



# An Expat's Guide

Moving to Berlin for tech



# Pleased to meet you

We're Orange Quarter. We help companies hire the builders behind the future of tech and AI.

Our team operates across New York, London, Amsterdam and Berlin, embedded in early-stage tech ecosystems where new products, teams and companies are built from zero. Berlin has long been a core part of that story — both for the companies we work with and the talent we support relocating to Germany.

Over the years, we've helped Product, Engineering and AI leaders move to Berlin to join Seed–Series C companies across software, platforms and emerging technologies. Many of us have made the move ourselves, navigating visas, housing, registration and the realities of settling into life in Germany's capital. We've learned what works, what doesn't, and how to make the process smoother.

If you're considering a role in Berlin, or planning a move to Germany to join an early-stage tech company, this guide is designed to help you make that transition with clarity and confidence

## 5 reasons we love living and working in Berlin

### A leading early-stage tech hub

Berlin remains one of Europe's most active startup cities, particularly for Seed–Series C companies across software, fintech, climate and AI.

### International by nature

Berlin is Germany's most international city, with English widely used in tech workplaces and a strong global talent community.

### Still relatively affordable

While costs have risen, Berlin remains more affordable than cities like London, Paris or Amsterdam, particularly when it comes to rent and everyday living.

### Strong creative and cultural scene

Few cities rival Berlin's music, arts and nightlife. The city's creative energy continues to attract founders, operators and builders from around the world.

### Room to build long term

Berlin offers space — professionally and personally. For many, it's a city where a short-term move turns into a long-term base.

# Working

Before relocating to Berlin, it's important to understand how the local tech market operates and what this means for your career.

Berlin is one of Europe's most established startup cities, particularly at Seed–Series C. The city attracts founders and operators building new products across software, fintech, climate tech and AI, often with international teams and global ambitions from day one.

For international candidates, Berlin offers a relatively accessible entry point into the German market, with strong demand for experienced Product, Engineering and AI professionals and a hiring culture that values ownership and adaptability.

In this section, we outline how to approach your job search, how hiring typically works in Berlin, and what to expect when relocating for a role.

## Index

[Finding work](#)



[Residence Permits](#)



[Choosing the right recruiter](#)



[Annual Leave and Siestas](#)



[Berlin salaries](#)



## Finding Work

Berlin offers a high volume of tech roles, but competition for the most interesting early-stage positions can be strong. While job boards are a useful starting point, many critical hires — particularly at senior or specialist level — are filled through direct outreach and referrals.

### Getting started

#### *Understand the market*

Berlin's ecosystem spans everything from very early-stage startups to later-stage scale-ups. Knowing what stage you want to join will help focus your search.

#### *Optimise your LinkedIn profile*

LinkedIn is widely used by German startups and recruiters, especially for international hiring. Clear articulation of impact, scope and ownership is key.

#### *Leverage your network*

Referrals and warm introductions play a major role in Berlin hiring. Let recruiters, former colleagues and founders know you're considering a move.

#### *Work with specialist recruiters*

Recruiters embedded in Berlin's tech scene understand which companies hire internationally, how visa sponsorship works, and what profiles are in demand. This is particularly important if you're relocating from outside Germany.

#### *Secure a role before relocating*

Most international candidates secure a job before moving. This simplifies visa processes and reduces uncertainty when relocating.

### Choosing the right recruiter

If you're relocating to Berlin, the recruiter you work with can have a significant impact on both the outcome of your search and how smoothly the move itself goes.

Berlin's tech market relies heavily on direct hiring and headhunting, particularly for Product, Engineering and AI roles. Many early-stage companies prefer to work with a small number of trusted recruiters rather than advertising roles publicly.

### Work with a specialist

A good recruiter will specialise in your function and understand the realities of Berlin's startup ecosystem. This includes knowing which companies:

- Hire in English
- Sponsor visas for international candidates
- Are building new teams rather than maintaining existing ones

Local market knowledge is particularly important in Berlin, where hiring practices can vary widely between startups and more traditional German companies.

