



# Kalkar Welcome Package 2018

## **2018 KALKAR WELCOME PACKAGE**

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**DISCLAIMER**

Throughout this Welcome Package, we’ll refer to specific companies, from AAA to USAA. Even if we include a toll-free telephone number or a World Wide Website address, neither we, nor any other agency of the USAF, or U.S. Government is endorsing any of these companies. We mention them only for your information or as examples of companies you’re likely to be familiar with.

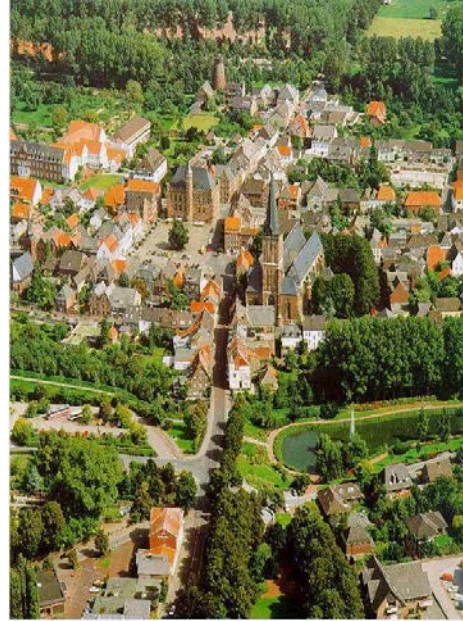
**ABOUT THIS WELCOME PACKET**

As we’ve put this package together, our “target audience” has been the enlisted or officer member who has not been stationed in Germany before. Even if you’ve spent lots of time overseas, in Germany or elsewhere, your assignment to Kalkar will probably be unlike any other assignment you’ve ever had. Our community is a small “island of Americans” among our German hosts. Living and working here will almost certainly be different from anywhere else you’ve been, even if you’ve lived in Germany before. This assignment will give you the opportunity to live in “the real Germany,” not the heavily Americanized areas around the major US bases in the central part of the country that you may have visited or been assigned to in the past. Throughout this package, we’ll try to identify for you the kinds of things that make living in Europe, especially Kalkar and Germany, unique, or at least different from living in the United States. Still, we hope that you’ll find that the rewards and benefits of living here more than make up for the challenges.

Finally, there’s A LOT of information here for you to digest. A quick once-over scan of this package and the other information your sponsor has sent you won’t be enough for you to absorb it all. We know how busy you’re going to be as you prepare for this move, but reading this whole package carefully should be an important part of your preparation. We hope you’ll make the time to read this package slowly and thoroughly. If you come across something you don’t understand, ask your sponsor for more information or an explanation—that’s what he or she is for. We’re looking forward to meeting you. *Willkommen in Kalkar.*

**WELCOME TO KALKAR !**

When Germans go on vacation, they prefer two areas, the southern mountains and the sea. Only connoisseurs know that there is a lot more to see in-between those two. One special area is the Lower Rhine. When people mention the Rhine River, they usually think of the small area where the river has to find its way between mountains guarded by castles and where the wine gets its sweetness from the late autumn sun. But as soon as the river flows into the Lower Rhine area, you can almost smell the open spaces and the sea. Here the Rhine has found its own ways to the sea during past centuries, ways that people repeatedly tried to change. The long sandbar on which the city of Kalkar was set up in the beginning of the 13th Century (1230) is such a relic of a side-arm of the Rhine River.



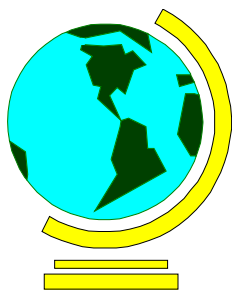
Visitors to Kalkar will notice the parallel streets connected by straight alleyways. There is a good reason for this. When the Count of Kleve founded the city, he systematically planned it to benefit from its location at a crossing point of two important roads. One road went from Strasbourg, France, in the south, to Münster in the north. The other ran from east of the Rhine River to Nijmegen and the Maas River in the west. Besides, what would the land be worth for the rulers of the territory if there were no people to live on it, cultivate it, trade and pay taxes to the Count?

St. Nicholai's Church is a Gothic hall church with three naves and a tower. Another story was added to the tower later but then lost its steeple. Originally, there had been a smaller Roman-style church in this place, whose cornerstone was laid when the city was founded. During the 14th Century, it burned down and in 1409 the new church was built, starting with the high choir, followed by the side naves and the tower. The old church was torn down after the new church had been built around it. Today visitors admire the masterfully carved oak High Altar, showing a picture of the Passion of Christ, and the beautiful and detailed paintings in the altar wings. (The church started a major, two-year-long renovation right after Christmas 1997, and it re-opened shortly before Christmas 2000.

The Kalkar mill is one of the tallest in the region, standing over 30 meters (93 feet) high. In the mill, there now are a brewery and a restaurant, where the famous "Mühlenbier" (Mill Beer) is served.

Besides pretty houses with their step-like gables, the church and the city hall overlooking the wide marketplace are especially remarkable. The brick town hall, with its towers and pinnacles and an entrance door dating to the 15th Century, is characteristic of this area because there is enough clay for bricks but not enough natural stones to build with. The motto above the town hall entrance means "You who are sitting in judgment here—love justice." The architect of the building, Johann Wyrenburg, also helped build the Schwanenburg Castle in Kleve and St. Nicholai's Church in Kalkar.

## **LOCATION**



Kalkar is a small town, located in northwestern Germany in the state of Nordrhein—Westfalen (North Rhine Westphalia). It is near the German-Netherlands border on the southern side of the Rhine River. This town of approximately 13,000 celebrated its 770th anniversary in 2000. Kalkar lies 7 miles (12 kilometers) southeast of Kleve (pronounced "CLAY-ve"), population 64,000; 7 miles northeast of Goch (pronounced "gawkh" but gurgle the "kh"), population 30,000; 22 miles (36 kilometers) southeast of Nijmegen (pronounced "NYE-meggen"), the Netherlands; and 60 road miles (100 kilometers) northwest of Düsseldorf, the nearest major German city and the one with the most accessible major international airport. Don't be surprised if you can't find Kalkar on a map right away. You will be living in houses around Kalkar. Von-Seydlitz Kaserne, is the German base where our support unit and the Joint Air Power Competence Centre are located, which is about a mile from the town center. We've included a map of the area on the next page to help you get a picture of Kalkar's location and layout. You can also

find Kalkar on such sites (Google maps, Apple Maps). Be sure to find the correct Kalkar (postal code 47546), since there is more than one in Germany.

