

The M³+ ZDF Survival Guide

The University of Memphis
Student Guide
to the University of Mainz

**A handbook of what to expect, what to do, what to bring and where to go...
among other things**

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2004-2005 participant

Introduction

Congratulations! You have made a brave decision – to leave your family, friends and university for one year and attend the University of Mainz in Germany.

Your next few months are going to be some of the most hectic and frustrating you have experienced, but it will all pay off when you finally get to Germany. The rewards of this particular study abroad program are high: experience in the German business environment, the opportunity to study within your field in Germany, and the opportunity to gain fluency in the German language. Not to mention the usual study abroad benefits like friends from around the world, a global awareness and a general good time. By now, I hope you are excited and eager to begin your great adventure.

Hopefully, you are getting this guide no later than January before you plan to leave – it takes a lot of work, time and patience to prepare yourself for a year's absence. In the following pages, I hope to give you some advice, tips and general ideas on what to do when, what to expect and what you need to know. My wish is that you avoid a bit of the frustration I experienced when I asked questions no one knew the answer to and others that people told me not to worry about. Most of the time, I found, “don't worry about it” actually meant a bigger headache once I actually arrived in Germany.

The following pages are organized in two sections “Countdown to Germany” and “Once in Germany”. If you follow these instructions, your experience should be a bit smoother than mine was.

Countdown to Germany

1. Paperwork	4
2. Housing	6
3. Finances	8
4. Packing	9
5. What to worry about and what not to	10

Once in Germany

1. Getting home	11
2. Finances	12
3. Insurance	12
4. Classes	12
5. Fun Stuff	13

Paperwork that never ends

You will have more forms to fill out than you know what to do with. You might already have many of these. The most important ones are as follows:

- Application for Studying for Exchange Students
- Confirmation of Application - *Bewerberbestätigung*
- Application for Housing for Exchange Students - *Wohnheimantrag*
- Language course application – *Deutschsprachkurs Antrag*

Other forms you will probably end up filling out are:

- Registration for Info Days - *Anmeldeformular*
- Scholarship application for U of M study abroad participants
- Scholarship application for DAAD
- Countless others

Important information: No matter who you ask, these forms are always easy to find and self-explanatory to fill out. Don't believe it. The forms are NEVER where you think they are, and, when you actually do find them, you will not know exactly what to do with them. Don't get frustrated. That's why you are reading this book first.

Get at least eight passport photos before you leave home. They are usually more expensive in Germany, and this is just one more thing you don't need to worry about upon arrival.

Application for Studying for Exchange Students

This basis application form can be found at www.uni-mainz.de/studium/4474.php. At least it could when I wrote this. The University seems to be constantly changing its website, in particular moving any useful information every few days. Hopefully, the form is at the website above. If not, I suggest you go to www.uni-mainz.de, click the link that says *Englisch*, and look around. Much of the information you need will be under *International*.

Important information: This form also includes a checklist of the other important forms you need and claims to include links on where to find them. Only some of the links work. The entire form is in both German and English.

Confirmation of Application

This is exactly what it says; it confirms that you do want to apply to the University. You only have to fill out your name, address, birthday, nationality, major and dates you want to study. Ignore anything else that anyone tells you to do. It can also be found at www.uni-mainz.de/studium/4474.php.

Important information: As redundant as it seems, make sure you send two copies. This form is also in both German and English.

Application for Housing for Exchange Students

While there is a link at the same website for this application, it does not work as of July 2005. Instead, go to www.studentenwerk-mainz.de and click on *Wohnanlagen*. From here, click the *Antrag* link. This should pull up the housing application form, as

well as a letter from the student housing department and a description of the available housing. See *“Housing, Description of Wohnheims”* section in this guide.

