

# International Student's Survival Guide to Life in Denmark



**byStudents**

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Please note: At the time of publication, all links are working.  
If you stumble upon a link that isn't working, a mistake or  
missing information, please let us know via e-mail, thanks!  
[contact@bystudents.dk](mailto:contact@bystudents.dk)

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# Welcome to Denmark

You have decided to study in Denmark, and for that we salute you. We hope that you will enjoy your stay.

We know that acclimatising to a new country and a new city can be complicated – and we know that the Danes can be a little weird at times, so this book will give you tips, insights and background information on how to experience the best possible student life in Denmark.

In each chapter you will find useful information, tips and tricks, fun (and not so fun) facts about Denmark, and a variety of links and places to get even more information.

This book is a guide to many different aspects of Danish student life. It is not comprehensive, but we have tried to cover as much ground as possible. We will give you tips, information and where-to-go places, but we will not be able to solve every problem that you encounter.

We hope this book will give you the tools and knowledge needed to solve your problems on your own.

We believe this will be a better help than any quick fixes.

If you have any questions and don't know where to go, our best tip is simple: Ask a Dane!

Approach one of your Danish classmates and ask them how they find their way around your university's intranet, how they navigate MitID, or where they bought their bike. They know these things better than any book ever could, and the best cultural knowledge is gained through meeting people – so ask for information and help when needed.

Before you plan your trip to Denmark, remember to check if your new university offers pre-semester introduction events and language classes. If they do, we recommend you participate in those, as they will give you the best start to your stay here.

We hope that you will have fun, learn a lot, and enjoy your experiences as a student in Denmark.

For more information about studying in Denmark:

[www.studyindenmark.dk](http://www.studyindenmark.dk)

## Greetings from byStudents!

byStudents works to improve student life for all students in Copenhagen and Denmark. We do this by focusing on communities, engagement, and city life.

Students are the core of byStudents. Our board of governors consists of students, all our projects are developed in collaboration with students, and it is students who provide input and meaning to everything we do.

We believe that the quality of students' lives can be improved if everyone has access to meaningful communities, can find relevant opportunities to engage with the world around them, and live in a city that welcomes all students - both newcomers and those who have been here for a long time.

byStudents is for all students regardless of their educational institution, expertise, and interests. We offer the opportunity to be part of a community.



QR to digital version

**byStudents**

## You're not alone! Even when you might feel like it

Moving to a new city can be tough. Moving to a different country and culture altogether can be even tougher.

Surveys indicate that about one in four of the international students in Denmark have experienced loneliness during their stay. However, this is not only a problem for international students – similar surveys from 2020, show that about one in six of Danish students also feel lonely at university.

Student loneliness may be caused by the fragmented university structure and the lack of centrally located social activities.

If you want to counter this, there are many ways to get involved at your university, in your city, and through the local Student Houses (Studentarhus).

See chapter 6 for more ideas.





# Culture shock

ARRIVING IN A NEW COUNTRY can result in both practical and personal issues. Some people even talk about experiencing an actual "culture shock". Here are some tips on how to make your first time in a new culture easier and more enjoyable.

Although Denmark is a well-organised country and people here are eager to make you feel comfortable, you will need some time to settle in. There may be times when you question why you left home, which is likely similar to what your fellow students are feeling.

When this happens, it is important for you to remember that you are going through a learning process. By accepting this brief adaptation period as a learning experience, you will ultimately return home with greater self-confidence and the skillset to succeed in a multicultural environment.

So keep active, engage in social opportunities, talk to people and try to learn Danish.

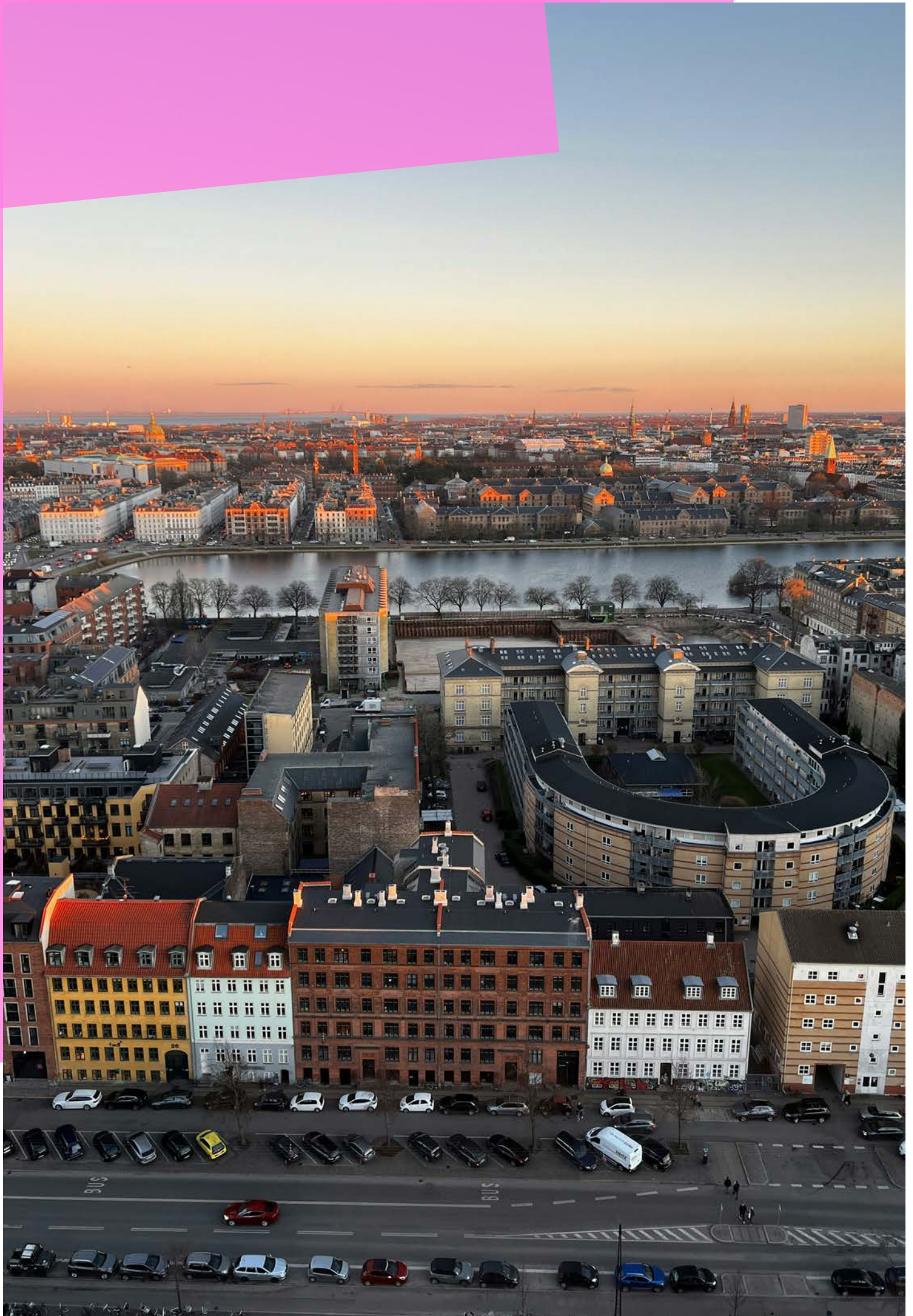
Remember: you are not alone in experiencing this. Talking about your feelings and worries is the best way to deal with loneliness or homesickness.

## Here are some tips on easing yourself into a new culture

- Accept that you cannot know everything about your new country and language
- Keep an open mind
- Try to do things that you did at home
- Stay in touch with family and friends at home
- Talk to other students about how you feel
- Stay active by getting involved in nearby clubs (foreninger), or by joining a sports team.
- Some of your Danish classmates are probably also new to your city. They might be interested in investigating the city together

[www.studyindenmark.dk](http://www.studyindenmark.dk)



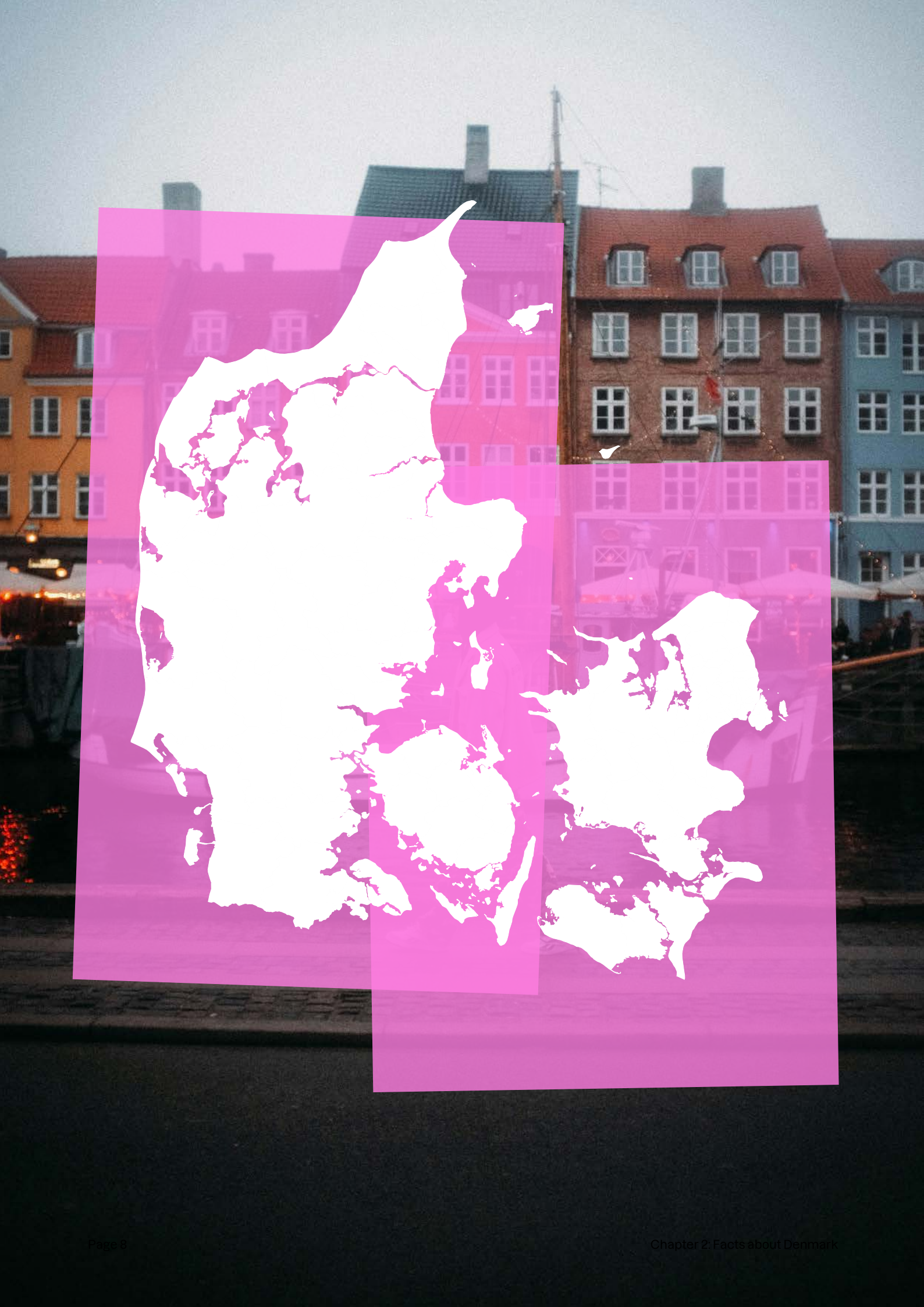


The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent pink geometric shapes, including rectangles and polygons, arranged in a dynamic, abstract pattern. These shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from a light pink to a more vibrant magenta.

Chapter 2

# Facts about Denmark







# Denmark at a glance

DENMARK. Home of Hans Christian Andersen, Tivoli, LEGO, beer, pastries and hygge.

On the surface it's hard not to see Denmark as a tiny cute country, mostly known for its fairytales and tourist attractions... unless you arrive in January. Then you'll probably notice the grey, rainy and cold weather, and crazy Danes who will bike to class regardless of snowstorms and rain.

Denmark is a lot of things, and we hope that you will discover a great deal of those things during your stay here.

## Geography

Denmark consists of the Jutland (Danish: Jylland) peninsula and 443 named islands linking Northern Europe and Scandinavia via the Øresund bridge. Copenhagen (Danish: København), the country's capital, is situated on the biggest island in Denmark, called Zealand (Danish: Sjælland). You can find Funen (Danish: Fyn), a slightly smaller island, between Zealand and Jutland.

The big university cities are Aalborg and Aarhus in Jutland, Syddansk on Funen and the Greater Copenhagen area (including Roskilde and Lyngby) on Zealand.



## Danish demography

Denmark has a population of almost 6 million people. Copenhagen is the biggest city with a little over 1,3 million inhabitants, followed by Aarhus (approx. 290.000 inhabitants), Odense (approx. 180.000) and Aalborg (approx. 120.000).

Most of Denmark's population can be described as middle class, and there is little divide between most people's living conditions, compared to other western countries.

Around 85% of the Danish population is considered "of Danish descent", meaning that they have one or two Danish parents. The remaining 15% of the population is a mix of Western and Non-Western immigrants, guest workers and refugees.

It is mandatory that all Danish kids receive at least nine years of education, normally until the age of 15 or 16, resulting in a 99% literacy rate in Denmark.

Government-funded education is free of charge and open to all. 60% of all Danes between the ages of 15 and 69 have a higher-level education.

## Climate

DENMARK IS SITUATED in the temperate zone, and has a coastal climate, resulting in generally mild temperatures that rarely become too cold or too hot. Winters seldom get much colder than 0 to -10 degrees Celsius.

The weather tends to be mixed throughout the year in terms of sun, wind and rain, but be prepared for wonderful sunny, rainy, and grey days, and then those days where it simply feels like you're about to get blown away by a storm. Get a pair of rainboots, a raincoat and a big scarf, and remember that layers are the way to go all year round.

Due to Denmark's geographical placement, which is quite north, we have short days in the winter (from 9-16 around



winter solstice) and long days and bright nights in the summer. This results in a lot of indoor cosiness (hygge) in the winter and outdoor fun in the summer.

Outdoor life is an important part of enjoying life in Denmark, even if it's just biking through the city on your way to university – so be prepared for that. Get a bike, and pack some warm clothes that will enable you to go outside and enjoy yourself regardless of the weather.

If you don't have winter or autumn clothes with you, you can find shops with affordable options in all cities. A cheap alternative will often be second-hand shops that can be found in almost all Danish cities.

## Religion

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM is a constitutional right in Denmark. The country's official state religion is Christianity, in the form of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark (Dansk Folkekirke). In this respect Denmark is a non-secular state; however, atheism and most religions are represented within Danish society, and religion is rarely mentioned in political or state matters.



The second largest religion is Islam, which has witnessed an increase since the 1980s as a result of immigration. There are Jewish, Muslim and different Christian congregations in the bigger cities, so contact them, if you are interested in getting involved.

Most Danes see themselves as secular in their daily lives, and church attendance is generally low. Religion plays little role in most people's life choices, and it can actually be seen as a social faux pas to discuss religion at length with people you don't know very well. Most Danes prefer to keep their religious preferences private, so maybe don't bring it up as the first topic when meeting new people.

## Language Courses

The majority of universities in Denmark offer tuition free Danish language courses for exchange students as pre-semester classes or in the beginning of the semester.

Be aware that you need to pay a deposit to enroll. The deposit is normally 2000 DKK and will be refunded when you complete the course.

Check with your local International Office or Student Hub if language courses are not mentioned in your admittance package. There are usually also short courses offered just before the semester starts. If you would like to continue studying Danish, there are private and public centres offering Danish language courses.

Contact your local Citizen Service Center to get specific information about your options. Remember to ask about tuition fees and deposit requirements when signing up for continued language courses.

### Read more

The Danish language centre: <https://dedanskesprogcentre.dk/english/>

From the Danish public portal: <https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/leisure-and-networking/Danish-language-training>

Copenhagen language centre: <https://www.studieskolen.dk/en/dansk/koebenhavns-sprogcenter>



# Transportation and getting around town

WITHIN THE CITIES, biking, walking, and taking public transportation are more than enough to get you around town in the larger cities.

You'll find that Danes bike everywhere and in all kinds of weather. If you have only just learned how to ride a bike upon coming to Denmark, be careful with learning the rules of the road, so that you don't hurt yourself or others. In some Danish cities, the Red Cross occasionally organises "bike schools" for foreigners.

If you know how to ride a bike, find an affordable yet reliable one. You can buy a new one, go on Facebook or dba.dk (similar to eBay) to find an affordable used one or rent one at e.g. Swapfiets.dk or Donkey Bike. Ask your classmates where they got theirs.

## The most important basic cycling rules are:

- Always use a bike lane
- Keep to your right, so people can pass by you
- Use hand signals. Put your hand up in the air to signal that you are stopping and put your arm to signal to your right before turning right
- Get off your bike and walk on pavements or pedestrian crossings
- Look over your left shoulder before you overtake other cyclists
- Put on your bike lights after dark so that you don't get fined
- A white light at the front and a red light at the back are required

It is illegal to make a direct left turn at an intersection. Ride straight across to the opposite right corner of the intersection, stop and wait for the traffic light to turn green before you go. Give way to pedestrians at intersections, traffic lights and bus stops.

Signal when you turn and stop, stop for red lights and you should always stay to your right in the bike lane or as far right on the road as is safely possible.

It is not mandatory to wear a helmet in Denmark, but keep your brain safe and get a proper one that fits you and has the CE

certificate (a sticker inside the helmet with CE, stating that it's approved). It can save your life.

For safety reasons, we recommend that you do not listen to loud music, and know that the use of your mobile phone while biking is illegal.



