

## LOCATION

**Country:** Germany

**Town:** Ramstein, Rhineland-Palatinate

**Base:** 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, NATO Allied Air Component Command Headquarters.

**Other info to Consider:**

- Family (non-dependents) can visit and stay 90 days **without a visa** (Schengen Area).
- American base, 100% ID check coming onto the base.
- For your HHT, you will need to coordinate with another Canadian member to sign you into the base and will require your passport, your posting message, and your NATO travel order for the HHT.

## POPULATION

**Size:** 7,930

**Ethnicity:** Mostly Germans, though the American population is substantial, thanks to the large base.

**Religion:** As of 2018, 40.3% of the population of the state adhered to the Roman Catholic Church and 26.8% to the Evangelical Church in Germany; 32.9% of the population is irreligious or adheres to other religions.

Muslims made up 5.0% of the total. Germany is the second most popular country in the world for immigrants. Also, there is a large number of Syrian refugees (estimated 700,000) in Germany.

## LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** German.

**Prevalence of French or English:** English as a second language.

- Most establishments will have an English-speaking employee. However, English is not spoken freely and commonly. Limited to no French.

## COST OF LIVING

**Exchange rate to consider:** Euro

- Groceries and restaurants are typically cheaper in Germany than in Canada.
- Clothing and furniture are often more expensive.
- Gas is more expensive; however, Aral fuel cards allow members and their dependents to purchase gas tax-free from Aral stations.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

**Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:**

- The climate in this area has mild differences between highs and lows, and there is adequate rainfall year-round. The Köppen Climate Classification subtype for this climate is "Cfb" (Marine West Coast Climate/Oceanic climate). The fall and winter bring lots of cloudy and rainy days, and some light snow (which does not stay long), but the weather is so mild that outdoor activities such as running, biking, and hiking can be enjoyed all year long (and there are so many trails everywhere, it is hard not to).

**Laws and culture:**

- Germans are traditional and pride themselves on being organized, professional, and having a good work/life balance. Germans enforce laws (for example - a ticket on the spot for jay-walking). Germans are known to be rule followers and do not take kindly to those who don't adhere to rules and social norms.
- Customer service can be lacking.
- The drinking age for beer and wine in Germany is 14 with parents present, and 16 without parents. The drinking age is 18 for all other alcohol (i.e. spirits). Alcohol is sold in grocery stores; public alcohol consumption is allowed. Smoking is much more common in Germany than in Canada (in general and in public places).
- Cigarettes are available in vending machines on street corners.
- Germans LOVE their dogs and they are welcome everywhere (restaurants, some stores, bars, festivals, and malls) if behaved properly. However, if a dog is aggressive or disruptive, it will not be welcome to enter businesses.

- You must be at least 18 years old to drive a vehicle in Germany. An International Driving Permit is recommended. You should apply for one before leaving Canada.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05%. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines, and your driver's licence may be confiscated immediately.

#### **Safety and security:**

- Violent crime is rare but does occur.
- Exercise normal security precautions and be particularly vigilant if attending large events.
- Petty crime (pickpocketing and purse snatching) occurs in major cities and train stations, airports and Christmas markets.
- Pickpockets often work in teams and target people on trains and at railway stations and airports. Their methods include distracting a victim who is boarding or exiting a train or surrounding a victim in line-ups or at check-in counters.
- Individuals have been harassed or attacked for reasons of race or foreign-looking appearance.
- Ensure that personal belongings, including passports and other travel documents, are secure at all times.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorists have carried out attacks in several European cities. In Germany, previous incidents have resulted in injury and death. They include random violent assaults in public areas and a truck driven into crowds at a Christmas market in Berlin. Further attacks in Europe are likely.
- Demonstrations may occur. Even peaceful demonstrations can turn violent at any time. They can also lead to traffic and public transportation disruptions.

#### **Level of isolation:**

- French-speaking spouses may feel very isolated if they don't speak English at all.
- There are 15-20 other Canadian families in this location.

## **HOUSING**

- Pets might not be accepted.
- Member to rent housing in the local community. Finding furnished accommodations is possible.
- Most homes and flats are much bigger compared to Canada's average.
- Good rentals do not stay on the market for very long.
- It's become customary for Canadian families to "hand down" rentals from one departing family to an incoming one.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

**Are there employment opportunities for spouses?** Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Germany is not a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should be prepared to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting.

**Op tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on the position. TD is possible.

## **HEALTH CARE**

**Access:** The German healthcare system is fast and effective.

- English services are widely available, but French is very limited
- The CFSU(E) Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen (200 km) is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP.
- Access for dependents is through the base hospital, though we do not qualify for TriCare as Canadians, so you will be billed for visits (which you can claim).