Some exchange students decide they would rather live in an actual apartment than in a student housing facility. The advantages are more space, easier access to the city and a generally nicer place to live. The disadvantages are higher cost, more difficulty finding a place and the fact that you cannot rent a room before arriving in Germany. Most people want a face-to-face interview before agreeing to rent you a room, and many will not rent to foreign students or want financial documentation like bank statements and credit reports or a longer contract than only six months or a year. I suggest that you live in the student housing at least for the first semester and then decide whether you want to move.

Important information: The student housing information and the form are entirely in German. Make sure you understand what it says thoroughly before making a decision on where to live. Make sure your contract is for a year. You can get out of it if you give them three months notice, but if it expires after six months, you could be out without a place to live.

Application for German Language Course

This form can be found at www.uni-mainz.de/studium/9711.php, on the right side, under *Anmeldeformular Intensivsprachkurs “Deutsch als Fremdsprache.”* On the form, you have to say what your level of German is, what semester you are registering for and of course, personal information. Whatever level you claim to be, you will still have to take a language placement test on one of your first days in Germany. If you place into one of the lowest classes, you will have to pay for the class. The more advanced language classes are free.

There is also a form for Rebecca Laumann to fill out, stating that you are an eligible exchange student of the University of Memphis.

Registration for Info-Days

This is a form that you receive in the summer along with your acceptance letter. Fill out the form by selecting which orientation session you will attend, check that all the information is correct, date it and sign it. Then, send it immediately back to the University. This is a very important form because once you arrive in Germany, it is used as your identification, and you need it continuously before you matriculate. You will get it back on the day of your language placement exam.

Scholarship for U of M Study Abroad Participants

This application form can be found at the Study Abroad Office in the basement of Brister Hall. Check with Rebecca Laumann if you do not already have it.

Scholarship for DAAD

The application process for this German Academic Exchange Service scholarship, which covers almost every expense, took me at least a month to finalize and send off. It includes a 4-page basic application form, an essay detailing your program, a curriculum vitae, letters of recommendation, a statement of support and

credit eligibility from the U of M, a letter stating your acceptance to the exchange program from both the school and internship, transcripts, passport photos and a language certificate. Everything has to be submitted in triplicate. Details and the application form can be found on the website www.daad.org, under the *EDU.DE Undergraduate Award* link. Good luck.

Visa

While you do not acquire your visa until after you arrive in Germany, there are a few things you need to make sure you have before leaving home. A visa requires your passport, your *Bewerberbestätigung*, a certificate of health insurance, proof of financing, two passport photos and 40 EUR. Before leaving home, don't worry about any of this, except the proof of financing and the passport photos. *See Finances section.*

Housing

Housing is a big issue. The problem is that the descriptions of the available housing are very vague and mostly revolve around price. The other problem is that the housing department here is not attached to the University of Mainz, except in a very perfunctory way.

The housing process is as follows. You fill out the application form on the university website (*see Paperwork section*), then you sign the contract that comes with your acceptance package in the summer. When the housing people receive this package, they send you an e-mail to confirm that you still want the apartment. If you do not respond to this e-mail, they take your name off the list and you don't have anywhere to live. I only found out about this whole process when I got an e-mail saying I no longer had housing since I did not respond to the first e-mail that I never received. It worked out in the end, but was a traumatic experience for a few days.

Important facts: The housing people do not necessarily communicate well in English, so anything you send them should be in German. Check your e-mail. Make sure you sign the contract that you want to sign for either six or 12 months.

Before leaving home, make an appointment with the *Hausmeister* for your first day in order to receive your key and sign the housing agreement. This is one place that Petra Wacker comes in. She made the appointment for me, as well as provided phone numbers of people to call if there were problems, which turned out to be very handy. If you miss your appointment due to flight delays like I did, the *Hausmeister* is almost impossible to find.

You do not pay anything for your apartment until arriving in Germany. Within a week or so, you will have to pay your first month's rent as well as a deposit, or *Kaution*, of two months' rent. This adds up to somewhere between 500 and 800 EUR, depending on which living complex you choose.

