

**Castle and Manor-House accomodation in the scenic East German state Brandenburg:** The exciting capital of Germany, Berlin, is surrounded by the state Brandenburg, which offers the outstanding and wonderful opportunity to relax and enjoy a gorgeous landscape with forests, lakes, rivers... Coming from Berlin, it seems as if you travel to a completely different country within just one or two hours. To make your journey between these two poles perfect, you can pick one of the many fabulous castles and manor-houses in Brandenburg providing excellent and unique - and sometimes truly Royal - accomodation. These hotels mostly have only few individual rooms or apartments, therefore it's a recommendation especially for small groups and independent travelers. To give you an idea, we introduce two places: the "Fortress Stavenow" and the "Castle Reichenow". The Fortress Stavenow has been protecting a ford to cross the river "Loecknitz" for 650 years. The so called "little grey fortress" offers 8 neat appartments, all lovingly restored and furnished. An overnight stay is available for 50 Euros per person and night - quite affordable we think. And the location with its garden, the old trees and the calmness are priceless anyway! If you prefer a Royal ambience, the Castle Reichenow is the perfect choice. The castle, including a farm and a park, was established in 1897-1900 in the neo-Gothic style. The builder was inspired by english country residences of the Tudor period. The Castle Reichenow is a color-romantic castle right out of a book of fairytales with soaring octagonal towers and a corona of crenelation. It's located on a scenic lake. An overnight stay is available for 99 Euros per person per night. To find these - or one of the many other - hidden treasures, we as The German American Connection offer our Individual Trip Planning service. Don't hesitate to [contact us](#) - either just for recommendations, for booking your special accomodation or for planning your dream trip to East Germany. <http://www.schlosshotels-brandenburg.de/viewer.html> (only in German)

**The history and tradition of Germany's world-famous beergardens:** During summertime you can find a beergarden, a so-called "Biergarten", almost everywhere in Germany – South, North, West and East. Sometimes they are huge places with several hundreds of outdoor seats, sometimes it's just a few tables hidden in a pub's backyard. But where and how did it start? It might not be very surprising, that Bavaria claims to have created the first beergardens – and they are most likely right about that. Historically correct, those places should be named "on top of the beer cellars". Everything began in 1539 with the Bavarian Brewing Law, which says that brewing beer is only permitted in the time from the feast day of St. Michael (Sep 29) until the day of glory of St. Georg (April 23). During summertime, brewing beer was prohibited due to the high fire hazard of the simmering process. To avoid beer shortage in summer, the Bavarian brewers came up with several ideas. First of all they brewed a stronger beer with a better storability in spring, the so called "Maerzenbier" (March beer). At the time, mostly bottom-fermented beer was brewed, which is naturally more stabile than top-fermented beer. In addition, the brewers built cellars to store the beer in wooden barrels under a huge layer of ice chunks, which were broken out of rivers and lakes during wintertime. And last but not least, they planted chestnut trees on top of the cellars. Especially the large leaves created shade and protected the cellars – and the stored beer – from too much sun and heat. Then Napoleon enters the stage: in 1805, he raised kind of an embargo in Bavaria: Now pub-owners were allowed to choose their brewery, and the brewers were allowed to sell their own stored beer directly to the public. Soon the brewers started to set-up tables and benches in the shade of the trees, that people could drink the fresh beer right there – the beergarden was born! Of course, the pub-owners protested immensely. Finally king Ludwig I. decided: Brewers keep the right to sell beer, but they are not allowed to sell food. That's why the Bavarians started bringing their own victuals. Until today it's an official rule: Even in pub-linked beergarden with full menus, everyone can bring a picnic hamper, at least in Bavaria. A perfect chance to enjoy German beergarden culture, is to go with us on a [German Beer Crawl](#).

