

# Are you ready to tour Europe?

U.S. citizens residing in Germany, the “heart” of Europe, have many opportunities to visit other foreign countries and experience different cultures. In order to prevent complications or delays when entering these countries and to make your holiday as trouble-free as possible, the Ramstein Passport Office would like to provide a few facts and tips for you.

While many borders to neighboring countries are open with no checkpoints, each country has specific entry requirements and visitors must have the necessary travel documents on hand. We recommend reviewing the Foreign Clearance Guide at <https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil/> to find out if a passport and possibly a visa are required before making any travel plans. Please note that this website can only be accessed from a government computer.

**Travel documents for military personnel:** Military members initially enter Germany using their ID card and PCS orders. While that is sufficient to reside in Germany during their assignment, military members planning to travel to other countries should apply for a tourist passport since many countries require one for entry. When on leisure travel outside of Germany, each military member should carry their military ID, approved leave form and their tourist passport.

**Travel documents for civilians and all family members:** U.S. civilians on official orders and family members of civilian and military personnel will receive no-fee passports with a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) stamp prior to PCSing to Germany. This passport may only be used for official travel to Germany and other authorized travel. These members should acquire a tourist passport if they plan to visit other foreign countries and carry both no-fee and tourist passports when crossing the German border as verification of their SOFA status. When entering the country visiting for leisure travel, they should present the tourist passport. When re-entering Germany, they will need to present the no-fee passport with SOFA stamp. Local hire U.S. civilians, contractors and non-command-sponsored family members possessing only a tourist passport are authorized a SOFA certificate for their passport to show their affiliation with the military. This also authorizes them to reenter Germany while on leisure travel. The use of a no-fee passport for leisure travel is not authorized; members will be traveling at their own risk and may be denied entry to a foreign country.

**Leisure Travel in the Schengen Area:** The Schengen Area is the world’s largest visa-free zone. It is comprised of 29 European countries that have abolished passport and any other type of border controls at their common borders, which means the area serves as a single country for international travel purposes with a common visa policy. Those countries are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. **U.S. citizens must be in possession of a tourist passport that is valid for at least 6 months when entering the Schengen area. U.S. citizens are not required to obtain a Schengen visa for tourism or business travel for up to 90 days within a 180-day period.** The Schengen Calculator at <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/visa-calculator/> helps keep track of your travel dates to ensure you are not overstaying your 90-day visa waiver period.

**Travel Tips:** Always check the validity of your passport(s) and renew them at least 6 months prior to the expiration date. Timely planning is especially important as regular processing times for tourist passports are between 6 to 8 weeks.

Most importantly, always safeguard your passports to prevent loss or theft, especially when visiting metropolitan areas such as Paris, London, Barcelona or Rome. If your passport is lost or stolen in a foreign country, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate immediately and apply for a replacement passport if needed. Be proactive and look up the nearest Embassy or Consulate address and contact information prior to your trip. It is also a good idea to keep a copy of the data/photo page of your passport with you separately while traveling in case of loss or theft.

Always be prepared for weather changes and carry extra clothes or rain gear. Look up local customs, tourist attractions or frequently used expressions. While many Europeans speak English, they all appreciate you talking to them in their language. For more information regarding leisure travels and tours, you may contact the Ramstein Tickets and Tours (RTT) Office at DSN 314-480-6330/6650 or Civ +49 6371-476330 or visit their web site at <https://www.rttravel.com/fly>.

If you follow above guidance, you should be ready to tour Europe and enjoy the many sights and local customs. If you have any additional questions regarding passports or SOFA status, please contact the Ramstein Passport Office at [786fss.passports@us.af.mil](mailto:786fss.passports@us.af.mil).

**Traveling around Europe is as easy as 1, 2, 3! 1. Check the Foreign Clearance Guide. 2. Bring all required documents any time you leave Germany. 3. Enjoy your trip!**

*Courtesy of the Ramstein Passport Office (5 August 2024)*