



Germany Travel Planning Podcast

Ep 15 - How to turn your ideas into a Germany trip itinerary you'll love

Transcript is autogenerated

Cate (00:00)

If you've been feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or just unsure how to start planning your Germany trip, or maybe you've been researching for weeks and you still don't feel confident about how to turn all that research into your ideal trip, this is the episode for you.

This is the Germany Travel Planning Podcast, the show that helps you plan a super fun trip to Germany and beyond.

My name is Cate and I'm your Germany destination specialist. I'm here to help you plan the trip of a lifetime.

Today's episode is all about taking action and that's why I'm going to walk you through our Germany trip planning jumpstart challenge. And yes, you can actually go through this challenge while you listen to this episode. My goal for today is to help you go from feeling stuck and overwhelmed to having a real plan you're excited to build on. Are you ready? Let's dive in.

Okay, to begin, let's be honest. Planning a trip to Germany can feel like a lot, especially if you've never been to Germany or if you're planning a trip for your whole family or friend group or if you'd like to visit other countries along with Germany. You've got all the big stuff to figure out, like where to go, how long to stay in each place, whether to drive or take the train.

And then there's all the little details you have to figure out, like which train ticket or pass to get because you know, there's like a bazillion options. Which hotel is the right choice? Or maybe you'd prefer an apartment, where to stay in the city or town or village. How many and which tourists to book or maybe you want a private guide. How to plan out your travel days so you don't waste time. But also you want to have enough flexibility and spontaneity. And there's so much more.

That's why it is so easy to fall into planning paralysis. If you've been feeling this way, don't beat yourself up. It's completely normal.

Planning a trip today is actually harder than it used to be. Because while there's more information than ever, there's also less actual guidance. You can scroll endlessly through blogs and reels and Facebook groups and Reddit threads and TripAdvisor reviews. I mean, we've all done it, right? We've all been there. But most of that is just generic lists and inspiration or contextless opinions.

And while all those things can be helpful in their own ways,

It's not the kind of input that turns a million random ideas into a real bookable plan that will work for you.

And that's the big problem. Most of the content out there, mean, while it's inspirational and you can get lots of ideas about where you wanna go and what you wanna do, and that can be super, super helpful, especially at the very beginning stage, the dreaming stage. It doesn't actually help you build a doable trip that fits your travel style, your interests, your timeline, and your budget.

because you don't want a cookie cutter trip, right? You want something that is going to be memorable and meaningful and super fun for you. The thing is, a great trip isn't built from random tips online.

A great trip It's one that you will remember for the rest of your life. and building something like that comes from knowing how to connect the dots in a way that actually works on the ground when you're in Germany.

So you're not wasting time, you're not backtracking unnecessarily or missing out on the experiences that matter most to you.

So if you've been doing some travel research and you feel like you're going around in circles and you would like to make some progress towards building out a really great trip, this challenge will help you.

The goal today is to start building momentum. You're not gonna build out your full itinerary today, but you will get things moving in the right direction. So what do you need for this challenge?

First, I recommend a notebook and a pen, or open up a Google Doc, or even just the Notes app on your phone.

and then if you already have access to our DIY Germany Travel Planner, go ahead and log in so you can access specific tools in the planner as you go through the challenge. Now, if you don't yet have our DIY Germany Travel Planner, don't worry. You can absolutely do this challenge with just the resources you've already gathered. That said, I will be 100 % honest. It will be 10 times, 100 times, maybe 1,000 times easier if you have our DIY Germany travel planner, not only to do this challenge, but to plan your whole

But you can absolutely get started and do this challenge with the resources you already have, and then you can go from there.

Okay, now let's walk through the five steps of this Germany trip planning jumpstart challenge. I recommend pausing the podcast after each step so you have enough time to dig into it.

Step one, if you have the DIY Germany travel planner, watch the video in the module called Not Sure Where to Go in Germany?

It's a seven minute video and I give you a tour, kind of like a high level view of what you can do and see in each region, kind of like what the highlights are for each region in Germany.

I use our planning map to give you the tour so you can see photos and things like that. And this way you'll have an idea of what each region in Germany offers you can more easily figure out which parts of Germany you'd like to spend time in.

I find this is a really good place to start because whenever I work with clients one on one and I give them a little mini tour of Germany, almost always there's some region that they didn't know existed and there's something there that really caught their attention that they really want to visit. Other times, it's a little bit different and going through the regions and seeing what there is to do really solidifies that they absolutely do want to focus on the one or two regions that they had already thought they wanted to see.

