

## ***May Parent Meeting***

### ***Q&A***

Something that occurred to me on the ride home that I missed.

The outlets are different in Germany – the plugs are a different shape, and the current is 220V instead of 110V. If you plug an American electronic in without a transformer, you fry the device. There are converter sets available. The plug you need will be labeled “North Europe(an)”.

### ***Questions and Answers from last night:***

#### **1. Can students bring a laptop?**

Yes, but Frau has reservations. They are heavy and expensive if lost. Security in a hostel is somewhat less than in a hotel. I guess my question would be... why would they need/want it?

#### **2. What is internet availability?**

There is free wi-fi access in both hostels. They will need to inquire with their host student what internet is offered at the home where they are staying – it will vary from family to family.

#### **3. What is the view on iPods, Skyping, etc?**

You are paying a lot of money to be on this trip, and the goal is to be immersed in the culture. If you are spending your evenings in the hostels/with the host family Skyping with friends/girl (or boy) friends back home, or with the family for hours, you aren't getting the full experience. A quick check-in is fine. I'd prefer that they not be hours long conversations.

Additionally, in the cities especially, you will need to be aware of your surroundings. You may have your phone with you if you are using it as a camera, but NO texting, Facebooking, or listening to music.

I've also found that excessive contact with home can make homesickness worse.

#### **4. Are pickpockets common?**

Probably about the same as Washington D.C. or Boston – not common, but a threat, especially in tourist areas or public transportation. We will stand out as tourists, and tourists are known for not being aware of their surroundings, which makes them MORE of a target than locals. So, something to be aware of, but not something that I'd consider to be a huge issue.

**5. Will they need to have their passports on them at all times?**

No. Both hostels have a safe, and I will lock them up. I will carry a photocopy instead. **THEY WILL NEED IT TO GET INTO THE BUNDESTAG (CONGRESS)**. I'd also carry a driver's license or other photo ID – sometimes you will be asked for it for a credit card transaction.

However, a student ID will need to be on hand – student discounts are MUCH more common in Germany than they are here, and you can save quite a bit of money with them. Obviously, I will take advantage of them whenever possible.

**6. What do you recommend to carry money and wallets?**

A neck wallet is the most common thing for guys. Girls can carry a purse, as long as they are aware of where it is.

**7. Is there a surcharge on a Visa Buxx card or credit/debit card?**

Yes – the same charges as a regular Visa. Here is a good article about transaction fees.

<http://www.bankrate.com/finance/credit-cards/how-to-avoid-foreign-transaction-fees.aspx>

**8. How much cash do you recommend they carry?**

No more than €100 should be necessary. Basically, no more than you'd feel comfortable losing and not having the possibility of getting back. However, keep in mind that every time you withdraw money from an ATM there is a fee (but it is less than losing \$100+!)

**9. How do they get to school?**

Whatever way their German gets to school – if their German walks to school, they will walk. If their German rides their bike, they will ride.

**10. What will they do during the day?**

They will start by shadowing their German. After that, I'm going to request that they be able to choose the classes to attend. They may be requested as guest speakers – maybe in an English class, so that students can practice with a native speaker, maybe in a history class, talking about US history. That lies in the hands of our German hosts.

**11. What type of shoes are recommended?**

Comfortable for our time in the city. There will be a lot of walking, on concrete, and it may be hot. If you buy new shoes for the trip, make sure you break them in before you leave. I'll have band-aids, but prefer not to have to do first aid on your feet.

**12. What is meant by “dressy-ish outfits”?**

Skirts/casual dresses for the girls, khakis for the boys will be awesome.

**13. What is the name of the high school?**

Oscar-Paret Schule.

<http://www.ops-freiberg.de/>



**14. What is the dress code at the school?**

Much as it is here. Their German partner would be the best source of information for this.

**15. What will the weather be like?**

Hopefully, much as it has been here lately – mid-70s. But there is always a chance of rain in Germany, and it could be chillier than I'd wish!

<http://www.weather.com/weather/wxclimatology/monthly/GMXX0007>

**16. Can girls wear shorts?**

Yes, but choose longer over shorter, if possible.

**17. Are Germans allowed to miss school when they come here?**

No more than a day to make a long weekend.

**18. How long are they staying with us?**

They'll be here from

**19. When they first come, what should we do?!?!**

Introduce them to yourselves, ask them about themselves, and give them a tour of the house. Share with them any house rules. Let them know where they can find extra towels, toothpaste, glasses, snacks, etc. Share your daily schedule with them – what time you get up, what time they'll be leaving for school, what the plans are for dinner. Make them feel at home!

**20. Are the Germans fluent in English?**

Yes, but they aren't perfect or all-knowing. There will be words they will struggle with – there are words that we just don't teach in class that they will find they need! Circumlocution (a roundabout or indirect way of speaking; the use of more words than necessary to express an idea) is a great skill for a foreign language learner to have!