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Germany, Austria & the Czech Republic Country Book

International Business Seminars
info@ibstours.com

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Welcome to Germany!



Overview & Country Facts:

Germany is a politically and economically stable democracy in Europe. To the north, the country borders Denmark, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea; to the east, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg; to the south Switzerland and Austria; and to the west it borders the Czech Republic and Poland. The federal parliamentary republic is comprised of 16 states.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has served as head of government since 2005. Merkel and her center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) won reelection in the September 2013 and 2017 elections. As one of the most influential members of the European Union (EU), Germany is often at the forefront of decisions regarding EU fiscal and monetary policies. In particular, Germany's position as a key decisionmaker on financial bailout programs for struggling economies such as Greece has occasionally led to tensions between Germany and other member states.

The overall assessment of threats in Germany is Medium. The primary security concern for visitors to Germany is crime, which occurs most frequently in larger urban areas. Most crime is nonviolent, involving petty theft, car theft and burglary. Street demonstrations are a common occurrence in cities across the country, particularly in Berlin, Cologne and Frankfurt. Most of these actions are peaceful in nature, although violence does occur occasionally; the risk of violence is elevated during demonstrations where neo-Nazi and far-right elements are present. Strikes in the public and private sectors are a fairly common occurrence in Germany and may affect services used by travelers; this is particularly true of labor actions involving the transportation sector. The threat of terrorism perpetrated by Islamist militants such as those affiliated with or inspired by al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) as well as by homegrown radical attackers inspired by extremist elements, represents a longstanding threat in Germany. Terrorists may target locations within Germany for attack due to the country's close alliance with the United States and its role in the Middle East. Additional factors that make Germany a possible target include the known presence of radical Islamists within the country and the relative ease with which would be attackers can enter the country under false pretenses. Despite significant improvements, cultural and economic vestiges of a divided Germany remain, with the former Eastern Germany experiencing higher rates of crime and unemployment than western areas. Xenophobia and support for far-right groups are also of concern throughout Germany, although such sentiments are more pronounced in Eastern Germany to a degree.

Country Facts	
Official Country Name	Federal Republic of Germany
Type of Government	Federal Republic
Leadership	Head of Government: Chancellor Angela Merkel. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Capital	Berlin
Official Language	German
Population	81.7 million
Ethnic Divisions	German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, Other 6.1%
Religion	Protestant 34%, Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, Other 28.3%
Growth	0.1%
Inflation	0.6%
Unemployment	6.6%
Currency	Euro
Office Work Week	Monday – Friday
Time Zone Offset	UTC +1
Country Phone Code	49
Capital City Phone Code	30
Nationwide Emergency Number(s)	112, 110 (Police)
Electricity	230 volts, 50 cycles AC
Plug Styles	Type C & Type F

Current Analysis:

- Though her popularity in Germany has vacillated considerably, Merkel is currently the longest-tenured head of government in Europe. She stepped down as leader of her party in 2018 and has announced that she does not plan to run for re-election as Chancellor in 2021.
- Germany's economy has experienced moderate-to-low growth over the past several years. Despite showing some signs of contraction, Germany will remain the strongest economy in Europe for the foreseeable future. German leadership is unlikely to face the same significant economic challenges that many of its European counterparts have recently faced.
- As a member of the European Union (EU), Germany is affected by a number of supranational developments and challenges.

Political & Economic Developments:

Political Situation:

Chancellor Angela Merkel and her center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) a majority of the votes in the September 2013 federal elections despite a decline in support for the government. As the CDU failed to win an absolute majority, the party formed a "grand coalition" of right-and leftwing groups in December 2013, renewing a coalition of parties that have led the country since 2005. Merkel remains a relatively popular figure, although her ruling coalition has faced criticism over the European debt crisis, interparty political disagreements and unpopular domestic initiatives; she has also come under fire for her status on refugees and asylum seekers. Germany's position as a key decisionmaker on financial bailout programs for struggling economies in the eurozone has served as a point of contention among opposition groups in Germany and has occasionally led to tensions between Germany and other member states, including Greece.

A special assembly elected Frank-Walter Steinmeier as the country's new president on 12 February 2017, as is dictated by Germany's constitution. Steinmeier will be sworn in on 18 March, when President Joachim Gauck steps down. The presidency is a largely ceremonial position in Germany, although presidents are often seen as a moral example for the country. In this case, Steinmeier is an opponent of rightwing extremism and is a symbolic choice ahead of September legislative elections, when the rightwing antiimmigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is expected to make significant gains.

Economic Situation:

Germany remains the European Union's most politically and economically influential member nation. Strong exports and increasing investment into construction are among the biggest contributors to that growth. Germany ranked 24th of 180 countries rated in the Heritage Foundation's 2019 Index of Economic Freedom. Meanwhile, the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business project ranked the country 22nd out of 190 countries assessed on the ease of doing business. The level of corruption in Germany is low; the country ranked 11th out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Security Issues:

- Crime is the security concern travelers to Germany are most likely to encounter.
- Strikes occur relatively frequently and have the potential to affect services used by travelers.
- Demonstrations occur frequently in the country, especially in the larger cities.
- The threat of terrorism remains a serious concern in Germany, particularly in light of recent terrorist attacks and foiled plots.
- Rightwing extremists also pose occasional threats.

Crime:

The security concern visitors to Germany are most likely to encounter is crime, especially in large urban areas. Opportunistic, petty theft such as pickpocketing and purse snatching occurs frequently in crowded areas and locations popular with tourists. Violent crime is not common. Vehicle theft, along with the theft of valuables from parked vehicles, is common. Travelers to Germany should employ basic security precautions such as not overtly flaunting wealth and not leaving valuables unattended to minimize the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime.

Strikes:

Strikes in the public and private sectors occur frequently in Germany. Labor actions may disrupt services used by travelers, particularly when they occur in the aviation or public transportation sectors. Strikes are frequently called with little prior notice, so travelers should keep abreast of announcements ahead of and during trips.

Demonstrations:

Street demonstrations and protests often take place in the country's larger cities. Demonstrations are often motivated by domestic and international economic or political issues, anti-immigrant sentiment, ethnic or religious concerns and nuclear technology. These events are usually peaceful, although a higher possibility of violence exists during rallies organized by militant left- or rightwing groups. Protests in Germany can range in size from less than 50 people to several hundred thousand. Travelers should always avoid demonstrations out of an abundance of caution.

Terrorism:

The threat of terrorism perpetrated by Islamist militants such as those affiliated with or inspired by the Islamic State (IS) or al-Qaeda represents a significant threat in Germany, as evidenced by recent attacks and numerous thwarted plots. Urban areas are the likeliest targets for militant's intent on causing a large number of casualties and economic damage given the plethora of high-profile business and government interests located in such areas.

Right-Wing Extremists:

There is a persistent element of neo-Nazis and other far-right groups within Germany. Recent statistics indicate that violence perpetrated by leftwing extremist groups has increased in Germany, while incidents attributed to rightwing extremists have slightly decreased. Most incidents have targeted police stations or police officers deployed to monitor street

demonstrations, but the threat also extends to civilian targets. Many Germans, especially in the eastern areas, hold a longstanding animosity toward people of Turkish descent, who are considered by some Germans to be living off the generosity of the state; these groups have also targeted other immigrants. Visitors are rarely affected by racist violence, but there have been assaults on visitors of non-Caucasian appearance. Demonstrations over immigration-related issues occur occasionally in Germany, but these protests have decreased in overall frequency and do not generally involve extensive violence.

Customs & Immigration:

The Entry Requirements section reflects the most correct and up-to-date information to the best knowledge of UnitedHealthcare Global. Setting requirements for entry into the country is the sole prerogative of each country's government, and requirements may change, sometimes with little or no prior notice. Travelers should always contact the diplomatic representation of the country prior to departure to verify entry requirements.

Passports and Visas:

Germany is a signatory to the Schengen Agreement, which provides for the free movement of travelers between 26 signatory countries within Europe under a common visa policy. The so-called Schengen visa is typically a single-entry visa that allows visitors to travel between member states without needing a separate visa for each country. There are no internal border checkpoints between the following states: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland and the United Kingdom although members of the European Union are not signatories to the Schengen Agreement and maintain their own visa requirements. It is important to note that border controls can be implemented with little notice, which has been a growing issue in light of the refugee and migrant crisis.

