

Predeparture Notes – Spring in Berlin 2007

In the Predeparture Orientation for NYU in Berlin, held on November 27, 2006, Professor Ertman, director of the program, welcomed the group and introduced Professor Ulfers, who will be the on-site director for 2007. Information packets were distributed (if you did not receive one, please email spring.in.berlin@nyu.edu and arrange to pick one up from Youjin, our program assistant). Professor Ertman then reviewed the following topics:

Money

Remember to call your bank and notify them that you will be in Europe for at least four months from February. If you don't call ahead, the bank might think that your transactions from across the ocean are "suspicious" and may cancel your ATM card. Then, it is not easy to undo this from Europe, especially because the toll-free 1-800 customer service number does not work. The automated message may say that there is a toll-free service number or that you can call collect from outside the US, but this is generally not true. You will be charged for long-distance calls. So make sure you let your bank know that you will be overseas for awhile. You can also ask about transaction costs when you call.

Also, the keypad on phones and ATMs are different in Germany. That is, the letters correspond to different numbers. Where in the US, letters ABC are number 2, in Germany, they are on number one. So if your PIN is a word, memorize it in numbers that correspond to the American keypad.

Transportation

Anna Steinel, the administrative director, will meet the group flight at the airport. She will lead you to the BVG (the "MTA" of Berlin) desk where you can buy your monthly transportation tickets. Berlin is divided into three zones – A, B and C – but you will only need a metro card for zone A and B – zone C is the far reaches of Berlin, such as Potsdam. The monthly pass will be about 67 Euros and again, because Berlin is still a cash-based society, you might want to buy some Euro-cash beforehand and bring it with you. Also, there are very few – maybe just two – ATMs in the airport.

With the monthly pass, you do not have to validate your ticket, but when you or your visitors do buy a weekly or daily, or even single ticket, **DON'T FORGET TO VALIDATE YOUR TICKET**. You validate your ticket by stamping it in a machine on the platform. Carry your monthly pass with you at all times or else you will be fined 40 Euros on the spot. Once you receive your student IDs, you can get a student discount and pay 48,50 Euros for your monthly pass. Take your student ID and 1-2 passport pictures to a "Kundenzentrum" in one of the larger stations and get a student transportation ID card made. You will have to carry this and your discounted monthly pass together at all times.

The monthly pass allows you to take one other adult and up to three children between the ages of 6 and 13 (inclusive) with you free of charge from 8:00 PM to 3:00 AM on weekdays (Monday to Friday), and all day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Once the

weather gets warm, it is easy to purchase a bike and the ride to school is easy and not far. But keep in mind, if you do want to hop on a train with your bike, you have to buy a ticket for your bike as well.

The U-Bahns run all night only on Fridays and Saturdays but stop around 12:30-1 am on the weekdays. The S-Bahns run a little later or some lines run throughout the night but seldom come. There are always night buses and plenty of cabs. You can check time tables for U-Bahns, S-Bahns, and buses on the BVG.de website which are pretty accurate (except during rush hours). Although there are a lot of taxi cabs in the city, it's not easy to hail one on the street. If you should look for taxi stands, which are usually near the bus stations. You can also call for a cab by dialing 210101.

Mail/Books

Because of a general decline in postal service and the apartments that you will be living in often have temporary residents, like you, mail delivery is not reliable. If your friends and family would like to send you packages, have them send them through shipping firms and not through the regular post office.

All of the classes besides the mandatory 20th Century Germany class will have readers available at a copy house to purchase for 10-40 Euros, depending on the teacher. We will notify you soon via email about the books for the 20th Century Germany class. Books can be ordered through an English bookstore in Prenzlauerberg (refer to Youjin's Hot Tip's) or probably Dussmann's – a large bookstore on Friedrichstrasse.

Health Insurance

Please refer to the handout in the predeparture orientation packet regarding the German student health insurance. You can purchase this insurance as additional insurance, but you cannot waive the NYU insurance for this one. If you have further questions about AOK insurance, email Peter Kurowski at Peter.Kurowski@bln.aok.de.

If you get sick, Anna Steinel will help take you to the doctor. She has a list of referrals and doctors from general practitioners to gynecologists. Note: antibiotics are not prescribed in Germany as much as in the US and alternative medicine is popular in Germany.

If you take vitamins, bring a supply with you, as they are expensive in Germany. In Germany, drug stores are different from the US in that they do not include a pharmacy where you can get prescription drugs. Rather, these stores (such as the large chain, "Rossmann") sell only health and beauty products and the pharmacies, called "Apotheke," are separate.

Internet/Cellphones

The program will provide wireless internet access in your apartments, but you will need to bring your own computer or else you will not be able to have internet access from your apartment. (If you cannot bring a computer, there are plenty of inexpensive internet cafes just a few blocks away from the apartments.) There will also be two sets of printers in

two of the apartments where you can print for free by connecting your computer to the printer. You will only need a little plug in adapter (3-5 Euros) for your computer and not a big and expensive converter.

Cell phones will be provided by the program for your use throughout the semester. You will need to purchase minutes before you use them (prepaid) in increments of 15 and 25 Euros. It is always cheaper to use phone cards to make international calls. Most internet cafes also have telephone booths with inexpensive rates. The cell phones are best for use within Berlin.

Sheets/Towels

We have a service to provide you with sheets and towels, so you do not need to bring these with you.

Bureaucracy Hurdles

Citizens of the United States of America, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, as well as EU citizens may apply for their residence permit after entering Germany without a visa. Citizens of other countries are required to apply and obtain a visa prior to entry.

Once in Berlin, everyone must get a residency permit (except EU citizens). (If you are an EU citizen, bring your passport and all you will have to do is get a stamp but you do still need to register with the local authorities and we will help you with this.) For everyone else, you will submit your passport to Anna Steinel, who will help you obtain the residency permit. Required documents that you will need can be found in the acceptance packet. One of the documents you will need for the residency permit, is a letter of financial support from your parents with a copy of a parent's passport attached to it. This letter needs to state that your parent or guardian will take full financial responsibility for you during the dates of the program or longer, if you wish to stay over the summer. If your parent does not have a passport, a copy of his/her driver's license is fine. It may be a good idea to get this notarized as well, but this is optional. The process of applying for a residency permit will take from two to three weeks because first, you need to be registered to the local authorities and then you can apply for the residency permit.

Because you will turn in your passports, do not plan on leaving Berlin for the first three weeks!