

## Newsletter – January 2019

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expat-karlsruhe

Dear Expats,

*This is a free English-language monthly newsletter from [expat-karlsruhe.com](http://expat-karlsruhe.com). Feel free to pass it along. Full versions (with working links) of the current and past newsletters can be found on our [website](#). Please contact us if you have any suggestions, questions or comments or if we are missing any events you think might be interesting &/or useful to the expat community. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, please click [here](#) or send a reply to this newsletter with the text "unsubscribe."*

The Germans say "Guten Rutsch" as a New Years greeting. This means they wish you a smooth start in the new year. We also wish you a "Guten Rutsch" and hope that 2019 brings you and yours many exciting adventures, continued success, good health and happiness!

### Important dates in January

At midnight on **December 31st** (Silvester), you are allowed to shoot your own firecrackers — these may only be purchased a few days ahead of time and may only be used on New Year's Eve. Some towns of cultural importance or with narrow roads may **forbid fireworks**. There's lots of talk at the moment that the fine dust (Feinstaub) caused by the fireworks is just as bad if not worse than that from diesel cars. You are not allowed to shoot fireworks near hospitals, nursing homes or churches. If you will be using public transportation, check the [online trip planner](#) for special schedules. Use the one for kvv rather than Deutsche Bahn because apparently the Deutsche Bahn has incorrect information for the local system for this evening. If you would like to see the fireworks from the Turmberg in Durlach, the Turmbergbahn will be operating from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. only. Expect crowds. It's a popular spot and the number of people allowed on the terrace is limited to 500. A heightened police presence is expected at all the popular outdoor locations (e.g. Marktplatz, in front of the castle etc.). If you have pets, please keep them indoors away from the firecrackers and noise.

On **December 31st** most stores close early (around 2 p.m.).

**January 1** is a national German holiday. Stores and public offices are closed; some museums and restaurants are open. Check before you leave home to avoid disappointment.

**December 25th – January 10th** — If you had a **Christmas tree** this year, the city has collection points from where the trees will be removed (free of charge) and composted. For a list of collection points look [here](#). Your tree should be free of ornaments and plastic. In some of the outlying regions and smaller towns as well as some neighborhoods of Karlsruhe, the junior fire fighters or sports clubs use this as a fundraiser — Christmas tree removal from the sidewalk in front of your residence in exchange for a small donation (under €10).

**January 6 — Epiphany (Heilige Drei Könige)**. Official holiday in Baden-Württemberg, but not all of Germany. It's a Sunday this year, so no day off from work. Many museums and restaurants are open.

### Changes in rules/laws/regulations in 2019

Listed below are some changes taking effect in 2019:

#### Banking & Finance & Taxes & Money



- The basic tax-free allowance increases to €9168 for singles and €18336 for partners.
- For those with children, the tax abatement increases to €7620 per child.
- The deductions for social services (state pension, unemployment insurance, health insurance etc.) are taken as a percentage of your income up to an upper limit — this upper limit is raised to €4537.50/month for health and nursing care insurance and €6700/month for the state pension fund.
- In order to be eligible for private health insurance, you must earn at least €60,700 a year. Civil servants (Beamte), students, those self-employed and freelancers don't have a minimum limit.
- Your contribution to nursing home insurance increases by 0.5 points to 3.05% (3.3 % for those without children) of your gross income and your contribution to unemployment insurance decreases by 0.5 points to 2.5 % of your gross income starting in January.
- Starting in January, your health insurance contributions are once again evenly divided between yourself and your employer.
- The minimum wage increases to €9.19/hour. In some branches, this minimum wage is higher.
- If you are self-employed and have state-run health insurance, the amount you pay is based on your income. If you don't earn much money, you now pay at least €151/month (before it was at least €320/month).
- If you file your own income tax returns, you have two extra months to do so. Rather than the end of May, you can file your return for the previous year until the end of July.

### Families

- If you receive child benefits (Kindergeld), the amount increases by €10 per month per child starting in July 2019.
- It should be easier to find a spot for your child in a daycare center. The federal government has made funding available for more teachers, but it may take a while for the law to take effect and be noticeable.

### Other

- Supermarkets must indicate if beverage bottles are non-refillable (Einweg) or refillable (Mehrweg). More types of beverages now have a deposit.
- Sending packages is more expensive. Package processing and delivering has become more expensive and almost all package delivery companies are raising their prices to compensate.
- Telephoning within the EU should be cheaper starting in May 2019. Mobile telephoning has been regulated, but calling from one landline to another can still be quite expensive within the EU.
- If you are renting, starting in January of 2019 before signing the lease, the landlord must inform you in writing if the rent is higher than that of the average rent in the area. If the landlord does not do this, he/she does not have the right to charge a higher price. You have a right to know what the previous renter paid.
- Within Karlsruhe, it is not allowed to park your car on the sidewalk. Up to now it has been more or less tolerated, but starting in the middle of January, unlawful parking will cost you a ticket.
- The new schedule of penalties (Bußgeldkatalog) has come out. Some of these penalties are regulated by cities and they use this schedule as a guideline of what to charge for various



infractions ranging from littering to feeding birds where it is not allowed or smoking in a playground. Other infractions are regulated by the states (e.g., pollution) and still others by the country (e.g., speeding). The main thing that has changed is that the maximum penalty for all infractions has gone up, sometimes to twice the previous amount.