So I recommend as you watch the video, jot down the one or two regions that catch your eye. Of course you can go to more regions if you want to, but for now just focus on the one or two that just seem really intriguing to you. Then jot down what you're

most drawn to. So is it castles and scenic rivers or lakes? Or maybe it's the big cities and the museums and unique restaurants.

Or maybe it's the smaller towns or villages or beautiful natural areas. Or maybe it's Christmas markets or Oktoberfest or summer beer gardens. So just jot down a few things that pique your interest. Don't overthink it. This is just your starting point.

If you don't yet have access to our Germany travel planner, no worries,

Instead of watching the video tour that I mentioned, here's what you can do. Start by opening a map of Germany. And then look at the different regions and cities and ask yourself, what kind of experiences am I drawn to? Do castles and scenic drives sound fun or big cities with museums and history and restaurants, small towns in nature or Christmas markets or beer gardens?

Just jot down one or two of the regions or cities that stand out to you and note why they interest you. This will help you focus your planning and avoid trying to see too much. You can always add to it later, right? But this is a good place to start.

Feel free to pause the episode here if you want to complete this step before moving on, I'll be right here when you're ready to move on to step two.

Okay, let's go on to step two.

If you have our DIY Germany trip planner, pull up the interactive planning map and then zoom in on the one or two regions you chose in step one. You can then look at the recommended top sites, castles, hotels, castle hotels, tours and restaurants all at one time.

Or you can look at each category one at a time. I recommend looking at the sites and maybe the castles at this stage. I would hold off on all the other things. I would look at those later when you're getting into more detailed planning. For now, just start clicking on the orange dots and the little castles on the map. Those will show you the top sites that we recommend and the top castles that we recommend.

And then also take a look at the photos of each site that we include. Aaron and I really love doing on the ground research in Germany and we take a lot of photos of each site, castle, hotel, et cetera. because it is so helpful if you can see not only what the site looks like, but really get a feel for it. See some of the details, see some of the area around it and kind of contextualize it. It'll really help you get a feel for and then ultimately decide whether that's something you're interested in or not.

And then I would also read the information and the tips that we give you and that will also help you decide whether that's something you want to add to your itinerary.

Spending some time poking around on our planning map is different from scrolling through things like blog lists or watching videos because you're seeing everything in one place on a real map. But it's a map that we've customized. So it's way better than Google Maps. So like when we're actually in Germany and we're navigating, we use Google Maps. Google Maps is great for that. But for planning, I actually find Google Maps super annoying because there's way more stuff than you need. You do not need to know all the little teeny tiny random things that are in the city. It's way too much. And all these things pop up as you use it. I find it so frustrating to use when I'm planning. That's why we created a completely separate planning map. And we have about a thousand points on there right now.

We really wanted to create this map so that you can see everything in one place without the clutter of a Google map and it really focuses on the things that are the top sites, top hotels, castles, et cetera. and gives you visuals and practical context. So

instead of guessing whether a site fits your trip and guessing how far apart things are, You can see it all laid out, which helps you start grouping ideas geographically and planning smarter from the start.

And then you can come back later on to find accommodations and then you can see where those accommodations are in relation to the top sites and castles. And you can also see things like where the train station is and public transportation and all of that.

Okay, so look at the planning map. Then jot down three to five places that stand out to you as something that you might wanna visit, like cities, towns, castles, sites, villages.

Just follow your curiosity, there's no wrong move here, and just make a list. You can come back and refine it later.

if you don't yet have our DIY Germany travel planner and access to our planning map, here's what you can do. Use Google Maps. I know I just said that it's not ideal and it really isn't, but if you don't have our map, it'll work in a pinch. It'll at least get you started.

So open up Google Maps and zoom in on the regions that you picked in step one. And then you can start looking at nearby towns and sites and landmarks and kind of what's there and anything that grabs your attention. You might have to sort through a lot of things that are really not relevant to your trip, but it'll work to at least get you started.

Then jot down those places that stand out to you that you might want to add to your itinerary.

And like I said earlier, don't worry about the perfect order. Just follow your curiosity for right now.

Go ahead and hit pause right here if you'd like to complete this step before moving on to step three.

