

**FU/BEST**

**PROGRAM**

**Semester/Academic Year in  
Berlin**

**Student Guide**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	3
<b>Part I: Program Basics</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Freie Universität Berlin and the FU-BEST Program	4
2. Application and Course Selection	6
3. Program Structure	7
4. Student Responsibilities	7
<b>Part II: Pre-Departure Information</b>	<b>9</b>
5. Before You Leave	9
6. Personal Budget Considerations	10
7. Passport and Immigration Issues	12
8. Health Insurance and Medical Issues	13
9. Packing Advice and Checklist	14
10. Post-Berlin Registration & Housing?	15
11. Aspects of the Intercultural Experience	16
<b>Part III: During Your Stay in Berlin</b>	<b>17</b>
12. Arrival Instructions	17
13. Housing in Berlin	18
14. Food and Meals	18
15. Living in Berlin	19
16. Culture Shock?	20
17. City Transportation	21
18. Independent Travel	22
19. Lodging Options for Visiting Relatives or Friends	23
20. Safety Issues	23
21. Postal Matters & Communications	24
22. Computers & Internet	25
23. LGBTIQ Issues	26
<b>Part IV: After the Program</b>	<b>27</b>
24. Transcript	27
25. Re-entry Shock?	27
26. Looking for Jobs or Internships in Germany?	28
27. Useful Websites and Information	30

## **WELCOME from the Academic Directors**

Dear FU-BEST participant:

Welcome to the Berlin European Studies Program, brought to you by Freie Universität Berlin! We are excited that you will join us for what we hope will be a stimulating and rewarding experience in one of Europe's most fascinating cities.

Berlin is a wonderful city in which to live and study, with countless historical, political, economic, and cultural features and sites that await your exploration. It is a city undergoing a dramatic transformation, ever since the notorious Berlin Wall's demise in 1989, Germany's reunification in 1990, and the parliament's decision in 1991 to re-locate itself and most of the government from Bonn to Berlin by the turn of the century. This re-location process is now basically completed, and the city is bustling not only with politicians, civil servants, and interest groups, but also with countless people attracted to Berlin's unique cultural vibrancy. Many construction cranes still dot Berlin's skyline, as a dizzying array of often striking architectural projects transform the historically scarred city's physical profile. Berlin is also a fascinating "hinge-city," located strategically on the former dividing line between east and west in Europe and subject to multiple cultural influences as a result.

Freie Universität Berlin, founded in 1948 with considerable U.S. support, is located in the southwest of the city, in the former "West-Berlin." It is here that you will have your academic home. Utilizing the city's superb public transportation network, you will be able to explore both Berlin and the surrounding area (the state of Brandenburg) to the fullest.

This Student Guide is meant to be a wide-ranging resource for you before, during, and even after your semester in Berlin. It also contains information that might be useful or relevant to your parents/guardians and various persons on your home campus.

Perhaps not all of your questions will have been answered once you finish reading this Student Guide. If there is something you wish to discuss which we have not covered, check first on our website (or with the relevant staff and/or faculty on your home campus, if it is an issue that concerns things back home).

Before you know it, you'll be on the plane en route to Berlin.... Take the time to rest and to prepare yourself well. "Berlin ist eine Reise wert..." (Berlin is worth a trip...) is a well-known saying in Germany. We are confident that your experience here will cause you to agree!

"All the BEST,"

**Dr. Dirk Verheyen / Dr. Kristina Rödder**  
**Academic Directors**

**Freie Universität Berlin European Studies Program (FU-BEST)**

Email: [fubest@fu-berlin.de](mailto:fubest@fu-berlin.de)

Web: [www.fubest.org](http://www.fubest.org)

## **Part I:                   PROGRAM BASICS**

### **1.       FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN and the FU-BEST PROGRAM**

Freie Universität Berlin (FU or FUB) is a premier destination for research and education in Europe. It was founded in December 1948 with the support of U.S. officials and Berlin politicians by students and scholars as a response to the persecution of students critical of the system at Universität Unter den Linden (today Humboldt Universität) in the Soviet sector of the divided city of Berlin. These students and scholars wanted to study and carry out research at Freie Universität, free of political influence. To this day, Freie Universität Berlin is attractive to students because of its support of a libertarian ideal of education, marked by unfettered research and discussion of ideas and knowledge in order to form autonomous conclusions, opinions, and new ideas. Accordingly, the overall academic atmosphere at Freie Universität features lots of student activities and organizations. In comparison to many other academic institutions or systems, Freie Universität Berlin is marked by a rather individualized and self-reliant approach to planning and conducting one's own studies. The university's infrastructure features 15 broadly conceived departments and central institutes offering over 100 programs in all academic disciplines, except engineering. As an institution that highly values a free exchange of ideas, it offers a particularly supportive environment for innovative research and development projects.

The greatest strength of Freie Universität Berlin and a key component of its high national and international reputation are its achievements and offerings in the humanities and the social sciences. Specialized centers for interdisciplinary area studies or particular and rare subjects further contribute to the excellent quality and reputation of the university.

Freie Universität Berlin is ranked nationally and internationally among the top research universities in Germany. In 2007, after an intense, nation-wide competition, Freie Universität Berlin became one of nine German universities to be awarded an Elite status by the German Research Foundation (DFG). In 2012, Freie Universität Berlin was granted the honor of being named university of excellence in the Excellence Initiative competition for the second consecutive time. Freie Universität Berlin won the highest number of grants and was selected for its outstanding graduate programs, excellent research clusters and successful internationalization strategy.

The different components of the university campus, which is the intellectual home of approximately 33,000 students, is located throughout the charming and mostly residential southwest area of Berlin. Yet – thanks to Berlin's superb public transportation network – it is within easy reach of the city's downtown areas. The campus, like those of the other universities in Berlin, is fully integrated into the city's setting and therefore takes advantage of existing infrastructural offerings outside the university such as cafés, restaurants, cinemas, postal offices and banks, pharmacies, hospitals and doctors, shops and Berlin's public transportation network. In addition, there are also several student dining halls ("Mensa"s), student cafés, coffee bars, bookstalls and other small businesses on or adjoining the campus.

Exchange programs for students have played an important role at Freie Universität Berlin from the very beginning. The first exchange students went to Stanford University in 1949. In the 1950s, Freie Universität Berlin had already established partnerships with leading American universities such as Stanford, Princeton, and Columbia, as well as with Western European universities. First contacts with universities in Eastern Europe were made in the 1960s. In particular in the 1990s, links were extended to include growing numbers of institutions in North America, Eastern Europe, and the Far East. Currently, Freie Universität Berlin participates in the European LLP (formerly Socrates), ERASMUS, and ERASMUS Mundus programs and also maintains agreements with around 90 universities for direct exchange. Wide-ranging international contacts to other universities and organizations also provide key impulses for research and teaching. Today, the university has over 160 partnerships worldwide and over 300 in the ERASMUS program, aside from hundreds of smaller partnerships pursued by its individual academic departments. It has set up liaison offices in Beijing, Brussels, Cairo, Moscow, New Delhi, New York, and Sao Paolo. Since the late 1990's, the university has offered a growing and successful International Summer and Winter University as well ([www.fubis.org](http://www.fubis.org)).

The creation of the FU-BEST program in 2005 thus continued a distinguished tradition of internationalism at Freie Universität Berlin!

Based on the international tradition of Freie Universität Berlin sketched above, the mission of the FU-BEST program is as follows:

“The FU-BEST (Berlin European Studies) Program seeks to educate responsible, global citizens by promoting intercultural sensitivity in a multi-faceted environment. The program aims to provide an intensive and diverse study abroad experience to its participants. Combining mandatory German language instruction and a varied menu of content courses taught in English and German, FU-BEST is intended to be an accessible opportunity to a wide range of potential participants. Using its concept of “extended classroom,” the program’s goal is to link high-quality academic instruction with a broader international experience, encompassing elements of culture, society, history, and politics, in Berlin, in Germany, and in (Central) Europe generally. Small classes and the availability of day-to-day guidance and support are designed to enable students to make the most of a unique educational opportunity.”

The program is conceived as a semester-based opportunity for students drawn primarily from North American institutions, combining the strong institutional foundation of Freie Universität Berlin with resources available in the German capital. FU-BEST provides to students not advanced enough in their command of the German language for direct enrollment the possibility of gaining insight into an important European society through English-taught courses. Utilization of the North American semester calendar, rather than the German academic schedule, makes the program easily accessible for students from the U.S. and Canada. The program is thus a stand-alone feature in the curriculum of Freie Universität Berlin, not based on direct enrollment in the university’s regular semesters, offering its own range of content courses, taught primarily but not exclusively in English.