### Expect transparency

A strong recruiter will be upfront about:

- Role expectations and company stage
- Salary ranges and equity structures
- Visa requirements and timelines

They should also be clear about where your profile fits in the market and which opportunities are realistically achievable.

## Do your due diligence

Ask recruiters about their experience placing international candidates in Berlin, the types of companies they work with, and how they support candidates through offer and relocation stages. Recommendations and reviews can also be helpful indicators.

Choosing the right recruiter won't just help you secure a role — it can make the difference between a stressful move and a well-managed transition into life in Berlin.

See what our candidates say about us on [Google Reviews](#)

Or better yet, [contact us!](#)

## Berlin Salaries

Salaries in Berlin's tech market vary depending on role, experience level and company stage. Early-stage startups often offer lower base salaries paired with equity, while later-stage scale-ups tend to provide higher fixed compensation and more established benefits.

Compared to cities like London or New York, salaries are generally lower, but this is often balanced by Berlin's relatively affordable cost of living and strong quality of life.

When speaking with a recruiter, salary expectations are usually aligned early in the process. Recruiters will advise on what is realistic for your profile and support negotiations during offer stages to help secure the best overall package.

## Residence permits in Germany

If you plan to stay long term, you must register your address (Anmeldung) with the local authorities shortly after arrival. This registration is required for employment, banking and health insurance.

If you're an EU / EEA or Swiss citizen...

You can live and work in Germany without a visa. This registration at your home address is still required.

If you're a UK citizen...

UK nationals are treated as non-EU citizens. To live and work in Germany, you will need a residence permit. In most cases, this is arranged through employer sponsorship under a recognised visa route, such as the EU Blue Card or a skilled worker residence permit.

If you're coming from outside the EU...

Non-EU nationals generally require both a residence permit and permission to work. Applications are typically processed through the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the local immigration office (Ausländerbehörde). The process can take time, so securing a role with a company experienced in hiring internationally is strongly recommended.

Spouses and family members...

Partners and dependants may be eligible to join you under family reunification rules. Requirements depend on nationality and visa type, so documentation and timelines should be reviewed early in the process.

## To apply for a German working residence permit, you'll need:

For most non-EU candidates, the application is initiated after securing a job and is processed through the local Ausländerbehörde (Foreigners' Office). Requirements vary slightly by permit type, but you will typically need:

- A valid passport
- A signed employment contract or binding job offer from a German employer
- Proof the role meets requirements for the relevant visa type (e.g. Skilled Worker or EU Blue Card)
- Proof you meet the minimum salary threshold (where applicable)
- Proof of qualifications (degree certificates or professional credentials, if required)
- Proof of health insurance valid in Germany
- Passport photographs meeting German requirements

Depending on your nationality and visa type, you may also be required to:

- Provide a clean criminal record declaration
- Undergo a medical check or tuberculosis (TB) test
- Submit officially translated or apostilled documents

In most cases, your employer or recruiter will guide you through the process and confirm exactly which documents are required for your specific situation.



## Annual leave and siestas

Germany has strong labour protections and places a high value on work-life balance.

The statutory minimum annual leave entitlement is 20 days per year based on a five-day working week. In practice, most tech companies offer 25–30 days, plus public holidays.

Working hours are clearly defined, and overtime is not typically expected as standard. Many companies operate flexible or hybrid working models, and it's common for employees to fully disconnect outside of working hours.

This balance between structure and flexibility is one of the reasons many international candidates choose to build long-term careers in Berlin.

# Practicalities

You've decided that Germany is where you want to be. You've begun your job search — or secured a role — and now it's time to think about the practical side of relocating.

Moving to Berlin involves a number of administrative steps, from registering your address to setting up healthcare, banking and utilities. In this section, we cover the key things you'll need to organise to ensure a smooth transition into life in Germany's capital.



## Index

<a href="#"><u>Language</u></a>	>	<a href="#"><u>Buying property in Berlin</u></a>	>
<a href="#"><u>Weather</u></a>	>	<a href="#"><u>Getting around</u></a>	>
<a href="#"><u>Moving</u></a>	>	<a href="#"><u>Healthcare</u></a>	>
<a href="#"><u>Finding a rental</u></a>	>	<a href="#"><u>Bank account</u></a>	>
<a href="#"><u>Getting Connected</u></a>	>		

## Language

Berlin is one of Europe's most international cities, and English is widely spoken — particularly within tech companies and startup environments. Many expats are able to work comfortably in English, especially in Product, Engineering and AI roles.

