

Beat: Politics

IN GERMANY SPACES FOR WOMEN ARE SEEN IN SOME WAYS AS PATRONIZING THEM

BIGGER AND NICER PARKING AREAS

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USPA NEWS - Frankfurt Airport is one of many places in GERMANY to offer women their own parking areas. Some consider this action as a sensible practice and some as plain sexism... "Women only" ! These reserved spaces are made in such way that they are easy to find, colour-coded.

This is not the only area to practice this kind of « policy », In some states, it is a legal requirement that as many as 30% of parking are designed for female drivers. Frankfurt Airport made a special announcement on its website « Ladies Parking at Frankfurt Airport ». It is said : Quick, safe and convenient from your parking to the terminal. Bigger, nicer and close to the terminals. This is our exclusive parking offer at Frankfurt Airport for women only. With new and special designed parking areas, which are colour-coded and easy to find ». Further down : «You can also conveniently book a parking space online in advance and save up to 56% with the Early Bird Online rates... » (www.frankfurt-airport.com)

It seems that all this does reinforce the stereotype that women are bad at parking. The idea of women-only parking places in GERMANY originated in the 1990s, when it wasn't so much women's convenience that was up for discussion, but their safety. Women were feeling at risk from sexual assault in underground car parks, it emerged as part of a policy to reduce this kind of risk with the introduction of special parking spaces.

Nowdays, regulations for women's parking spaces differ from State to State in GERMANY. Already, in 2012, spaces in a new car park in the Black Forest town of Triberg came with male and female symbols. The spaces for women are wider and well lit, while those for men are close to concrete pillars and can only be reserved into. Explaining the policy, Mayor Gallus STROBEL said it was a natural decision because men are better at parking than women. Still, he added that women drivers could try and park in the men-only spaces. He denied accusations from sexism claiming that it could help business for the small town, more famed for its waterfalls and natural beauty than being a bastion of male chauvinism.

Still, recently, the Frankfurt Airport has caused controversy after it painted a section of its car park pink and designated it entirely for the use of women. The Ladies Parking section had bigger parking bays insuating they require less skills to manoeuvre their vehicle safely into the parking lot. Campaigners claims that women-only parking spots enable the introduction of better security and CCTV systems to help women to feel safe. The German Automobile Association echoed the view that this should be for both genders, making sure every space and stairwell is well-lit, avoiding blind spots and corners and installing sufficient security systems.

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