

# Moving to Germany

A personal experience with insights and guidance plus help from a native speaker for your own move.

*by Manuela Markley*

**Print Edition**



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## Preface

I am writing this book to give some insight on what happened to us before, during and after our move from Austin, Texas to Munich, Germany, as well as some hints, tips and ideas on how to improve on your very own journey based on our – how should I say this – fun learning curve! Plus, I am pregnant with story, as my good friend Debbie would put it.

You'll encounter a lot of helpful links to anything from schools, to current university fees, and where to register your car as well as information about the German culture and customs along with some personal stories. I won't spare you the tortures of buying a car, finding a house, much less opening a bank account either. My hope is to give you enough information to be well prepared before you take on this journey.

When you decide to change anything in your life, things get set into motion and pretty soon you'll be wondering what day it is or what you did a week ago or even just yesterday. I didn't want to forget all those experiences, the overwhelming help we received from friends and family,

even strangers, the hardship and the many joys. This is definitely not a "how to" book but more of a "how we did it and are still doing it" book. If anything, I hope that you'll be at least a little entertained. Maybe you'll be as surprised as we were about the cultural differences that we encountered. Coming "home" as a grown up, after living in Texas for over 20 years, was eye opening, new and exciting for me, as a native German.

For all those we had to leave behind: "You're always welcome at the Markley's!" Maybe this book will spark your interest enough to come and visit Germany or even dare to move here too.

Germany! It's NOT the USA! If you do come and visit, try and keep an open mind. Bring your walking shoes because you'll do a lot of walking. There'll be no ice in your drinks! If you ask for tea, it'll be hot tea! Food portions are "normal" size not super sized. After every meal you walk off your meal to make room for the next meal. Patriotism is great but unnecessary. Germans in general are in awe with the US, so no need to try and shine a spotlight on the differences. Most public toilets are very clean because there'll be some-

one there to clean up after you for a mere 0,20-0,70 Euros. Germans love fresh air! There are no vents in regular restrooms and if there's no open window and a breeze, it stinks! So bring your gas mask! Haha, just kidding.

Speaking of stink. I couldn't imagine separating the trash in Texas the way we do it here, because it really does stink! Especially in the summer. I don't think a gas mask would help you when you try to throw away your organic trash where your trash can used to be, which has now become a living entity, moving with maggots all on its own (note to self: throw left over meat in the regular trash!). Did I mention that there are NO garbage disposals! I really do miss those. In general everything's a little rougher, rawer, not so beautified! The country is BEAUTIFUL! Don't misunderstand me. It's the people who are tough and very honest. If you don't want an honest answer, think before you ask! Most Germans are very well educated, knowing a lot about their own country as well as the rest of the world, geographically, politically, economically, etc. They're very interested in what goes on around the world and are eager to discuss it with you at any time over a good glass of wine or a

nice liter of beer.

Since this book will be available online, some names may have been changed to preserve the privacy of certain individuals.

Also, please excuse any mistakes you might encounter. As the Germans would say: "This book grew entirely on top of my own pile of manure," — from writing to editing. Each chapter is divided into sections and sometimes I've added "story time" to let you know that it might get a bit wordy if you're only interested in facts. For easy access I've tried to incorporate as many links as possible. If you're wanting to copy certain parts of the book, please ask for permission first. For questions or comments you can always send me an email at [helpingyou-movetogermany@gmail.com](mailto:helpingyou-movetogermany@gmail.com). If you're seriously thinking about moving to Germany and need someone to hold your hand with all that German paperwork, (they do have computers here, really, but they love, love, love their papers!) want a native speaker to show you around, help your family settle in or help you out in any way, you can request to hire me at the above email. Now sit back, relax and enjoy!

Chapter 1

# MOVING?

**D**o you know what you're getting yourself into? No? Well, it's probably better that way. Because if you did, you might give in to your fears and miss out on a lot of great adventures. Life is an adventure!  
Take it by the horns!



Section 1

## Things to consider before the move!

**C**heck Lists can help a great deal.

Cleaning out junk. Check! Calling the moving company (<http://www.teamalliedgroup.com/>). Check! Passports. Check! Pets passports. Check! Taken care of Tax return. Check! Canceling all auto drafts. Check! Made sure that your bank knows you're moving and that you'll be doing a lot of online banking for left over payments like storage, house, etc. Check! Paying off all credit cards. Hahahahaha! Taken care of kids' school transcripts. Check! Taken care of all other, unexpected paper work. Check! Making sure all carry-ons and suitcases will close, fit and be within the weight limit. Check!

Pets also need their special passports for international travel. This means that all their shots have to be up to date and they need a special 15 digit ISO chip implanted between their shoulder blades. Had to call several vets to see if they have the chip that Germany will accept. Only Pets Mart (<http://www.banfield.com/Veterinary-Professionals/Home/>) was a hit. Dr Campbell, who had worked in the military for a long time, knew all about which vaccines, chips and papers needed to be filled out. Thank goodness. \$350 later you're out of there.



After all the papers are filled out correctly within 30 but no less than 21 days before travel can you go to the Export Office ([http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/area\\_offices/downloads/Pet\\_Travel\\_EU\\_no\\_tests\\_TX.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/downloads/Pet_Travel_EU_no_tests_TX.pdf)) in downtown Austin to drop off your papers, pay another \$75 only to pick them up the next day stamped and ready for departure.

Pet papers ([http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/area\\_offices/downloads/Pet\\_Travel\\_EU\\_no\\_tests\\_TX.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/downloads/Pet_Travel_EU_no_tests_TX.pdf)) up to date? Check! Cross your fingers that they don't croke on the way over, after putting that much effort into everything.

A week before departure: call the vet for travel pills, to lesson anxiety for the dog (Tough luck for the cat! No pills here.), get some flea stuff for dog and cat.

Pets need special kennels (<http://www.united.com/web/en-US/content/travel/animals/kennel.aspx>) for airplane travel. Sizing and requirements can be found online and with the airline you're choosing to fly with. Kennels need to be big enough for the animals to be able to stand up and turn around comfortably. Something to keep in mind when you're planning your trip to the airport as well as pick

up on the other end. It's cheaper to have them travel with you - about \$200 each - as to having them travel as cargo by themselves - about \$1,200 each -. Less stress on the animal, too because they don't have to be boarded overnight.

Gathering all papers for the tax guy and dropping them off at his office a week before departure. A month later I finally get a hold of the guy after repeatedly leaving messages, waiting on hold and texting. It's harder to talk to him than to get an audience with the Pope! Oh, yeah, I forgot. Is it Tax season?!

Find the nearest USCIS office, 'cause guess what?! My green card is only good if I stay IN the country. If I leave for more than a year, I'll lose all privileges, would have to reapply just like I did when I first started this entire process. Can get some kind of extension though, hence in need of finding the office. The guy "in charge" claims that since I don't have an appointment, he can't help me..... hmmm, well my flight's in a week. "Who do you think could help me pretty please?"

"Well, if you don't have an appointment in the mail the day before departure, come back and see me again..."

"Really? the day before?" Needless to say, I go back the day before, begging the same guy.

"Pretty please with sugar on top?!!!"

"Oh, look at that, I see you in the system now. What a surprise!"

I get my stamp and I am outta there. In need to do follow up work once I'm overseas.

Make sure and pay all credit cards. Haha, yeah right, like that's going to happen! Cancel Netflix and anything else that's on auto draft. Go to schools and unenrole girls the day before departure. Get their transcripts. Go back and ask for the FULL transcripts! Translate their transcripts and make sure they're certified!