Although knowledge of German is not a prerequisite for admission to the program (thus further enhancing its accessibility to a broad range of interested students), all participants are required to enroll in German language instruction on-site.

In addition to its specific academic offerings and features, the FU-BEST program aims to supply its participants with a comprehensive intellectual and intercultural experience, pursued by means of a variety of activities (excursions, field-trips, field projects, social and cultural opportunities, etc.). The study abroad experience provided by the program unfolds simultaneously on several levels: in the classroom, on campus, in the city, in Germany, and even on a more (Central) European level. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own culture, learning as much about themselves and their own society as they do about Berlin, Germany and/or Europe.

## **2. APPLICATION & COURSE SELECTION**

The first thing you should definitely do is read through the program's General Terms and Conditions of Business and our Academic Regulations and Code of Conduct. Both documents can be found on our website: [www.fubest.org](http://www.fubest.org). In applying to the program, you accept the contents of these documents. When submitting an application, be sure to note carefully all instructions provided on our website, so that your FU-BEST experience is off to a smooth start right away!

Please familiarize yourself with all information and regulations at your own university regarding academic registration, beyond the paperwork you fill out and submit to the FU-BEST office.

As part of the application form, you are asked to rank 20 courses in order of preference. Once your complete file has reached our office, it is then officially "logged into" our system. We conduct course enrollment on a first-come-first-served basis, and operate with enrollment limits of 20 students per subject course. Subject courses are offered in a total of 8 "blocks" during Monday through Thursday, whereby each course meets once a week for 2,5 hours. In each block, at least two courses are offered simultaneously. Please see the course registration page in the application for details. In the course of November (in case of Spring semester) or April (in case of Fall semester), participants are notified by e-mail regarding the courses in which they have been enrolled.

You will have the customary Drop/Add options during the first week of the program in Berlin, but remember that switching courses in an overseas setting like Berlin is more complicated and at times simply impossible. Also keep in mind that changes in your course enrollment will usually require that you first obtain long-distance approval of such a changed course schedule from officials back home.

Be sure that you mark the proper German language section on the application form, especially if you have already taken some German language courses at your own institution.

It is best to consult with a German language teacher back home if you already had some German, so that you can be sure that you are marking the proper section on the form. As always, communicate with your advisor! However, please also note that, unless you are a complete beginner in German, you will be tested by means of an online placement test prior to the semester's start in order to ensure that you end up in the proper language section. So the language section you marked on your application form is not necessarily the section to which your placement test result assigns you in the end.

### **3. PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

As noted above, classes meet on a Monday-through-Thursday schedule. German language is taught in the mornings, with non-language courses scheduled in the afternoons. Do not make any independent travel plans until you know for sure when the various mandatory elements of the program are scheduled.

Each semester, all students not only participate in a week-long off-site excursion (see below), but also visit at least one of three sites in and around Berlin on selected Fridays as integral and mandatory part of the overall academic program: the Chancellor's Office (Bundeskanzleramt), the site of the former Nazi concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, and the former prison complex in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen of East Germany's state security police (Stasi).

A week-long excursion to Poland, Munich, Vienna, Dresden, Prague, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Budapest, Paris, London or other destinations (varying from semester to semester) forms an integral part of each semester. Details for a particular semester are made available to participants at the time of admission.

You receive all your textbooks, course readers, etc. on site, as part of your Program Fee. Barring unforeseen circumstances, all classes are held in the same location: Haus L (second floor) on the Lankwitz section of the FU campus (Malteserstraße 74-100), with the offices located there in Haus S. You are registered as a student at Freie Universität, which is giving you access to the university libraries, food services, intramural sports activities, etc.

### **4. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The FU-BEST program is an academic program, involving an academic community. Although we recognize the importance and attractiveness of personal travel in Europe during the program, your academic obligations will always come first in this program. Class attendance and participation in field-trips and excursions are mandatory. As a student in this community, you can expect to be treated as an adult but you are also expected to behave as an adult. You must respect the rights of your fellow students, the staff, the faculty, and all individuals with whom you come in contact. Remember that you are a guest of Freie Universität, enjoying the status of a visiting student. Exercise due respect for the property of Freie Universität and for the rights of all individuals whom you encounter there.

Keep in mind at all times that you are residing in a foreign country. You are subject to the same laws that apply to all residents of Germany and **not** to the laws of your home country. As noted above, familiarizing yourself with our **Academic Regulations and Code of Conduct** (posted on our website) is a smart thing to do.

With respect to your private life, FU-BEST is neither eager nor able to regiment your behavior. You are free to exercise your own judgment, drawing upon your own values in the personal choices that confront all of us as adults. However, the personal choices that you make could have a negative impact on others and tarnish the reputation of our academic community as a whole. Our staff wants you to take full advantage of all the opportunities offered to you in this great city, but at the same time we remind you to always employ wisdom and discretion in your personal conduct. We are confident that you will do so and that we will all enjoy a great semester in Berlin.

## Part II: PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

### 5. BEFORE YOU LEAVE

This guide introduces you to the Berlin program and advises you on what to bring, what to expect, and what to do when you are on-site. Keep an open mind and a sense of humor. Basically, your experience will be what you make of it – try to make it as German as you can. Be brave enough to reach beyond your own country's customs and creature comforts as you explore the rich culture and beauty of this exciting and changing city.

We do not need to convince you of the benefits of study abroad, nor do we want to "map out" your semester in this guide. Your semester abroad will be your own unique experience to discover. In writing this guide, our aim is to provide you with pre-departure information geared toward preparing you for an adventure of a lifetime. Read through this guide carefully, making the most of all the information and advice it offers.

One of the biggest regrets that many study abroad students have is their lack of research and preparation before departure. Your study abroad experience is an investment in your education, time away from loved ones, as well as your future. As the weeks draw closer to your departure, think about preparing your mind for the journey, as well as your suitcase. A few hours spent researching the history and culture of your host country will pay off in a few short weeks, we promise! The more you prepare now, the better adjusted you will be when you arrive, and the more you will learn about your host culture and yourself. At the end of this guide is a list of suggested reading and viewing.

For many students, this semester abroad will be your first opportunity to live and travel in another country. You will soon notice the distinction between „living” abroad and „traveling”. If you have left your home country before for a short trip, you will have already had an experience in making yourself understood in a different language or in navigating around an unfamiliar city. As you live in Berlin for the semester, however, you will get the insider view on German culture through trips to the post office, the corner market, little towns nearby, the hair dresser's, the doctor's office, etc. It can be frustrating at times to leave your comfort zone linguistically and culturally. It is difficult to navigate German systems when public transportation is delayed and crowded and when bureaucracy at the post office or train station seems to be incomprehensible. There are many benefits to a long-term stay abroad. During your time abroad, you will develop a routine, get to know the city, and even be equipped to give tourists directions! The challenge is learning to adapt. The reward is learning a new culture, and learning about your own culture.

Your semester will be both a joy and a challenge. FU-BEST aims for it to be an excellent learning experience. Our advice to you is that you keep an open mind and learn to be flexible. Germany is a beautiful country bursting with cultural and historical riches. Take advantage of the opportunity to live abroad, and make a big effort to „do as the Germans do.”

Begin preparing yourself for the fact that things are going to be different in Germany. Some things in your daily life are going to be „better” than at home and some are going to be „worse.” You will miss some things that you like, but you will also come to like new things that you can have in Germany/Europe but that you cannot find back home. Keep in mind that you are the guest and it is up to you to conform to the customs and living habits in Germany/Europe. You may have to modify your expectations about the lifestyles, habits, and customs of Europeans. You will certainly encounter frustrations and you will go through an adjustment period. But that is part of what this experience is all about, and you will become a better person as a result.

Please note the official starting date for each semester, as communicated to you once you have been accepted into the program: you must be on-site in Berlin no later than this day! If you travel to Berlin from North America, remember that your arrival in Berlin would typically be one day after you left the U.S./Canada. Several weeks prior to the start of the program, you will receive instructions regarding the check-in process on that official starting day, including directions to the building where the check-in takes place (those directions can then also be shared with taxi drivers, for example). Apartment students: you will have the additional option of moving into your apartment one day before the official starting date; information on that will be sent to you prior to the start of the program. The apartments are located ca. 50-60 minutes from the program site. Homestay students: on the starting day of the program (and not earlier), you will be picked up by your host-family after you have formally checked into the program. Most host-families will tend to be located 30-45 minutes from Freie Universität by public transportation. If you set up your own housing, you are thereby also assuming responsibility for your own moving-in and local transfer to your chosen place of residence.