That said, German is still the official language, and learning at least the basics will make everyday life much easier. Tasks such as dealing with government offices, healthcare providers and landlords are often handled in German. Even a small amount of language knowledge goes a long way and is generally well received.

## Weather

Berlin experiences four distinct seasons. Winters are cold and can dip below freezing, while summers are warm and often spent outdoors in parks, lakes and beer gardens.

Weather can be unpredictable, particularly in spring and autumn, so layers and a good rain jacket are essential. Long daylight hours in summer contrast sharply with short, dark days in winter, which can take some adjustment if you're relocating from a warmer climate.

## Moving

When relocating to Berlin, how you move your belongings will depend largely on where you're coming from and how much you plan to bring with you. There are a few common approaches expats tend to take.

## International removals company

Hiring an international removals company is the most hands-off option. These companies handle packing, transport and delivery, which can be useful if you're moving furniture or relocating with family. This option is generally more expensive, particularly for smaller moves.

## Shipping container or air freight

Shipping your belongings via sea or air freight is a popular option for international moves. Air freight is faster but significantly more expensive, while shipping containers are more cost-effective for larger volumes but take longer to arrive.

If you go down this route, check whether door-to-door delivery is included, as port-to-home transport is sometimes charged separately.

## Drive your items yourself

If you're relocating from within Europe and travelling light, driving your belongings yourself can be a practical and economical option. Many expats moving to Berlin choose this route, particularly if they're moving into furnished accommodation.

## Finding a rental

Berlin's rental market is competitive, especially in popular neighbourhoods. Demand continues to outstrip supply, and it's common for well-priced apartments to receive a high number of applications.

Compared to cities like London or Amsterdam, Berlin is still relatively affordable, but rents have increased steadily over recent years. Many newcomers choose to rent a room in a shared apartment (WG – Wohngemeinschaft) when they first arrive. This can help keep costs down and make it easier to live in a central area.

Most long-term rental contracts are issued for a minimum of 12 months, so it's important to choose an area you'd be happy living in for at least a year. Start your search early and be prepared to move quickly when you find something suitable.

#### Tips when searching for a place to live

- Choose a neighbourhood based on the lifestyle you want
- Start your search as early as possible
- Prepare key documents in advance (ID, contract, proof of income)
- Ask friends, colleagues or recruiters for advice
- Be cautious of scams and avoid transferring money without a signed contract

Landlords commonly request a security deposit of up to three months' rent, along with proof of income or savings.

#### Property rental websites to check out

- [ImmobilienScout24](#) – Germany's largest property portal, widely used for long-term rentals.
- [WG-Gesucht](#) – Particularly useful for shared apartments and short-term lets.
- [Wunderflats](#) – Popular with expats looking for furnished, mid-term accommodation.
- Facebook groups – Often used for rooms and sublets, though competition is high.

If you're searching from abroad, many landlords and agents now offer virtual viewings, but some expats prefer to secure short-term accommodation first and then search in person.

# Where to live in the city?

Berlin is made up of a collection of distinct neighbourhoods, each with its own character, pace and community. The city is well connected by public transport, so living outside the centre doesn't necessarily mean a long commute.

Some popular areas to consider when house hunting include Mitte, Neukölln, Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg. Read a bit about each below.



## a. Mitte

Mitte literally translates to "centre" and is the closest thing Berlin has to a downtown area. Home to government buildings, startups, museums and major transport hubs, it's central, convenient and well connected, though typically more expensive.

## b. Neukölln

Young, international and fast-changing. Neukölln is known for its markets, cafés, bars and diverse food scene. Popular with creatives and expats looking for a lively atmosphere and comparatively better value.

## c. Prenzlauer Berg

Upmarket yet relaxed, Prenzlauer Berg is popular with young professionals and families. Expect leafy streets, cafés, parks and a quieter pace while still being close to the city centre.