The following entry regulations apply to the Schengen countries:

- Nationals of the Schengen countries are not required to have a visa to travel between the Schengen countries, but should carry a national identification card or passport as a means of identification.
- Holders of a Schengen country's residence title can travel freely in the Schengen area for a period of up to 90 days.
- Citizens of countries not party to the Schengen Agreement are required to have a passport for entry into the first Schengen country visited. Passports are not required to travel between Schengen countries, but may be required if asked for identification.
- A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days within a six-month period (for both business and leisure trips) for residents of several dozen countries (including Australia, Canada, Croatia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States).
- Travelers who are staying longer than 90 days either for work, school, or to reside in the European Union are required to apply for a Schengen visa. Among the requirements for a Schengen visa are documentation of adequate medical insurance (minimum coverage of 30,000 euros), application form, two passport photos and applicable fees. There may be additional requirements based on the type of visa applied for. To meet the medical insurance requirement, travelers must provide a letter from their insurance company

stating that they will be covered for any medical and repatriation expenses applicable to the entire Schengen area for the entire duration of the intended stay.

- Travelers requiring a Schengen Visa should apply for the visa at the embassy or consulate of the traveler's main destination country or, if traveling for short periods between multiple countries, at the embassy or consulate of the first country the traveler will enter upon arrival in the Schengen area. Travelers crossing external borders that is, borders that are shared with non-Schengen countries inbound or outbound will be subject to all entry requirement checks, including identification, documentation and visa (if applicable).

Health:

There are no vaccinations required to enter Germany from any country.

Entry/Departure Taxes:

There are no airport taxes levied upon travelers at German airports.

Imports and Exports:

Visitors from non-European Union countries over the age of 17 can import up to the designated amounts of the following noncommercial items (items of personal or family use or items intended as presents) duty-free:

- 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco;**
- A total of one liter of spirits exceeding 22 percent volume or undenatured ethyl alcohol of 80 percent volume (or greater) or a total of 2 liters of alcoholic beverages under 22 percent volume;
- Four liters of still wine;
- 16 liters of beer; and
- Other items up to a value of 430 euros for air and sea travelers (this amount is reduced to 175 euros for travelers under 15 years-old)

Prohibitions and restrictions on drugs, medicines, weapons, explosive materials and pornographic materials are covered by national legislation.

There are no restrictions on the amount of foreign currency that can be imported into the European Union. However, travelers entering or leaving the EU with more than 10,000 euros (or the equivalent in other currencies) must make a declaration to the customs official.

** EU member states have the option of restricting imports of tobacco products in the interest of their respective health policies. The limit according to this second option is 40 cigarettes or 20 cigarillos or 10 cigars or 50 grams of tobacco.

Currency:

The euro (€) is the official currency of Germany. Euro coins are minted in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents, as well as full one-and two-euro coins. Euro bank notes are available in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euros. ATMs are widely available and are the best means of withdrawing local currency.

Credit cards are also accepted, although many restaurants and businesses don't (especially in Berlin). However, many European countries have adopted a type of credit card featuring a microchip that requires users to enter a personal identification number when making a purchase. Credit cards with only a magnetic stripe on the back such as those issued by banks in the United States may be rejected by automatic kiosks and other retail merchants. While in theory a clerk can manually swipe the card to complete the transaction, some merchants may be unable or unwilling to do so (for example, due to a language barrier or lack of training). Travelers checks are most often accepted in larger cities and towns; however, they may not be as widely accepted in provincial areas. Currency exchanges may charge exorbitant fees (sometimes as high as 13 percent).

Communications:

The German telephone system is modern and efficient. Most phone booths in Germany accept only phone cards, and many have instructions in both German and English. International calls can be made from phone booths marked "inlands und auslandsgespräche." Phone cards may be purchased at post offices or news kiosks. To avoid using a phone card when placing an international call, use phone booths at post offices and pay the clerk after the call has been completed. Cellular telephone services in Germany are well-developed.

Germany Country Code: 49

Berlin Area Code:

30

Cologne Area Code:

221

Dusseldorf Area Code:

211

Frankfurt Area Code:

69

Hamburg Area Code:

40

Munich Area Code:

89

Stuttgart Area Code:

711

Calling Germany landline from abroad: Country exit code + 49 + city code + phone number

Calling Germany mobile phone from abroad: Country exit code + 49 + mobile code* + phone number

Calling Germany landline from within country: 0 + city code + phone number

Calling Germany mobile phone from within country: 0 + mobile code* + phone number

Making international calls from Germany: 00 + country code + city code + phone number

**Mobile code varies by call recipient's provider.*

Cultural Information:

Language:

German is the primary language, but English is widely spoken in airports, rail stations, hotels, restaurants and other areas popular with tourists. English is widely spoken in the western part of the country.

Cultural Tips:

- A firm, quick handshake is customary upon greeting.
- A gratuity of 15 percent is added to the customer's bill. However, Germans typically leave additional change or smaller bills for exceptional service.
- The U.S. sign for "OK" (index finger forming a circle with the thumb) should be avoided in Germany.
- Theaters expect audience members to check their coats.
- There are informal restrictions on entering some restaurants and nightclubs while wearing athletic shoes.

Tips for Female Travelers:

- "Fraulein" is only used for very young women (under the age of eighteen). Businesswomen are addressed as "Frau," whether they are married or single.
- Business dress for women is usually conservative, but varies from industry to industry. Khakis are generally not acceptable. Women often wear dark suits and white blouses. Plain, muted and solid colors are common.

Health & Hospitals:

Overall, Germany has an excellent health care system. Health care is available throughout the entire country with an extensive network of hospitals and doctors covering even the most remote areas of Germany. Although some hospitals have certain wards designated solely for the use of private patients, people with state-regulated insurance plans and those with private insurance use the same hospitals. On the whole, patients who are not privately insured are at no medical disadvantage and receive the same standard of care as the private patients. Generally, doctors work either in hospitals or in private practice. Those working in hospitals are employed by the hospitals. Those working outside the hospitals have their own offices and are self-employed (this includes general practitioners and specialists, but they all refer patients to a hospital if necessary). Apart from relatively minor delays for nonemergency surgery (e.g., three to four months for hip replacements), waiting times are virtually nonexistent.

Introduction to Munich:

City Overview:

Munich is the colorful, cosmopolitan capital city of Bavaria, the largest federal state (by area) in Germany. It is Germany's third largest city after Berlin and Hamburg. While it is world famous for its beer gardens, white sausages and its annual *Oktoberfest*, Munich is also renowned for its fine architecture and culture.

City Facts:	
Population:	1.456 million

Munich is considered Germany's most livable city. Hardly surprising considering that the Alps, Italy and the Mediterranean, the Czech Republic, Austria and some of Europe's most beautiful scenery is just a short drive away! Throw in some additional benefits like beautiful Baroque and Rococo architecture, green countryside, the second largest university in Germany, and an almost reverent understanding of beer and it's easy to see why this city is a favorite among Germans and non-Germans alike. This comes at a price of course – Munich is often considered the most expensive city in Germany.

Munich boasts of a rich cultural scene and its museums are even considered to outrank Berlin in quality. Unlike Berlin, Munich has been brilliantly rebuilt after the war and many find it hard to believe that it was even bombed in WWII.

Transportation:

Munich has an extensive public transportation system. It consists of a network of underground (U-Bahn), suburban trains (S-Bahn), trams and buses. Subway stations are marked with signs showing a white "U" on a blue background. The S-Bahn suburban lines are marked with a white "S" on a green background. Tram and bus stops are marked with a green "H" inside a green circle on a yellow background.

