

COPENHAGEN

Exchange Experience

If you are reading this exchange review you are obviously considering going on an exchange, which I have to say, is a great option! It is likely that wherever you choose to go you will have an amazing time. Heading overseas on exchange taught me so much and it truly was an invaluable experience. It is a fabulous opportunity to live overseas, learn and experience different cultures and life away from home. In this review I hope to tell you a bit about Copenhagen and why it is a definitely a choice worth considering.

Copenhagen Business School

The Copenhagen Business School ("CBS") campus situated in Frederiksberg is a relatively new and modern complex of buildings. The main building Solbjerg Plads is home to the main library, lecture theatres, tutorial rooms as well as the university nightclub – Nexus.



One big drawcard for me in choosing Copenhagen was the fact that the classes were taught in English. This made things a lot easier! The format of my exams at the end of the term were two written exams and two oral exams in English, this was a breeze for us having English as our first language.

My timetable was great too, the classes were up to three hours long, a bit different to the way things are done here but there were plenty of breaks. It actually worked out well as most of my classes were timetabled on Wednesday and I had one on a Friday (there was often only one class per subject a week). This left me with ample of spare time! I guess it is a little bit of luck of the draw as to how your timetable falls but often the schedule of classes is available when electing papers.

The classes themselves are very interactive, a lot more so than what we are used to at Otago. The classes are often long so in most classes the lecturer would speak for an hour and then you would be told to go off in groups and discuss what had been taught and there was a presentation or some sort of interactive activity for the remainder of the class which kept things a little more interesting.

The university exchange program itself was reasonably well organised. Upon arrival we were allocated groups and we had organised introductory activities for the first week. We were shown around the campus and given a tour of the city. On the first day we had a meet and greet and at the end of the first week there was a big organised dinner party to meet others on exchange at the CBS. These sorts of social events, organised especially for the exchange students, carried on throughout the semester.

We were also given a buddy on arrival to show us around and introduce us to their friends. This was a great help as we could ask them anything about CBS, the city or anything we needed to know. They were really lovely and inclusive and took us out a few times. A group of our buddies also organised a trip for us all to go over to Sweden for a long weekend which was heaps of fun!

Accommodation / Housing

My one complaint which may be quite influential in deciding where you decide to go on exchange would be the poor organisation of the housing system and the unhelpfulness and rudeness demonstrated by the Copenhagen housing office. When applying to get a room in one of the CBS accommodation houses provided, there were 300 spots available for 800 people applying for a place. I think there were so many people as it is all the first year students at the university also bidding for a place so there was a severe shortage of places available.

This was not something we were aware of and we were reassured by the exchange office at Otago that we were likely to get a room as others always had in the past. This was not the case however. The way you apply is online via a link and you are automatically allocated a room after a series of questions and hostel preferences. Given the time difference however this link would become live at the early hours of the morning NZ time. This meant we were up at 2, 3 and 4 am trying to secure a place in one of the halls. Then to make matters worse the link constantly suffered technical issues meaning that we could never get through. The link would collapse after 20 people had gotten through as it couldn't cope with the number of people trying to secure a spot.

The housing office in Copenhagen would not give us any information on when the link may next open and they were totally unwilling to give us any guidance in helping us secure a spot. It was certainly not ideal waking up at several times during the night to check if the link was open when we had exams the next day. After weeks of frustration we all missed out on a room in one of the university hostels. Our experience in dealing with the CBS housing office was that they were impolite and totally unsympathetic, despite our several requests for guidance. They wouldn't provide us with any alternative housing options so we were on our own in finding something.

I had two other friends that had also been applying for a room and when we all couldn't secure a place we decided to look online for a place. Second warning, there are SO many scammers registered with online accommodation, organisations that pretend they have a place available to rent but when you look closer you can often see the photos provided don't match up. They often put pictures up of the place for rent and the rooms look like hotel rooms or there is no actual existing address. These scammers often demand a deposit "for you to secure the place" but don't be fooled, we almost fell into that trap.

Eventually via a personal contact we were able to get a great place in Nørreport the main part of town. We had a fabulous place but I was then living with my two long term friends and it was a lot more difficult to meet people as we were not in the university hostels with others. My main reason for wanting to go on exchange was to push myself out of my comfort zone and meet a new group of people and whilst we made some good friends, being excluded from a hostel is not the ideal way to do that. I had other friends at the Copenhagen University (not CBS) and they managed to get a place in a lovely modern new hostel and had a fabulous time. It's just something to keep in mind when deciding where to go on exchange or what university to go to.