City E-bikes and E-scooters have also become a thing in major Danish cities. These are great for a quick trip if you have already downloaded the app for them, but they can add up and be a bit expensive. The rules of the road on a scooter are the same as stated for cycling.

In the bigger cities, buses, metros, and local trains are all good reliable options for transportation. In Aarhus and Odense, you also have the Light Rail (in Danish: Letbanen), which is a great alternative to other means of transportation.

Across Denmark, there are trains (check out DSB's "Orange" tickets), ferries, and coach services that you can take. Train lines run between the different regions.

The app and website "Rejseplanen"/ [www.rejseplanen.dk](http://www.rejseplanen.dk) (translates to "the travel plan/itinerary") is a great tool to plan your trip, and provide you with an overview of public transport options.

You must have a valid ticket or commuter card when using public transportation. Be aware that the fines for riding without one are high in all cities. See chapter 3 about transportation for more information about travel documents.

Outside the cities people often travel by car, and most families have at least one. It is expensive to own a car in Denmark due to high car taxes, high fuel prices, expensive parking and high insurance costs, so few students own one. But there are services which allow cheap car rental and car-pooling like GoMore.



# Things to see and do in your university city

## Aalborg

**CARNIVAL** In the last week of May each year, Aalborg turns up the heat for the biggest carnival in Northern Europe with 60.000 parade participants in extraordinary costumes and over 100.000 cheering spectators.

**THE SINGING TREES** Park in Aalborg where international music stars have planted a tree that "plays" a musical creation by the various artists at the push of a button.

**SKAGEN** The Northern-most point of Denmark with spectacular nature, a sand-buried church, and the possibility of standing with a foot in the two different seas that meet at the tip of Skagen.

[www.enjoynordjylland.com/aalborg](http://www.enjoynordjylland.com/aalborg)



## Aarhus

### AROS

The huge museum of modern art in Aarhus has both permanent and visiting exhibitions. It is famous for Ron Mueck's statue "Boy" and Olafur Eliasson's "Your Rainbow Panorama", from which you can see Aarhus from above, tinted by all colours of the rainbow.

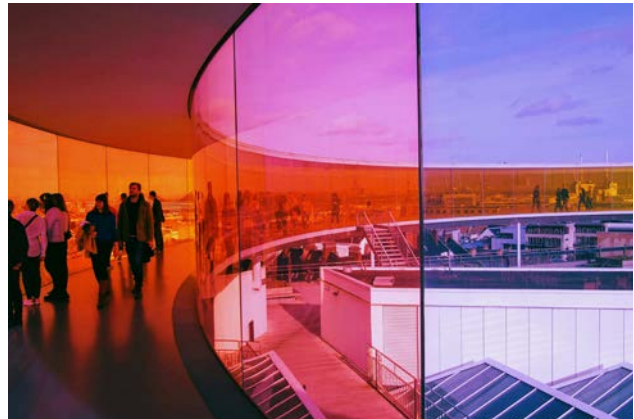
### AARHUS FESTUGE

For 10 days in August/September all of Aarhus is bustling with art, theatre, dance, music, and too many events to mention in the cultural melting pot that is known as Aarhus Festuge, which translates to Festival Week.

### BAZAR VEST

If you venture out to the Western Aarhus suburb Gellerup-parken, you'll come across Bazar Vest. Here you can find food, spices and groceries from all over the world in the market hall, showcasing the multicultural Aarhus at its finest.

[www.visitaarhus.com](http://www.visitaarhus.com)



## Odense

### H.C. ANDERSEN'S HOUSE

The famous Danish writer grew up here, and there are plenty of references to his stories in the city. You can e.g. visit Eventyrhaven (translated: the fairytale garden) or join the H.C. Andersen festival in August.

### BRANDTS

Museum of Art and Visual Culture – The central city art centre and museum is a great place for everyone who is interested in art, photography, and culture.

### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Several small or large festivals take place in Odense, amongst those the study-start festival Generator Festival, the Havnekulturfestival (translated: Harbor Culture Festival) or the Femi Festival.

[www.visitodense.com](http://www.visitodense.com)



# Roskilde

## ROSILDE FESTIVAL

The biggest music festival in Scandinavia and a constant for many Danish students, where they camp out with their friends. In the last week of June, the whole city of Roskilde changes to cater to the 130,000 participants, and is immersed with festival goers. The festival has 4 full days of music from different genres, and is filled with cultural activities, great food and happenings. You can buy single day or partout tickets, or join as one of the over 30,000 volunteers who make the festival run!

## VIGEN BEACH

North of Roskilde, you will find a go-to favorite for all the locals. Vigen Beach offers a sandy beach with surrounding green meadows where you can go swimming.

## ROSILDE CATHEDRAL

Experience a magnificent church and an architectural masterpiece. 1000 years of Danish history are gathered here under beautifully decorated vaults and in dark crypts. The cathedral is a UNESCO world heritage site.

[www.visitfjordlandet.dk/en/areas/roskilde](http://www.visitfjordlandet.dk/en/areas/roskilde)



# Copenhagen

**TIVOLI AND BAKKEN** The two oldest operating amusement parks in the world. There is a lot to experience and enjoy in both. During any season of the year, the atmosphere in Tivoli Gardens is magical.

**SUMMER BARBECUES IN THE PARKS** Use one of the many stationary grills located in the parks. Bring your own food and enjoy any beverages you would like. There are no laws against open containers, but remember to clean up afterwards.

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS** From documentaries at CPH:DOX to Distortion's massive block parties and CPH Fashion Week, there's a festival for every taste and type in Copenhagen. Keep an eye out for upcoming ones on posters and banners in the street or programs in cafés.

[www.visitcopenhagen.com](http://www.visitcopenhagen.com)







## Chapter 3

# Getting started in Denmark

# Getting started in Denmark

THIS CHAPTER will give you a brief overview of how to get started when you arrive in Denmark. In general: Check the links and follow the instructions given to you by the relevant authorities.

This is not a definite checklist, but a way to get most of your bases covered as easily as possible.

Most of this chapter will not be particularly exciting to read, but we promise it is useful to get the practical formalities sorted, so you can move on to focus on the more exciting aspects of studying in Denmark.

## VISA/residence permit for NON-EU/EEA citizens



This is a student guide, updated yearly. You should always double check important information on the official websites. Rules might have changed since the time of publication.

Before coming to Denmark you need to find out whether you need a VISA or a residence permit. Use the link in the info section below to see which nationalities need a visa to enter Denmark.

If your country of residence requires a visa for you to enter Denmark and you plan to stay here for more than three months, you must apply for a residence permit prior to arriving in Denmark.

### Where to file your application

You can apply for a visa at any authorised Danish mission in your home country. These include the Danish Embassies and certain consulates abroad.

If you need more information about the Danish immigration rules, visit the website of the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (see below). You can also contact the nearest Danish embassy or consulate.

## EU/EEA or Swiss citizens

If you are an EU/EEA or Swiss citizen, you can legally stay in Denmark for up to three months without having a residence permit. If you work while in Denmark, you can stay for up to six months.

If you want to stay longer, whether it is for school or work, you will need either a registration certificate (for EU/EEA citizens) or a residence card (for Swiss nationals).

Nordic citizens (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland) do not need visas or registration certificates for living, studying, and working in Denmark, but they do need a CPR-number.

### How to get a registration certificate

You can apply for both the registration certificate and residence card at the Danish Agency for Labour Retention and International Recruitment (SIRI) within three months of arriving in Denmark. Book an appointment before going, and remember to bring your passport, two passport photos and your letter of admission from the educational institution. Remember that it can take up to three weeks to get the permit. See more in the links below.

You need the permit in order to be able to get a CPR-number, so get this done early on and everything will be easier.

Danish Immigration Service to apply for a visa: [www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/You-want-to-apply](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/You-want-to-apply)

Information about visa requirements from different countries: [www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Words-and-concepts/US/Visum/Countries-with-a-visa-requirement-and-visa-free-countries](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Words-and-concepts/US/Visum/Countries-with-a-visa-requirement-and-visa-free-countries)

Learn about permits, visas & red tape: [www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/permits-visas-red-tape](http://www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/permits-visas-red-tape)

The Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI): <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Contact-us/Contact-SIRI>

## Keep yourself updated on official websites, like these ones below:

The Danish Immigration Service official portal:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en>

Denmark's Agency for Digitisation's official portal:

<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/>

(You can order a health insurance card here)

Copenhagen municipality Citizen Service:

<https://international.kk.dk/>

Aarhus municipality Citizen Service:

<https://international.aarhus.dk/>

# Where to go

## Copenhagen

### INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN

#### SERVICE EAST

Nyropsgade 1  
1602 København V  
+45 33661000  
[cph@kk.dk](mailto:cph@kk.dk)

#### SIRI COPENHAGEN

Carl Jacobsens Vej 39  
2500 Valby

For Copenhagen and a large number of municipalities in Region Zealand and the Capital Region of Denmark

## Odense

### INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN

#### SERVICE SOUTH

Borgernes Hus  
Østre Stationsvej 15  
5000 Odense C  
+45 63756040  
[ics-south@odense.dk](mailto:ics-south@odense.dk)

#### SIRI ODENSE

Borgernes Hus  
Østre Stationsvej 15  
5000 Odense C

## Aarhus\*

### INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN

#### SERVICE WEST

DOKK1  
Hack Kampmanns Plads 2  
8000 Aarhus C  
+45 89402222  
[icswest@aarhus.dk](mailto:icswest@aarhus.dk)

#### SIRI AARHUS

DOKK1  
Hack Kampmanns Plads 2  
8000 Aarhus C

## Aalborg

### INTERNATIONAL CITIZEN

#### SERVICE NORTH

Rantzausgade 4, 1.  
9000 Aalborg  
+4599311530  
[info@ihnd.dk](mailto:info@ihnd.dk)

#### SIRI AALBORG

Rantzausgade 4, 1.  
9000 Aalborg

## How to book an appointment

You need to book an appointment ahead of time before you go to the Citizen Service or SIRI.

Use <https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/settle-in-denmark/> and <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Contact-us> or call your closest ICS centre if you have further questions

- ★ In Aarhus, your place of study will be given a specific time slot so you can get all your documents organised in one place, at one time. You will be informed about this directly from your educational institution, unless you arrive more than a month before study start. In that case you need to organize your documentation yourself. See <https://international.aarhus.dk> for info and to upload documents and register online. Also, see the following pages for additional info depending on whether you're an EU- or non-EU-citizen.
- For the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI), you have to book an appointment at [www.nyidanmark.dk/en](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en). Remember to bring your passport to the appointment. If you are a citizen of the EU, you can bring your national ID card.
- If you live in Bornholm, there is a SIRI office in Rønne at Sønder Landevej 2 (at the airport terminal).



# Getting a CPR-number

After arriving in Denmark there are some important things you must take care of. The most important one is to register with the authorities and get your CPR-number as soon as possible.

In Denmark, the social security number is known as the CPR number. CPR stands for Central Person Register.

It's a ten-digit number, which starts with the day of birth and ends with a unique 4-digit combination. The CPR number is essential when interacting with Danish authorities and administrations: at the doctor's office, opening a bank account, at the library, the apothecary and so on. You also need it to buy a phone, get a gym membership and much more.

Once you've applied for a CPR number, you'll automatically receive a health insurance card within a few weeks. When someone refers to "sygesikringsbevis" or "the yellow card", this is what they are talking about.

To apply for a CPR number, you have to physically go to an International Citizen Service Center (ICS).



International Citizen Service East  
Copenhagen

It's a good idea to apply if you intend to stay in Denmark for a period of 3 months or more - or 6 months if you have citizenship from a EU or Nordic country.

You'll need a few documents to apply, such as your passport or a national ID card (EU/EEA/ Swiss and Nordic citizens only) and proof of address in Denmark (e.g. a rental contract). You will need to go to the Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) to get a registration certificate, before going to the ICS or Citizens' Services. If you're arriving from outside of the EU or the Nordic region, you'll also need to bring a residence permit from the Agency for International Recruitment and Integration. See page 19 for a list of document requirements.



International Citizen Service West  
Dokk1, Aarhus

You need to have a place to live with a valid address, and you must have been granted a residence permit or certificate as mentioned above. If you do not yet have a permanent address, ask the staff if you are allowed to use your current address, such as that of a hotel, hostel or AirBnB, if you plan to stay there long-term.

If you are in doubt during the process, ask the staff to help you. They are there to provide a service, and will normally be very helpful if you ask politely for help with the forms and procedures. Also, do make sure to check up on the specific requirements, as these may differ depending on which city or municipality you're living in.

You can also ask your university's international office or your mentor, but keep in mind that they might not know all of the current rules and requirements.



International Citizen Service South  
Borgernes Hus, Odense

Also, many educational institutions have specific registration events on campus. Ask if your campus does.

We know that the "proof of address" can be the biggest hurdle to overcome. This is why we have dedicated the entire 5th chapter to housing.

## For EU students

Including EEA and Swiss citizens

Documents you need to apply for a CPR number:

- First you need a EU Residence document also known as a registration certificate (if your residence in Denmark is based on the EU-rules). The Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) will issue your registration certificate
- Work and residence permit (relevant if you are a citizen outside the EU/EEA, the Nordic region or Switzerland)
- Passport, personal ID or a national ID card
- Proof of your address in Denmark (e.g., rental contract)
- If you are moving to Denmark from another Nordic country: your social security number from the country you are moving. Your passport or national ID Card
- Documents concerning legal custody, if you have children and are not married to your child's other parent
- If applicable, birth certificates for your children
- If applicable, documentation for changes of name (marriage/divorce certificate, etc.)
- If applicable, a marriage certificate

To get the registration certificate at SIRI, you will need:

- Your passport or national ID Card
- A filled out OD1 form (can be found online)
- Your letter of admission or other documentation from the educational institution in Denmark
- Documentation that you can support yourself during your stay in Denmark
- Find the entire checklist and more info at [www.nyidanmark.dk/en](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en)

Your local International Citizen Service Center (ICS) will issue your CPR-number.



International Citizen Service North  
Aalborg

Bring these things to get it:

- Your registration certificate
- A completed arrival form, get it from the ICS (not relevant if you're studying in Aarhus)
- Your passport or national ID Card
- Proof of your address in Denmark (e.g. rental contract)
- If relevant, marriage certificate and birth certificate(s) for accompanying children
- If you are living in Greater Copenhagen, you need to apply online via <https://ihcph.kk.dk/registration-services/> where you can find link to registration in Copenhagen Municipality and further down the page to "Outside Copenhagen". You will need to find your municipality on the list to apply.
- If you are studying at Aarhus University you will be given the opportunity to apply for your CPR card during your Intro Days when the ICS organises a visit.

## For non-EU students

Similar process to the one for EU students. However, rather than a residence document, you must apply for a residence permit BEFORE your arrival (see [www.nyidanmark.dk/en](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en) for more information)

Then bring this to the International Citizen Service (ICS) or Citizens' Services, to get your CPR-number:

- Residence permit
- A completed arrival form, get it from the ICS (not relevant if you're studying in Aarhus)
- Your passport or national ID Card
- Proof of your address in Denmark (e.g. rental contract valid for a month)
- If relevant, marriage certificate and birth certificate(s) for accompanying children
- If you are living in Greater Copenhagen, you need to apply online via <https://ihcph.kk.dk/registration-services/> where you can find link to registration in Copenhagen Municipality and further down the page to "Outside Copenhagen". You will need to find your municipality on the list to apply.
- If you are studying in Aarhus you will be given the opportunity to apply for your CPR card during your AU Intro Days when the ICS organises a visit. It makes it easier and the process will be speedier.

# Opening a bank account in Denmark

IT IS A GOOD IDEA to open a Danish bank account if you are studying here. If you want to have a job or apply for SU, you will definitely need one.

To open a bank account you need a CPR-number, so start by getting that sorted. The banks differ in prices and service options, so it is a good idea to review your options beforehand.

When you have decided on which bank to use, opening an account is pretty simple. Just bring your passport and the national health insurance card ("sygesikringsbeviset") to the branch of the bank you wish to open an account with or upload the required documents with them online.

You will still have to bring enough cash or a credit card for the first few weeks of your stay in Denmark. You might need it for the deposit on your accommodation and other start-up expenses.

Make sure your credit card works in Denmark. It'll be easiest if you have a card with a chip and a pincode, as those are the

common type here. Contactless is also very common, but the chip/pincode is a good failsafe. Also, check your cash withdrawal limit so you don't get any annoying surprises.

## "Nemkonto" – the public payment system

You need to register your Danish bank account with the Danish tax authority as your "Nemkonto" (translates to "easy account").

This will make it possible for the public authorities to make direct payments to you – like SU, tax rebates or maintenance payments. It is mandatory for all foreigners with a CPR-number to have a Nemkonto, so remember to talk to your bank about it when setting up the account.

Once it has been set up, it can be managed online as well. Follow the link <https://www.nemkonto.dk/en/> to read more about Nemkonto and to get started

## MobilePay

In Denmark, it is normal to use the MobilePay app, developed by a Danish bank, to transfer money. It is similar to Venmo, Swish and Paypal, but you transfer the money immediately and the transaction is tied up on your phone number. Many companies and stores also use the app. Their phone numbers will always be 5-digit, whereas a private number is 8-digit.

Some smaller businesses and a lot of student cafés on campus only accept Mobilepay since it is a free service for them. They might not accept cash.



National Bank of Denmark  
Copenhagen



# SU

SU IS THE DANISH STUDENT'S GRANT. SU (Statens Uddannelsesstøtte) roughly translates to State Educational Support and is the Danish state educational grant for students.

All Danish students at a recognised educational institution are eligible to apply for SU.

Besides Danish students, it is only possible for EU/EEA and Nordic citizens to receive SU. As an EU or Nordic citizen receiving SU, you are required to fulfill a list of criteria. One requirement, for example, is that you have to have a paid (legal) job for 10-12 hours per week.