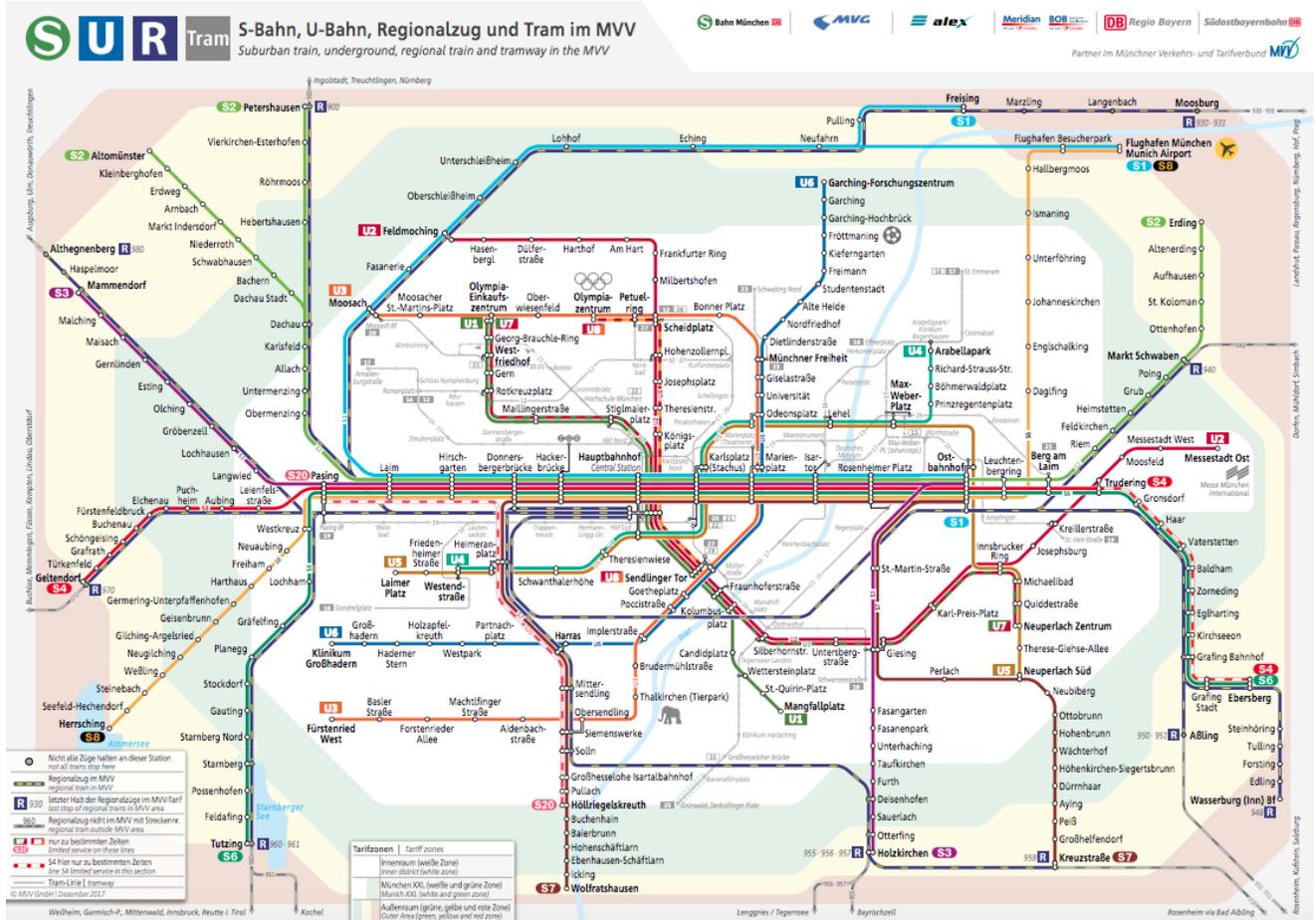
All S-Bahn suburban lines go through the city center and connect Munich's Central Station (Hauptbahnhof) to East Station (Ostbahnhof) with popular tourist destinations like Marienplatz and Karlsplatz in between.

The same ticket is valid for all these forms of public transportation. You don't need different tickets, if you move from train to tram to bus.

Tickets can be purchased at the blue vending machines, found at U- and S-Bahn-stations, at many tram and bus stops and newspaper kiosks.

An information office of the Munich public transportation network (MVV), where English is spoken, is located at the Marienplatz Basement.

Map of Munich Public Transport:



Food & Beverage:

Germans are known for their traditional German cuisine around the world. What many people don't know is the fact that German cuisine is so much more than just sausage and meat.

German food is rich, hearty and delicious and many top German dishes make great comfort food.

Common German Dishes:

Rouladen - This typical German food involves wrapping thinly sliced meat – usually beef but also veal or pork – around a filling of bacon or pork belly, chopped onions, pickles and usually mustard, and then browned and simmered in broth (braised). The mixture changes between regions, with some variations including minced meat. It is common to serve this dish with gravy, dumplings, mashed potato or blaukraut (cooked red cabbage).

Kasespatzle – Soft egg noodles, made from wheat flour and egg, served topped with cheese—rather like macaroni cheese – and sometimes with roasted onions too.

Rote grütze - Rote grütze is a red fruit pudding that is a popular dessert in north Germany. It's made from black and red currants, raspberries and sometimes strawberries or cherries, which are cooked in their juice and thickened with a little cornstarch or corn flour. It's served with cream, milk or vanilla sauce or ice-cream.

Schnitzel - A schnitzel is a thin, boneless cutlet of meat, which is coated in breadcrumbs and often served with a slice of lemon. You can choose a Wiener Schnitzel (Viennese schnitzel), which is made of veal, or a Schnitzel Wiener are made of pork (Schwein).

Common German Beverages:

Coffee - More than 1,000 flavors and over 60 acids characterize the unique taste of German coffee. This is skillfully unfolded by the know-how of German producers, their careful selection of the coffee beans, the means of transport and the manner in which the beans are roasted, ground and packed.

Tea - Both black tea (Schwarztee) and fruit tea (Fruchttee) are popular in Germany. The most popular types of fruit and herbal teas are Kamillentee (Camomile), Fencheltee (Fennel), Hagebuttentee (Rosehip) and Pfefferminztee (Peppermint).

Bowle/Punsch - A Bowle is a cold mixed drink. The most well-known of all Bowle is the Maibowle that is flavored with woodruff (Waldmeister). A Punsch on the other hand is a warm mixed drink.

City Attractions & Sightseeing:

English Garden - This large public park, which reaches from the city center to the northeastern city limits, is one of Munich's must-dos. Named for the informal English style of rolling hills and open landscaping, the *Englischer Garten* contains several popular biergartens, a handful of eclectic monuments and a boating lake, among lots of jogging and biking paths.

St. Peter's Church - Open daily, *Peterskirche* (St. Peter's Church) is Munich's oldest and smallest place of worship. Jump off the U-bahn or S-bahn at Marienplatz to tour for free, but expect to pay a small fee to climb its tower for a sweeping view of Bavaria.

Marienplatz - The Marienplatz square, accessible by a U-bahn station of the same name, is Munich's heart just as it used to be back in 1158 when it was established. Back then, it hosted spectator events, such as jousts and executions. Today this *Altstadt* (Old Town) square is alive with street performers, from mimes to musicians, and restaurants, selling bratwursts and beer, plus lots of surrounding shops.



Augustiner-Keller - Augustiner-Keller, one of few remaining traditional beer gardens left in the city center, serves big glasses of refreshing beer. Although you can cut down on costs by bringing a picnic of your own food, you can also order your traditional German fare here.

Residenz Royal Palace - In the late 1300s, when the royal Wittelsbach family decided their palace was too small, they commissioned the building of the Residenz Royal Palace. Inside, you'll find the Crown Jewels, the State Collection of Egyptian Art, the Residenz/Cuvilles Theatre and the Herkulesaal concert hall. Outside are courtyards, fountains, grottoes, a medicine room, a chapel and more.

Viktualienmarkt - The Viktualienmarkt, located in Altstadt off the Marienplatz U-bahn and S-bahn stops, is the city's oldest farmer's market (dating back to 1807). Open six days a week, it contains around 140 booths with merchants selling everything from fresh baked bread to sausages and honey to fresh flowers.



Welcome to Austria!



Overview & Country Facts:

Austria is a politically and economically stable democracy in Europe. To the north, the country borders Germany and the Czech Republic; to the east, Slovakia and Hungary; to the south Slovenia and Italy; and to the west it borders Liechtenstein and Switzerland. As a permanently neutral country, Austria is home to several international organizations. The parliamentary republic is comprised of nine independent, federal regions.

