and to prepare for the later choice of career, Realschulen conduct “Practice Days” on which the students participate in work experience at local companies. At the end of the 10th grade, it is possible to obtain one of three different school leaving qualifications: the lower secondary diplomas, i.e. the Hauptschulabschluss and Realschulabschluss or the extended upper secondary diploma, with which one can move on to the senior grades of a Gymnasium or to a Fachgymnasium. It ends upon completion of the 10th school year with a Realschulabschluss (“Mittlere Reife”). Students with a good school-leaving qualification have the opportunity to move to a Gymnasium (or a Fachgymnasium at a vocational school) and complete their Abitur there.

Gymnasium

The Gymnasium provides a broad and in-depth general education and prepares students for a higher (academic) career. Gymnasium attendance ends on completion of the 13th school year with the Abitur, which enables the student to attend university.

The Felix-Klein-Gymnasium in Göttingen is the only public school in Lower Saxony to offer the opportunity to graduate with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Students who are interested in the IB branch are prepared intensively for this international school-leaving qualification. Instruction in this branch is exclusively in English.

Oberschule

Oberschulen combine the Hauptschule and the Realschule into one school structure. Students can choose here whether they would like to acquire a Hauptschulabschluss or an (erweiterte) Realschulabschluss. Some Oberschulen also offer a Gymnasium branch, although the Abitur can still only be obtained at a Gymnasium. Hauptschule and Realschule students are taught together here. From the ninth grade onwards, instruction is predominantly specific to the school branch.

Gesamtschule

Gesamtschulen are comprehensive schools. Students can choose between different academic streams. They can choose a Hauptschulabschluss, an (erweiterte) Realschulabschluss or a Gymnasialabschluss (Abitur). As Gesamtschulen offer different streams under one roof - in joint or separate learning groups - it is also possible to change streams quite easily in the course of the school year.

Private school

In addition to the state schools, there are various privately run schools in Lower Saxony. These are often schools that pursue alternative pedagogical concepts (e.g. Waldorf school, Montessori school) or have a special ideological or religious character (e.g. Protestant school, Catholic school) or a special language programme (bilingual school, international school). Private schools that receive state funding charge a comparatively low average fee of € 200 per month. At private schools that do not receive any state funding, the amount for the monthly tuition fee can be in the four-digit range. In general, the quality of teaching at private schools and state schools in Germany is the same. Even though private schools often follow a special pedagogical concept, the curriculum generally does not deviate significantly from that at state schools. The majority of students in Germany (approx. 90 %) attend a state school.

Holidays and public holidays in Lower Saxony

Primary school holidays in Germany are spread over the year and are scheduled differently from state to state. In Lower Saxony the holidays are divided as follows:

- Autumn holidays - 2 weeks
- Christmas holidays - 2 weeks
- School report holidays / Winter holidays - 4 days
- Easter holidays - 2 weeks
- Whitsun holidays - 4 days
- Summer holidays - 6 weeks
Elderly people and people with disabilities

All people who, either because of a physical or mental illness or disability, or because of their age, need outside help with nutrition, mobility, personal hygiene and domestic care, are considered to be pflegebedürftig (requiring care).

Care for the elderly

In Germany, the care and nursing of the elderly is referred to as Altenpflege. This comprises a spectrum of organisational forms and institutions such as:

- Home nursing
- Outpatient care
- Residential care home
- Assisted living facility
- Gerontopsychiatry
- Where applicable, palliative wards and hospices

In outpatient care, people with a defined care requirement (known as Pflegegrad and divided into 5 different levels) are legally entitled to reimbursement of the costs of nursing aids. The Pflegegrad depends on how much care the person requires. It is determined on the basis of an expert opinion by the Medical Service of the Health Insurance Companies (Medizinischer Dienst der Krankenkassen, MDK) and assigned by the long-term care insurance companies.