## d. Kreuzberg

Often described as Berlin's creative heart. Kreuzberg has a strong alternative culture, vibrant nightlife and an international community. It's lively, central and full of character.

### **e. Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf**

A more traditional and residential area with elegant pre-war buildings, green spaces and a strong dining scene. Popular with families and those looking for a quieter lifestyle.

### **f. Moabit**

A multicultural residential area close to major transport links. Moabit offers a mix of local markets, green spaces and good connectivity to the rest of the city.

### **g. Friedrichshain**

Lively and youthful, Friedrichshain is known for cafés, restaurants, flea markets and nightlife. A popular area for younger professionals and those who enjoy being close to the action.

### **h. Wedding**

Less touristy and increasingly popular, Wedding offers more space and comparatively affordable rents. Well connected and diverse, it's often chosen by those looking slightly outside the city's hotspots.

### **i. Schöneberg**

A well-connected, central area with a strong café and restaurant scene. Schöneberg offers a good balance between residential calm and city life, and is popular with professionals looking for space without moving too far out.

### **j. Tempelhof**

Known for the former Tempelhof Airport, now one of the city's largest open parks. Tempelhof is quieter and more residential, ideal for those who value outdoor space and slightly lower rents.

### **k. Lichtenberg**

An emerging area with improving infrastructure and newer housing developments. Lichtenberg offers better value for money and good transport links, making it increasingly attractive to renters priced out of central neighbourhoods.

### **l. Pankow**

Located north of Prenzlauer Berg, Pankow is greener and more residential. Popular with families and professionals looking for more space while remaining well connected to the city.

### **m. Treptow**

Close to the River Spree and large parks, Treptow offers a quieter lifestyle with easy access to Kreuzberg and Neukölln. A good option for those who want space without leaving the inner city.



## Buying property

Buying property in Germany is possible for international buyers, and many expats choose to purchase once they feel settled in Berlin.

While property prices in Berlin have increased over recent years, they remain comparatively moderate when measured against other major European capitals. That said, buying can still feel complex if you're unfamiliar with the German system.

If you're planning to buy, it's common to rent first to understand neighbourhoods, pricing and long-term suitability before committing.

## Buying a property in Berlin and getting a mortgage

German banks tend to be conservative when issuing mortgages. In addition to assessing the property value, lenders will closely evaluate the borrower's financial profile.

Typically, buyers should expect to contribute at least 20% of the purchase price themselves, excluding additional costs. These extra costs — including notary fees, land registry fees, property transfer tax and agent fees — usually amount to around 10–15% of the purchase price.

Mortgage availability and conditions depend on income, employment status, residency status and financial history. International buyers may face stricter lending criteria, though higher deposits can improve approval chances.

## Getting around

Berlin has an extensive and reliable public transport system, making it easy to get around without a car.

Transport options include:

- U-Bahn (underground)
- S-Bahn (suburban rail)
- Trams
- Buses

Most residents rely on public transport or cycling. Monthly and annual passes offer good value for frequent travel.

Driving within Berlin is rarely necessary. EU driving licences are generally valid, while non-EU licence holders may need to exchange their licence within a set period depending on their country of origin.

## Healthcare

Health insurance is mandatory for everyone living in Germany.

Most employees are enrolled in the public health insurance system, with contributions automatically deducted from salary. Some higher earners may be eligible to opt into private health insurance, which can offer faster access to certain services.

Healthcare in Germany is high quality, and patients generally have direct access to specialists once registered. You'll usually be registered with a health insurer shortly after starting employment.

## Bank account

Opening a German bank account is one of the first practical steps after arrival. You'll need one to receive your salary, pay rent and set up utilities.

To open an account, banks typically require:

- A valid passport or ID
- Proof of address (registration certificate)
- Your tax ID (in some cases)

Many expats start with a digital bank while settling in, then move to a traditional bank once fully registered.

## Mobile phone

To get a German SIM card, you'll usually need proof of ID and a registered address.

Prepaid SIMs are flexible and easy to set up, making them a good short-term option. Contract plans offer better value but often require 24-month commitments, so it's worth checking terms carefully.

