Personal information

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Major: Landscape Architecture
Name of host university: University of Copenhagen
Period/Time of Exchange: Spring Semester

Practical Advice

Visa
For a visit to Denmark that exceeds 90 days, you are required to obtain a residence permit. This process can be done before hand or while in Denmark. I personally took care of it prior to my departure (I suggest 1-2 months ahead of time). This does involve a trip to New York City to visit the consulate within 14 days after submitting your ST1 application, so I would advise planning accordingly. Taking care of this beforehand was very beneficial because within 4 days of my arrival in Copenhagen, I had a valid Danish ID (so I didn’t have to carry around my passport) and my health care card soon after. Overall, the process requires time but is worth completing prior to your departure to ensure a stress-free time in Copenhagen.

Housing
The University of Copenhagen helps students find housing through the Housing Foundation. An email is sent to students on a specific day, giving them access to an online portal to select housing. I highly suggest doing research on the Housing Foundation website to ensure that you find an apartment/dorm that fits your needs. My apartment was in the Nordre Fasanvej Kollegiet—it was a quiet but pleasant area to live in, especially if your classes are in the Frederiksberg Campus (this is where Landscape Architecture studio courses are) as it is only a 5 minute bike ride away. There is also a Fakta (a small supermarket) on the ground floor of the building which was extremely convenient.

Arrival
The university has a mentor program, however, this is often hit or miss—some of my friends had mentors who turned out to be valuable resources upon their arrival and throughout the program. Mine, however, did not reach out to me. I arrived in Copenhagen on January 2nd—the airport was easy to navigate and I did not experience any issues at immigration. In order to avoid the stress of figuring out the public transportation system (which in retrospect is extremely simple), I took a cab from the airport to the Housing Foundation to pick up my keys—this was a bit expensive but was worth the peace of mind of not getting lost. The Faculty of Science did not have orientation until late January, however, I highly suggest taking the Pre-Semester Danish Language Course. It is a sure fire way to make friends and pick up a bit of the language. Additionally, Danes are extremely friendly, so if at any point during your arrival, you get lost or need help figuring something out, don’t be afraid to ask (and they all speak English!).

Academics

The University
The University of Copenhagen has different campuses for each college, or faculty, throughout the city. I had classes at two different campuses: the KUA2 campus in Amager for my pre-semester language course and Danish Culture Course, and in the Frederiksberg Campus for my studio course.

Each campus has a different atmosphere so I would certainly take the time to explore them and get involved if possible. The Frederiksberg campus, which was where I spent the most time had some activities but they were mainly advertised to year-round students. Studenterhuset, a student cafe and bar is a hub for activities that many exchange students get involved with, including social events.

Courses
Enrolling in classes was a relatively stress-free experience that took place a week before the start of classes in late-January / beginning of February (this excludes the Danish Language Course which I enrolled in prior to arriving in Copenhagen). It was no problem getting into the classes that I needed and it did not seem to be an issue for anyone else, however, I highly suggest planning ahead of time which courses you plan on enrolling in.
In addition to the pre-semester Danish Language Course (3.5 hours/weekday for 3 weeks in January), I took a Danish Culture Course in Urban Design and Architecture (1 weekly class, 2 hours long), and my Landscape Studio Design course. This studio course, like Landscape Architecture studios at Cornell are time intensive, but are extremely manageable. For landscape architect majors, I would highly suggest this pairing of classes (pre-semester language course, Danish culture course, and studio) as it meets the requirements, is very manageable with workload, and it means you are done with classes around mid-late April. I really enjoyed this because I stayed for a month after my classes ended, which gave me time to work on my final exams and enjoy the city without worrying about class.

Classes at the University of Copenhagen are graded on a 12 point system. Many classes had a grading system that put its main emphasis on the final exam, however, your performance throughout the course is held to high standards. My exams consisted of an oral and written exam for my language course, a final essay for the culture course, and a final presentation for the studio course.

**Difference between studying at Cornell and at your host university**

Studying at the University of Copenhagen in comparison to Cornell is quite different, especially for Landscape Architecture majors. At Cornell, landscape architects have grown fond of late night hours in the studio, toiling away for sleep deprived pinups. This, however, is not a common occurrence in Copenhagen. Studio courses, although they are time intensive, are organized to have students work between the hours of 9AM-4PM on weekdays. For most of the semester, this was the expectation from both the students and the professors. As a result, the professor’s expectation reflected this time frame appropriately, resulting in an effectively creative and productive environment that did not exceed this time frame. I only stayed past 4PM to work on my project a few times throughout the semester, which lead to a great and healthy relationship with my academics—I looked forward to working on my project, and equally enjoyed my time off in which I didn’t have to think about academics. This structure is highly valued in Denmark and it is one of the main reasons why I enjoyed the academic nature of the university.