Care for people with disabilities

People with disabilities, be it from birth or through an accident, illness or the like, can be in need of care. The care for these individuals is often provided by relatives. Outpatient nursing services offer guidance courses to help relatives cope with their role as carers and train them in nursing. Additionally, there are many self-help groups in which relatives can exchange experiences, as well as holiday benefits and rehabilitation programmes. Depending on the Pflegegrad, the long-term care insurance fund provides financial support for nursing aids.

If the care is too much of a burden for the relative, it is possible to hand the care over to a care provider. The Pflegenote (nursing grade) was introduced to make it easier to find the right care provider and to ensure transparency. This is obligatory for every care provider and evaluates the quality of the services.

The services provided by the care provider are geared toward the needs of the person requiring care:

- Household support
- Support during studies and at work
- Companion and driving services
- Meal services
- Care assistance

Additionally, it is possible to accommodate people in need of care during the day in a support facility or on weekdays in care facilities; accommodation in a residential care facility to guarantee 24 hour care is also an option.
CAREER

Vocational training and studies

In Germany, the most common form of vocational training is dual training. The dual training system is a combination of practical training at a company with a theoretical component at a vocational school.

Dual vocational training is internationally recognised. It lasts between two and three and a half years and can be completed in the following areas:

- Skilled crafts and trades
- Industry and commerce
- Service sector
- Shipping
- Farming
- Public service

The most important prerequisite for admission to a university degree course is a higher education entrance qualification. This qualification serves as proof that you are entitled to study at university, i.e. that you hold the general higher education entrance qualification, the Abitur, or its equivalent, on the basis of your previous school education. This general higher education entrance qualification allows you to study any degree programme at any German university. The student advice centres of the universities will be able to tell you whether and, if so, which, other admission requirements are associated with the degree programme or how the application procedure works. You can study at a Fachhochschule (FH) with a Fachabitur or if you can provide evidence of a completed apprenticeship with professional experience. The FH concentrates on research questions from professional practice. It adapts quickly to the demands of the labour market and develops special new degree courses.

Recognition of foreign professional qualifications

Have you acquired your professional qualification abroad and would like to work in Germany? You do not need German citizenship or a residence permit to apply for recognition of your qualification. You can also submit this application from abroad. The responsible authority checks whether your foreign professional qualification corresponds to the German reference occupation, i.e., whether your training is equivalent to German training in this occupation (equivalency test). This assessment requires certificates and documents providing information about your professional education. Your professional experience can also play an important role. The assessment is generally carried out within three months. Costs may be incurred for the recognition procedure. After completion of the equivalency assessment, you will receive an equivalency decision stating the result of the assessment. This can be as follows:

- Full recognition
- Partial recognition
- No recognition

Advice and further information is available here:

- The Bildungsgenossenschaft Südniedersachsen (BIGS) provides advice on all questions concerning the recognition of foreign educational qualifications and will support you in having your qualifications officially assessed if necessary. Consultations take place in Göttingen, Northeim and Osterode www.bildungsgenossenschaft.de

- In Göttingen, the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce also offers recognition consulting: www.hannover.ihk.de/ausbildungweiterbildung/fachkraefte/anerkennung-abschluesse/anerkennungsberatung.html

- Information can also be found on the portal www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de.
Continuing professional development

There are a number of ways in which you can continue your professional development. You have the option of distance learning. In this case, content is primarily conveyed online. Additionally, many companies organise their own in-house courses, which consist of workshops and seminars. It is also possible to study part-time at a university whilst working. Continuing professional development can lead to recognised educational qualifications, which can include a change of occupation or promotion, and also to non-formal qualifications. The latter are characterised by a wide range of courses and training courses which take place on a part-time basis in parallel with employment and are relatively short. This form of continuing professional development serves to stabilise your career and provides a certain degree of protection against job losses or downward mobility in the workplace. Non-formal continuing professional development rarely leads to promotion, a change of company or occupation.

If you are interested in continuing professional development, find out which is worthwhile in your professional field. Further information is available from a variety of sources, including www.bibb.de.