As you prepare for departure to Berlin, make good use of the "Quick checklist" provided in this Student Guide in section 9! And please remember: always consult the program's website with its extensive information – [www.fubest.org](http://www.fubest.org).

Along with your admission letter, you will be sent a copy of the Masterschedule for the semester. Key elements in the Masterschedule are the Orientation Days, Welcome Reception, the week-long excursion, the one-week mid-semester break, midterms and finals weeks, and the Farewell Dinner. Please note the end-dates of the semester as listed in the Masterschedule and communicated to you. Those in apartments who wish to stay on in Berlin for a few days or so after the formal end of the program should note that the apartments are available until shortly before Christmas in case of the Fall semester and through May in case of the Spring semester. Those in homestays might be able to stay with their family a bit beyond the formal end of the program, but that should be cleared with the host-family in a timely and diplomatic manner!

## 6. PERSONAL BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The information in this section should be of use both before and during your stay in Berlin, so you may wish to return to it after you have settled into the FU-BEST program as well.

**Credit cards** are not (yet) used in Germany nearly as widely as in the U.S. and some other countries. With the exception of better restaurants, **many** establishments will only take cash. It is always best to ask if credit cards are accepted before making purchases to avoid embarrassing situations. Large department stores generally take credit cards.

To obtain cash, you are normally able to use an ATM card from your own home bank. Avoid making cash withdrawals with a credit card, since the fee and interest rates tend to be very high. Traveler's checks have all but disappeared. Furthermore, one can buy Euros at many banks, at change bureaus (*Wechselstuben*), or even at large department stores. Commissions are fairly standard, so no need to spend much time shopping around. Banks will usually advance cash on major credit cards, such as VISA or MasterCard, but, as noted, this involves considerable fees.

Unless one has regular bills that need to be paid to someone in Germany, students will probably not need to open a bank account. Personal checks, as Americans know them, are virtually nonexistent.

Prices in Germany are generally comparable to or even, for many items, slightly below U.S. prices. As for other countries, we cannot give general indicators here. In the end, it is always difficult to generalize about these matters. Your standard budget during a semester at home may suit you generally well in Germany, but if you add in any significant personal travel and related expenses (souvenirs, concerts, etc.), you may wish to ensure yourself additional financial resources.

Movies seen Thursday through Sunday cost about 8 Euros. Monday through Wednesday are the popular nights, however, as admission is only about 5 Euros (note that prices often vary among movie theaters). Movies in English are designated OV or OMU. There are discounts available for opera and theater shows. For example, all unsold tickets for any opera at the Komische Oper can be purchased after 12 noon on the day of the performance at half the normal price. Student tickets at the Staatsoper, available right before the performance, cost about 10 Euros.

Dry-cleaning is on average somewhat more expensive than in the U.S. Clothing and most other consumer items can be found at prices spanning a considerable spectrum. It is therefore impossible to generalize here.

Hours were recently liberalized and many stores now remain open until 8:00 p.m. (instead of the usual 6:00 p.m.) on weekdays, and until 4:00 p.m. or even 8:00 p.m. (instead of 2:00 p.m.) on Saturdays. It takes time especially for many Americans to get used to the idea that stores, except for mini-markets in gas stations and a few shops at the train stations and airports, are closed on Sunday throughout Germany.

For those wishing to take home souvenirs, popular items include the traditional beer mug, cutlery, wooden toys, etc. Such items can be found at Christmas markets (*Weihnachtsmärkte*) in November/December, in case you spend the fall semester in Berlin. One tends to

find more unique items when outside Berlin, in the smaller cities or towns. It is also possible to find some interesting things at Berlin's popular flea markets.

In conclusion, when it comes to personal finances, budget realistically. You will almost certainly spend more than during a normal semester back home but your means will have some limit. This is particularly important when planning independent travel: aside from your academic obligations (otherwise known as homework), which would interfere with unlimited travel (especially during weekends), keep a realistic eye on your "financial well" and do not let it run dry early during the semester!

## 7. PASSPORT AND IMMIGRATION ISSUES

In order to enter Germany for your studies at Freie Universität Berlin, you have to have a passport valid more than 6 months (even better: 1 year) after arrival in Germany. You need a passport for every official activity, like the registration at the local Berlin *Bürgeramt* (known as *Anmeldung* – we will do this on-site together with you) or the acquisition of the mandatory residency permit (see below).

### Application for valid passport in U.S.:

Remember to apply **early** for your passport, as it might take 6 to 8 weeks until you get it. To acquire a passport, you will need the following:

- Proof of U.S. citizenship (an official birth certificate, a naturalization certificate, or a previous U.S. passport)
- Two recent identical color photographs (2"x2") with a white background. Make sure to observe the strict style regulations that tend to apply here!
- A valid picture ID with your signature (i.e., a driver's license)
- Passport application form, available in the U.S. at most Post Offices
- \$85.00 fee if you need a new passport, \$55.00 for renewal (note that these fees may change over time)

It is possible to submit applications at many Post Offices. Here is the key website in the U.S.:

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic\\_898.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic_898.html).

Students from countries other than the U.S. should check for specific regulations applicable in their home country.

**Important immigration notice:** If you are not a citizen of an EU member-country, the USA or Canada, you will almost certainly need a visa in order to enter Germany and participate in the FU-BEST program. It is your personal responsibility to obtain such a visa, using the admission letter we provide via e-mail and adding proof of your ability to pay for your stay in Germany. Be sure to take care of this matter in a timely manner!

It is best to apply for the visa as soon as you have received our letter of admission, since the process can take time and you will be unable to depart for Germany without your visa! You must apply at the German Embassy or a German Consulate in the country where you study, NOT in your home country, in case there is a difference here.

All non-EU participants will be required to apply for a permit which extends the customary 3-month limit on stays by visitors; this permit is issued by the Office for Foreign Residents (*Ausländerbehörde*) in Berlin; the relevant forms will be completed on-site.

## 8. HEALTH INSURANCE & MEDICAL ISSUES

Note that some of the information here, as in chapter 2, is relevant before and/or during the program, so again, you will need to keep an eye on it throughout. **Participation in FU-BEST requires that you, your home institution or the provider through which you are participating provide us, prior to your arrival in Berlin, with specific documentation regarding the nature and extent/amount of insurance coverage for your stay in Germany.**

Upon arrival at the FU-BEST program site, all participants receive a **yellow card** with relevant emergency information, for medical/dental/psychological as well as financial, legal, or personal safety situations. **This card is an essential resource and should be carried by each participant at all times.**

FU-BEST provides participants with liability and accident insurance. However, FU-BEST does not offer its own health insurance and thus requires each student to have personal medical insurance that will cover expenses abroad. Students may choose to accept their university's policy or continue with their own policy. However, be sure to review the policy to ensure that it covers treatment abroad. When treatment is received in Berlin, you will normally have to pay out-of-pocket. When seeking reimbursement from the insurance carrier, remember to get translatable itemizations of the treatment received. Check with the study abroad staff at your school on what arrangements are to be made here. The FU-BEST office will provide you with medical information when you arrive.

Health is a major concern for most travelers. It can be difficult to deal with medical problems when you are in a different country because of differences in medications as well as the medical system. The Lonely Planet website has a section devoted to health (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/health/>) with information for pre-departure measures that you can take as well as how to deal with any health issues that may arise while you are abroad.

Some doctors will expect payment at the time of service (the student will receive a receipt to submit to his/her insurance company), while others will allow patients to wait until billed. Most bills are mailed out quarterly. Students should make all payments prior to leaving Germany, so that doctors are not made to track down students abroad. Most consultations might run between 25-75 Euros during office hours. As for dental care: if you think you will need treatment in the near future, then we suggest having it done before coming to Germany, simply to save yourself the hassle while in Berlin.

Pharmacies (*Apotheken*) frequently do not carry the same brands of medicine as you might find at home. It is suggested that all current prescriptions be filled for the length of time you will be in Germany, if possible. There is at least one *Apotheke* open 24 hours every day in each neighborhood. If you wear glasses and/or contact lenses, be sure to bring along a copy of your prescription(s), in case you need it/them.