Kalkar and the neighboring towns are surrounded by farms. This is primarily an agricultural region. Crops include wheat, feed corn, potatoes, sugar beets, “*Spargel*” (white asparagus available in May and June), and strawberries. There are a number of plant nurseries in the area, so you’ll see decorative plants in the fields as well. In the Netherlands, you’ll see many greenhouses that are used to grow vegetables all year round. Farmers also raise cattle, sheep, horses, and some pigs.

Here’s a map of Germany and the Benelux countries—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen is the nearest military base with a major American presence. It is our nearest support base. Ramstein AB is our primary support base. The Army compound at Schinnen, the Netherlands, is where the nearest PX (exchange) and commissary are located. Volkel Air Base is a Royal Netherlands Air Force base with a small US presence.



Here are the average driving times and official driving distances to some of the more important facilities in the area.

NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen	1½ - 2 hours	71 miles
Schinnen (PX and Commissary)	1½ - 2 hours	92 miles
Spangdahlem AB	2½ - 3½ hours	166 miles
Ramstein AB	4 hours	227 miles
Düsseldorf International Airport	75 minutes	51 miles
Amsterdam International Airport	2 hours	99 miles

**CLIMATE**

The climate at Kalkar is somewhat like that found in Seattle. Summer temperatures are moderate and range from 50 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and winter temperatures range from 15 to 40 degrees. Precipitation and strong winds can occur year round. Winters are cold with fog, rain and black ice but snowfall is usually light to moderate. Bring good all-weather gear.

**TIME ZONE**

All of Germany is on Central European Time (CET). Daylight savings time is used during the spring, summer and fall. During non-daylight savings time months, CET is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT or “Zulu”); when daylight savings time is in effect, CET is two hours ahead of GMT. Here’s a quick conversion chart for US time zones:

From US Time Zone	TO GET CET:	FROM Kalkar	TO GET
Eastern	Add 6 Hours	CET	Eastern - 6 Hours
Central	Add 7 Hours	CET	Central - 7 Hours
Mountain	Add 8 Hours	CET	Mountain - 8 Hours
Pacific	Add 9 Hours	CET	Pacific - 9 Hours

## **KALKAR UNIT DESCRIPTIONS**

The Von-Seydlitz Kaserne is the headquarters of the German Air Force Air Operations Command. The Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) and the US National Support Unit (NSU) are located on the Kaserne, while the Combined Air Operations Centre Uedem (CAOC Uedem) is located in the nearby town of Uedem. In this section we'll briefly describe the CAOC, JAPCC, and NSU and their missions, and give you top-level organization charts of both the organizations themselves and where they fit in the NATO or USAFE command structures. We'll also provide some information on duty hours and uniforms. Your sponsor will be able to give you more information on your specific duties, TDY loads, and the like.

The USAF element at Kalkar currently has about 30 military members and one civilian German national employee. With family members, the American population is about 110 people.

### **US NATIONAL SUPPORT UNIT (NSU) OL-B, 470<sup>TH</sup> AIR BASE SQUADRON**



The smallest American unit on the Kaserne is the NSU. Only 3 people work full time at the NSU. 2 American NCOs and one German civilian are based in the NSU building 25 on the Kaserne. They provide the basic and critical support we need here. The American NCOs provide the postal support to the community. The German civilian coordinates civil engineering, housing assistance, family services support, TRICARE and provides translation services.

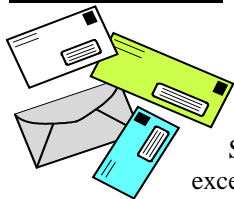
The NSU is an Operating Location of the 470th Air Base Squadron at NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen. The 470<sup>th</sup> is part of the 52d Fighter Wing at Spangdahlem. The folks at GK (as we commonly call Geilenkirchen) provide many services you are used to at a "regular" Air Force base—some personnel and finance services, and medical and dental care. For more complex matters, Spangdahlem is about three hours away.

## **US COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**

### **PERSONNEL ACTIONS**

All of these administrative functions are ultimately performed by the MPF at Spangdahlem AB.

### **POST OFFICE**



The Military Postal Service provides a post office that is located in the NSU on the Kaserne. It accepts United States Postal Service packages and provides parcel services. A full range of normal postal services is available: Special Services, Registered Mail, Money Orders and Stamp Sales. All services can be paid for by credit/Debit card only. Box dimensions cannot exceed 108 inches ((height x 2) + (width x 2)) + length for Priority Mail and 130 inches for Space Available Mail. There is a weight limit of 70 pounds for all mail.

The Post Office is open Monday-Friday. First class mail from the United States should arrive in 7 to 10 days. Lower mail classes, such as magazines, can take up to 6 weeks. If you will be making regular payments (such as car loans or credit cards) to banks or other agencies in the US, it's a good idea to set up automatic payments through your stateside bank. There will be more information on banking a little later in this package.

Everyone at Kalkar is assigned a box in the Postal Service Center (PSC) and receives mail there. Your sponsor should have already reserved a PSC box for you and you can start using it no earlier than 45 days prior to your arrival. Your mail will be held until you arrive. Your mailing address will look like this:

(Your rank and name)  
PSC 21 Box 4XX  
APO AE 09261

### **AAFES EXCHANGE SHOPPETTE**

A small exchange Shoppette operated by AAFES is located in the same building as the National Support Unit on the Von-Seydlitz-Kaserne (building 25). The Shoppette has some staples and a selection of frozen food. The Shoppette staff can also special order items on request. There is no commissary at Kalkar. The nearest commissary is at Schinnen, near Geilenkirchen.

### **ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE**



Routine financial services are provided at Geilenkirchen AB for NSU personnel and at Spangdahlem AB for JAPCC and CAOC personnel.

