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My Exchange Experience

Aarhus University was my second exchange, and it turned out to be a completely different experience from my first. I made numerous international and danish friends, had some incredible travel adventures, and studied some very unique and intriguing topics.

Aarhus quickly become my home, and I loved how much this small city had to offer.



Aarhus is filled with history, culture and activities, with the city's origins tracing back to the viking age. The city has much to offer, from Marselisborg the Danish Royal Summer Residence, a theme park, music and food festivals, botanical gardens and a relaxing cafe culture. In 2017 Aarhus will be the Culture Capital of Europe, and whilst there I grew to understand the magic behind this city. There's a wealth of great museums (including; AROS, Moesgaard and Den Gamble By), beautiful parks, beaches and countryside, as well as a busy student city atmosphere.

University

Whilst in Denmark I choose three papers, all at Masters level: Revenue Sources in Developing Countries, Danish Politics and Foreign Fighters, with two classes on Monday and one on Tuesday. Danish Politics was compulsory for all political science exchange students and whilst the class was quite slow, only exchange students choose the paper so it was a great opportunity to make friends.

I found all three courses to be informative, engaging and enjoyable. I especially loved my early morning Revenue Sources class, with our lecturers providing us with coffee to wake us up, then spending the lessons discussing concepts, theories and case studies. Throughout the semester we even had a number of guest speakers from related fields, who discussed their own projects and research in the Caribbean and Africa.



For the examination period, two of my classes were oral exams and one was a written paper. Oral exams were a new experience but being a native english speaker definitely helped. Overall I found the coursework manageable, with enough time to spend afternoons

hanging out at the park or beach with my exchange friends.

Language

At the beginning of the semester there is an option to sign up for a free Danish Language Course, with classes one or two times a week for the entire semester. And even if you choose not to participate it is helpful to at least learn the basics, though most Danish have excellent English.

Transportation

Denmark is known for being a very flat country, Aarhus on the other hand is actually quite hilly. I was very lucky living in the centre of town so never used the bus. Some of my friends whom lived further away from town bought bus passes for the semester, or bought the 10 trip tickets.

In my first week at Aarhus I bought a bike, and it was the best decision of my exchange. I managed to get in contact with my Danish Mentors previous Mentee, who sold me the bike before she left Denmark. I definitely appreciated the bike culture of Denmark and already miss the convenience and comfort of biking everywhere. My flatmate and I even went on biking trips around the city, to the beach, the deer park, and various other spots.

Accommodation

You can apply for International Housing through the International Housing Office. On your application there are three options: University dorm (Kollegium), a shared house, or subletting from a Dane who is on exchange somewhere else. I was very fortunate and got accommodation right in the centre of town, next to the Aarhus Cathedral at Rosensgaden Kollegium. My dorm was very well equipped, with a common room, outside patio, laundry room and fully stocked flats. I was essentially living in a flat, sharing a bathroom and kitchen with a fellow exchange student on the ground floor with five other flats in our building, and three buildings in total.

Other dorms are spread out across the city, with each one differing in style, size and student population. Some of my friends lived in international student dorms whilst others were in dorms for mainly Danish students. My flatmate and I were the only international students in our building,

Eating

Denmark is quite an expensive country, and eating out is especially expensive. I only ate out a handful of times, instead I cooked meals with my flatmate. We even hosted a few international dinners with our exchange friends, inviting people around, and asking them to bring a plate of food.

Social Life

One of the best things about Denmark, was the Friday bars. Every Friday all the student bars on campus open in the afternoon, providing an afternoon of games, conversations and cheap alcoholic drinks. All the different University departments have their own Friday bar in their canteens, so students and lecturers alike take the afternoon off to relax.

Another great attribute of Aarhus University, was their Danish Mentor system program. Every exchange student is given a mentor before they arrive, who helps them with issues before, during and after their exchange. I got paired with a really lovely mentor, Nadia, whom helped me find my accommodation initially, and became one of my good friends. The Political Science exchange

mentors organised a number of exchange events throughout the semester including: an easter party, an international dinner and a Friday bar tour.

Kapsejladsen

Kapsejladsen is one of the biggest, most exciting events of the year. You spend the day drinking, eating, hanging out with your friends and of course watching the race events. It's a beer boat race which entails a group of 5 from all the different university departments competing in a boat race across the small lake, drinking a beer, running around the beer 10 times before crossing the lake again. We had to get up very early in the morning to get a good spot next to the lake but it was well worth the effort. There are a number of other events and performances happening, with each team doing show on the lake with costumes, songs and dances. And even a fun event in which anyone can enter a naked run around the lake.

Travel

Aarhus itself does have an airport an hour away, with cheap flights to London available. It also possesses a relatively good transport system, with possibilities of buses and trains to Hamburg and Copenhagen taking 3 or 4 hours. From either of these two destinations you can find cheap flights all over Europe. I personally did a trip around the Baltics in the Easter holidays visiting: Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki. The flights were very cheap from Copenhagen and it was one of my favourite trips.

I thoroughly enjoyed my exchange to Denmark. Denmark has an enthralling outdoor culture, and I loved going on biking trips, hikes and picnics at the beach. I made a number of great friends from around the world, even visiting a few of them in their different home countries after my exchange finished. My exchange experience has made me a more confident, outgoing, adventurous and worldly person. I would highly recommend an exchange to everyone, and stress that no matter where you go, you will no doubt have an incredible experience.

