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Practical Advice

Visa
I suggest that you begin the visa process as soon as possible to avoid headaches if you live far from a Danish embassy. Unless you are going abroad for a whole year, a six month student visa is perfect. Aside from filling out the forms, I highly suggest that you make sure you have the required amount of sum in your account to support yourself because they do actually check that. I am unable to remember the actual cost of the visa, but it is split up into two payments. For the first part you pay online and create a case ID number along with choosing an in person appointment date. The other amount is to be paid in cash at the embassy before going through the rest of the process such as getting your pictures and biometrics taken.

Packing
I would not go overboard with packing, because you can always buy anything that you need once in Copenhagen. Unless it is something very sentimental that you can’t travel without, it’s always best to travel light.

Arrival/Orientation
One of the best things about Europe is the ease of travel within the Schengen area; meaning passport control is very lax. Being inside the Schengen area really minimizes interaction with immigration and I love it. I only really went through immigration in my connecting city, Dusseldorf, and once I arrived in Copenhagen; I just walked straight out after picking up my luggage. Once in country, the only interaction with immigration is registering with your local office to obtain your health, residency card and CPR number.

I would highly recommend signing up for the buddy system because you immediately have a friend and a point of reference to reach out to. My mentor was extremely helpful, on my first day; she picked me up from the airport, took me to my hostel and showed where to pick up my keys the following morning. She even wrote out directions for me on how to get to my dorm from the international office.

If you arrive a couple days before the pre-semester language class or even before the semester starts, you will find yourself on your own in terms of figuring out what you need to do. But once under the KU umbrella, you are provided with a list of everything from registering for your CPR number to when and where your department specific orientations are. The department specific orientations are more helpful, they are done on the campus where you will have your classes and it’s just a great opportunity to meet key people to reach out in times of need and your professors, of course.

Academics

The University
There are various KU campuses throughout the city, but more than likely you will have class in just one campus or two at most. The Danish language class was down in Amager but all of my other classes were around city center on the CSS campus. There’s no central campus like at CU, but the CSS campus I would say is the central one since it is home to a lot of different faculties and right in the heart of the city. But nothing is ever too far in Copenhagen when you hop on your bike. Each campus is equipped with labs, Wi-Fi and such. There are also various other libraries you can access around the city with your KU student card.

The fall semester is pretty standard but KU runs on a block system that mostly resembles quarters. Some of your classes will end after 8 weeks while others will be regular semester long courses. We had a fall break much like at Cornell and the only days we didn’t get off are the U.S. holidays that just don’t apply here.

Courses

Prior to arriving I signed up for my classes and I would recommend doing the same. KU does not have the easy add drop system that we do, but rather you have to fill out a form for each class and then email it to the proper class coordinator.

You will soon see the difference in education style; you might never get homework in some of your classes, while others might feel a bit like Cornell. The language course grade was based on attendance, and both an oral and written exam. As
for my other classes, the final grades are based on finals papers. But I can assure you that you most likely won’t be drowning in work and will have lots of time to travel and relax.

**Life Abroad**

If possible, I would suggest paying off the rent before you come to Copenhagen just to remove a huge portion off your plate. The cost of housing depends on which dorm you are assigned to but you will soon find that housing can be expensive. The dining halls do offer food at each of the campuses, but there’s no meal plan. So it becomes increasingly important for you to be able to budget for food. Eating out is an option, but more expensive and truly it’s more rewarding cooking for yourself and with friends. The best and cheapest way to get around the city is by bike, so plan on buying a bike within your first week if possible. There are resources at the university and the international office that can help you with where to buy your bike. There is also the metro and buses, which are easily accessible, but I have found that my bike is the best investment I made. Much like at Cornell, the number of books varies by classes, but I would say the books are cheaper than at CU.

Overall, Copenhagen is not a cheap place but there are lots of lower end grocery stores and shopping centers. It all depends on your diet and eating habits, but grocery shopping for about $40-50 a week is the ballpark I found for myself. Going out can be expensive, but there are lots of student friendly bars all throughout the city, and also bar nights at the university are always cheap.