Dual Career: Support for partners looking for a job

You have received an attractive job offer and would like to move to Südniedersachsen with your partner. Your partner would also like to pursue his or her career, but has not yet found anything suitable in the region. They therefore have mixed feelings about the move.

The Welcome Centre can support you in this situation:

- We have information about the current labour market situation and job postings in the region.
- We have a large network of partners from the fields of education, research, business, politics and administration.
- We can provide information on qualification options.
- We advise you on questions regarding the application process.
- We will work with you to find an individual solution.
No matter where you live in Südniedersachsen, doctors’ offices and pharmacies are within easy reach. And even without your own car, you can comfortably travel anywhere: by bus, train or bicycle. Is it your first time in Germany? Find out here what the Rundfunkbeitrag is and how you use the mobile networks.
HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Doctors
The German health care system offers high-quality care. In general, you are free to choose your doctor. It is typical to consult a Hausarzt (general practitioner) first. Hausarzt offices are for general medicine, internal medicine as well as paediatric medicine. They will refer you to a specialist if this is necessary; nevertheless, you are also free to consult a specialist immediately. As long as it is not an emergency, it is better to make an appointment in advance. Otherwise, there may be long waiting times at the office. As a rule, the offices offer weekly emergency consultations during which acutely ill patients can come by without an appointment. However, even then it is prudent to call in advance. You should have your health insurance card ready for your visit to the doctor and, if you visit a specialist doctor, the referral certificate from the Hausarzt. During your first visit to the new doctor’s office, it is also a good idea to bring previous examination results and a vaccination certificate with you. Do not hesitate to ask if you have not understood something!

The office hours of the respective offices vary. A central emergency and on-call service is available at night and on weekends.

Pharmacies
In Germany, you buy medicines, including painkillers, in pharmacies. This applies to both prescription and over-the-counter medicines. The legal regulations in Germany are very strict. For many medicines, especially antibiotics and strong painkillers, you will need a prescription from your doctor in Germany. Often your health insurance provider pays for a large part of the medication, you only pay a small part of it. The opening hours of the pharmacies correspond to those of other shops. Outside regular opening hours, an emergency system ensures that you will always find an out-of-hours pharmacy in your area. You can find information on the out-of-hours pharmacy in the window of every pharmacy or online at www.apotheke.de.

Medical treatment costs
If you hold statutory health insurance, you only need to show your insurance card at the office. The doctor settles the treatment costs directly with your insurance provider. Therefore you do not need to do anything. For certain treatments, such as specific types of dental treatments, you will have to pay part of the cost yourself. Find out in advance which services are covered by the benefits catalogue of your health insurance provider.

If you are a private patient, you will first have to pay the doctor’s bill yourself. You then submit the invoice to your insurer, who will reimburse you the amount within the scope of your insurance coverage. You should therefore consider in advance which services your health insurance provider will cover and which it will not.

Hospitals
With the exception of a few private clinics, all hospitals in Germany are open to everyone. General practitioners and specialists usually refer their patients to hospital for a specific treatment. The aftercare is then taken over by the Hausarzt. Do not forget your insurance card when you go to the hospital. In an emergency, however, you will not be rejected even without a card.

The type of room you will be assigned depends on your insurance. If you are privately insured, you will probably be given a single or double room. Those with statutory insurance, however, may have to share their room with more than one person. Chief physician treatment is also reserved for private patients. If you have statutory health insurance, you can book such benefits privately. Remember to pack clothes, toiletries and towels. These will not be provided at the hospital.
GOOD TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS

Germany has a well-developed public transport system. You can reach practically anywhere in the country by bus or train. Many cities are also connected by long-distance cycling paths.

Rail
Deutsche Bahn connects all large and small cities locally, regionally and long-distance. If you travel by train frequently, it may be worth purchasing a BahnCard. With a “BahnCard 25” you can save 25 percent of the fare, with a “BahnCard 50” you can save half. There are also season passes and monthly passes and discounts for groups and early booking. Always travel with a valid ticket (it will be checked on the train) and make sure you buy your ticket before boarding the train. You can buy tickets online, at the ticket counter or at the ticket machines in the station.

