

START ME UP

YOUR HAMBURG GUIDE



Top European Location



The mix of economic potential and high quality of life makes Hamburg the powerful heart of Northern Europe. People and companies from around the world settle here. Whether startup, industrial player, or service provider: your business is at home in Hamburg.

In Hamburg good ideas are valuable assets. A strong, diversified economic structure and a vibrant startup ecosystem provide a solid basis for successfully implementing ideas.

For international investors, Hamburg is one of the most attractive locations in Europe. This is one of the findings of the “European Cities and Regions of the Future 2020/2021” survey of the Financial Times Group’s fDi Magazine, a specialist publication on foreign direct investment. In the Large European Cities section of the survey, Hamburg scored second place in the overall rating. In the individual rankings,

Hamburg came in first in the Human Capital and Lifestyle category and third in the Economic Potential and FDI Strategy categories. In the Business Friendliness category, Hamburg reached ninth place, and in the Connectivity category Hamburg came in tenth.

Hamburg is on course for a successful future. We embraced the opportunities of digitisation at a very early stage, and we keep a strong focus on facilitating cooperation between industry and science. Hamburg is an innovative and smart location. This helps us strengthen the city’s knowledge-based economy by systematically attracting international tech companies.

What can we do for you?

Dr Rolf Strittmatter

*Managing Director
Hamburg Invest*



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Welcome to Start Me Up – Your Hamburg Guide

First of all, we would like to let you know that we are very happy that you took the decision to come to Hamburg with your startup. We know that arriving in a new city where you don't know the ins and outs can be quite overwhelming. To help you prepare for your stay in Hamburg, we have compiled this guide for you – with things you need to know or do prior to and during your time in Hamburg.

Please note that all information and links provided in this document have the sole purpose of providing guidelines without any claim to completeness and are not intended as a recommendation.

Startup Unit

The Startup Unit is the new port of call for knowledge- and technology-oriented startup businesses in Hamburg. By consolidating several different services under the umbrella of Hamburg Invest, Hamburg's rapidly growing startup ecosystem has been professionalised even further.

The Startup Unit thus serves as the central point of contact for anyone looking for information on innovative startups, events and conferences, universities, public funding agencies, economic clusters, as well as incubator and accelerator programmes.

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Hamburg at a glance



The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg is both a municipality and a city state within the Federal Republic of Germany. There is no distinction between these administrative tasks, meaning that city-wide government is organised at state level through the Hamburg State Parliament (**Bürgerschaft**).

So here's Hamburg at a glance:

With five million inhabitants and a per capita purchasing power of approx. **€26,000 (2019)**, the Hamburg Metropolitan Region occupies a top position in Germany and in Europe.

1.9 m

inhabitants

26

universities

Third largest
seaport in Europe

Further information on Hamburg can be found at [hamburg.com](https://www.hamburg.com)

Germany's second largest city and one of Germany's 16 federal states (**Bundesländer**)

Government is divided into legislative, executive and judicial powers

Hamburg has seven districts or "**Bezirke**", which are governed from their respective district offices.



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The strongest **economic sectors**



Hamburg is a major international trade, transport and services hub and one of the most important locations for industry in Germany. Global players such as Airbus, Beiersdorf (Nivea), Hapag-Lloyd, Helm, Montblanc, Olympus, Otto and Tchibo are located here. Ten of the strongest 100 German businesses in terms of turnover have their head offices in Hamburg. The city's diversified economy allows start-ups to collaborate with established businesses and to take advantage of a wide array of incentives to develop innovative solutions.

Hamburg's innovation landscape is characterised by great diversity. Hamburg takes a prominent position within numerous fields of technology, such as civil aviation, wind power, laser and X-ray technology as well as port logistics. Hamburg is thus more diversified than many other large cities and at the same time highly specialised.

The city on the River Elbe provides unique collaboration opportunities, with a strong economy, a broad range of industries as well as excellent scientific institutions and relevant application and transfer initiatives. From basic research and test fields to market launch, Hamburg can provide professional partners for literally every step in the innovation process.

Hamburg is an attractive location for growing startups: comprising 96,000 businesses, the services sector is Hamburg's strongest industry. With a share of approx. 34%, the information and communication segment, including leading advertising and online marketing companies such as Facebook, Facelift, Google, Smaato and Twitter, is particularly important.