Berlin has three major university hospital centers, including Universitätsklinikum Benjamin Franklin in the Steglitz area, located at Hindenburgdamm 30. It provides quality medical care in every field.

For psychological help, there is an American Hotline (0177-8141510). This is an outreach service for English-speakers offering emergency help 24 hours a day. Additional information on English-speaking counselors is also listed on the yellow card with emergency information you receive upon arrival. In case of psychological counseling, you may also wish to go to the following website at Freie Universität Berlin: [http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/einrichtungen/studierende/ze-beratung/psyber\\_zeb.html](http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/einrichtungen/studierende/ze-beratung/psyber_zeb.html).

## 9. PACKING ADVICE AND CHECKLIST

Please pack all important documents, including your passport, travel documents, and program contact information in your carry-on luggage. It is also a good idea to pack one change of clothes in your carry-on. Please mark all your luggage with both your home and FU-BEST program office contact information. You are generally allowed to take one carry-on bag with you, either a backpack that will fit under your seat or a larger bag that will fit in the over-head compartment. Check with your particular airline for details, however, that may deviate from this widespread practice.

It is best NOT to plan having a lot of stuff, such as clothing, sent to you in Germany through the mail, since many students have faced unpleasant bills from German customs officials. Just be realistic about what you need and about what you can/should bring!

Know that forgetting something is not the end of the world. There is little that you will not be able to find in Berlin. Pack an umbrella, rain gear, clothing for variable seasonal conditions as well as for occasions such as concerts or opera, and any medical prescriptions. Toiletry brands may differ from those in your home country, so you may want to pack your own.

110-volt U.S. appliances need a transformer in order to use 220-volt German/European current. An adaptor is needed as well to make the plug fit in the holes. It may be just as easy to buy a hair dryer or curling iron in Berlin. Clocks and other appliances which require 60-cycle current will not function properly even with a transformer. We suggest you bring a battery-powered clock to be on the safe side.

Quick checklist

- valid passport (required); visa (if needed). Make photocopies of your passport and other important documents (visa, plane tickets, etc.) and put them in your carry-on luggage.
- health/accident insurance card
- credit card (Master/VISA), debit card (Maestro/EC), and/or traveler's checks. Keep a copy of your credit card numbers and the phone numbers to cancel cards in case they are lost or stolen. Keep this information separate from your wallet.
- mark your baggage with your home address as well as with the address of the program: FU-BEST, Haus S, Malteserstraße 74-100, 12249 Berlin, Germany.
- pack some clothes into your hand baggage in case your suitcase gets lost.
- ISIC card (recommended)
- prescriptions (eye and medical); extra medication (recommended)
- electrical transformer/adaptors: 110-volt U.S. appliances need a transformer in order to use 220-volt German/European current. An adaptor is needed as well to make the plug fit in the holes. In most cases, a laptop will only need an adaptor.
- personal laptop computer
- Berlin book (e.g. Lonely Planet Travel Guides or Let's Go series)

### Clothing

As for clothes, Berlin is a big city and on the street – anything goes. There are neighborhoods where T-shirts, jeans, and piercings are common, and others where the women walk through parks in high heels and fur coats. Bring whatever you feel comfortable wearing.

Clothes for going out tend vary based on the occasion: jeans to some bars, dressier wear to others. There will be occasions where one will want to be more "formal" (opera, theater, museums, holiday events, etc.).

Keep in mind that you will be coming to Berlin in the fall and staying through the early winter (Fall semester) or in winter and staying into spring (Spring semester). Bring appropriate clothing to match the semester(s) in which you are participating. Also, it is important that you think about bringing versatile clothing that can be mixed-and-matched with each other. This is especially good for when you go on trips and only have room for a few outfits in your backpack or suitcase.

You can check out the weather in Berlin by going to [www.wetter.com](http://www.wetter.com) or [www.dwd.de](http://www.dwd.de). If you have trouble thinking in Celsius, you can find temperature conversions at: <http://www.onlineconversion.com/temperature.htm> or: <http://www.convert-me.com/en/>.

## **10. POST-BERLIN REGISTRATION & HOUSING?**

Thinking about the semester back home after your FU-BEST experience is, of course, something you may want to do before departing for Europe. Although this is by and large beyond the responsibility of FU-BEST, some words of advice may yet come in handy.

Registration materials for your "post-Berlin" semester back home can be sent to the Berlin office by your university, but nowadays it is customary at most schools for registration to be taken care of via internet. Check with the appropriate office back home to find out what procedure(s) will be followed. We suggest meeting with your academic advisor prior to your departure to discuss your course schedule for the next semester.

In addition, you may want to consider taking care of any required **pre-departure housing matters** for the "post-Berlin" semester as well.

## 11. ASPECTS OF THE INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Among the most important aspects of study abroad is the intercultural experience. Most FU-BEST participants tend to come from North America, and the cultural "gap" between that part of the world and Germany is in many respects not very large. Nonetheless, there are differences, and experiencing and reflecting on similarities as well as differences will hopefully be an integral part of your time in Berlin and beyond.

We suggest that you consider exploring some of the socio-cultural aspects of life in Germany in more detail before taking off for Berlin. We can recommend a few useful books that have appeared in recent years:

- Greg Nees, *Germany: Unraveling and Enigma* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2000)
- Susan Stern, *These Strange German Ways and the Whys of the Ways* (Berlin: Atlantik-Brücke e.V., 2000)
- Hyde Flippo, *The German Way: Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs in the German-Speaking World* (Chicago: Passport Books, 1999)
- Hyde Flippo, *When in Germany, Do as the Germans Do: The Clued-In Guide to German Life, Language, and Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 2002)
- Stefan Zeidenitz and Ben Barkow, *The Xenophobe's Guide to The Germans* (London: Oval Books, 2000) (This booklet is a very tongue-in-cheek British view...)

As with any socio-cultural information, it should be used with care and a sense of perspective, in order to avoid slipping into misleading generalizations or stereotyping. In the end, the information provided here and in the books mentioned is meant to be suggestive, leaving your own experience as the most decisive, conclusive element.

## Part III: DURING YOUR STAY IN BERLIN

### 12. ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

You are expected to arrive in Berlin no later than the official starting date, as communicated to you upon admission. Please provide contact and travel information to the FU-BEST office in Berlin by e-mail in a timely manner, so that we can e-mail you any updated information regarding arrival procedures, if needed. Failure to do so may complicate your arrival in Berlin. Berlin has a first-rate and easy-to-use public transportation system. Since experience shows that students arrive at strongly varying times, please note that you will not be picked up at the airport or train station. Instead, you are expected to use public transportation or a taxi to come to the program office at Freie Universität on the starting/check-in day (the same applies if you arrive a day earlier in order to check into your program-managed apartment). Most of you will arrive at Berlin-Tegel, though some flights come to Berlin-Schönefeld (the new Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport to the southeast of the city is still awaiting completion...). Those coming to Berlin from elsewhere in Germany or Europe by train will generally arrive at Berlin Hauptbahnhof.

On the official starting day of the program, you must **first** go to the program site at Freie Universität, where you are officially checked in to the program and will then be met by your host-family. Pick-up by host-families is in the course of the afternoon. Apartment students: you will have the additional option of moving into your apartment one day before the official starting date; information on that will be sent to you prior to the start of the program. The apartments are located ca. 50-60 minutes from the program site. If you opted for non-program housing, you are responsible for your own transfer to your chosen place of residence. As part of your check-in, you will receive the FU-BEST Student Handbook, which includes a program for the Orientation Days that follow.

If, upon arrival at the airport, pieces of your luggage are missing, please give the baggage office there the cell number of FU-BEST Academic Director Dirk Verheyen as contact number (0163-5525130), unless you already have another number available (homestay or your own German-style cell phone).

If you know that you will need housing before the official starting date, do not leave for Germany without first making a temporary lodging reservation. One night's stay (including breakfast) costs about 20-25 Euros at a youth hostel.

We recommend the following link to find a hostel: <http://www.hostels.com/berlin/>.