Figure out how to take the 17 inch Mac on the plane. Bubble wrap? Dr. Tim - my smart brother in law - to the rescue with bubble wrap, plastic ties and some sort of a strap. Don't wanna stick it in the suitcase in case it get's stolen. I mean, "lost".



## Section 2

### Take time for the F's: Friends & Family

**T**ry and make time to say goodbye to all your friends and family. Spend as much time with Mom, sisters (related or not!), brothers, nieces and nephews as possible. These are the only memories you'll be able to pull from for a long time and who knows when you'll be back and if they'll still be there then. Nothing will ever be the way it was before. The entire world is based on constant change and growth.

Leave your melancholy, doubts and

fears behind as well. You won't need them where you're going. *Au contraire* my friend, you'll need all the strength and optimism you can muster up. Heck you might even work on some overflow to share with those family members that need a little extra during those first couple of months.

### *Story Time:*

**D**oug, our good friend and neighbor, let us use his old car after we sold ours about a month before we left. Since Chris was on the title we had to sell our car together. He left a month before the kids and I.

Of course Doug's car dies suddenly and unexpectedly three days before departure on the side of 2222 right before the big hill and of course I've got the car full of kids and no cell phone with me. Luckily I'm still in Texas and a nice lady stops to let me use her phone so I can call my saving angel, Meike, who's also my little sister, to come and pick us up.

Good thing my five year old niece, Isa, knows her Mom's cell phone number too. I've got it programmed

in my phone, which is sitting on the charger back at her house. So yes, your child is never too young to learn Mom or Dad's cell phone number. A nice bunch of Mexicans stop to take a look at the car. Brand new battery, enough water, enough gas, little bit of oil leaking- Nope! They don't know what happened either. Oh, well, thanks for checking it out!

Great opportunity for Mom and me to spend some time alone while we're waiting for the tow truck the next day after repeatedly and unsuccessfully trying to get the car started again.

*"So, you really think you want to do this?"*

*"Yes, I am doing this, Mom!"*

*"Well, I just want you to know that I'll miss all of you and that I am very proud of you and Chris. It takes a lot of courage to leave all that you know and start out new... I know."*

*"Thanks, Mom, I'll miss seeing you too!"*

Return all borrowed items still left in car. Check!

Get gift certificates for all our nice family and friends who helped us in so many ways. Check!

Chapter 2

## Our New Home

**W**here thou art – that is Home.... even if it's covered in snow!  
~Emily Dickinson~

I believe that to be true with all my heart. You can build a house but if you want to build a home, you'll have to put your heart and soul into it. You have to be here, live it and feel it in the present moment.

### Section 1

### Arriving

**B**urrr...why didn't anybody tell me it was going to be *this* cold???!!!

We get to Munich and it's freezing cold. I mean COLD! Not Texas cold but Antarctica cold!!! There is snow on the ground...white as far as the eye can see.

Passports O.K. Pet papers O.K.

Made it through customs just fine. I can see Chris behind the doors but have to gather our luggage and pets before we can meet him. Duncan, our dog, is whimpering and attracting every travelers' attention. Good! He made it. Peter Pan, our cat, is kinda quiet though. Wait! No! He's fine too! Must have run out of voice box material during the long journey.

Getting my first taste of German hospitality when I ask the guy who drops off Peter and Duncan's crates to please help me get them into a cab: "*You'll have to ask the lady over there, I'm not in charge of that, and it'll cost you!*"

O.K., so I go and ask the lady over there to please send someone to pick up the crates for me, because I see no way of getting out the door with 5 pieces of luggage plus carry ons, two kids and two big crates.

"*Yeah, we can do that, but it'll cost you!*"

"*O.K., whatever it takes, just get me someone please.*"

Another guy shows up, with probably the same cart that the first guy just dropped the pets off with and helps me load up our pets and luggage.

Chris is waiting for us with two Taxi cabs. One's a minivan so we can



fit all our pets as well as us, the other one's just there to take our luggage. After a delightful reunion – a month apart is a long time – we head towards our new home.

When we get to the house, Duncan is finally let out of his cage after only 16 hours and he's running around like crazy in the snow. The kids are going nuts and throwing themselves *face first* into the snow. The cab drivers just look at us with big eyes and shake their heads.

*"You'll have to excuse them,"* I explain, *"where we come from, we don't see this much snow all at once, ever."*



Chris pays the guys while Duncan is frantically looking for a patch of green to relieve himself. No luck, he's going in circles, running up and down the street looking everywhere and then, finally, the pressure is overpowering

the patch of green image in his head and he just lets loose. His tiny member totally covered in snow, so basically he's peeing under the snow, which makes me laugh so hard, I start having pee in my eyes myself.

## Section 2

### The House

**T**he house seems big and very empty. Our furniture had to be put in storage since the first house fell through. Well, that's a different story altogether. So let me tell you that one before I start on the actual house.

I kept sending Chris links from Texas: *"Hey, look at this one, that one looks great too, what do you think about this one here?"* The house Chris had picked out at first was closer to downtown but the landlord was a crazy lady. She kept calling me in Texas, wanting to talk to a "German", constantly wondering:

*"Are you sure you make enough money to pay for rent? Do you think it's wise to bring the dog? I've got new clean carpets*

*on the upstairs. How come you're coming over here? What's your plan? How long are you staying?"* etc.

*"We don't really know, lady, it's an adventure for us too."*

So when Chris let her know that we decided on another home she called me up again and left a message saying that she's sorry for all her questions and concerns but she's had a bad experience with the prior tenants. So glad we didn't get that house, even though it had a Sauna! Yes, I am already missing the Texas heat!

In Germany you can't just hire a realtor, tell him or her what you're looking for and let them show you around. Oh, no, no, no! You find a house, apartment or whatever you're looking for in the papers, on the web, through a friend of a friend etc, and then you call the realtor who's showing that house. Realtors in Germany only have a couple of houses they're in charge of turning over. So they basically charge you around 3 months worth of rent for showing you one house once, or twice (if you're going for one of their houses). They won't even pick you up from your hotel, much less take you back.

Don't expect great customer service anywhere in Germany. They haven't

figured that one out yet.

You'll have to call a bunch of different realtors if you're wanting to look at a bunch of different places. Also, you'll need enough cash to not only pay the realtor but the renter as well, another 3 months worth of rent. Yes, ouch!

Back to the actual house. It's nice! Beautiful rustic front door, hanging flower pot in front of the kitchen window. Small toilet and sink at entry. Distressed looking kitchen with everything you need for cooking. Tiny fridge, no ice maker, even tinier freezer (fits about two packs of frozen veggies – German size veggies that is!). But at least it has a kitchen. Most German rentals don't come with a kitchen! Women here are very particular about having their own, individually designed kitchen. Food and how it's prepared is very high on their priority list.

Dining room is big enough for our big table and eight chairs plus buffet, nice big living room with beautiful big windows opening up to the backyard. Nice backyard! Just big enough! Detached one car garage at the end of the yard. Dark laminate floors throughout the parterre.

First floor: lighter laminate floors,

four bedrooms. The wooden ceilings in our bedrooms had recently been painted white, just like the walls. It smells like fresh paint and we have to sleep with open windows to unclog our noses. Double burr. One big bath for all four of us, yikes! It's got a bathtub, no shower. Later I buy a plastic, foldable wall to be attached to the side so we can take a shower standing up! Two sinks, nice! No cabinets anywhere in the house. No light fixtures either! Some ceilings have a simple light bulb hanging down.... and we got charged \$50 back home because our renter was complaining about 2 bulbs being burnt out when he moved in. At least we left the FIXTURES!!! Stairs are very noisy every time you go up and down.