Since we are a "geographically separated unit" (GSU), we must work most pay changes through our host Accounting and Finance Office (AFO). You should try to wrap up as many of your financial affairs as you can (such as allotments and checks to financial organizations) before you leave your current duty station because it will take a bit more work to take care of them from here.

All enlisted personnel are entitled to Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) Type H, there are no US government messing facilities on the Kaserne. Everyone also receives a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) based on the Euro/dollar exchange rate, distance to US facilities and number of family members. Contact your local AFO about the eligibility requirements for Family Separation Allowance if you will be serving an unaccompanied tour at Kalkar.

### **TEMPORARY LODGING AND ALLOWANCE**

Kalkar does not have temporary lodging facilities. You should plan on staying in a hotel or furnished apartment upon your arrival. You will be paid Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA) when you are overseas and not assigned government quarters for up to 60 days. Ask your sponsor what options will be available for your arrival time.

Due to limited options in the Kalkar area, it is essential that you tell your sponsor about special needs prior to your arrival. For example, if you will not have transportation, the best option will probably be an apartment or hotel room within Kalkar. There is an assortment of shops and restaurants in Kalkar which are within walking distance of any apartment or hotel. The military Kaserne (German base) and NSU are also accessible by bicycle from these locations (only 3 km from the main square in Kalkar).

### **HOUSING ALLOWANCES**

All assigned personnel live on the economy and receive the Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) similar to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) plus a utility allowance. You will also receive a one-time Move-In Housing Allowance (MIHA) to help cover your initial expenses. You can find very adequate housing in most cases for the money. You can get information on your OHA and MIHA rates at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/>.

## **EXCHANGE RATES, COLA, OHA, AND UTILITY ALLOWANCE**

The dollar to Euro exchange rate fluctuates constantly and these fluctuations impact our COLA. Unlike BAH, any unused OHA does not go in your pocket. The good news is that no matter what the exchange rate is, your OHA adjusts to cover your rent, if of course you rent a place under your maximum. Therefore, do not count on your COLA to pay your bills—it may not stay as high as you expect. You can also get this information at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/>.

## **BANKING**

You will have a number of banking options when you get to Kalkar. There is no US banking facility in Kalkar or anywhere nearby. However, you may want to establish an account at the US “Community Bank” at Schinnen, or Spangdahlem. Andrews Federal Credit Union also has branch offices at Schinnen and at many bases in Germany. You may also (or instead) want to establish an account at one of the local German banks, Volksbank or Sparkasse. There are advantages and disadvantages to each option.

Many of us have kept our bank or credit union accounts in the States. For many basic functions, like deposits and automatic payments, there’s really no reason to change. If your bank lets you make transactions by phone or over the internet, you can do those things almost as easily as if you were in the US. You will also be able to use your current ATM card at many ATMs here.

## **MORALE, WELFARE, AND RECREATION**

There are no MWR activities or facilities available at Kalkar. However, a gymnasium with weight training equipment, treadmills, step machines, exercise bikes, an adult and children’s library, a kitchen, a club/multipurpose room and TV and game rooms are available in the National Support Unit building.

# **LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

## **MILITARY DINING FACILITIES, OFFICER AND NCO CLUBS**

There is a German Combined Enlisted and Officers Club on the von-Seydlitz-Kaserne (called “Kasino”), which has meal services and also a small “snack bar” (Treffpunkt). The Combined Club also serves a “troop issue” menu at noon, in addition to the regular menu, and has active social programs. Membership costs are very reasonable.

## **CHAPLAIN SERVICES**

Spangdahlem AB is our designated support base for Chaplain Service. Our assigned Chaplain from Volkel Air Base (NL) holds services in our National Support Unit, can provide religious education material, counseling services, and emergency Chaplain support upon request. English speaking Catholic services can be found in the Netherlands (30 miles away) and in Düsseldorf:

## **SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The number of English-speaking employment opportunities for spouses is *very* limited here. There are no U.S. sponsored job opportunities available. If you find employment on the local economy you are advised to contact the Geilenkirchen Legal Office. <https://www.basedirectory.com/geilenkirchen-air-base-directory/legal-services>



## HOUSING



All newly arriving members will be required to find housing on the local economy. The NSU Housing Assistant's job is to help you find a house by assisting you in making contact with house owners and/or realtors, providing translation services when required, preparing the rental contracts, and submitting all housing allowance paperwork (TLA, OHA, MIHA and Advanced Housing Allowance). Economy housing for large families may require a diligent search and you may have to stay in temporary lodging for 4 weeks or longer. We also have a NATO Multi-National Support Center that can assist with finding houses, etc. Since Kalkar doesn't have a full Housing Office, Kalkar is waived for incoming TLA (60 days instead of 30), and so you can take your time with house hunting.

You will receive both an Overseas Housing Allowance and a utility allowance to offset these costs. You can set up "standing orders" with your local US or German bank to pay your rent, utility, and phone bills automatically. This is an excellent system that makes bill paying almost painless.

Moving into a house on the economy can require some extensive up-front payments as you may have to pay realtors' fees, security deposit and rent all at once. If you are using a realtor who asks you to sign something, please make sure that you understand what you are signing to ensure that you don't pay when you shouldn't have to! Please feel free to bring the Housing Assistant the paperwork for review and translation when and where necessary.

German houses don't usually come with all of the items that we would expect to be installed in a house in the US. These items may be kitchen cabinets, light fixtures, curtain rods, etc. The Housing Assistant will try to help find you a house which already contains all of these items.

If you like to start looking for homes already, you can use the following website which is the largest of its kind in Germany (all other websites have a smaller selection, and even those are often on Immobilienscout24 already):

[www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)

When you are on the site you click on "Häuser mieten" (houses for rent) and then fill in the town (i.e. Kalkar, Udem, Kleve, etc.). You can also already fill in the number of rooms (INCL. living room) under "Zimmer". (So, if you want i.e. 2 bedrooms, you choose 3+)

It will give you choices of houses then that have 3 or more room's total. Then you click on "Einbauküche" on the left to ensure the houses have a built in kitchen. At the drop down list you can check "niedrigste Kaltmiete" (it's default set on "höchste Kaltmiete") for lowest basic rent to show first.