Description of Wohnheims

Inter 2: Medium single rooms in a family living arrangement. This means that it is more like a large apartment arrangement with 4-8 single co-ed rooms around a large living area, bathrooms and kitchen. There are also single apartments, double apartments

and double apartments with a children's room. Located next to Inter I on campus, very close to *Mensa*.

Münchfeld: Located across the footbridge, or *Übergängsweg*, at the Friedrich-von-Pfeifferweg bus stop. Basically, about a five-minute walk to campus. Nice, quiet neighborhood to be close to campus without actually being on campus. Single rooms with sinks and refrigerators.

Hartenberg: Located about four blocks from campus, it is close enough to walk and yet just far enough that you will want to ride the bus. With a bike, it is only a 5-minute ride. One of the older housing complexes, Hartenberg has medium-sized rooms in double apartment settings with two single rooms sharing a kitchen and bathroom.

Valenciahaus: If you want to be in the middle of the city, this is the place for you. Valenciaplatz is located near the center of the new city, putting it in easy walking distance of the entire town and raising the rent. Even the university is foot-accessible, although the walk is almost entirely uphill. By public transportation, the university is about 10-20 minutes away, depending on traffic and the necessary changes. The rooms are large, with three people sharing a kitchen and bathroom. There is only one small refrigerator per kitchen and only 40 students are housed here, so it will be a bit harder to get to know people.

Weisenau: Single rooms or apartments or double apartments in a complex on the outskirts of town. There is a Wal-Mart located only a five-minute walk away, and no bus changes are necessary to get to the university. Apartments are large with decent-sized personal bathroom and tiny kitchen area. Many exchange students live here, although it is harder to get to know people because of the single apartments. While it is a bit out of the way, if you want your own place, Wiesenau is the place to be.

Hechtsheim: Double, triple or quadruple same-sex apartments in a large complex a 10-15 minute *Straßenbahn* ride from the *Hauptbahnhof*. Rooms are large with common living area, small bathroom with shower and small kitchen area, including refrigerator. Located on the tram line, but a change to a bus at the *Hauptbahnhof* is necessary to get to the university. Many exchange students live here, and most gather fairly often at the Hechtsheim bar, which is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the semester.

Important facts: While apartments are usually same-sex, all halls are co-ed. Almost all rooms and apartments include telephone and TV hook-ups, as well as some form of Internet access. Some include cable hook-ups. Rooms do NOT come with phones (see *Fun Stuff, Phones*). Washers and dryers are located in every building, but cost money for each load. The price depends on the complex – it is more expensive on campus than off. Rooms are furnished, but common living areas in apartments may or may not be, depending on if the last people who lived there left a table and chairs behind or not. Check the *Studentenwerk* website for the most recent rent prices.

Finances

Before leaving home, finances definitely need to be considered and planned. The costs associated with studying abroad at Johannes Gutenberg University are not necessarily too high, but there can be problems.

Monthly costs are estimated at a little over 650 EUR a month, including rent, health insurance and living expenses. Take money with you in various forms: cash, traveler's checks and an ATM card. There can be problems with transferring money from a U.S. bank account to a German bank account, so don't depend on doing that. German banks take six weeks to process a foreign check, so this is not a viable option. My ATM card was the best means of getting money, I found. If I needed it, my family could simply put money in my home bank account and I could withdraw it in Germany. The problem with this is there is a fee (usually around 5 EUR, plus 2 percent of whatever you withdraw) every time you make this transaction. Also, before leaving home, make sure you know your daily withdrawal limit. Remember, that number is in dollars, not Euros. Get online and find a money converter to find out about how much you can withdraw each day in Germany.

Another important thing to have is a credit card. I would recommend a VISA, because other cards are not always accepted. You can't use this card at grocery stores or other small stores, usually. You can use it to buy clothes and other necessities at larger stores. It is also important in case of an emergency. Know how to use the card to get cash out of an ATM. Make sure you have someone paying the bills while you are away or change your billing address.