Basement: big laundry room with a sink and a place to put a washer.

Heating room: heating elements and a "shower" imagine that! Drain is clogged, gotta figure out how to make the water disappear.

Small storage room: very handy for all our Christmas and other holiday ornaments plus snow boards and kensels.

Also in the basement, a big party/guest room with two windows and heaters. This is where Chris sets up his

TV and X-Box plus Wii for the kids. For Germans this is a pretty big house. Most families of four live in apartments with three bedrooms, one living, one bath and one kitchen. There usually is some space, one room, in the basement, for storage. Most of the time you'll have a balcony, enough space to put a little table and two chairs or to hang your laundry. There probably won't be enough space in the bathroom for a washer AND a dryer. So if you're planning on bringing a lot of stuff over. DON'T. It won't fit.

So we get here and it's all empty! Chris had bought some nightstand lights so we could see at night, some bread, butter and marmalade but no knives to spread things with. Thank goodness for my aunt and uncle, Anita & Claus, who come all the way from Bonn (6 hours away) with their RV just a couple of hours after we arrive and bring us our blow up mattresses that we had left last summer, plus bed sheets, cooking pots, dishes, silverware, a folding table and chairs, and most importantly a home cooked meal!!!

They leave right the next day because it's too darn cold. The RV has a hard time keeping it warm on the inside.

Did I mention how freaking cold it was???!!!!

Later the neighbor asks me: "*Who was that, who walked his dog in a T-Shirt and shorts at 20 below Celsius?*"

*"Ah, that would be my uncle who now has a bit of a cold."*

We spend about a week living like this until the first batch of our furniture arrives. In the meantime we get to check out our neighborhood, by foot and underground train.



## Chapter 3

## Story Time:

# Schools

Looking for a school is one thing, finding one is a totally different story. Well, that is if you've got a 7th grader.

## Section 1

### Joyful Ginnie

We look for the local elementary school for Ginnie, our youngest daughter. We find it and sign her up for fourth grade. No problem. End of story! Five minutes by bike, ten minute walk from the house. Pretty perfect. Her teacher, Frau Miess, is very nice, though her name might suggest otherwise "Mrs. Mean". Ginnie gets up in the mornings with a big happy smile and comes home starving but still smiling.

"Mom, I think I know more here than I did in Texas!"  
"Really, how so? You don't know German very well and you're not up to speed in Math either."  
"Yeah, I know, I just do. Can't you tell I am happier here?"  
"Yes, indeed I can!"

She makes friends easily and soon has her first play date with Sara, then Lisa....

After watching the rain fall for a while, she turns towards me and says: "Mom, I bet the birds over here are super clean with all that rain."

Another comment from the little squirt: "Hey, Mom, you know what's really cool?! ... when they talk to you in German and you don't even have to translate into English in your head any more, cause you know,... you get it!" This was followed by the biggest grin. So I asked her if she's started dreaming in German already. Her response: "No, but that's O.K., I talk to myself in my head in German all the time when I am awake."

"Is Mädchen (girl/s) plural?"  
"Well, it depends on how you use it. It can be both depending on what article

you put in front. Ein Mädchen, is singular. Die Mädchen, is plural.”

....thinking pause....

“Aha, so than what’s Mädels?”

“Well, that’s plural for Mädels, which is the Bavarian dialect for Mädchen!

Hahaha, who said this was going to be easy?

Only 4 month at her new school and she brings home the first “1” which would be a “100” back in Texas. Subject: German! We are impressed and really proud of her.



### Funny Ginnie Sayings:

Ginnie’s got a tummy ache and tries to describe it to me: “It’s like a fire truck crashing into a wall, caboom.”

I ask her to please pick up the weeds that I pulled from the yard and to put them in the same bag that she was putting the dog poop into. Two minutes later she’s running through the house, holding the bag under everyone’s nose, asking: “Poop salad anyone?”

Ginnie after tackling Peter Pan and pinning him to the floor: “Now, lets talk about this, Peter. Do you really think that you need another meal???” Peter shows his discontent by growling. Ginnie: “Wait, I wasn’t finished with therapy. Listen, do you ever think about all those poor cats that have to go hungry while you fill your belly with all those goodies.....hey, I am talking to you!!!”

“Amazing how two little legs can hold up this entire body.....maybe that’s why they hurt so much.”

Me: “Or maybe it’s because you’re RUNNING non stop all day long?”

After looking at my white legs: “Hey Mom, I bet Germany will never see your legs during the winter.”

Me: “You got that right!”

“Hey Mom, isn’t it funny when Peter Pan is laying in his bed, you enter the room and he starts meowing?”

“What’s so funny about that?”

“Well, haven’t you noticed how his

tongue falls out of his mouth sideways when he tilts his head to look up at you?”

“...now that you mention it...”



## Section 2

### Kimmy's veni, vidi, vici experience

**A**fter 4th grade you basically have to decide what you want to do with the rest of your life. Do you want to go to a University and study? Then you'll have to choose a Gymnasium from 5th til 12th(13th) grade. Do you want to learn a trade and do an apprenticeship? Then you're encouraged to go to a Realschule from 5th til 10th grade. If your grades are good and you change your mind after 10th grade you have the option to transfer to a Gymnasium or Volkshochschule where you can earn your high school diploma. If you're not interested in school at all or are just having a tough time you go to a Hauptschule from 5th til 9th(10th) grade. You can still learn a trade afterwards or move up the ladder and go to Realschule and then Gymnasium if you're so inclined.

We look for a "Gymnasium", the highest branch of the educational system here in Germany for Kimmy's

age. She's our oldest daughter.

Ludwigsgymnasium (<http://www.ludwigsgymnasium-muenchen.de/>): Meeting with the principal. Nice lady, but you can tell she doesn't want to put up with us.

*"Well, our kids have had almost 2 years of Latin at her age in grade 7. She'd have to make that up and that will be very hard. Why don't you try next door at the Erasmus Grasser Gymnasium (<http://www.dasegg.musin.de/>), they have only had French!"*

Like that'll be easier?! We say thank you and go next door. Rude lady at the secretary's office tells us:

*"No, if you haven't had French than you should go to a Realschule - second highest branch - or Hauptschule - lowest branch -. Can't help you here and the principal is busy."*

*"Well thanks for nothing!"*

Next school: Gymnasium Fuerstenried West (<http://www.gymfw.de/>). Meeting with the principal, Herr Fiebig, a tall guy who keeps twirling his glasses around and pretends to think forever before he actually verbalizes anything. Dork!

His suggestion: *"We can put her in 5th grade so that next year she'll start fresh with her second foreign language."*

*"Aaaaaah, have you looked at her?????"*

*She's in 7th grade!!! Did I forget to mention that? She's 5'8" and wears shoe size 11 and you want to put her with 5th graders?"*

*"Well, twist, twirlytwirl.....that's just my suggestion, 'cause you know, we're very advanced here in Bavaria and she'll probably have lots of other things she'll need to catch up with, though she seems to be very bright, making good grades and all."*

*"Well, thank you for your time, Dork!"*

On to the next school: Bertold Brecht Gymnasium (<http://www.bbg.musin.de/>). An all girls school, much to Kimmy's disapproval! Meeting with the principal, Herr Satzig, and his foreign language specialist. Nicest guy we've met so far!

*"Well, we'd like to help you but our classes have over 30 students each and I am afraid Kimmy will need more attention than we can give her. But, if you don't find another school that fits her better we'll certainly try to make it work."*

*"Well thank your for at least trying to make it work!!!"*

Oh, and did I mention that we're having to figure out how to get to all these places by foot, U-Bahn (underground train), tram and bus?!

