



# *Berlin*

ENVISION HANDBOOK





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# ***Introduction***

## **ABOUT BERLIN ENVISION**

Envision Berlin began in 2020 as a new extension of Alliance Missions which has been in Berlin for over 25 years. Through strategic partnerships our desire is to help grow a multiplying church network that gives Germans and Internationals opportunities to encounter and walk with Jesus, innovatively and creatively sharing the Good News, and developing missional leaders.

Less than 2% of Berliners go to church on a Sunday morning. NE Germany has the highest concentration of self-described Atheists in the world. The destruction of WWII followed by a communist government resulted in the elimination of almost all religion. Some fill this spiritual hole with humanistic moralism, others by collecting pieces from multiple religions. Most people feel a responsibility to help the poor and sick, and to take care of Earth's resources, even if they don't think there is a Higher Power.

Berlin is an intriguing mix of old and new, the capital of a country with a long history. People come here from all over the world for many reasons, including its openness to diversity, for study, and for artistic and business opportunities. About four million people live inside the city limits, but it feels like both one big city and a bunch of small neighborhoods at the same time.

Envision Berlin invites you to help share the love of Christ in NE Germany while going deeper in your own faith.





## MEET THE TEAM

**Mike and Elissa Picconatto** live in Berlin with their two sons (their adult daughter is in the US) and dog. They met as students at Crown College, a C&MA college in Minnesota. Mike served as a youth pastor for six years, and then for ten years as a lead pastor, while Elissa was active in children's, youth and women's ministries.

In February of 2008, they were given a scholarship to visit an Alliance Missions project. The Picconattos flew to Germany, looking to build a bridge between their church family in central Minnesota and the international church family in Berlin. Following God's leading, they returned to Berlin, Germany in 2012, but this time it wasn't a visit, it was a move! Fast forward several years... Berlin aXcess workers invited the Envision international site developer to talk about bringing Envision to Germany. As Mike and Elissa listened to the developer speak about Envision's values and various expressions of discipleship and ministry, they saw so many similarities between Envision's mission and their own, that they began to explore what it would mean to transition again from one branch of the Alliance family to another, but this time staying in the same location! Mike and Elissa are passionate about supporting multi-cultural and creative arts ministries in NE Germany while assisting in the development of Kingdom-minded leaders.



**Stephen and Jennie Jones** joined the C&MA Envision Berlin team in 2021. When Stephen and Jennie graduated from a Christian college in 2005, they had thought that they would head into international missions within a year or two. In college, they participated in a service-learning missions training program in Mexico for 10 weeks (Jennie) and 6 months (Stephen) and were looking for the Lord's leading in what was next—little did they know it would take 16 years for His call overseas to materialize!

Along the way, the Lord built their family. After getting married in 2004, their kids, Rosemarie, Owen, and William, joined Jennie and Stephen in their journey of following Jesus. In Berlin, the Jones family will continue the work they have been doing with publishing and training. They are excited to involve interns in creating high-quality art and publications as they seek to live faithful lives of Gospel presence in Berlin.



**Justin and Brittany Siemens** have served with Envision overseas since 2015. Exciting things were happening in their American life, but they felt God calling them to something bigger.

This call first landed them in Taipei, Taiwan where they served at a local cafe and church called The Aroma, part of Envision Taipei. Having left their careers in media and marketing, Justin and Brittany spent their time helping the ministry behind the scenes creating menus, flyers, social media and more before turning their focus to Envision Taipei's church plant and discipleship. Together with their two daughters, they love using their gifts and skills for the Kingdom and have been surprised by how often God uses their family in non-traditional ways.

In 2020 God began pulling the Siemens toward Europe. After finishing their time in Taipei, they joined Envision Berlin in the Spring of 2022. "Our heart is to engage Berliners with the Gospel through media and art while enjoying more and more of Jesus each day. With that, our desire is to bring Envision interns and residents along with us on our journey towards Christ. Together with the rest of our team at Envision Berlin, we are so excited to build up the next generation of leaders."