Long-distance coaches
Long-distance coaches are a cheaper and popular alternative to rail travel. They have considerably expanded their network in recent years and connect many cities just as well as the trains: www.fernbusse.de

Public transit
Local public transit in the region is organised by the Verkehrsverbund Süd-Niedersachsen (VSN), an association of 16 transport companies. In addition to the districts of Göttingen and Northeim, the VSN also covers the district of Holzminden, a total of more than 4,000 stops are served over a total distance of over 3,000 kilometres. The range is constantly being expanded, connections to rail transport are being improved and timetables are being adapted to the needs of users, both for commuting and leisure travel. Information is available at the VSN Service Center at the Göttingen station forecourt or online (www.vsninfo.de).

Taxi
If you take a taxi, you pay a base price and a flat rate per kilometre. The price for the trip is therefore based on the distance to the destination, plus any waiting time. All taxis are equipped with a taximeter that runs during the entire trip. In many cities, there are taxi stands where you can hire a taxi. Always go to the first car in the queue. If there is no taxi stand nearby or you do not want to walk far, you can call the local taxi office and order a car.

Carpool services
The ride-share service offers an alternative to public transit. Private individuals who (regularly) drive longer distances offer these trips online to find passengers to join them. The passengers pay a fare agreed beforehand with the driver. The service only puts the driver and passenger in touch with each other, but does not guarantee the quality of the ride. A rating system enables the passengers to rate the drivers at the end of the journey. The best known car-sharing service is www.blablacar.de.

Bicycle
Cycling is a popular form of transportation in Germany when it comes to traveling within a city or between nearby places. Especially when the weather is nice, you will come across many cyclists. Many roads are now equipped with well-developed bike paths that facilitate safe cycling. Be sure to ride with the lights on in the dark! This is mandatory and is regularly checked by the police. Be sure to follow the rules of the road, or you may need to pay a fine.

Air travel
The central location of Süd niedersachsen offers good connections to numerous airports, which can be reached relatively quickly by train, bus or car. These include Frankfurt am Main, Hannover, Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen, Paderborn-Lippstadt, Kassel-Calden and Leipzig-Halle.
TV, INTERNET AND COMMUNICATION

Telephone, fax, Internet

To be able to use the landline and Internet connection in your home, you must sign a contract with a telecommunications provider. The largest providers in Germany are Deutsche Telekom, Vodafone, 1&1 and O2. Numerous smaller companies complement the available selection. The products differ with regard to the speed of the Internet connection and the price. You can get a contract both online and in a local branch. Depending upon the services selected, billing can be by the minute or a monthly flat rate. Check whether the flat rate applies only to landline numbers or also to mobile numbers. If you make international calls using your landline, you should use a “cheap code” (“Billigvorwahl”) to keep the costs down. https://www.billigervorwahl.de

Mobile contract

To get a German SIM card for your mobile phone, you can sign a mobile phone contract with a provider of your choice or buy a prepaid card.

Mobile phone contracts are offered with various conditions. Mobile phone contracts can often be combined with Internet and landline contracts or even with a television service. Ask your provider about the options!

Prepaid cards are now available not only from telephone providers, but also from supermarkets and petrol stations. Here, too, you can choose between different tariffs and flat rates.

Broadcasting licence fee

The broadcasting licence fee is a joint institution of various television and radio stations, specifically ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio. It serves to finance public service broadcasting and the state media institutions. Currently, the broadcasting licence fee is € 17.50 per month (as of April 2019). The broadcasting licence fee is calculated per household. It does not matter how many people live in one apartment or whether you actually use the public broadcasting service. If you stay in Germany for more than three months, you must pay the fee. Under www.rundfunkbeitrag.de you can easily register online.

