



SUMMARY OF GERMAN – AMERICAN DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

All German and American politicians begin their speeches by emphasizing the great similarities shared by the two countries. But if we look closely at many aspects of German and American life, are there really so many similarities? Below is a catalogue of many aspects with the author's judgment as to whether Germans and Americans are really so similar in these respects. Possibly these differences make us more interesting to each other, but we should not underestimate them.

	Similar	Mixed	Different
Literature	Shared values	Except Germans read more and books are more expensive	
Art	Shared values		German business people put more emphasis on their cultural sensitivity.
Music	Shared values		Differences in accessibility, role in culture and society. Every German city has serious concerts.
Theater	Shared values		Same as Music
Museums	Shared values		Same as Music
Philosophy	Shared values		
Food	Shared tastes; traditional US cooking is based on German and English.		
Mushrooms/Asparagus		No collecting in US; no asparagus season in US. Corn? Cows eat it.	
Grocery shopping			Quite different; many German specialty shops and bare bones groceries. More frequent shopping for fresh food in Germany
Vacation			Longer, farther and exotic, more important to Germans
School Vacations			Longer in the US; use of

			summer camps. No big traffic jams.
Holidays			Also more and more important except 2-3.
Schools		Universal education, but quite different	Gymnasium generally higher quality than most US high schools. Children of factory owners in Germany go to same schools as workers.
University			Important to society, but quite different in many ways; Dr. titles in Germany are more common. US universities indicate intelligence level.
Practical training			Quite different
Societal Movement Class to Class			Quite different, but now German MORE flexible than US – at least economically.
Highways		Similar, but German better maintained	Where is the road kill in Germany?
Cars		Shared tastes, but not roles; US still bigger. Germans understand more about performance.	
Houses	Architecture is somewhat similar		Size, fine points, apartment vs. single family are quite different – kitchens and wiring are very different. Walls in Germany much thicker.
Luftung / Airing Out			This is almost never done in the US, certainly not in the winter.
Office Buildings			German buildings are shorter and have less interior space due to window laws. Insulation is very efficient in Germany. Green roofs

			only now developing in the US.
Green / Environment / Recycling			Dramatically different
Alternative Energy			Dramatically different but US changing
Land Use			Dramatically different
Labor			Role of unions and labor in a company are quite different
Responsiveness			Re e-mails, correspondence – quite different. Germans often do not respond.
Drinking		Beer and wine are similar, also coke, but role is different	Germans do not drink “hard” liquor or mixed drinks. Often use straws.
Taxes		VAT is different	Germans complain, but it’s not like the US. Tax evasion in Germany is more common.
National Pride			Quite different
Religion			Both are Catholic or Protestant, but otherwise quite different. Few Jews in Germany and they are mainly Russian. Many US Protestants are evangelists. Germans view TV preachers as nuts. Church tax.
Weather		Similar – more rain, shorter winter days in Germany. Fewer really hot days, but little AC.	
Open Spaces			Germany is cramped; space is treated as valuable
Skiing	Quite similar		
Hiking			Quite different
Sailing	Seems similar, although Germans get a license		
Service	I think it is similar; Germans think we get better service		

Golf	Newer to Germany, but playing a bigger role.		
Marriage	Similar		2 nd families are more common in Germany, at least for older men. Comparing middle class, Germans more likely NOT to get married.
Abortion			Big issue in the US, but not so much in Germany
Role of Government			Viewed very differently; Germans think government can function well.
Military			Quite different. American soldiers enjoy much more respect.
Use of Force			Quite different
Role of Police	Similar, but Germans are more completely trained, more professional.		
Food			Tastes are similar, but shopping and gene modification are different
Nuclear Power			Germans are anti
Newspapers	Similar in many ways		German press may be more opinionated, but most Americans now think the US press is slanted
TV			Little German tolerance for ads; program quality and type is very different; many more talk shows there. Much more nudity in Germany.
Public Transportation			Very different in quality, cost and reliability
Freedom of speech	Similar, not identical		No Holocaust denial permitted in Germany.
Restaurants		Similar, but with many differences, also tipping; speed of	

		coming and going. German waiters are professionals.	
Legal System			Quite different but relatively reliable. US awards much bigger. No German juries.
Role of Lawyers		Becoming more similar	
Relations of sexes			Quite different; women's rights 15 years behind in Germany.
Interest in Sports			Quite different. Soccer is by far of greatest interest in Germany.
Charitable giving			Quite different. Father state takes care of this.
Attitude about Travel			Quite different, both business and leisure
Modes of transport			Quite different; Germans walk and ride bikes. Motorcycle use is more similar.
Pop Culture	Seem pretty similar; such as tattoos and popular stars; movie stars, country music.		
Dress		Becoming more similar, but with significant differences.	
Separation of Church and State		Not as much in Germany, but many Americans want a national religion.	
Firearms			Very different; Germans own guns, but more for sport and hunting. Not a requirement for freedom.
Hunting			Very different – almost completely different. Nobility hunts in Germany.
Fishing			Very different. Most Germans who fish use bait.
Smoking		Much more in Germany	
Handshakes		Similar, but more	

		frequent in Germany	
Face Saving			Very different – US more sensitive.
Friendships			Very different; also Sie/du differences, but they change.
Humor		Some similarities	Americans do not understand Carnival. More German bathroom humor.
Foreign Languages			Very different; most Americans do not speak a 2 nd language. Germans do not understand the emotional weight of many English words they use.
Importance of Exports			Very different
Multilateralism/UN/EU/Sovereignty			Very different
Currency			Inflation continues to haunt Germans. Also DM longing.
Property rights		Similar, but also differences, such as access to lakes and fields	
Durability of Products			Germans build things to last. US – good enough.
Houses			Germans are solid and very tight – hence need to air
Culture/ Sports		Sports seem similar	Culture holds Germans together, but not Americans.
Privacy			Germans much more sensitive to data protection as a matter of basic freedom
Free Market			Germans view as very dangerous.