Austria is led by a chancellor – Kanzler Sebastian Kurz – since 7 January 2020, after concluding the process of forming a coalition following the September 2019 Austrian parliamentary elections. Kurz, the youthful leader of the ÖVP and former head of a coalition government with the FPÖ that was brought down by a vote of no confidence following the Ibiza scandal, won a resounding victory over his party's former coalition partners, but not a majority of seats in the National Council, the lower house of the Austria's Parliament. Kurz negotiated with the Green Party to form what became an unprecedented variant of a coalition government at the federal level, but would not mark the first success of the environmentalist movement in national politics. Austria's nominally nonpartisan federal president, Alexander Van der Bellen, had made his name in Austrian politics as a leader of the Greens. Austria has never yet had a female president. Bierlein was the Second Republic's first *Kanzlerin*, albeit only of a nonpartisan caretaker government.

Country Facts:	
Official Country Name	Republic of Austria
Type of Government	Federal Republic
Leadership	Chief of State: Alexander Van der Bellen; Head of Government: Chancellor Sebastian Kurz
Capital	Vienna
Official Language	German
Population	8.822 million (2018)
Ethnic Divisions	Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (Includes Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks), Turks 1.6%, Germans 0.9%, other or unspecified 2.4%
Religion	Roman Catholic 73.6%, Protestants 4.7%, Muslims 4.2%, None 12%
Growth	1.3%
Inflation	1.9%
Unemployment	4.6%
Currency	Euro
Office Work Week	Monday – Friday
Time Zone Offset	UTC + 1
Country Phone Code	43
Capital City Phone Code	1
Nationwide Emergency Number(s)	112 (general), 133 (police), 122 (fire), 144 (medical)
Electricity	230 volts, 50 Hz
Plug Styles	Types C & Type F

The overall assessment of threats in Austria is Low. Travelers to Austria face a low threat of physical harm and most visits occur without incident. The primary security concern is opportunistic crime, such as petty theft, which occurs most frequently in larger urban areas. Street demonstrations also occur occasionally in Austria, especially Vienna, in response to various domestic and international political and economic developments. Austria's role as host to many international organizations and the country's past participation in military operations in Afghanistan makes it a potential target to Islamist militants, but no specific threats against the country have emerged recently.

Current Analysis:

- Austria is a prosperous, democratic country led by a grand coalition made up of the Social Democratic Party and the Austrian Peoples' Party.
- Alexander Van der Bellen was elected president of Austria in December 2016. Incoming chancellor Sebastian Kurz of the Peoples' Party (ÖVP) is in the process of forming a coalition government.
- Economic issues and immigration policies currently dominate Austrian domestic politics.

Political & Economic Developments:

Political Situation

The ruling center left Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) formed a "grand coalition" with the center right Austrian Peoples' Party (ÖVP) following its victory in the September 2013 elections. Although the SPÖ was the leading vote winner, increasing popular discontent with Austria's mainstream parties resulted in the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) earning 20 percent of the vote, which was its best performance in more than a decade. The FPÖ continued its rise, taking the majority in Austria's April 2016 presidential elections. Two weeks after the defeat, Chancellor Werner Faymann (who led the SPÖ), announced his resignation. Christian Kern, of the Social Democrats, assumed the post of chancellor and will continue in the role until a new coalition government is formed in the aftermath of snap elections, which took place on 15 October 2017. In the elections, Sebastian Kurz's ÖVP took 31.5 percent of the vote, followed closely by the SPÖ with 26.9 percent of the vote; the FPÖ continued its rise and took 26 percent of the overall vote. Kurz is now in the process of forming a coalition government.

Heinz Fischer served as president from 2010 to 2016. The first round of the most recent presidential elections in April 2016 also appeared to be a victory for the FPÖ, as it took 36 percent of the vote. However, Green Party-endorsed Alexander Van der Bellen won the runoff elections in May. The FPÖ subsequently filed a legal complaint against the election results, claiming election fraud, and the courts ultimately ruled in its favor. New elections were scheduled for 2 October 2016 but were postponed after faulty envelopes for mail-in ballots left votes open to manual manipulation. Austrians were finally able to vote in December 2016, when Alexander Van der Bellen won the presidency with approximately 54 percent of the vote.

Economic Situation

Austria has a strong economy, although it struggles to reduce unemployment. As of July 2017, the unemployment rate hovered just above 7 percent. Public discontent over Austria's contributions to eurozone bailouts, high unemployment and immigration has contributed to a resurgence of support for the right-wing Freedom Party, which manifested itself in the aforementioned parliamentary elections.

Security Issues:

- The primary security concern in Austria is crime, mostly in the form of petty theft.
- Demonstrations occur occasionally, primarily in larger urban areas.
- The threat of a terrorist attack by Islamist extremists remains relatively low throughout Austria.

Crime

Crime is most likely to occur in larger cities, particularly at tourist sites, train stations, markets and other crowded areas. Petty opportunistic crime -- such as pickpocketing and bag snatching -- is the type of crime most likely to affect travelers in the country. Theft on public transportation is a major problem in Austria, particularly of passports. Basic precautions -- such as not overtly flaunting wealth, keeping all valuables secure and avoiding poorly lit areas at night -- should reduce the risk of falling victim to crime. The smaller towns of rural Austria rarely experience crime.

Overall, violent crime is uncommon, and it rarely affects foreign visitors. However, there have been reports of criminals placing sedatives and other drugs in visitors' drinks in an effort to commit robbery or sexual assault. Occasionally, foreigners of non-Caucasian appearance have been targets of physical violence by neo-Nazi youth groups.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations also occur periodically in response to various domestic and international political and economic issues. Such protests are more likely to occur in Vienna than in other Austrian cities. In addition, demonstrations frequently occur around far right political events, both in support of and in opposition to the event. Travelers should avoid these gatherings as a precaution, as they can turn violent with little notice.

Terrorism

Although the likelihood of a terrorist attack in Austria is low, the possibility cannot be ruled out, particularly in light of past terrorist attacks in Europe, periodic arrests of suspected militants in the country and the relative ease with which terrorist elements can enter the country via open borders with other European Union countries. For instance, in January 2017, police arrested a teenage Austrian citizen who was reportedly planning to carry out an attack in the country. A number of recent security operations have uncovered recruiting operations of militant Islamist groups in Austria; however, no threats specific to the country have emerged recently.

Country Tips

- According to Austrian law, individuals must always have some type of photo identification on their person. Most visitors use passports as identification.
- Tap water in Austria is safe to drink.

Customs & Immigration:

The Entry Requirements section reflects the most correct and up-to-date information to the best knowledge of UnitedHealthcare Global. Setting requirements for entry into the country is the sole prerogative of each country's government, and requirements may change, sometimes with little or no prior notice. Travelers should always contact the diplomatic representation of the country prior to departure to verify entry requirements.

Visas and Passports

Austria is a signatory to the Schengen Agreement, which provides for the free movement of travelers between 26 signatory countries within Europe under a common visa policy. The so-called "Schengen visa" is typically a single-entry visa that allows visitors to travel between member states without needing a separate visa for each country. There are no internal border checkpoints between the following states: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom -- although members of the European Union -- are not signatories to the Schengen Agreement and maintain their own visa requirements. It is important to note that border controls can be implemented with little notice, which has been a growing issue in light of the refugee and migrant crisis.

The following entry regulations apply to the Schengen countries:

Nationals of the Schengen countries are not required to have a visa to travel between the Schengen countries, but should carry a national identification card or passport as a means of identification.

Holders of a Schengen country's residence title can travel freely in the Schengen area for a period of up to 90 days.

Citizens of countries not party to the Schengen Agreement are required to have a passport for entry into the first Schengen country visited. Passports are not required to travel between Schengen countries, but may be required if asked for identification.

A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days within a six-month period (for both business and leisure trips) for residents of several dozen countries (including Australia, Canada, Croatia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States). *

Travelers who are staying longer than 90 days -- either for work, school, or to reside in the European Union -- are required to apply for a Schengen visa. Among the requirements for a Schengen visa are documentation of adequate medical insurance (minimum coverage of 30,000 euros), application form, two passport photos and applicable fees. There may be additional requirements based on the type of visa applied for. To meet the medical insurance requirement,

travelers must provide a letter from their insurance company stating that they will be covered for any medical and repatriation expenses -- applicable to the entire Schengen area -- for the entire duration of the intended stay.