Note to international visitors:

with many telephone providers, you cannot sign a contract until you have received your electronic residence permit.
POLITICS, CULTURE AND ELECTORAL LAW

The region offers a great variety of options to actively spend your leisure time: hiking, surfing, skiing or climbing, puppet theatre, jazz, readings or baroque opera, festivals, fun runs and races for everyone or even a summer toboggan run. In Südniedersachsen, everyone can find exactly the leisure activity that suits him or her - children as well as adults.
DISCOVER THE REGION

Whether on foot, by bike, by canoe or simply by car - the towns and communities of the region of Südniedersachsen offer countless opportunities for inspiring excursions and varied leisure activities in charming surroundings: museums, impressive buildings, city festivals, concerts, numerous sports facilities - from the Weserbergland to Eichsfeld and the Harz Mountains. There is something for every preference - and for any weather!

The region is surprisingly diverse and offers the best conditions for active holidaymakers as well as for culture enthusiasts, for nature lovers, explorers and connoisseurs.

The spectrum of intellectual offerings ranges from international music festivals such as the annual Händel Festival in Göttingen and the International Gandersheim Cathedral Festival, to world-renowned book publishers such as Steidl and Hogrefe Verlag.

The region also offers numerous destinations that are important beyond the borders of Südniedersachsen. These include the PS.SPEICHER in Einbeck with its unique exhibits of historical vehicles (cars, motorcycles, etc.), which is an extracurricular learning location recognised by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education, or the Walkenried Monastery with its Cistercian Museum which belongs to the UNESCO World Heritage in the Harz Mountains.

If you want to be active, you can find a large variety of nature parks and conservation areas over an area of more than 3,000 square kilometres in Südniedersachsen. Here you can cycle, hike, sail, ski or climb. There are several hundred kilometres of hiking trails through a varied landscape of forests and cultivated areas. On the rivers Werra, Fulda and Weser you can enjoy 30 km of river canoeing, and in the Reinhauser and Göttinger Wald you can climb sandstone rocks in approved rock-climbing areas.

More information is available at the Welcome Centre and the region’s tourist offices:

Stiftsfreiheit 12
37581 Bad Gandersheim
05382 73-700
tourist@bad-gandersheim.de

Haus des Gastes
Ritscherstraße 4
37431 Bad Lauterberg im Harz
05524 853-190
info@badlauterberg.de
Tourist-Information Herzberg e.V.
Marktplatz 32
37520 Osterode am Harz
05222 318-333
touristinfo@osterode.de

Eisensteinstraße 1
37520 Osterode am Harz
05222 318-333
touristinfo@osterode.de

Altes Rathaus
Lange Straße 1
37170 Uslar
05571 307-220
touristik@uslar.de

Gästeinformation der Stadt Duderstadt
Marktstraße 66
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WELCOME GUIDE SÜDNIEDERSACHSEN REGION | POLITICS, CULTURE AND ELECTORAL LAW

DISCOVER THE REGION
German and international cuisine

In Südniedersachsen you will find a large selection of international restaurants and grocery stores. Turkish, Greek, Italian, Asian and other international restaurants and shops are represented here. Also, large supermarkets often have international specialities in their aisles. Vegetarian or vegan dishes are can be found on almost every menu. There is something for every taste.

German cuisine offers many different regional cooking styles and culinary specialities. Traditional food and drinks are just as cherished as new creations and variations.

Many towns of Südniedersachsen hold regular farmers markets. The fruit and vegetables here come directly from the field or tree to the market and then to your kitchen. Local vendors and producers offer regional fruit and vegetables, flowers and plants, honey, cheese, eggs, poultry, locally sourced fish, meat and numerous other products. There are also stalls with coffee, freshly squeezed juices, sandwiches or waffles.

Everyone shops here - young families, students or people who have been coming to the market for 40 years. Let yourself be inspired by the variety of products from Südniedersachsen and the market’s special atmosphere!

Are you looking for a particular ingredient or are you homesick for your traditional food? The employees of the Welcome Centre will help you to find the appropriate speciality shop.
Moving to a new country is an adventure! In order to make it easier for you to get started and to give you a preview of everyday situations, we have compiled a few German customs that you will soon encounter in everyday life.

