

## NUMBER 1 TIPS OF GETTING AROUND IN THE AMERICAN CULTURE

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The American culture is a bit different from the German one. The best way of experiencing it is first to not behave conspicuous. In the Pacific Northwest nothing and nobody is conspicuous at all – in the first place. Everything is just normal. There will be many times that you realize how normal extravagant behaviour or clothing etc. are handled. However, with all the freedom of living there apply many rules (similar to recipes of meals) that help the people to get along with each other. Here I list a few of those things that you might be used to differently from a German background.

- Be prepared to say “Hi.” To everybody and anybody. This is just as the friendly and open culture works! Also, you will not have two seconds on your own in a store (“Are you finding everything all right, today?”). Don’t be annoyed by that. You might miss this service orientation once you are back in Germany.
- Being in line: Americans are best practiced line standers. Use your time in line waiting for your turn to meet interesting people.
- Individual Space: is larger than in Germany. This applies for example also if you use the bus. People would change the seat as soon as another seat gets free. Respect the individual space in order to not get sued.
- Restaurant visit:
  - Wait to be seated
  - Tipping rules: add 15% (10-20%) to the amount you had in a pub, restaurant or desert place. Really!!!
- Traffic:
  - As a pedestrian: never cross a street diagonally and only cross a street at the end of a block!!!
  - As a biker: if you want to turn right, you show this by raising your left (!) hand straight
  - As a driver:
    - Stop sign is equivalent the German “Yield”-Sign.
    - Caution with stop signs: You also have to check whether the cross road has stop signs. If it is not a four-way-stop you really will have to stop for the cross-traffic
    - Gas station: In Oregon NEVER fill your tank yourself. It is forbidden by law! You stay in your car and wait to be asked what fuel you need. BTW: Gasoline is cheaper in suburbs compared to downtown but more expensive on the coast again.
    - Always yield to pedestrians!!!
    - Always respect police officers!
    - Freeway: if there is an exit, there is no guarantee that there also is an entrance to the highway within the next ten miles ;-) This applies also to urban freeways!!
    - What the lane markings mean:
 

Yellow line at the border of the street:	no parking
Red line at the border of the street:	no stopping
White line at the border of the street:	here you can park
Yellow center line:	two-way-traffic on this road
White center-line:	one-way-only on all lanes
  - Rental Cars:
    - approximate costs: 10-15\$ per weekend-day, 20-25\$ per weekday, plus 10\$ obligatory liability insurance and an optional 20\$ collision damage waiver as well as 20\$ additional 20\$ insurance if you are under 25. That sounds expensive but might level if you calculate how often you might need a car. Check out Thrifty.com (guarantee the cheapest rates)
    - Never rent a car from the Airport! It is three times as expensive there!!! However, you usually can return it there for no additional fee.

- Public Transportation: fareless square: yes, there might be places where you do not have to pay for using public transportation. (However, the Portland Streetcar is not – as formerly reported, sorry – totally free. You will have to buy and validate a one-zone ticket prior to boarding if you want to go further as Powell's bookstore, e. g. to the Nobhill area in Portland)
- Alcohol:
  - Never consume alcohol in public!
  - Always carry your ID if you want to buy alcohol (in stores or pubs)
  - Never have alcoholic beverages in the main cabin of your car! Nobody in your car is allowed to drink alcohol while you are driving. Always transport alcoholic beverages in your trunk!!!
- Coupons: Collect whatever reduction you can get ;-)
- Coffee shops: some have a punch card system, where you get your tenth for free or so. Also, you get a reduction, if you bring your personal cup

## YOU CAN GET MORE DETAILED INFORMATION FROM GOOD TOUR BOOKS

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My favourite, however German, guide, that I really recommend, was published at:

- Iwanowski's Reisebuchverlag, Ettenheim. "USA – Nordwesten, Reisehandbuch" (2000, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; there might be newer editions out by now) by Dirk Krise-Etzbach.

Also, a new book that I just found published in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is:

- "The Portland Handbook – A practical guide to international residents"  
This book includes much interesting information about not only institutions you need, places to go, sight to see, rental, insurance, public transport, buying a car etc. but also about architecture, history etc. in Portland, OR! Very well done. You can definitely get it at Powell's. Might also be available via Amazon.

Free Newspaper: There are weekly free newspapers with more good places and tips. For Portland, make sure to grab the

- "Willamette Week" (Wednesdays),
- "The Portland Tribune" (twice a week) or
- "The Portland Mercury"

Check for other tour books on the WWW and in book stores such as....

- Lonely Planet "Pacific Northwest " Oregon & Washington

## OTHER USEFUL TIPS THAT YOU MIGHT NEED IN THE US:

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- **Photographing:**  
Packing: Make sure to only taking 24-picture film rolls from Germany!!! 36-exposure rolls are very expensive to develop in the US (compared to the 24-rolls) because they are just rare!!!
- **Phoning:**
  - Cheap (international) telephone card: "UNI" (you will get more information about this from your Orientation guides). Watch for "no connection fee".
  - Country code for Germany from the US: 01149
  - If you have no long distance carrier from your local phone company, you still can use the so-called 10 10-numbers (similar to the German 010xx-numbers), to make cheap calls to Germany. Use google for getting the cheapest rates.
  - Area code in Portland: 503 and 971 (the second one is new), 541 the rest of Oregon
- **Housing**
  - Lease: Rent with a time commitment
  - Rent: usual rent, as you might know it
- **Postal Service**

There is a way to relatively cheaply sending books and copies home: "Printed Matter". You have to have different packages for textbooks and paperwork. The stuff will be sent by USPS in a sea bag. It will go by ship, so do not send pictures that might get wet (worst case, never happened to my stuff, though). It will take about six to eight weeks and you will be called from the German Customs Service to pick up your package. Make sure to ensure there that all the stuff in the box was used or given to you as a present. So, if the money value does not exceed 40 EUR, you will not have to pay tax.