Travelers requiring a Schengen visa should apply for the visa at the embassy or consulate of the traveler's main destination country or, if traveling for short periods between multiple countries, at the embassy or consulate of the first country the traveler will enter upon arrival in the Schengen area. Travelers crossing external borders -- that is, borders that are shared with non-Schengen countries -- inbound or outbound will be subject to all entry requirement checks, including identification, documentation and visa (if applicable).

Health

There are no vaccinations required to enter Austria from any country.

Entry/Departure Taxes

There are no airport taxes levied upon travelers at Austrian airports.

Imports and Exports

Visitors from non-European Union countries over the age of 17 can import up to the designated amounts of the following non-commercial items (items of personal or family use or items intended as presents) duty-free:

- 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco; **
- A total of one liter of spirits exceeding 22 percent volume or undenatured ethyl alcohol of 80 percent volume (or greater) or a total of 2 liters of alcoholic beverages under 22 percent volume;
- Four liters of still wine;
- 16 liters of beer; and
- Other items up to a value of 430 euro for air and sea travelers (this amount is reduced to 150 euro for travelers younger than 15 years of age).

Prohibitions and restrictions on drugs, medicines, weapons, explosive materials and pornographic materials are covered by national legislation.

There are no restrictions on the amount of foreign currency that can be imported into the European Union. However, travelers entering or leaving the EU with more than 10,000 euros (or the equivalent in other currencies) must make a declaration to the customs official.

** EU member states have the option of restricting imports of tobacco products in the interest of their respective health policies. The limit according to this second option is 40 cigarettes or 20 cigarillos or 10 cigars or 50 grams of tobacco.

Currency:

The euro (€) is the official currency of Austria. Euro coins are minted in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents, as well as full one- and two-euro coins. Euro bank notes are available in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euros. ATMs are widely available and are the best means of withdrawing local currency.

Credit cards are also widely accepted. However, many European countries have adopted a type of credit card featuring a microchip that requires users to enter a personal identification number when making a purchase. Credit cards with only a magnetic stripe on the back -- such as those issued by banks in the United States -- may be rejected by automatic kiosks and other retail merchants. While in theory a clerk can manually swipe the card to complete the transaction, some merchants may be unable or unwilling to do so (for example, due to a language barrier or lack of training). Traveler's checks are most often accepted in larger cities and towns; however, they may not be as widely accepted in provincial areas. Currency exchanges may charge exorbitant fees (sometimes as high as 13 percent).

Communications:

Austria has a well-developed telecommunications industry including landline and mobile phone infrastructure. Phone numbers in Austria do not have a standard length; they range from 4-13 digits.

Austria Country Code: 43 **Vienna City Code:** 1

Calling Austria landline from abroad: country exit code + 43 + city code + phone number

Calling Austria mobile phone from abroad: country exit code + 43 + 6 + phone number

Calling Austria landline from within country: 0 + city code + phone number

Calling Austria mobile phone from within country: 0 + 6 + phone number

Cultural Information:

Language

German is the official language of Austria. English is widely understood, as it is a required language in Austrian high schools.

Cultural Tips

- Often, Austrians will list their degree or title before their name. In these cases, they should be referred to as "Herr" or "Frau" and then their title (such as Doctor or Magister, which means master).
- Individuals should say hello and goodbye when out and about in Austria, including in shops, on buses and other such locations.
- The practice of tipping is common in Austria; generally, the amounts involved are small. Taxi drivers generally receive a 10 percent tip; for shorter trips, round up to the nearest euro.

- Railway and hotel porters expect between 0.50-1.00-euro tip per bag.
- At restaurants, a service charge of 10 to 15 percent of the check is usually included in the price of the meal; it is customary to either round up or leave an additional 5 to 10 percent. Servers should be given their tip directly in the form of cash.
- Austrians are accustomed to using formal titles when addressing others and this should be observed in both verbal and written correspondence.

Tips for Female Travelers

Female travelers are often seen by criminals as particularly vulnerable targets. In highly conservative cultures, foreign women may be perceived as promiscuous, inviting unwelcome or violent advances. Female travelers, in turn, are likely to encounter cultural mores that may initially seem startling or offensive. The purpose of this section is to apprise female travelers of such attitudes and customs, offer means to respond without giving offense, and promote a heightened sense for security among female travelers. The information offered below is not intended as advice, nor is it necessarily comprehensive in presenting the challenges female travelers may face. UnitedHealthcare Global encourages female travelers to thoroughly research the areas to which they travel to determine what precautionary measures to take and what to do should they become victims of crime while traveling.

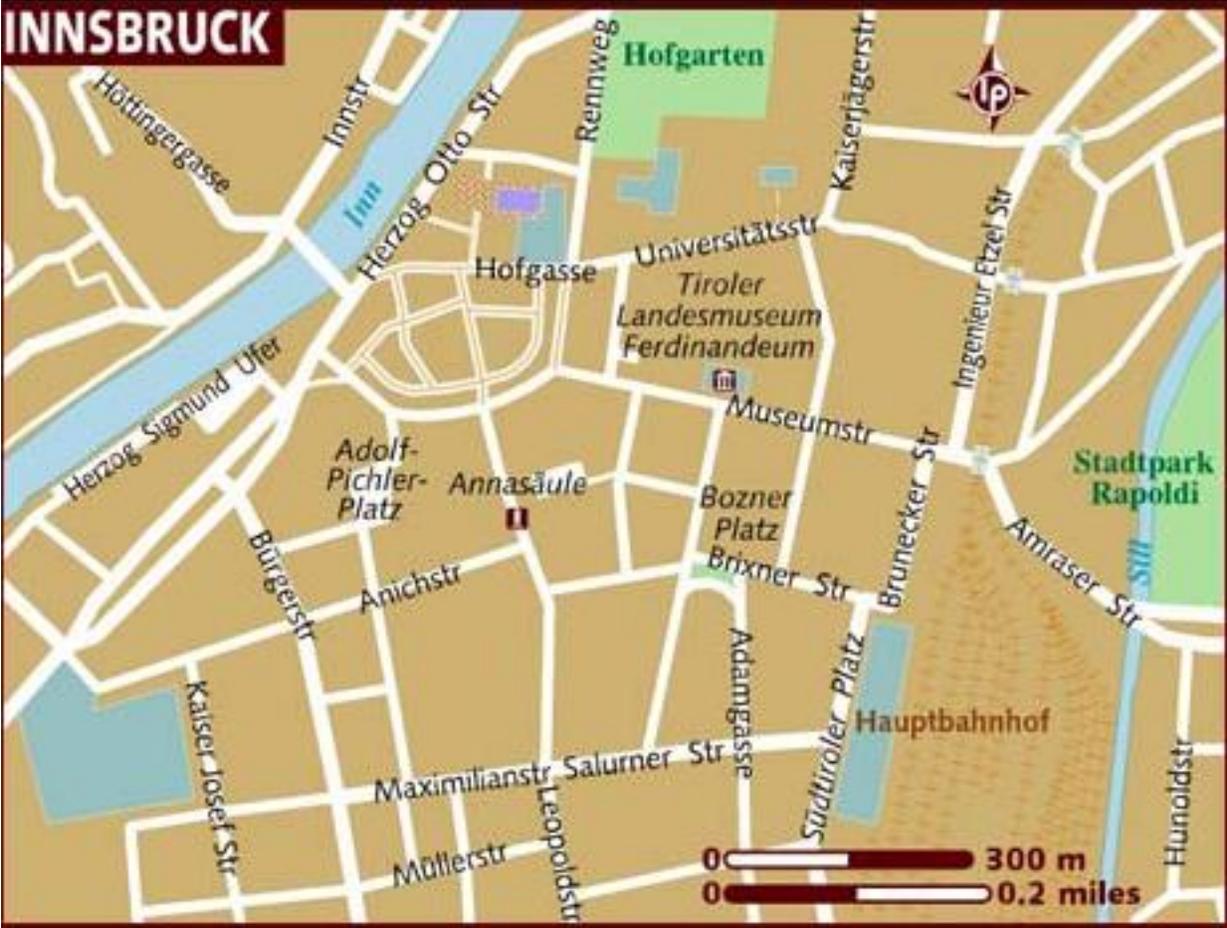
- Although there is a history of patriarchal family structure in Austria, business attitudes are quite liberal; female business travelers are unlikely to experience discrimination.
- Men and women shake hands upon greeting. The term "Fraulein" is only used for young women under the age of 18.
- Businesswomen are addressed as "Frau," whether they are married or single. Business dress is quite conservative. Women often wear dark suits and white blouses. Plain, muted, solid colors are common.