The living space may often sound small, however, the basement - even if fully finished - is never included in the official living space, - so the place may actually be bigger than it is advertised.

When it says "nein" under "Haustiere", the landlord does not accept pets; if it says "nach Vereinbarung" one has to check what type of pets he will accept.

The word "Doppelhaushälfte" means a duplex home, "freistehendes Einfamilienhaus" or "EFH" means free standing home, "Reihenhaus" = row house, "Stadthaus" = town house

Should you find anything that you think you like, please feel free and send the Housing Assistant the link. She then checks if there are any catches in the texts.

In the following section, we're going to talk about family housing and living on the economy in a house that you rent directly from a German landlord. There are many differences between German and American style houses you may be used to, and what you can expect to find in them when you move in.

**ELECTRICAL POWER**

German electricity is 220-240 volts/50 Hertz alternating current versus the American standard of 110 volts/60 Hertz. If you have any question on whether or not an appliance will work here, look at the voltage label on back. **WARNING:** 110V/60Hz appliances can burn out or be seriously damaged if they're plugged into a 240V outlet without a transformer or converter.

Most American appliances will require electrical transformers, adapter plugs and/or modification to operate properly. Transformers will be issued to you when you arrive (subject to availability). If you need more, they are expensive but available through the Thrift Shop at Schinnen or the local Shoppette. US-2-prong-to-German-2-prong adapter plugs are available at the Shoppette for about one dollar each. Adapters for grounded 3-prong plugs are also available. AAFES sell voltage converters for about \$20 that are good for items that don't use timers, clocks or motors such as toasters, irons, and waterbed heaters. Here are some other good things to know about electrical appliances and consumer electronics.

Remember, transformers only convert the voltage, not the cycles (or Hz). Extended use of motorized items at a lower Hz than designed could degrade the motor. Also, transformers that are turned on use electricity, even when the device plugged into them is off. A relatively high voltage transformer that is operating uses as much electricity as a 60 Watt light bulb.

**TELEVISION AND RADIO**

Typically, service members buy or lease American Forces Network (AFN) programming satellite decoder systems from AAFES while living on the economy. **At Kalkar, you can sign out an AFN Decoder from the U.S. Family Support Office, free of charge, for the entire length of your tour here.** Current programming provides ten AFN TV channels. If you plan to get AFN, you will need the satellite system's special decoder plus the 80-centimeter dish. You will be responsible for installing the system (with your landlord's permission) and AAFES will not buy back a purchased system at the end of your tour. A US TV will work for AFN.

If you want to get European stations, you will need a PAL or multi-system TV and an external antenna/satellite dish. There is no cable TV system in Kalkar, so satellite systems are common. In the Düsseldorf area you may be able to rent cable TV. However, if you already own a satellite TV system, you will not be able to pick up the signals that are broadcast to North America. The German TV signal standard (PAL) is different from and not compatible with the US standard (NTSC). A European satellite offers more than 50 English speaking channels.

You can also obtain German TV through DSL with Deutsche Telekom, Unitymedia or other providers available in this area.

**KITCHENS**

If you're moving into a new (or even a not-so-new) German house, the kitchen may be nothing but bare walls. Unlike Americans, Germans expect to custom-build their kitchens, even in a rented house. Furniture stores have large departments devoted to kitchens. Since you'll be getting appliances from the US government (refrigerator, freezer, washer, dryer, kitchen range, and dish washer), you won't have to spend anything on them but you'll need their dimensions in order to fill in everything else around them. Since this can be a big expense for a two or three year tour, you may be able to work out some kind of cost-sharing agreement with your landlord, however, the rent may not exceed a certain limit then. This is another prime area for using your Value Added Tax (VAT, a kind of sales tax) exemption. The Kalkar Housing Assistant will try to find houses on the economy, which already have these items installed; however, the options may be limited. You will get more information after you arrive.

**LIGHT FIXTURES AND LAMPS**

As with kitchens, Germans expect to select and install their own ceiling lights. Your house may already have some lights installed or there may just be wires hanging from the ceiling. If you shop around, you can get lamps at reasonably low prices and then have the VAT taken off of the price. Your lamps will work here. You will just need to use 240V light bulbs and plug adapters. Both the bulbs and the adapters are available at the Shoppette.

**CLOSETS AND WARDROBES**

Under German tax laws, a space with a door on it is a room; that makes a closet a “room.” Since property taxes are based on the number of rooms and square meters of living space in the house, you can see why Germans don’t want to have closets! So where do you hang your clothes? A wardrobe (called a “*Schrank*” (pronounced like “shrunk”) in German). The government will issue you one per family member, plus one more. You can also buy them at local and AAFES furniture stores. You can buy clothing racks at our local Shoppette as well.

**WINDOWS, CURTAINS, SCREENS, AND AIR CONDITIONING**

Air conditioning is just about unknown in this part of Germany, especially in houses. It’s not needed most of the year. When it does get hot and humid, people open their windows and use table, floor, or ceiling fans. You can buy fans here at our Shoppette.

Curtains are for decoration more than for privacy in many houses as most German houses are equipped with roll-down shades on the outside (called “*Rolladen*” or “*Jalousie*” in German). These *Rolladen* provide shade during the daytime along with privacy, insulation, and security.

Lace curtains are typical on the ground floor windows on the front of the house. Mini-blinds are also very popular. You may also choose to wait until you get here; the previous residents of your house may have curtains or mini-blinds to sell.

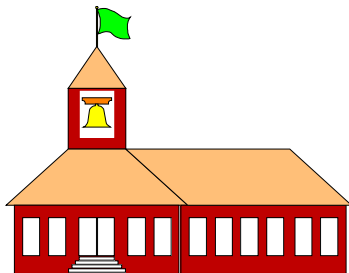
Unfortunately, window screens are not widely used here, so when you open the windows, say hello to flies and mosquitoes.