**The “Max-Liebermann-Villa” in Berlin – the artist’s house, the garden and the museum:**

Max Liebermann, considered both for his work and for his art political activity one of the most important trailblazers of modern German painting, was born in Berlin in 1847. After having lived and worked in Paris, Holland and Munich, Max Liebermann returned to Berlin in 1884, where he gradually won recognition as an artist in his home town. Liebermann’s intense preoccupation with motifs of the common tradespeople and farm laborers he encountered in Holland earned him the name of “poor people painter”. His participation in the Paris World’s Fair of 1889, which included a comprehensive exhibition of European art, was a huge success. Max Liebermann had submitted his painting, “The Netmenders”, and was awarded the title of Knight of the Legion of Honor. However, the Prussian government issued an injunction forbidding him, for political reasons, to accept the honor. Nevertheless, Max Liebermann became one of the triumvirate of the so-called German Impressionists, now addressing the world of the upper middle classes. In 1920, he accepted an appointment of the Prussian Academy of Arts, the cultural center of Berlin. He held this position until 1933, when he – born as a son of a Jewish textile manufacturer – had no choice but resign. Max Liebermann died ostracized by the Nazis, lonely and embittered, in 1935 in Berlin. Following the historic restoration of the house and the garden, the “Max-Lieberman-Villa” in Berlin-Wannsee opened to the public in April 2006. The upper floor rooms show paintings, pastels and prints of the artist. On the ground floor, an informative exhibition documents the life of Max Liebermann’s family as well as the shifting fate of the villa. The garden has been reconstructed today as it was originally planned by Max Liebermann. Within the huge and almost overwhelming arts scene in Berlin, the “Max-Liebermann-Villa” is one of the hidden pearls. The combination of the original house, where the artist lived and worked, the museum, the small but fine exhibitions and not to forget the Café Bar provide an impressive but familial approach to one of Germany’s most important painter and art politician – Max Liebermann. [http://www.max-liebermann.de/en/\(S\(q5ndo5im3kl2ih55jmqgxe55\)\)/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=1](http://www.max-liebermann.de/en/(S(q5ndo5im3kl2ih55jmqgxe55))/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=1)

**2008 – the International Year of the POTATO:** For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europe was the undisputed world leader in potato production. While the honor has now passed to Asia, seven European countries are among the 10 global producers. The continent also has the world’s highest level of potato consumption: almost 100 kg per capita per year. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the potato was first brought to Germany from South America as a decorative plant due to its beautiful blossom. But shortly later, the nourishing character of the potato was recognized. Still, for the next 200 years the potato was grown almost exclusively as animal feed. But after a severe famine in the 1770s, German monarchs promoted the “Kartoffel” as a staple food crop as well. The potato is a versatile, carbohydrate-rich food and low in fat. It’s rich in several micronutrients, especially vitamin C, and a source of iron, vitamins B1, B3, B6 as well as of several minerals such as magnesium. Potatoes also contain dietary antioxidants and dietary fibre, which benefits health. But – most important: Potato dishes are tasty and great to eat! Today the potato is one of the most popular vegetables in Germany and Germans are world-famous for their great variety of local potato recipes. The most famous German potato dish is probably the “Kartoffelsalat” (potato salad). But it’s impossible to provide just one “German potato salad” recipe. There are as many differing ways of preparing a potato salad as regions and local traditions. Again, traveling through Germany is the ultimate way of tasting the delicious seasonal specialties. Especially in September and early October, numerous local “Potato Feasts” or “Harvest Celebrations” take place in many German cities, towns and villages including musical programs, competitions, potato tastings, traditional handcraft, entertainment and – very popular – crowning the “potato queens”.

<http://www.germanfoods.org/consumer/search.cfm?SearchTerm=potato>

<http://www.potato2008.org/en/>

**How to shop Tax Free in Germany – easy ways for a safe refund:** Shopping in Germany is something just too good to miss. And with TAX FREE SHOPPING it is even more economic shopping. The VAT Rate in Germany is 19% for regular goods and 7% for some goods like food and books. The VAT is included in the purchase price (15,97% respectively 6,54% of the price tag). To qualify for Tax Free Shopping in Germany you have to make a minimum purchase of 25 €. All visitors residing outside of the European Union are entitled to claim back the tax in Germany. The goods need to be exported within three months plus the month of purchase. Before you purchase any goods in Germany you should inform the retailer that you intend to export the goods to the United States of America. With your receipt you will receive a so-called “Ausfuhrbescheinigung” (export papers) or a Tax Free Shopping Check. The easiest and safest way is to shop at one of the more than 40,000 retailers offering the TAX FREE SHOPPING Service of Global Refund which can be identified by the logo (see picture). Just follow the 3 steps: Shopping – Stamp – Refund. Shop where you see the Tax Free Shopping logo and simply ask for your Refund Cheque (if the retailer does not participate in the Global Refund program, ask for the “Ausfuhr-Bescheinigung”). When leaving the EU, show your purchases, receipts and passport at the border, then have your Global Refund Cheque (or export papers) stamped. Plan on spending an extra 30 minutes at the airport. For goods in carry-on luggage, go to customs after passport control to show the goods and to have your Global Refund Cheque stamped. For goods in check-in luggage, before checking in your luggage go to customs first, present your purchases and get your cheques stamped. Then you can store your purchases and check in your luggage. For immediate Refund back home: show your refund cheque, passport and credit card at a nearby Global Refund Office and ask for an Immediate Refund on your credit card (available since May 2008) or in cash. Alternatively there is a mail-back Refund option.

[http://www.germany.info/relaunch/info/consular\\_services/otherconsularservices/taxeng.html](http://www.germany.info/relaunch/info/consular_services/otherconsularservices/taxeng.html)

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