You will be spending an incredible amount during your first month or so in Germany. Don't worry, it will slow down. First month expenses include three months' rent (first month, plus two months' rent for deposit), first semester university social fees, visa fee and initial health insurance fees. This all adds up to a bit less than 900 EUR. This does not include initial purchases of bedding, food, clothing, room furnishings, etc.

Visa

The international office requires that you show proof of having at least 500 EUR a month for the whole of your stay in Germany in order to qualify for a visa. This proof can be in one of two different forms. If you bring all of the money you plan to spend in Germany with you (not recommended), you can show a German bank statement that proves you have enough money. If you do not want to do this, you can bring a letter saying you have this money. The letter can be as simple as a letter from your parents that says they will provide you with 500 EUR a month for the duration of your stay. If you are on scholarship, get a letter from Rebecca Laumann explaining how much you are receiving from the University or outside scholarships.

Important facts: Make sure you get these letters before you leave Memphis. It is incredibly difficult to try to get it done once you are already in Germany. You **MUST** have this (these) letter(s) before you are eligible for a visa. Bring an ATM card and a credit card with you as well as cash and/or traveler's checks.

Packing

I have two words to say about packing: Space-saver bags. These are the best invention in the world for the exchange student. You can pack so much stuff into these that you can't lift your suitcase. Suitcase-wise, I recommend a large duffel bag with wheels and a large backpack. Bring a backpack-like bag for your carry-on that will be put in the overhead compartment, as well as a smaller bag (mine is a messenger bag) to keep with you at your seat. Check weight limits for your airline, but don't stress too much over them. Weight-limits on the large airlines are usually per-bag, not per-passenger, but make sure you are following the correct guidelines. The more important weight limits are how much you can carry and manage to get through the airport and on and off trains.

Packing list:

- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Two copies of passport and birth certificate (carry in separate bags)
- At least 8 passport photos
- Paperwork that you need for visa, registration, etc.
- Sweaters
- Long-sleeve shirts
- Long underwear and/or tights
- T-shirts
- Warm socks
- Underwear
- Sweatshirt, fleece, etc.
- Scarf
- Coat
- Gloves
- Hat
- Going out clothes
- Jeans – 2 pairs
- Nice pants
- Skirt(s)
- Pillow
- Journal
- Camera
- Toiletry items
- Phone and address book with home information
- Personal CD player/MP3 player with favorite CDs, songs
- Photos of home, family, friends, city
- Sleeping bag
- Towel
- Contact lenses for duration of trip and supplies, including solution
- Tennis shoes
- Snow boots of some type (or buy in Germany)
- German grammar written in English (Recommended: *Essential German Grammar* by Durrell, Kohl and Loftus)
- German-English dictionary

You may have noticed items that seem to be missing. They are missing for a reason. You can buy bedding cheaply in Germany. I suggest bringing one towel, but not more – again, you can find towels easily and cheaply. The same goes for most toiletry items, extra clothing, school supplies and just about anything else you need. Alarm clocks, hair dryers and other electric devices are easier to buy in Germany because the outlets and wattage are different.

Items to buy in Germany:

- Hair dryer
- Alarm clock and radio
- School supplies
- Sheets
- Blankets or comforter
- Extra towels
- Extra clothing

Important facts: It is much colder for a much longer time period in Mainz than in Memphis. Below freezing temperatures are usual beginning in November and lasting into April. Warm, layered clothing is a must, as is a heavy coat. If you are unsure about bringing something, leave it at home. There are very few things that you cannot get in Germany.

You will miss odd things from home, like the right kind of mayonnaise or a certain kind of candy. Bring some of these items with you, but remember to try out new things in Germany (Nutella, Ritter Sport, Jaffa Cakes and Johannisbeeren are just a few things to get you started).

What to worry about and what not to

There are many things before leaving that people tell you to think about and watch out for. Many of the things I freaked out about before leaving for Germany were not the important issues. Some of the important issues were the ones I didn't think about. Here are a few things that you need to worry about before leaving and other issues that are best left until you arrive in Germany.

