

COUNTRY OF PURCHASE

Germany



Can I pay for a car in cash?

Yes, there are no restrictions on cash payments. However, it might be wise to choose a more secure and traceable method. Be extra careful if a trader only accepts cash. When entering or leaving Germany, any sum of money of or equivalent to EUR 10 000 and above must be declared orally to customs upon demand.

What about payment of VAT?

Within an intra-EU transaction new cars should be sold without VAT.

A car is considered new if no more than 6 months have passed since the date on which it was first registered or if its mileage does not exceed 6 000 km. In practice, some sellers may require payment of VAT as a deposit, to be refunded once the car is registered in the buyer's country. Check in advance with the seller how to claim the VAT refund, i.e. what documentation the seller needs from you. Be aware that you have no direct claim against the fiscal authorities, only against the seller, so you should claim any refund quickly.

All other cars are considered second hand (more than 6 months since the date of first registration and mileage of more than 6 000 km). They are generally sold inclusive of VAT (19 %) if the supplier is a commercial seller (the supply is not liable to VAT if the supplier is a private person). You don't have to pay VAT in your country of residence.

Is the seller obliged to provide a vehicle inspection?

No, but they generally do. A roadworthiness test must be performed on every car registered in Germany 3 years after it is first registered and then every 2 years. This includes an emissions check and the average cost is EUR 85.

Is the German vehicle inspection recognised in my home country?

Some countries recognise it. Check in advance with your local registration office to avoid unnecessary costs. For further information, see the [country fact sheets on registration](#).

Can I have an expert carry out a check on the car at the seller's premises?

With the seller's agreement. To make sure the car is in good condition, it might be wise to negotiate having an external independent check carried out with the seller. You will usually have to cover the costs. Most companies offering roadworthiness tests can perform this kind of check ("Gebrauchtwagentest"), although not all do.

What should I look out for in the contract of sale?

Read the contract carefully and only sign contracts you understand. Some traders try to exclude legal guarantee rights by claiming that the contract is a business-to-business contract or that the car is sold "without warranties" (only in business-to-consumer contracts would such a clause be considered null and void). Make sure that the name of the seller is the same as the name given in the registration document, or that the seller has power of attorney to sell the car in the registered owner's name. If you buy from a trader, make sure that the name of the company is mentioned in the contract and that there is an indication regarding VAT

Can I cancel a signed contract?

- If the contract is signed on the seller's premises, you have no legal right to a cooling off period (unless the car is financed by a loan and the contract includes a clause allowing you to cancel if credit is declined or you use your legal right of withdrawal from the credit contract).
- If the contract is a distance sale contract and you have not yet collected the car from the seller's premises, you can withdraw from the contract before delivery. You can also withdraw up to 14 days from delivery of the car to your address. If you collect the car at the seller's premises, the contract is usually signed there and either will not foresee or will exclude the right to a cooling off period.

What documents should the seller provide?

- The contract of sale or an invoice;
- A valid vehicle inspection certificate, even though this is not a legal requirement. A roadworthiness test must be performed on every car registered in Germany 3 years after it is first registered and then every 2 years. This includes an emissions check and the average cost is EUR 85;
- The service book is not mandatory but it is normal practice to provide it, so request it;
- Both registration certificates ("Zulassungsbescheinigung Teil 1 and Teil 2"). "Zulassungsbescheinigung Teil 2" proves that the car is not pawned;
- The European Certificate of Conformity (COC) which is needed for registering the car in another country. Check with the seller if a COC can be provided. If not, a duplicate can be requested from the manufacturer for a fee.

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Should I apply for temporary plates to drive the car home?

Red export plates (“Ausfuhrkennzeichen”) can be obtained at the local registration offices (“Kfz-Zulassungsstellen”). If you are not a German resident, you must name a representative who lives in the municipality in which you apply for the export plates. This representative must be present when you apply. It might be easier to let the seller handle this. You should be aware that yellow short-term plates (“Kurzzeitkennzeichen”) are not meant for export and might not be accepted in other countries.

Approx. price: EUR 30-35 for registration + EUR 10-15 for plates, depending on the length of the plates’ validity; **Timeframe:** issued immediately; **Validity:** 14 days-1 year

Regular national plates

If you wish to drive home with the national plates still on the car, are you obliged to return them to the competent registration offices, either in the country of previous registration or in the registration country?

The seal on the regular plates has to be destroyed and shown to the competent authorities. Therefore, it is generally necessary to send the seal back. Export plates have an expiry date on them so it is not necessary to destroy the seal.

Do I need temporary insurance?

When driving the car home, you must be covered by insurance allowing you to drive on public roads. Ask your insurer if they can provide you with short-term insurance. In Germany, a car can only be registered if it is insured. For this purpose, the insurance company issues an electronic insurance number (eVB) that can be verified by the registration office.

If I have a complaint about a cross-border purchase, whom do I contact?

Contact your local ECC: www.evz.de

What out of court dispute resolution body is available in Germany?

The “[Schiedsstellen des Deutschen Kraftfahrzeuggewerbe](#)” are private out of court dispute resolution bodies for the car sector. They only mediate if the seller is one of their members. For more information, visit. You can also contact your ECC to find out how they can help you.

To whom do I report cases of fraud?

You can file a complaint with the local police or public prosecutor’s office. Some German states offer the possibility to file a complaint online (“Onlinewache”).