

13 Things in the USA That I CAN'T Get Used To | Feli From Germany

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I've been living in the US for five years now but there are still things about living here that I just can't get used to no matter how hard I try.

Hello servos, and welcome back to my youtube channel, my name is Felicia.

I'm originally from Munich, Germany but I've been living here in Cincinnati, Ohio on and off since 2016.

Since August 13, 2016 to be precise, which means that this year marks my five year anniversary of living in the US and for that occasion I thought it's time to reflect on a few things.

So I made a list of things about the US that I really can't live without anymore at this point which I released about three weeks ago on the actual anniversary on August 13th.

Check it out here if you haven't seen it yet, and I also made a list of things about living here that even after all this time I just can't get used to and that's what I'll talk about today.

So in a way this is the more critical, whiny, first world problems complaining counterpart to the other video.

Before we start with the list though, a big shout out to Italki for sponsoring this video.

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Now let's jump into the list of things about living in the US that I have a hard time getting used to.

Number one is something that's been bothering me literally since day one and it has to do with showers.

I've mentioned this before in my video on housing differences, but in Germany a shower usually looks like this or this.

The shower head usually has a hose attached and you can either put it into a fixture and just stand underneath or you can also grab it and move it around. So in Germany we use so-called handheld shower heads usually.

In the US however, the standard that you'll find at most houses, rental places and hotels is this: a fixed shower head where the pipes are built into the wall, you can usually move the angle of the shower head a little bit, but that's about it.

And my question is, why America? Do you know how hard it is to clean a shower when you can't move the shower head?

A shower should be one of the easiest things to clean because it already has a drain and water in it.

And, yeah, in Germany, with a handheld shower head, cleaning a shower is really easy because you can just flush things away.

But not here, which is why I've been wondering for five years how do Americans clean their showers?

And when you build a place yourself, why do you choose a fixed shower head over a handheld one.

I can't think of a single advantage, hand held shower heads are also amazing for when you want to shower but don't want to get your hair wet.

Or for when you just want to shave your legs real quick or when bathing a baby or child.

Now of course I know that you can buy handheld shower heads in the US but I personally can't remember seeing one in an actual bathroom throughout the whole time I've been here.

The second point I've mentioned before in my video about seven surprising everyday differences and one of those surprising things for me was that people in the US don't use whatsapp.

I mean it exists, some people use it, but many Americans haven't even heard of it.

And, unlike in Germany, and frankly most other parts of the world, it's not the default for texting in the US.

Instead, text messages are SMS, which have basically been extinct in Germany for like five to ten years at this point.

Now I'm not sponsored by whatsapp and of course there are also other messenger apps like signal or three ma but I really do wish that this wasn't the case sometimes because the features that you get with text messages simply aren't as good as the ones you get on whatsapp.

Now, most Americans have iPhones so usually texting means using Imessage which is when the

message appears blue instead of green on an Iphone, that means that you basically are using a messenger service in a way because the message will be sent through the internet and not through regular cellular service.

But even that doesn't offer a lot of features.

As someone who was used to having all one-on-one and group chats taking place on whatsapp before I came here I was really annoyed by how complicated group texts can be here.

Especially when one or several members of the group chat don't have an Iphone.

When I first arrived here a lot of my fellow students used another app group me specifically for group chats because of this.

In addition to that, the search function is pretty bad compared to whatsapp and so is the overview of photos and other media you've sent, the feature to save messages, and most importantly voice messages.

I know that not everyone uses that feature but I personally use that a lot especially with my friends in Germany.

Kind of instead of calling each other you can send voice messages with Imessage but the feature really sucks compared to whatsapp.

You can't move the cursor while listening, when you record it'll just break off the recording if anything pops up on your phone or your screen goes black.

Plus on whatsapp you can now even listen to the voice message at different speeds.

Now before you guys start commenting, I know that whatsapp is owned by Facebook and there might be valid concerns about using it, but at the same time I see Americans posting a hundred pictures of their family dinner on social media every weekend without even thinking about privacy at all.

So when Americans say that that's why they don't use it I always find that argument a little weird.

And, yes, other countries have texting flat rates as well and use whatsapp anyways.

So, all in all, even after five years of living here and after switching from Android to Iphone pretty much just to make it easier for myself to text in the US, I still find it hard to get used to using text messages instead of a more convenient messenger service like whatsapp.