#### DIRECTIONS:

As pointed out above, FU-BEST is located at the FU campus section at Malteserstraße 74-100, 12249 Berlin. Bus line X 83 runs through the Malteserstraße, and the stop to use for this campus section is "Emmichstraße". The program's offices are located in Haus S (a yellow-colored villa on the edge of the Malteserstraße), but **check-in on the official arrival day (as**

announced upon admission to the program) is at Haus L (a modern building with about 6 floors). It is most advisable to take a taxi from the airport or the train station to the Lankwitz campus site, since the trajectory would be a bit complicated by means of public transportation (and you are probably also carrying plenty of luggage...); the cost would normally range from 20 to 30 Euros. Instruct the taxi driver to take you to Malteserstraße in Lankwitz and have them take the side-street called Preysingstraße, where, after a mere 20 yards/meters, there is an entrance to the campus area they can use to drop you off right in front of the tall Haus L, where your check-in will take place. **Please note:** on the official arrival day, check-in concludes at 6 p.m., so that anyone who arrives in Berlin later than 5 p.m. that day should plan on finding lodging for the first night and check into the program at Haus S at 9 a.m. the following day.

The FU-BEST office can be reached at +49 30 838 56 582, +49 30 838 575 87 or +49 30 838 51 018. Academic Director Dirk Verheyen's mobile number is 0163 552 51 30, if dialed inside Germany, or +49 163 552 51 30, if dialed from outside Germany. In the U.S., add 011 in front of the 49; in other parts of Europe, add 00 in front of the 49.

### 13. HOUSING IN BERLIN

There are two basic housing options in the FU-BEST program: a fully furnished single-occupancy studio apartment or a homestay. Please refer to the information about housing options in Berlin available on our website. Choose whatever you feel will suit you best, but make sure to keep an open mind vis-à-vis the cultural challenge that accompanies any living abroad. If you wish to opt out of these two choices: please check the conditions noted on the housing page of the application form before doing so! Also note the relevant information contained in our Terms and Conditions of Business document (posted on our website).

**PLEASE NOTE:** Participants opting for apartment housing are required to provide credit card information as security deposit. See the application form for details.

### 14. FOOD & MEALS

#### Mensa

This is the name of the standard German university's food service. You will have daily access to this meal option during weekdays. The meals are truly inexpensive. You will receive a meal card for this facility during the Orientation Days and can put money on it as time goes by.

Host-family vs. apartment meals: if you chose the homestay option, you will receive breakfast and dinner there. If you opted for an apartment or independently arranged housing, you are, of course, fully responsible for your own meals. Also note that, except for breakfast in most instances, lunch or dinner during the week-long excursion are not provided by the program but considered a personal expense.

Upon arrival and check-in into the program, you will receive a FU-BEST Student Handbook that, among other things, contains many tips regarding restaurants, going out in the evening, etc. We encourage you to use it all as fully as possible!

## 15. LIVING IN BERLIN

Berlin is a great place to spend a semester. It is a large and exciting city with interesting ethnic neighborhoods, any lifestyle you could wish for, and a great nightlife. One popular area is Kreuzberg, with a large Turkish population. Students will also find neighborhoods, particularly those in the former East, which are distinctly Berlin (for example, Prenzlauer Berg, around Käthe-Kollwitz-Platz). Building cranes still dominate parts of the landscape and are a constant reminder of the historic changes underway in the city. In many ways it is a unique and exciting time to be living in Berlin.

It would take more than a semester to take in all the city offers, so consider enrolling in FU-BEST for an entire academic year! Rich café life, first-class theater, fantastic opera, cabaret, world-class orchestras, interesting neighborhoods, lakes and rivers, an alternative art scene, and of course, years of history: Berlin just seems to have it all.

Freie Universität is located in a very pleasant, primarily residential part of the city. It is extremely well linked to the rest of Berlin (located approximately 30-45 minutes from the center of Berlin by U-Bahn, S-Bahn, and buses). Not far from campus (at the S-Bahn and U-Bahn stations Rathaus Steglitz – a mere 15-minute bus ride from the Lankwitz campus section) is the bustling Schloßstraße, a popular shopping street (including several shopping malls, department stores, cafés, a big electronics store, bookstores, etc.).

Berliners love to eat and drink. One usually seats him/herself in the restaurant, and in a crowded restaurant or bar it is perfectly acceptable to share a table with people already sitting there. Just ask "Ist hier noch frei?" (Is this free?). While you are not expected to talk to your table mates, it is a way to meet Germans.

There is an endless number of "reasonable to expensive" eating establishments in Berlin. And there are fast food stands (*Imbiss*) on many corners where a variety of *Würste* (sausages) and *Pommes* (french fries) can be quickly and inexpensively purchased. There are a huge number of *Döner Kebab* shops, featuring relatively inexpensive Turkish food. Throughout the city one can also find Thai, Mexican, Greek, Indian, Italian, French, American (Hard Rock Café), and vegetarian restaurants. Cafés are also very popular. They are abundant, frequently visited, and range in style from the upscale Viennese variety to those that appear to have put no money into the decor, but serve great espresso and have a diverse younger crowd.

Food prices vary considerably, depending on one's tastes and standards, so it is hard to generalize here. Tipping in restaurants is minimal, as the tip is already included, along with taxes, in the bill. Leave about 1 Euro for every 10-15 Euros on the bill. Tips are never left on the table, but rather given directly to the waiter or waitress.

Students will receive a map of the campus and surrounding area upon arrival in Berlin. We urge you to purchase a copy of a Berlin travel guide (for example Lonely Planet Travel Guides) as well as a comprehensive Berlin city map. Filled with background and practical information, the Lonely Planet book is a very valuable resource for your semester, and you will find yourself turning to it again and again.

## 16. CULTURE SHOCK?

Over the years, some participants have at times been struck in an uncomfortable way by cultural differences, yet all managed to develop the skills of dealing with such differences. So just in case you develop a sense of what is commonly referred to as “culture shock”, the thoughts below might come in handy.

The symptoms usually appear when a person is uprooted from the safe and secure surroundings of home and transplanted – voluntarily or otherwise – to a totally different cultural setting. The majority of people residing in a foreign country for an extended amount of time encounter physical and psychological reactions to an unfamiliar culture.

Culture shock is a rite of passage for many people – a time when the initial newness of foreign surroundings wears off and the realization sets in that you are going to be in this situation for a long time. Frustration, loneliness, homesickness, depression, irritability, and loss of appetite are the major signs of this „traveler’s disease.”

It’s always the little things that begin to threaten your sense of stability and well-being that cause culture shock:

- the way purchases are made
- people’s mannerisms and how to respond to them
- distinguishing between serious and amusing statements
- using different kinds of transportation
- attitudes towards life values
- doing laundry
- food shopping

Symptoms of culture shock might include:

- homesickness (longing to be where things are familiar)
- compulsive eating and excessive drinking
- irritability and excessive need for sleep
- boredom (no discovery of new aspects of the culture)
- hostility and stereotyping of native people
- avoiding contact with natives
- inability to perform work or study efficiently
- tension and conflict with those around you
- unexplained crying and physical problems

Fortunately, not everyone experiences all the above symptoms. The majority of people adjust to the local culture reasonably well. They experience some of the symptoms, but are able to recognize and work their way through the problems successfully. For those who do not, it is important to know that some degree of culture shock is inevitable and can occur to anyone.

We encourage you to discuss any discomfort or difficulty resulting from culture shock with those around you in Berlin: your fellow students, the FU-BEST Academic Directors and their office colleagues, your teachers, and/or your host-family.

Also, expect to experience some form of re-entry culture shock after the program, when you return to your home country! There is nothing wrong with you when you find yourself having some trouble readjusting!

Useful website: [www.worldwide.edu/travel\\_planner/culture\\_shock.html](http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html).

## 17. CITY TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation in Berlin is excellent. There is an extensive, easy-to-use network of buses, U-Bahn (primarily underground train system), and S-Bahn (part of the German rail system, primarily above-ground). **As part of your FU-BEST Program Fee, you will receive a pass for use of the public transportation system throughout Berlin (zones A, B, C) tied to your Freie Universität student ID card.**

Bus stops are indicated by a sign with a green capital H inside a yellow circle. U- and S-Bahn stops have signs with a large capital U or S. They are all safe, efficient, run every 5-20 minutes (depending on location and line), and operate until a bit past midnight. Thereafter, regular night bus service is available; or one walks or takes a taxi. Night life begins late in Berlin. One can easily find much to do at 2 a.m., if so inclined. It is usually easier to find a taxi stand than to hail a taxi from the street in central Berlin. Rides cost 3-4 Euros as a base price, then costs vary according to distance and time. Night buses run all night throughout the city, frequenting each stop about every hour.

