

Congratulations!

You have been invited to join the **Greifswald International Students Festivals 2018: Beyond Borders - Where are Your Limits?**.

Welcome!

This reader aims to answer all your questions concerning GrIStuF.

Please read it carefully and make sure you cannot find the answer to the question you might have, before contacting the GrIStuF team. This will save a lot of our time which we can use instead for other tasks like the organization of the programme - or your food and your accommodation.

If you do need help

Send us an **email (!)** to help@gristuf.org. Please send us your question **only once**. We will answer it for sure, but it might take a few days. We **do not** answer questions via Facebook or other communication methods.

Remember

You have to confirm your attendance to GrIStuF as instructed. You will receive these instructions via email - make sure to check your inbox regularly and don't miss the deadline. If you do not confirm your attendance according to the instructions, you will be disqualified and cannot attend the Festival.

We are looking forward to an unforgettable week with you in Greifswald!

Best wishes,
Your GrIStuF Team 

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1. About us



1.1. What is GrIStuF?

Inspired by the International Students Festival in Trondheim, a group of students from Greifswald University started to organize the first Greifswald International Students Festival (GrIStuF) in 2001. This ambitious team wanted to bring together students from all over the world in order to discuss the issues of the time as well as to get to know each other with regard to culture, religion and way of thinking. For sure the fun should not be missed, too.

The first GrIStuF took place in 2002 and this was followed by festivals in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. Each of these festivals had a distinct focus like in 2012 "Face to Face – Paving the way for a non-violent society" or in 2016 "SEA: The Future". Moreover each festival had and will have its own atmosphere since the composition of the organizing team changes over the time and thereby the ideas, interests and mentalities of its members.

1.2. Who are the organizers?

GrIStuF is organized by a group of about 20 to 25 students like you. We are all members of the non-profit and non-governmental association "GrIStuF e.V." and spend our free time to organize this festival as well as other cultural and thematic events like the famous "[Running Dinner](#)" and the "[Fête de la Musique](#)". Luckily, you will enjoy both events (which are favourites to the local people) during your time in Greifswald, too!

Our work for GrIStuF is **voluntary**, meaning we do not receive payment or credits towards our degrees at Uni. Yes, we are that crazy. We solely enjoy to devote our free time organizing this great event for you and therefore contribute to the international community of Greifswald, and the world. **We believe that this kind of work is important because it establishes long-lasting friendships across all borders and therefore improves international understanding.**

Please keep in mind that GrIStuF is hence not a high-end business event and you shouldn't expect five-star-hotels and pick up services in a limousine. We do our best to make this experience a great one for you and assure the highest comfort possible. Your accommodation will be

with voluntary students or families in Greifswald and there will be food and drinks provided for you, too. Just know that it will all be a bit "alternative", with handcrafted decoration and self-made signs and that things can be a bit improvised — but it will be from the bottom of our hearts and if you like this kind of event, GrIStuF is the perfect place for you.

Furthermore, we are always grateful for your individual support before and (most importantly) during the festival. **Remember to leave places as clean and tidy as you found them, pick up your dishes after you eat to clean them and if you feel like more, come ask any of us: we will always need a free set of hands.**

1.3. About Greifswald

Greifswald is located at the coast of the Baltic Sea in the North-East of Germany. It has about 55.000 inhabitants and about 12.500 of them are students. Hence, it is filled with young people as well as bars, cafes and restaurants with diverse characters. There are many beautiful places in Greifswald and its surrounding area, especially during the summer. More information can be found in the internet, for example at Wikipedia as well as at the websites of the city and the university.

- > www.greifswald.de
- > www.uni-greifswald.de



1.4. Communication with GrIStuF

If you have problems or questions, your first contact is always help@gristuf.org

Please remember to use a clear subject and add your full name and the email-address you signed up with on www.gristuf.org/ems so we can identify you easier and look at your documents and information on our database.

If you want to give a presentation during the festival, please email us, too, and use the subject "Participant Lecture".

More general inquiries can be sent to info@gristuf.org and you can also give this email address to people who are not participants but are interested in our work and have questions (e.g. your teachers or employees at the embassy).

We are active on social media, and you can follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We are always happy to be mentioned by you or receive interesting messages there. However, please do **not** send questions regarding your visa, travels etc. to our Facebook page and only communicate these problems via **e-mail**.

We encourage you to spread the word about GrIStuF! Share your excitement on twitter, blogs or Facebook before, during or after the event. Whenever referring to us, please use the hashtags **#BeyondBorders** and **#GrIStuF18** as a reference so we can make some digital noise together. 