If you fulfill the criteria, you still need to apply for the SU to get it. Go to the SU office at your school or check [SU.dk](https://www.su.dk).

If you receive SU, there is a limit to how much you can earn per year while getting the grant. If you earn more than that limit, you have to pay back some of your SU, so plan your working hours accordingly. Check out the first link below. How to calculate your "fribeløb" (translates to "free amount") will help you find the maximum amount you can earn at your job, while also receiving SU.

The 2025 SU rate is DKK 7,086 (approximately € 950) per month before taxes for students who do not live with their parents. Extra support is available for those who are also supporting children.

Read about and apply for SU at The Danish students' Grants and Loans Scheme: [www.su.dk/english](https://www.su.dk/english)

Learn more about applying for SU: <https://www.su.dk/foreign-citizen/gb-foreign-citizen/foreign-citizen-how-to-apply>

Learn about tuition fees: <https://studyindenmark.dk/study-options/tuition-fees-scholarships>

## Eligible for SU

You're eligible to apply if you are:

- an EU or EEA citizen
- work at least 10-12 hours a week (see chapter 7)
- are studying at a Danish Educational institution for a full degree (though not eligible if you are studying through an exchange programme)

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- a non-EU or non-EEA citizen
- do not (yet) have a job of 10-12 hours a week (see chapter 7)
- are an exchange student at a Danish educational institution while doing a full degree at your home university

# Phones and Internet

WHEN YOU HAVE a CPR-number and a bank account, it will be easier to get a phone plan and internet.

Most of the cheap phone options will be online-based phone plans, where you pay either a fixed amount per month or pay-as-you-go for the services.

Sim-cards are very cheap in Denmark compared to other countries, but the price will vary depending on how much you talk and the amount of data you use.

Since almost all of Denmark is covered by 4G or 5G networks and most Danish data plans have unlimited data, free wifi at café's etc. is becoming increasingly unusual.

If you come from a European country, your phone will most likely work here. The majority of phones that are sold around the world will also work in Denmark.

## How to get a mobile phone

If you need a new phone, most companies have discounted phone deals when you sign up. Try asking the Danish students from your classes about which phone companies they like and if they would recommend it. Choose according to your needs and budget.

A good tip is to get a plan that comes with free or affordable international use. Both to call home, and if you are travelling outside Denmark during your studies.

There is of course always the option to use Skype, WhatsApp or similar online communication platforms for long distance calls and daily communication with people back home.

If you have to make a lot of international calls, it is also worth looking into the phone companies that specialise in this.

If you are here for a short stay, consider prepaid like Lebara og Lycamobile. If you are here for several months, you might want to look into w.g. Greentel or Oyster that are subscription based.

Read more about getting mobile phone plans here:

Finding a phone deal as an exchange student: [www.forbrugseksperten.dk/english/mobile/exchange-student](http://www.forbrugseksperten.dk/english/mobile/exchange-student)

## The country calling code for Denmark is +45.

Remember to type this before the number you want to call, when calling Danish numbers from a non-Danish phone provider or network.

## Internet

MOST UNIVERSITIES, libraries, and residential halls/dorms already have free Internet for students and/or residents.

As a student, you will have access to this network called Eduroam, if this is provided at your school. All Danish universities offer Eduroam, but coverage varies.

Read more about Eduroam here:

[www.eduroam.org/index.php?p=faq](http://www.eduroam.org/index.php?p=faq)

If you need another Wi-Fi option, there are many phone and internet suppliers that sell USB-modems, which are a cheap and portable solution.

If you are living in a private flat without Internet, talk to your landlord before ordering a cable line. The building might have a deal with a provider, and you don't want to spend more money on this than you should. As 5G is rolled out, new cable lines are becoming unusual unless you need a high speed fiber connection.

If in doubt, the personal USB-modem is a cheap and easy solution and you are normally not bound for a long period of time. You might even be able to get a combined deal when you order your phone plan.

Read more about Internet solutions here:

[www.expats.com/en/guide/europe/denmark/14368-phones-and-internet-in-denmark.html](http://www.expats.com/en/guide/europe/denmark/14368-phones-and-internet-in-denmark.html)

And here:

[www.samlino.dk/blog/internet-options-for-the-tourist-in-denmark](http://www.samlino.dk/blog/internet-options-for-the-tourist-in-denmark)

... And of course ask your fellow students. They might have heard about a good deal.

# Transport

THE EASIEST WAY to get around most Danish cities is on bike, by foot or by public transportation. Cars can be expensive to buy, insure, fuel, and park in the bigger cities, so consider whether or not you really need one, especially if you're on a budget.

Cabs are very expensive, but it is a good idea to have the number or app of a local reliable taxi-service saved in your phone in the event that you should need it. Ask other students what taxi-service they prefer.

Public transportation works well throughout Denmark. All public transport is handled by the state and is divided into smaller companies that manage bus lines, trains, light rail, etc. E.g. DSB (short for De Danske Statsbaner, which translates to The Danish State Railways) manages the trains and Movia and Midttrafik manages the buses in respectively Copenhagen and Aarhus. In both Aarhus and Odense new light trails are coming or already in place and operating as a fast and environmental alternative to buses and trains.

It can be quite a jungle to understand the systems, but when you know how to buy a ticket or have your commuters card or "Rejsekort" (translates to Travel card), it doesn't matter what the name of the company is and you can relax and use all of the transportation options in Denmark. Often you can find information at DOT (short for Din Offentlige Transport, which translates to "Your Public Transportation"), where most of the companies are managed as a whole.

If you have a longer commute to your school, and fulfill some specific requirements, you might be eligible for the student commuter card called "Ungdomskort". That can save you some money. But be aware of the information below, if you are a non-EU/EØS student.

It is a good idea to get a personal "Rejsekort" under all circumstances, as that will work in almost all of Denmark's public transportation. You sign up for a card, which then functions as a digital ticket, either as a pay-per-travel or a monthly plan. Go to the central station in your new city and ask them whether this is worth considering.

Read about and order tickets for DSB here:

[www.dsb.dk/en](http://www.dsb.dk/en)

Read about and order your "Rejsekort":

[www.rejsekort.dk/?sc\\_lang=en](http://www.rejsekort.dk/?sc_lang=en)

How to get a commuters card/"Ungdomskort":

<https://www.ungdomskort.dk/english>

About Public Transportation in Denmark (DOT):

<https://dinoffentligetransport.dk/en/>

If you use buses, local trains or the metro, check out how the ticket system works in your city. Be sure to download the app 'Rejseplanen' to better plan your journeys.



## Important info for non-EU/EØS students

If you have a residence permit through SIRI, you cannot apply for transport discount like "Ungdomskortet". You also cannot receive student support "SU" or other public support.

If you apply for these grants, it will adversely affect your residence permit. <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Words-and-concepts/SIRI/Public-benefits-when-you-have-a-residence-permit-or-an-EU-residence-document-from-SIRI/Public-benefits-when-you-have-been-granted-a-permit-by-SIRI>



# In case of Emergency

If you have an emergency situation, call 112 for ambulance, police, and fire service. The emergency call centre will ask for your name, address, and the phone number you are calling from. They will then make sure that the appropriate help is sent immediately.

Do not use this number unless it is an emergency and you need the aforementioned services, cluttering the line prevents a quick response to people in real need. Consider if you can get the help you need from your own doctor, a medical hotline or the local police. However, if your need is urgent, call 112.

## Police

Danish culture and everyday life is based on a high degree of mutual trust and tolerance. The crime rates in Denmark are low, but it is of course still wise to use common sense to stay safe and to look after your valuables. The Danish police are usually helpful and service-minded, so do not be afraid to contact them if needed.

Find your local police station, report a crime or get more info at:

[www.politi.dk/en](http://www.politi.dk/en)

## Call

The two phone numbers you need to remember are:

**Emergency 112**  
**Police 114**

Should you need emergency assistance immediately dial 112. If you need police assistance or have to report something, dial 114.

If it is not urgent, call your local police station.



# Healthcare



THE DANISH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM ensures universal access for all residents. As an international student and a resident of Denmark, you will have access to free medical treatments, except for a few things like dental care and physiotherapy.

## Doctors and prescriptions

When you apply for your national health card ("Sygesikringsbeviset"), you get to choose your general practitioner, so it is a good idea to ask around for recommendations beforehand. If you need to see your GP, you should arrange an appointment by telephone or online. The phone number is on your yellow health card. This can be done a few days or sometimes weeks in advance or on the same day if your illness requires more immediate attention. Most GPs also offer a consultation service online or by telephone, the latter though often only available for about an hour or so every day.

Your GP will provide you with preventive and general treatment. They can also refer you to a hospital or specialist clinic for further treatment. Your GP is also the doctor you contact to get prescriptions for medication, or if you need to renew your existing prescriptions.

Danish prescriptions can be done as a paper-in-hand version or (more often) as a digital registration that the pharmacies can access through your CPR-number. You can only buy prescription medicine at the pharmacies (apotek).

## After-hours medical help

The Doctors on Call-service ("Lægevagten") is free and open from 4pm to 8am on weekdays and 24 hours on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Remember to have your CPR-number ready when calling. Here are the phone numbers of the Doctors on Call in your area:

Greater Copenhagen Region  
(including Bornholm)

**1813**

North-Jutland Region  
(Aalborg)

**70 15 03 00**

Zealand Region

**1818**

South-Denmark Region  
(including Funen)

**70 11 07 07**

Central-Denmark Region  
(Aarhus)

**70 11 31 31**

## The Danish National Health Insurance Card

When you register for your CPR-number, you will receive a national health insurance card ('Sundhedskort'). This card is proof that you are entitled to all public healthcare services in Denmark. Remember to bring it with you to all visits to the doctor, hospitals, and at the pharmacy when collecting prescription drugs. The card states your name, address, and CPR-number as well as the name and address of your general practitioner. The app "Sundhedskortet" allows you to have a valid card on your phone.

Read more about the Danish Healthcare system and coverage here:

<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/healthcare>

[www.justlanded.com/english/Denmark/health](http://www.justlanded.com/english/Denmark/health)

## Medication

Please be aware that certain prescription medications (for instance opioid painkillers, some types of anti-anxiety drugs, sleeping pills, and stimulant ADHD medication) are classified as controlled substances in Denmark/EU. Bringing those types of medication into Denmark/across borders requires a medicine certificate (sometimes referred to as a prescription passport) or similar documentation.

If you're taking any type of medication where this may be relevant, please check with your local doctor and pharmacy about this before travelling to Denmark.

If you have prescription medication you need to bring to Denmark, it's generally recommended to keep it in its original container, make sure you have a copy of the prescription and a statement/transcript from your doctor explaining your condition, and bring proof of legal purchase of the medication (that can simply be a receipt from the pharmacy where it was purchased).

You can read more about it here:

<https://um.dk/en/travel-and-residence/legalisation-frontpage/legalisation-danish/medical-certificates-and-pill-passports>

<https://disabroad.org/health-safety-and-support/bringing-medication-to-scandinavia/#copenhagen>

# Dentists and special doctors

DENTISTRY IN DENMARK is unfortunately not covered by the free health care system, nor is physiotherapy or psychological help.

Our best tip is to visit your dentist now and to have any major work done before you leave for Denmark. What is free in e.g. Germany might be very expensive in Denmark.

Dentists are private practitioners. Adults over the age of 21 must find their own private dentist.

Dental care in Denmark comes at a subsidised rate and the amount paid by the state will be automatically deducted from your bill.

Ask your fellow students for a good dependable dentist and remember to ask about the price as well. Most dentists have websites where you can see their rates. An example is <https://tandbro.dk/en/pricelist/>

For physiotherapy, psychological help and specialist doctors, you can get a referral from your general practitioner (GP). This will lower the cost, if your GP agrees to give the referral, so it is advisable to take this route.

## Sexual health

More than 90% of all students in higher education in Denmark have had sex at least once in their life.

Birth control and sexual health are not taboo topics (though not exactly dinner table conversation either), and you're considered to be responsible for your own health and safety.

Condoms are widely available and should always be used to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

If you need to talk to a doctor about your sexual health, and don't want to go to your GP, several hospitals in the bigger cities have clinics specifically designated for this purpose. However, your GP interactions are covered by professional confidentiality and the common Danish GP will never judge you for being sexually active.

Find information about clinics where you can be examined for sexual transmitted infections here:

<https://sexogsamfund.dk/en/sex-body-gender/sti-information/sti-clinics-in-denmark>





# Alcohol and drugs

The legal age for drinking in Denmark is 18.

This is both when it comes to buying liquor in stores as well as buying drinks in bars and restaurants. Some bars will have a higher minimum age, but that's up to the individual business, and you'll be able to see this on their social media or websites.

Most venues don't check ID at the bar as a rule, but they might do random tests, so have a valid ID with you when you go out.

You will probably experience a lot of your Danish friends cycling home while drunk, but we can't recommend following their (bad) example. Firstly, because it's unsafe for you and your surroundings and technically against the law (even if that law is rarely enforced), but especially because crashing and hurting yourself while drunk biking is dangerous, painful, and potentially expensive in dentist bills and damaged bikes. Also, driving drunk on a bike might lose you your drivers license.

If you have a car: Drunk driving is of course illegal in Denmark as well. You are considered to be driving under the influence if your blood/alcohol level is equal to or exceeds 0.5g per thousand. This means that having more than approximately one beer before driving is illegal.

This is strictly enforced, and if you get caught, the penalty ranges from heavy fines to suspension of your license and prison time.

We hate to be the party poopers, but we have to do this:

## Drugs. All types.

Don't do them. It's illegal in Denmark. Selling them as well as buying them and being in possession of them.

This notably includes marijuana/weed/hash, despite it being legal to various degrees in many other countries and despite many Danes using it recreationally.

It may seem like no big deal to you, but legally, it's still a big deal here.

And as an international student or expat, the consequences for buying/selling/being in possession of weed (even if you're only buying it from/selling it to/holding it for your friend) is not just a steep fine and potentially jail time. If you aren't a Danish citizen, you risk deportation as well.

And it should go without saying that driving anything while under the influence of drugs is a horrible idea as well as very much a crime, too.

Don't do it.

# Insurance

YOU ARE ADVISED to make sure that you have proper insurance while studying in Denmark. Some insurances are required by law, if you own a car for instance, but for the average student, the following are the recommended insurance coverage:

If you want to use the insurance in Denmark we recommend to check out this brief overview of the types of insurance you will need ([www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/health-safety/insurance](http://www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/health-safety/insurance))

There are many different insurance companies that offer insurance to students at a discounted price. Be sure to research a bit, there might be good deals available through your bank or the trade union related to your field of study. Ask your fellow students what they do.

Be sure to remember to cancel your insurance at home - you are not allowed to have two!

And please purchase insurance even though it seems expensive. You never know when you might need it.

## World's safest country - unless you're a bike

Denmark is heralded as a very low-crime rate country and is generally a place with a high degree of public trust, a concept always exemplified by the prams left outside cafés, sleeping babies included.

Despite this, petty theft is still a common occurrence, especially when it comes to smartphones, laptops, and bikes.

So save yourself the trouble and refrain from leaving your phone or computer unattended in public spaces and get a proper lock for your bike – and remember to use it.

You will often see people asking their friends to keep an eye on their laptops at the student café (only ask people you know and trust, please) and bikes locked to guardrails with more than one lock. See the bike section on page 64 or more information on insurance-approved bike locks.

These are easy ways to keep your personal belongings yours for as long as you want them.

## Third-party liability insurance

### Ansvarsforsikring

Will cover expenses, if you have to pay compensation to another person. E.g. if you damage another person's computer.

## Accident insurance

### Ulykkesforsikring

Will cover the financial consequences and related expenses of an accident. E.g. if you need physical therapy for an extended period of time.

## Home insurance

### Indboforsikring

The insurance for your personal belongings and will protect you if there's a break in or if your things are stolen.

# Digital Denmark

MitID ("MY ID") is the current Danish digital login solution for both public self-service, online banking and access to the digital portals for SU, SKAT, etc.

MitID is primarily an app and you can get started with it yourself, if you hold a biometric passport / national ID card (EU/EEA/Swiss and Nordic citizens). You get the ID by downloading the app "MitID". There are also solutions with other gadgets than on your phone. Follow the link [MitID.dk](https://mitid.dk) to see them, where you can also get a MitID user.

If your passport/national ID card is not accepted in the MitID app, you must make an appointment with your local citizen service center (Borgerservice). International citizens registered with a CPR number at the International Citizen Service ICS East (also known as International House) must make an appointment there: MitID | International House Copenhagen ([kk.dk](https://www.kk.dk))

MitID consists of a User ID and a password. You log on by entering your User ID and your password first, and then accept the action in the app.

The system is secure and reliable when used wisely (don't save your password, don't use it on public computers or without a firewall, etc.), but it can be the source of many frustrations and jokes. If you are having problems, know that this is not due to you being a foreigner. Chances are that your Danish classmates have experienced some of these issues as well.

You don't have to be a Danish citizen to get a MitID, and having one will allow you to handle a lot of interactions with the Danish authorities digitally, which is easier in the long run. So it is generally worth the trouble!



## You're eligible for a MitID if:

- You have a Danish CPR-number.
- You are 13 years or older.
- You have a valid and approved ID, such as a valid passport, national ID card (EU/EEA/Swiss and Nordic citizens) or a residence card issued by the Danish Immigration authorities.