### Karlsruhe is the City of Justice

Karlsruhe is known as the City of Justice (Stadt des Rechts) because three important judicial pillars are located here — the Federal Court of Justice (Bundesgerichtshof), the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) and the Offices of the Federal Prosecutor General (Generalbundesanwaltschaft). In May of 2019, Germany will be celebrating 70 years since the signing of the Constitution of the German state. A celebration will take place in and around the castle close to the Federal Constitutional Court. The region of Baden already had a relatively progressive constitution in 1818, parts of which were a basis for the national constitution of 1949.

### Snow & Ice

The past few years were unusually mild, and we've only had one snow day this season, but who knows what the rest of winter will bring. Many of the ski lifts in the Black Forest (Schwarzwald) are open for business. The closest hills are in the Dobel part of Bad Herrenalb just south of Karlsruhe. You can even reach these with public transportation. Some larger ski areas further south are very busy on weekends and the parking lots fill up quickly. Check the websites before leaving.

If you own a car, be sure you have [winter tires or all-weather tires](#). If you are in an accident and don't have tires appropriate for the situation, your insurance may not pay.

Depending on where you live and your house arrangements, you may be responsible for snow removal from in front of the building. This should be stated in your lease.

### What to do in Karlsruhe in January

#### Regular English-language Events

Karlsruhe's very own [English-Speaking Meetup Group](#) (sponsored by expat-karlsruhe.com.) is an informal platform allowing for the organization of events, activities and adventures. The most popular regular event is the monthly German-English Stammtisch where you can practice your English and meet nice people in a relaxed atmosphere. Start is 6:30 p.m. until around 10:00 ish. It's a mix of young and old and all those in-between, who come and go throughout the evening.

The [American Library](#) has regular events in English for kids and adults: **LitNite** (January 15), **Poetry, Please!** (January 22), **MovieTalk** (January 9), **Storytime for kids 3-5** (January 9 & 23), **Teen Time** ( ) and **Storytime for kids 6 and up** (January 25). The American Library is closed until January 7th. Spelling Bee registration deadline is February 8<sup>th</sup> at midnight. More information on the [Spelling Bee website](#).

The [Karlsruhe Toastmasters](#) meet every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. to practice public speaking in English.

### Improve your German!



### Sprecht miteinander!

Practice your spoken **German** in a relaxed atmosphere. People of similar language ability form groups moderated by a native speaker volunteer. Free and no registration required. Wednesdays and Fridays from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. Just stop by!

Bürgerzentrum Mühlburg (BZM)

Hardtstr. 37 A/2

76185 Karlsruhe

The **IBZ** (Internationales Begegnungszentrum Karlsruhe - International Meeting Center Karlsruhe) offers a number of projects to help with integration. A listing in English is available [here](#).

### Calendar of Events

**until January 27th — Ice skating** in front of the castle.

**December 31 — New Year's Eve.** Most stores close early on this day.

**January 1 — New Year's Day.** All stores and government offices closed.

**January 6 — Epiphany (Heilige Drei Könige).** Official public holiday in Baden-Württemberg. It's a Sunday, so most everything is closed anyway. Many museums and restaurants are open.

**January 6 — [Open House](#)** at ZKM from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free admission. If you haven't been to this wonderful Karlsruhe institution yet, now is the perfect opportunity. Last day to see the [Open Codes](#) exhibition.

**January 6 — [Open House](#)** at the [Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe \(Municipal Gallery\)](#). Free admission. Guided tours.

**January 8 — [English/German Stammtisch](#) and [Pub Quiz](#)** organized by the [English-Speaking Meet-Up Group](#) at [The Old Chapel Pub](#) starting around 6:30 p.m. A great way to meet new people, chat with old friends and enjoy a night out.

**January 30 — [Collection for the Pfennigbasar](#)** at the Schwarzwaldhalle in Karlsruhe from **10 a.m. to 5 p.m.** The International Women's Club hosts this huge flea market. Proceeds go to local charities and scholarships for exchange students. Donations are gratefully accepted. If it's good enough to give your best friend, it's good enough for the [Pfennigbasar](#). Please no broken or dirty items.

### Relocation Service move-in

With 15+ years of experience in the region, [Relocation Service move-in](#) can help with your move to Karlsruhe, your move from Karlsruhe and with all those day-to-day problems expats experience.

If you enjoyed this newsletter, please pass it on!

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[info@expat-karlsruhe.com](mailto:info@expat-karlsruhe.com)

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