The official Facebook group for participants can be found here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/participants2018>

Please, register for it but remember that you will only be permitted to join once you have **confirmed** your arrival.

2. Visa processing



'Do I really need a visa?' is the first question you have to answer. If you are a citizen of the European Union (EU) you will not need one. The same applies for individuals who already have a visa for the [Schengen area](#). Also some non-EU countries allow a visa-free access to Germany. A detailed visa list of all countries is given at the website of the [Federal Foreign Office](#).

The visa section of the embassy must ensure that the following requirements have been met in each individual case:

- > The purpose of the trip to Germany must be plausible and comprehensible.
- > The applicant must be able to finance living and travel costs from own funds or income.
- > The visa holder must be prepared to leave the Schengen area before the visa expires.
- > Documentary evidence must be provided of travel health insurance with a minimum coverage of 30,000 euro valid for the entire Schengen area.

We are trying to do our best to assist you in getting your visa (only if you need one).

If needed, we can provide you with an official invitation and further documents. We can send it to you via email and post mail, if it has to be original. Please check which documents and papers you need to apply for the visa - you will find the necessary information on the German Embassy's website of your country. We can provide:

- > The official invitation letter (including letter of commitment)
- > Verification of third party health and accident insurance
- > Proof of GrIStuF e. V. being a registered non-profit association
- > An explanatory letter from us to the embassy

If your visa request is being denied, please contact us as soon as possible. We can try to convince the responsible person of the embassy,

which was successful in the past. Of course, we cannot promise anything.

In any case, what is most important is:

1. Inform yourself about your visa requirements as soon as possible
2. Find out what information & documents you need
3. Contact us with clear questions (e.g. do not just write "I need help with the visa")

3. Costs involved



3.1. Participation

The participation in GrIStuF 2018 is free of charge for you. There will be also no entrance fees for all activities organized by our team. At this point we would like to thank our financial supporters!

Please note that if you join any activities that are not organized by us (e.g. parties, entry fees to museums, or the zoo) are not free and must be paid by you yourself.

3.2. Accommodation

During the festival time you will live for free with a student or a family in Greifswald. We call them "Hosts". Hosts are students or families in Greifswald who have a free bed, a cozy couch, or at least a space for an air mattress. **Hosts are not Hotels.** They are better! While you can probably not expect a super comfortable bed and room service, you will be welcomed with open arms and warm hearts. They are also a great chance for being in close touch with the German culture. That's better, right?

In return, we expect you to be polite guests at your host's place and respect that they welcome you into their homes and lives.

You will meet your host during the check-in procedure shortly after your arrival in Greifswald. This proven concept will enable the direct contact between the international participants and the local inhabitants. Your breakfast will be organized by your host, too. If you have any special wishes, please tell your host about it. But keep in mind, that most of the hosts are students too and that the wishes shouldn't be too special and too expensive.

You might also want to consider a small guest present for your hosts — maybe a souvenir or a local specialty from your home country?

3.3. Food

Basic food like breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as tea and water will be organized for you for free. There will also be breaks during the workshops where you will get some snacks. For any other food or drink,

however, you will need your own money and pay for it yourself (most importantly for any alcoholic beverages).

According to our beliefs as an NGO, we think that it is only consistent to provide you with delicious and nutritious (mostly) vegan and vegetarian food for lunch and dinner. Details will follow.

You are also always free to buy meat on your own or to ask your host for it, there is no judgement.

3.4. Insurance

We will provide all participants with free health-, accident- and third party-insurance as well as legal protection. Be aware that this does not cover costs resulting from gross negligence like drug abuse, including alcohol. Upon your arrival you will have to sign our insurance's terms and conditions on that matter.

3.5. Travel

You will have to pay for your tickets to and from Greifswald, which may include bus, train, ferry or plane. Try to find someone, like a local sponsor in your country including your university who may give you a financial support. Please also use the Facebook group to find potential travel partners. There are many options that involve cheaper transportations when shared with others. Please see the point 4 for further details.

We are currently applying for a grant for travel allowance in order to support each participant with 50 € and will inform you about the result as fast as possible.

Information about the GrIStuF Scholarship can be found on our website: <https://www.students-festival.de/en/festival/scholarship/>

3.6. Visa

Unfortunately the visa for the participation of GrIStuF 2018 is not free of charge in general. In some cases the visa fees will be reduced or even remitted completely. These exceptions can be found here:

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/480896/publicationFile/150773/Gebuehrenmerkblatt.pdf>

Our advice: When you are applying for the visa take your official invitation letter and the other documents with you and ask the embassy, if they can make an exception in your case, because you are a student and you are visiting an international student conference (a cultural and educational event of a non-profit organization).