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The strongest **economic sectors**



Hamburg has a policy of promoting the city's strongest economic clusters and is home to the following cluster initiatives:

Finanzplatz Hamburg

Finanzplatz Hamburg is a cross-sectoral regional network that is aimed at strengthening the city's finance sector.

FoodActive Hamburg

The initiative, a joint venture of some 80 companies from the food industry, serves as the main port of call for the food industry. As well as helping establish contact with industry players, experts, and stakeholders from politics and administration, it serves as the official "nutrition network" of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

Gesundheitswirtschaft Hamburg

The aim of this association is to improve and strengthen Hamburg's healthcare sector.

Hamburg Aviation

This network of stakeholders from the aviation branch is dedicated to enhancing conditions and opportunities in the aviation sector.

Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft

The Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft is a municipal institution that supports and promotes Hamburg's creative industries.

Logistik-Initiative Hamburg

This is the local network of the logistics industry in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region. In addition, the Digital Hub Logistics Hamburg is responsible for the digital business transformation of the logistics industry.

Life Science Nord

Life Science Nord is a network of employees and firms in Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein who are involved in medical innovation.

Maritimes Cluster Norddeutschland

The cluster initiative of the maritime industries is aimed at strengthening ties between business, science and politics.

nextMedia.Hamburg

This initiative supports the expansion of the regional media and digital industries network.

Renewable Energy Hamburg

The main task of this cluster initiative is to strengthen the energy branch and to establish a communication platform for industry stakeholders.

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Hanseatic business culture



In Hamburg you say “Moin” – which basically means “Hello”. You can use it at any time of the day or night. In the rest of Germany, Hamburg’s residents are considered to be a rather cool-headed and reserved bunch – but really, we’re not that bad once you’ve gotten to know us.

Hamburg’s business culture is still heavily influenced by the city’s Hanseatic legacy, and the city’s locals have always valued the toil of manual workers such as port workers and market vendors.

Hamburg is not only home to global players such as Airbus, Facebook, Google and Nivea, but also provides excellent opportunities for the perfect after-work experience – e.g. in the legendary St Pauli neighbourhood. Even the Beatles kicked off their music career in Hamburg.



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Fun facts about Hamburg



Hamburg comes **in first place** in the Human Capital and Lifestyle category of the fDi survey 2020/21.

Hamburg is covered in more green areas than any other city in Germany.



The clock on the church tower of St Michael's Church has a diameter of **8 metres**, and each hand has a weight of **130 kg**.

A study concluded that Hamburg's residents are **very happy**, and even happier than people in Rome, London or Paris.



Hamburg's town hall has **more rooms** than Buckingham Palace. Recently they even discovered an additional room, when a state employee moved a bookshelf in his office.



Around **262** people move to Hamburg each day.



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Visa and entry requirements



If you're planning on coming to Hamburg to live and work, you should be aware of any applicable visa and entry requirements. Please note that different rules may apply, depending e.g. on whether you are a citizen of a country within the European Union, the European Economic Area, and Switzerland, or a citizen of any other world region.

EU/EFTA citizens

- ✓ An official identity card or passport is required.
- ✓ EU citizens and citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland do not need a residence permit.

Non-EU/EFTA citizens

- ✓ A valid passport is required.
- ✓ Nationals of Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and the United States are allowed to enter without a visa.

Third-country citizens

- ✓ A valid passport is required.
Must apply for a visa from their local German mission abroad **before** travelling to Germany.

Non-EU/EFTA-citizens – residence permit

- ✓ A valid passport is required.
- ✓ Permit is intended for a temporary stay and granted for a specific reason.
- ✓ There are two titles that govern entry and residence in Germany for all non-EU citizens: the settlement permit (**Niederlassungserlaubnis**) and the residence permit (**Aufenthaltserlaubnis**).

The EU Blue Card

- ✓ The EU Blue Card helps highly qualified third-country nationals to immigrate to Germany permanently.

 [Consulates in Hamburg](#)



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To learn more about the entry process, check out the links below, with information provided by the Hamburg Welcome Center, or visit the Hamburg Welcome Portal:

hamburg.com/welcome/entry-residence

[General information on the visa process](#)
for citizens of other states

[Requirements for citizens of other states](#)
wishing to set up a self-employed business

GTAI German Trade and Invest



It is recommended that you start the [application process](#) for an entry visa, residence permit or work permit at an early stage as it may take several months to complete. Typically, a visa has to be applied for in person at the German diplomatic mission in or closest to your home country. If you're a citizen of an EU or EEA country, you have the right to live, work and study in Germany without any visa or permits.