Living in Copenhagen

The city of Copenhagen was stunning. Cobble streets, parks and canals that run through the city, it really is picturesque. Highly accredited for its art and design, there is no shortage of art work, bronze statues and sculptures dotted around the place.



The population of Copenhagen is approximately 1+ million people which meant that day to day life and getting around was not too overwhelming and overcrowded by people and tourists. The people themselves are mostly really friendly and helpful. I knew no Danish upon my arrival and given it is such a hard language I was not much better by the time I left either! However, the locals are really lovely and immediately switched to talking in English as soon as they realised you had no clue what they were saying. Their English is often so fluent, especially among the younger people so there was never any trouble communicating. If you were interested in learning a bit of the language, there are introductory language courses offered by CBS on arrival.

The city itself is very clean and I was amazed by how well presented all the people residing there are, everyone looked so fit and healthy! Denmark itself is renowned for the high standard of living and Copenhagen has numerous times been named at the top of the rankings for the world's most liveable places. The city boasts an excellent transport system, quality housing, lively culture and best of all fantastic food and shopping!

There are several transport options to commute around Copenhagen, by far the easiest and most common being by bike. Over half the population of Copenhagen commute daily by bicycle and the city is well set up for it with wide bike lanes all around the city. I purchased a bike on my arrival and mostly used this to get around for the following months. Alternatively you can arrange a long term bike hire which can be a good option as when you leave you just return them without having to sell them.



Some days however it was far too cold and miserable outside to be blown off a bike so there is a great metro system which covers most parts of the city and at times like these, this is a far better option! The metro was very clean and efficient and the best way to get to and from the airport.

The VAT tax in Copenhagen is 25%, which makes buying food and drink etc quite costly and means that it is one of the more expensive places to live. In saying that, there are definitely ways to make living here affordable and it is not as expensive as I originally thought. Also, it often seems more expensive because of the conversion rate (NZD\$1 is approximately 4.5 Danish Kroner). When shopping for clothes and more expensive things, remember to keep all your receipts if over 300 kroner as you can get your tax back at the airport if on the one receipt.

Taxis in particular I found very expensive due to the tax and all sorts of other costs they seem to add on so where possible bike or use the metro. It was also not that easy to set up a bank account as you need all sorts of special numbers and seemed more effort than it was worth. This did mean however that we would have to make large withdrawals of money as it would cost every time I withdrew money from an ATM.

I joined a gym (fitness dk) just off the main street and the membership costs were pretty reasonable. It was a nice modern gym and offered a range of different fitness classes (although these were taught in Danish which so at times it was a challenge!). In the warmer months you could just go on nice walks or runs around the parks or the big lakes but in the colder months this was not so pleasant!

Danish Cuisine

The food in Copenhagen was dangerously good and resulted in the addition of (quite) a few extra kg's...The Danish pastries, as one would expect, are amazing and my very favourite was the cinnamon scrolls. The best cinnamon scrolls we found were from the bakery at the bottom floor of Illum (a department store in the main street), they were incredibly tasty!

Another must try are the hotdogs from the street vendors, which can often be located on the main street (Strøget). Delicious warm hotdogs offering a variety of toppings, my favourite being the dried onion sprinkles, was a treat on the bike ride home from town! Another absolute favourite was the pizza sandwiches, pizza dough made into a sandwich with basil pesto, garlic, prosciutto and mozzarella, seriously to die for!

For some authentic Danish cuisine, you will find that most of the local cafes have Smørrebrød's which are Danish open sandwiches. You can choose from a variety of toppings and cold cuts but Danish specialties are most often the salmon or roast pork. Another acclaimed meal in Denmark is pickled herrings, but these were most definitely not to my liking!

Nyhaven is a fabulous spot on the canal, home to several bars, cafes and restaurants and a great spot for casual dining with an outside fire and blankets, it is very picturesque looking over the old boats and coloured townhouses. Copenhagen also has a considerable number of highly acclaimed restaurants, several of which have been awarded Michelin stars, but often these are booked out months in advance.

We lived just around the corner from a fantastic fresh food market place called Torvehallerne, which consisted of two market halls with over 80 food vendors selling fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, cheese, bread and an array of specialties from the Danish regions. Basically a food lover's dream! A must try from there is a cupcake from Agnes Cupcakes which made beautiful cupcakes in nearly every flavour you can think of, we managed to try most of them, and they were all heavenly!