## MINISTRY

Envision Berlin exists to see the Kingdom of God advance in Berlin and beyond. We do this primarily through partnerships with Alliance Missions aXcess workers ministering in Germany, but also through strategic partnerships with other like-minded believers and ministries. Developing relationships and prayer initiatives are prioritized. During your time in Berlin, you will do a variety of things to help further ministry, likely in both creative and traditional ways. A few examples: assist in Arabic, Spanish or German churches, prayer walk in key neighborhoods, and discuss spiritual topics over a cup of coffee with locals who may or may not be actively seeking Truth. Specific activities and goals will be made in consultation with Envision, aXcess, partners, and individuals.

Individuals and groups have unique gifts and abilities to further the work of the Kingdom both in their home contexts and internationally. Envision Berlin will challenge participants to see missions and faith through a new lens and to practice ministry overseas, enabling them to more effectively reach their own “Judea, Samaria and the Ends of the Earth.”

## General Information

### TEAM COSTS

The general cost is \$1,165 per individual team member on the ground in Germany for 10 days. The in-country expenses cover meals, lodging, laundry, in city transportation, and travel insurance. Airfare excluded.

### INTERN COSTS

The general cost is \$1,800 per intern on the ground in Berlin per month. The in-country expenses cover meals, lodging, laundry, in-city transportation, and travel insurance. Airfare excluded.

In addition to the monthly cost, there is a one-time fee of \$455 for international travel insurance if your internship is over 6 months. For internships under 180 days, the international travel insurance is a one-time fee of \$53.





## HOUSING AND FOOD

Larger teams should plan on staying in hostel or hotel accommodations arranged by the Envision staff. Smaller teams or individuals sometimes stay with Envision team members, depending on logistics.

When there are multiple interns, women will share apartments with other women and men will share apartments with other men. This is to provide a stronger sense of community within the ministry team. Interns should plan to cook their own meals unless assisting with teams.

For teams, meals will be done communally with site leaders and interns. There will be opportunities to eat local food specialties.

Guidance will be provided about where to get toiletries and personal items during your stay if you need, especially if you come for an extended length of time. Don't feel you need to bring everything but the kitchen sink! Germany, and especially Berlin, probably has everything you need.

## AIRPORT AND ARRIVAL INFORMATION

The team leader must inform Envision Berlin (well before beginning travel) about flight information, including which terminal will be used. An afternoon landing is ideal for managing jetlag, but not required. A member of the Envision Berlin team will meet you after you exit baggage claims at the airport. Do not leave the area where you exit until Envision meets you in person. An American quarter should fit in the luggage cart coin slot if you need to use a cart in the airport.

There are currently no governmental forms to fill out when coming from the US but checking with your airline or travel agent for recent changes is encouraged. (It is expected that by the end of 2022, international travelers will be required to submit a European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) registration; a short online application for 7 Euros which requires a valid Passport, credit or debit card and Email address, that should take less than 10 minutes to full out. This is not a visa for a country, but a pre-screening.)

Wherever you first land in Europe, you will go through Passport Control and customs, where you will be required to show your passport and possibly paperwork confirming "Reason for Travel." (The two most common answers will



be, “Vacation” or “Internship.”) Signage from the plane to the Baggage Claims is very clear in the Berlin Airport. Collect your baggage and exit through the glass doors. Look for us immediately after you exit the restricted area. Do not leave this area without Envision staff, since this is our meeting point with you. Other people may also be there, waiting for others to arrive, but we will find each other!

**Important!**

You will likely take public transportation (which can include subways, trams, busses, stairs, and long walks) to get to and from your lodging. Knowing this, if you are traveling as a team, only pack what you can carry. If you’re staying longer, please talk to Envision Berlin ahead of time about transporting luggage.

**VISAS**

For visits longer than 90 days, the Envision staff will assist in the process of obtaining the required extended visa.

**MONEY**

As a member of the European Union, Germany uses the Euro for its currency. For personal funds, we suggest using your United States bank ATM or credit card to withdraw Euros while you are here. Usually, the fee for withdrawing cash is significantly less than exchanging dollars for Euros at the airport or other cash exchange businesses. You can also get Euros from your bank in the US by making a request a couple of weeks before your departure. We suggest smaller bills (20’s and 10’s, not all 50’s or 100’s). Depending on what and where you buy, you might not be able to pay with large bills or a credit card. Visa and Master Card are often accepted, but not always. Discover and American Express are rarely accepted.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Free internet access is available at the homes of Envision staff and almost always at hotels and hostels. Internet is also available in many cafes, some restaurants, and on some public transportation. Cell phones with international calling plans can be helpful; arrange the details with your cell phone provider before leaving the States. If they choose not to bring a personal cell phone, interns and team leaders may be provided with cell phones, when available, that work in Germany.