Do worry about:

- Housing
- Finances
- Plane tickets both to and from Germany
- Information necessary for visa
- Information for internship

Don't worry about:

- Classes
- Items you may forget
- Health insurance

Once in Germany

Getting home

You have finally finished your preparations, boarded the plane and made it to Germany. The first thing you need to know is how to get from the airport to home.

The terminal you arrive in is almost as far away from the connected train station as possible. Grab your luggage and a luggage cart and start walking. You will want to stop by an ATM first and grab some Euros. ATMs usually give out money in smaller bills, so it shouldn't be a problem to get change. For instance, if you ask for 100 EUR, you will probably receive the following bills: 50, 20, 10, 10, 5, 5. It is recommended that you get at least 200 EUR in case of emergency and so that you do not have to worry about money for the first few days. You will need change, and what better way to get it than to introduce yourself to the world of German chocolate. It is all good. Just pick one.

There are signs directing you to the train station, both in German and in English. Follow the signs across the airport. Once you find the station, find a ticket machine. Punch in the numbers for Mainz listed on the machine (65) and insert your money. Don't lose your ticket. Then, find the S8 platform. Check the large yellow sign for train times in the 24-hour time system. The sign above the platform will change to say "Mainz/Rüsselheim" when the correct train comes.

Often, there are controllers on the trains, so make sure you have your ticket accessible during this journey. There is a 40 EUR fee if you don't have a ticket.

Once you arrive at the Mainz *Hauptbahnhof*, find a taxi. You can take a bus or tram to your dorm, but, at this point, you are going to be exhausted and jet-lagged. Find a taxi, give the driver your address and relax for a few minutes.

Hopefully, your plane was on time and you made an appointment, through Frau Wacker, with your *Hausmeister*. He will meet you at the correct time and show you to your rooms, give you a set of keys and have you sign your room agreement. In case your plane is late, make sure you have the phone numbers for Frau Wacker, the *Hausmeister* and anyone else whose number is provided. The *Hausmeister* can be hard to find if you miss your appointment.

I recommend dropping your stuff off and then going out for a while. Take a walk around your new neighborhood, discover the cafes and restaurants, find out where the tram or bus stop is and just generally get acquainted with your surroundings. Don't go to bed too early because you have to adjust to the new time zone.

Take a deep breath because you made it to Germany!

Finances

You will be instructed by Frau Wacker to open a bank account within a day or two of your arrival. Try to open the account at one of the large banks, *Deutsche*

Bank or *Sparkasse*. These are the two biggest and most prolific banks in Mainz. They are also relatively easy to find. The main branch of *Sparkasse* is located at *Münsterplatz*, the first *Haltestelle* south into the city from *Hauptbahnhof*. *Deutsche Bank* is at the next stop, *Schillerplatz*. From the stop, walk towards the large fountain and then left. *Deutsche Bank* is a block away on the right side.

Go to the banks early in the morning because you have to make an appointment to open a bank account. Many times, the main branches do not have time to see you. Ask about smaller branches that might possibly be near your apartment. If you live in *Hechtsheim*, there is a small branch of *Sparkasse* that almost always has time available located at *Berliner Strasse*, one tram stop before the dorm. There is also a small branch just around the corner from *Münchfeld*.

In order to open a bank account, you need your passport. It is also helpful to have your basic information in Germany, such as your address, written down. While a few of the bank employees speak English, plan to transact this business in German. Don't be afraid to ask the person to slow down or explain something twice if you don't understand. Within a week or so of opening your account, you will receive a pin code in the mail, followed by your bankcard a week later. You can use this card, known as an EC (electronic cash) card, almost everywhere, and it is accepted even when credit cards are not.

A German bank account is necessary because your rent, health insurance payments and student fees are transferred directly out of your account into the university account. The first thing you must do is transfer money from your account for the student fees, and deposit enough money to cover your first month's rent, plus your deposit. Keep any receipts you get from transferring money because you will need them to matriculate.