The Torvehallerne markets are located a few minutes from Nørreport station in the heart of Copenhagen and are open 7 days a week from morning often till late, it is definitely worth checking out!

Bars and Nightlife

From the quaint gabled warehouses of Nyhavn to unique atmosphere of the bohemian Christiania quarter, Copenhagen has some of Europe's most eclectic and interesting nightlife. There is no shortage of charming bars dotted around the city.

Some of our favourites were Ruby, a very trendy cocktail bar which offers an array of unique cocktails to try. It has a very Scandinavian feel with its high ceiling and is as though you have been invited into someone's private lounge. The unmarked door can make it quite tricky to find but you will see the bouncer on the road and on Friday and Saturdays there is often a line. It's quite expensive but definitely worth checking out for the unique experience and tasty cocktails.

Kassen was another cute bar in Nørrebro just across the lakes from Nørreport station. It boasts delicious cocktails and has good 2 for 1 drink deals some nights and was popular amongst the locals. Particularly tasty were the espresso martinis and mojitos.

In terms of nightclubs, the meatpacking district in Kødbyen goes off. At night it's buzzing with bars and clubs and has become the new hotspot with new restaurant openings. Many of the locals seem to congregate here and we understood why when immersed in the cool, lively atmosphere. The location was a bit niggly as no metros run out there, so we rode our bikes or opted for a taxi when it was too cold.

Off Strøget (the main street) there is a bar Sukkerbageren which had a 60 kroner door charge but once inside you could get unlimited free drinks from 11-1 am, apparently its full of young people but we had a great time there and it has a super dance floor!

The university bar Nexus is a hit on Thursday nights and is definitely worth going to! I would also advise talking to the locals and your buddies as they can give you an insight into the newest trendy places to go to!

Things to do

Strøget is the main pedestrian street in the middle of town and has heaps of good shopping. This is where you will find all the main chain stores as well as the big department store Illum and Magasin which are amazing and can keep you entertained for hours. Nearing Christmas time this main street is dressed up in lights and the shop windows, particularly in the department stores which have incredible displays. I suggest branching off the main street and checking out the shops and cafés on the side streets to get away from the masses of people and find more boutique type stores.

The canal tour takes you around the city in a boat along the canals and runs past all the different areas whilst the guide tells you all about the different landmarks including the infamous little mermaid. The tour leaves from down by Nyhaven hourly and is well worth doing especially on arrival to get your bearings and give you a good overview of the city. Go on a nice day if possible however, as it can be pretty miserable if it's cold and windy! Changing of the guard happens daily at 12pm and if the royal family is in residence they bring out the marching band who put on a fantastic show.



Christiania is a very bizarre little community set in the middle of a buzzing cosmopolitan city and stands in stark contrast to the rest of Copenhagen. There are several little stalls selling junk jewellery and clothing and, what it's renowned for, the hash joints. It's a very relaxed free spirited community, with different rules to the "outside" and has a hippy like feel. If you go when no one is around it's a bit creepy but they often have festival type galas there so would be worth going then to check it out.

Tivoli Gardens ("Tivoli") would have to be my highlight of Copenhagen, it is the second oldest theme park in the world and is absolutely gorgeous! Tivoli is at its best at night, particularly during the Halloween and Christmas seasons when the park is dressed with themed decorations. There are several rides and stalls but we only went on a few, just being there is really magical, it is hard to explain until you see it!



There are several day/weekend trips to take from Copenhagen which are easy to get to. You can jump on a train up to Helsingor and visit Kronborg Castle which is apparently where Shakespeare's play Hamlet is based. The Castle is situated right on the coast and you can see across the sea to Sweden. It's well

worth doing the tour so try and time your trip to make the guided tour times I think which run twice daily. On the same route whilst heading up to Helsingor we stopped at the Louisiana Gallery which is an interesting infusion of art and design from around the area and home to some beautiful sculptures and interesting displays.



Another notable day trip would be to drive or train over to Malmo, Sweden. There is a bridge connecting Denmark to Sweden so you can easily pop over for the day. Malmo is very cute medieval town with its cobbled streets and ancient town houses, there is not an awful lot to do there, but it too is well worth a visit.

Further Queries

I hope that the above information has convinced you to go on an exchange. It really is a great opportunity to study overseas, travel and meet new people. Copenhagen is a fabulous place to go on exchange and allowed us to get away and see other parts of Europe in the weekends, a luxury we are not exposed to back home. The people were lovely and the city is modern and lively. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to know any more (anya.alderlade@gmail.com). Enjoy!