Practical Advice

Visa

In terms of obtaining a visa, I don’t recommend stressing about it and filling out the paperwork ahead of time. I was one of the few other American students in my program who filled out their visa information ahead of time. Most international students simply went to the international office/visa center in Copenhagen and applied there. Not to mention I don’t think I ever received my CPR number and residence card due to a miscommunication somewhere between New York City where I filled my permit out and Copenhagen. The only thing I would mention about the visa and obtaining it in Copenhagen or NYC is that you have to have EXACT change. If you do not pay correctly it will not go through and you will not receive a refund so double check that you have enough money when you are doing this. I cannot remember the exact cost, but I think it was somewhere around $260.00.

Packing

Pack for all types of weather. I mainly packed winter clothes because I came in the winter, but now I am wishing that I had more clothes for the warmer days. I recommend packing lightly though, you will want to buy clothes when you arrive, but anything you need from home you can find here, I had no problems. Though everything is more expensive here so keep that in mind.

Arrival

Arriving in Copenhagen was a little stressful for me. I arrived on a Sunday, meaning that the housing office was closed, so I had to arrange to pick my key up at a random location in the middle of the city. I recommend that if you have the opportunity, find out how to get in touch with your roommates and have them pick your key up. I would also recommend getting a buddy, I never had one but my friends who did said that they enjoyed the experience.

Academics

The University

Copenhagen University is set up in the exact opposite way Cornell is, there is no large campus, rather there are four campuses placed in different areas of the city. When I was first informed of this I was uncertain whether I would be comfortable with this, however I soon found that having multiple campus locations in different areas of the city allows for students to become involved with the area around them and not isolate themselves from the rest of the community. It is also very easy to bike from each one of the campuses; you are never more than 20 minutes away from one of your classes.

Another brilliant thing about having multiple campuses is that there are multiple libraries, meaning that you can study closer to your house or explore new areas of the city. Personally, I have enjoyed studying in cafés around school, they usually have free Internet if you buy a coffee and it is a lovely atmosphere to do work in.

Courses

I enrolled in the classes online at the KU website. I also was required to email instructors for my Theory and Method Class. Final grades are based on a few things; for Danish it was one written and one Oral examination; and for my other two classes it was one final paper.

Life Abroad

Language

In Denmark it is uncommon for people not to speak English, I have never ran into a place where I have had any problems communicating with someone. All of my classes were taught in perfect English, and all of my friends also speak great English. Although everyone speaks English in Copenhagen, I still think that it is important to take Danish because it gives you an appreciation for the language and allows you to attempt to try to converse with locals.

Banking
When I was abroad a few of my friends set up banks at various Danish banks however I found that to be too much work, especially if you’re only staying for a semester. It’s easier to simply withdraw money in large sums and pay for things in cash. Most stores also accept major credit cards, I have never run into problems accessing my money.

Housing

Housing was provided for me at Copenhagen University and I was offered a multitude of selection ranging from apartments, to various collegiums. I ended up living in an apartment provided by the University. I could not tell you what the rent was for my room however I believe it was comparable to what I would pay back home for an apartment. There are no meal plans to speak of here in Copenhagen, I have cooked all my meals myself.

Transportation

In the city of Copenhagen public transportation is awesome. There is a metro, train and bus system that allows one to easily make their way through the city. However transportation passes are rather expensive, it’s much more cost effective to bike or walk. Copenhagen is a small city and there is no real need to use the transportation system if you have a bike. I know that the public transportation has a monthly card to use; however I have no idea how much that costs because it was not worth the money for me to use it.

Social activities

There are a variety of social activities that the international program puts on for students. I have been to quite a few in the beginning and they were fun, but one of my favorite experiences here in Copenhagen was working at the student run bar called Studenter Huset. Here, I met a lot of my friends, and also was able to brush up on my Danish by speaking with locals at the bar. If you have any interest in bartending I highly recommend applying, the hours are very flexible and the work is far from overwhelming.

Shopping

Let me start off by saying that Copenhagen is an expensive city, but this is not something that should push you away from living there because it is an absolutely amazing place! However, because it is expensive you have to be strategic on how to spend your money. I would say be prepared to have a budget close to $600.00 a month, you could do it for less I’m certain however I find that I like to overestimate my budget. In this $600.00 I include food, other living essentials and bar money. One of the best ways that I have found to save money is by cooking with friends, this way the meal is less expensive and you can meet new people. During my stay I cooked with friends almost every night.

Health and Safety

I have never felt safer in a city. I lived close to the red light district, which one would normally associate as being a pretty dodgy place, however I always felt safe in my neighborhood. Copenhagen does a very good job ensuring that its streets are safe. As for health care, once you have your CPR number it’s very easy for one to receive medical attention, I never needed medical attention but I have taken a few friends to doctors and it was amazing how simple and easy their health care system is.

Overall exchange experience

For anyone who is still on the fence about deciding whether to study abroad, let me just say DO IT! Going aboard is one of the best experiences that I have had in college. I have met so many interesting people, made so many new friends and have had so many unique opportunities afforded to me that I would have never been able to come across at home. For instance, one evening I went to an international lecture night centering around the topic of the Armenian Genocide, and at the end of the talk I ended up having dinner with the Armenian Ambassador! From that evening alone I learned more from one dinner than I have in an entire semester of diversity courses back at Cornell.

Each day I was abroad I woke up excited for what the new day had to offer. I was even excited going to class because each day, I got to meet different people and learn how to experience what we were learning through person’s eyes. Not only did working with other student’s interest me, but I have also found that the classes I took had many more hands on opportunities for me to experience. For instance, in my architecture and urban planning classes, we had assignments where we were instructed to go to a specific part of the city, get a coffee and observe the atmosphere.

Going abroad provided me with a variety of new relationships, but it also has also proven to me how easy it is to live in a city, overseas. Prior to studying abroad, I had traveled to Europe before, but could never imagine living comfortably in Europe. I always associated Europe as a place for me to simply visit. However, after the first few weeks, I began to fall in love with Copenhagen, and Europe itself. Its amazing how easy it is to travel on weekends once you arrive in Europe, and its even more amazing to me that each time I traveled away from Copenhagen, I started to miss it towards the end of my weekend vacation. Copenhagen has become more than a place to study abroad for me, it has become a home and I cannot wait to visit again one day soon!

For future abroad students the only advice I have is to have an open mind. Being open minded has allowed me to experience so many new things and these new things have made this European experience worth it. If I was not open minded, I would have never gotten a job working at a bar, I
would have never met the Armenian ambassador, and I would not have made as many friends as I did. Being abroad is a privilege and if you can make time to experience this privilege, it is worth every dollar you spend.