It's advisable to have some knowledge of the German language before moving to Hamburg. A basic understanding of the language and the ability to introduce yourself in German not only makes daily life easier, it also helps with practical matters such as filling out official forms and setting up a bank account.

[Health insurance is mandatory](#) for anyone taking up residence in Germany. Making sure you're adequately covered before you arrive in Hamburg is your own responsibility. If you're an employee or student, you will most likely be insured as part of the German [statutory social insurance system](#).



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Housing – Looking for a place to stay






Where do I stay in Hamburg?

This section provides you with useful information on Hamburg's districts and on how to find a home during your stay.

IMPORTANT

Being a city state, Hamburg's real estate market is very dense, and especially short-term rentals can be difficult to find. You are therefore advised to start looking for accommodation as early as possible.

-  [Hamburg's districts](#)
-  [Finding a home](#)
-  [Living in Hamburg](#)

Relatively cheap and yet with good public transport connection: the districts of Harburg, Barmbek, Lokstedt, Wilhelmsburg...

More "hip" and expensive are the Schanzenviertel ("**Schanze**") district, Altona, Ottensen...



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🔗 **Setting up a bank account (Girokonto)** is not difficult, but does take some planning. The easiest way is to walk into a bank office and schedule an appointment. Be sure to bring your passport, residence permit, proof of residence (**Meldebescheinigung**) as well as any documents stating that you are a student, an employee or entrepreneur.

In order to open a bank account it is necessary that you speak either German or English. Otherwise you may want to ask a professional interpreter to accompany you as the relevant forms will have to be completed in either German or English.

For the contract to be concluded, the CEO of your company is required to show his national ID card or passport to the relevant bank or an authorised third party. Therefore, it is highly recommended that your CEO is in Germany at the time of the opening of your bank account. In addition, you are required to bring a copy of the ID cards/passports of the partners of your startup business. The bank will also need information regarding the source of income of every partner who holds more than 10% of your company (**direct and indirect shares**). Moreover, you should make sure that your business model is easily comprehensible.

Cash in Germany

Germans pay cash for almost everything, and in many places cash is the only option. In fact, Germany continues to be one of the world's most cash-intensive advanced economies (**roughly 80% of all retail transactions in Germany are conducted in cash**).

In many cases, you will not be able to pay with your debit or credit card, and the number of international ATMs is very limited. Therefore, it is recommended that you carry a reasonable amount of cash in your wallet at any time.

🔗 **Further information about banking**



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German **mobile phone** plan



German mobile phone plan: prepaid or contract?

If you're planning to stay in Hamburg for only a few months, it might be wise to get a prepaid card for your mobile phone. It certainly brings less perks but after all, you just need a way to be reachable during your stay. Prepaid cards offer all the basics like a phone number as well as calls and texts billed per minute or per text, and most providers will also supply you with a sufficient amount of data volume. However, if you intend to stay for more than 12 months and you need a large volume of mobile internet, you'd better go for a regular contract. If you are planning to stay long-term, you can even get a new phone with your contract.

Moreover, you should be aware that in Germany all SIM cards are sold separately. Therefore, you should make sure to have your phone unlocked before getting a contract. Otherwise, you won't be able to reuse your phone with the new SIM card.

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The option of getting a "SIM card only" contract

In Germany it is also possible to go for a "SIM card only" contract. This option probably suits you when you already have your own phone and you only need the service (but not a prepaid card with credit). While all major providers offer the "SIM card only" option, packages and deals may vary greatly. Therefore, you are advised to choose carefully.



In the event of **emergency**



This portal provides an [overview](#) of Hamburg's hospitals.

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German language courses



In order to make your stay more fun and comfortable, we recommend that you attend German language classes, e.g. at one of the following institutes:

Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut offers German language courses with a focus on speaking, listening, reading and writing. You can choose between intensive courses and evening courses. The Goethe-Institut also offers an internationally recognised German language exam for all levels of proficiency **(A1–C2)**.

Hamburger Volkshochschule

Hamburger Volkshochschule **(VHS)** offers daytime and evening classes for German as a foreign language as a preparation for the Goethe-Institut language exam.

