

Denmark – The way of life (Student experience report)

Preparation

The choice of Denmark is quite contrary with my friend's expectation because they always tell me to go to the southern Europe for the winter, but I am always fascinated with the question about why Scandinavian countries are considered a HAPPIEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. I took this question with me to Denmark and touched with the Viking stories it's no brainer for me to choose Denmark as my choice for Erasmus. Also, I am solo impressed by Denmark as everyone speaks English from old to young and it's very easy to integrate and be more connected!

I was informed by the friend that he is going to Osaka for his Erasmus and I was immediately drawn to this idea. One night I was chatting with her about exchange, and we decided to apply together, she choose Czechia and I decided for Denmark. The anticipation of response was high as only one student can go to Denmark from whole physics faculty, but luckily I got selected and I remember my friend told me that we will celebrate with the Danish way with Danish food and beer, ha-ha.

Application process was quite fluid as international office is very active in Oldenburg. Since it is a completely different place all the formalities were necessary though Denmark is exceptionally well maintained, its sooo easy to apply for anything from their national id called MitID and their CPR number. I applied for accommodation prior to two months of start of university which turn out to be stressful as I didn't get the accommodation near university and in my budget. So pro tip: look for apartment early and I suggest looking at website like Lejebolig.dk or voreslejebolig.dk, its subscription based but the probability of finding room there is much higher, also facebook is good place to find rooms though be aware of scammers.

I got room in Holte, it's not too far from DTU, it's more like Bad Zwischenahn, small and nice. I would advise to join some groups early, as its best place to start your life in Denmark and arrange some hangouts. Also, I would advise not to fall in trap of THE STUDENT LIFE, they will lure you in by advertising the events for student in Copenhagen, but they are very much taking money and leave kind of company.

Travel and Arrival

I decided to leave before the start of welcome week to settle in strange land, I took flibus to Copenhagen, the ride was smooth and quick, barely 4-5 hours. The most beautiful thing was the crossing Danish channel through the Baltic Sea where flibus goes to ferry and we can enjoy ferry ride with nice views from the deck. I arrived finally in my town located at the outskirts of the Copenhagen. I had 3 travelling bags so it was kinda hard to navigate, but one of the sweetest things ever happened to me, an old person came to me and asked whether he can help me with the luggage. That really set my impression of the Denmark where people are super nice. If I have to say about biggest cultural shock, I noticed it can be how everything in Denmark work on honesty, no wonder it ranked as most honest country in the world, where peoples have immense trust on other peoples and their country.

Accommodation

In a popular city like Copenhagen, it's no wonder that huge housing crisis exist. If one gets lucky and find the room, one shouldn't expect anything more than a small cottage room. In Denmark if you have your own kitchen in your room, you can be eligible for the housing benefits (boligstøtte) of around 800- 900 dkk, which can be small relief amidst expensive rent. The university admission office (BDTU) has some nice room and dormitories where it might be the best decision to accept the room from BDTU. It might be expensive, but it can really make your Erasmus glorious as you live with international groups and they always have parties which are the best for hanging out and making lasting friendships. I paid around 4500 dkk (roughly 630 €) which is considered as a rather cheap rent in Denmark, if you want to live in student dorm It might range from 5500 dkk to 7000 dkk (800 – 1000 €). My biggest piece of advice: do not wait for the university to offer you a room; treat the housing search like a part-time job before you arrive! I would still choose student dorm, anything but Ballerup campus dorm, as they are very far and very hard to commute there.

Studying at the host university

The first impression of DTU was how advanced it is and how much they offer for the students. It's remarkable that whole campus lay out in the vast area and spread out further than km from the main building, whole campus reminds me of American campuses in the movies. The academic culture in Denmark is remarkably different than Germany, mainly due to incredibly flat hierarchy. Where you called professor by their first name and you can go inside any

professor office without appointment as their main focus is to create a feeling of equivalence. Also, Danish culture focuses more on equality, humility and huge emphasizes on teamwork over individual overwork.

When you enter the university, the first thing you notices is endearing teamwork designs, every study places to their classes are designed in a way that you can work in a team rather than individual. Their classes lasts 4 hours where first two hours is lectures and later time is to work in team to solve problems.

Everyday life and leisure time

When I arrived to the Denmark first conversation I had with my landlord is about why Danes are known to be happiest people in the world, his response was simple and mundane which was "Denmark have covered all the basic needs of its citizen from the education, healthcare to excellent quality of life and one secret word is "hygge" which includes creating a warm atmosphere, enjoying the good things in life with closest people and finding happiness in little things like walking, game nights to barbeque. I would highly suggest book called "the little book of hygge by meik wiking" and most importantly coffee and cake is big part of Danish life.

Did I find my answer about the Danish happiness? maybe.....it does compile into spending meaningful time with close people and be very active as Danish are very active peoples. spend more time in nature and do lots of sauna and ice dipping. you should try cold dip in the sea, apparently its very big thing in Denmark (called vinterbadning).



(Trying the famous Danish " (winter bathing)!)

I really liked techno, so if anyone is interested, there is very cool techno club called Hangaren. Also, I would recommend to go to the planetarium in the Copenhagen its one kind.



(Immersed in the 3d globe at Copenhagen Planetarium with friends and one stranger liked our pose and took our photo :p)

Also, I went to Sweden for 2 weeks trip it was also very cool, so better use this time to explore Scandinavia. There is amazing cafe in Copenhagen which is called cafe Kaf which is very famous and vegan, I would highly recommend some cinnamon bun and cardamom bun they are very famous.

Everyday life for me was mostly go to DTU and then rather attend the lectures or work on assignments, with many parties and events here and there. One more tip: almost twice or more a week there are some events happening in the DTU all the time and they always have pizzas or sandwiches, which is very cool. I often also joined the climbing in DTU their gym is amazing and super affordable for the students. also be careful on bike lanes, Danes are known to be going hard on bike lanes, and no weather can stop them from biking.

Conclusion

Here are my final tips for other students, broken down into Dos and Don'ts:

DOs:

- Enjoy the Danish hygge as this is the most important concept to survive cold winters.
- Try to join ESN DTU, almost all the friends I made are from there, ESN is arranging some of the best events.



(Having fun at an ESN DTU event! Make sure people's faces aren't too identifiable to respect their privacy in the official report.)

- Visit the Viking museum in the Roskilde, they have real Viking ship and it must see.
- Attend almost all the events in the welcome week it really sets the mood about who will be some close friends during the Erasmus.
- Try the cold dip in the sea (vinterbadning), it is a very big thing in Denmark.

DON'Ts:

- Do not fall in trap of THE STUDENT LIFE, they are waste of money and take money and leave kind of company.
- Do not forget to be careful on bike lanes, Danes are known to be going hard on bike lanes, and no weather can stop them from biking.
- Do not wait for the university to offer you a room, treat the housing search like a part-time job before you arrive.