

ART?QUEST

Renting and Buying
3 Months in Berlin

I thought hiring video and film equipment in Berlin would be really difficult for me, as I'm not registered as a Berlin resident.

Everyone who moves to Germany and rents somewhere to live is required by law to register with their local district authority (Bezirksamt). You are required to do this within seven days from the start of your tenancy. You need your passport, plus your tenancy agreement. When you are registered you receive your 'Anmeldebestätigung', which consists of part of the form you filled out, complete with a stamp and the signature, usually illegible, of the official who has dealt with you. This, together with your passport or other legal ID, is your official proof that you live in Berlin and it's necessary whenever you need to confirm your address; opening a bank account, obtaining a library card, renting a DVD and, I presumed, renting video equipment.

Not so. As there are so many international productions filming here that I suppose some businesses are open to renting to those of us passing through. There is a company based in Prenzlauer Berg called called 25P that was recommended to me by a few different groups of people. They didn't have the equipment I needed so I found Camelot Broadcast Services GmbH. Their address is 27/28 Fritschestrasse, 10585 Berlin. To set up an account with Camelot, call them and they will email you a form to fill out to register as one of their clients. The form asks you to provide them your bank details, credit card number, British address or of course your Berlin address if you are registered. When you are on their database, you email them what you want to rent and for how long and they send you back a quote. You then turn up to collect the items at a pre-arranged time and hand over the cash. They asked me to pay in cash, as I'm a first time customer.

It's not unusual to pay in cash for goods or services in Berlin, even if they are expensive. Many restaurants or shops don't take debit or credit cards and if they do it may not be the brand you have. Also, there are not as many cash machines here as there are in the UK so it's easy to get caught out and be left with zero cash and no way to pay your bar bill.

Fed up with waiting for days on end for that delivery to arrive at your studio or home? DHL have got a service called Postpaket, which is a brilliant idea and I wish we had in London. Dotted around the city you will see these yellow structures, shaped a bit like those self cleaning toilets, with Postpaket and DHL written on them. These are delivery terminals for your goods, meaning that you can arrange for your delivery to be sent to one of these for you to collect. In order to use this service you must register online, and the Postpaket part of the DHL site is in German. Part of the process of getting a Postpaket account means you have to take delivery of one registered letter at your home/studio address and sign for it there and then. This unfortunately has made it impossible for me, as I don't have a doorbell.

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