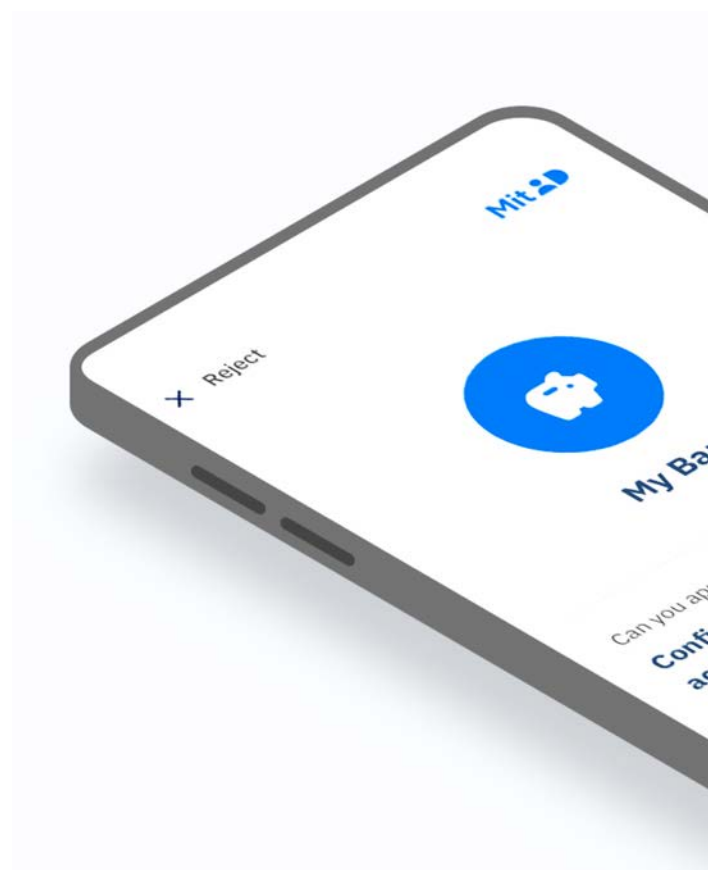
## More info

<https://en.digst.dk/systems/mitid/>

Once you have a MitID, you can access [Borger.dk](https://borger.dk), where you will find links to almost all of the Danish public services and authorities.

Lots of information about moving to Denmark:

<http://lifeindenmark.borger.dk>





## Family, children and pets

IF YOU HAVE A RESIDENCE PERMIT as a student at a higher educational programme or at a PhD programme in Denmark, you will normally be able to bring your family with you to Denmark. Family in this context means spouse or partner plus kids.

Your spouse, registered partner, or cohabiting partner can get a residence permit, as can your children under 18, if they are living with you. To be accepted as cohabiting partners, you must have lived together for a period of at least 18-24 months before moving to Denmark.

### Read more about bringing your family with you:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/You-want-to-apply/PhD/Phd-studies>

"Borgerservice" (translates to Citizen Service) can help you if you have questions regarding daycare for your kids, choosing schools, and general registration of these things. It is worth contacting them early in the process, if you plan to move to Denmark with kids, since you don't want to have to rush these things when you arrive.

## Pets

Remember that there are rules for bringing your pet or service animal into Denmark. It normally requires permission before travelling here, so make sure to get this in order.

You can read more about bringing pets here:

<https://en.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/animals/traveling-with-pet-animals>

Remember to check with your housing contract, landlord, and potential flatmates whether you are allowed to have a pet in your new Danish home. It is better to be prepared than to have any problems with your accommodation once you have already brought your pet.

## Students with disabilities

INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR POSSIBILITIES and rights as an international student with a disability may be difficult to find. The Danish support system for mentally and physically impaired students is called SPS.

### What is SPS?

Special Educational Support (SPS) provides compensatory support for full degree students with physical or psychological disabilities, giving you the opportunity to undertake your studies on equal terms with other students.

You are eligible to apply for SPS:

- You are accepted into a full degree programme
- Your disability is long-term (e.g. hearing or vision impairment, dyslexia, psychological, or physical disabilities)
- You are an active student
- You have a CPR-number

As well as support, you can apply for:

- Special conditions during your exams
- Exemption from academic progress requirements
- Exemption from maximum study period requirements

If you're an exchange or guest student, you can only get help from the SPS with funding from your home country

Remember to apply early!

Read more on this link if you are studying at KU: <https://www.ku.dk/studies/special-educational-support#c7199>

# We hate to see you leave, but...

## THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS TO REMEMBER IF YOU DO!

If you should choose to leave Denmark temporarily or permanently, there are different things that are important to have in order before you do:

- The important cut-off to remember is six months. You can stay outside of Denmark for up to six months, before you have to report it to the authorities
- If you stay abroad for more than six months, then you must de-register with the Civil Registration Service (CPR), and report to the authorities that you are moving. You can do so digitally via [borger.dk](https://borger.dk), or on your municipality's website
- When you have de-registered, you will still keep your CPR-number, you will just be registered as having left Denmark
- After moving, you will still have access to digital correspondence with the authorities, like your login to [borger.dk](https://borger.dk). However, this is only as long as you have an active MitID.
- Also, you should contact your bank and insurance company, check up on your pension, and make sure to have everything with housing sorted out.

## Read more here

About your Danish CPR, when you leave: [www.cpr.dk/english/moving-from-denmark](https://www.cpr.dk/english/moving-from-denmark)

From Borgerservice (Citizen service): <https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/housing-and-moving>





An abstract graphic design featuring several overlapping, semi-transparent green rectangular bars of varying lengths and orientations. These bars intersect to form a complex, star-like or floral pattern in the lower right quadrant of the page. The bars are a vibrant lime green color.

Chapter 4

# Student life

# Student life

EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE PROBABLY ALREADY AWARE that there are great differences between your home country's education system and the Danish one, you might still find yourself surprised by how Danish student life works.

Though Danish universities and bigger educational institutions often have a campus area, "actual" university campuses do not exist.

Rather than being confined to a "campus", the universities function as part of the city they are placed in. As a student you will get to utilise the surrounding city as part of your university and overall educational experience.

The universities are mainly concerned with the academic part of your student life. They aim to ensure your academic development, but generally don't interfere with your life outside of class. This means that you might not be offered the same non-academic services that you might be used to back home. Don't worry!

The services are still there; only they are not necessarily run by the universities or institutions themselves, but by governmental or non-profit organisations, or by student-run communities.

Being a student is generally seen as a job in Denmark. It is something you do for a living (full time), but the rest of the week you are a private citizen..

As a student, you often live in residential halls called kollegiums, shared flats, or maybe even your own flat. You will cook, clean, pay your bills, and do everything else yourself, and then commute (by bike or public transportation) to the university where you have your classes. You will study, prepare, read, and agonise over exams, but what you do in your free time is not based on what you study.

While a lot of Danish students are very social with their fellow students, the basis of social life and activities for students are not organised through their studies as such. You will (hopefully) meet people and make friends there, but what you choose to fill your life with outside of your studies is completely up to you, but also dependent on the available opportunities in your new city.

You are the one who gets to structure your life and studies in a way that makes sense to you.

If you want tips on how to structure your life as a Danish student, there are useful tips here:

[www.isicdanmark.dk/en/student-life](http://www.isicdanmark.dk/en/student-life)

# Being a student

MOST DANISH UNIVERSITIES use a mix of lectures and smaller classroom-based sessions. The larger lectures mainly consist of the professor discussing a subject, often using slides or examples, whereas the smaller classroom sessions are more interactive and place a greater emphasis on student participation and discussion.

The ethos of Danish education is to “take responsibility for your own education”, meaning that you are rarely tested on the reading or having your attendance checked. Do not take this as a reason to skip class or not do the reading. You will still have exams and assignments that you need to pass and many subjects might include group work with other students, who are depending on you to show up prepared.

As a rule, the Danish education system requires the students to be independent, inquiring, and responsible. It is rare to encounter a professor who will tell you exactly how you should complete an assignment, or what to write in an exam, and this can be a big adjustment when compared to educational styles in other countries.

Ask all the questions you need to, but be aware that most teachers in Denmark would be more inclined to help you to find the solutions for yourself, than to give you a straight up answer. Being able to solve the problems on your own is a large component of the Danish exams, and imaginative and individual inputs are often rewarded, as long as they are academically sound and validly argued.

There is generally not a very strict hierarchy between the professor and the students in Denmark, most professors will ask you to call them by their first name rather than address them as Mr. or Mrs. The lack of hierarchy also means that you can discuss various ideas for exams and assignments with your professor, without having to follow all of their instructions or ideas on the subject. If your point of view is academically valid, you don't necessarily have to agree with every point your professor makes.

As a student, a lot of your work will be based on the assigned reading and on completing assignments either on your own or in groups.

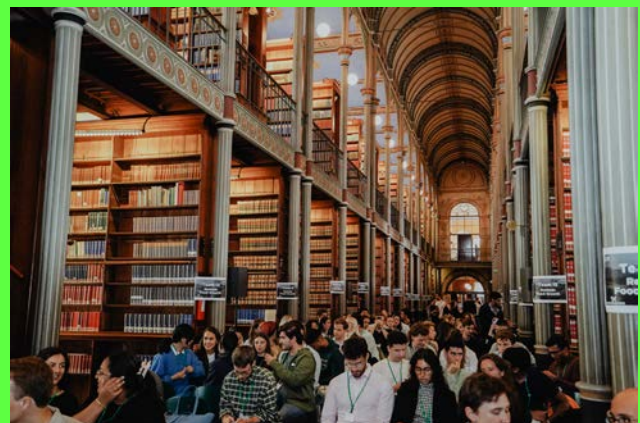
Studying on your own is a big part of your education here. You will have to keep yourself motivated throughout the semester, since most schools or universities don't have quizzes or take attendance to check if you are actively following the course.

Even if you don't have required group assignments, having a small study group can be beneficial and will both hold you accountable and prevent the studying from getting too lonely and boring.

In order to maximise your efficiency, we recommend that you find other places than your bedroom to read.

If you live at a kollegium, there might be common study halls in the building that you can use. If you live in an apartment or house, try to go elsewhere.

Your place of study or faculty will definitely have areas, such as reading rooms, that are suitable for studying, and both the various institutions and public libraries have rooms for reading and writing, as well as small study rooms where you can discuss assignments and the literature with your study group. A lot of cafés have Wi-Fi and separate quieter areas that people use for studying. There is also your local Studenterhus (student house) which is a failsafe space to meet up with your study group – they even have cheap coffee.



## Libraries

In Denmark, we have public libraries as well as university libraries. The public libraries are open to everyone and you can register as a user if you have a CPR-number. Ask your local library how. The public libraries function more as civic centres than research facilities and have a diverse selection of genres and media. Your local library will often host events and various social initiatives.

The university and royal libraries have more restrictive user policies – ask about or look up the rules before assuming that you can use them. As a rule, your home university and institute's libraries will definitely be open for you. Click the link below to find relevant and updated academic materials, reading halls, and librarians who can help your literature search. Also, being a user will often grant you with access to online databases and materials as well.

Database and reservation from all Danish libraries:

<https://bibliotek.dk/en>

The Royal Library and links to university libraries:

[www.kb.dk/en](http://www.kb.dk/en)

[www.library.au.dk/en](http://www.library.au.dk/en)



# Practical university info

## Semesters

The Danish academic year starts by September 1st of each year. Some universities, however, may decide to hold classes in late August. It is normal for the Spring semester to start around February 1st, after the winter exams, which are often in January. The summer break usually takes place from late June to mid-August.

Most universities and faculties use the 2-semester-model, but some schools have a "quarter"-structure, where the academic year is divided into 3 or 4 quarters with exams after each one. Summer break and start-of-year dates are usually the same throughout the different universities and schools.

Remember to check when your semester starts, so you have enough time to get settled before you have to be in class. Account time for pre-semester activities and courses.

Your stay here will be far more enjoyable if you don't have to get a CPR-number, find an apartment, and start class right after one another.

## Marks/Grades

The Danish School system uses a 7-point grading scale. It was introduced in 2007 to make Danish grades easier to compare in an international context. The top grade is a 12 (an "A") and the lowest passing grade is 02.

Some of your classes might have an attendance requirement for passing, while some courses might simply be pass/fail, in which case it will be determined at the end of the semester.

The type of grading normally depends on what kind of exam you take for the course and what kind of curriculum is required and used. See the rules that apply to your particular study.

When you start a new course, remember to check the form of the curriculum, the method of exam, and what kind of grading system your professor plans to use. Your professor should know the above and be able to tell you. If not, your department or institute's student guidance counselor (studievejleder) can help you.

For more information on the grading scale and the Danish Education System:

<https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system/grading-system/grading-system>

or

<https://www.ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system>



## Counselling and “where to go”

There are various places you can go to get answers to your questions and help for the issues you might have as a student in Denmark. If you have questions about being an international student – your local Internationale kontor (International office) or Student Hub is the place to go. If your questions are of a more course and study based nature, your department or institute's student guidance counsellor (studievejleder) is your go-to person. If you have issues with a professor or are having administrative problems you can talk to your guidance counsellor (studievejleder). They can advise you on where to take your complaints and how to solve your problem. Some universities have a “student ambassador” that can help with such things.

Remember that if you feel like you've been treated unfairly or incorrectly, you will always have an opportunity to appeal. There are processes set in place for filing complaints and appeals, and you will not be punished for doing this, as long as you follow the correct procedures. The incorrupt and generally unbiased nature of the Danish education system allows all voices to be heard, even if the decision doesn't end up in your favour. If you feel like there are things about your student environment that you'd like to change, you can get involved in your local student council.



## ECTS

Your courses are measured by the ECTS system, which determines how much of a “full time study” the course constitutes. One year of full time studies is 60 ECTS points. The system is used to compare courses across universities and countries in Europe, and is valuable when you need to transfer your merits from one university to another. A bachelor's degree in Denmark is normally 180 ECTS points and a master's degree is 120.

[www.studyineurope.eu/ects-system](http://www.studyineurope.eu/ects-system)



## Your local student council – Studenterråd

Your local Studenterråd (Student Council) is open to all students who want to improve student living conditions, the curriculum, the study environment, and many other things. Activities and membership is usually free. Most of the Student Councils (Studenterråd) don't have a lot of information about the groups in English yet, but they are really nice people, and will try to help you in anyway that they can. Contact them by mail, Facebook, etc. or set up a meeting.

University of Copenhagen:

[www.srku.dk](http://www.srku.dk)

IT University:

[www.studentcouncil.dk](http://www.studentcouncil.dk)

Copenhagen Business School:

[www.cbsstudents.dk](http://www.cbsstudents.dk)

Roskilde University:

<https://sr-ruc.dk/>

University of Southern Denmark:

<https://syddanskestuderende.dk/eng/>

University of Aarhus:

<https://sr.au.dk/?lang=en>

Business Academy Aarhus:

[www.baaa.dk/about-us/facts-about-business-academy-aarhus/student-and-academy-council/](http://www.baaa.dk/about-us/facts-about-business-academy-aarhus/student-and-academy-council/)

University of Aalborg:

<https://studentersamfundet.aau.dk>

## National Union of Students in Denmark

All the local student councils are working for the interests of students on a national level through the umbrella organisation National Union of Students in Denmark - DSF.

See <https://www.dsfnat.dk/en/> for more information.

# Life outside university

## Social life and student-run initiatives

Not having a campus life as such means that your social life as a student will depend on how much you choose to engage in social activities.

Though not run directly by the university, there are a bunch of social activities at the universities, often run by students either from your own field of study or from the university as a whole.

Some of the most common social initiatives at the Danish universities are the SU-friendly Friday bars. This is where you can go to hang out with your fellow students each Friday, wind down with a drink and have fun. Some of the bars function as volunteer cafés during the week, which can give you a social meeting point Monday to Friday. Often there will be a party committee related to the Friday bar as well, that will organise bigger parties for either their own field of study or the entire institute or faculty. If you want to meet students from other programs than your own, doing a “Friday bar pubcrawl” can be a fun way to do so.

Some student-run cafes only accept payment via the app MobilePay, so set up this payment option if you can.

If you don't have a Danish bank account to set up MobilePay you can always try bringing cash and hope that another guest in the bar would help you pay via their app. Who knows - you might end up meeting a Danish friend as well.

## Student jobs

A lot of Danish students have jobs alongside their studies. These can be part-time jobs in e.g. the service sector, private childcare or jobs relevant to their studies; either at the university as student employees or in the field of employment that they wish to work in after graduating.

Getting a student job is of course a great way to fund your life as a student, and it can be a wonderful way to meet people, make friends, and learn about the Danish work culture. It can however be complicated for international students to find a student job, which is why we have written an entire chapter about this later in this book (See Chapter 7).

## Student Houses

All of the big university cities have a student house. These are volunteer-run student organisations with a café/bar/concert venue that host a lot of social and student-related activities. You can either join their events or sign up as a volunteer.

### Copenhagen

<https://bystudents.dk/en/>

[www.studenterhuset.com/en](http://www.studenterhuset.com/en)

[www.facebook.com/studenterhusetkbh](https://www.facebook.com/studenterhusetkbh)

[www.station.dk](http://www.station.dk)

[www.facebook.com/Stationcph](https://www.facebook.com/Stationcph)

### Roskilde

[www.studenterhusetruc.dk](http://www.studenterhusetruc.dk)

[www.facebook.com/StudenterhusetRUC](https://www.facebook.com/StudenterhusetRUC)

### Odense

[www.studenterhus.dk](http://www.studenterhus.dk)

[www.facebook.com/StudenterhusOdense](https://www.facebook.com/StudenterhusOdense)

### Aarhus

[www.studenterhusaarhus.dk](http://www.studenterhusaarhus.dk)

[www.facebook.com/StudenterhusAarhus](https://www.facebook.com/StudenterhusAarhus)

### Aalborg

[www.studenterhuset.dk](http://www.studenterhuset.dk)

[www.facebook.com/studenterhuset.aalborg](https://www.facebook.com/studenterhuset.aalborg)

If your city doesn't have a student house, there might be other options, like SYMB ([www.symb.dk](http://www.symb.dk)) in Kalundborg!



Studenterhuset, Copenhagen



# Meeting people

Most universities have social immersion programs designed specifically for international students. These can be referred to as mentor, tutor, or buddy programs, the names can differ a bit.

They are essentially programs pairing Danish (or already established international students) with newly arrived students in order to give them a fun and safe introduction to their new life as a student in Denmark. They'll also be able to help with social activities and advice about jobs.