The commute between Freie Universität Berlin and several of the popular areas – Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg, the Ku'damm, Savignyplatz, etc. – usually will take about 30 minutes, but can range from 20 to 45 minutes.

For information regarding public transportation in Berlin, go to [www.bvg.de](http://www.bvg.de).

Another transport option worth mentioning is a bike. There are special paths, with their own miniature traffic lights, specifically for bikers between the road and the sidewalk in much of this biker-friendly city. Bikes can be taken onto the U- and S-Bahn (you need to pay a supplemental fare when doing so, however). There is a network of paths in the Grunewald, which is the nearest forest area to the program site (but of course not the only option!). This

is a fantastic forest with lakes located 15-20 minutes (by bike) from Freie Universität Berlin, especially great for mountain/all-terrain bikes (not to be missed by anyone interested in nature). To get to the Grunewald forest by public transportation, take the X83 bus from Emmichstr. or S Lankwitz to its final stop in Zehlendorf, passing the Dahlem portion of the campus on your way.

## 18. INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

For travel outside Berlin, and outside Germany (Prague, for example, is only 4 hours away), **German trains** (*Deutsche Bahn*) are great – efficient, comfortable, stress-free. For train information in English, call 01805-996633, once in Berlin, or check [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de). Fares change over time, so the information below may not quite match reality while you are in Germany/Berlin! One interesting train option to consider is the so-called Schönes Wochenende Ticket. It costs ca. 35-40 Euros. It enables up to 5 persons to travel on this single ticket and is valid on a Saturday or Sunday. For further details (in German), go to: [http://www.bahn.de/p/view/angebot/regio/schoenes\\_wochenende\\_ticket.shtml](http://www.bahn.de/p/view/angebot/regio/schoenes_wochenende_ticket.shtml). Please note that such a ticket is not good on the IC, ICE, EC, or IR trains (the fast trains, in other words), but still a useful and inexpensive ticket for a weekend jaunt to a destination a few hours from Berlin, of which there are many.

Aside from train travel, many students use cheaper **airline tickets**, booked via the internet, for their personal travel, such as EasyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)), RyanAir ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)), AirBerlin ([www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)), etc., but you should be sure to note any “hidden” fees when making your online purchases and reservations!

Many students have told us that the **ISIC (International Student Identity Card)** is helpful, even essential. It can be purchased at STA Travel offices (also in Berlin).

Germany has about 550 **youth hostels**, the largest network in the world. The individual hostels tend to be larger than average, and always have the best of standards. Priority is given to those under 27, and in Bavaria there is a maximum age limit of 26, except for group leaders and families. Most hostels have family rooms. German Hostels are rated, and the price varies according to the category. The average price will hover around 20-25 Euros per night. The relevant website is: <http://www.jugendherberge.de/en/>.

If you plan on traveling extensively, whether in Germany or other European nations, we recommend purchasing the International Youth Hostel Card. This allows you to stay at Youth Hostels all over Europe at reduced rates. Access the website at [www.iyhf.org](http://www.iyhf.org). You may also be able to buy this card while you are abroad. Budget hotels, pensions (small family-run inns), university dorms, and *Zimmer frei* (B&B concept) are plentiful, but they are slightly to considerably more expensive alternatives. For other reduced student rates, you can also look at [www.studentenpreise.de](http://www.studentenpreise.de) to find cheap rates for phone and internet service, travel, movies, museums, theater, and much more (in German).

## 19. LODGING OPTIONS FOR VISITING RELATIVES OR FRIENDS

In case you plan to have family or friends visit you in Berlin: be aware that your responsibilities connected with this program take precedence, so avoid scheduling visits that conflict with your class and/or excursion obligations! It is **not** permitted to have friends or relatives join you during excursions or field-trips, unless explicitly approved by the program.

If you have parents, guardians, other relatives or friends visit you and need some tips on hotels:

- In close proximity to the apartments, one can opt for "Hotel Bärnin," Scharnweberstraße 17-20, 13405 Berlin, Tel. +49 30 4 17 07 40, website [www.hotel-baerlin.de/en](http://www.hotel-baerlin.de/en).
- Further hotels in the Steglitz area, where the program is located, can be found by checking the listing at <http://www.steglitz.de/st-hotel.htm>.

## 20. SAFETY ISSUES

By and large, Berlin is a fairly safe city. Crime rates are well below American big-city averages, for example. Yet it is always important to be careful and aware of your surroundings. A few tips are:

- Bring a money belt for safekeeping of documents and money.
- Use your inside pockets. Do not keep important valuables in your jacket's outer pockets or in your backpack.
- Keep your purse zippered shut, and try to hold it to your chest or worn across your body.
- Try to use ATM machines in banks only. Try not to take money out of an ATM on the open street by yourself unless absolutely necessary.
- Never carry more cash than you actually need for one day.
- Consider not carrying a credit card with you unless you are out shopping. If you only need one credit card, only carry one with you.
- Never carry your original passport with you unless you are traveling. It is good to carry a photocopy of your passport, however.
- Keep a copy of your credit card numbers and the phone numbers to cancel cards, should they be lost or stolen. Keep this info separate from your wallet.
- Beware of conspicuously friendly strangers. There are many schemes for robbing foreigners.
- Do not fall into a false sense of security.
- Be aware of your environment and use common sense at all times. Be careful, especially after dark.

## 21. POSTAL MATTERS & COMMUNICATIONS

In Germany, postal matters are generally taken care of by the Deutsche Post, which you can easily recognize by its bright yellow color (mailboxes as well as offices). In addition, there are courier services as well, of course, such as FedEx, DHL and UPS.

Postage: an airmail postcard or normal letter overseas costs 1 Euro and a normal letter (up to 20 grams) 1.70 Euro.

Website tip: <http://www.deutschepost.de/dpag?xmlFile=828>. Go to "Produkte & Leistungen" and then to "Preise & Fakten Übersicht" to get an overview (in German) of postal rates.

Please note that the opening hours usually are from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Receiving mail and packages:

If you opted for a homestay, it is best to have all your mail sent there. If you opted for an apartment, consider having all your mail sent to the program building:

Your Name  
c/o Freie Universität Berlin  
FU-BEST Program  
Haus S, Malteserstraße 74-100  
12249 Berlin  
Germany

If someone is sending you a package or parcel, be aware of customs restrictions! It is best to have the sender write the following phrase on the box: "Persönliche Effekte / Gebrauchsgüter für Studienaufenthalt in Berlin". If customs officials suspect that import duties ought to be paid, you will receive a notice by mail and will be asked to go to the local customs office to pick up your package/parcel and possibly pay an import fee.

### Telephone:

**International phone calls require the use of international access codes and country codes.** The international access code when calling abroad from the U.S. is 011, in Europe it is 00. This is then followed by the country code (1 in the case of the U.S. and 49 in the case of Germany, for example). After that come a city or area code and then the rest of the number. So when calling the U.S. from Berlin, for example, dial the optional money-saving prefix (see under "Call-by-call" below), followed by 00 + 1 + area code + number. City codes in many European countries start with a 0, which is only used when calling from one city to another inside a particular country but is dropped when an international call is made. For example,

Berlin's city code is 030. You would use the full 030 when calling Berlin from, say, Munich, but you would only use 30 (after 011 and 49) when calling Berlin from the U.S.

Call-by-call: it is much cheaper to make long-distance/overseas calls via a call-by-call number. The rates of several of those private providers are worth checking out because there are great differences and you can save a lot of money by doing some research!

[www.billiger-telefonieren.de](http://www.billiger-telefonieren.de)

[www.billiger-surfen.de](http://www.billiger-surfen.de)

Phone number directories with search engines can be found online.

[www.dastelefonbuch.de](http://www.dastelefonbuch.de) (White Pages)

[www.gelbeseiten.de/branchenbuch/berlin/index.html](http://www.gelbeseiten.de/branchenbuch/berlin/index.html) (Yellow Pages)

For those of you interested in obtaining a cell phone or local prepaid card: most participants wait until they get to Berlin to purchase an inexpensive cell phone.

European cell phones and cell phone frequencies: If you are thinking of using your own cell phone, it must be compatible with the following frequencies: **900 MHz and 1800 MHz**.

Another telephone option is to bring a **calling card**. They are convenient and can easily be used in both Germany and the rest of Europe. The only real negative aspect is that one is charged a minimum of \$2.50 with AT&T when calling the U.S., for example, even if one only gets the answering machine. Alternatively, and importantly, you can purchase low-priced phone cards in Berlin, sold at a range of small shops across the city. Phone rates from Germany to the U.S., for example, are currently lower than the other way around.

