

Germany's Transportation Systems

Waterways

Germany's navigable rivers and canals are important transportation routes. Almost 20% of trade goods are transported along the waterways. The Rhine is the most important waterway of Germany. Eighty percent of the goods that are transported by water are carried on this river. On the mouths of the larger rivers are important ports, such as Hamburg on the Elbe River, or Bremen on the Weser River and Rotterdam in Netherlands on the Rhine River (Duisburg, located at the Ruhr/Rhine Rivers, is the busiest close port in the world).

With industrial development and the need for more energy, the rivers play a further important function. They provide cool water for atomic power plants and cover, in part, the water requirements for large industrial plants.

The bad side of having large industrial plants on the sides of rivers is the water pollution associated with them. More and more environmental protection organizations, residents or citizens in general are calling attention to this issue. It will be a challenge for these groups in the years to come to raise public awareness and clean up the waterways. Progress is already being made along the Rhine River.

Federal Interstates ("Autobahn")

Germany is crossed by a dense network of interstate highways that allow for speedy and efficient travel. In general, there are no speed limits on the interstates. Where they do exist, for reasons of safety, signs showing maximum speed are posted. The standard speed limit (when there is one) is 80 mph for passenger cars and 50 mph for trucks. Buses which are suitably equipped may reach a speed limit of 62 mph.

The dense network of interstates also brings a number of problems with it. Every year the heavy vacation traffic makes the main routes in Germany impassable. Especially in the months of June and July travelers have to count on long traffic jams. Automobile exhaust is one of the main causes of air pollution.

Drivers get information about construction sites, traffic, danger zones and accidents from signs and billboards along the highway or on the radio. Radio programs are often interrupted for this reason.

It is also possible to get extensive information about any kind of obstruction of traffic from navigation systems, from the internet or via text message on a mobile phone.

The Deutsche Bahn AG (German Railways)

The Federal Republic of Germany has a well-developed rail network that makes traveling to neighboring countries and between the different German states and regions very easy. Traveling itself is often a tourist attraction: for example, traveling by rail, romantic routes and views in the Black Forest and the Bavarian Woods, in the Vogtland and the Rhine valley can be enjoyed.

The trend of adapting older lines for new high-speed travel with the ICE (InterCity Express) trains and the transformation of train-stations into modern shopping- and service-areas will continue over the next few years. People in Germany – including Germany's political decision-makers – generally have a good opinion of rail transport and the advantages it offers. In the goods transport sector however, rail transport is continuing to lose ground to transport by road. The biggest cause of this is the opening up of markets in eastern Europe. Due to its position in the middle of Europe, the Federal Republic of Germany has become a transit country. A steadily increasing number of trucks on highways and superhighways are exacerbating the growing environmental and traffic problems. For this reason, a toll for trucks on interstates has come into effect.

ICE – InterCityExpress

The ICE is increasingly becoming the backbone of high-speed travel in Germany. The 174 mph trains can only be used with a special rail ticket.

EC – EuroCity

EC trains link Germany with almost every country in Europe. The top speeds of these trains, which meet high international standards, is 124 mph.

IC – InterCity

IC trains link all big cities in Germany every hour at a top speed of 124 mph. The rail cars used have the same standards as the EC trains.

ICN – InterCityNight,

EN – EuroNight

CNL – CityNightLine

All three of these trains are particularly comfortable “hotel” trains that travel overnight along selected rail links in Germany (as ICN) and abroad (as EN and CNL). Special fares apply to these trains.

D-trains

D-trains link small and medium-sized towns in Germany. They stop more frequently than EC and IC trains and hence are more suitable for short distances within regions. With their modern rail cars, these trains travel along well-developed rail networks at speeds of up to 124 mph and 99 mph.

SE – StadtExpress (City Express),

RE – RegionalExpress (Regional Express)

RB – RegionalBahn (Regional Train)

These trains provide a local service between towns and their suburbs and outlying rural communities in the individual regions.

- SE trains link districts in combinations and stop at almost all stations.
- RE trains link important centers in the region and do not stop everywhere.
- RB trains stop at almost every station in the region.

Train Name	Train Type	Journey	Distance	Stops	Duration	Speed
Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen	ICE 895	Hamburg-Munich	510 miles	8	5 hours, 51 minutes	Up to 174 mph
Nordfriesland	IC 823	Nuremberg-Passau	130 miles	2	2 hours, 13 minutes	124 mph
Joseph Haydn	EC 27	Bonn-Frankfurt	119 miles	3	1 hour, 53 minutes	124 mph
	RB 16600	Erfurt-Eisenach	35 miles	10	50 minutes	62 mph