



*The Ferris Wheel at Marktplatz is open through January 7th. On New Year's Eve, it is open until 1 am.*

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 at [expat-karlsruhe.com](https://expat-karlsruhe.com) and our sponsor [Relocation Service move-in](#) also wish you a “Guten Rutsch” and hope that 2024 brings you and yours many exciting adventures, continued success, good health and happiness!

Just a reminder – if you have any questions about life in Karlsruhe, just send us an email ([info@expat-ka.com](mailto:info@expat-ka.com)) and we’ll try to find an answer or solution. This holds for those new to Karlsruhe as well as long time expats.

### **Important dates in January**

**December 23 – January 5 – School holidays** for the Karlsruhe school system.

**December 27th – January 5th** — 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](#) under Christbaumsammlung 2024. Your tree should be free of ornaments and plastic. Many towns surrounding Karlsruhe also have collection points for Christmas trees or the local football club comes around and takes your tree for a small donation.

**December 31st** is a Sunday this year, so be sure to get all your shopping for the long weekend done by or on Saturday, December 30th.

On **December 31st** (Silvester) you are allowed set off your own fireworks – but not everywhere. They are on sale through December 30th and may only be used on New Year’s Eve. No fireworks near churches, old buildings, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, and at least 1000 meters from protected nature areas (Naturschutzgebiet, Landschaftsschutzgebiet) and anywhere where wildlife should be protected – not to mention pets. Also, please clean up after yourselves – this includes empty (or full) bottles and anything else you might have with you that belongs in the trash.

In Karlsruhe, fireworks are forbidden in the entire area in front of the Karlsruhe Palace as well as at Marktplatz. The giant Ferris Wheel at Marktplatz is open this evening until 1 am. At midnight, the bells of the town hall at Marktplatz will play *Ode an die Freude* (Ludwig van Beethoven), *Hallelujah* (Georg Friedrich Händel) as well as *Pomp and Circumstance*.

The outdoor ice skating rink near the Karlsruhe Palace, as well as the food and drink booths in that area, are open until 1 am on New Year's Eve.

If you would like to see the fireworks from the Turmberg in Durlach, the Turmbergbahn is operating from 9 pm to 1 am. You may not transport fireworks in the Turmbergbahn! It's a popular spot and the number of people allowed on the terrace is limited to 500. No setting off your own fireworks, but the view over the city is great if the weather is good. Many streets leading to the Turmberg are closed on this evening from 10 pm to 1:30 am.

**January 1** is a national German holiday. Stores and public offices are closed; some museums and restaurants are open, even if it is a Monday.

**January 6 — Epiphany (Heilige Drei Könige)** is an official holiday in Baden-Württemberg, but not all of Germany. Grocery stores are closed on this day. Many museums and restaurants are open. It's a Saturday, which means get your grocery shopping for the weekend done on Friday, January 5th.

**Many laws go into effect with the new year. Below is a list of changes which could be of importance for us expats.**

### Banking & Finance & Taxes & Money

- The basic tax-free allowance increases to €11,784 (was €10,908 in 2022) for singles and double the amount if you file with your partner.
- The highest tax rate of 42 % is for those earning €66,761 a year or more (was €62,810).
- The minimum wage in Germany is €12.41/hour (was €12).
- For those with children, the tax abatement is €6612 per child (married filing jointly).
- The maximum amount you may earn in a mini-job is €538/month (was €520) or €6456 a year.
- The deductions for social services (state pension, unemployment insurance, health insurance etc.) are taken as a percentage of your income to an upper limit — this upper limit is €5175/month for health insurance and €7,550/month for the state pension fund.
- If you earn at least €69,300 a year, you have the option to apply for private health insurance. Civil servants (Beamte), students, those self-employed and freelancers don't have a minimum limit. It is possible to get statutory health insurance as a freelancer.
- The CO<sub>2</sub> price is rising in January to €45 per ton, which means gasoline and diesel for your car (up to 5 cents per liter) as well as oil and gas for heating will be more expensive.
- The reduction in taxes in restaurants (7%), which was implemented by the government during/after corona, will return to the original rate in January – 19% – so expect your restaurant meals to be more expensive.
- Starting in April 2024, in order to receive Elterngeld, the upper limit of income is €200,000 a year for couples (was €300,000).

### Other Changes in 2024

- Starting in January, doctors must use electronic prescriptions. To redeem the e-prescription at the pharmacy, you can use an app, a paper printout or your health insurance card. Note: for those with private health insurance, only the app or paper printout can be used.