More phone calls: Kleines privates

Lehrinstitut Derksen (<http://www.derksen-gym.de/>): They've had Latin for two years, you have to write an essay about your daughter and why you think she should go to this fine, "private" school, plus it'll cost ya! 2,000 Euros registration plus 650 a month.

International school in Munich (<http://www.mis-munich.de/>): 21,650 Euros for the first year! Only 18,300 the next year. Well, it's either the school or living in the house.

Calling all three Waldorf-schools (<http://www.waldorfschule-muenchen-suedwest.de/>) in and around Munich: one's not ready for 7th graders yet, the other two have a long waiting list. *"We can put you on the list and wish you good luck. You might get in, in two years, haha"* – I detect a nervous and almost a little sarcastic laughter!

Calling the Dante Gymnasium (<http://www.dante-gymnasium.de/>), Feodor-Lynen-Gymnasium (<http://www.flg-online.de/>) and the Elsa Brandstroem Gymnasium (<http://www.elsa.musin.de/>). Counselors only available for about an hour once a week. One is sick the others don't care to return my calls.

Calling the Munich hotline for school counseling services ([\[www.schulberatung.bayern.de/schulberatung/muenchen/\]\(http://www.schulberatung.bayern.de/schulberatung/muenchen/\)\). \*"Why don't you try a Hauptschule?" "Really???" "That's your suggestion???"\*](http://</a></p>
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Going to the Joseph-von-Fraunhofer-Schule (<http://www.fraunhofer-rs.musin.de/index.php/de/>), which is a Realschule!

*"Are you sure we are the closest school to you? Why don't you try another one? Besides, you don't have all the right papers we need to get her registered anyways."* Really? Does really nobody want to take my child?

Calling the Allerbeste Realschule. Talking to the principal, Herr Freundlich, and telling him about my oh so successful search for schools in the neighborhood. Nicest voice I've heard in a while!

*"Why don't you come down here with Kimmy and let me look at her, Frau Markley?! I'll be here for another 2 hours. Can you make it?" "I sure can!"*

Kimmy, Ginnie and I ride our bikes endless miles through the neighborhood, trying to find the school from a make shift map I've scribbled on a piece of paper after searching it up on google. I don't have a printer or a fancy phone. We find it!

The school is colorful and very

inviting. The secretary is nice!!! Walking into the principals' office there's a bouquet of fresh flowers on the table and really big and colorful paintings on the wall behind his desk.

He talks in a soft voice, asks us all the questions he's got and then talks to Kimmy, letting her know that he wants her to feel at home here. No pressure for the first year.

*"You'll have what's called a "guest status". Do what everyone else is doing. If you're doing good, we'll grade you, if you're not there yet, we'll wait. Try your best but don't feel like you have to keep up with it right away. It won't work anyways. You'll have to catch up half a year of French and after 10th grade you can take an exam and go to a Gymnasium or Volkshochschule (<http://www.mvhs.de/index.php>) and graduate with a high school diploma if you like."*

Hallelujah!!! Mama needs a drink!!! Something really strong!!!!

First two days at school are great! Kimmy's teacher, Frau Popeye, is really nice and her class is super friendly. Over the weekend Kimmy gets the Flu and is out for the entire next week. I guess all that stress got to her too, even though I kept stressing that none of this was her fault. It's just that the system over here is so very differ-

ent from the one back home!

Frau Popeye calls towards the end of the week:

*“Did we scare Kimmy away? Is she coming back?”*

*“Oh yes, she’ll be back after she’s regained her strength.”*

Next challenge: trying to find German classes for the girls after school to get them some extra help.

Goethe Schule (<http://www.goethe.de/>): *“We only take grown ups!”*

KIKUS, Zentrum fuer kindliche Mehrsprachigkeit (<http://www.kikus-muenchen.de/kikus-deutsch/>): *“We only take Kindergarteners or younger.”*

Oh, not again!!!

Calling the Munich hotline (<http://www.schulberatung.bayern.de/schulberatung/muenchen/>) again. Nicer lady this time!!!

*“Yes, my colleague will call you next week.*

*..... “Yeah, I don’t think so!”*

Interviewed three different schools. First one, fit for school (<http://www.fit-for-school.de/>), great impression, too expensive for both kids though. Second one, Schulfit (<http://www.schulfit.de/>), bad impression, still pretty expensive. Third one, Lernstudio Barbarossa (<http://www.lernstudio-barbarossa.de/>), seems to be what we’re

looking for and sounds doable, price wise.

They’re set up with classes twice a week for 90 minutes each, together with two other kids and one teacher who knows it all from French to German to Math to History.

Kimmy is having to learn French, German and Bavarian all at the same time.

*“Mom, il va fait son devoirs....?”* ...plus she needs to know it from German to French, not French to German, which for some reason seems to be a bit harder.

I think the hardest part for Kimmy has been trying to get used to the German culture. There’s no small talk among students and teachers or students and students. No friendly Texas *“hi, how are you today?”* in the morning. Generally they’ve got a much tougher exterior and pretty much expect the same from you. To my request of trying to lure Kimmy out of her shell in front of class one of her teachers responds: *“Well, I don’t see why she’s so shy. There’s really no need to be. She just needs to get over it.”* Easy for you to say, BE-ATCH!

So proud of my two girls. They’re working really hard and trying to learn all they can.



### Section 3

## Higher Education ...and food!

**F**or many years universities in Germany did not charge any tuition fees at all. This changed when the Constitutional Court of Germany lifted the ban on tuition fees and from 2005 onwards, international students have been required to pay some fees in order to attend college. However, only four of the 16 federal states have implemented tuition fees. They charge an average fee of 500 Euros per semester, which is significantly lower

than those charged in the US. Those states that have yet to charge tuition simply request a semester contribution of around 50 Euros, which is exactly what I got charged some short 22 years ago, when I first started my studies in Düsseldorf. Imagine the shock and terror on my parents’ faces when we found out what international students have to pay in Texas.

Did I mention that I moved to Texas with an F1 student visa and wasn’t allowed to “work” off campus? It was a little tough earning the \$3,500 per semester at \$4,25/hour on campus. But what are parents for if not to support their kids? *“We’re moving to Texas”,* they said. *“It’ll be fun”,* they said. *“You’ll go to a community college and get a two year degree”,* they said. NOT!

It took me four and a half years, taking a full load of classes (as per the requirement for F1 student status), working part time and spending my summers back in Germany, earning more money. But enough with the sob story. Let it suffice that my degree was well earned. Jawohl!

In addition to the course fees you will need to bear in mind the cost of living in Germany. At present undergraduate students living in the

country spend approximately 600-900 Euros per month on accommodation, transport, food, and miscellaneous expenses depending on the city of your choosing.

For more information on the cost of undergraduate education within various federal states in Germany see the information for international students page ([http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare\\_your\\_studies/financing/tuition\\_fees/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare_your_studies/financing/tuition_fees/)).

If you're interested in local German news check out this page (<http://www.thelocal.de/>) in English.

Have I told you how inexpensive and good the food is? That and the quality alone is worth moving here for. Think German engineering. What are you thinking? BMW, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Porsche, ..... now imagine that precision and quality control with food! YES! It's that good!!! If you allow your taste buds to be open for new adventures, I promise you'll never tire of discovering new tastes.