In most cases, you can sign up as soon as you have been admitted, so remember to check if this is a possibility once you have received your admittance letter.

A lot of the activities that you may be used to having at your home institution might also be available here. There are student or university-run sport clubs, choirs, societies for various interests, and charities. Often you just have to ask around and keep an eye out for the posters hanging around campus, or check relevant Facebook groups to see what activities are available.

Most universities also have a yearly party or event for all of their students.



Studenterhus Aarhus

## Hobbies and interests

Danish students often have social lives that take place outside of their studies, and you should also try to find activities off campus. Get involved in the city – enjoy the cultural opportunities or the outdoors, volunteer for an organisation that is not necessarily related to the university or seek out your own interests. Most of Danish civil life is organised in “foreninger” (see page 56) and there is something for almost every interest, so if you are looking for something specific in terms of sports or hobbies, just Google it. Chances are that your new city will have a “forening” for whatever it is that you are looking for, and joining that club or activity will be a great way of meeting new people.

For more tips on how to get involved socially and meet new friends – see chapter “Meeting the Danes”.



# Do more spend less

Living in Denmark can be DAMN (pardon us) expensive if you're not used to being on a budget or money savvy. Here are some tips on how to save money, but still have a fun and social student life:

## Make a budget

This way you don't end up spending all of your money before the end of the month. Remember that you need to eat, buy books and boring things like toilet paper and light bulbs as well. Tips on budgeting and how to properly do so can be found here: <https://studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/bank-budget>

## Bikes

Get one. Use it, and use it wisely so you don't get fined. See the rules for biking on page 11. Remember to check how the buses and trains run at night. Be aware that biking while intoxicated is dangerous and illegal.

## Drinks

Don't spend all your money on expensive drinks in fancy bars. Student houses and the Friday bars are affordable and also often where your fellow students will be. Danish students often meet up privately to "warm-up" before going out, which can also help to make your partying a bit more budget-friendly.

## Student discounts

Remember to check for student discounts – both on services, events and when shopping. Your student ID-card should cover it. The ISIC Card is a great option ([www.isicdanmark.dk/en](http://www.isicdanmark.dk/en)), but in general be wary of schemes trying to sell special additional student cards for you to get discounts. Ask your friends and co-students where they get their discounts.

## Dinner at home with friends

A budget-friendly and fun way to share meals with your friends. You can take turns cooking or cook together. If there are communal kitchens ("folkekøkken") in your city, those can be a great and cheap solution for dining out with friends as well and even to meet new people.

## Shopping

Be aware of the various price tags on supermarkets in Denmark. The budget-friendly options like Netto, Rema1000, Lidl, and other "discount" shops have a great variety of goods, without the hefty price tag of the more upscale shops. If you have room for storing goods, it can also be a good solution to buy larger amounts of groceries when the shops have "special offers" and bargains. Just don't buy too many perishable goods, as you then risk that they go bad before you can consume it.

## Clothes

If you would like to buy new, affordable clothing, one of the high street larger chain shops would normally be your best bet. The big supermarkets in Denmark also often have special offers on well-known sports brands and other apparel, so keep an eye out for this, if that is your thing. Flea markets, thrift shops and online markets like vinted.dk are also great ways to buy new wardrobe items and to get rid of things you are not using anymore. Oh, and Marketplace on Facebook is also a great place to shop new things!

## Packed lunch

Buying lunch at university or in the city might lead to empty pockets very quickly. Start bringing a packed lunch instead. Danish kids grow up eating packed lunches throughout their educational upbringings and there is nothing socially awkward in bringing your own food. Homemade sandwiches, salads (get some sturdy plastic boxes for this), and leftover dinner all make for great options. Places like Studenterhuset in Copenhagen have weekly Community Kitchen events where inexpensive food is prepared by student volunteers.

## Volunteer for experiences

One way to experience fun and interesting things while being a student is to volunteer at festivals, cultural events, and local volunteer-run concert venues. This way you don't have to pay the entry fee, you will get a diverse amount of work experience and meet new friends, all while getting to attend events that would otherwise be too expensive. At times, there are goodie bags, after-parties, drink vouchers, food or other benefits for being a volunteer, so it's a big win for the financially-challenged student who still wants to have fun! Many of the Danish festivals need volunteers, so try talking to your fellow students and friends about which festivals have not yet been held.

## Free events

There are usually a wide and interesting variety of free cultural and social events in all of the big cities in Denmark. Keep an eye on your local newspaper, posters and flyers at the university and local student house, and follow the various groups that share and post links to free events in your area.

# A more sustainable student life

## Be a sustainable role model on campus

As a student in Denmark, there are a lot of options to choose from if you want to minimize the negative effect your study-life has on our planet. You will notice very quickly that this can also save you a lot of money!

## Books are \$\$ and CO<sub>2</sub> heavy

One of the first things you will need to pay for as a student in Denmark is academic books. As mentioned, these are often a nasty expense and they have a large effect on your carbon footprint. This is why we recommend you to buy your books second hand or as an e-book. There are many Facebook groups relevant for nearly every Danish university.



## Coffee

What do most students need to survive? Coffee! However, coffee is often expensive when you buy it on campus and even worse, all the single-use coffee mugs are increasing our problems connected to plastic pollution and waste management in general. Counter this by either bringing your own coffee mug (sometimes you even get a discount) or just bring your own coffee you made at home.



## Getting around sustainably

We've already said it: Get yourself a bike! One of the quickest, cheapest and most sustainable ways to get around is by bike. A good bike can be expensive, but you can find an affordable used one in good quality on dba.dk (similar to Ebay). There are also shops that specialize in used bikes, Rebike in Aarhus or Buddha Bikes in Copenhagen. By riding a bike, you save money and limit your carbon footprint. Compared to taking the metro you roughly save 52 g/km and 87 g/km compared to taking the bus. During a year, this means you can save up to three tons of CO<sub>2</sub> by choosing the bike. Also, it's good for your health.



## Eat sustainable

Besides planning your meals in a weekly meal plan, there are several apps that work towards reducing food waste (and save you some time and money at the same time). A great example is the app "TooGoodToGo", where you can fight the increasing waste of food in supermarkets, cafes and restaurants by buying left-over-food. Every day you can buy surplus food at discount from local businesses that would have been thrown in the garbage otherwise. The app is perfect for the "poor student" who wants to try local restaurants, bakeries and cafes, but also for picking up perfectly fine vegetables and fruits from the local supermarket







Chapter 5

# Housing



# Housing

## CUE THE HORROR MUSIC...

Now we get to the really complicated part about being a student in Denmark: Finding a place to live.

House hunting is rarely a particularly fun thing to do, but here are some tips to help you navigate the jungle of flats, shares, dorms, sublets, and dodgy landlords.

First of all: Start early. Preferably, you should begin looking as soon as you are accepted into a Danish university, but at least a month or more before you arrive in Denmark, as it can take quite a while to find a place.

In the months leading up to the start of a semester, there is normally a rush of people looking for student-friendly accommodation, particularly in the bigger cities. This is especially in July and August, leading up to the start of the academic year in September. If you haven't been able to find anything prior to coming, make sure that you have the funds to cover the worst case scenario; such as staying at a hostel or a hotel for a long period of time. Airbnb and other private temporary sublet services are also an option here, but are often more expensive than traditional student housing.

Universities in Denmark usually have a very limited number of student residences at their disposal. However, some universities do offer assistance in finding accommodation, so ask your university before trying to find accommodation on your own. Note that RUC and CBS do not have the possibility of assisting their full degree students with accommodation.

In regards to budgeting, remember that different cities have different price tags. Copenhagen is the most expensive housing-wise, but Aarhus is hot on its tails. Odense, Roskilde and Aalborg are less expensive, but no one in their right mind would call living in a Danish university town cheap. If you are okay with living outside the city centre/right next to the university, you can save on rent. Remember to check bus/train access, commute time and "bike-to-city-and-university" times before signing a contract, so that you are sure it is possible to get to university on time in the morning.

Student housing is somewhat different in Denmark than it is in other countries. Rather than applying through the university, you must apply directly to the student housing (kollegium) or sign up on a waiting list. It can be difficult to get a room in a Danish kollegium due to the high levels of competition, so we advise you to start applying before you arrive in Denmark.

As this kind of housing is not always readily available in Denmark, we encourage you to look at other housing options as well. By living off-campus, you will be exposed to more of the city and be more likely to experience life in Denmark outside of the university bubble.

# How to find a place to live

## Official channels

This is where most people start. It is not good for short-term solutions, but if you get in, you will have a secure housing situation as long as you are a student. You simply contact the various providers of kollegiums and student flats and sign up for the waiting list. If you are lucky, they have something for you on short notice, but it's not something we would recommend that you count on. However, if you plan to stay in Denmark for more than one semester, do join a waiting list or complete an application for one or several dorms. That way you might have better prospects for semesters to come, instead of a long string of sublets and temporary solutions.

## Private/public postings

You check for postings either on social media, poster walls, in forums, and on services for these postings. Contact the person renting out a room or an apartment and take it from there.

It is common to go see the apartment before you agree to move in. Do not pay any deposit or hand over any money without having signed a contract beforehand or received your key. Bring a friend with you when you go to see the apartment, that way you won't be as vulnerable to a landlord pressuring you into accepting terms you don't want to.

## Facebook, social media and network

There are a bunch of housing groups on Facebook and some of them are even specifically for international students. Find the ones relevant to your city and join them. Be aware that most postings will get a ton of replies and quickly be gone. Use caution in regards to deposits and contracts.

There is always the risk that the posting may be a scam. In these groups, people might also warn each other about frauds, so they are great places to keep yourself updated.

You can also use Facebook and other social media platforms to let your network know that you are currently looking for a place to stay. Let your classmates, friends, and co-workers know that you are looking for housing, so that in the event that they hear of something, they will be sure to let you know. Danish students often use Facebook to find a place to live, so you might as well join the party.

Make a post stating that you are looking for housing, remember to mention your city, preferred area, and your budget for rent and ask people to contact you if they hear about anything. If you make your post public, your friends can even share it for you, resulting in a larger network of people who will see it.

## University services

All of the major universities in Denmark offer advice on housing. What they can offer differs from city to city, but it is worth contacting them.

Some of the big universities are listed here - otherwise ask at your school's international office:

### Copenhagen

[www.housingfoundation.ku.dk](http://www.housingfoundation.ku.dk) (is also housing students that are not from KU, as long as they have an agreement with HF).

### Aarhus

[www.kollegiekontoret.dk/english](http://www.kollegiekontoret.dk/english) & [www.studenthousingaarhus.com](http://www.studenthousingaarhus.com)

### Aalborg

[www.en.aau.dk/education/apply/international-accommodation-office](http://www.en.aau.dk/education/apply/international-accommodation-office)

## Rent

It may prove to be rather expensive to pay for rent in Denmark. A 2024 survey found that students living in non-profit housing within the municipalities of Copenhagen or Frederiksberg paid between DKK 3,200 - 4,500 (€ 430 - 600) in rent per month, while students living in private rental accommodation paid between DKK 3,900 and 5,500 (€ 520 - 740) per month.

Keep these figures in mind while house hunting, as some may provide you with an unreasonably high rent. A bit later in this chapter, you can read more about how to avoid scams, and what to do if you experience it.

# Startup Housing Copenhagen

**by Students**



Are you moving to Copenhagen and do you need a place to stay?

Startup Housing is temporary housing at the start of the Fall semester available for all students in Copenhagen.

Read more here

<https://studenterhuset.com/en/housing/>



# Housing options

## Kollegium (Residential halls and dorms)

Kollegiums are the Danish form of student residences. The kollegiums in Denmark house students from a variety of different universities and education levels and are often located throughout the city. They are seldom located on campus. Many of the kollegiums have their own traditions, and will encourage an active social participation. This is a good way to meet students outside your own field of studies.

Here, students stay in a single room and usually share a big kitchen with 3-25 other people. The kitchens have common areas where students hang out with other residents. Living in this type of kollegium is often a very social experience and a great way to meet new people. Some kollegiums are designed as apartments, either with your own kitchen and bathroom, or as big apartments where you share a kitchen, bathroom, and common area with 2-5 other people. These kollegiums offer a bit more privacy, but don't have the same social environment as the kollegiums with large, shared kitchens.

Danish students living in kollegiums often sublet their rooms to other students when they go abroad for a semester. Ask people living in kollegiums if they know of anyone who will be subletting their room, or keep an eye out for relevant Facebook posts in the kollegium groups.

Admittance to a kollegium is usually determined by a waiting list, but some kollegiums accept new residents based on motivated or creative personal applications.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that many kollegiums were built in the 50's and 60's, which are now showing signs of wear and tear. Obviously, you get what you pay for, so instead of expecting luxury, enjoy the experience and the fact that kollegiums are a great way to meet new people and fellow students.

CIU – the centralised Kollegium and Student Flat Service:  
(Unfortunately in Danish)

<http://www.findbolig.nu/>

UBSBOLIG (for Copenhagen)

[www.ubsbolig.dk/en](http://www.ubsbolig.dk/en)

KollegieKontoret Aarhus & Student Housing Aarhus

<https://kollegiekontoret.dk/en/>

[www.studenthousingaarhus.com](http://www.studenthousingaarhus.com)

## Shared flats, renting, sublets, rooms

Most of the Danish students who don't live in kollegiums or student flats choose to live in privately rented or shared flats, often sublets or flats owned by private landlords.

There are a lot of websites that you can search to find housing advertisements from private landlords. Some of them are free, but the majority of sites will charge a fee to reveal the owner's contact information.

If your university has an online bulletin board or pin boards at campus these can also be good places to look for private postings for rooms and flats. Another good resource for finding people who are subletting or renting rooms is Facebook groups.

When searching online beware of scammers. See our tips to avoid scams on the housing market later in this chapter.

When sharing a flat (or a kollegium kitchen) make sure to talk about rules for cleaning, noise levels, and having parties in the flat. This is normally an issue in which people disagree, which can lead to a bad atmosphere between flatmates. It's better to set out the rules before any problems occur so that you're not dealing with angry housemates.

## Student flats

Most cities in Denmark have a number of rental flats set aside for students and young people. These are normally great deals, but require you to fulfill various criteria and the waiting list is often long, even for Danes.

[www.findbolig.nu](http://www.findbolig.nu) is a great place to search for these as this website covers most of these apartments.

## What to expect

The harsh truth is that housing is very difficult to come by, even for Danes. It is very unlikely that you will be able to find a place in which you may live on your own that is also considered affordable.

Most live in kollegiums or share a flat with other people. Expect the same to be the case for you.

If you get a room in a flat with access to a shower and kitchen, or a room at a kollegium and it's within 30-40 minutes (bus or bike) from your university, you're living under the same conditions as your Danish co-students.

You can often save money by moving further away from the city, but remember to factor in the time and money you will need for transportation.

**CULTURAL TIP:** Danes normally consider it a given that you take your shoes off when you enter a person's flat.



# Furniture

IF YOU ARE SUBLETTING or renting a private room or flat, it is sometimes already furnished, which will make your life a lot easier. However, there might come a time when you need furniture or other things, so here are some tips on how to pick up the things you need, without breaking the bank.

IKEA is big in Denmark, as it is in the rest of the world. Sometimes they even have student discounts so remember to check for those before going. Some universities do "IKEA drives" by bus from the campus during the start of the semester, which makes transportation so much easier. Keep an eye out for postings about this or ask your fellow students if they want to join you on an IKEA adventure. Also, a dinner of IKEA's famous Swedish meatballs is a cheap price to pay for help with carrying and assembling your new furniture. The Vesterbro IKEA in Copenhagen lends out cargo bikes for bringing your flatpicks home.

Though Denmark is known for its expensive designer furniture, there are cheap furniture alternatives, which are available at shops such as Jysk, Tiger, Søstrene Grene, and many of the large supermarkets.

Secondhand furniture is another way to go. Most cities have a Red Cross and other charity stores, which sell affordable secondhand furniture. The furniture from these stores should have already been cleaned by the time of purchase.

Online postings like [www.dba.dk](http://www.dba.dk) are also a great place to look for cheap furniture. It is a good idea to go and see the object in person to check that the quality is as you believed it to be before you purchase it. It is fine to haggle with the price, but remember to do it before you show up to look at and collect the item.

Finally, and obviously, you can also look for and check out various Facebook groups where people sell used furniture. Like with dba.dk, it's again a great idea to see the item in person, so you don't buy the cat in the sack. If you live near Aarhus, be sure to check Bytteboxen (<https://www.kredslob.dk/produkter-og-services/genbrug-og-affald/sortering/bytteboxen>), a swap station where you'll be able to get free stuff that others don't need anymore and leave something yourself. In Copenhagen, Aarhus and some other cities there are "nærgenbrugsstationer" (translates to local recycling stations), and at some of them, they have a "bytterum" (exchange room), where you can leave and take clothes, books and furniture. Find the nearest one at [www.a-r-c.dk/privat/find-din-genbrug.splads/](http://www.a-r-c.dk/privat/find-din-genbrug.splads/) (Copenhagen) or <https://www.kredslob.dk/produkter-og-services/genbrug-og-affald/genbrugsstation/naergenbrugsstationen> (Aarhus)

# How to avoid housing scams

AS IN ALL CITIES with a competitive rental market, housing scams do occur when it comes to student accommodation in the Danish university cities. Students, and international students in particular, are often in urgent need of housing and are unfortunately therefore more likely to fall victim to dishonest people.

Make sure you set aside time to look at housing ads and ask your friends and classmates, so that you have a solid understanding of prices and housing standards. The key elements here are to never pay without getting anything in writing and remember that if it seems shady or too good to be true, it probably is.

If you don't get the rental agreement in writing or if you "pay money under the table" to get the flat, and it turns out to be a scam, you have no legal claim. So get a contract stating how much the rent is, how long you can live there and what the terms are for giving notice, being asked to move out, etc. You can avoid a lot of unpleasant experiences by doing this.