Okay, now for step three. If you have our DIY Germany travel planner, go to the trip planning spreadsheet. It's a Google sheet. So make a copy. You can go ahead and name it. And then you can start using this to build out your itinerary. You wanna click over to the itinerary tab. This is where you can start shaping the flow of your trip. If you don't have our DIY Germany travel planner, just open up a Word doc or a notes doc, or just so can write this down with pen and paper. In this step, your goal is just to create a rough sketch of your route, or a potential route. This may not be your final route.

Sometimes I have to do this a few times, but it's a good idea right now to kind of start sketching out a potential route.

So what you're trying to figure out here is where you'll go and in what order and how many nights in each place. And remember, it doesn't need to be perfect at this stage. You're simply sketching out a potential structure of your trip so that you can start to see how it fits together.

Here's an example of a 10 day trip. So all you would really need to write down is day one, fly into Frankfurt. And then day 10, fly out of Munich. And then in between, three nights in the Rhine Valley, maybe two nights in Rotenberg, three nights in Munich, and one final night at the Munich airport.

That's all you need to do for this step. Doing this gives your trip a basic shape and a really great starting point to work from. You'll probably wanna go back and adjust it

or maybe completely change it. But remember, the goal here isn't perfection. Right now, it's just progress. You'll fine tune the details later. Right now, just build the bones of your trip. Feel free to pause the episode right now if you want to complete this step before moving on to step four.

All right, we're at step four, more than halfway done with this challenge. Now that you have a rough route to work with, let's consider the best way to travel from place to place.

Doing this will help you refine your overall route and it will help you see if you wanna make any changes in that basic itinerary that you created in step three. Here are some things to think about. Would you prefer the flexibility of a rental car? Or do you want to relax and let the train take you from place to place? Maybe that would actually be easier.

Are you visiting more cities? And in that case, the train is likely a better choice. Or are you going to be going to more rural areas or smaller villages? Or do you want to have a lot of flexibility to stop when you're traveling from place to place? And if that's the case, then a car might actually be a better choice.

But also consider, is there a train pass that would give you the flexibility you need? Or look at the different types of train tickets and consider that you might be able to save quite a bit of money by purchasing single tickets really far in advance. and maybe that is more important than having a lot of flexibility.

you're thinking about renting a car, think about things like, do you plan to cross a border because then you have to pay an extra fee? Will you need to buy a vignette in Austria or Switzerland, for example, or pay tolls in France? That will add to your costs.

How many people are in your group? Can you fit everybody into a car or would you need to size up to a van?

Would you be picking up a car and dropping it off in the same location? Or would you be picking it up in one city, dropping it off in another city in Germany? Sometimes that costs a little bit extra, but it's not often too expensive these days. but what is usually expensive is picking it up in one country and dropping it off in another country.

And so if your itinerary is calling for that, I highly recommend looking at which parts you could do by car within one country and then where you could drop off the car and take the train into the next country.

If you have our DIY Germany travel planner, be sure to check out the whole section we have on transportation because we go much deeper into everything you need to know in order to choose the best transportation for getting around Germany. We have information on trains and train tickets and train passes, and then also what to expect and how to navigate train stations and how to buy tickets and all of that and we have how-to guides and videos to show you exactly how to do everything and to make it really easy. We also have information on rental cars and driving in Germany, and then also on other transportation topics like finding the best flights and private drivers, and public transportation.

This section of the planner will help you make smart transportation decisions before your trip and it will save you money. I've had people ask me, can I just wait until I get to Germany to figure out the transportation and tickets and all that stuff? No, do not do that. I would say in 99 % of the cases, you do not want to do that unless you want to spend a lot of extra money and be really stressed out. If you don't want to spend a lot of extra money to be stressed out, please, please, please make these decisions and figure out your transportation before you leave for Germany. That way you won't

end up having stressful experience and wasting valuable time or overpaying. So if you have our planner, go spend some time looking through that section. You'll find it super, super helpful.

And if you don't have our Germany travel planner now, just jot down some notes, whether you think renting a car or taking the train or a combo of both would be better for your trip.

Feel free to pause the episode here if you want to take some time to go complete this step before moving on.

Step 5, you made it!

Congratulations, you've made it to the final step of the Germany trip planning jumpstart challenge. And this is where your trip really starts to feel real.

Now it's time to choose one of the cities, towns, or villages from your draft itinerary and explore where you might want to stay. If you have our DIY Germany Travel Planner, open up that interactive map you were using a few steps ago and zoom in on the one city, or village that you know you want to visit. Then look for the teal dots. Those are our top accommodation recommendations based on location, walkability, amenities and overall travel experience.