Back home in Texas I was on the "organic foods only" hype, the "no gluten diet", the "diary free diet" (because I am lactose intolerant)....etc. I've kept up with the diary free diet, which is easy because there are lots of

lactose free products available. Being gluten free is merely impossible. The rolls, breads and pastries are just too darn delicious. Good thing that you walk a lot more over here plus it's so much colder, that it's good to have a little insulation, at least for the winter. Organic foods are a lot more affordable since food in general costs a lot less.

Chapter 4

## Our Neighbors

Since we miss all our friends and neighbors back home, we were even more delighted to find out, how warm and friendly we were received over here. WE LOVE OUR NEW NEIGHBORS!!!

### Story Time:

DID I MENTION HOW NICE OUR NEIGHBORS ARE?! If anything they make up for all the “run ins” we’ve had with the public system.

Next door, Manfred and Vera helped us out a lot in the beginning. They’re both retired and enjoying life through skiing, hiking, biking and taking care of their two year old granddaughter.

Manfred took me washing machine shopping!!!

“You can’t be without a washing machine, girl! What’s that nonsense of washing your husbands’ pants in the bathtub? Go tell your husband that

we’re going shopping right now. We’ve got an hour before the stores close. Media Markt (<http://www.mediamarkt.de/mcs/marketinfo/Media-Markt-M%C3%BCnchen-Solln,79352,.html?catalogId=13951>) (Ich bin doch nicht blöd! - their slogan) is right around the corner. Let’s go.”

“Yes, sir!” Why would I argue with that?

At the store they showed us all kinds of models, mostly puny, little bitty 6 kg washing machines. Not the 12 kg machines I was used to from back home.

“Well, this is a great brand and these are very energy efficient and that one softens your clothes while it’s washing them... you just can’t beat German engineering.”

“That engineering beats my wallet though, so we’ll take the one for 300 Euros, thank you! I just need one that washes everything, not one that folds my clothes for me too.”

Manfred swore that he’d never seen anybody make a decision that fast about any major household appliance.

“If Vera was getting a new washing machine we would be back here a couple of more times: talking, contemplating, changing our minds, reevaluating... you know, being German!”

“I don’t have time for that. I still need a

*TV, a car, light fixtures, curtains, a shoe closet, cabinets for the bathroom stuff, plus some for the linens and sheets. The list goes on."*

Manfred was happy to have done a good deed for the day and I was happy to be the owner of a new washing machine when they would deliver it within the next couple of days.

Sunday rolls around and who's knocking on our front door but Manfred.

*"Let's go Markleys, I'll take you to the VW dealership so you can take a look at the cars they've got for sale there. Hop in my car, all of you!"*

*"We were going to check out the local indoor swimming pool but O.K. Let's go!"*

*"I'll drop you off at the pool on the way home. Now let's get going."*

*"Yes, sir."*

Manfred is fulfilling his yearly quota of good deeds through us. The other day he repaired Ginnie's bike after we so rudely got shot down.

*"I can't repair that!"* the guy at the local bike shop tells us.

*"The front brake doesn't match the back brake."*

*"O.K." I shrug my shoulders. "That's how we bought it. It probably just got a little squashed during the move. Is there*

*anything you can do to get this girl back on her bike until we can replace the brakes?"*

*"Nope, it's crap. The front doesn't match the back and besides, it would cost you over \$100 to replace the brakes... That bike is not worth it!"*

*"Well, thanks for nothing, Dufus. I guess you can't remember what it's like to be a kid and not be able to ride your bike."*

Ginnie leaves the store, tears welling up in her eyes. *"Don't worry, " I say, "Dad will take a look at it. He'll know how to fix this!"*

Infuriated I tell Manfred about the incident since he's the first one I see right after it happens. Mr. "Good Deeds" pulls out his tools and has that thing fixed in less than 5 minutes. WOW!

I REALLY LOVE MY NEW NEIGHBORS!

A couple of weeks pass and one Saturday morning Manfred is outside in the backyard, digging up the fence. Peter Pan, our cat, has made it a habit to crawl under the fence, since the bottom is totally torn up, in order to investigate his new territory. We've been having to jump over the knee high fence to fetch the little escape artist. Since Vera has an extreme fear of cats and dogs and we don't want

the cat to go do his business in the neighbors' yard, the fence needs replacing.

Manfred searched long and hard to find the same height fence again. I don't have the heart to tell him that Peter used to jump our ten foot fence back home.

Chris helps put up the new fence.

German precision takes time. It takes them all day. Did I mention that it's really more of a decoration than a fence?

Needless to say, Peter got the hint and now defiantly poops right next to the fence every time he's out there. Oh, and he found the holes to the other neighbors' fence.

Speaking of which. Frau Meyer, who lives behind us, rang the doorbell when she found out, from Vera, that we were looking for a school. She handed us a list of all the gymnasiums in the neighborhood, which her husband had printed out for us. They're both retired, too. Nice folks too, though Herr Meyer doesn't like animals all too much and isn't too happy about Duncan and Peter Pan. He asked Chris to please pick up the dog poop along the fence line since it's unsightly and smelly and right in his line of view.

*"Sure thing"* my friendly husband retorts, *"how do you say dog poo in German?"*

Herr Meyer, even though he's got a tough exterior, gives us his old push lawn mower. No motor, mind you. A mover non the less! Maybe he's just trying to keep the neighborhood in decent shape, hahaha.

Herr Meyer loves his garden. He's in it all the time. Every morning he makes his rounds, looking up and down every branch of every rose, bush and tree.

An observation Ginnie made:

*"Mom, how come Herr Meyer walks back and forth in his backyard every day, all day long?"*

*"Because he waters his plants, prunes his plants, fertilizes his plants, cuts his grass.....etc."*

Thinking pause.....

*"I want to be a flower in Herr Meyer's garden, then I don't have to worry about taking showers any more and he'll take care of me."*

*"Yes, indeed. He would. And you'd smell like a pretty flower all the time. It's a win win, really!"*



Frau Meyer came by and handed me a bag full of teenage reading material. *“If your kids like to read, I think they’ll like these. Something I kept from my kids.”*

I LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS!

A couple of houses down from the Meyers live Ulrike and her husband Michael with son Patrick (12). Ulrike found out from her son, Patrick, who found out from Frau Meyer, who found out from Vera – word gets around – that we’re looking for a school. So Ulrike put a post card with her phone number in our mailbox. A really nice post card, explaining that she’s a teacher at one of the gymnasiums we had already visited and that she welcomes us in the neighborhood.

I called her up and we’ve had afternoon coffee a couple of times since then. She’s invited us to a musical at the local church and we’ve gone on a couple of excursions with Ulrike and her son Patrick, plus occasionally her husband Michael. He’s an anesthesiologist and works a lot.

We bike to a nice café called VOR ORT in Fuerstenried West, to have coffee and cake at the local café and to the “Hirschgarten” (<http://www.hirschgarten.de/>), the biggest Biergarten in Munich.

Ulrike brings us newspaper clippings, books, magazines and anything she can think of that we might be interested in. She tells us about great vacation spots in Italy or around Munich. She comes over every now and then, to hang out or to have coffee and chat. We go to Zumba, Pilates and Aerobics together. She calls me up out of the blue, *“Hey, I am going shopping, if you want to come with, be ready in 15!”*

I LOVE MY NEW NEIGHBORS!!!

We even went to the Georgia O’Keefe exhibit at the Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung (<http://www.hypo-kunsthalle.de/>) in Munich. Funny to see people marvel over the land that we so easily just left behind....

well, I am sure they were more amazed by her awesome paintings and marveling over those.

