

**EXCHANGE TO:** Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Semester 2, 2011  
BA/LLB

Having only been back in NZ for about 4 weeks, I am writing this with equal parts nostalgia and envy as I think about how exciting it all is when you are planning your exchange, knowing all the fantastic (sometimes strange) experiences anyone going away for uni is going to have!

**GENERAL EXCHANGE TIPS**

In terms of a destination, it's great to have somewhere that particularly interests you, but I would stress that it pays to have an open mind and not to be fussy: the university operates on a policy of reciprocity, so they can only send as many students away as are coming here from the respective universities. I had decided when I was still in High School that I wanted to an exchange to France; however, when no more places were available I quickly had to consider other cities. The thing to remember is that the "exchange experience" is not dependent on where you end up, but your attitude and what you do while you are away. Just because you don't know anyone who has been to a certain place, doesn't mean it isn't going to be awesome. Copenhagen was my 5<sup>th</sup> choice, and honestly, of everywhere I traveled in my 7 months away, it was one of the few cities that stood out to me as somewhere that boasted a really lovely pace of life; tourists and tourist activities just slotted in nicely alongside the Danes' everyday life, as opposed to other European cities where the presence of tourists is so overwhelming you can come away feeling like you didn't really get to experience the "real" city.

The other thing I would advise is to get organised ASAP. You'll soon find that there is a lot of planning that goes into organizing an exchange and there will probably be tonnes of due dates for applications etc. My experience with the administration at CBS was somewhat mixed. The exchange office over there was wonderful and really accommodating – I had a very narrow selection of courses that could be signed off by the Otago Humanities Department (as I was going to a Business School) and CBS made sure I was put in all these classes. They were prompt in responding to emails and answering any questions I had the entire time. On the other hand, the Housing Department at CBS was horrendous. Despite advertising accommodation for anyone, we were informed as late as May (we left at the end of June) that there was only housing capacity for 300 people and no preference was given to exchange students. They were unhelpful, dismissive and completely rude when we called them to discuss other housing options once it became clear we had missed out on any places in the student accommodation, and were told to "never contact them again". It would have been nice for the Otago Exchange Office to assist once they had been informed of the situation, especially as we had been under the impression that accommodation would be guaranteed: being left on our own was challenging and quite stressful during our final Otago exams. We got lucky as I had a connection in Denmark who organised an epic apartment right in the centre of town by Norreport Station, but if it weren't for him, it is quite likely we would have been left high and dry by CBS as was the case for hundreds of students who ended up paying heaps of money for expensive hotel rooms because they were the only things available while they hunted for accommodation during term time. If guaranteed accommodation at your exchange university is a deal-breaker for you, I probably wouldn't recommend CBS as your best choice in that regard.

**CBS**

CBS itself is a very impressive campus. Unlike the University, which is spread all over Copenhagen, CBS has a fairly compact campus and has a very similar feel to Otago in that regard. Scandinavians are known for the emphasis on design, architecture and the environment and the buildings in CBS are particularly cool – the main building Solbjerg Plads is really flash and even has a bar in it which has student night on Thursdays! The cafeterias are awesome too – huge selection of hot and cold food every day plus sweet treats and you can even buy bottles of beer! The cafeteria is a hub of people every lunch time and is buzzing during exam time, not unlike Otago. All the buildings for lectures are easily within walking distance but its far quicker to bike – there are designated bike routes so you can whiz through and get to your next class in about 5 minutes!

The workload at CBS was really reasonable. I needed one paper to credit back to Otago for law and the other 3 were just for BA points (I had already finished my POLS major). Each paper had one or two lectures of 2-3hrs a week. Lectures are more like seminars really; they expect you to engage quite a bit which at first is quite confronting, but you get used to it and it actually engenders quite an energising class environment. I had 2 written open book exams and 2 take home exams. The writtens required just as much work as I would do for a normal open book Otago Law exam, but were quite variable. One exam was really easy and the other was a nightmare and the questions read like they had been written on Google Translate. The take homes were usually for 24hrs or 48hrs which was a pain really. My flat mates had a few oral exams which seemed like a piece of cake so I would probably recommend you pick your papers based on which days of the week lectures are likely to be on (long weekends are ideal for travel etc) and the type of exam (opt for open book writtens and orals). Bear in mind that the grading schedule in Denmark is very different (a 7-point scale: -3, 0 are fails; 2, 4, 7, 10 and 12 are passes) and can't be equated to NZ marks so you get either a pass or fail on your Otago transcript, irrespective of how well you may have passed in Denmark. Therefore the most efficient way to do your exchange is to do just enough work to pass and enjoy your time there as much as possible, rather than studying for an age because it won't matter in the long run if you get a 12 or a 4.