**TELEPHONE/ON-LINE SERVICES, COMPUTERS, E-MAIL, AND INTERNET ACCESS**

Once you have home telephone services set up, calls to the US made through the German company Telekom are actually cheaper than through the biggest US companies. Currently you can get the CountryFlat 1 for 3.95 € monthly, and all calls to the U.S. are free of charge. If you chose to live in the Kalkar area, you may want to get Deutsche Telekom’s services for internet and cell phone as you may get very bad cell phone reception from other providers, plus the internet lines through Telekom are more reliable. They also have a toll-free Hotline service for English speaking customers (0800-3301080), and it is easier to end the contract with them when you PCS.

Many personal computers and monitors are built to run on either 110V/60 Hz or 240V/50 Hz power. There is normally a power selection switch on the back of the case that lets you select the type of power that is available. For some reason, many printers are not dual power, so you will definitely need to use a transformer for them. If you choose to keep your computer set up to run on 110V power, you should not have any problems running it on a transformer. Additionally most laptops are built with a dual voltage converter, as always check your label to see if it will work here.

## EDUCATION

**DEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

Parents have three basic options for schooling: private English-speaking schools, local German schools, and home-schooling. There are no Department of Defense Dependents School (DoDDS) schools available for Kalkar dependent students.

ISD is an independent, co-educational International style school serving approximately 1000 English speaking students from 50 countries. It is located near the Düsseldorf airport (about a 1 hour and 15 minute bus ride each way from

Kalkar, but closer from other communities). For more information, you can access ISD's web site at <http://www.isdedu.de>

The NDSP schools office (<http://www.dodea.edu/nonDoD/>) has also offered to pay for registration and tuition fees for other schools, such as the Arnhem International School (located in the Netherlands) and St. George's school, which is located in Duisburg. The websites for these schools are [www.arnheminternationalschool.nl](http://www.arnheminternationalschool.nl) and <http://www.stgeorgesschool.de/>.

Many parents elect to send their young children to local German kindergarten. Every town has several kindergartens which take children from 3-5 years old, and some take children as young as two. Instruction is all in German, of course. The German kindergarten emphasizes social and emotional development of children before they enter formal education, and is similar to American pre-school. There is a fee for the school that is based on your annual gross income, and whether you choose half days or full days. This fee will be paid for by NDSP only if your child is considered of school age: 5 years old as of 1 Sep. This last year in Kindergarten, however, is cost free in Germany.

Children may also attend local German school. And home-schooling is of course available here at Kalkar. The School Liaison Officer can help you with these options. Also, see the NDSP (<http://www.dodea.edu/nonDoD/>) for details on how they can help cover costs of these programs, to include supplemental language instruction, and study materials.

**Parents should establish contact with the Kalkar Schools Liaison Officer and the schools, as soon as practical before PCS inbound to Kalkar, to learn more about the schools and begin the application process for the respective school you choose. This contact can be established through your sponsor.**

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Special education is a more difficult issue. We suggest you contact the Kalkar Schools Liaison Officer directly, if you have a specific question.

### **DUTY-RELATED EDUCATION AND TESTING**

Kalkar is too small to have any in-residence duty-related study programs. If you're eligible for these programs, you'll have to do them by correspondence or test at Geilenkirchen.

### **COLLEGE COURSES**

There are no undergraduate or graduate college courses offered at Kalkar. The nearest study center for actual classroom programs is at Geilenkirchen. Embry Riddle, University of Maryland University College (UMUC), and the University of Oklahoma (OU) all offer classes at or near GK.

### **GERMAN LANGUAGE COURSES**

For military personnel, the working language in the CAOC and JAPCC is English. However, in town, not everyone speaks English. So, learning at least a little German will both make life easier and will please our hosts around town.

Alternatively, you can purchase a commercial language courses at <http://www.berlitz.com>. Your last choice is to wait until you get here. Some of the local technical schools also offer "German for foreigners" courses.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

Because Kalkar is a geographically separated unit, we do not have the facilities normally found at larger bases. However, the German doctors and hospitals available to us fill virtually every medical need. Some special medical conditions, however, may not be adequately supported locally. German doctors have different methods and standards of record keeping and communicating with their patients than Air Force doctors do. If a family member is currently enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, you should work with your current base's program coordinators to determine if you will be able to bring that family member to Kalkar. They can check with our TRICARE advisor on the availability of medical services. You can also contact her directly at DSN 314-454-8765, commercial 011-49-2824-902403, or via e-mail at [kalkarNSU.personnel@us.af.mil](mailto:kalkarNSU.personnel@us.af.mil).



**If you have any questions or concerns about special medical needs let your sponsor know right away.**

We are supported by excellent local German doctors and hospitals. The nearest US medical facilities are the USAF clinics at Geilenkirchen (75 miles) and Spangdahlem AB (160 miles).

As NATO active duty members you can also receive medical treatment on the von-Seydlitz-Kaserne Kalkar at the German Military Clinic, but only for urgent care/sick call.

According to an agreement between NATO and the German Air Force, NATO will pay for the treatments INCL. THE MEDICATION which you receive here on base. (If the military doctor refers you to a civilian facility, contact [International SOS](#) and TRICARE picks up the costs then.)

TRICARE Overseas Prime Remote is required for active duty personnel and is used extensively by family members at Kalkar (at no cost). Accessing care in a remote area using [International SOS](#) is eas: First, you contact Internationals SOS, who is your Primary Care Manager, who helps you to find a medical provider. If the provider is a TRICARE network provider, he/she will treat you and submit your claim for payment. That's all there is to it!

We also have a full-time civilian TRICARE Point of Contact who helps in dealing with the German medical system and personnel. She is also available to translate if necessary.

You may want to keep your family members enrolled in the TRICARE Family Member Dental Plan with United Concordia, so they can receive routine dental or orthodontic care on the economy, too. You can schedule appointments at the military dental clinics at Geilenkirchen or Spangdahlem, but it will be on space-available basis for family members.

Active duty members on flying status can expect to have their annual flight physicals at Spangdahlem or Ramstein.

You can find more information about TRICARE Overseas Prime Remote at TRICARE Europe's home page at <http://www.tricare.mil/tma/EurasiaAfrica> or [www.tricare-overseas.com](http://www.tricare-overseas.com).