If you do encounter unpleasant experiences or are scammed, the organisation Lejernes Landsorganisation (translates to The tenants organization) offers advice and legal counselling to people who have problems with their landlords. They can advise you on your rights and possibilities.

Lejernes landsorganisation: [www.llo.dk/om-llo/internationalt](http://www.llo.dk/om-llo/internationalt)

Free rent service: [www.rentguide.dk/en](http://www.rentguide.dk/en)

## Danish apartments and addresses...

Danish housing calls the ground floor 0 (or st. for stuen), the floor above that is the 1st floor and so forth. In Denmark, the number of "rooms" determines the apartment size. This number is created by combining the bedrooms and living room – but does not include the kitchen, bathroom, or hallways.

In regards to apartment blocks, apartment addresses are written as: name of the tenant/company, you can write c/o, if the tenant/company's name isn't stated in official registers yet or their name isn't on the mailbox, street name, house number, floor number, followed by apartment placement th. (to the right), mf. (the middle), or tv. (to the left). Remember to include your postal code and city name (as in 1608 København V) when writing your address. E.g. the publisher of this magazine:

byStudents  
c/o Foreningen Studenterhuset  
Købmagergade 52, 3. th  
1150 København K

## DOs

- Check who owns the rental property
- Always see the rental property
- Check the rent level
- Get everything in writing
- Document any defects when moving in (photos are a good idea)
- When subletting, note what the rules are for the specific subletting deal
- Make sure that the property is consistent with the rental contract
- Make sure to go through the property
- Double-check the legality of the arrangement if you are told not to have your postal address there

## DON'Ts

- Never pay by cash
- Never pay via a foreign bank account or money transfer service
- Don't accept landlord pressure
- Don't be too critical about location
- Never pay money under the table
- Don't pay too much in deposit and prepaid rent (usually 3 months rent)

## Practical info

Tap water is drinkable all over Denmark and often of a better quality than expensive bottled water. Danish houses are normally very well insulated – double (or even triple) glazed windows and double walls will keep the cold out during the winter.

Most Danish apartments are heated with radiators that use hot water. Turn them on when it starts to get cold. Normally the 3-setting will ensure a nice and cosy room. As the radiators run via thermostats, remember to turn off the radiator when you have opened windows - that way you'll avoid expensive heating bills.

It's normal for kollegiums and apartment buildings to have a common laundry room for all of the tenants, so don't be surprised if there isn't a washing machine in your apartment. Ask for info about where you can do laundry when moving in.





# Let the house hunting begin

– here are some links to get you started;  
unfortunately some are in Danish

A guide to finding housing: [www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/housing-1/find-housing](http://www.studyindenmark.dk/live-in-denmark/housing-1/find-housing)

Info about types of housing: <https://bl.dk/non-profit-housing-in-denmark/>

Flats and youth housing. [www.findbolig.nu](http://www.findbolig.nu)

Lejerbo manages apartments across Denmark, including youth housing: [www.lejerbo.dk](http://www.lejerbo.dk)

Students and others looking for roommates: [www.findroom-mate.dk](http://www.findroom-mate.dk)

Similar to Ebay. List of flats and rooms for rent: [www.dba.dk](http://www.dba.dk)

Flats, shared apartments, and rooms for rent: <https://en.lejebol-ig.dk>





The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent pink geometric shapes. These include a horizontal bar at the top, a vertical bar on the right, a horizontal bar on the left, and a large diagonal shape extending from the bottom left towards the center. The shapes create a layered, architectural feel.

Chapter 6

# Meeting the Danes

# Meeting Danes

THE DANES. They're everywhere and yet they can seem like an elusive rarity in your life as an international student.

Naturally, they are there physically, but how do you meet them? Let alone, how do you get to know or befriend them and maybe even (drumroll) date them?

It can seem like an insurmountable task, and maybe it's easier to just hang out with the other international students and joke about the antisocial Danes, but if you want a local network as a student (the shortcut to jobs, housing, and an all-around fun time in Denmark), befriending the Danes is a must.



## Cultural differences

First of all: The Danes aren't antisocial or hate hanging out with international students such as yourself. Yes, there are antisocial and dismissive people amongst us, but it's not the rule. We just socialise and form friendships in slightly different ways compared to what you might be used to in your home country.

Denmark has been a culturally homogenous country for centuries, so your Danish classmates might not even realise that other cultures don't do "friendships" and "hanging out" similar to how they do them.

In the same way, you might misinterpret the Danish behaviour as a lack of interest or as them being "weird", because it's different from what you're used to.

Use the cultural differences to your advantage by being curious and interested in your fellow Danish students and talk about their culture compared to yours. Most people love to talk about their background and appreciate people who are genuinely interested.

Most Danes learn to form social bonds through school, hobbies, sport, and work. This means that we're not used to social-



ising with strangers, and many Danish students who haven't developed friendships within those traditional categories also struggle with being lonely at times.

The ones who aren't lonely might still be interested in new friends too, but they probably already have a fully packed life with old friends, family, jobs, and hobbies, so they might not be as active in looking for new friends as you are, leaving you to believe that they aren't interested in hanging out.

The thing you need to remember is that even if your new Danish classmates don't say so, they might be interested in getting to know you. You just have to approach them in the right way and maybe take a bit more initiative than you're used to doing in your home country.

Generally speaking, many expats will say that "Danes only talk/hang out with people they know", which of course can become a problem if you're interested in meeting new people and forming a network in a new city. However, there are ways around this and we will cover those as well as certain quirks of social interaction that are culturally typical for Danish students.

As with all people, regardless of culture, your fellow students have individual personalities, so unfortunately we can only offer tips and tricks, not a one-size-fits-all solution.







## Hygge

We have to cover it, right? The elusive and alluring Danish concept of hygge... Google translate will tell you it means “fun”, “co-siness” or “comfort”, but you can’t really grasp the idea until you have experienced it. Hygge is both hanging out with friends, cosying up on your own, being outside in the summer or inside by candlelight in the winter. Try using it as an icebreaker and asking your Danish classmates to explain it, and you will get at least five different ideas about what hygge is.

## Humour

Another thing that you might find “weird” about your Danish friends could very well be their sense of humour. The Danish humour is “dry”, sarcastic (irony is BIG here) and irreverent. You can make fun of all authority figures and are not expected to “spare” people in leadership positions or religious figureheads. It is also very popular to be self-deprecating (often called selvi-roni) in your jokes.

Research shows that the Danes generally don’t have a problem looking foolish or laughing at their own mistakes. The emphasis on “cringe-worthy” situations and stories might seem weird to you, but try to watch a Danish comedy show or Danish stand-up with subtitles to get an idea about what the Danes currently find funny.

Remember that it’s okay not to find Danish humour funny or not to participate in the joke telling, but try not taking the sarcastic and irreverent jokes too personally. They are rarely meant as an insult.



# Meeting people at the university

The first step to finding new Danish friends is knowing where to meet your fellow students. Certain circumstances make for excellent time windows during which you can meet and make Danish friends, even if you don't know anyone yet.

Some of the ones you'll encounter as a student are:

## Mentor/buddy programs

Most places have various mentor and buddy programs that provide a safety net, practical contacts, and a social network for new international students. If you get a chance to join one, it's a great way to meet other people from both Denmark and the rest of the world, and the people signing up to be mentors or buddies are most likely interested in getting an international network.

Even if you haven't been in one of the programs yourself, and are a long-term international student in Denmark, ask your local international office if it's possible for you to become a mentor or buddy in the future. This is a great way to use your experiences to help new international students and to meet new people in the process.

## Clubs and activities

Most schools have a wide variety of clubs, activities, and "foreninger" (see explanation on the following pages) that you can join as a student. Are you interested in music? Join the choir, the glee/musical club, or the yearly revue. Like your local SU-friendly Friday bar? Join the group organising it! Do you like sports? Most departments or institutes have their own sports team. If not, the universities should have bigger central sports organisations that you can join. Each department or institute will often have academic clubs and an alumni organisation, both of which have members who will plan social and academic events for their members.

Check out the lists with some of the student associations at:

Aalborg University: <https://www.students.aau.dk/student-life/your-study-environment/student-associations>

University of Copenhagen: <https://foreninger.voresku.dk/english/>

## SU-friendly Friday bars and parties at your course or institute

They're cheap, local, and jam-packed with other students from your own area of education. This means that you will definitely have something to talk about while drinking cheap beer, drinks or soda, playing board games and complaining about exams together.

Often, the institutes or the universities have a cheap student-run café, where you can hangout after classes and chat with fellow students.

If you have any initiatives like this at your school, go there! It is a great way to meet Danish students, especially at the beginning of the semester, when everyone will be looking for new friends and are very social and more open-minded.

## Stuenterhuset aka the Student House

All the major university cities in Denmark have their own Stuenterhus aka Student house. They are volunteer-run non-profit organisations that organise social activities for the entire university (or all the universities if there are more than one in the city), and provide a social space for all students.

The prices are student friendly and the student houses function as cafés, bars, concert venues, and event spaces, while providing a host of activities for the student community.

Additionally, the student houses often offer valuable activities for students besides the cheap beers – it could be job fairs, housing events, networking events, and current affairs debates.

Since the student houses are mainly volunteer-run, you can either participate in the activities offered as a guest or sign up to help as a volunteer. The latter will definitely ensure that you meet a lot of new friends and maybe even get some useful job experience on top of that.

## Become a volunteer

Student volunteers run most of these aforementioned activities either partly or completely. Getting involved in a volunteer activity is a great way to meet Danes and provides an opportunity to bond over mutual interests and projects. People will usually be happy to hire you or have you join their organization if you offer your time and dedication as a volunteer, so ask around if you are interested in joining an activity at your university or local student house.

There are many other ways to volunteer and these are covered in the specific volunteering section on the next page.

# How to get involved

## “Foreningskultur”

A thing that is unique to Danish culture and socialising is the emphasis on “foreninger” and the culture in regards to all the different types of “foreninger”. This is relatively complicated to translate, as it is a Danish/Scandinavian concept that has been a pillar in these countries’ civil societies for almost 150 years. A “forening” is a democratic, membership-based organisation with a common theme, goal, or activity. A board, consisting of members from the organisation, runs the forening and every member has the right to vote and participate in the activities, given that you pay the membership fees. So essentially those members participating are also the people running the activities voluntarily.



This is how almost all sports clubs, leisure activities, interest based clubs and societies, and many of the volunteer organisations work in Denmark and it is where many people form a network outside work and school. Around 90% of all Danes are members of at least one forening, chances are there's a relevant one for you as well out there.

Getting involved in a forening is not only a good way to meet new people; it is also a great way to see one of the culturally specific “very Danish” institutions at work.

If you join a forening to play sports (instead of the local “pay & go” gym), not only do you get to do the sports, but there are normally also a host of other activities connected to it, like parties, fundraisers, committees to join within the club, etc. So, it is a great way to get to meet many Danes and form a network.

## Volunteer organisations

A lot of students in Denmark do volunteer work, either on a regular basis or for special events in their city, community, or within their fields of interest.

If you're interested in regular (weekly or monthly) volunteer work, your local Studenterhus or Student Council is a great place to start. Both normally have a big community of volunteer students and do activities related to your life as a student, whether it is bartending at their café, organizing events, or doing social activities for other students. If you want to join, contact your local Studenterhus or Council (Studenterråd).

The various non-profit cafés and charity organisations in your city can also be a great place to volunteer, especially if you're in Denmark for more than a few months. The volunteer opportunities here are many and diverse. Globalhagen in Copenhagen and Café MellemFolk in Aarhus are great examples. As a volunteer here, you're able to work behind the bar, plan events, work with PR or just engage in various activities. Beyond these, you can find more about volunteering on [www.frivilligjob.dk](http://www.frivilligjob.dk), but you can also ask your fellow students about volunteer opportunities in your city.

Remember that a lot of volunteer work is done within the various “foreninger”, so if you're interested in a particular activity or subject, there are normally many opportunities to get involved here as well.

Many Danish students also volunteer for various bigger events such as music festivals and other cultural events (film festivals, fashion week, and historical celebrations are all based on volunteer work as well), and can be a great way to meet new people, have fun, and get new experiences without having to commit on a weekly basis.



Google the events you're interested in several months before the event, normally they do posts about looking for volunteers on their websites.

For big music festivals like Roskilde Festival, you can also sign up to volunteer alongside some of your friends and fellow students by which it becomes a social event in itself. This is how many Danish students finance their festivals, as it is otherwise expensive on a SU budget.

# Danish friends

It's worth remembering that Danes often distinguish between friends, who are understood to be the few you're really close to, and then acquaintances/classmates/colleagues, who are the people whom they know and are social with, but don't hang out with exclusively. The Danish word for friends "venner" tends to be used in a more exclusive way than the English term.

## So how to befriend the Danes?

Most Danish students have met their friends through school, work, volunteering, sports, and hobbies.

Even though they have met through a common activity, it is rare to consider yourself friends right from the start. You do that activity "alongside" each other for a while; probably chatting casually and realising you click and have fun. Maybe that leads to casual socialising, which still relates to the thing you do together, talking while biking home from sports, eating lunch together at school, etc. Then you go on to do something social

– but not just the two of you, since you are still "getting to know each other". These social things can be a party for your class, a trip for the sports club or with your hobby, a dinner for the entire volunteer crew. These are good ways to be social while still in the safe context of what you do "together", which will make the Dane feel like the friendship is developing naturally and not something that they are being trapped into.

After this social activity (or several of these), you can safely ask to do something social together that is separate from the activity which you initially met doing.

Now you are entering the "good friends" territory and it's perfectly normal to do things together without having to make up excuses to justify being around them.

## Friendship tips

- Be patient. Social relations with Danes tend to take a little more time to form
- Join some clubs/projects/hobbies that you find fun and engaging. Activities with others is a great way to meet people
- Talk to people and go to the social gatherings of the things you're involved with
- If the Danes seem closed off, remember that they might be trying to respect your private space or simply are shy or unsure. Approach them and see what happens
- Danes can also be shy and might find it just as hard to make friends as you do
- Don't expect to jump straight to best friend territory immediately
- Take initiative and suggest doing stuff together



# On time

## Being on time

The Danes are, in general, a pretty precise people. Once you're here, you may quickly notice how trains, meetings, classes, hanging out with friends all seem to be scheduled with similar degrees of specificity and expectations of punctuality.

So... when are you considered to be late here?

For official/formal situations, assume you'll be late if you're not there for the precise time announced or agreed upon in advance. So, try to be there 5 minutes before, just to be sure.

In social settings, most Danes seem to operate with a 5 to 10-minute tardiness allowance. If delayed, you're expected to let people know, so they know how long the wait will be. This is considered polite for both formal and informal social events.

For some appointments (doctors, interviews, exams etc.) it may not be possible to reschedule if late, but it's still considered good form.

## The academic quarter

At some universities, you will meet this term. It means that classes start 15 minutes past the hour, and while your schedule might say "13.00" – your class will start 13:15.

When no specification is given, we recommend turning up early for the first classes, being ready for them to start on the hour, and then adjusting once you know more.

## The Exceptions to the Lateness Rules

Is everything always on time in Denmark? Am I never allowed to be late? As with everything, of course, there are a few exceptions to the rules.

## Parties and casual events

Parties that don't have a host as such, like big parties at your university or your department's Friday bar usually don't come with an expectation of a set arrival time. The same tends to be the case for private parties thrown at kollegiums, bars, and such unless there will be food served. If there's food, be on time.

Events that are advertised with wording like "You're welcome between XX and YY", receptions, and similar "stop by and mingle" events also allow you to show up when it works for you within the timeframe – though most people will appreciate you arriving early enough to enjoy the event for some hours before it ends.

If you plan to meet up with someone before or at an event or party, the normal social expectations around tardiness are in play again, however.

## Should I be early?

It bears to mention that most Danes detest when you arrive early for an event at their house. Anything more than 10 minutes, and you risk your host is still in the shower, trying to convince themselves they can face the world. Only arrive early if you've asked in advance.

"We're going to be at this bar all evening, drop by whenever..."

This is exactly what it says on the can. You can text people to check if they're still out if you're joining very late, but that's for your own sake, not an expectation.

## Cancelling plans

Cancelling official appointments: If you need to cancel or reschedule an official appointment; there will normally be an app, a phone number, or an email address for this. Please use it. Most places like doctors' offices, hairdressers, dentists and such expect you to cancel no later than the day before, or they might fine you.

Cancelling social plans: Do it as soon as you know you can't make it. It's normally not a problem but please let people know so they don't wait for you to show up and can make other plans.

## The awkward art of the Danish invitation

If it's bigger social events like a Friday bar or a party for your classmates, everyone in that context is considered invited. This means that you might not get an "official" invitation to these events, but you are still invited. If you are unsure about going by yourself, ask your fellow students if you'll see them there and make plans to meet up at the event.

For more private social events, you'll normally be invited. If it's a private party, it's common courtesy to RSVP no matter if you are able to attend or not.

When attending private parties or hanging out with an already established group of friends, it's considered polite behaviour to ask before you bring someone outside the group along with you.

## How do invitations to different events normally work in Denmark?

If your department has a student café or a Friday bar, you will generally not need any further invitation than "I study here" to go there. The same goes for Facebook events/posters etc. inviting "all students at this department" to join.

If your fellow students say, "Are you coming to the Friday bar?" or "Let's all go to the café!" to a group you're with, it's generally seen as an open invitation, and you are welcome to join.



Casual socialising, at home: Most Danish students live in residential halls/kollegiums, shared flats or smaller student flats, so their homes are not necessarily suitable for guests or hosting parties. This means you shouldn't feel socially discouraged if your new Danish friends don't invite you to their home, especially not in the beginning.

For those who live in a kollegium, it may be different, as the shared kitchens often make group socializing easy, and inviting friends to dinner or parties at your residential hall is quite normal.