**“Du” and “Sie”**

There are two different forms of address in German: “Du” and “Sie”. “Du” is used when talking to people you know well or who have explicitly offered to use “Du”. In all other cases, use the formal form of address “Sie”, for example when talking to strangers, persons in a position of authority or business partners. In a professional context, the corporate culture determines whether the employees use “Du” or “Sie” with one another. Among young people, it is common to use “Du” with each other. Children are addressed as “Du”. If you are unsure, you should use “Sie” to be safe.

**Shaking hands and greeting**

Typically, people in Germany shake hands to greet each other. This is particularly the case when greeting people who are not close friends or for business partners. Pay attention to a firm, confident handshake and look your counterpart in the eyes. Greeting hugs are common in a private setting, particularly amongst women. Everyday greetings are “Guten Morgen”, “Guten Tag” and “Guten Abend”. Amongst family and friends “Hallo” is typical. When you leave, you say “Auf Wiedersehen”, or less formally, “Tschüss”.

**Meal invitations: Take a gift, shoes off**

Whether it’s a dinner invitation or a house party - small gifts are a nice gesture. Ask the host if you can contribute something to the evening! If they say no, you should not come empty-handed, but could for instance bring a bottle of wine. It is also common to take off your shoes before entering the apartment. Some hosts even have guest slippers ready. Before eating together, it is customary to wish each other “Guten Appetit”. When lifting the glasses, you can say “Prost” or “Zum Wohl” (to your health).

**Night-time quiet period: 10 pm**

In general, the night-time quiet period applies in Germany from 10 pm to 6 am. During this time, you should be considerate of your neighbours and refrain, for instance, from listening to loud music. If you are planning a celebration, post a note in the stairwell in good time to inform the other residents of the house about the planned party and maybe invite them to drop by for a beer. In general, it is better to arrange a celebration for the weekend.
Restaurant: Who pays the bill? Do you tip?

When Germans go to a pub or restaurant with friends, they usually each pay their own bills. Most of the time, the server will ask you if you want to pay together or separately before you settle the bill. If you pay separately, the separate amounts are calculated precisely. It is customary to leave a tip. As a guideline, this should be approximately ten percent of the bill. Do not tip if you were not satisfied with the service. City guides, hairdressers, taxi drivers or pizza delivery drivers are also happy to receive a tip!

Punctuality

Germans like to be on time. Sometimes they might even be at the agreed meeting point five to ten minutes early. You should therefore always let the other person know if you are going to be more than five minutes late so that you do not unnecessarily irritate anyone.

Non-smoking areas

Since August 2007, the protection of non-smokers in Lower Saxony has been comprehensively regulated by law. You will quickly notice that smoking is prohibited in many public places, such as schools, daycare centres, youth and sports facilities, universities, restaurants, train stations, airports, government agencies, museums and other places. However, in many places there are specially designated smoking areas where smoking is permitted.

Shop opening hours

Shops in Germany are usually open from 9 am to 7 pm. Large supermarkets have longer opening hours, small shops have shorter ones. Almost all shops are closed on Sundays. An exception are bakeries and a very small number of supermarkets. At petrol stations and kiosks, you will also find a small selection of groceries and other items for daily use.

Value-added tax

Value-added tax is levied on all goods. It is 19 percent and 7 percent respectively as a reduced rate on food, books and cultural goods (see page 44).

Waste separation and recycling

Please separate your waste. The blue bin is for paper, the yellow bags are for recyclables and plastic, the green or brown bin for organic waste and the black bin for residual waste. There are also public containers for glass, batteries (in supermarkets) and electrical waste. Many drinks are available in deposit bottles. The deposit will be refunded when you return the bottles to the supermarket, see on page 40.
Germany is a federal republic divided into 16 federal states. Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) is one of them. The state capital is Hanover with 558,799 inhabitants (Dec 2019).