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Note: mail usually takes from one to three weeks to arrive from the USA. It may take longer, but mail is secure. If sending packages, please be aware that some items (like electronics) and higher estimated values may mean that





a package may be held at the customs office and a (sometimes surprisingly high) tax may be charged before it can be released. That list is too long to include here, so please do your own research if someone wants to send you a package. Not all packages are held by the postal customs office. A small package with inexpensive items like stuffed animals and packaged food with a total value under \$30 will probably be delivered without any hold-ups. However, we cannot guarantee that a package won't be held by the customs office.

For Germany there are two plug types that are similarly shaped: C and F. Plug type C is the plug which has two round pins and plug type F has two round pins plus two earth clips on the sides. Germany operates on a 230V supply voltage and 50Hz. (American appliances operate on 110 volts.) If your item is equipped to handle 220V, please note that you will need a simple EU plug adapter to plug it in. If your item uses only 110V, you will either need to bring a transformer with you or leave it at home and plan to buy a similar item in Germany. Not all appliances work well with transformers, for example, hair dryers, so leaving those items at home is often best practice.

## HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS

If you have limited mobility, Berlin will be more challenging to navigate. Daily activities often involve three to five miles of walking and multiple flights of stairs. Berlin is partially accessible, but not barrier free.

The CDC does recommend being current on all standard vaccinations. Please visit [einreiseanmeldung.de](http://einreiseanmeldung.de) for current vaccination and Corona guidelines, because they are updated often. Without a Covid-19 vaccine, there may be a required 10 day quarantine upon arrival. Please check the website above about 48 hours before your flight in case of updates on requirements.

## *Suggested Packing List*

- Comfortable, “nice” clothing
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Rain gear (Umbrella or raincoat, maybe rainboots)
- Seasonal clothing – jackets, scarves, etc.
- Toiletries
- Medications/prescriptions
- Pain and cold medicine, etc.
- Hand sanitizer
- Feminine products
- Passport + 1 extra passport photo
- Camera
- Spending money
- Water bottle
- Bible, journal, pen
- European plug adapter (When needed)
- German phrasebook or App
- Sygic App (Offline map of Berlin/ Brandenburg)
- Fully closable bag for carrying around the city, maybe a backpack. Note: particularly in tourist areas pocket thievery is not uncommon. Fully closeable bags help deter theft.

If you are looking to bring small treats for the team, name-brand peanut butter is always appreciated. For staff or locals, fun treats can be Peanut Butter Cups, Fruit Roll-Ups, or Pumpkin Spice.

**Interns:** Since you'll be in Berlin for an extended time, you may want to bring a couple of mementos from home like a favorite pillow, pictures, books...

In Europe, business casual or even jeans and a nice shirt are much more common than athleisure and sweatpants. Please err on the side of dressing modestly. Short and/or tight clothing can distract from the message you want to share and are less comfortable for extensive walking. Avoid clothing that is distinctly patriotic, religious or militaristic in nature.



Although Berlin is far North, the climate is quite moderate. It rarely gets extremely hot or cold. Do expect rain during your visit! In summer the days can reach the 80's with the nights becoming cool. Most buildings do not have air conditioning, and temperatures change quickly, so it is very helpful to dress in layers. (This might be why Europeans are often known for wearing scarves.) Winters are also moderate with lows a little below freezing. Snow is rare but cold damp air is common, so the real feel is often cooler than the actual temperature.

# Schedule

## TEAMS

Note: actual schedule is developed in tandem with the Envision staff and the team leader.

A sample of a week in the life of a team in Berlin:

Friday	AM: Arrival, getting settled PM: Get to know the city, photo scavenger hunt & team dinner
Saturday	AM: City Tour PM: Meet the team, possibly an evening event with a ministry partner (art, music, games, drama)
Sunday	AM: Spanish or German Church PM: Arabic Church
Monday	Sabbath: use the day to see the city or recharge
Tuesday	AM: Prayer Walk, meet with other International Workers PM: cultural understanding tour
Wednesday	AM: Hear from a local pastor about ministry & church; prayer walk PM: Time at the Lighthouse center, conversational English or German
Thursday	AM: prayer walk PM: evening worship (lead/participate in worship, share a testimony)
Friday	AM: Late start PM: Time at a cafe, childcare during group art therapy at Lighthouse, prayer walk, connect with a new friend; Evening Grilling/hangout with the Envision team, invite a new friend!