Point number three is the lack of a deposit system here. To this day I cringe a little bit every time I throw a can or a bottle away instead of collecting it and returning it to the store, even if I throw it into a recycling bin it still kind of feels like a trash can.

It also took a while for me to get used to crushing the cans like this which you should do here because obviously it saves space in the bin but in Germany that's a big no-go because you need the barcode on the bottle or can to be eligible when you return it to get your deposit back.

For context, I should explain that in Germany we have the Pfandsystem, a deposit system on certain glass bottles, plastic bottles and drink cans where you get 8 to 25 cents back when you return them to the store.

So basically every German household has some spot where they collect empty bottles and cans sometimes it can become a pretty big pile.

And then you just take them to the store next time you go get groceries and put them in this returning machine and you get money back for it.

Some states in the US do have a deposit system too, but the incentive isn't quite as high to actually go and return things.

Plus I believe that in most cases you have to go to a recycling site to return them rather than just going to any store.

Here in Ohio, they don't have a deposit system at all though the city of Cincinnati at least offers a recycling service which is good so everyone has a landfill trash can and a recycling one here that get emptied once a week and you just put all different kinds of recyclable materials into the recycling can together.

Which is also kind of weird for me still, because in Germany we usually separate our recyclables by material and put it into different bins or for certain things we even have to bring it to recycling containers ourselves.

So long story short, it's still weird for me to throw a plastic bottle or even worse a glass bottle away instead of rinsing it out and collecting it somewhere.

But I did actually kind of get used to crushing cans because I now sometimes catch myself do it when I'm in Germany out of habit.

Which sucks, because as I said you need the barcode to be working in order to get your money back.

I know this is a total cliché point, but even after five years of living in the US I still can't really get used to the low quality of bread and dairy products here.

I know this might sound a little snobbish, but I just really miss good bread that has an actual crust and I miss good cheese, especially mozzarella.

I still haven't found good mozzarella here even the ones in the deli section for like ten dollars tastes like rubber whereas real mozzarella is fluffy and airy.

Same goes for yogurt and butter. Good butter is hard to find here and so is good creamy yogurt and Quark doesn't really exist here at all.

So, yeah, this is a total first world problem, I'm aware of that, but this whole video really is, but it's still something that is hard to get used to.

For me, the next thing on my list of things about the US that I can't get used to even after five years is people overdoing it with air conditioning.

Okay, that's partly a lie because I actually have gotten used to it in a way.

When I first came here I got sick from the AC all the time and for those of you who think that you can't get sick from AC I'm gonna put a link to a recent podcast episode in the info box below where we talked about that and I might also link an article down below.

But, back to the topic. I was just not used to it being so cold inside here everywhere that I was sick a lot in the beginning.

And mind you, I arrived in the middle of August so it was really hot in Cincinnati.

But I always wore long pants and carried a sweatshirt with me wherever I went because I knew that anytime I'd be inside somewhere I would be freezing.

And even though I still bring a cardigan with me in the summer I can definitely tell that my body has gotten used to it a little.

I'm just not as sensitive to the cold and the temperature differences anymore. I don't think I've gotten sick from AC in years at this point which is awesome.

But I still don't like it when I basically have to put on winter clothes inside because someone sets the AC to a freezing temperature.

I know, I also kind of mentioned this in the last video but, why not just set it to a normal room temperature in the summer?

That'll still be so much colder than the outside anyways.

This doesn't only apply to people's homes by the way, but also to stores and businesses. I'm often inside a store shivering in the summer.

Another thing that I have a hard time getting used to in this regard is when people use their central air conditioning all year round even during fall and spring where the temperature is perfectly nice outside.

At least here in Ohio just open your windows people.

Yes, this really shows that I'm German because Germans are known for being obsessed with *luften*, airing out rooms.

I complained about this one in one of my very first videos but even after five years, my opinion on this hasn't changed and it's about American washers, or to be more precise top loading washing machines which I found to be much more common here than front loaders.

In Germany it's the other way around.

Now I've never bought my own washer in the US, I've always had one in my rented apartment or a coin operated shared one in the basement or something like that, so yes. I know that if you buy one yourself you obviously have the choice but most households I've been to and all of the rentals I've lived in had a top loading washing machine.

And in my opinion they're just not nearly as good as the front loaders that I know from Germany.

It might have to do with the differences in laundry detergents as well, but front loaders in my experience just get your clothes so much cleaner.