**DUE TO GERMAN CUSTOMS LAWS, MAIL ORDER PRESCRIPTIONS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN GERMANY!**

## **MAKING TRAVEL PLANS**

### **SHIPPING YOUR HOUSEHOLD GOODS**

All accompanied personnel are authorized to ship their full Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR) weight allowance to Kalkar and a statement to that effect should be on your orders. **DO NOT ship American style stoves, washers, dryers, dishwashers, freezers or refrigerators.** These items will be issued. **Non-temporary storage of these appliances at Kalkar is not authorized.** American-style microwaves, irons, coffee makers, bread machines and other small appliances will work without any problems with transformers. However, some people choose to purchase either dual-voltage or European small appliances to reduce the clutter caused by multiple transformers.

**BE SURE TO KEEP ALL OF YOUR PERSONAL PROPERTY SHIPPING DOCUMENTS WITH YOU. YOU WILL NEED THEM WHEN YOU GET HERE IN ORDER TO GET YOUR PROPERTY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IF ALL GOES AS EXPECTED, YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL YOUR SHIPMENTS AND BE SETTLED WITHIN EIGHT WEEKS AFTER YOU ARRIVE.**

### **FIREARMS**

The U.S. Army, Europe, has put a ban on the importation of privately owned firearms by military members to Germany. The ownership and possession of privately owned firearms are prohibited by German law, unless the owner has a German Weapons Possession Card (Waffenbesitzkarte).

### **PETS**

The government will not pay for you to transport your pets. Each airline will require you to have proof of vaccination and a health certificate from a veterinarian, which should be completed within 10 days of the shipping date. If possible, obtain a bilingual (English and German) certificate. (A trilingual certificate can be found on <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/forms/eforms/dd2621.pdf>) This certificate MAY also be required to cross the Dutch-German border if you ship the pet to Amsterdam. Some types of airliners are prohibited from carrying pets during certain months because of the temperatures in the airplane. Contact your TMO and airline for more information.

### **DOGS**

Due to several incidents, where dogs attacked children, a law has been passed, where importing, breeding and trading of certain kind of dogs, so called "Kampfhunde" (dangerous dogs), are forbidden in Germany. The law for North Rhine-Westphalia lists 3 types of categories. These are:

Category 1:

- Pit bull Terriers
- American Staffordshire Terriers
- Staffordshire Bullterriers
- Bullterriers
- AND ALL MIXTURES OF THESE BREEDS

If you have a dog of this category and you want to bring it into Germany, you can do so, however, you need a "dangerous dog owner license" from the local City Administration, and you have to take a test to prove that you have knowledge about this breed, you can handle such a dog, you have to be at least 18 years old, etc. These dogs always have to wear a muzzle when walked. Even then the City Administration COULD deny such a license. **So it is advisable, should you have a so called dangerous dog, to leave it in the US while you are stationed here in Germany.**

### Category 2:

Dogs of certain breeds are considered "potentially dangerous dogs", and they are handled the same way as dogs of category 1. However, breeding and trading are not forbidden:

- Mastino Napolitano
- Mastino Espanol
- Dogo Argentino
- Fila Brasileiro
- Alano
- American Bulldog
- Bullmastiff
- Mastiff
- Rottweiler
- Tosa Inu
- AND ALL MIXTURES OF THESE BREEDS

These dogs of category 2 also have to be walked on a leash and with a muzzle. This restriction may be lifted if the dog passes the so called "Wesenstest" (character test). You can find out from the local city administration where those test can be done at.

### Category 3 (40/20 category):

Dogs larger than 40 cm (approx. 15 inches) **or** weighing more than 20 kg (44 pounds) have to be registered with the local city administration. For the registration you are required to submit the following:

- Liability Insurance for the dog (which is common in Germany)
- Written proof that you know how to handle dogs of that size (German citizens can get it from a vet or from a dog school; you can write this statement yourself)
- Background check (in your case, a letter of conduct from the Commander would suffice).
- Additionally, your dog has to have an ID microchip implanted.

These types of dogs can only be walked on a leash in residential areas.

**THIS LAW ONLY APPLIES IN NORTHRHINE-WESTPHALIA, where Kalkar and Düsseldorf are located. OTHER GERMAN STATES MAY HAVE DIFFERENT LAWS.**

Dogs smaller than 40 cm and weighing less than 20 kg (such as Dachshund, Westhighland Terriers, Yorkshire Terriers, etc.) don't have to be registered with the city administration; however, they have to be walked on a leash in residential areas as well.

All Germans are required to pay dog taxes (as strange as it may seem to you). As Americans living in Germany you would be exempt from this law, unless, you have a European spouse.

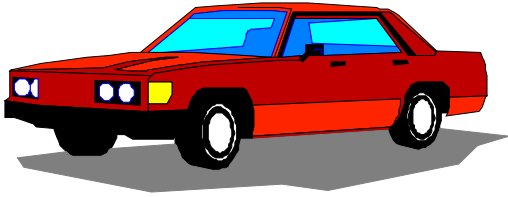
Each airport freight terminal has holding pens and facilities for pets. However, you must make arrangements to pick up the pet when it arrives. The airfreight terminal pet agents must also see the health certificate before they will release a pet. NOTE: If a health certificate is not with the pet, the pet can be placed in quarantine for 30 days by customs at your expense.

You need to ensure that your pet has an INTERNATIONAL microchip, as the national ones may not be read by the chip readers at the airport!

For more information please contact the Family Support Representative in Kalkar. She will help you with requesting the permits.

**VETERINARY SERVICES**

Excellent local veterinary services are available on the economy. Prescription food can be ordered through the Kalkar vet but pet prescriptions may not be available so bring extra medication and food until you can set up shipping arrangements with a US vet.

**SHIPPING YOUR VEHICLE TO GERMANY**

First of all, military and civilian personnel who want to ship vehicles overseas must present an original certificate of title or a certified copy of the title, according to U.S. Customs Service regulations. If the vehicle is leased or has a lien, the shipper must also present a letter from the lien-holder authorizing shipment. Please check with your lien-holder if your care is allowed to leave the U.S.!