Got introduced to hiking in the Bavarian Alps by Ulrike, Michael and Patrick. Took the cable car up to the Alpspitz. Had the most beautiful view from on top of the world at lunch. Half way down, Kimmy’s knees give out and Ulrike, Kimmy and I take another cable car back down the mountain. Chris, Michael, Patrick and Ginnie walk all the way down for another two hours. We meet up at a beautiful little sea “Riessee” and wait for them with coffee and cake all the while enjoying ours. They’re still kinda sore today.

Across from Ulrike and family live Nora, her husband Stefan and their two kids, Jojo (13) and Jorge (14). Awesome kids, nice parents, too! Nora is Hungarian and has her own doctors office the next town over. Stefan works for IT at the TUV. Jojo is the fastest speaking teenager I’ve ever met. She’s totally cute. Haven’t figured out how and when she takes a breath though. Jorge is a very polite and fun gentleman. Stefan out of the blue decides to lend us his car. He just shows up one morning while I am planting some

daisies and dangles his car key in front of my nose.

*“Here, take it. I am going to work by bike. Don’t need it. Use it. Have fun.”* So I do. Driving around ABOVE GROUND for the first time.... *“hey look, I kept telling myself, that’s where that place connects to and this is how you get to this street.”*

So funny when you’ve only been seeing your new surroundings from below ground for the last month and a half. Tried to return the key with a bouquet of flowers and a thank you note. *“Nope, you keep the key. It’s yours til we need it again next week some time. We’ll let you know.”*

DID I MENTION THAT I LOVE MY NEW NEIGHBORS!!!

Using our nice neighbors car again to find a specialty food store for Duncan and Peter “die Futterbox” (<http://www.futterbox-planegg.de/>). The lady was very helpful and Duncan seems to really enjoy his new food. Here is to hoping that his diarrhea will go away and that his tummy will stop hating him and making those painful noises.

Right next door to us live Elisabeth with her friend Oskar and her two kids Bella (24) and Phillip (21). Elisabeth invites us to her blowout 60th birthday party at Waldheim, a

fancy Biergarten. A gourmet buffet awaits us with everything the heart desires, live music, lots of fun and new friends. Every now and then the guys sneak away to the other side of the Biergarten to see the current soccer game scores. We laugh, dance and have fun all night long. My husband is actually considering taking another dance class with me, since he can tell how much fun everyone's having by just dancing. A German party is not complete unless there's dancing involved. Everyone goes to dance school at age 15 to learn Latin dances.

We can tell that Elisabeth is much loved by her family and friends. They all tell a little story or perform something for her on her special day.

We walk around Wesslinger See and parts of Ammersee with Bella, Elisabeth and Oskar one afternoon. It's beautiful, peaceful, quiet.

DID I MENTION THAT I LOVE MY NEW NEIGHBORS???!!!

Chapter 5

Section 1

## Living in Munich

### Opening a Bank Account



I've been away for over 21 years. It's a change of life for sure. No more easy comfort. Comfort here needs to be earned. I so miss my comfy car. The kids are really doing great, even though they miss their friends. We all looove the healthier life style and food over here, love to be able to step outside and be surrounded by hundreds of years of history and culture. Some of these old buildings, streets and churches are just vibrating with history. I really missed hearing those church bells or smelling spring time air. Can't wait for the summer but I really can't wait for fall – to see the leaves change into their marvelous display of rainbow colors – something other than brown.

Funny story, trying to open a bank account at Deutsche Bank (sorry but this does not deserve a link!!). So Chris and I get there and a guy in a suit sits us down. We explain that all we want is to put our money in his bank every month and set up our automated withdrawals like utilities or the girls German classes. Online banking is a must.

*"Sure thing, no problem,"* he assures us.

*"Can we open a credit card?"*

*"Yeah, we'd love to help you out with that."*

Chris: *"What's the interest rate?"*

Guy in a suit: *"No interest rate!"*

Chris: *"Really? That's awesome! How do you do that? How much do I have to pay back at the end of the month?"*

Guy in a suit: *"We'll just take all your charges straight from your account at the end of the month."*

Chris: *"Well, that's not a credit card, that's a darn ATM card!"*

Guy in the suit takes down our Bonn

address, since we lived there last summer and that's what it said on my ID. "Sorry, I have to write what's on the ID."

"O.K., but we don't live there any more. We want all our mail and correspondence to come to our HOME here, in Munich."

"I understand," dumb guy in a suit replies, "but I have to write down the address that's on your ID....."

We should have walked out right there and then. Needless to say, it's been almost two months and I still can't get to my account online. After 2 weeks they send me a letter asking me, you guessed it, ... "so do you live in Bonn or Munich? If you changed addresses, you'll have to fill out this form and send it back to us."

@#\$% Seriously???? You've got to be joking!!!! Two more weeks go by and we finally get our bank cards. I call the telephone helpline.

"So, how do I actually get online to my account?"

"Well, we need to send you a bunch of papers with codes that you can enter into the system for every transaction, for security purposes."

@#!&%\$#

"But of course you do!"

So what do I get in the mail after an-

other week of endless waiting?! Not the codes, but paper work to request the codes!!! Needless to say, we still can't get online.

We wait another two weeks. Deutsche Bank doesn't contact us and we decide to go with Münchner Bank (<http://www.muenchner-bank.de/>). They're friendly, understanding and unexpectedly very helpful. We are up and running within two weeks. Yes, there's still a lot of paperwork that needs to be signed and mailed back but it's DONE. They took care of everything. RIGHT AWAY and with a SMILE!!!

Chris and I go back to Deutsche Bank to close the account. We walk in and tell the guy at the counter.

"O.K., I need your ATM cards back. Sign here and here. Thank you. That's it. Here's the rest of your money. Good bye."

No questions like: why we were closing the account or did we not like some of the features, the service, could we match you with a better account?..... NOTHING!!!

We are baffled and totally reassured that we made the right decision to close with that bank, which shall never be named again. Apparently they have an utter lack of care for customer service.

Did I mention that you need an insane amount of patience when you move to this country??? Really, you do! I always considered myself as pretty, darn patient. I am being tested on a day to day basis.

Oh, and don't even get me started on buying a car!



## Section 2

**If you're from Texas or anywhere in the States, you'll definitely need one of these.**

**B**uying a car is just as complicated as anything else you can do in Ger-

many. Trying to find a car dealer, who actually wants to sell you a used car, is a challenge in itself. We walk into this rather big dealership expecting, like good Texans do, to be bombarded with sales people giving us all kinds of pitches. First, it is hard just to find a sales person. Second, he sends us out onto the lot, to have a look ourselves. "You can report back to me if you find something you like"..... hmmm, O.K. We come back in and tell him: "The Audi A3 seems really cool. Can we look at pricing and financing, please?" "Well, we close in 20 minutes. Why don't you just call me on Monday? Here's my number." "Really???"

We must have had THE DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS look, cause he points us towards the door.

Chris just keeps shaking his head "unbelievable, un-be-lie-va-ble!"

Thank goodness for Vitamin "B" (Beziehungen = Connections). Tante Steffi, who works at Volkswagen in Wolfsburg, knows a customer service rep here in Munich. Charles is a delightful guy who's more than eager to drive me around in his convertible VW, letting me enjoy the beautiful German hill country, and letting me talk to an awesome salesman at one of

the dealerships, which he says has the highest rankings for customer service every year. It shows!

I get to test drive the Audi A4 and the VW Passat. Because we need the space, we decide on the roomier VW. Steve, the sales rep, prints out some payment plans for us and tells me to look it over, take my time and call him back within a couple of days. He is going to hold the car over the weekend for us.