#### **Special needs:**

- Depending on the language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, but very limited.
- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on the availability of English/French providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

### Consideration for pregnancy/birthing:

- Members and their dependents will be referred to a local doctor (English-speaking) to monitor them throughout their pregnancy.

### Dental:

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses.

## SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically in Ramstein and St-David's, there is also an International School in Ramstein; CEM approval is on a case-by-case basis.
- The DoDea schools are ENORMOUS and Canadian students are admitted via a "space available" program meaning, if the grade is full, your child will NOT be accepted.
- If your child is anywhere out of their enrollment regulations (i.e.: birth date), they will NOT do a waiver for your child and they will NOT be admitted to the school, no matter what they tell you.
- You will not find out for sure whether your child will be able to attend the DoDea school until one or two working days before school starts (again, this is thanks to the "space available" program).
- There is no pre-kindergarten, and the toddler program they offer has such limited space that most American families wanting to get in don't (so they will never get to Canadians).
- The International School is a HIGH QUALITY, small, private school, with caring and extremely competent staff and teachers. Its size allows for a sort of community among the parents, many of whom are NATO families (teaching is in English).

### Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not available.
- The DoDea schools teach a high-quality American curriculum. The International School teaches a blended curriculum, which depends on the school.
- The International School teaches a blended curriculum, which is similar to a British curriculum, but with aspects from other types. They also teach the students four hours of German every week. After-school care is offered on the premises until 17:00.

### Resources for special needs children:

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and the school before making any commitments.

## CHILDCARE

- Local German childcare is available.
- Eligibility for German childcare is based on geographical location, and families must live within the same designated area as the childcare provider.
- Families can visit their local town hall to find out what childcare providers are open to them.
- When choosing local childcare there is no guarantee that staff will speak English or French.
- Military Childcare Child Development Center (CDC) on-base childcare is provided by the American military and is open to children from six weeks to kindergarten, with full-time and hourly care available. Two locations are available: Ramstein and Vogelweh.
- The School Age Program (SAC) on-base childcare is provided by the American military and is open to children ages 5-12. Programs offered include before and after-school care, camps during winter, spring, and summer breaks, and daily care for school holidays. Two locations are available: Ramstein and Vogelweh.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Airports: Francfort (FRA) 120 km, Luxembourg (LUX) 135 km, and Sarrebruck-Ensheim (SCN) 50 km.
- Germany has excellent train and bus services.
- Road-worthy vehicle is needed, as car safety checks are mandatory.
- As bicycles are a common form of transportation, bike paths and lanes are common, and bicycles are treated as a vehicle when driving on roads.

## RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

### Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No, but remote services are available from MFS(E) Niederheid, Germany.

### Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only. The CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located in Belgium.

#### **Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection):**

- Good, depending on the provider and location.
- High-speed Internet is not consistently available.
- Hook-up can take up to six weeks and scheduling appointments is difficult for non-German speakers.
- German house construction makes getting Wi-Fi in all parts of the house difficult, so boosters are necessary.

## **ACTIVITIES**

#### **Access to sports or other leisure activities:**

- Many. There are wonderful public pools in the area (outside of the base pool), with outdoor and indoor pools. Swimming lessons are a little hard to access, but competitive swimming clubs are available. There are martial arts clubs run in English, lots of cross-fit classes and clubs, and yoga classes in English.

**Availability of playgrounds:** Yes

## **RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER**

#### **Are common-law relationships recognized?**

- Yes, a registered partnership offers many of the same rights as marriage except in the areas of taxation and adoption.

#### **Are same-sex couples recognized?**

- Yes, Germany does not recognize same sex-marriages as marriage, but it does recognize it as a registered partnership.

#### **Medications that are illegal in the country:**

- Cannabis is illegal in Germany.
- While not illegal, medications that would be available over the counter in Canada (such as aspirin, ibuprofen, cough syrup, etc.) must be obtained from a pharmacist in Germany.
- Stores will typically only carry vitamins and not any medication.
- Canadian over-the-counter medication can be obtained from the CFSU(E) Canadian Pharmacy on the Selfkant Kaserne(CFSU(E)) in Niederheid, Germany

#### **Other considerations:**

- Pharmacy has most needed medications. Sometimes language might be an issue.
- Difficult finding distilled water for CPAP machines.
- Banned dog breeds: American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and English Bull Terrier.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- European Commission Country Reports (2022)  
[https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- Canadian Travel Advisories  
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager from the US)  
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/germany>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-germany>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)  
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

## **For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below**

- MFS(E) Social Worker Andrea Liss: [liss.andrea@cfmws.com](mailto:liss.andrea@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Niederheid: + 49 (0) 2451 717 500, [MFSE.Selfkant-Kaserne@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Selfkant-Kaserne@cfmws.com)
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, [MFS.Europe@cfmws.com](mailto:MFS.Europe@cfmws.com)