Invitations to this will almost always be communicated directly to you. It's considered nice to ask "if you should bring anything/ if they need help cooking?" and expect most parties to be "bring your own beverage".

Danes generally aren't big fans of unannounced/surprise visitors, so if you're in the area where a friend lives and would like to visit them, text them first to check if they are up for spontaneous company.

## Scheduling, punctuality, and spontaneous hanging outs

Some things you might discover when being friends with the Danes is that the average Danish student likes to schedule most things in their life including their social time.

Since this is the norm, punctuality is valued, and you will be expected to at least let your friends know in advance when you are running late or have to cancel. Text messages are acceptable here, and cancelling "in good time" is considered to be polite if you realise you can't meet up.

The scheduling also means that it can be a bit complicated to find time to make plans with your Danish friends on a short notice. Don't take this as an insult or a dismissal of seeing you – try instead to suggest a date further into the future, so both of you can make it.

## Turning down invitations

It is perfectly okay to turn down an invitation in Denmark. Of course, some people may get disappointed, but it's not an automatic social faux pas, and most people appreciate an honest decline instead of an insincere acceptance.



# Dating in Denmark

There is no “formalised” dating structure in Denmark, no unwritten rules about who-calls-who or who-pays-on-the-date. The arrival of various dating apps might have changed how often the Danes go on dates with people they don't already know, but the word ‘date’ is still used just as often about an already established couple who have been together for a while.



The Danish word “kæreste” is considered more serious and committed than “just” dating, and can mean both boyfriend and girlfriend as well as “live in partner”.

Most people meet their romantic partners through friends, school, work, or the clubs and organisations that they're a part of, meaning that they've often gotten to know that person before getting involved or starting to date.

In regards to actual dating, Danes often use dating apps, and make arrangements to go have coffee or take a walk, while talking. Eating dinner is usually an activity you turn to, when things are getting more serious. If you are setting up a date with someone, you can ask them to show you their favorite coffee place, museum or someplace they think is nice in the city. That way you'll have something to talk about, when you meet up and you'll learn new things about your city.

## Sex Education and Sexual harassment

80% of all 19-year-old Danes have had sex, so it is a natural thing for young people to have experienced in Denmark. We have Sex-Ed all through primary and high school and it's normal for Danish parents to let their teenagers' boyfriends/girlfriends sleep over as well.

One thing we teach in Sex-Ed is of course to use protection. Condoms are the only thing that protects you against both unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms are easily accessible in supermarkets or pharmacies all over Denmark. It is recommended to use them with new partners, at least until you both have been tested for STD's. And it's not embarrassing to tell your sexual partner to use protection – though we admit it can be awkward for everyone, also for the Danes.

Remember that you always have every right to enforce your own personal boundaries, and say yes and no to intimate activities depending on what you want, as well as you should respect other people's wishes and boundaries.

If you experience sexual assault, there are clinics in all of the major Danish hospitals that are designed specifically for this purpose. You are safe to report it to the police. Please note that consumption of alcohol neither negates nor constitutes consent in a Danish legal context.

Sexual harassment, in any form, is never okay or your own fault. If you experience anything that you're uncomfortable with, you can go to your local student council, and they'll be able to guide you in the right direction from there. If you have a bad experience and wish to press charges, call the police and/or one of the hotlines for sexual assault



# Explore your city

MEETING THE DANES is also about doing activities “like the Danes” with your friends.

During the (short but sweet) summer, most university cities in Denmark have a great outdoor life.

People grill out in the parks and have a low-key social barbecue, bring wine and beer to the beach, go to outdoor movie screenings (often for free) in parks, and play ballgames on the nearest patch of grass.

If there are outdoor sports facilities in your area, these are often also used for social purposes.

During the colder seasons you can still go for a walk outside (remember your raincoat and a warm sweater) or even go to the skating rinks that most cities have during winter.

All through the year there are a ton of cultural and social events in all of the major Danish cities. These events can be various festivals (music, film, art, food), cultural happenings, carnivals, or big block parties. Sometimes all of these are combined into big city-celebrations like Aarhus Festuge or Golden Days in Copenhagen. Bring your friends, go out, explore what your local city has to offer, and discover new experiences. Often these activities are for free or have student discounts on tickets. If not, it's often possible to volunteer as well.

Even in the biggest cities in Denmark, there are rarely neighbourhoods that are actually dangerous for anyone to visit. Of course it's a good idea to keep updated on whether there are tensions in your local area, but other than that you can safely assume that your city is safe. You should feel safe to explore the various neighborhoods in your city and we recommend that you do so to ensure that you see and experience things outside of your university and home.

Maybe you'll find beautiful street art, a hidden park, or your new favourite burger place?



# Bike culture

WHEN IT COMES to exploring your new Danish hometown, there is one tip that is more valuable than anything else:

GET A BIKE! It's cheaper and more flexible than buses, often quicker too, and gives you exercise and fresh air on top of that. And it's what all your fellow Danish students are doing, so it makes hanging out with them much easier.



The "biking the same way home from class" is a time-tested classic when it comes to getting to know your classmates.

We suggest that you buy a used yet reliable bike from an official bike shop - it's often cheaper than renting it. If you're only here for a short while, you can rent your bike from specialised businesses that often exist solely to rent bikes to exchange students at a favourable rate. Google it.

## How to get a bike

Cheap bikes can be found at second hand bike shops, through dba.dk and similar pages or through some of the Facebook groups for international students in your city. There are also often police auctions where cheap bikes can be bought.

Many international students sell their bikes when they go back home and you can probably buy their bike for a cheap price if you keep an eye out for posts like this.

Get one that's not too fancy (eliminates the risk of theft), but not too worn out (eliminates massive repair bills) and get a secure lock for it.

Secure locks will be sold with this:



Keep the frame number of your bike and lock it in a safe place. If your bike gets stolen, you will need this number for the police and the insurance. You can also use the frame number on a used bike you are considering buying to check if it is stolen.

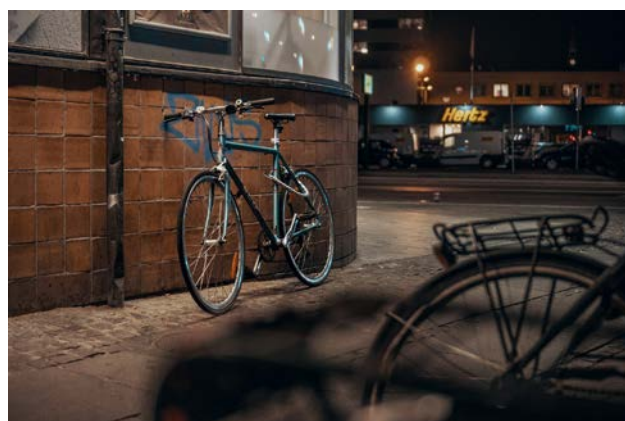
And since it gets cold in Denmark: Buy some lock antifreeze from a gas station. It will save you many tears once the temperatures get below zero and your lock suddenly won't open.

If you or your friends can fix things on your bike, great! Otherwise the second hand bike shops normally do cheap repairs, or you might be lucky and there's a volunteer-run bike repair shop in your city.

## Good bike-etiquette is important!

We have mentioned it before, but as with everything else, there are certain rules to play by while biking around your city. The most important ones are to remember to keep as far right as possible, look before you overtake fellow bikers, and always signal before turning or stopping.

Check out the rules for biking on page 11.





# Going out

## STUDENTS GO OUT.

It's a fundamental fact of life, also in Denmark.

Whether you drink alcohol or not, a lot of the social life of a student is focused around going out to bars and cafés or attending parties.

The concept of going out to dinner is not as widely used in Denmark as it is in many other cultures – probably given the price tag on restaurant food.

Be aware that Danes tend to eat dinner a little earlier than you might be used to; dinner is most often eaten between 18-20.

It is however quite normal to go out after dinnertime, meaning that people will have eaten from home.

Alternatively, you can gather friends at your home and cook dinner together – if you have a kitchen that allows for this.

When you go out there are of course the various bars, cafés and pubs. For the student community, the local Studentarhus is a great place to start, and the same goes for the various student bars at the university.

A lot of students will probably also favour the local “bodega” (Danish equivalent of the old-school British pub for locals), where the drinks will be substantially cheaper than at the fancy bars in the area.

Alcohol is normally served to everyone who is over the age of 18, but you should be aware that some clubs might have a 21+ rule and maybe even a dress code. In general, the Danes dress stylishly, but casually, when they go out. Most places will let you in if you're wearing sneakers and jeans.



Many clubs and bars in Denmark tend to be open late (until 4 or 5 in the morning) and as a result of these late hours and the “eat at home before we go out” concept, your Danish friends might go out a tad later than you're used to. Or earlier, if you are from Spain.

## Alcohol Culture

We cannot talk about parties and bars without talking about alcohol culture. And yes, the Danish student life can sometimes look like it's revolving around alcohol.

This doesn't mean you can't go out with your Danish friends if you do not want to consume alcohol.

All bars and cafés will normally have non-alcoholic alternatives and though they might offer you a beer at first your individual choice should and will be respected.

If you do drink alcohol, remember planning in advance, how to get home. Both driving a car and e-scooters while intoxicated is illegal in Denmark. It is also illegal to bike, while intoxicated.



## Stay Safe

In general, it's a good thing to know your alcohol limits and have your bus route and the number for a cab service written down alongside your address. This way you can always make your way home safely. Denmark is a very safe country but please do use common sense and exert caution when going out in a new city while under the influence of alcohol. Keep an eye on your belongings and your drink, and let your friends know when you are leaving the party and with whom.

If you just moved here and aren't sure you can remember your address: Text it to the friends you're going out with so you have it for later, even if you lose your phone.

Make sure you have money on your rejsekort or other transport funds, and check in advance what train/night bus/metro will be the best option for you when it's time to go home.

# LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ is an abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning. It also includes other identifiers, such as non-binary, asexual, and pansexual. In Denmark the majority of people are open-minded, tolerant and inclusive towards the LGBTQ+ community. Copenhagen in particular, has a big and diverse LGBTQ+ social scene. Both Copenhagen and Aarhus host big official pride parades and celebrations each summer, and many smaller cities are joining in.

Denmark legalised same-sex civil marriage in 1989 and same-sex church marriages in 2012. Overall, the majority of people in bigger Danish cities are open-minded, tolerant and inclusive towards the LGBTQ+ community.

If you are looking for LGBTQ-friendly venues and events, the "rainbow sticker" system is common, so look for the sticker at the entrance. Your local Student House might even have e.g. an Queer Crea Club etc.

You can find more information at [www.lgbt.dk/en](http://www.lgbt.dk/en), the website for the Danish LGBTQ+ foundation. The magazine "Out and About" published a LGBTQ+ guide for Copenhagen. You can find it here: [www.outandabout.dk/copenhagen-lgbt-guide/](http://www.outandabout.dk/copenhagen-lgbt-guide/)

If you're interested in other types of activities, the organisation Sabaah is an independent, voluntary association that works to improve the conditions for LGBT+ people with a minority ethnic background. They host several activities as well. Find them on instagram @sabaahdk or visit their website, <https://sabaah.dk/welcome-to-sabaah/>











Chapter 7

# Student job

# Getting a student job

## Can I work in Denmark?

Nordic, EU/EEA or Swiss citizens are allowed to work in Denmark under EU rules regarding the free movement of people and services. There is no minimum or maximum number of hours that you can work. If you are an EU citizen working in Denmark, you might be able to apply for SU.

To be eligible for SU as a non-danish student, you have to work a minimum of 10-12 hours, so be sure to have your work contract, before you apply for SU. If you do get SU, there is a limit to how much you are allowed to earn per year.

Non-EU/EEA/Swiss citizens are allowed to work up to 20 hours a week and full-time during June, July and August.

The limited work permit is also valid during the 6 month job seeking period that's granted if you're expecting to complete a full-degree programme in Denmark.

Nevertheless, when it comes to following the rules for employment as an international student, it's always better to be safe than sorry!

## Work in Denmark

A great percentage of Danish university students have student jobs. Though it might not be your first task to get one immediately upon arrival, if you plan to apply for SU or to stay here for more than one semester, it's a good idea to consider getting a student job.

However, it can be difficult to find a job if you do not speak Danish. Many people find jobs through their personal networks, so making Danish and international friends in Denmark could already be a huge first step. As the competition for student jobs in general is quite tough, it's best to plan your finances so that you will be able to support yourself without a job for the first semester.

## What kind of jobs can you get as a student?

RESTAURANTS, CAFÉS, BARS, AND HOTELS will often be open to employing international students who don't speak Danish. Some retail stores will also employ international students.

You might be able to find a job with a company that needs someone with your native language skills or insider knowledge of your home culture. This could be a job in the tourist industry, or with a company that caters to people from your background. It could also be with a Danish company conducting business with companies from your country or someone about to launch a product in your home country. Translating assignments can also be a good option for employment.

If you like to write, you might be able to get a job at an English speaking newspaper or online media outlet.

We know that you would probably prefer to find a job related to your field of study or previous experiences, but please remember that this can be difficult even for Danish students. Getting Danish work experience in other fields first might make it easier to get the more attractive student jobs in the future.

Campus jobs are difficult to find and many of them require Danish language skills. You could be lucky and find a position as a research assistant, instructor, or administrative assistant within an international program. The universities will post job openings on their online job banks or job and internship portals.

## About working in Denmark as a foreigner:

<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/working>

About work permit:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/You-have-received-an-answer/Work/Yes>

## Please note

If you work illegally in Denmark - for example by working more than 20 hours a week as a non-EU/EEA student – the Danish Immigration Service can revoke your residence permit or refuse to extend it. This puts you at risk for deportation.

Both you and your employer also run the risk of a prison sentence or substantial fines if you are caught working illegally. So make sure that you have your affairs in order before accepting a job.

# Where do I find a job?

## Ask people you know

Many jobs are never posted as a job ad. More than often people find jobs through their own personal network, so ask your friends, your classmates, or other students if they know of any places that are hiring. Let people know what kind of experience you have, so that they will keep you in mind if something opens up. You can also let your network know through social media that you are looking for a job.

There are several different strategies you can follow when looking for a job. Try to use a combination of these methods rather than solely relying on one way to do it.

## Hand out your CV in stores and cafés/bars/restaurants

Many international students choose to print out their CV and hand it out in stores and bars/cafés in the city in which they live. However, before you hand a random staff member your CV, make sure to ask them how to apply for a job. Many brand stores or cafés have an online system for job applications. Also, they have the right to refuse to receive your printed CV because of issues with GDPR.

## Check the companies' websites

Positions in retail, bars, and hotels are not always posted in online job banks, but might be posted on the company website. Larger chains in particular will usually have postings listed on their websites as well as information on whether they accept unsolicited applications.

You can also send unsolicited applications to smaller companies; include a short description of how you could help the company if hired.

## Social media

LinkedIn is very popular in Denmark. Make sure that you have an updated profile to provide potential employers with a good sense of your background and skills. Make sure to check for spelling mistakes and typos.

<https://students.linkedin.com/>

You can find many groups for internationals looking for jobs on Facebook. These will often have job postings from smaller workplaces.

## Online job banks and internship portals

- [Jobbank.dk](#) has university specific sub-sites, where you can find student jobs, internships, and full-time positions. On the bottom of the page, you will find a link to your university's job bank.
- [Moment.dk](#) is one of several job-pages that post student jobs and short time employment opportunities, often as temps or for event work.
- <https://www.workindenmark.dk/> is dedicated to job openings for non-Danish speakers.
- [Graduateland.com](#) focuses on student jobs, internships, and graduate programmes.
- [Jobindex.dk](#) is the largest database of jobs in Denmark, both full- and part-time.



# CV and cover letters

For all kinds of job applications you need a CV (aka a résumé) and a cover letter.

Whatever job you apply to, remember to read and supply the info they want, in the form they want it. If they request that you send your application to a specific email address, do this and only this. If there's an online form, use that one and don't send an email.

This is the first step to ensure that your application actually gets considered.

## CV

It is common to add a photo to your CV in Denmark. Choose one that's neutral, recognisable, and not a blurry Facebook selfie.

Keep the CV short and relevant – 2 pages is plenty. Organise your CV in chronological order, with the most recent work experience at the top. You can separate school achievements, work experience, and other credentials to make it easier to read.

Modify your CV so that it is relevant for the job

that you are applying for. For example, rather than mention your first prize in a high school math competition in your application for a job at a café, highlight your past experience as a barista for a non-profit café.

When it comes to your CV, you don't need to reinvent the wheel. You can find templates online that will give you a great head start, as well as courses from e.g.

<https://www.state-of-denmark.com/>

## Cover letter

Keep this targeted, relevant, and easy to read. Try to keep it to one page if possible.

This is where you contextualise your CV experiences in relation to the criteria mentioned in the job posting. Explain why you would be a good match for the job and how the company could benefit from hiring you. Stay away from clichés and standard phrases, but keep it easy to understand by using short sentences and straight-forward wording.

## DOs

- Figure out how the workplace could benefit from hiring you - focus on that
- Remember to do a spell check or get someone to read and correct your CV and cover letter for you
- Make it personal so that they remember you

## DON'Ts

- Send out the same letter to everyone
- Talk about how awesome you are without relating it to the job you're applying for
- Write several pages
- Write about your personal life too much
- Forget to put in contact details

# Danish work culture

DANISH WORK CULTURE is often pretty relaxed and informal. It's normal to call your superiors by first name, especially if they introduce themselves to you using their first name. Collaboration and teamwork is the norm, and it is not seen as a good quality to "step on others to get ahead". The work-life balance is valued in Denmark, so you will rarely get extra points for working extra or overtime. It's a "work smarter, not harder" culture, and even your boss might call in sick, leave work early to pick up their kids or take a few days off once in a while.

If you are in doubt about anything, it's perfectly okay to ask a colleague you trust for tips.

Ask about sick leave, work hours, and vacation policies when you start the job, so you're sure to follow your workplace's protocol.