Wow! All hope is not lost! There are people here in Germany that actually do enjoy their jobs. Nice!

The next day I am off with Ulrike, my coffee and cake neighbor, who's also in need of a new car, looking at more cars. I call a guy at BMW here in Munich, who I know through my friend Elke, who knows his father in law because he used to come to Texas to repair the German machines in her bakery. It's a long story but small world!

Anyways, Ulrike and I have our hopes up because the guy tells me on the phone that he has more than just used BMWs. Well, when we get there all he shows us are BMWs. *"Why would you want anything but that?"*

The pricing is way up too, of course. So we leave and check into MAHAG,

another VW dealer off Westend. Ulrike falls in love with a little black golf that we get to test drive and I find a nice Passat with everything in it.

It's a one year old car. Little mileage, great pricing, 0.9% financing. Gotta have it!!!

Calling Steve back at the other VW dealership. *"Do you have something like that for me? I'll buy it from you then."* *"No, sorry!"*

So we're going with MAHAG, though Charles doesn't think that the customer service will be all that.

Chris goes down the next day, since it's close to his work, to look at the car and maybe drive it around a little. He does and signs the contract right away. Marco, the sales rep, calls me with an insurance quote from the VW bank.

102 Euros per month. Hm, well, I ask him to give me some time to shop around. ADAC: 600 Euros per year. That's only 50 Euros per month! Checking the insurance that Ulrike went with, Concordia, after purchasing her new "white" VW Golf from yet another dealer. 500 Euros per year, only 41,66 Euros per month! Bingo!

I call Concordia insurance and ask them to sign us up. *"Sure thing, we'll just need to have your proof of insurance*

*from your previous insurance and a translated, certified copy."*

*"Yeah, let me just pull that out of my back pocket since I keep that handy at all times."* C.R.A.P., I so desperately want a car!!!! Three months is too long to be going without a car, having to haul groceries for my ever, hungry zoo home every other day.

I call my brother in law who works for Farmers Insurance back in Texas. *"No problem I'll have that right out to you."*

Great! I'm translating the entire thing and sending it back to him. *"Can you certify it for me, please? Since the document didn't originate in Germany, nobody here will certify it for me."*

We get it done. The insurance accepts it and we are that much closer to our new car. Thank you!

Chris and I take the 40 minute U-Bahn drive to the dealership again. Marco rewrote the contract the way we asked him to. We need to sign the papers again. He gives us all the papers that we need and tells us if we send the money to his bank today, a Wednesday, we could have a car by Monday.

*"Sign here if you want us to register the car for you. It'll only cost you 125 Euros."*

Since I had talked to Ulrike in the morning, I knew that you could do that yourself for a lot less money. *"We'll do that ourselves. Thank you!"* And we leave to get the car registered at the KFZ Zulassungszentrale (<http://www.meldebox.de/Umzug-Muenchen/Kfz-Zulassungsstelle/>). Taking the U-Bahn for another 20 minutes. At the front desk they give us a number: *"1st floor, section B, wait there!"*

We wait..... and wait..... Two hours go by. We're the last ones in the building it seems. Finally, *number 423!* Hallelujah! That's us! We get called into a room. There are two extremely friendly guys, NOT! sitting behind a computer screen. The first guy is in training, of course!

*"Papers! I need your papers!"*

*"Here you go, Mr. Friendly."*

*"Here's your sticker so you can get into and drive around the city."*

*"O.K., where does the sticker go? Left or right on the windshield?"*

*"I don't know, on the windshield!"*

*"Oh, so it doesn't matter then?"*

Guy in the back who's training the guy in the front leans over and shows him the illustration on the back of the sticker.

*"Aha, so that's where it goes. Thank you!"*

Guy in the front: *"I need your bank account number so we can deduct your annual taxes."*

*"How much will that be?"*

*"I can't tell you that."*

*"Why not?"*

*"Because I don't know."*

*"Well, who knows?"*

*"We can't tell you that because they have to calculate it and it's different for every car."*

*"So you want my bank account number and can't tell me how much you'll be deducting out of it once a year?"*

*"Yes!"*

*"Interesting!"*

Annoyed he looks at us and tells us that we need to go downstairs to the cashiers, pay the 35 Euros for the registration, take the receipt to one of the stores that are lined up along the streets outside all around the KFZ Zulassungsstelle and get our license plates, come back into the building and have the license plates stamped by one of their employees.

*"Excuse me, what?"*

*"Pay, get your plates, come back, leave!"*

*"O.K. Thanks a bundle!"*

We go downstairs, pay the bill, go outside and into the first license plate shop that we see - BIG mistake! Never take the first best shop. Another

34 Euros. Wow! Later we walk past another couple of shops on our way back to the U-Bahn and realize that we just got screwed. Here the plates only cost half as much. DANGIT! Back in the building they put a bunch of stickers on our new license plates, tear up our ticket and send us on our way.

Yeah, I think that's one of those days I should have just stayed in bed. Better yet, next time we'll just pay the 125 Euros. But we felt like we were getting cheated there too.

I email the car dealer on Friday: *"Hey, I transferred the money online. Today is my 17 year wedding anniversary. It would be a really great surprise if we could have our car today."*

Out of office response: *"Please call soandso, since I am out of the office."*

No wonder he told me to come back on Monday. So I call soandso and explain the situation.

*"Nope, sorry, don't see you on my list. I am only delivering two cars today. You're not one of them!"*

*"Yes, but could you just check and see if the money arrived at the bank and maybe we can pick it up later in the afternoon?"*

*"Nope, I get all my orders in the morning. ONLY in the morning."*

*"Yes, I see how checking again would be a big challenge for you, Turd!"*

Monday rolls around and I am finally on my way to pick up the car. Getting stopped by this weird dude in a car. I think he wants to ask for directions but instead he's asking me out for a cup of coffee..... at 9am?! It's been a while since anybody's hit on me so boldly and I finally realize what he wants, smile politely and walk away. *"Dude, you have no idea how long I have been waiting for this day. I am getting a CAR today!!!! Oh yeah, and by the way, I am married with kids!"*

I finally get to the car dealership. Marco hands me the last papers and the keys, then he's off to formerly introduce me to my sweet ride. He takes his seat on the passenger side: *"This is where you control your mirrors, here's a place for your glasses, now this is an automatic....."* I interrupt him *"Marco, I know I am a woman — a blonde one on top of it, but it's only been four months since I had to give up my AUTOMATIC, super cool and fancy car in Texas. I think I've got it."*

He grabs the door: *"O.K., well, call me if you have any questions."*

*"Thank you!"*

It's just plain awesome!!!! Really cool

feeling to have a car at your disposal after such a long time. Hey, and it turns off every time you're sitting at a light. Turns right back on when you take your foot off the brake. Great pick up speed for a diesel. Loving every part of it!!! Zoom, zoom, zoom...



Chapter 6

## Things to do in and around Munich

**N**ot very many countries have had as much impact on the world as Germany, a land of innovation that has given us the printing press, the automobile, aspirin and MP3 technology. It's the birthplace of Martin Luther, Albert Einstein, Karl Marx, Goethe, Beethoven, the Grimm brothers and other players on the world stage. Germany has nine European borders and a location smack dab in the heart of the continent. With over 80 million people in a pretty tight place, it's an economic and political powerhouse.

There's just so much to see and do in and around Munich alone. Sommerrodelbahn in Mieders (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqCkICXWdWI>) by Innsbruck, Austria. It's a blast for

the entire family. You take the lift up into the mountains, have a great view from up there, can stroll around a little if you like and then take the bob back down into the valley. You control the brakes and speed. It's FUN!