Plus, in Germany, you can choose the actual temperature that your clothes are going to be washed on in degrees whereas in the US washers usually just say hot, cold or warm and I believe that they just use the hot or cold tap water instead of bringing it to that exact temperature.

And the spiral thing in the middle has damaged some of my clothes before too, so when it comes to washers I'll always prefer the German ones.

If a Miele front loader doesn't get it clean, nothing will.

Another thing that I still can't get used to in the US is feeling unsafe at times.

For one, this has to do with me living in a city rather than a suburb or rural area and it also has to do with gun violence in this country.

I've talked about my views on gun control before and I'm not going to go into detail about that here but it was a huge change for me and frankly still is that I always have to think about where I can and can't go in a city.

Like whether I can go outside after dark or whether I can safely walk home from a bar or when I visited Chicago a few weeks ago for example, where I can and can't go as a tourist.

I'm not trying to talk about why these things are different in Germany and the US and what could be done to change the situation but the fact is that in American cities there is generally a lot more poverty as well as violence and crime than in German cities.

For example, United Nations statistics show that the homicide rate for the year 2018 per 100,000 inhabitants was at 4.96 in the US.

Well, it was at 0.95 in Germany, so in the US it's almost five times as high as in Germany.

Now Cincinnati surely isn't Chicago or Detroit or New York City but in some years it has been listed among the top 20 most violent cities in the US with the current homicide rate being at about 19 per 100 thousand people.

So more than three times the national average, which doesn't mean that crime is something I personally see in everyday life here, but before I came to the US I never had to take shelter because there was an active shooter around for example.

And this happened several times while I went to college here, that there was an active shooter alarm that went out to all students.

And one time, I was actually on campus during that time and locked myself up in a classroom together with a fellow student and like him I had never had any kind of training for a situation like that.

Luckily he did, because American students usually get prepared for these scenarios in school.

I also have a lot of friends who have been attacked or robbed while walking on the streets at night here and just a few weeks ago I was out on a walk at like 10 PM which is like the only time it doesn't feel like a sauna outside in the summer and I wasn't in a particularly dangerous area but the next day I found out that there was an armed robbery on the very street I was on at around the same time I was there too.

I must have just missed it, but I found out the next day that the girl's phone and car keys were stolen and then they took her car.

Long story short, what I'm trying to say is that it's hard for me to get used to the fact that I can't just go outside at 10 PM without having concerns.

Just to put this into perspective, I bought pepper spray just a few weeks after I first came to the US.

I never had that before and during my three weeks home in Munich just now, I went on several walks even later at night and I didn't even bring my pepper spray to Germany.

I also took my bike through the woods at night like I used to growing up.

I used to always take the subway home late at night all by myself too, and never had to worry so even after five years of living here it's hard for me to get used to the idea that I'm limited in my freedom in a way.

This one probably makes me sound like a broken record because I've talked about this in several videos already and even in my recent one about 10 things I had never done before coming to the US.

But if this doesn't belong on a list of things that I can't get used to, I don't know what does, the American banking system.

I'll keep it short this time, but I just can't get used to the fact that bank transfers aren't really a thing here, but instead you have to use a third-party service to transfer money from your bank account to another one.

Like when you're paying for rent, or just paying a friend.

In Germany for paying utilities, or as I said, paying a friend or rent or really any other kind of service, any kind of bills we just send money from bank to bank.

Well, here, that's not very common and sometimes doesn't even really work.

As I said you'll usually have to go through another service like Zelle for example to do that.

And I even had to get approval from my bank first before I could transfer any money.

Americans therefore often just use services like Venmo or Paypal to make payments which means that you have to connect your bank account to an additional service and cover potential fees.

Many Americans also choose to do this because they think that bank transfers and giving out your account number isn't safe.

Whether that's true or not, I don't know, but it's a pretty common concern here.

On top of that, people still use checks in the US, which seems pretty archaic from a German perspective.

I have several friends who go to the ATM regularly to deposit a physical paycheck.

Why do people have to waste their time with that in the 21st century? That hasn't been a thing in Germany my whole life.

The next point on my list is how normal it is in the US not to believe in facts.

I know this might be a little controversial for some people and this might be more of a recent development in the US but ever since I first came here I've been very surprised how wherever you go people sometimes say things like "I don't believe in climate change" or "I don't believe in the gender pay gap", "I don't believe in evolution" or of course, most recently "I don't believe in covid".

You'll hear that even from very educated people sometimes and what's so weird about that to me is that in the society I'm from facts are not a matter of belief.