## SCHEDULE (CON'T)

Saturday	AM: Hear from an Envision intern PM: evening event (art, games, music, drama)
Sunday	AM: Local Spanish or German Church PM: Arabic Church, followed by dinner and debrief

## INTERNS

Interns will likely spend their weeks with the following emphases:

1. 5 hours learning German
2. 2 hours staff meeting
3. 3 hours personal development and discipleship
4. 5 hours church and small group
5. 15-20 hours of ministry related to current ministry needs of Berlin teams
6. 5-10 hours other ministry specific to your personal calling (can also be ministry need focused)



# *Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness*

- Berlin was founded almost 800 years ago! Known for exceptional openness to world cultures and avant-garde ideas, this city is a jumble of unique people from almost 200 nations. Even a small church gathering held in one language will likely have half a dozen nationalities represented. There are dozens of museums, many colleges, numerous stages and galleries, and restaurants of every kind. Many startups and tech industries also call Berlin home.
- Get ready for a good sampling of Berlin food and culture! Riding in trams and subways, ordering Schrippe (bread rolls) at a local bakery, meeting in a café, ordering Currywurst (it's not spicy!), visiting an art gallery and hanging out in a city park are just some of the activities you might do while here.
- Berlin Envision wants your involvement here to be a blessing in both the short and long term. We want to promote a healthy exchange between people of different cultures. Deciding to be a learner instead of a critic can open many doors, both in your own heart and in the hearts of those who will be here after you go home.
- Since knowledge of some cultural generalizations can help people better understand and show respect across cultures, here are some tips to help you make the most of your time here and to build bridges between ongoing Berlin ministries, the Gospel, and locals whom you will meet. Yes, there are exceptions, but these tips can help teams and interns avoid some of the most common cultural faux pas made by visitors.
- Young people are taught to discuss and question as part of their normal education. These skills combined with classic German directness can lead to engaging conversations, especially about current events and culture, about which many Germans are very well informed. It's better to acknowledge not knowing something than to bluff your way through any topic. It is helpful to be aware that violence in movies and television is highly restricted in Germany, whereas nudity, especially in entertainment, is more accepted. Everyone is responsible for where they allow their eyes and thoughts to dwell.
- While this area of the world has a rich heritage and contributes to current trends and world affairs, Germany still lives in the shadow of WWII. Please respectfully refrain from any Nazi related jokes. Best practice is to only talk about this dark period of history when on a tour at a relevant site or when only Alliance Missions staff are present. Everybody takes this era seriously and casual conversations about it can easily turn to shaming present day Germans.
- Most Germans are quieter and more reserved than most Americans. Shouting across a tram or talking loudly on the phone in a bus are examples of what not to do. Most people don't automatically make small talk or smile at strangers. This is not rudeness; it's a show of respect for each other's privacy in this bustling city. In fact, smiling at strangers on the street can leave the Berliner frustrated that he doesn't remember you when you must clearly remember him! Smiles or casual conversation without an introduction can, but not always, send messages you don't intend, like that you are flirting with the Berliner. Saying "Hallo" or "Guten Tag" when entering a small store or office is very polite. So is saying "Tchuess" or "Ciao" when leaving. When meeting someone new, a handshake is often the friendliest greeting. If meeting a man and woman at the same time, please shake hands with the woman first. Hugs are more common in church settings, but not always, and rarely on the first visit. If invited to a meal, chocolates or flowers to give the host(ess) upon arrival are always appreciated.
- When in doubt about what to do, look for cultural clues and/or just ask. Everyone makes social blunders in their own culture. So, relax! Blunders will happen in Germany too! Learning "please, thank you and excuse me" in German is a thoughtful way to show respect and can smooth over many missteps. (Please: Bitte, Thank you: Danke, and Excuse me: 'schuldigung/Sorry. Bonus: Bitte can also mean "Here you go," and "You're welcome.")

The staff and interns of Envision Berlin look forward to serving together with you in Germany!



## *Contact Info*



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