Health and Hospitals:

The standard of medical care in Austria is extremely high, and travelers should not encounter any difficulty with obtaining quality medical care. Austria has state maintained (public) hospitals and private hospitals. The best-known type of hospital is the public general hospital, which is set up to deal with many kinds of disease and injury, and typically has an emergency ward or department to deal with immediate threats to health.

All hospitals, except for some private clinics, are open to all insured patients.

Introduction to Innsbruck:



City Overview:

Innsbruck is the capital city of Tyrol in western Austria. It is in the Inn valley, at its junction with the Wipp valley, which provides access to the Brenner Pass some 30 km (18.6 mi) to the south.

Located in the broad valley between high mountains, the so-called North Chain in the Karwendel Alps (Hafelekarspitze, 2,334 metres or 7,657 feet) to the north, and the Patscherkofel (2,246 m or 7,369 ft) and Serles (2,718 m or 8,917 ft) to the south.

Innsbruck is an internationally renowned winter sports center and hosted the 1964 and 1976 Winter Olympics as well as the 1984 and 1988 Winter Paralympics. Innsbruck also hosted the first Winter Youth Olympics in 2012. The name translates as "Inn Bridge."

Transportation:

Innsbruck travelers should opt to make use of the public transportation in the area as frequently as possible. The public transportation system consists of two different modes of transportation: buses and trams. The buses are used for getting around Innsbruck relatively quickly and efficiently although inexpensively. The trams are used by tourists for seeing all of the major tourist attractions while gaining experience navigating Innsbruck.

The city bus system is a network of more than twenty bus lines, which cover all major areas of Innsbruck and its suburbs, operated by InnBus.

Food & Beverage:

Tafelspitz

This is considered the "national dish of Austria" and is the king of beef dishes in Vienna. It is a boiled beef broth served with horseradish on the side. The meat used is well-aged pieces of beef, from the bottom sirloin primal cut. Tafelspitz is simmered with root vegetables and spices in the broth. Many times, it will be served with roasted potato slices and a mix of apples and horseradish.

Apfelstrudel

One of the best known Austrian pastries is the Wiener Apfelstrudel. This delicious treat is a sweet layered pastry with an apple filling inside. The filling is made of grated cooking apples, sugar, cinnamon, raisins and bread crumbs.

Liptauer Cheese Spread

Liptauer is a spicy cheese spread made with sheep milk cheese, goat milk cheese or cottage cheese. The cheese is often spiced with paprika to give it a sharp, spicy taste. Liptauer cheese spread is usually served as an appetizer or snack in many restaurants.

Weiner Schnitzel

This classic Austrian dish is a very thin, breaded and deep-fried schnitzel that is made from veal. It is prepared from a butterfly cut and whipped together with eggs and bread crumbs. After that, it is fried to a crisp. Traditional wiener schnitzel in Austria is served with kopfsalat (lettuce tossed with a sweetened vinaigrette dressing), cucumber salad or potato salad.

City Attractions & Sightseeing:

Bergisel Ski Jump - this Olympic facility is a literal high point of any Innsbruck trip. At its peak, the structure reaches 820 feet above the city. From there, daredevil skiers fly off the Bergisel Ski Jump at up to 57 mph., only professionals should attempt this feat. But visiting to catch a ski jumping tournament or simply to venture to the top is still a thrill.

Cathedral of St. James - The tolling bells and multiple clocks of the Cathedral of St. James have kept the town on time for almost three centuries. But it's more than just an oversized clock; this church is also a fine example of Baroque architecture and an exhibition of the excessive wealth of the Hapsburg Empire.



Schloss Ambras - The 16th-century Schloss Ambras consists of two parts. In the Upper Castle you'll find numerous regal rooms to explore, not to mention a phenomenal portrait gallery featuring the works of Titian and Velázquez among others. But it's the Lower Castle that distinguishes this royal residence from other Germanic palaces. Conceived by Archduke Ferdinand II, this section hosts a large collection of armor and his "Chamber of Art and Curiosities," a fascinating assortment of bizarre objects.

Olympia SkiWorld Innsbruck - The Stats: 81 mountain railways and lifts, 170 miles of runs, a 7,710-foot vertical drop, and nine different parks. With those types of numbers, Olympia SkiWorld Innsbruck is a haven for winter sports enthusiasts. In theory, you might never have to ski the same run twice in a multiple-day stay; however, we are betting that after a thrilling first time you will want to repeat many of them. It also becomes easily apparent why Innsbruck was chosen as the site of the Winter Olympics not once, but twice.



Imperial Palace (Hofburg) - Sandwiched between the Golden Roof and the Cathedral of St. James, this imposing Baroque

palace was once the royal residence for many monarchs of the Hapsburg Empire. Dating back to the 16th century, its current exterior can be credited to Empress Maria Theresa, the powerful sovereign of the Holy Roman Empire and the mother of Marie Antoinette.

Welcome to the Czech Republic!



Overview & Country Facts:

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy, bordered by Germany to the west, Poland to the east, in addition to Slovakia and Austria to the south. The country is one of the more economically successful of the former communist bloc countries. The Czech Republic has become an increasingly attractive destination for both tourists and business travelers alike. The country has adequately weathered the European financial crisis, but protracted negative effects continue to pose challenges as the economy recovers.

Andrej Babis is the current prime minister of the Czech Republic. He has served since December 2017. During a lengthy business career, he rose to become the second richest man in the Czech Republic, with an estimated net worth of about \$4.04 billion according to Bloomberg. Much of this wealth came from his time as CEO and owner of the Agrofert Group, which owns two of the largest Czech newspapers. Milos Zeman has served as the president since early 2013, on a platform that emphasized gradual integration with the European Union. Zeman's critics have stated that Zeman uses appeals to populist themes and exercises his presidential authority to undermine the current government. Some have accused Zeman of attempting to alter the government by granting more powers to the president. While political issues ranging from the European Migrant Crisis to official corruption lead to demonstrations, the Czech Republic has a stable political and security environment.

The primary security concern in the Czech Republic is crime, specifically petty crime. Occasional demonstrations and protests occur in the country; such events generally remain peaceful. Although xenophobic violence occurs in the country, such incidents are unlikely to affect travelers. The Czech Republic's ties with the West and growing international presence have also made it a potential target for transnational terrorism. Czech security officials have increased security measures across the country even though the threat of terrorism is lower than that of countries in Western Europe. Although no attacks have occurred to date, officials have stated that they have thwarted at least one major

Country Facts:	
Official Country Name	Czech Republic
Type of Government	Parliamentary Republic
Leadership	President Milos Zeman; Prime Minister Andrej Babis
Capital	Prague
Official Language	Czech
Population	10.612 million (2020)
Ethnic Divisions	Czech (64.3%), Moravian (5.0%), Slovak (1.4%), Other (1.8%), Unspecified (27.5%)
Religion	Roman Catholic (10%), Protestant (0.8%), Orthodox (9%), Atheist (34%), undeclared (45%)
Growth	2.2% (2020)
Inflation	2.15% (2018)
Unemployment	2.2% (2019)
Currency	Czech koruna
Office Work Week	Monday – Friday
Time Zone Offset	UTC + 2 (Daylight Saving Time observed)
Country Phone Code	420
Capital City Phone Code	2, 31, 32
Nationwide Emergency Number(s)	112
Electricity	230 V, 50 Hz
Plug Styles	Types C, E

plot targeting Prague in the past.

Current Analysis:

- The Czech Republic currently has a center-left social democratic government that is opposed to austerity and in favor of closer relations with the West.
- Political infighting can threaten the implementation of necessary reforms.
- The resettlement of migrants remains a controversial issue for Czech voters. Demonstrations over migrant issues have led to violence.
- Czech leaders maintain friendly relations with both Russia and the West.