Shipping times from the US to Europe vary from 30 to 60 days, depending on the time of year, which port you're shipping the vehicle from, how long it takes to fill the ship, etc. Status of your vehicle shipment can be found at: <https://www.pcsmypov.com/>

Your car must be in good condition since the mechanical inspections are fairly thorough and detailed. For example, your car can fail the inspection if the lights, turn signals, or horn don't work or there are cracks in the windshield. Missing component parts, excessive deterioration, or unsightly markings may also cause the vehicle to fail the inspection.

The nearest AAFES garage facilities are at Spangdahlem and Ramstein. They carry a supply of the most basic parts. Everything else must be ordered. Larger Air Force bases in Germany have AAFES auto parts stores and carry an extensive supply of American car parts or they can order parts for you. Shipping times can run from two weeks to 90 days or longer. Another option worth exploring would be to order parts off the Internet. You can have the parts sent via the US and military postal systems (to your APO box). UPS/Fed Ex delivers to Kalkar as well.

Because it can take so long for your car to get here, we suggest shipping the car as early as you can. That should minimize the time you're without a car or have to drive a rental car. During the warmer months, it's easy enough to walk or ride a bike to and from work. You can check out bikes from Family Support, buy them at the Shoppette, or bring them with you in your hold baggage. (Be sure to bring your helmet!) For longer trips, or to go shopping, however, it's still a lot more convenient to have a car.

There are a few rental car agencies in the Kalkar area. Check with the NATO Tax Office on tax-free rental cars.

**PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE OPERATIONS**

For our purposes, a POV is a car, truck, motor home, motorcycle, moped, or all-terrain vehicle. US Forces personnel must register any POV they own, either wholly or in part, with US Army Europe (USAREUR) unless the POV is physically located outside Germany. Registration with the German government is prohibited. You can have two cars in Germany, but TMO will only ship one for the military member. Motorcycles do not count toward the number of cars you can have here. To register your POV you will need the title or proof of ownership, proof of insurance, and your USAREUR driver's license. There is a \$30 – 60 registration fee, which you pay with a credit card.

<http://www.eur.army.mil/RMV/>

**BUYING A CAR HERE**

There is a large new and used car market around Germany. There are used car lots on Geilenkirchen, Spangdahlem and Ramstein Air Bases. You might also be able to pick up a car from an American who's getting ready to PCS or from one of your coworkers. There are several used car dealers in the area with a wide variety of European cars available.



There are several American banks in Germany that will finance new and used cars. Andrews Federal Credit Union will also provide loans to Kalkar personnel through their Schinnen branch.

Buying a new car is fairly straightforward here. You even have the opportunity to buy a new European model car without paying the Value Added Tax or Stateside sales tax on the car. AAFES also sells cars from the major US manufacturers.

Buying and registering a used car can be much more complicated, especially if you're buying it from a European. Before rushing into a purchase, take the time to make sure you completely understand the process. This will save you from having to make a lot of extra trips, especially to Geilenkirchen.

Whether you choose to buy a new or used car, you need to know that a car built for America will have some technical differences from one built for Europe.

### **AUTO INSURANCE**

The green certificate issued by your insurance company is the only acceptable proof of insurance for registration under US Forces regulations. Your current policy is not acceptable. Your auto insurance in Germany will generally cost more than the insurance you purchased in the US. Medical and disability pension costs are high and the minimum liability insurance required by German law is high, too. The minimum liability insurance coverage required by German law on your POV is about \$3,000,000 per person and about \$9,000,000 per accident.

If you get insurance through an American company, your bill will still be in dollars. Getting insurance from a German company is costly and customer service and price vary from company to company. Local subsidiaries of US companies are generally your best choice.

When considering whether to keep insurance on your vehicle or not during shipping, please contact your insurance company. There are pros and cons. If you drop the insurance, it could impact your automatic insurance if you drive another's vehicle (you may no longer qualify) or rental car. Also, discuss with your insurance co. the pros and cons of when to switch from US coverage to German coverage (the day you drop it off for shipment or when you pick it up at Shinnen). Keep in mind the rules are different for automatic coverage (when you borrow or rent a car) since the German and US programs are separate. Bottom line...don't assume anything...ask your company.

### **INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS LICENSE**

As of 2006, the International Driver's license is required for all licensed family members 18 and older. It is recommended that you obtain your International Driver's License before you come to Kalkar. You will use this license in addition to your USAREUR license. If you drive in a country that requires an International Driver's License without having one, you can be fined a lot of money and may even have your car confiscated. You can obtain information at the POV office or Legal Office at Geilenkirchen or in the USAREUR Driver's Handbook. NOTE: While family members must have a USAREUR POV operator's license to drive in Germany, they must also have an International Driver's License to drive in other countries. You can get an International Driver's License locally in Kleve or in the US before you come to Kalkar, which is the option we recommend. Call your local AAA office for information.

### **USAREUR DRIVERS LICENSE**

All Active Duty members, spouses and dependents over 18 with valid stateside driver's license are required to take the USAREUR Driver's license CBT and test located on Joint Knowledge Online (JKO). The Computer Based training is roughly 4 hours long and there is a summative test at the end of the CBT, it takes on average 4 to 8 hours to complete all the training. From there you will print the certificates and take them to the Geilenkirchen, you will be issued a paper temporary license that will allow you to register cars and be able to operate POV's and GOV's. In 4 weeks your permanent USAREUR driver's license will arrive by mail.

### **ESSO GAS CARD**

Once your car is registered, you can purchase an ESSO Card at the Geilenkirchen Shoppette, which will lower the price of gas significantly. Even with the ESSO card, however, gas is still much more expensive here than in the US. You can use ESSO card at all AAFES gas stations and all **German** ESSO stations. The amount of gas is rationed per month which is a total of 400 or 600 liters, depending on the size of your engine. You are entitled 400 liters per month, at the beginning of the month it will set back to 400 liters regardless if you only used 200 liters the past month. The nearest ESSO stations, unfortunately, are not in Kalkar, but in Goch and Kleve, which are each about 8-10 miles from Kalkar.