Oberammergau (<http://www.gemeinde-oberammergau.de/index.php>). Do you know that Bavarian song about this town? It's a cute little town. Has a lot of southern flair.

Do you like beer? Well, check out the monastery in Andechs (<http://www.andechs.de/kloster-andechs.html>). Besides being able to tour one of the most glorious, golden Rococo churches on the holy mountain and read about their history, you get to taste their home grown beer. The monks have been brewing here since 1455. Great view from up there as well. A lot of pilgrims visit all year long.

Schloss Linderhof, (<http://www.linderhof.de/>) for those that want to see a pretty castle without having to walk too much. The castle itself is rather small compared to all the other ones we've seen so far but it is beautiful. The gardens surrounding it are breathtaking with its waterfalls and its lavish ponds and fountains.

Like to hike? Try climbing the Zugspitze, the tallest point in Germany.

Tickets for the cable car are rather expensive but you can get the same view from the Alpispitz, which is just across from the Zugspitz, for a lot less moola. Please make sure to wear appropriate footwear! No flip flops or high heels up there, for your own safety. In fact, if you want to see anything in Germany, bring comfortable shoes and be prepared to walk a lot. It's always a good idea to bring rainproof clothing as well. The weather can change quickly.

Want to stay within Munich? No problemo! Downtown Munich is beautiful! Lots of old buildings, churches, shops and museums. The history of Munich is very rich and explained with ease during a two hour touristy city tour on one of those double decker tour busses. Tickets are available at Marienplatz or Hauptbahnhof.

Schloss Nymphenburg (<http://www.destination-munich.com/nymphenburg-palace.html>) is a majestic castle with an enormous garden. Right next to it is the Museum Mensch und Natur (<http://www.musmn.de/start.htm>). It's very hands on for younger kids.

Don't miss out on the Viktualienmarkt (<http://viktualienmarkt-muenchen.de/>) either. It's the

biggest fresh market Munich has to offer, right in the center of town. It offers fresh fruits and veggies, teas, freshly squeezed juices, cheeses, meats, fish, freshly made soups, flowers and herbs, hand crafted knick knacks and much more. Of course it's got a Biergarten in the middle of it, just in case you do get thirsty, or tired, or both.

The Jugendamt (the city's youth administration) offers so many programs for kids. For only 14 Euros each, we get kid passes and we ride any public transportation for free during the entire summer, plus entrance fees to the public pools are free or discounted. We also get a family pass with a ton of coupons in it. Discounts for any and all museums in Munich, Sommerrodelbahnen, workshops (art, cooking, dancing, karate, etc) or the zoos. They really do a lot for the little ones.

They offer movies in several parks during the month of July and August. Bring your own blanket and snacks plus your family and check out the latest movies under the open sky. There's so much more to discover in and around Munich. It would be smart to invest in a city guide and pick out what most interests you. There's no way you could possibly see everything during one visit. We've

been living here for over 6 months now and are still discovering new things every weekend.

Don't try to rush through your visit either. Try to be conscious about it, enjoy it, taking in the sounds and smells, the different people, the culture.

Life is the adventure.

Take it by the horns!

## *Dedication*

*This book is dedicated to my beautiful family.*

*My adventurous husband, who's last name should have been Columbus because of his eagerness to see the entire world. Though he drives me bananas with his need to collect sand from every place we visit, I couldn't imagine my world without him. He works very hard to provide the best life possible for all of us. Love you with all my heart!*

*My beautiful daughters, Kimmy and Ginnie, who get along so beautifully (99% of the time) and who are embracing every new adventure with us. Thank you for being such awesome, loving, caring, compassionate and funny girls. You make my life so colorful.*

*To our guardian, Duncan, who's now watching over us from heaven. Duncan must have been pretty sick before we took on this adventure. His digestion never got back*

*to normal and his condition didn't improve much after doctor visits and heavy pain pills for his arthritis. Life was getting even harder when his lungs started getting sick as well. You gave us so much, never asking anything in return. We miss you and your unconditional love, buddy.*

*To our ever hungry cat/dog, Peter Pan, who's always up for cuddling or playing and having fun. You warm our hearts when we're homesick or sad and our feet when we're cold.*

*To the rest of our family and friends: Moms, Dad, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, neighbors and dear friends. Thank you for being there for us. We couldn't have done it without you!*





## *Biography*

Since I was a little girl, I have been fascinated with nature, people and faces in particular. At the age of nine I started painting with oils, then I moved to charcoal, chalk, watercolors and acrylics. I remember writing in my diary for hours, just jotting down what lay heavy on my heart. For me these forms of expression were a way to escape the reality of my childhood (hey, there might be a new book idea here).

I graduated from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas in 1996 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications Design and a minor in Photography. It was through the technology department that I found my love for photography. The darkroom with its creative possibilities fascinated me. Since we've moved into the digital era, I've come to enjoy the creative freedom digital cameras and Adobe Photoshop have to offer.

Right after college I worked for an advertising agency in downtown Austin, later I was in charge of advertising for the Texas Podiatric Medical Association.

Since the birth of my first daughter in 1998, I've quit my day job and became a full time Mom, doing a lot of freelance work with the little time I had left over. I've painted childrens' rooms with dinosaurs, bakery trucks that needed logos, worked on brochures and logos for companies and individuals. I have done freelance photography work since 1995 and opened my own portable photo studio in 2004. I have photographed merchandise, small weddings, graduates, musicians, babies, families, birthdays, reunions, and so much more. To capture a child's unspoiled spirit, the love of a young couple or the wisdom of a seasoned couple satisfies my creative energy to no end.

In December 2008 I started my own T-Shirt printing business "Steiner Tees". Earlier that summer while sitting around the pool, my husband and I thought it would be a great idea to create positive message T-Shirts. The goal was to drench my customers with my passion for life, fun and positive messages through T-Shirts. To support this goal, I specialized in custom T-Shirt printing. I bought the "do it yourself" tapes, all the necessary hardware and software to open my own print shop out of my garage and

started supplying the local schools, kindergartens, brownie troops and sports clubs with my newest creations. Occasionally I had help from my dear friend and great artist Cathy Richardson who deserves a five star honorable mention. If you're ever in need of any design work, go check her out at <http://cathybdesign.com>. You won't be disappointed!

On the side, I was still creating logos and designs as well as putting together and publishing a book "Letters from Papaw", in Adobe InDesign, for my dear friend Joanne York. It's available online at Bookpeople (<http://www.bookpeople.com/product/letters-paw-paw-mclintock-family-history>).

In May of 2011 we took a 5 months family trip to Europe, staying mostly in Germany and Spain. My husband has always been talking about moving away, overseas, Europe, Australia, anywhere, really. So my idea was to give him a taste of "being away from home" for a longer period of time. We took the girls out of school a month early and planned on returning a month late. The whole idea kinda backfired on me. Chris loved it and applied for a job in Munich, just to see what would happen. Well needless to say, he received the O.K.

in December of 2011 and moved to Germany in January of 2012. After selling my businesses and tying up loose ends, the kids and I followed him in February of the same year. Which is the reason you're now reading my book.

I hope you've enjoyed reading it as much as we've enjoyed living it. If you did, I would love it if you told your family and friends about it or if you wrote me a review.

Thank YOU for your support.

*If you're seriously thinking about moving to Germany and need someone to hold your hand with all that German paper work, want a native speaker to show you around, help your family settle in or help you out in any way, you can request to hire me at the email below.*

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### Helpful links:

## *Moving to Germany*