3.7. How much money should I take with me and how do I get Euros?

This depends on what you would like to buy. Participation, accommodation, basic meals and festival events are free of charge for you, but you might want to buy souvenirs, additional food and drinks or anything else during your stay. At this point we would like to mention that the price level is (quite) high in Germany. To give you an idea:

- > A plain roll: 0.40€
- > Coffee to go: 2-4€
- > 100g of chocolate: 0.90€
- > 1/2 liter of beer in a students bar: 1.50 - 3.50€

In order to get Euros, you can **exchange your money** in any bank in Greifswald. However, due to the tight schedule of the festival events, you probably won't have much time to do this.

We would also like to warn you that some banks do not accept the currencies of some countries. The **US dollar** is probably the most advisable and convenient foreign currency to carry and to exchange if you do not carry any Euros. Large bank notes (like 100 US dollar) are often not accepted by the banks, due to the higher risk of falsification. So, small banknotes are the better choice.

You have to keep in mind, that banks will charge you for this exchange (so you'd better exchange all the foreign currency you think you'll need for your stay in **just one transaction**, or even better, get together with some other participants, pool your money and exchange it in just one

transaction to save on the bank's commission). We should also warn you that exchange centres such as the ones you find in airports and train stations charge a higher commission than regular banks do.

You might avoid all these commissions, if you use your debit card or your credit card to withdraw money directly from automatic teller machines (**ATM**), which are accessible 24 hours a day. **Please inform yourself, whether your bank has a German cooperation partner or not.** If a bank would like to charge you a fee for this service, you will be informed beforehand so you have the option to cancel the procedure. Master Card and Visa are widely accepted in Germany to withdraw money from ATM but are usually not accepted in shops.

In restaurants the service is usually included in your bill, but it is widely considered appropriate to give a five to ten percent tip if you are satisfied by the service.

4. Arriving in Greifswald



You will be picked up directly from the central train station of Greifswald and will be accompanied to the check-in at the info point. In order for this to run smoothly it is important you will send us an email to inform us about your time of arrival.

Please make sure, that you get off at the train station that is simply called 'Greifswald' or 'Greifswald Hbf' and not at the station called 'Greifswald Sued'!

During the whole festival time the info point in the festival centre will be opened 24 hours a day. If you have got any questions or problems, you will always reach us via phone (the phone number will be published later) during the whole festival time!

4.1. How do I get to Greifswald?

Greifswald is located in the north east of Germany and at the coast of the Baltic Sea. There is an endless number of ways how you can get from your home country to Greifswald by bus, train, ferry and airplane. However the last miles you will most likely have to use the train or bus (please see below).

Please use the most ecologically friendly connection to Greifswald to avoid as much greenhouse gases as possible. This means please prefer long-distance busses and trains especially to airplanes.

Long-distance busses

Berlin is the nearest arrival and departure centre for international long-distance busses with connections to almost all parts of Europe. In the following there is just an overview with two of the largest providers in this field:

> Eurolines

Austria; Belarus; Bosnia; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; England; Estonia; France; Hungary; Italy; Kosovo; Latvia; Lithuania; Macedonia; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Romania; Russia; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Ukraine.

Buses are more and more popular these days. A good way to start your search is <https://www.busradar.com/>. A bus might also be your cheapest option driving from Berlin to Greifswald. The ride takes approximately 3 hours.

Train

There are also many international train connections, for example from Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Lund and Warsaw to Berlin, hence a really comfortable and comparably fast way.

Trains in Germany are quite expensive. The best way to save money is to form a group of up to five individuals and to buy a group ticket (before entering the train!). In general there are three options for you:

1. During the weekend (Saturday + Sunday) you can use the "Schönes-Wochenende-Ticket", which costs 44 € for one person and only 6€ for additional travellers for up to five. Five would have to pay 68€, meaning 13,60€ per person.
2. During week days the easiest way is to buy a "Quer-durchs-Land-Ticket". For one individual it costs 44 € and for each additional individual 8 € more. So finally five individuals have to pay 76 € or 15.20 € per individual.
3. A little bit more complicated are the federal state tickets. We will post an update on trains in our Facebook group shortly and answer your questions there.