Political & Economical Developments:

Political Situation

President Milos Zeman of the social democratic Party of Civic Rights (SPO) came into power in March 2013, capitalizing on popular discontent over the previous government's handling of the country's economic downturn. Zeman's confrontational personality and criticism of official government policies on immigration and foreign policy continue to be a source of controversy within Czech politics.

Babiš was appointed Prime Minister on 6 December, and a week later formed a minority government composed of ANO 2011 figures as well as independents. He became the oldest and wealthiest person ever to become Prime Minister, as well as the first Prime Minister in the history of the Czech Republic to be from a different party than ODS or ČSSD. On 16 January 2018, his government lost motion of confidence in the Chamber of Deputies, requiring Babiš to form a second government, which became the first since the fall of Communism in 1989 to rely on support from the Communist Party.

The “Velvet Revolution” ended Czechoslovakia’s Communist dictatorship in 1989, and the Czech Republic became independent from Slovakia in 1993. President Miloš Zeman of the center-left Czech Social Democrat Party won a second term in 2018. Prime Minister Andrej Babis of the populist ANO movement, a billionaire former finance minister, formed a fragile minority coalition government in 2018 with the Social Democrats but relies on the support of the Communist Party. The return of the Communists to political power set off large protests in many cities. The Czech Republic’s prosperous market economy, led by automobile exports, boasts one of the European Union’s highest GDP growth rates, one of its lowest unemployment levels, and a rising standard of living.

International Relations

The EU's proposal to resettle migrants in the country continues to be a contentious domestic issue. Czech voters are overwhelmingly reluctant to host refugees from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, due to fears of terrorism and cultural incompatibility. Other members of the

European Council (EC), however, have asked Czech leaders to accept resettled migrants, despite domestic opposition. The EC proposal stated that the Czech Republic should accept approximately 1,500 people. These differences have led to political tensions between the Czech government and the European Union. Czechs frequently stage anti-migrant demonstrations that, at times, lead to small scuffles or violence, particularly in Prague and Brno.

The Czech Republic has traditionally followed a foreign policy of moderation between the West and Russia. Due to Prague's economic integration with the European Union and geographic distance from Russia's borders, it is able to act more independently from Moscow's influence. Despite this integration, however, the Czech Republic is one of the European Union's most circumspect members and continues to increase its economic ties with Russia. Many influential members of the political class, including President Zeman, have strong political and economic ties with Moscow. Western diplomatic efforts in response to Russia's involvement in the Ukraine crisis, however, have led to subtle shifts in Prague's normally amicable relationship with Moscow.

Economic Situation

The Czech Republic is a high income OECD market economy, closely integrated with other European Union members. Industrial products for export -- which include machinery, motor vehicles and armaments -- account for approximately 40 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Obstacles to growth include corruption, tax evasion and the need for large-scale educational reform.

The OECD projects stable economic growth for 2017 and 2018. Increasing labor demand is driving unemployment to a 20-year low and increasing wages for workers. These rising wages and reductions in tax evasion have reduced the government's budget deficit, and with an 11% minimum wage hike scheduled to take effect in 2017, incomes will continue to grow. These factors will fuel increases in domestic consumption and imports, but Brexit and declining growth in world trade will constrain exports.

Security Issues:

- Crime is the primary security concern in Czech Republic.
- Occasional demonstrations and protests occur in the country.
- The Czech Republic, particularly Prague, remains a potential target to transnational militant Islamist groups.

Crime

Crime is the primary security threat to travelers in Czech Republic. The crime rate in the Czech Republic is low to moderate, although the threat increases in larger cities and tourist centers. Petty theft is the most likely type of crime to affect travelers; violent crime is rare and usually does not impact travelers. Petty crime most often occurs in popular tourist areas, restaurants

and aboard public transportation, including on the subway, trams and trains. There have been reports of professional pick pocketing rings that target travelers in major cities. Passport theft and other tourist-targeting scams pose additional concerns to travelers. The most common scams involve currency exchange scams; therefore, offers to change money on the street should be ignored. Vehicle break-ins also occur frequently in cities.

ATM card skimming, where criminals steal the card and pin number, occurs in the Czech Republic, and travelers should only use ATMs at large commercial banks, major hotels, or the airport where the machines are more secure and closely monitored.

Machines with a green translucent strip at the card input slot have been outfitted with a device designed to inhibit skimming, and while criminals can still overcome these devices, travelers should feel comfortable using these machines as they are more secure. Travelers should also closely monitor bank and credit card activity while traveling.

Although xenophobic violence occurs in the Czech Republic on occasion, travelers are unlikely to be affected as most of these incidents occur in less populated areas.

A number of criminal organizations -- that are involved in armed robbery, extortion, protection rackets, prostitution and illegal trafficking -- operate in the Czech Republic. Conflicts between these groups sometimes spill onto the streets, but this is not common in the central areas of cities frequented by travelers. There is no evidence that organized criminal groups actively target Western travelers, but the possibility remains that they could become collateral victims.

Demonstrations and Strikes

Although civil unrest is not a significant problem in the Czech Republic, demonstrations and strikes occasionally occur and can affect travelers. Strikes in the transportation sector can be particularly disruptive. Demonstrations usually take place in Prague or other regional centers. Such actions vary in size from a few hundred to a few thousand participants, or more, and are often in response to political or international developments. The main concern with such events is the potential disruption of various services, including transportation. While there have been instances in which Czech police officers have used force against both participants and bystanders, most demonstrations remain peaceful. When violence does occur during protests, it is often linked to clashes between competing groups, such as far-right and far-left activists. Clashes between security forces and demonstrators have occurred at protests against the Roma community. Violent incidents have increased in areas with higher Roma populations, particularly in Northern Bohemia.

Terrorism

Although the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the Czech Republic is lower than in other European countries, the possibility cannot be fully discounted, particularly in light of past terrorist attacks in Europe. Prague remains a primary potential target due to its status as the

country's political and financial center. Despite periodic arrests and plots, no group has successfully staged an attack.

Country Tips

- Due to the ongoing European refugee crisis, travelers should remain aware that potential travel disruptions, involving train and car transportation, can occur with little warning especially near the border with Austria. Although the ongoing crisis has not affected the Czech Republic as much as other European countries so far, potential remains for the situation to change.
- Due to government regulations, smoking is prohibited in administrative buildings, sports facilities, theaters, cinemas and schools, as well as at train, bus and tram stops.
- While tap water in the Czech Republic is safe to drink, many travelers use bottled water.

Customs & Immigration:

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Passports and Visas A passport is required to enter the Czech Republic. The following exceptions to the visa rule include, but are not limited to:

European Economic Area (EAA) States: Holders of National Identity Cards from EEA member states* may enter the Czech Republic with their National Identity Card, except if they are from the following countries: Denmark, Republic of Ireland, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

Holders of a National Identity Card from the following countries/territories: Switzerland, San Marino and Monaco

Emergency Passports: Nationals from Belgium, Canada, Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden or the United Kingdom who hold emergency passports.

*Member states include: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Visas are required to enter the Czech Republic .The following exceptions to the visa rule include, but are not limited to:

- Country Exceptions: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

- British passports: Holders of British passports that are marked "British Citizen."
- Transit Without Visa: Transit without a visa is possible, if travelers have onward tickets for the same calendar day.

There are no vaccinations required to enter the Czech Republic from any country.

Entry/Departure Taxes

There are no airport taxes levied upon travelers at Czech Republic airports.

Imports and Exports

Travelers, who purchase goods within the European Union for personal use, can import up to the following designated amounts of the following goods duty-free:

- 800 cigarettes, 400 cigarillos (max. 3 grams each), 200 cigars and 1 kg of tobacco;
- 10 liters of spirits over 22 percent and ethyl alcohol, 20 liters of alcoholic beverages less than 22 percent volume; 90 liters of wine and 110 liters of beer.

Travelers from non-European Union countries, who are over the age of 17, can import up to the following designated amounts of the following goods duty-free:

- 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos (max. 3 grams each) or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco;*
- 1 liter of spirits exceeding 22 percent volume or non-denatured ethyl alcohol of 80 percent volume (or greater) or a proportional mix, or 4 liters of still wine; 16 liters of beer; and
- Other items up to a value of 430 euro for air and sea travelers.