**Calling over the Internet:** If you bring a laptop, one of the best possibilities to communicate internationally is through the internet telephone service Skype. Calls from computer to computer are free. Skype also offers a service which allows you to call landlines all over the world at inexpensive rates. For more information, please visit [www.skype.com/intl/de/](http://www.skype.com/intl/de/).

## 22. COMPUTERS & INTERNET

**Students who own laptops/notebooks are urged to bring them.** The FU features W-LAN, enabling you to access the internet for free by using your own laptop. We also have several regular computers in place, along with a copier/printer you can use (not free-of-charge). The apartments feature an internet connection via Ethernet cable, and WiFi access is provided in the common areas on the ground floor. There is no internet access guaranteed in the homestay accommodations.

There is, of course, also always the option of utilizing one of several Internet-Cafés in Berlin for internet access. Here are two useful websites with relevant address listings:

<http://www.berlin.de/tourismus/infos/internetcafes.php>

<http://www.berlininfo.com/Freetime/Recreation/internet/index.htm>

## 23. LGBTIQ ISSUES

FU-BEST students in Berlin will experience mixed messages about the acceptance of LGBTIQ individuals. There is a **thriving LGBTIQ social scene** in Berlin for sure (there are many clubs, organizations, and magazines tailored especially for LGBTIQ individuals) and students can expect to see open expression of alternative sexual orientations. There are LGBTIQ radio stations and consistent representation of LGBTIQ issues in the media.

There is a **gay students department** in the student government (AStA) of Freie Universität, which organizes events such as lectures, pub crawls and movie nights, and also has opening hours, where you can get information about LGBTIQ living in Berlin and support if you are discriminated against. For further LGBTIQ information/help in Berlin, contact any of the following: Lesbenberatung (Lesbian Counseling Center), Kulmer Straße 20a in the Schöneberg area, tel. 030 - 2152000; Schwulenberatung (Gay Counseling Center), Mommsenstraße 45, tel. 030 - 32703040; Schwules Überfalltelefon (Gay Attack Hotline), tel. 030 - 2163336; Mann-O-Meter, Motzstraße 5, tel. 030 - 2168008, [info@mann-o-meter.de](mailto:info@mann-o-meter.de) / [www.mann-o-meter.de](http://www.mann-o-meter.de), for general info (open Mon.-Sat. 5-10 p.m. and on Sundays until 9 p.m.). If you go to <http://www.studieren-in-deutschland.de/english/4.86.325.html> and click on „Gays and Lesbians,” you can access short articles about LGBTIQ issues in Germany. Although in Berlin attitudes towards sexual orientation will appear very open, you should carefully negotiate each setting and „test the waters” to ensure safety.

## **Part IV: AFTER THE PROGRAM**

### **24. TRANSCRIPT**

Each participant receives a formal transcript (in English) from Freie Universität Berlin, which lists all courses taken, including contact hours, and displaying ECTS credits (see below) and course grades. The transcript is normally issued within a month after completion of the program and sent to the participant and/or his/her home institution. The FU-BEST program does not offer any Audit option as far as its courses are concerned. Each participant is expected to clear his/her FU-BEST course selection with the appropriate advisor(s) on the home campus. Inasmuch as most participants come from partner institutions, credit transfer has generally been a fairly smooth procedure. Each participant receives his/her own copy of the transcript, and upon request a second copy is made available to the home institution directly (in the case of partner institutions) or via the student. Explanatory information accompanies each transcript.

As far as credits issued by the program are concerned, the following may be noted: Regulations concerning the award of credits are standardized by the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), to which Freie Universität Berlin (and thus FU-BEST) adheres. ECTS is a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of higher education across the European Union and other collaborating European countries in order to facilitate transfer and progression of academic studies. In this system, one academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits which are equivalent to between 1,500 and 1,800 hours of study in all countries irrespective of standard or qualification type. Accordingly, one ECTS credit equals 25 to 30 hours of study. The Academic Senate of Freie Universität Berlin has stipulated that at this institution, one ECTS credit awarded is equivalent to 30 hours of study.

### **25. RE-ENTRY SHOCK?**

As someone who has lived and studied abroad, your attitudes, perceptions, and values might change considerably. Though you may not realize it, getting on a plane and flying home does not end your international experience.

As a result, some observers and specialists on the matter suggest that „Re-Entry Shock“ is the reverse of “Culture Shock”. The following observations have been gathered by the program from a variety of sources.

Re-entry is the process of readjusting to your home culture, which has remained the same while you have changed.

Your family and friends can be supportive listeners. However, do not necessarily expect them to fully understand your experiences.

It is very important that you search for the positive aspects in your home surroundings. On your home campus or in your city, find ways to take advantage of your new „cross-cultural” interests. A few of the ways you can incorporate your new interests and cross-cultural insights into your life are:

- Search out international student groups and become involved with them by participating in their activities, tutoring and helping new arrivals adjust to your own society.
- Keep in contact with fellow students who may have studied abroad with you.
- Talk about your own experiences in a different culture and the problems you had in adjusting to it.
- Share stories and photographs with others.
- Follow the news of the country in which you studied.

## 26. LOOKING FOR JOBS OR INTERNSHIPS IN GERMANY?

During the semester, pursuing a job or internship is not feasible, in view of the full calendar and tight structure of the program. However, once you end your FU-BEST participation or after you complete your studies back home, looking for a job or internship in Germany might be something that interests you. On the following page you can find out which options you have.

### **Option 1: FU-BEST Internship Program (BEST-IP)**

FU-BEST partners with Cultural Vistas GmbH, an American organization which arranges internships for foreign students in Germany, to facilitate internship opportunities in Berlin for German-speaking FU-BEST students enrolled in the Spring semester. The internship allows students to enrich their academic experience in Berlin by immersing themselves in a German workplace and gaining valuable intercultural experience along with skills for their careers. Internships last approximately 8 weeks after the end of the semester (May-June) and are full-time (between 30-40 hours per week). Online applications must be submitted by early February. Applicants need to have language abilities at the Intermediate 3 (B3) level or above by the time the internship commences, be enrolled at their home universities/college before, during and after their internship, and have completed at least two semesters of university/college level studies at their home university/college.

Internships are sought with organizations and companies that match each student’s professional and academic background, previous work experience, and career goals. Each internship placement is arranged on an individual basis by Cultural Vistas for an administrative fee which also covers on-site advising, an orientation seminar and material, and quality monitoring of the internships. FU-BEST advises and, where possible, assists

participants with regard to their housing during the internship period.

For more information, please go to our joined website <http://culturalvistas.eu/best-ip/>.

### **Option 2: Individual Search**

If you are still in Berlin/Germany/Europe, your search will be somewhat easier because you can arrange visits to potential work/internship sites, set up interviews, explore options on-site, etc. If you are back overseas, things become more difficult, of course. In either case, unless you are a citizen of an EU member state, you will also face the question of the necessary work permit, which will entail paperwork at the Berlin immigration office. You will need a valid residency permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) and a valid work permit (Arbeitslaubnis). All this paperwork will require time (perhaps even lots of it), so plan well ahead!

Both an internship and a job require an official letter of invitation/appointment by the employer or internship provider before you can do anything at the immigration office. Keep in mind that paid internships are rare in Germany, and that internship providers expect internees to be available for a good number of hours per week and for a relatively sustained period of time. If that is not in your planning, then it is best to not even try.

In all cases, work or internship, knowing German at a very solid level will be indispensable. If your German is still at the beginning stages, do not expect to find work or an internship easily, if at all. Put together a good CV in English and German. Gather letters of recommendation that you can copy and include with a CV and cover letter if you submit an application somewhere.