Ferry

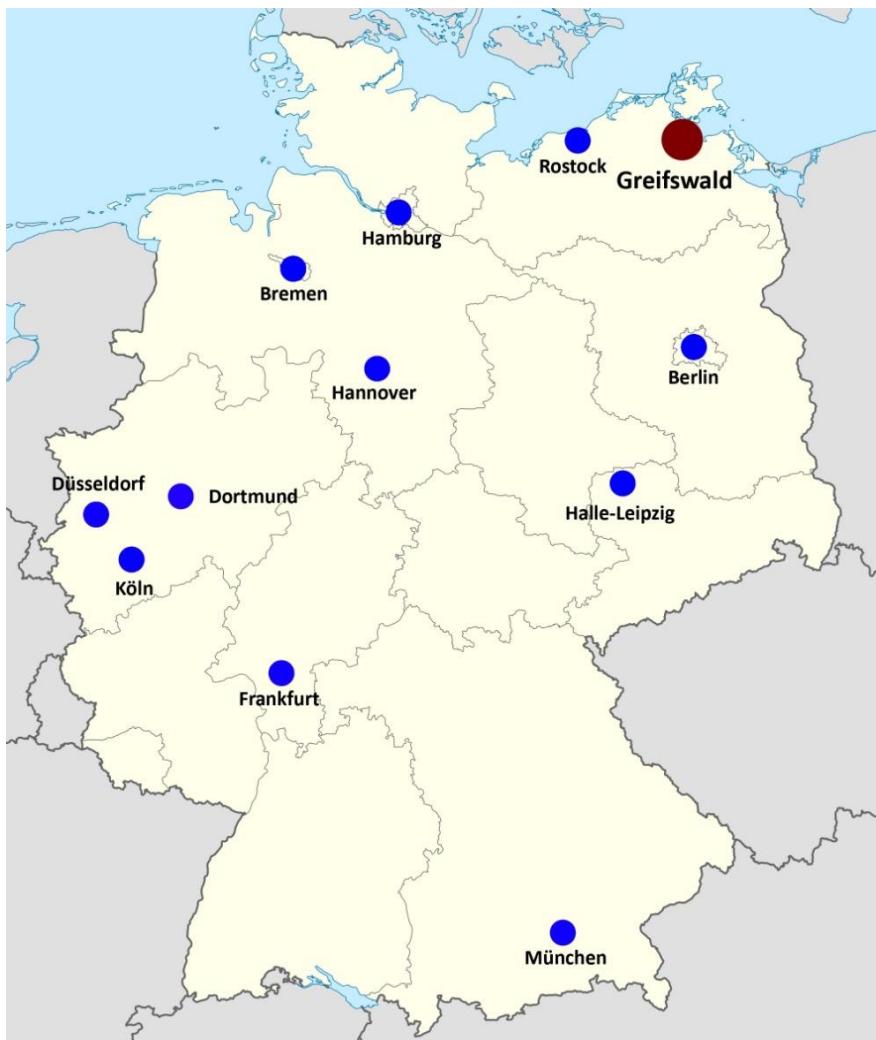
The nearest ferry ports are in Rostock and Sassnitz with connections to some countries of the Baltic Sea region:

- > Helsinki to Rostock (Finnlines)
- > Rønne to Sassnitz (Bornholmer Færgen)
- > Gedser to Rostock (Scandlines)
- > Trelleborg to Sassnitz or Rostock (Stena Line, TT Lines)

Airplane

The nearest international airports are in Berlin, Hamburg and Rostock. At this point, Berlin would definitely be the best option, since the train connections to Greifswald are better than from any other German international airport.

Please, be aware: As you can see on the map below, cities like Frankfurt and Munich are really far away from Greifswald. If you are going to land in one of these cities not early enough, you might not reach Greifswald at the same day and have to stay somewhere else!



Source: www.wikipedia.org - Modified

5. What to pack?

In June the Greifswald weather can range between warm-sunny (swimming) and sometimes cold-rainy (tea) weather. You should keep this in mind while packing your clothes. The best would be to check the weather forecast a few days in advance to your journey in order to get a rough orientation.

Required to pack:

- > **Passport** (check: do you need a visa?)
- > **Tickets** (note: there can only be a refund on your tickets for original travel documents that indicate a price and date of purchase)
- > Money for your personal expenses
- > Medication you might need

Optional:

- > Sleeping bag
- > Special food and drinks from your country, especially if you plan to take part in the "Running Dinner"
- > National items like a traditional costume or a musical instrument for the event "Meeting of the Cultures":

We will celebrate cultural diversity by an event called 'Meeting of the Cultures' during our famous **Fête de la Musique**. Further information will be provided before the festival through email and in the Facebook group.

We are looking forward to a wonderful summer
and an amazing GrlStuF 2018!

Together, we will create a wonderful week #BeyondBorders 