**Language**

Danish is truly a hard language to learn and the Danes appreciate your efforts, but everyone and I mean EVERYONE speaks English. At school you will not run into communication issues at all. The Danes culturally can be very closed but friendly nonetheless. The countless times I have gotten lost around town, not once did I run into someone who refused to help or was unable to speak English.

I would highly recommend taking the language course; it’s a great way to make friends before the semester starts. But more importantly, even if you don’t retain much due to difficulty, you learn some valuable phrases that are helpful when shopping or just meeting Danes.

**Banking**

I opened a bank account with Nordea Bank while some of my friends chose Danske Bank. Both are student friendly and easy to set up. I found it useful while travelling across Europe and didn’t have to incur lots of fees on my foreign purchases. Opening up a local account is not absolutely necessary if your current bank does not charge insanely high fees for foreign transactions. Use your discretion!

I still used both my U.S debit and credit card while I was abroad as I would if I was back home. Also, you still need to use your debit card to withdraw money to be deposited into your local Danish bank account.

**Housing**

The host university arranged my housing for me. You can apply for housing through the international office or through your specific department of study. I live in a studio apartment style dorm room. It is equipped with my own shower and kitchen and cookware. All of the rooms are singles so much of the effort is on you to socialize but you will find it easy to meet people. Location-wise, my dorm is perfect, I am a 15-minute bus ride and 10-minute bike ride from the center of town. If you haven’t applied for housing yet, I would highly recommend you putting down Keops as one of your choices.

I am unsure of the exact monthly rent but it’s about $700 utilities included. But monthly housing cost can be higher or lower depending on the dorm you are assigned to. No meal plan like we are used to at CU but all of the campuses have dining halls and you can buy food. But I found it easier and better to cook my own food.

**Transportation**

There are various options in terms of the cards you can buy for public transportation. When I first arrived I bought a 10-ride card for 150 DK to get to and from my language course, but I never had to buy another one once I bought my bike. You can also get a student monthly card that is good for the metro, buses and the S-Tog and there is also a pay as you go card that you can refill at your convenience. You can buy the 10-ride cards at convenient stores like 7-11 and as for the other cards you can use an automated machine.

**Health and Safety**

Not once did I feel unsafe walking around the city or near my residency hall. I am still amazed of the low number of cop cars I saw during my semester in Copenhagen. I have not had any incidents regarding muggings, harassment or anything remotely close. I am always comfortable walking or biking around late at night. Just like in any new place, be aware and alert, not because something bad will happen to you but simply because it’s good practice.

I wish I got sick, which is a bad thing to say, but I would have loved to make use of the free healthcare that is available to everyone. Bring the essential cold medications from home as they can be different in Europe, but I would not freak out too much. The health card you are given has your personal doctor’s number on it and you can always call to schedule an
appointment. As always, if it’s something more serious, call for emergency.

**Overall exchange experience**

I am very adamant about taking full advantage of networking and meeting people. They say the Danes are very reserved, but once you have a Danish friend, you have one forever. I didn’t make it my mission to have Danish friend, but it just worked out over time. In light of that, the best thing about being abroad is all the friends I made and being able to say I have a friend just about anywhere in the world. Along the way you get lost in big European cities that are not on a grid system and you have to just learn to not freak out. Overall, it was a process of learning about myself while being exposed to a new culture. Perspectives do change, but it’s only because you leave your host country and the places you visit having learn so much about life back in the States.

Academically, I was exposed to a different style of education, a bit more relaxed but equally effective. I can honestly say that at times I was not looking forward to returning to Cornell, not out of fear but more so I have become accustomed to not being bombarded with work the past 4 months. Flying into CPH a part of me was afraid I would not have fun or meet people or go to the places I wanted to. I was also afraid of starting over, I felt like a freshmen again. I had to do all the registering, shopping around among other things, and I was terrified I wouldn’t be able to quickly adjust and settle in. Turns out it’s really not difficult and not scary at all!

**Tips for future students**

The nerves will kick in as you get closer, but know and believe that you are about to embark on the greatest journey of your young life. Being abroad is what you make it, the more you put yourself out there and meet people, the more accomplished you will feel.