Aaron is our resident hotel expert and he puts a tremendous amount of attention, care, and detail into our accommodation recommendations. So if you do have access to our map, I highly recommend spending some time looking at those teal dots because instead of scrolling endlessly on booking sites or looking at blog posts, and trying to figure out which neighborhoods are safe or convenient, we've already done the research for you.

We've concentrated our hotel recommendations in the best locations. We've personally selected these places and we also include notes and photos to help you decide the best fit for your trip.

If you're doing this challenge and you don't have our DIY Germany travel planner and planning map, then what I recommend is go to our website, mygermanyvacation.com, and look at our accommodation guides. It's not quite as easy as looking at our map, but it's a good place to start if you don't have our planner accommodation recommendations, think about things like what kind of lodging do you want ideally? Do you want a large chain hotel where you can use points you've accrued? Do you want a smaller hotel, maybe a small family run hotel? Do you want an apartment? Also think about location. Do you want to be right in the old town? Do you want to be near the old town but just outside of it? Do you want to be close to the train station? Do you want to have an amazing view? Or is price more important? Also think about things like do you need air conditioning? Do you need parking?

Are you looking for a family room or a family suite? Because those can be a little bit harder to find in Germany. And also think about how important is having breakfast at the hotel?

As you look at our accommodation recommendations and you think about the things that are really important to you you'll start to zero in on where you want to be and what you want in your accommodations. This step helps you avoid overwhelm later when you are building out the details of your itinerary. And it gives you one more layer of confidence in how your trip is coming together.

But for now, like I said, just jot down some of the things that you either definitively know or are realizing that are important to you in your accommodations and location. And then find one or two accommodations that you think might work for

you and jot those down. You can come back and revisit that later, but it's a good idea to just jot down a couple of things right now.

Now go ahead and pause the episode here if you want to have some time to complete this step before moving on.

Okay, you did it! You completed the challenge! you have now selected regions you'd like to visit, you've also found specific cities, towns, sites, and castles to explore, which means you're building a trip around things that genuinely excite you, not just what pops up in Google searches or what someone else says is a must-see.

You've outlined a potential so your trip has structure you can now build on. You've selected some transportation options, which will help you confidently plan out how you'll get from place to place without surprises or stress or paying more than you need to. And you've explored accommodations in one of your destinations. So you're starting to see how your trip could actually look and feel day to day.

That is a huge win, congratulations, this is big. Your trip is no longer stuck in your head, it's no longer a jumbled list of potential places and ideas and things that you could do. It's on the page or in a Google Sheet or in your notes app, depending on what you're using. And it is taking shape.

Remember that planning a trip doesn't happen all at once. You'll want to go back and tweak your route and dig deeper into destinations, figure out the best tickets, passes, or rental cars, compare hotel options, and so on. but for now, you've got momentum and that is huge. You've started making decisions. You can always adjust it later and the planning gets easier once the ball is rolling.

If you enjoy doing your own trip planning, the best way to keep the momentum going is with our DIY Germany travel planner. It's basically a masterclass in how to plan your perfect trip to Germany and beyond.

And if you'd like personalized feedback on the itinerary you create, you can book an itinerary review. I love doing itinerary reviews because I can spot potential problems in your trip plans and offer solutions. I can also show you hidden opportunities you don't know about and help you avoid costly mistakes so that you will feel super confident about your trip plans as you move towards your departure date.

Now if you did this challenge and you started feeling like, you know what, I don't think I really want to plan this whole trip myself, the best way to maintain trip planning momentum is to book either a one-on-one trip planning consult with me in Zoom, or you would prefer to have a trip that's fully tailored to you, but without spending weeks or months figuring it all out yourself, let us create a fully custom itinerary just for you, designed around your interests, priorities, and budget.

We'll do all the heavy lifting, including recommending specific hotels, driving routes, train tickets, train departure times, and activities for each day of your trip. So you can skip the overwhelm and confidently book each piece of your trip and get right to the fun part, which is preparing for departure.

You'll find links to all of these things in the show notes and on our website, mygermanyvacation.com.

Well, there you have it. No matter how you move forward, whether that's on your own with our DIY Germany travel planner or with our help, you're one step closer to a trip that's organized and will be meaningful, super fun, and totally unforgettable.



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