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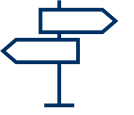
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Mobility **and** shopping



Public transport

 **Hamburger Verkehrsverbund (HVV)** is the local public transport provider within the Hamburg municipality.

 **More information about HVV ticket prices**

The HVV app is very helpful for searching connections and buying tickets online.

Bike sharing

StadtRAD is a German bike sharing platform. It is available in several cities across Germany. For more information, visit

 stadtrad.hamburg.de

Grocery shopping

As a rule, retail shops in Germany are open Monday to Saturday from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Yet there are also a number of shops with longer opening hours. Hamburg has quite a broad range of supermarkets on offer, and some of these are listed below.

Every neighbourhood has at least one weekly market where locals can stock up on fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, cheese, bread – and perhaps enjoy some chitchat with the neighbours. Most markets take place in the mornings and early afternoons, though some are open throughout the day.

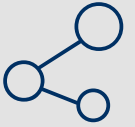
 [farmers-markets](#)



Hamburg's startup ecosystem



Networks **and** events



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- [Accelerators and company builders](#)
- [Coworking map](#)
- [Innovation parks](#)
- [Be your pilot](#)
- [Future Hamburg](#)

How to find suitable events

- [Hamburg@work](#)
- [Gründertag Hamburg](#)
- [Startup Digest](#)
- [Hamburg Chamber of Commerce](#)



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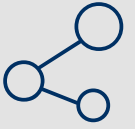
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Strong public support

hei. – Hamburger Existenzgründungsinitiative
Offers consultation, information, advice and a coaching programme for entrepreneurs. While the website is available in German only, services are rendered in both German and English. Support is provided to local startups only **(i.e. startup businesses that are registered in Hamburg)**.

IFB Innovationsstarter GmbH
InnoRampUp and Innovationsstarter Fonds are two different funding programmes for local startups **(i.e. startup businesses with a permanent establishment situated in Hamburg)**.

Hamburg Chamber of Commerce
The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce offers various services, information and coachings for startups and founders in Hamburg. Some services are also available in English.

Startup Port
Allround support for founders & startups from Hamburg universities & research institutions.

beyourpilot.de
Centralized gateway and interactive online platform for founders & startups from Hamburg universities & research institutions.

Hamburg Innovation GmbH
Tech & Know how transfer connecting Hamburg universities to industry.



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Sightseeing **and** local apps



Local apps and websites to make
your time in Hamburg more *enjoyable*

Nightlife and leisure

Hamburg Tourism Board
 www.hamburg-tourism.de

Very helpful for getting around:

 **Hamburg CARD**


The Hamburg CARD is an excellent companion for your stay in Hamburg. As well as offering unlimited travel within the local public transport network, it allows you to enjoy reduced rates at more than 150 partner venues across the city – ranging from sightseeing bus tours or boat trips on the Elbe and the Alster to popular touristic highlights, countless museums and fabulous restaurants.

 **Hamburg App**

Tips for getting around in Hamburg

 **Hamburg is really a special place**

 **An Israeli guide to Hamburg**

 **Restaurants**
 **Bars and Pubs**

Sports and events

Hamburg offers various opportunities for sports and recreation, including sports clubs, gyms, and the jogging routes around the Alster Lake and along the Elbe River.

The Hamburg Tourism Board has compiled a list of recommended cycling tours for

 **exploring the Hamburg Metropolitan Region by bike.**

Stay up-to-date on festivals, street fairs and recurring events, such as the Hamburg Port Anniversary, the city's Christmas markets and the Hamburg Dom.

 **Events in Hamburg**



If you decide to **stay**





Immigration and registration

[Customer service centres](#)
are responsible for registration and
identification matters in Hamburg.

[Useful forms and checklists](#)
for your registration progress

A helpful institution that
provides guidance for a new
start in Hamburg is the

[Hamburg Welcome Center.](#)

Office space: Coworking

As one of Germany's main startup
hubs, Hamburg offers a broad range
of coworking spaces.

The [coworking map](#) provides an
interactive overview of all coworking
spaces available in Hamburg, alongside
information on working environments
and pricing.

Where to find suitable talent

[General information for employers](#)
regarding different employment
conditions and aspects to be
considered.

The following platform might be
helpful in finding talent, but there
are many more:

[Yojo](#)
Young Jobs Hamburg – information
portal for professionals looking for
a job in the Hamburg Metropolitan
Region (**free service for companies
and professionals; website available
in German only**)

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