Lower Saxony is again divided into 37 districts and eight independent cities. The districts of Göttingen and Northeim belong to Südniedersachsen. They take care of local affairs.

The parliament of a district is called the Kreistag. It is headed by the chief administrative officer, who also heads the administration and is elected directly by the citizens.

Several municipalities belong to the districts. At the head of the administration of each municipality is the mayor, and in larger cities the lord mayor. These are also directly elected by the citizens, as are the city council or the municipal council (the parliament of the municipality). If you are interested in a particular matter, you can usually listen to the deliberations because the meetings are generally public.

Right to vote in local elections

The municipal parliaments are elected every five years. As a voter you have three votes, which you can distribute between individual candidates and/or the candidate lists of the individual parties and voter groups.

All EU citizens aged 16 and over who already had their (main) residence in the election area for at least three months at the time of the election are entitled to vote in local elections.

In addition, all EU citizens aged 18 and over who have resided in the electoral territory for at least six months and have been citizens of an EU country for at least one year can have themselves nominated as candidates.

Anyone who has been an EU citizen for at least one year and is between 23 and 65 years old can run for mayor or chief administrative officer.
CHECKLISTS AND PHONE NUMBERS

On the following pages are a few checklists to help you with your packing and planning. In addition, there are tips for interactions in everyday German life and helpful telephone numbers.
CHECKLISTS

Before arrival

- Apply for a visa
- Collect all necessary documents
- Arrange the exact start date of your employment with your employer
- Find out about your health insurance coverage
- Research housing options in Südniedersachsen
- Find out more about schools and childcare
- Inform your water, gas and electricity provider of your move
- Cancel your newspaper subscription
- Inform your telephone provider of your move
- Set up mail forwarding, if possible

After arrival

- Register at the Residents’ Registration Office and apply for your tax identification number
- Open a bank account
- Take out health insurance
- Register your children at school or kindergarten
- Have your visa converted into a work/residence permit at the immigration authority, as soon as possible
- Collect information about possible taxes and pension entitlements that may arise from your employment contract

What should I bring with me?

- Power adapters: in Germany, the power plugs and sockets are of type F. Type C or type E plugs will fit in a type F socket but are not grounded.
- Transformers: Sockets in Germany have a 230-volt voltage. If you come from a country with a different voltage, you should use a voltage transformer for your electrical equipment.
- In Germany, the sockets have 230 V and 50 Hz alternating current. Depending on where you come from, you may need to use an adapter and voltage transformer.
- Medical records: If necessary, bring your medical records with you for the German doctor.
- Required medication: If you need medication, you should also bring a supply of it with you. Please note that medication in Germany is often subject to prescription. This includes painkillers.
- Important documents such as passport, marriage certificates, birth certificates of children, visa, driving licence and bank cards
- Special items from your home country that may not be available in Germany

What should I not take with me?

- Kitchen appliances wider than 60 cm (60 cm is the standard width in modern European kitchens)
- Non-European appliances (if they break, you may not find a replacement)
- Non-European televisions (the standard in Germany is PAL)
- Tumble dryers (these could exceed the watt limit)
- Mobile phones (if they do not comply with the German mobile radio standard [GSM 900/1800])
IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police 110
If you or another person are in danger, in a serious traffic accident or to report a criminal offence.

Fire brigade/ambulance 112
In the event of serious accidents, chest pain (heart attack) and collapse, shortness of breath, unconsciousness, paralysis, or acute pain.

Out-of-hours doctor 11 61 17
If you are ill and your general practitioner is closed.

Poison control centre 05 51 1 92 40
In case of poisoning.

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IMPRINT

Publisher
Vice-President International Affairs,
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

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Translation
LUND Languages
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Design
connect Werbeagentur GmbH, 2019

Printer
Klartext GmbH, May 2019

As of May 2019: All the information contained in this guide has been carefully researched and checked, and all reasonable efforts have been made to avoid errors. If you have any queries on the content of this brochure please contact us.

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