- If you are working and have a sick child and have statutory health insurance, you may now take up to 15 days (Kinderkrankengeldtage) a year to help heal your child. Single parents can take up to 30 days.
- Starting on January 1, a deposit is required on all milk products sold in plastic bottles. The procedure is similar to other bottles – rinse out and return to the supermarket for a return of the deposit.
- If your child has a German passport, this will need to be replaced with a new passport with a chip. Currently the children's passports are only valid one year; the new ones will be valid for six years. For travel within the EU, the child needs a personal ID (Personalausweis); for travel outside the EU, a passport. Many countries no longer accept documents without a chip. You can apply for a new passport at your Bürgeramt or town hall.
- Cannabis will be legalized in Germany starting on April 1st – max 25 grams. This is not an early April Fool's joke.
- Starting on July 1, smaller vans weighing more than 3.5 tons (previously 7.5 tons) must pay a toll on the Autobahn (Mautpflicht).
- Starting on July 7, new cars in Germany need to have a type of black box which can be analyzed in case of an accident.
- The standard of USB-C cables goes into effect in December of 2024.

### Travel Difficulties in 2024

- The trip to Frankfurt International Airport from Karlsruhe will take a lot longer if going by train because the tracks between Mannheim and the airport are being completely refurbished. This will take place from January 2 through 21, and again from July 15 until around Christmas 2024. The options are a train to Mannheim and then a special direct bus to the airport (runs between 5 am and 10 pm every half hour), or the train to Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof and then switch to an S-Bahn to the airport. Alternatively, long-term parking is available in and near the airport; FlixBus runs a number of times a day – the bus stop is behind the main train terminal (Hauptbahnhof).
- As of this writing, Deutsche Bahn has not reached an agreement with the GDL, therefore strikes are possible at any time after January 7th and may run for 3 to 5 days.
- Starting on January 8th, the local public transportation system must thin out the number of trains running because of a lack of qualified drivers. This will continue through at least June 8, 2024. Affected lines are: S31, S32, S4, S5, S6, S7 and S8. The main commuter traffic mornings and evenings should not be significantly altered. If you use one of these lines, check online before you leave.

### Election Year

The European Parliament elections are from June 6 – 9. If you are a citizen of an EU country, you are eligible to vote either in your country of origin, from abroad or in the EU country in which you live – but you may only vote once. More information from the EU is available [here](#).

National elections in the US take place on November 5, 2024. Primary elections run from January through September of 2024. If you are a US citizen, you are probably eligible to vote from abroad. More information is available from the [Republicans Overseas](#) or [Democrats Abroad](#) or the [US Vote Foundation](#).

### What to do in Karlsruhe in January Regular English Language Events

Karlsruhe's **English-Speaking Meetup Group** (sponsored by [Relocation Service move-in](#)) is a means for anyone to organize events and activities. 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 pm until around 9:30 pm. The **January Stammtisch** is on **Tuesday, January 9** at Kaisergarten Karlsruhe (see below). Other popular events are hiking and jazz concerts. Anyone

can participate, but it helps the organizers if you sign up first – and remove your name if you can no longer attend!

The **American Library** has regular events in English for kids and adults.

For adults: LitNight (Jan 16), New(s) Views (Jan 9), Poetry?Please! (Jan 23).

For kids and teens: Storytime in English for Kids 3 to 5 (Jan 10 @2pm and Jan 24 @4 pm), Stories for Kids 6 & up (Jan 19), TeenTime (Jan 19).

The **Karlsruhe Toastmasters** meet every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month from 7:15 to 9:15 pm to practice public speaking in English with friendly, relaxed support from speakers from around the world. To check if the events have moved from online to in-person, please check the website.

### Calendar of Events

If you have an event you would like advertised, please let us know a few days before the end of the month (info@expat-ka.com). Keep in mind that it should be something of general interest or specifically of interest to an English-speaking community.

### What to do in Karlsruhe in January

**January 9 — Monthly Stammtisch** hosted by the English-Speaking Meet-Up Group. This time at Kaisergarten in Karlsruhe from 6:30 – 9:45 pm. It's a great way to meet new people, chat with old friends — all in English! Please sign up if you plan to attend. And please remove your name if you can no longer attend! It helps those planning the event.

**January 26 – Reading in English** at the [American Library](#). Ukrainian author Iryna Kupchynska, the 2022 Herrenhaus Edenkoben Writer in Residence, will read from her poetry and recently published essays *Interrogation – Outerrogation* and talk about her life between Germany and Ukraine. The ubiquitous presence of war once you have been confronted with it, the common objects that tell chilling stories, the guilt, the pain – and hope, are all dealt with in her work. Admission free. Donations are always cheerfully accepted.

**February 4 – Open House im Hallenbau KA.** The annual open house at ZKM and Städtische Galerie has been moved to a new date (was January 6) and now includes all 4 institutions: ZKM, Städtische Galerie, Staatliche Kunsthalle and Hochschule für Gestaltung. Save the date!

### Want to improve your German?

[Sprecht miteinander! Speak with each other!](#)

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

Bürgerzentrum Mühlburg (BZM) Weinbrennerstr. 79a 76185 Karlsruhe

Just stop by!

The [IBZ](#) also offers practice in speaking German via Skype on Mondays and in person on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. More info [here](#).

### Relocation Service move-in

With more than 20 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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