Prohibitions and restrictions on drugs, medicines, weapons, explosive materials and pornographic materials are covered by national legislation.

There are no restrictions on the amount of foreign currency that can be imported, if the traveler is arriving to or from another European Union state. Travelers arriving from a non-EU state must declare any currency that exceeds 10,000 euro (or the equivalent in other currencies).

Currency:

The currency of the Czech Republic is the Czech koruna (CZK), sometimes referred to as the Czech crown. Banknotes are issued in denominations of 100, 200, 500, 1,000 and 2,000 korun. Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 korun. Previously, one koruna was divided into 100 hellers; however, hellers were removed from circulation in 2008. The Czech Republic is expected to shift its currency from the koruna to the euro eventually.

Communications:

The telecommunications infrastructure of the Czech Republic is well developed and comparable to those of other European Union (EU) countries. While the availability of fixed lines has decreased since the 1990s, mobile phone usage has increased sharply since then. Similarly, internet usage has increased rapidly as well, and accessibility is widespread.

Czech Republic Country Code: 420

Prague City Code: 2/31/32

Brno City Code: 54

Calling Czech Republic landline from abroad: Country exit code + 420 + city code + phone number

Calling Czech Republic mobile phone from abroad: Country exit code + 420 + mobile code* + phone number

Calling Czech Republic landline from within country: City code + phone number

Calling Czech Republic mobile phone from within country: Mobile code* + phone number

Making international calls from Czech Republic: 00 + country code + city code + phone number

**Mobile code varies by call recipient's provider; mobile code consists of three digits.*

Cultural Information:

Language

Czech is the official language of the Czech Republic, with over 95 percent of the population speaking it as a first language. Czech is extremely similar to Slovak, and the two languages are largely mutually intelligible. Many people in Prague speak at least some English; however, English is not common outside the capital city.

Cultural Tips

- Initial meetings are usually formal. Visitors should wait to use a person's first name until invited.
- Gift giving is common upon arrival as a guest to someone's home. The gifts are considered a warm gesture and need not be expensive.
- If giving flowers, give an odd number, except for 13, which is considered unlucky.
- Tipping is an optional practice at restaurants; however, if the service is good, a tip of 5-10 percent is usually expected. For taxis, round the fare up for the tip.

Tips for Female Travelers

In highly conservative cultures, foreign women may be perceived as promiscuous, inviting unwelcome or violent advances. Female travelers, in turn, are likely to encounter cultural mores that may initially seem startling or offensive. The purpose of this section is to apprise female travelers of such attitudes and customs, offer means to respond without giving offense, and promote a heightened sense for security among female travelers. The information offered below is not intended as advice, nor is it necessarily comprehensive in presenting the challenges female travelers may face. UnitedHealthcare Global encourages female travelers to thoroughly research the areas to which they travel to determine what precautionary measures to take and what to do should they become victims of crime while traveling.

- Although there is a history of patriarchal family structure in the Czech Republic, business attitudes are quite liberal; female business travelers are unlikely to experience discrimination. Men are the titular heads of households, but most women work outside the home.
- The most common form of greeting is shaking hands. A man usually waits for a woman to extend her hand. On formal occasions, elderly Czech men may kiss a woman's hand, although foreign men are not expected to do so.
- When a man and a woman walk together along the street, the man usually walks on the side of the curb. When two women walk together, the younger one walks closer to the curb.
- The most senior member of a group often enters a room before the others; among peers, men precede women. This is not considered sexist; conventional wisdom has it that the tradition dates back to times when men would enter first to assure the premises were safe.
- Some Czech men will rise when a woman enters the room. Business dress is quite conservative. Khakis are not acceptable. Women often wear dark suits and white blouses.

Health & Hospitals:

Overall, the Czech Republic has a good health care system with care available throughout the entire country in both the public and private sectors. A relatively high-quality level of care is available in public facilities in large cities, though many hospitals and clinics are run down and lack up-to-date equipment. Private hospitals and clinics, providing both inpatient and outpatient care, are easily accessible throughout the Czech Republic, but do not provide a tertiary level of care or major emergency care as a rule. UnitedHealthcare Global recommends that travelers and foreign visitors seek care in private facilities over public facilities in terms of quality of care, service and the range of specialties available. Nurses and doctors in the Czech Republic are well-educated. Many have had training abroad, mostly in Western Europe but sometimes in North America as well, and the Czech Medical Chamber requires life-long education of all physicians to ensure continued medical excellence. Almost 2/3 of doctors in the Czech Republic are trained as specialists. Nurses are required to finish four years of vocational training at a secondary school for nurses or a two to three-year university program after graduation.

Introduction to Prague:

City Overview:

Prague, the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic and located alongside the Vltava River
Prague is home to a number of famous cultural attractions, many of which survived the violence and destruction of twentieth century Europe.

City Facts:	
Status:	Capital
Population:	1.319 million

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Prague has become one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. It is the sixth-most-visited European city after London, Paris, Rome, Madrid and Berlin. Prague suffered considerably less damage during World War II than some other major cities in the region, allowing most of its historic architecture to stay true to form. It contains one of the world's most pristine and varied collections of architecture, from Romanesque, to Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Gothic, Art Nouveau, Cubist, Neo-Classical and ultra-modern.

Transportation:

Prague has one of the best public transportation systems in Europe. The metro, trams, and buses are used by two-thirds of Prague's population and cover the majority of the city and outskirts.

The metro especially makes getting around town a breeze since it enables you to cover long distances in a matter of minutes. If you can't continue to your destination on foot, you'll be able to catch a tram or bus from near the subway station.

The traffic situation in the city has become pretty bad over the past decade but taxis are still an option for transportation. There are tourist passes that you can buy that will enable you to use any type of mass transit as many times as you want within the time period for which your pass is valid.

Map of Prague Public Transportation:



Food & Beverage:

Food:

Beef Steak Tartare

It's raw beef that is cut, scraped or minced and that is served with condiments and an egg on top, or simply sold premixed. It is eaten with toasted bread and a clove of garlic: you rub the garlic on the rough surface of the toast, and put a generous portion of the meat on top for the perfect textural contrast.

Kulajda

A creamy potato soup with mushrooms, dill, vinegar and a poached egg on top.

Goulash

Just like the schnitzel, the goulash is shared all across the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, but while the Hungarian version is soupy and is eaten with a spoon, the Czech version is a thicker stew, usually using a cheaper cut of beef, and served with dumplings.

Fruit Dumplings

Dumplings filled with fruit and served in a deeper dish with melted butter, sugar and other sweet condiments.

Beverage:

Fernet

Fernet is an herbal beverage. It comes in different variants, Stock (or bitter), Citrus (Lemon) and is best served cold or with ice.

Slivovice

An alcoholic beverage made from plums. Different variants of this type of drink are made of other fruits and come in aromas like: pears, apricot, etc.

City Attractions & Sightseeing:

Old Town Square - Old Town Square is a popular spot in Prague, with travelers flocking here in droves for its beautiful architecture, colorful history and vibrant atmosphere. The square hasn't changed much since it was established in the 12th century when it functioned as the city's original marketplace.

Prague Astronomical Clock - Located in the Old Town Square, the Prague Astronomical Clock has been around since the 15th century, though it has required repairs many times over its history.

Charles Bridge - The Charles Bridge connects Old Town and Lesser Town. Visitors come here to soak up the atmosphere, buy souvenirs and to take in the 30 saint statues that line the bridge. Dating back to 1357, the statues were crafted between 1683 to 1928 to honor numerous saints.

Prague Castle - Holding the record for the largest coherent castle complex in the world, Prague Castle serves double duty as the residence of the Czech president and a popular tourist destination. The complex where it stands is also home to several other attractions.

Dancing House - The bizarrely designed Dancing House is closed to the public. Still, travelers like to come take photos of the unique structure. Original design plans were conceived by Vlado Miluni in 1992 (with assistance by architect Frank Gehry), and construction was completed in 1996.

Jewish Quarter (Josefov) - Josefov, Prague's historic Jewish Quarter, is home to several significant sites, including a number of important synagogues like the Spanish Synagogue and the Old New Synagogue.