## **TRAVELING TO KALKAR**

### **PASSPORTS**



Be sure to bring your passport and all your family members' passports with you! Obviously, you'll need them just to get through the Immigration Control station when you arrive. Military members can obtain or renew their passport through the MPF at Geilenkirchen, if they need to. Military family members are required to have a passport (issued at no cost to you through your losing base) to enter Germany. Spouses and family members should always carry their passports when they will be crossing international borders. Remember: the PX and Commissary are located in the Netherlands and the Dutch police do sometimes stop and check the occupants of foreign-licensed cars.

If you have an alien spouse, make sure he/she has a proper green card on file with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and if possible, get a valid return visa in their passport for the US before you leave. In the event of emergency leave, regular leave, or PCS back to the States, alien family members **MUST** have a valid United States visa in their passport to be allowed to board the airplane back to the US. For more information, you can visit the web site of the US Embassy in Germany at <https://de.usembassy.gov/>.

### **FLYING TO GERMANY**

You are authorized to arrive at either of the two most favorable points: Amsterdam (Schiphol) International Airport, the Netherlands, or Düsseldorf International Airport, Germany. Your local TMO can refer to the AMC Sequence Listing, which lists Amsterdam as the port of entry for Kalkar. Düsseldorf is closer than Amsterdam and has been the usual choice.

### **GETTING TO KALKAR FROM THE AIRPORT**

There is no scheduled government transportation from Düsseldorf or Amsterdam to Kalkar. Normally you will be picked up by your sponsor, so it is **very important** to make sure your sponsor knows your arrival date and time, airline and flight number, how many members of your family will be coming with you, and if you have any pets, the number, ages and sizes of the pets and kennels.

If you or your family have never traveled to Europe before, don't be concerned—getting through customs and immigration is a fairly easy and straight-forward process. After you get off of the airplane, all passengers will be taken to immigration processing first. Pick any line that is marked for people with "Non-EU" passports—that is, people who are not citizens of the countries that make up the European Union. When the immigration officer signals for you to come up to his/her desk, take the whole family up to the desk and present everyone's passports. The immigration officer will review them, put an entry visa stamp in each one, and give the passports back to you. You'll then go out into the baggage hall to retrieve your luggage and pets. Once you've got it all, you'll go through the customs processing. Head for the "Nothing to Declare" line, and leave the "secure" area. Once you pass through the doors, you can't go back in, so make sure you have everyone and everything!

A good thing to tell your sponsor is how you can be recognized when you walk out into the arrival hall at the airport. An easily identifiable piece of clothing is usually a good choice although as a security precaution you'll probably be advised not to wear something that marks you as obviously an American. Once you and your sponsor have met up, you'll have a chance to change some dollars into Euros, take a restroom break if needed, and then you'll likely load up the sponsor's POV for the ride back to Kalkar or use an airport bus transfer. As we noted earlier, the ride from Düsseldorf is a bit more than an hour, the ride from Amsterdam more than two hours. Kids and pets will probably need a few minutes to stretch their legs and try to wake up a bit since, if you're coming from the US, you'll probably arrive early in the morning.

If you don't find someone who is looking for you, go to an airport information booth (marked by a large "i"), where you can have them page your sponsor, or whoever you expected to pick you up. If you haven't found, or been found by, anyone from Kalkar after a reasonable amount of time, buy some Euro coins and find a telephone. Your sponsor should have given you all of his or her phone numbers (home, work, cell phone), or the numbers of the person who was supposed to pick you up.

However, Taxi and bus rides into Kalkar are reimbursable expenses when filed with the Members travel voucher.

### ***Arrival***

Once you get to Kalkar, you may be dropped off at a hotel here in town. Please tell your sponsor of any special requirements (i.e. huggies on arrival would be nice) to make your trip and transition most enjoyable. There's a lot more information we have to share with you but much of it won't make much sense, or be of much use to you until you get here. In addition to our information, there is also information from GK, Ramstein and Spangdahlem that we will pass on.

### **CALLING KALKAR**

There are a number of different ways you can telephone the staff here at Kalkar. If you're stationed outside of Europe, you'll need access to a worldwide DSN line. Be sure to add the 314 prefix if you're placing the call yourself. Your base operator will know to add it. If you choose to call commercial long distance from the US, 011 is the international access code, and 49 is Germany's country code. If you wish to call the US after arrival dial DSN: (312) plus seven digit number. Commercial dial: 001-(area code) plus seven digit number.

Please keep in mind that both the Amsterdam and Düsseldorf airports are located in major metropolitan areas. Rush-hour traffic in both cities can come to a complete standstill, sometimes for hours. A major traffic back up, called a "*Stau*" in German, can happen almost anywhere on the autobahn at any time. All it takes is fog or an accident. If your sponsor gets caught in one of these *Staus*, there's not much you or they can do. Be patient: they'll get to you as soon as they can.

## ○ MOVING TO KALKAR CHECKLIST

- START PASSPORT PAPERWORK AND MEDICAL REVIEWS.
- Work with sponsor to determine housing and schooling options.
- Get PSC Box number from your sponsor for change of address notices.
- Schedule household goods shipments. Decide what to bring and what to store based on the information in the Welcome Packet
  - Hold baggage
  - Household goods
  - Non-temporary storage (Remember, major kitchen and laundry appliances will be issued to you at Kalkar.)
- Schedule your vehicle shipment. Make rental car reservations, if desired.
- Get your airline tickets through TMO and SATO.
- Be sure you're routed to either Amsterdam or Düsseldorf.
- Gather important records:
  - For school applications, gather records from current schools.
- Get International Driver's Licenses for **all** currently licensed drivers 18 or older.
- Mail items you want to have shortly after you arrive but that you don't want to carry.
- **DO NOT** include any passports or personal or family records you will need for in-processing or school registration! Hand-carry all of these.
- Remember that the US or military postal systems will not ship items over 108 total inches or 70 pounds.
- Talk to your TMO about reimbursement procedures at your current base.
- Get pets' physicals and shots.
  - The letter from your vet must be dated within 10 days of your arrival in Europe and translated as required.
- Confirm your sponsor has your arrival airport, date, time, airline and flight number and knows your plans.
  - Be sure to let your sponsor know if:
    - You will be bringing any pets or large luggage;
    - You have any special food or bedding needs (for pets or human family members);
    - If taking leave en-route pass where you can be contacted if needed while you're on leave.