Insurance

Health insurance is a big issue in Germany. Every student must have European-recognized insurance. They say this is because U.S. insurance companies take too long to reimburse you. In any case, at Info Days, you will be sent to *Techniker Krankenkasse*, the campus-preferred health insurance. It costs about 60 EUR a month.

If you get sick or need a doctor for any reason, you first have to go to the insurance office on campus and get the address of a doctor. Then, you pay 10 EUR at the doctor's office and are seen as many times as necessary. Prescriptions are usually 5-15 EUR.

Classes

At Info Days, you will be told that an advisor in your department will email you about what classes you will take. Don't believe it. Of everyone I know here in all of the different majors, or *Hauptfache*, not one person was contacted by an advisor.

Instead, a week or two before classes start, find your department's library and ask for the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*, or book of classes. This usually costs a Euro. You can also buy a 6 EUR book at the bookstore that includes all of the classes for every subject, but it is not necessary.

There are about six types of classes:

Vorlesung: A pure lecture class. There are no quizzes, tests or papers to write in these classes. They are only informational, though there is written material to read that helps you understand the lecture. Many professors put scripts online which are very helpful to go over before class to become familiar with the vocabulary. At the end of some of these classes, you can take an oral exam, or *mundliche Prüfung*, to get credit, or a *Leistungsschein*, for the class.

Übung: A class with tests or papers or both. Includes some homework and usually some type of oral presentation, or *Referat*. Similar to a regular class at the University of Memphis. Taking the test or writing a large paper, or *Hausarbeit*, at the end earns you ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points.

Seminar: Seminars are upper division classes that require students to write large papers, do group work and presentations as well as take a final exam and turn in homework. Some of these classes are also broken into two parts, one each semester. There are two types of seminars, *Hauptseminar*, less intense, and *Oberseminar*, more intense.

Kolloquien: This is the equivalent of a graduate-level class.

Fun Stuff

Okay, enough with all the serious talk. Let's talk about the important stuff.

- **Getting to know folks:**

The first few weeks you are here, the exchange program people arrange all sorts of activities for the new exchange students. If it says "Erasmus," you need to go. Seriously. My friends and I did not miss a party, *Kneipenbrummel* (pub crawl) or trip for the first three months, and, as a result, we got to know everyone in the program who actually went out ever. By the time classes began, three weeks into our life here, we knew enough people to have folks to wave to and chat with on the first day.

- **Tandems:**

Another important thing to think about is a tandem. A tandem is a meeting of two people with different native languages who are attempting to learn the other's language. Basically, for you, it is a native German speaker who wants to learn or is learning English. I managed to find a tandem partner within a few weeks of arriving, and, in my opinion, she was the one factor that helped my German improve the most within a very short time. You can find a tandem partner through friends, past exchange students to the University of Memphis or advertisements. There are posters and notices up everywhere from people looking for a tandem partner.

- **Semester Ticket:**

Student fees for each semester add up to something over 150 EUR. This includes 100 EUR for a semester ticket, which entitles you to ride all of the local *Straßenbahnen*, trains and busses. There is a brochure you will get at Info Days

with a map showing you the entire area you are allowed to travel within. Depending on which direction you choose to travel, you can ride for hours for free. You CANNOT take an IC (inter-city), ICE (inter-city express) or EC (express city) train. The conductors don't really accept the "I'm a stupid exchange student" excuse. We tried.

- **Trips:**

While in Germany, take the opportunity to travel. There are many cities that are within just a few hours by train of Mainz. On Saturday or Sunday, you can get a small group together and buy a *Schöneswochenende* ticket for 30 EUR (as of 2005) that allows up to five people to travel anywhere in Germany for that day. We have used these tickets to go to Heidelberg, Nuremberg, Cologne, Bonn, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and, one weekend, even Berlin. You can even take this ticket to Salzburg, Austria! It's a great deal, and, if you start early enough, few places are really out of reach. Another train travel deal is the Rhineland-Phalz or Hessen tickets. For 24 EUR, you and four friends can travel anywhere within the *Bundesland*. There are similar tickets for travel within every *Bundesland*.

