

Host Institution: University of Copenhagen, Semester 1 2017

Degrees: LLB and BA (History)

Living in Copenhagen:

Copenhagen is an amazing place to go on exchange! It's about the size of Auckland with 1 million people in the wider area, but it's an incredibly laid back and chill place. The culture, cafes, food and nightlife are all awesome, and there's nothing like cruising around the city on a bike with ease. Copenhagen is literally the best city for biking in the entire world. Almost everyone does it, there's bike lanes everywhere, and no one uses helmets because all the vehicles are super aware of bikes so it's really safe. If you need it, the public transport is also really modern and almost never too busy.

The Danes are maybe a bit reserved but super friendly. If you want to try pick up Danish you can, but basically everyone speaks perfect English so you never have to worry about not being able to communicate. Because its quite far north, not only is it quite cold in the Winter, the days are also insanely short. When I arrived in January the sun rose at about 10am and set before 4pm. On the plus side, once summer comes around the sun stays up until midnight. I definitely recommend going semester 1 if you can, because you get to see the city open up as winter ends and summer hits. Even in winter though, all the accommodation is pretty warm and you can ask the Danes about trying to create some Hygge.

The University:

Classes for history and law are in the south of Copenhagen at Amager, at a pretty much brand new campus. Other departments are spread over the city, but with a bike you can get pretty much anywhere pretty quickly. The workload is fairly similar to Otago, but most papers have only one assessment at the end that covers the whole course. I did two papers each counting for 2 at Otago, one just involving a written paper and the other had an oral exam. Oral exams are pretty common in Copenhagen. While they're a bit of a weird concept for us but they're really not too bad – you speak a bit on a question you're given, the lecturer asks you some questions and then you've wrapped up an entire paper in 20-30 minutes. Lectures are more like classes, and while they're often 2-3 hours long there's less of them, given you more free time. For Law you'll have to take papers at masters level, but they're pretty much the same difficulty level as here.

Practical Advice:

- Cost – Copenhagen is very expensive in some ways, but it's not too hard to keep your spending low if you're trying to:
 - Try not to eat out or get coffees too much, because these cost about twice as much as in NZ, the exception being kebabs and beer, which cost about half as much as in NZ. Supermarket prices are pretty similar to NZ if not cheaper, because fruit and vegetables don't become unaffordable during winter.
 - Bikes can cover pretty much all your transport costs. They are quite cheap and you can sell them before you leave, meaning you might only spend \$50 net for all your biking. Public transport, on the other hand, is *very* expensive, so try to buy a bike as soon as possible.

- Housing is also very expensive in Copenhagen, and you'll have to pay for most of your stay up front.
- **Bikes** – Buy a bike as soon as you possibly can. Not only will it save you from spending all your money on public transport, biking is the absolute best way to experience Copenhagen, and it lets you see so many more parts of the city more easily. Pretty much all the Danes and other exchanges students will have them, and you don't want to be the one person taking the metro while all your mates are biking.
 - There's lots of groups of Facebook for people selling second hand bikes, or you could see about getting one off an Otago student who went the semester before you. I bought mine off DBA, which is basically the Danish trademe, which is also worth checking out.
 - A lot of my friends had recurring mechanical issues with their bikes, but there's bike repair shops everywhere and they get things fixed really quickly so it's not too much of an issue, even if it adds a bit of expense.
 - Make sure you grab lights for your bike if they don't come with them – you can get fined for riding without them lights on after dark, and you can get them from any supermarket or bike shop.
 - Having a good lock is important as well, and theft is relatively common.
- **Housing** – Most likely you'll be getting your accommodation through the Housing Foundation. As part of your application to the University you just check a box on whether or not you want to go this route, the alternative being finding accommodation yourself. Doing it yourself is a bit risky and requires more effort, but could be worth it if you want to save money or live more authentically Danish.
 - The housing foundation basically provides housing on a first-in-first serve basis. All the exchange students get sent a link to the system at the same time (which probably means it will be at around 3am in NZ time), and you have to go in and pick from a number of rooms you've be offered before someone else gets them.
 - You'll know what day they're sending the link, so my single biggest recommendation is to make sure you stay up refreshing your email that night so you can get in quick. I fell asleep for about an hour, saw the email half an hour too late and got left with accommodation *way* more expensive than I planned for.
 - Make sure to think about your preferences beforehand so you can choose the best option for you quickly – you can see all the info on the housing foundation website.
 - I ended up in Basecamp, which couldn't have had a better location, right in the centre of the city right. I really liked it and there were a lot of other exchange students there, but it was crazy expensive, wasn't very social and I didn't meet many Danes. If you have the option of somewhere cheaper it's probably not worth it. If you get offered Tietgenkollegiet, take it without a second thought – it's quite possibly the best student hall in the entire world and it's not easy to get a place in.

Other Tips and Recommendations:

1. **Do the Pre-semester Language course if you can** – You'll have to arrive a month earlier, but it's an awesome way to meet people and get yourself accommodated to Denmark quickly. The best friends I made in Copenhagen I met either in the Language course or through people I knew from it. Plus the Danes appreciate if you give Danish a good go and it's a pretty interesting language.

2. Go to Roskilde Festival – The small town of Roskilde just west of Copenhagen turns into the fourth biggest city in Denmark for a week in mid July for its massive music festival. Its worth going for the experience alone, pitch as tent with some mates and have a week you won't forget. I just went for a day because I wanted to travel more during that time, and even that was pretty amazing.
3. Volunteer at Studenterhuset – Studenterhuset is a student run café in the middle of the city, and because it has big student discounts it's an affordable option for coffee and food. You can volunteer to work there which is a great way to meet other exchange students and get involved with things happening. They're really flexible about times you can work and the time commitment isn't too big.
4. Try to get a feel for all the different areas – All the districts of Copenhagen have different kinds of feels and the contrast is really sweet. Vesterbro is great for bars and clubs, Nørrebro has awesome food and great parks, Østerbro is a bit more upmarket while Amager in the south is a bit underrated cause there's some really good cafes and food. There's also Christiania, a small socialist district near the centre of the city where everybody lives communally – its completely different from the rest of the city, and for a while it was basically independent of Denmark. Copenhagen gets better and better the longer you stay there and a more thoroughly you explore it.
5. Explore Denmark – Travelling anywhere in Europe from Copenhagen is pretty cheap and super worth it (flights to London were as low as \$20 earlier in the year), but if you can seeing other parts of Denmark is really worth it. Aarhus is an awesome city, there's a Legoland in the north of Jutland, and the cliffs at Mons Klint a few hours south of Copenhagen are pretty incredible to name a few places.