Religion sure is, but hard scientific facts are not.

You don't get the privilege to just not believe in a fact just because it's uncomfortable.

Science isn't about believing, it's about forming our opinions and strategies based on a rational analysis of the information and evidence we have at the time.

Science never claims to be 100 percent right of course.

The current state of research on evolution can't explain every last thing yet.

Of course, scientists change their statements about covid over time, that's how it works, but it's still the most rational way of creating knowledge.

You base it on all the evidence and facts that you have and when new ones come out you integrate those and adapt the state of research and potentially also your course of action based on that.

Now I'm not saying that everyone has to be on the same page as me but overall I would say that this pretty much reflects the standard view in German society and growing up there I've never experienced it as a normal thing for people to just not believe in certain things.

That's something that I still find hard to get used to in the US.

The next point is expensive groceries and cosmetics.

Now this is a pretty specific Germany versus USA thing because groceries are exceptionally cheap in Germany compared to other European countries but the US really is extremely expensive in this sense.

As a German, it's hard to wrap my head around the fact that as a low-income person in the US it often makes more sense financially to get a fast food and takeout rather than buying groceries at the store.

A normal trip to the grocery store with like half a cart full of things for the next week or two easily costs me like 90 to 100 at a store like Kroger or Walmart, which is where the average American goes to get their groceries.

Fortunately though, the German discounter supermarkets Aldi and Lidl have locations in the US too which is why I personally get most of my groceries at Aldi where I pay about 60 for the same things.

I only go to Kroger for certain items that they don't sell at Aldi but every time I go to the store and see a small bag of almonds sold for ten dollars or a small box of strawberries for five dollars I'm like, damn I'll never get used to that.

The same goes for cosmetics, like face wash, makeup remover or face lotion for example.

I've told you guys this before but I actually still use products from the German drugstore dm for that because even though I really tried to find good makeup remover and face lotion in the US I failed.

They were all like seven dollars per bottle and none of them were as good as the product from the dm, for like a euro.

And I know that many other German expats even in other countries have the same experience here.

Another one about houses is that even in modern houses it's pretty common in the US to have two handles for hot and cold water at the sink rather than having a mixer tab like you'll find at most modern German homes.

I don't quite understand why the mixer tabs aren't more common here because they're just so much more practical.

I noticed this one especially whenever I come back from a trip to Germany but I'm always kind of aware of it in the back of my mind there is a huge amount of trash and plastic in this country.

People here get takeout all the time and every meal leaves a huge pile of packaging waste behind.

Many people use disposable dishes even at home because they don't want to clean their actual dishes and people don't bring their own shopping bags to the store but instead get piles of plastic bags every time they get groceries at least here in the Midwest.

Coming from Germany where way more people try to at least avoid waste, when it's not necessary and where you have to pay for plastic bags at the store and where plastic straws and other single-use plastic products have been banned now.

It's just hard to get used to that sometimes especially knowing that most of this trash is totally avoidable.

And last, but not least, even after five years I still find it weird how big of a deal alcohol is here.

I mean I'm from a country where alcohol is part of our culture, where you can legally drink beer and wine at 16 and hard liquor at 18.

While here in the US not only can people not drink legally until they're 21, but there's also such things as dry counties for example, where you can't buy alcohol anywhere.

Or so-called moist counties where you can get alcohol only at certain places or for certain occasions.

And it's also still weird to me how stores need a liquor license to sell alcohol and you often have to go to a separate liquor store to get it, even just beer sometimes.

And it's also still weird to me and a little sad, that drinking in public is illegal.

That means no beer by the river after you get off work, no drink while walking to a party no playing beer pong at the park.

And there's not a lot of curbside dining because of that either because restaurants have to have a designated area if they want to do that.

And even after 5 years I still sometimes forget about this and accidentally have a drink in my hand outside or I walk into a store looking for the alcohol section and then realize, oh, they don't sell that here.

And that was the last point on my list of 13 things that even after five years in the US I can't really get used to.

I hope it didn't come off as too snooty.

As I said it's kind of a first world problem video and of course these things don't keep me from living here.

I still very much enjoy it.

If you'd like to see a video about things that I really like about the US now feel free to check out the first part of this video, or this one where I talked about why I really enjoy living here.

Either way, I hope you enjoyed this video.

Also, let me know in the comments what things you have trouble getting used to, either here in the US or in the country that you live in.

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