The international programme at CBS is organised by a team of volunteers who spend heaps of time putting together activities for introduction week and ongoing activities and trips throughout the term. They do a pretty good job. One of the best things they do is assign every incoming student with a Danish "buddy". This buddy gets in touch with you before you arrive in Copenhagen and can pick you up from the airport/train station etc; they have an info pack for you with city maps etc and are just there for you if you need help with anything while you are settling in (setting up bank accounts/joining the gym/finding cheap linen and furniture etc). The buddies then get together in "buddy groups" so that before the events organised by the international exchange team you can all get together in your buddy groups for drinks and meet some other exchange students – nice to know some familiar faces around campus! My buddy was really cool and we got on really well and ended up being one of the closer friends I made in Copenhagen. We still keep in touch even now when I am back in NZ. The first week in Copenhagen is jam-packed with all the usual orientation stuff – campus tours and evenings where you go along to meet the other exchange students etc culminating in a big dinner and drinks evening at the end of the week. For someone who wasn't in a hall, this was another really great way to meet exchange students. The international exchange team also organised 2 trips for the semester I was in Copenhagen for, one for a weekend to Berlin and one away on a cruise to Oslo. I went with friends to Berlin, and while it probably wasn't the cheapest way to do it or the most efficient, it was cool to go away with new people. Berlin is a mean city, so if you get the option definitely go!

## **COPENHAGEN**

Copenhagen is a stunning city. It's weird to think that we were only just signing the Treaty of Waitangi when they were building Tivoli, one of the oldest fairgrounds in the world and my absolute favourite place ever.

The Danes speak brilliant English. This is great because it means there are hardly any problems at the beginning with sorting out general stuff – bank accounts, gym memberships etc., but it also meant that after 4 months I could only say about 6 Danish words which was kind of disappointing.

The VAT tax there is 25% which makes everyday items like a takeaway coffee or lunch at a café far more expensive than in many other European countries that use the euro. For this reason I certainly didn't eat out as much as I would in NZ, which is something I really missed, but when it works out to be about NZD\$8-10 for a coffee, you do have to budget a wee bit!

Copenhagen has a really well set up public transport system consisting of masses of busses, 2 metro lines (one that runs directly from the airport) and a number of S-trains. But it's all pretty expensive. A metro to CBS which was two stops for us cost DKK24 one way (about \$6). The cost of trains and busses is the same. And the Danes are pretty

strict on having ticket men on the metros making sure you have a valid ticket. I had a bike for the whole time I was there and would absolutely recommend it to anyone going to Copenhagen. The whole city is so set up for bikes – you have your own bike lane with traffic lights, there are almost no hills, and you have a cute wee basket on the front to put all your stuff in. Bike parking spaces are everywhere and although the city is reasonably compact, its big enough to need some form of transport faster than just walking but often you can't justify the cost of a metro ride. There are tonnes of places where you can buy or hire bikes. In fact at the start of each term CBS hosts a bike sale day where you can purchase or hire used and new bikes with the option to then sell them back to the company at the conclusion of your exchange. I rented a bike for the 4 months I was there and was very sad to return it in December! The biking is one of the best parts about living in Copenhagen. You know you have ingratiated nicely into Danish life when you can cycle while texting and lighting a cigarette all in one go.

#### FOOD/DRINK/TO DO

As mentioned earlier, really high VAT means that eating and drinking out is more expensive than is ideal, but this shouldn't put you off from splashing out now and then! Generally, the street food in Copenhagen is some of the best I had anywhere and the pastries are to die for. Get a hotdog at Nyhavn and a cinnamon scroll from the Illum bakery. Another place we became obsessed with was the semi-open air markets down by Nørreport station (called Torvehallen, I think). It is brilliant for picking up cheese/bread/nibble things and there is a supermarket next door for cheap(ish) wine. Highly recommend trying a cupcake from Agnes Cupcakes (heaven). Of course you will have to try some Smørrebrød (Danish open sandwiches) from a café. If you want to splash out for this, the Royal Copenhagen china shop (right on Strøget) has an attached café and although VERY pricey, their Smørrebrød is epic.

A cocktail will set you back anywhere between 50-100DKK, but beer is reasonably cheap and many bars have cover charges which allow for a certain number of drinks once inside. The best place for going out is the meatpacking district ("Kødbyen"). We went to Karriere and Jolene quite a bit which is on Flæsketorvet. In Nørrebro, just across the lakes from Nørreport station is a bar called Kassen. They have epic mojitos and do good drinks specials. Further up in Nørrebro is a bar called Rust which is also cool. On Strøget there was a bar called Sukkerbageren, just up from Abercrombie & Fitch, apparently its full of underage people but that never deterred us... it has a 60kr door charge but with that you get free drinks from 11-1am.

Sign up to things like Groupon and Sweet Deal.dk for pretty good deals as well. I guess at some point you just need to stop converting. You will never have enough money; I can guarantee it, so do absolutely everything you can within your means because there is no point in coming home with any savings! You're only on exchange once!

Over and above all the obvious tourist stuff that I am sure you will get around to doing, I will once again do a quick plug on Tivoli. Tivoli was one of my favourite places to visit in Copenhagen and I would highly recommend purchasing the season pass as you will probably go about 4 or 5 times (there are different decorations for Halloween and Christmas, plus visits when people come to visit etc) so a season pass is way more economical.

I would also highly recommend getting a train to Helsingør to go to Kronborg Castle and the Louisiana Art Gallery which is incredible. Another trip over the bridge to Sweden is a good option. We managed to travel quite a bit in the weekends including Berlin, Amsterdam, Sweden (a couple of times), London and Aarhus. Once you are in Europe it is pretty easy to get around, and if avoid last minute bookings, it is quite reasonable too.

Whatever you end up doing, have a brilliant time. What you get out of an exchange is directly proportionate to how much you put in to it, so take every opportunity to get out and about and see, do, eat, drink and experience everything! Have fun!!!