

Safety Tips AFS GER

Germany is a very safe country. However, as in every human society and in every environment, criminality and risks exist and thus here are some tips for you.

Going out

When you go out with friends, tell your host family where you are going, with whom and at what time you will be back. If you go to another home, **leave the phone number**.

Be aware of the rules given by **German law**:

Do not get involved with any drugs! Any kind of contact is forbidden under German law and your stay in Germany will be terminated immediately by AFS.

If you go to the movies, pay attention to the age limit. Films might be restricted to audience over 16 or 18 years of age.

Without a person who has parental responsibility, **adolescents under 16 are not allowed to:**

- enter a pub or disco
- drink beer, wine and other alcohol in public or buy it in shops
- smoke in public or buy cigarettes
- attend gambling halls

Without a person who has parental responsibility, **adolescents from 16 – 18 are not allowed to:**

- stay longer than 12 pm in a restaurant, pub or disco
- drink alcoholic beverages (incl. mixed drinks) other than beer or wine in public

Theft

There are pickpockets, be most aware when shopping in crowds. Even at school, thefts are possible, so take care of your money and personal belongings. **Always** lock your bicycle.

Diseases and dangerous animals

Germany is one of the safest countries as for dangerous animals and diseases. In **certain areas** of Germany there is the risk of Lyme disease and, FSME. Ask your hostparents about this. Both diseases are transmitted by ticks – a tiny animal (as small as a pin) which lives in forests and meadows. In case you find something sitting on your skin that won't blow away, ask your hostparents for advice. If the surrounding area of skin turns red days later, or you get fever, you need to see the doctor.

Like in any other country there is the danger of infection, so you might not be able to prevent yourself from catching a cold. Certain diseases are passed on by close contact person to person. Even if sexual diseases such as AIDS are proportionally rare in Germany, you should follow the well known rules of behaviour. If you are uncertain, ask a person you trust in.

Cycling, bathing or risk sports

Risky sports (e.g. climbing) cannot be undertaken within the AFS program. You need a sports waiver signed by your natural parents for these activities.

If you ride a bike, ask your host parents about dangerous crossings and the traffic rules for cyclists. Attention, we have right hand traffic in Germany! Do not ride in the dark without lights. Lock your bike to prevent theft.

Do not go swimming if you do not feel safe – even if others want you to join them.

Be careful when bathing in the open sea (your host parents or natives will inform you about the dangers of the tide). If swimming in lakes, do not jump in even if you think it is deep enough.

Uncomfortable social situations

Especially during your first weeks in Germany you might be unsure how to consider other persons behaviour. A “brother kiss” for example is very normal in certain countries; it might not be in yours. Generally speaking in Germany the form of reception and interaction depends a lot on the relation you have with that person. Relations in Germany are depending mostly on “knowing a person well” and not so much on the status that the person has compared to you.

If you are in doubt, discuss this openly with your AFS counsellor, your host family or other AFS-volunteers or staff members.

In and around your new home

We recommend that you talk about the following questions with your host family, your AFS contact, other AFS-volunteers in your chapter or teachers at your host school.

Inside

Emergency

- * What should I do if an emergency occurs? Whom should I call?
- * Do you have first aid equipment? Where is it?
- * Do you have a smoke detector and a fire extinguisher?
- * Where do you keep the emergency telephone numbers? (doctors, relatives,...)

Safety

- * Am I going to have a house key? What if I have forgotten it?
- * Do you lock your doors and windows? When do you do that?
- * What do you advise me when answering the door if I am alone at home?
- * Do I answer the phone when I am on my own? What may I say to unknown persons when answering? How much information may I give? What information should I not give?

Outside

- * Is it safe to walk around this neighbourhood after dark?
- * Which areas in my host community are not safe for me – at night/at daytime?
- * How can I feel safe when alone, especially at night?
- * What should I do if I get lost or separated from my friends?
- * What if an emergency occurs outside?
- * **Ask your host family about any situation in which you feel uncertain or frightened.**

Conclusion

1. Get to know the host culture well. Keep talking and discussing with your host family, peers, local AFS-volunteers.
2. Take concerns seriously that the host family or school express. Follow their advice.
3. Do not ignore your own “instinct” in any given situation!

Besides your hostfamily, AFS provides you with local volunteers that are always happy to help you. Make sure you get to know your local AFS contact person. Take down her/his phone number and do not hesitate to call in case of any questions or concerns.

Central emergency phone numbers:

- * Emergency numbers in Germany (free call, no pre-code):

Police:	110
Ambulance and fire:	112

- * In an emergency, call your local AFS contact person or the AFS national office:

During office hours (app. 10am to 16pm)

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|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| * AFS Hamburg: | 040 – 399 222 - 0 |
| * AFS Regional Office Berlin | 030 – 4978561 - 0 |
| * AFS Regional Office Stuttgart | 0711 – 8060 769 - 0 |
| * AFS Regional Office Wiesbaden | 0611 – 98713 - 23; -24 |

After office hours

- * AFS emergency mobile: 0162 – 1051 881