



Dear Expats,

The Germans say "Guten Rutsch" as a New Year's greeting. This means they wish you a smooth start in the new year. We also wish you a "Guten Rutsch" and hope that 2020 brings you and yours many exciting adventures, continued success, good health and happiness!

Important dates in January

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

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. In Karlsruhe, the area in front of the castle including the ice-skating rink is off-limits for fireworks (new this year), as is the old part of Durlach (Altstadt). Be respectful of others as you celebrate the new year.

If you would like to see the fireworks from the Turmberg in Durlach, the Turmbergbahn will be operating from 10 pm to 1 am only. Expect crowds. The streets leading up to the Turmberg will be closed to car traffic. It's a popular spot and the number of people allowed on the terrace is limited to 500 – controls will be set up starting at 10 pm.

A heightened police presence is expected at all the popular outdoor.

If you have pets, please keep them indoors away from the firecrackers and noise.

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 (usually under €10).

January 6 – Epiphany (Heilige Drei Könige). Official holiday in Baden-Württemberg, but not all of Germany. Many museums and restaurants are open, even though it is a Monday.

Listed below are some changes taking effect in 2020:

Banking & Finance & Taxes & Money

- If you earn less than €784 a month, you no longer need to fill out an income tax form for the tax year 2020.
- The basic tax-free allowance increases to €9,408 for singles and €18,816 if you file with your partner.
- For those with children, the total 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 €4687.50/month for health and nursing care insurance and €6900/month for the state pension fund.
- In order to be eligible for private health insurance, you must earn at least €62,550 a year. Civil servants (Beamte), students, those self-employed and freelancers don't have a minimum limit.
- The minimum wage increases to €9.35/hour in 2020. In some branches, this minimum wage is higher.
- For hygiene products (tampons or pads), the sales tax is 7 rather than 19% starting in 2020.



- The sales tax on E-readers is 7 rather than 19% in 2020.
- In 2020, you can use language or computer courses as tax write-offs.
- Train travel is cheaper (7 instead of 19% sales tax) in 2020.
- Flying is more expensive starting in April of 2020.
- In order to finance the Renewable Energies Act (EEG), your electricity bill increases in 2020. For an average household, this will be about €13 a year more.
- Starting on January 1, 2020, you must receive a till receipt for every purchase – even if you never got one before, e.g., at the bakery.
- Sending packages with DHL will be about 3% more expensive in 2020.

Other

- If you are sick, the note from your doctor for your employer will now be taken care of electronically, and you will no longer need to present the yellow copy.
- Starting March 1, 2020, parents or guardians need to prove that the child has been immunized for measles before the child may take part anywhere where many children gather (school, Kita, refugee accommodation). For those already in such an institution, the information needs to be received by July 31, 2021. The same goes for all those working in such institutions. A penalty of up to €2000 may apply if the parents/guardians do not comply.
- 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.
- If you plan well, then by using 27 vacation days, you can have 61 days off in 2020. This can be accomplished by strategically using [state holidays](#), weekends and “Brückentage” (e.g., when a holiday falls on a Thursday, take the Friday off for a four day weekend).
- Starting in March of 2020, it should be easier for those from non-EU countries to come to Germany to work. (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz). This is for those who have a professional or occupational qualification, can prove that a job is available and can demonstrate a sufficient German proficiency. Also, those still looking for a job or apprenticeship, who can prove they have finished school and have sufficient German proficiency may come to Germany and look for a job – if they can prove that they can financially support themselves during this time.

Karlsruhe News

- For the first time in 50 years, there will be NO Pfennigbasar in Karlsruhe in 2020.
- The new IKEA on Durlacher Allee is scheduled to open on Midsommar 2020, i.e. around June 20th. Until then, expect traffic delays in the area.
- The Rheinbrücke should be free of construction by December 29th, 2019 making travel to and from the Palatinate easier.
- The Karlsruhe subway system was expected to be in use by the end of 2020, but the date has been moved back to the middle of 2021, which means expect more construction delays in the inner city.

Snow & Ice

Some of the ski lifts in the Black Forrest (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.

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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 a way for anyone to organize events and activities or plan adventures. The most popular regular event is the monthly Stammtisch where you can meet nice people who speak English in a relaxed atmosphere. Start is 6:30 p.m. until around 11:30 p.m. It's a mix of young and old and all those in-between, who come and go throughout the evening. The next one is January 14th.

The [American Library](#) has regular events in English for kids and adults: **LitNite** (January 7 & 21), **Poetry, Please!** (January 28), **MovieTalk** (January 8), **Storytime for kids 3-5** (January 8 & 22), **Teen Time** (January 24) and **Storytime for kids 6 and up** (January 24).

The [Karlsruhe Toastmasters](#) meet every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m. to practice public speaking in English with friendly, relaxed support from speakers from around the world.

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

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.

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

January 14 – Stammtisch organized by the Karlsruhe English-Speaking Meet-Up group at [Aposto](#) in Karlsruhe starting around 6:30 p.m.

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.

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