Here are some further suggestions (some of the websites listed focus more on either job or internship possibilities, but many could be used in the pursuit of both):

- Job search engines: [www.JobScout24.de](http://www.JobScout24.de), [www.jobworld.de/Berlin](http://www.jobworld.de/Berlin), [www.eujobsly.com/Berlin](http://www.eujobsly.com/Berlin), [www.jobsinberlin.eu](http://www.jobsinberlin.eu), [www.jobsabroad.com/search](http://www.jobsabroad.com/search), [www.englishlanguagejobs.com](http://www.englishlanguagejobs.com), or [www.monster.de/Berlin](http://www.monster.de/Berlin).
- [www.au-pair-agenturen.de](http://www.au-pair-agenturen.de): for those of you looking for au-pair opportunities.
- You might want to explore opportunities through various U.S.-German Chambers of Commerce (GACC). Among the relevant websites are [www.gaccny.com](http://www.gaccny.com), [www.gaccsouth.com](http://www.gaccsouth.com), [www.ahk-usa.com](http://www.ahk-usa.com) (which has 6 branch offices in the U.S.), [www.amcham.de](http://www.amcham.de), [www.gaccomm.org](http://www.gaccomm.org), [www.gaccphiladelphia.com](http://www.gaccphiladelphia.com), etc. (there are a number of regional branches in the U.S.).
- Another option is to end up teaching English in Berlin/Germany/Europe. You can apply for a Fulbright teaching fellowship (a number of former FU-BESTers has managed to get one) or contact a language school in Berlin and beyond directly to ascertain your chances (e.g. the Wall Street Institute or another, similar chain of language learning centers).

- Some organizations in Berlin you could contact include the American Academy ([www.americanacademy.de](http://www.americanacademy.de)), the Aspen Institute ([www.aspenberlin.org](http://www.aspenberlin.org)), the Center for Cultural Diplomacy ([www.culturaldiplomacy.org](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org)), or Transparency International ([www.transparency.de](http://www.transparency.de)),
- Also check out <http://www.justlanded.com/english/Germany/Jobs>
- For International Relations and E-Learning projects check Freie Universität Berlin, Center for Global Politics, <http://www.global-politics.org> (mostly internships)
- Jobs, trainings, internships, projects...Subscribe to JOE List: JOE digest: <http://www.joe-list.de/>
- Another job search engine: <http://www.stellenanzeigen.de/>
- American Jewish Committee: [www.ajcgermany.org](http://www.ajcgermany.org)
- Interning at or writing for Eurotopics: <http://www.eurotopics.net/de/presseschau/aktuell.html>
- Be a journalist (usually unpaid) for Café Babel, an interesting young organisation in Europe: <http://www.cafebabel.com/ger/>
- For jobs available via Freie Universität Berlin, you may check out the following two websites: <http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/kommwiss/service/jobs/index.html> and <http://www.studentenwerk-berlin.de/jobs/>
- If you want to look at internship possibilities at the German Bundestag (parliament), check out: <http://www.daad.org/page/53287/> or <http://www.cdsintl.org/fellowshipsabroad/cbyx.php>.
- For State Department internships, check out <http://careers.state.gov/students/>.
- Other internship/job search sites include <http://www.starteasycareer.com/pages/germany-jobs-internships.php> and <http://www.internabroad.com/listingsp3.cfm/listing/53819>.

## 27. USEFUL WEBSITES AND INFORMATION

City guides:

- [www.berlin.de/english/index.html](http://www.berlin.de/english/index.html): Berlin Online official website (in English). See also [www.berlinonline.de/tip/.bin/index.php](http://www.berlinonline.de/tip/.bin/index.php) and [www.berlinonline.de](http://www.berlinonline.de).
- [www.zitty.de](http://www.zitty.de): Zitty contains tons of information about cultural events, music, clubs, restaurants, etc. (in German).
- [www.eng.cityvox-de.com/guide\\_berlin/cityhome](http://www.eng.cityvox-de.com/guide_berlin/cityhome): Online city guide for Berlin (in English).
- [www.german-way.com/berlinlinks.html](http://www.german-way.com/berlinlinks.html): Berlin links for memorials, museums, and other cultural information (in English).
- There is a list of Berlin city guides at: [www.studieren-in-deutschland.de/english/4.22.3.111.html](http://www.studieren-in-deutschland.de/english/4.22.3.111.html)

Counselling Center at Freie Universität Berlin:

[http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/einrichtungen/studierende/ze-beratung/psyber\\_zeb.html](http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/einrichtungen/studierende/ze-beratung/psyber_zeb.html)  
and <http://www.studienberatung.fu-berlin.de/ISFU>

Culture Shock issues:

[www.worldwide.edu/travel\\_planner/culture\\_shock.html](http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html)

Freie Universität Berlin:

[www.fu-berlin.de](http://www.fu-berlin.de)

Freie Universität Berlin International Summer and Winter University (FUBiS):

[www.fubis.org](http://www.fubis.org)

LGBTIQ issues:

<http://www.studieren-in-deutschland.de/english/4.86.325.html>

General information:

- [www.germany.info.org](http://www.germany.info.org): Germany Online! This site, brought to you by the German Embassy and the German Information Center, is a comprehensive site about all aspects of Germany. This is a good resource for information about government, politics, culture, academics, and many other aspects of Germany.
- [www.studieren-in-deutschland.de](http://www.studieren-in-deutschland.de). This site is wonderful – it has a lot of great articles about the latest news, information about studying in Germany, and articles about German culture (in English/German).

German language:

If you feel like brushing up on your German language skills before you get to Berlin, there are free downloadable German courses on the Deutsche Welle site [www.dw-world.de/de/o,2142,2547,00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/de/o,2142,2547,00.html), either in .pdf format or as audio .mp3 files.

Another good site is [www.german.about.com](http://www.german.about.com), which is all about German language. There are online courses on this website as well.

Health matters:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/health/>

Internet Café information:

<http://www.berlin.de/tourismus/infos/internetcafes.php>  
<http://www.berlininfo.com/Freetime/Recreation/internet/index.htm>

Postal matters & communications:

Please see the many websites suggested in section 21.

Program information:

[www.fubest.org](http://www.fubest.org)

Public transportation in Berlin:

[www.bvg.de](http://www.bvg.de)

Social life:

Although it is highly unlikely that you will have a lack of things to do in Berlin, an „Uniparty“ is always a fun time, and a great way to meet Germans. If you want to know what university parties are happening in Berlin, just go to [www.uniparties.de](http://www.uniparties.de) (in German). You can search by city, so you'll always have a party to go to, no matter where you are! Another good website for party information is the one run through the Erasmus program, which operates at all European universities: [www.erasmusnights.com](http://www.erasmusnights.com).

Travel:

- Anything you could possibly want to know about travel in Germany can be found at [www.reiseplanung.de](http://www.reiseplanung.de) (in German). Another key website is STA Travel: [www.statravel.de](http://www.statravel.de).
- [www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) is a site in English that is devoted to German tourism. It contains information about German cities, upcoming events, and transportation.
- We have already mentioned that the Lonely Planet guide for Berlin is excellent. If you go to [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/germany/berlin](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/germany/berlin), you can find some of the information in the guide. You can also purchase the book from the website. Also go to [www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/) to search for any country (there are limited city guides available online as well, such as Frankfurt and Munich).
- The website of the German rail company is [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de). Among the discount airlines are [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com), [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) and [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com).
- For youth hostels, check out <http://www.jugendherberge.de/en/> and [www.iyhf.org](http://www.iyhf.org).
- Another good student-oriented website is [www.studentenpreise.de](http://www.studentenpreise.de).

U.S. passport application information:

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic\\_898.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic_898.html)

Weather:

You can check out the weather in Berlin by going to [www.wetter.com](http://www.wetter.com) or [www.dwd.de](http://www.dwd.de). If you have trouble thinking in Celsius, you can find temperature conversions at:

<http://www.onlineconversion.com/temperature.htm> or: <http://www.convert-me.com/en/>.

\*\*\*

## Metric Conversions

### Length

1 millimeter = .03937 inches

1 centimeter = .3937 inches

1 decimeter = 3.937 inches

1 meter = 1.094 yards

1 kilometer = .6214 miles

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters

1 foot = .3048 meters

1 yard = .9144 meters

1 mile = 1.609 kilometers

### Weight

1 gram = .03527 ounces

1 kilogram = 2.205 pounds

1 hectogram = 3.527 ounces

1 metric ton (1,000 kg) = 984 US ton (2,000 pounds)

### Liquid Measure

1 liter = 2.114 pints

.946 liter = 1 quart

3.785 liter = 1 gallon

### Temperature

Fahrenheit: Water boils at 212 degrees and freezes at 32 degrees.

Celsius: Water boils at 100 degrees and freezes at 0 degrees.

To convert temperatures:

Fahrenheit: Celsius degrees times 9, then divide by 5, and add 32.

Celsius: Fahrenheit degrees minus 32, multiply by 5, and divide by 9.

© Freie Universität Berlin, 2016