

Host Institution: Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Year and Otago semester you went on exchange: 2013, Semester 2 (August-December)

Degree: Bachelor of Arts (History and Geography)

I went on Exchange to Aarhus University for their Autumn Semester of 2013. It was my 4th year of study and I completed my double major while on exchange. A question I was always asked by Danes was “why did you come to Aarhus?” as if they thought it was a terrible decision. But you will soon understand that is just their understated way of saying things and they enjoy studying in Aarhus as much as you will. To answer the question I would explain that firstly, I wanted to go on exchange to a university in Europe. Secondly, I’m not great with languages so the fact that most Danes are fluent in English meant it was high on my list. Finally, I really enjoy the small city with a large university feel that is associated with studying at Otago so wanted to go to a city with similar situation. Aarhus has a population of around 250,000 and a student population of almost 45,000 so it has a great student vibe.

In order to study in Denmark everyone must get a residence permit/visa. This was a bit of a mission and I had to fly up to the Consulate in Auckland to get my photo taken, be finger-printed, and hand over about \$400. Once this was sorted it was a matter of getting to Denmark in time for Intro Week at the end of August

Accommodation

The International Office at Aarhus University guarantees every exchange student a room in any of the 3 choices; a University dormitory (Kollegium), a shared house, or subletting the room from a Dane who is on exchange somewhere else. I choose to live in Kollegium which proved to be great as it was home to both exchange students and Danes. I’d recommend on your housing application ticking the preference of living in “close proximity to Uni” as I know of some people who ended up being a 40min bus ride away from their classes. Kollegiums are different from Dunedin halls in that you have to cook for yourself, but this wasn’t an issue, and the communal kitchen/dining area were a great place to socialise. Some Kollegiums even have their own bars which host some great parties.

University Life/Work Load

University itself was fairly relaxed for me. I had a single class on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, each of these classes was 3 hours long but you got breaks every 45min so they didn't drag too much. Classes are like Otago tutorials and are very discussion orientated, which I liked. Being a native English speaker gives you a big advantage too as the classes I did had no assessment apart from either a 20min Oral Exam, or a 10page approx. take home essay. Each department at the University also has a "Friday Bar", which is a place where students, tutors and even lecturers go from 4pm on a Friday to drink some cheap beer and socialise. These were a great place to start the evening before heading out to the bars and clubs in the city.

Basically every student bikes to class so I quickly acquired a bike and joined in. Because Aarhus has a small condensed downtown with cobbled streets, and plenty of bars and cafes, my bike proved to be the most efficient way to get around everywhere, and was preferable to waiting for buses in the cold.

Money Matters

Denmark is a relatively expensive country, especially for things like going out for coffee. You soon learn where are the best places to shop, to eat or to party so don't let money be the reason that stops you going to Denmark. Aarhus University also gives Exchange students a 1000 Euro travel grant which is a nice incentive. Still make sure you save lots of money before you go to Denmark as extra expenses, or spur of the moment trips to Copenhagen, Norway or Sweden, pop up regularly.



Typical street in Aarhus

The canal in downtown Aarhus

Aarhus proved to be a great place for travelling to other European cities. With Ryanair flying from the nearby airport I was able to go on trips to Norway, Prague, Budapest, and Berlin before the month of travelling I did following the exchange itself.

Overall I had a fantastic experience in Aarhus. I made some terrific friends from both Denmark and other countries, and would recommend Aarhus to anyone. I'd advise any future exchangers to make a big effort to get to know some Danes, they are a great people despite being a little reserved at first, and it will make the exchange a richer experience if you can get fully immersed in Danish culture.