- **ASTA:**

The student organization, ASTA, is in charge of much on campus. Through them, you can go on day-trips to the Nuremberg Christmas markets, the Cologne Cathedral and other cities and events for a very reasonable price. Our trip to Nuremberg one weekend was only 7 EUR, much less than the price of a normal train ticket there. There is an email list that you need to make sure you are on at Info Days in order to find out about every opportunity.

- **Phones:**

Unlike the University of Memphis, phone service does not come with your housing. While your room will have a phone hook-up, if you want a room phone, you will have to arrange service yourself by calling the phone company and renting the phone. If you do not feel the need for a room phone, and most students do not, you will probably want to get a cell phone, or *Handy*. Contracts are the best deal, and you usually get a free phone with them, but they are for no less than two years. Most students go for a pay-as-you-go plan with either O2 or Vodaphone. Try to get all of your friends to sign up with the same network, as it is cheaper for everyone that way. If you have T-Mobile at home, you may be able to get a good deal through them as they are one of the only companies from home that is also in Germany. To call home, there are call shops on almost every block. A phone call to the United States is 10 cents per minute. If you have a computer with you, buy a headset and sign up for Skype (skype.com). With Skype and a good internet connection, you can call a landline anywhere in the United States or Europe for only 2 cents per minute. It's the best deal I have found by far.

- **Sports:**

Also at Info Days, you will receive a map of campus. While this is important, the most important part of this piece of paper is the backside. There you will find a long list of all the sports classes the University offers for free. You can do anything from rock-climbing to martial arts to conditioning training. You can even take ultimate Frisbee or juggling. Almost everyone on campus does some type of sport. It is important to go to the first sports class because you get all the information about what you need to have and initial instructions. At the *Mensa*

(turn back to the map to see where this is), there is a table that usually is piled with various types of literature. Pick up a *Sportprogramm* booklet to get more detailed information about each sport as well as locations and whether or not you need to register or pay extra.

- **Bicycles:**

While the public transportation in Mainz is very good, a bicycle gives you a whole new sense of freedom. You no longer have to wait for buses and trams or worry about the random times that they do not run, like holidays. A good place to find a bike is at the Unibike shop across from the *Mensa*. There, you can find good used bikes for reasonable prices or have a bike fixed. There are also many shops in town where you can buy new bicycles.

Random Facts

- Europeans don't eat peanut butter or grilled cheese sandwiches.
- Strawberry and cherry season starts at the beginning of June.
- Everything is closed on Sundays. Everything.
- Everyone goes to the Rhine on Sundays when it is nice.
- Every German city worth its salt has a *Dom* and an *Altstadt*.
- No one in Germany uses their hands while riding a bike.
- *Fastnacht* (Carnival) is at the same time as Mardi Gras in February. You need a costume. Preferably a warm costume.
- Europeans mostly think that American football and baseball are quite silly sports actually. The British don't understand why we play a rugby-like game with pads.
- Europeans almost all play soccer.
- Murphy's Law of *Straßenbahnen*: No matter what time you leave to get to the stop, you are always just in time to watch the tram pull away. As you wait, at least two trams will come by going the opposite direction.
- Another tram (or bus) always comes.
- Unless it is 2 a.m. No trams or busses run between 2 and 4 a.m.
- Offices are only open for about two hours a day. You will always arrive five minutes after they close. Office hours are always different on Wednesdays.
- Almost all plastic and glass bottles include a refund (*Pfand*) in the price. Save the bottles and take them back to the store for your money.
- Bottles and glasses in clubs also include refunds. Don't forget this as some can be quite expensive.
- Some people here will add cola products to anything: beer, wine, champagne...
- When you get a song stuck in your head, you have an "Ohrwurm" or "ear worm."
- When your foot falls asleep, you say it has ants in it.