Bachelor students also take Masters courses (as they are the only ones taught in English in the Faculty of Science) so my studio course was a Master’s level class. This, however was not an issue, Cornell landscape architect students are very well prepared for these courses.

**Life Abroad**

**Language**

Enrolling in the pre-semester Danish language course was certainly one of the best decisions I made! I arrived in early January and it was a 3 week long course that was effective in teaching you basic Danish language skills. In addition, nearly everyone in Denmark speaks English fluently, so language barrier is often not an issue in everyday conversations. In addition, the Danes, at least the ones I had the pleasure of interacting with on a daily basis, were excited and enjoyed speaking in English to me.

Learning the basics of the language, however, proved to be very beneficial in reading signs, menus, and learning when to say yes/no to store cashiers. People in Denmark are very friendly and are more than willing to speak in English.

**Health and Safety**

Upon becoming a resident and obtaining your CPR number (Danish equivalent of a SSN), you receive free health care and are assigned a local doctor. I was fortunate enough to only fall ill once during my stay in Denmark, and scheduling an appointment was incredibly simple. I showed up, scanned my health card at the counter, and within 20 minutes I had left with a prescription to the medications I needed which only cost me a few dollars at the pharmacy.

Denmark is an extremely safe country, and the city of Copenhagen is no exception. Throughout my months abroad, I did not feel that I was in any danger and all of my friends had the same experience. Even walking around at night felt safe, which gave me a lot of peace of mind. Commonly, European cities are known for their scammers and pick-pockets, however, I did not experience anything of this nature and it is something that is very uncommon in Copenhagen all together.

**Overall exchange experience**

Study abroad is a time for growth, both on a personal and academic level—this certainly was true for my abroad experience. Copenhagen provides an ideal atmosphere to focus on this growth among great academics with all of the perks of living in a Danish city. Copenhagen was a great choice—I never felt that I had run out of things to do and explore. In addition, I fell in love with the lifestyle and culture, appreciating how efficient and happy the city was everyday. I highly
I recommend considering study abroad in Copenhagen.

**Additional Tips for future students**

**Packing**
If you are traveling to Denmark during the Spring semester, I would advise bringing mainly winter clothing. Ithaca has prepared Cornellians well to endure Danish weather. It does not get as cold in Copenhagen as it does in Ithaca, however, the weather is **consistently** cold. Copenhagen is not very snowy (only snowed a few times and it melted within a day) but is mainly overcast and rainy so be sure to pack rain gear and waterproof shoes (my Blundstones were a lifesaver in keeping my feet warm and dry). We began to have nicer days as we got well into May, but warm clothing was a must throughout the majority of the semester so I would suggest mainly bringing pants. Consider winter biking gear including gloves, hats, etc. as the Danes will bike in any weather. Danish style often revolves around black, white, and gray colors, so it is easy to blend in, but this should not deter you from expressing your style and wearing the colors you want.

Be sure to keep in mind any travel destinations you might have during your time abroad and pack clothing that is also appropriate for those places.

**Embracing the culture**

Danish people are very respectful and trusting—this is something that should be taken to heart. The entire city operates incredibly efficiently, and this is mainly as a result of people respecting the rules and being composed and organized.

It is rare to see people jay-walking—the Danes will wait until the crosswalk light has turned green before crossing the road even in the middle of the night. The same applies for biking—always follow the traffic signals (and learn your hand signals!).

The Danes are often quite reserved and shy people. This means that public areas and public transportation are often very quiet and it is important to be aware and respectful of this.

Additionally, the Danes are incredibly trusting people—it is important not to break this trust. Having American debit/credit cards sometimes resulted in unpredictable troubles at the register. I had this happen to me twice; once at a coffee shop and again at a grocery store—in both occurrences, the cashiers took out their own bank cards to pay and insisted for me not to worry and to come back another day and try the payment again. These manners are rooted in living in trusting communities, and because of this, it is important to always honor your word in these situations.

**Get yourself a bike!**

In order to fully immerse yourself into the Danish Culture, I believe it is a **must** to ride a bike; even if it’s not your forte, it is all part of the Copenhagen adventure. The city’s infrastructure is extremely bike friendly (there are bike lanes on every road) and it is the fastest way to get around the city. It may take some getting used to, however, within a few weeks you will be riding like one of the Danes. I purchased my bike by going into a few bike shops to see if they had used biked available, however, it is much easier to join some of the buy and sell Facebook groups for Copenhagen students and find a bike there. A reliable bike can be easily be purchased from around 700DKK - 1000DKK (keyword here is **reliable** because some repairs can get expensive!).

In addition to getting a bike, I would also suggest getting a Rejsekort (Travel Card) that works on the train, bus, and metro. Money can be loaded onto it at metro and train stations and the system is extremely easy to use. This is a great fall back in case of a flat tire / bike malfunction and it comes in handy if you get caught in some rain, which is sure to happen.