## Internet & TV

Internet infrastructure in Germany can vary by building and location. Before signing a rental agreement, it's worth confirming what speeds are available at the property.

If internet isn't included in your rent, you'll need to arrange a contract directly with a provider. Installation can take time, so this is something to organise early.

Many providers bundle internet, TV and mobile services together.

## Utilities

Utilities in Germany are often billed separately from rent and can be confusing for newcomers.

In addition to electricity, gas and water, tenants may be responsible for Nebenkosten (additional building-related costs), such as heating, waste collection and communal cleaning. These should be clearly outlined in your rental contract.

Before signing, make sure you understand:

- What is included in your rent
- Which utilities you're responsible for
- How and when additional costs are settled

# Community & Lifestyle

Your new city won't truly feel like home until you start building a community. While many people meet their first connections through work, Berlin offers countless ways to expand your social and professional circles beyond the office.

With a large international population and an open, creative culture, Berlin is one of Europe's easiest cities to settle into socially — whether you're looking to meet people professionally, socially, or both.



## Index

[Meetup's, groups & clubs](#) >

[Our favourite places to drink and dine](#) >

[Tech Events](#) >



## Meetup's, groups and clubs

Berlin has a strong culture of community-led events and informal meetups, particularly within tech, product and creative industries.

Popular ways to get involved include:

- Meetup.com — Professional and social groups covering tech, startups, languages and hobbies
- Facebook Groups — Local and expat groups frequently organise casual meetups and events
- Sporting clubs and classes — A reliable way to meet people outside of work
- Social networking apps — Increasingly popular for building new friendships in the city

Because so many people in Berlin are international, most groups are welcoming to newcomers and English-friendly.

## Berlin tech events

Berlin hosts a steady stream of tech events throughout the year, ranging from small meetups to large international conferences.

Events commonly focus on:

- Software engineering and product development
- AI, data and emerging technologies
- Startups, founders and early-stage scaling

You'll find events advertised via community platforms, newsletters and event sites, with many offering free or low-cost entry. Regular attendance is one of the easiest ways to stay connected to the local ecosystem.

# Bar, Restaurants and cafes to check out

Berlin's food and drink scene is diverse, affordable and constantly evolving. Below are a few popular spots across the city.

## Breakfast & brunch

- Father Carpenter
- Benedict Berlin
- Isla Coffee

## Lunch

- Konnopke's Imbiss
- Restaurant Azzam
- Malakeh

## Dinner

- Cookies Cream
- Pauly Saal
- Neni

## Drinks

- Klunkerkranch
- Monkey Bar
- Pratergarten

Exploring neighbourhood cafés, bars and late-night spots is one of the best ways to experience Berlin's character and meet people organically.



# Your Relocation Checklist

## Before you leave

- Ensure you have a valid passport and any required documents for visa or residence permit applications
- Secure a job offer with a German employer (required for most non-EU residence permits)
- Confirm whether your employer offers visa sponsorship or relocation support
- Book appointments with the Ausländerbehörde or local authorities if required
- Arrange temporary or long-term accommodation
- Gather important documents such as employment contracts, degree certificates, birth or marriage certificates (translated or apostilled if required)
- Plan your move and shipment of belongings
- Arrange health insurance coverage valid in Germany

## Mandatory on arrival

- Register your address (Anmeldung) at the local citizens' office (Bürgeramt)
- Receive your tax ID (Steuerliche Identifikationsnummer)
- Finalise your residence permit if you entered Germany without one
- Register for or confirm German health insurance
- Obtain your social security number (Sozialversicherungsnummer)
- Complete any required medical or TB checks (if applicable)

## Optional on arrival

- Open a German bank account
- Set up mobile phone, internet and utilities
- Purchase or rent a bike or organise a public transport pass
- Exchange your driving licence if required
- Register with your embassy or consulate
- Explore schools or childcare options if relocating with family

## Get settled

- Join local meetups, professional groups or sports clubs
- Attend Berlin tech and startup events
- Learn basic German to help with everyday admin and integration
- Explore neighbourhood cafés, parks and cultural venues
- Give yourself time to adjust and build your routine