## How to dress for a job:

Most Danish workplaces (where you don't wear a uniform) don't have a specific dress code. In general, the Danes dress smart but casual, so jeans are normally accepted and ties and suits are not required.

If you are in doubt, watch and take a cue from how your Danish colleagues dress.



## How to ask your friends about jobs?

It's completely acceptable to ask your friends for advice, tips, and information, (but don't expect them to get you a job).



Good questions to ask:

- If you see a student job, can you let me know about it?
- Have you heard about places hiring at the moment?
- Where did you find your job?
- How did you get your student jobs?
- Do you know any places that are looking for student employees?

If your friend's job sounds interesting and the workplace is looking for more people, it's okay to ask your friend if it would be alright with them, if you apply and how to apply for the job. If there aren't any openings, you can also ask them to tell you if something turns up.

Don't expect them to be able to secure you a job, just because you're friends.

## Links to more info

[www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming\\_to\\_dk/work/work.htm](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/work/work.htm)

<https://www.workindenmark.dk/>

Jobportals in English:

[www.jobbank.dk/en](http://www.jobbank.dk/en)

[www.jobindex.dk/?lang=en](http://www.jobindex.dk/?lang=en)

Find information about how to start up your own business in Denmark

[www.workindenmark.dk/working-in-denmark/terms-of-employment/start-your-own-business](http://www.workindenmark.dk/working-in-denmark/terms-of-employment/start-your-own-business)

Career Development Programme for Master's students:

<https://student.state-of-denmark.com>

# More work info

## Feriepenge – The Danish Holiday Allowance

You may have heard about the mythical Danish five weeks of legally guaranteed vacation. It's not just a myth; it's the reality for most types of salaried employment here in Denmark. Further, once you start working here, you'll likely encounter the term *feriepenge*, which directly translates to "holiday money." Even your Danish co-workers might have a hard time explaining exactly what this is. So, we will try to do it here:

The holiday allowance is money which you earn with your wages and can apply to get when you take vacation time. It's especially relevant in jobs where you're paid by the hour and/or if you don't have a monthly salaried job with paid vacation time included in your contract.

If you don't have automatically paid vacation time, with every paycheck, your employer will automatically calculate your holiday allowance. It's then set aside for when you need it (it's an extra compensation, not deducted from your pay. Don't worry).

In general, an amount equal to 12.5% of your salary is set aside for your holiday allowance. You can normally see this tally on your monthly overview of your salary. The holiday allowance is earned in advance, so for your first year of employment, it's sadly not a factor. But if you have accrued holiday allowances from past jobs, you can transfer these amounts over and use them when you take time off. (They have to be used within the following holiday year).

When it's time for your vacation and you've informed your employer of your vacation days, you can then submit these dates either to the allowance system of your workplace OR via the digital interface on [lifeindenmark.borger.dk](https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk) (the English language version of [borger.dk](https://borger.dk)), and the holiday allowance for your vacation days will be transferred to your account automatically.

<https://www.workindenmark.dk/working-in-denmark/terms-of-employment/holiday-allowance>

You can find the form for requesting your holiday allowance and read more about the different rules here:

<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/working/holiday-allowance-ny/holiday-allowance>

## Sick leave

In Denmark, most workplaces don't operate with terms like "personal time off" as a substitute for sick leave, and you're not supposed to use your vacation days when you're sick. If you

are a salaried employee, you will probably have pay during sick leave specified in your contract. If you are paid by the hour, you may not be compensated or only partly compensated for the shifts you must cancel in case of illness.

Check your contract or ask your co-workers about how your workplace handles this.

Most workplaces will have their own rules for how and when you call in sick, but you should always be allowed to call in sick when you are sick. Since the Covid pandemic, a lot of Danish municipalities have run campaigns to remind people to stay home if they have the flu or are otherwise sick. That way you also ensure not passing any illness on to your colleagues.

## Unemployment Insurance Fund (A-kasse)

In Denmark, it is common to be a member of an unemployment insurance fund (a-kasse), as it helps secure you against unemployment. In order to secure yourself against unemployment, you can purchase your own insurance through a private unemployment insurance fund. This is important, as idle workers receive unemployment benefits (*dagpenge*) from the unemployment insurance fund along with counseling to help them find a job. If you have no insurance, the state of Denmark can help you financially with a smaller amount than the insurance, if your case is approved. However it is recommendable to have insurance instead.

As a student, and if you're under 30 years, you can join and be a member of an unemployment insurance fund for free. You will have access to professional education and career counselling. This means that the unemployment insurance fund can help you, if you for instance need a student job, help to write your CV and applications, or want to learn more about the job opportunities that are relevant to your education.

In order to secure your unemployment benefits you need to be aware of the 2-week rule and 1-year rule. It is important that you join an unemployment insurance fund no later than two weeks after completing your education. If you wait until graduation to become a member you will have to wait one month in order to be considered eligible for unemployment benefits.

To avoid waiting a month for your unemployment benefits, you have to have been a student member of an unemployment insurance fund for at least one year. This will secure you unemployment benefits the day after you complete your education.

The benefit rate for graduates, who are members of an unemployment fund, is 10.054 DKK (€ 1350) per month before taxes for 3 months. After that the amount decreases. The rate is a bit higher, if you have a child to support.

As with any insurance, it's a question of "what if...". You might have a job lined up when you graduate, but if not, what then? Even if it's just a couple of months that you're without a job, being able to receive unemployment benefits means that you don't need to take out a loan to be able to pay for food, rent, and other necessities.



In other words, being a member of an a-kasse is a good idea! So find one that matches your education and the line of work you'll be pursuing after you graduate. Ask a fellow student or friend which one to choose, as there are several different ones and they specialize in job areas and prices vary.

## Unions

A trade union provides you with the support and guidance you may need – and negotiates collectively to secure the best possible working conditions. This means that being a member of a trade union is common in Denmark and they can help you with any needed services.

Your general terms of employment are in many cases regulated by collective agreements made by the trade unions and employer associations.

The trade union offers you guidance and legal support on important issues such as your individual employment contract, your salary, and matters like work-related injuries or rehabilitation.

If you are starting an on-going job, always get a contract. At the very least, you should get something in writing regarding specific aspects of your job such as the expected tasks, your terms of employment, and your salary. This shows that both you and your place of employment are committed. Furthermore, the document provides you with something to show the union if there are problems.

There is not any law regarding minimum wages in Denmark, so the collective agreements are important.

If your workplace does not follow the collective agreement (either by joining it or by following the guidelines in them), they can pay you as little or as much as they want. However, the minimum is usually around DKK 100 an hour. Make sure your hourly wage is specified in the contract, and ask your union or google what the hourly rate normally is for the job in question.

[www.a-kasser.dk/unemployment-fund-and-union/index.html](http://www.a-kasser.dk/unemployment-fund-and-union/index.html)

About terms of employment:

<https://www.workindenmark.dk/working-in-denmark/terms-of-employment/trade-unions>

General information about work life in Denmark:

[www.lifeindenmark.borger.dk/working](http://www.lifeindenmark.borger.dk/working)

It is very cheap or sometimes even free to be a student member of a labour union. Pick the union most relevant to your field of study or your current work. Sometimes unions also have a unemployment insurance (a-kasse), and if it makes sense to you, you can have those from the same provider. Unions usually offer discounts on insurance and more, and they can even help you write a CV and cover letter.

You do not need to be a member of both an a-kasse and a union – it is possible to be a member of just one of these organizations, independently of the other.

## Tips on tips

Denmark doesn't have a tipping culture, so though employees in service jobs might receive them, tips should never constitute the basis of the salary or be used as a legitimate supplement to a low hourly wage. Don't accept a job working mostly for tips.

Most service area employees will share their tips or have a "tipping jar", so be sure to check the tipping culture at your place of employment before pocketing the money for yourself.

## Taxes (SKAT)

IF YOU HAVE a paid job, you have to pay taxes. Simple as that. It is a crime not to pay your taxes, both for you and for your work place.

Most workplaces report the salary directly to SKAT, so it will be automatically deducted from your salary each month. Most jobs in Denmark will pay you by the end of each month, but it might vary. Remember to ask how it works at your job and if they report the taxes automatically.

If they don't, you have to report it yourself and pay what SKAT has calculated that you owe them. You do this online via skat.dk in the form called "årsopgørelse" (translates to annual tax return).

You pay around 40-45% in various taxes even as a student, so remember to include the taxes in your budget – DKK 100 per hour is not DKK 100 for you to spend.

The taxes go towards paying for free education, health care, etc. in Denmark, so it's considered a very good thing, even though it can feel annoying to see your pay check cut in half.

If you have any questions regarding your taxes, you can find the information at [www.skat.dk](http://www.skat.dk). Usually the easiest is to call them or find the answer at the webpage.

## What is a tax card?

If you have a salaried job in Denmark you must apply for a tax card from your local tax office. A tax card is the official document that tells you how much tax you have to pay.

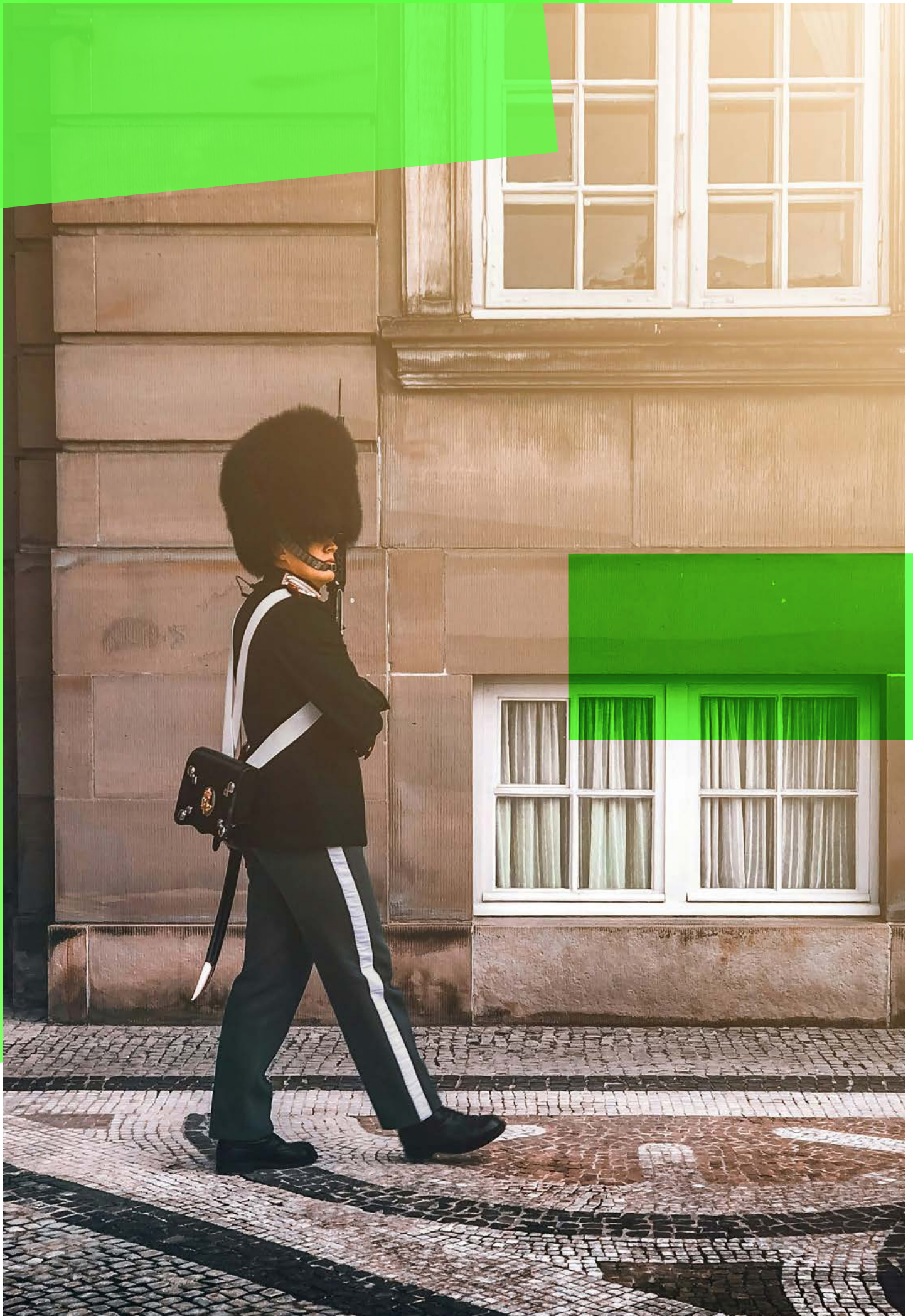
Once you have gotten your CPR-number you can contact SKAT and inform them how much you expect to earn in the coming year. Then they'll help you to get a tax card, although you won't actually get a physical "card", but you will be able to find it online in your tax file. Your employer will get your tax card digitally from SKAT once they have reported your income.

The Danish tax system:

<https://skat.dk/en-us/individuals/taxation-in-denmark>

A little more info, and where your money goes:

<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/money-and-tax/the-danish-tax-system/Tax-matters-and-what-taxes-are-spent-on>





Chapter 8

# History and culture



# Denmark's history

THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK is one of the oldest unified countries in the world. The word 'Denmark' dates back to the Viking age and is carved on the famous Jelling Stone from around 900 AD.

In 1849, the Danish Constitution was enacted, hereby moving away from an absolute monarchy towards a parliamentary democracy.

## Important years in recent Danish history:

- 2011: Helle Thorning-Schmidt is the first female PM
- 2015: Andreas Mogensen is the first Dane in space
- 2025: Denmark won the Men's World Championship in handball for the fourth time in a row.

History of Denmark:

[www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/history](http://www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/history)

Historical timeline from BBC:

[www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17930409](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17930409)

# The Danish society

DENMARK IS KNOWN internationally for our welfare state and the social system built around this.

The basic principle of the Danish welfare system, often also referred to as the Scandinavian welfare model, is that all citizens have equal right to social security. Within the Danish welfare system a number of services are available to citizens free of charge. The Danish welfare model is subsidised by the state, and as a result, Denmark has high tax rates compared to many other countries. However, if you factor in that most healthcare, education, and social security services are free, it somewhat levels out the costs related to this.

The equal access to health and social security services as well as both primary and secondary education has resulted in an equal and relatively socially mobile society, where the majority of the population can be defined as middle class.

## Danish model and flexicurity

WHEN PEOPLE TALK about the Danish labour market they often use the term “flexicurity” to describe the model. Flexicurity is a word made out of flexibility and security, describing the compounds of the concept.

One side is flexible rules in regards to hiring and firing staff, which make it easier for the employers to scale down during slow times and hire new staff when things improve.

The second part is unemployment security. As mentioned previously, this is in the form of guaranteed unemployment benefits, as long as you belong to an a-kasse.

The aim of this system is to promote employment security over job security, which means that in Denmark, people are less afraid of losing their jobs and are not constantly looking for new or other employment, as is the case in many other countries.

The Danish model for the labour market is built on a century-long tradition of negotiations between the various partners. The trade unions and the employers' associations negotiate the collective agreements for each field of work, ensuring workers' rights while also taking production and market conditions into account.

# Political system

## Folketinget

[www.thedanishparliament.dk](http://www.thedanishparliament.dk)

The political landscape in Denmark is a multi-party system, where several parties are represented in the parliament, which is called Folketinget (the People's Assembly). Folketinget resides at Christiansborg, the parliament building in central Copenhagen (picture).

Danish governments often represent a minority coalition, aided by one or more supporting parties. This means that Danish politics are based on consensus-driven decisions and negotiations with all parties in Folketinget. Since 1909, no single party has solely held or monopolised the majority.

The Constitution (Grundloven aka the Founding Law) from

1849 sets the framework for Danish democracy. The law outlines the citizens' and human rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.



Photo: The Danish Parliament

Folketinget is the legislative assembly in Denmark, which means that it passes the laws that apply in Denmark. Folketinget is also responsible for adopting the state's budgets, approving the state's accounts, exercising control of the Government, and taking part in international cooperation.

There are 179 Members of Parliament (MPs), 175 are elected in Denmark, two are elected in the Faeroe Islands and two in Greenland. Together with Denmark, the Faeroes and Greenland constitute the Unity of the Realm. Both territories have extensive home-rule and their own flags, languages and culture, but are still represented by Folketinget.

## Municipalities and local government

Denmark is divided into 98 municipalities (kommuner) and five regions (regioner) that each covers several municipalities.

Each municipality (and region) has their own publicly elected council that governs and administers the individual municipality. All local councillors are elected for a four-year period in local government elections.



## Denmark and EU

Denmark has been a member of the European Union since 1973. We have three opt-outs from European Union policies in relation to citizenship, police and justice, and the adoption of the euro. Following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Denmark held a referendum on abolishing its defence opt-out. The referendum took place on 1 June 2022, ending with the yes side winning by two thirds of the vote.

## Elections

There are three types of elections in Denmark: elections to the national parliament (Folketinget), local elections to the municipal and regional councils, and elections to the European Parliament. Furthermore, there are national referendums on topics directly related to issues of national concern.

### Can I vote?

International students from the Nordic and EU-countries can vote at the municipal and regional elections. All other international students must have lived in Denmark at least three years before they are eligible to vote at these elections.

Only Danish citizens can vote in the elections for Folketinget and the national referendums.

## The monarchy

Yes, Denmark is a monarchy... and actually one of the oldest in the world, dating back to at least 958 AD. Right now the monarch is King Frederik X.

Denmark has been a constitutional monarchy since 1849, and over the years the political power of the reigning monarch has been reduced and now they only have a ritual position in regards to the political decisions.

The prime minister has to present his or her government and law suggestions for a formal approval, but these actions are ceremonial and do not have real political value.

Even in 2024, 75% of the Danes are still supportive of the monarchy, and in 2018 more than 80% believed that the Royal Family were good representatives of Denmark.



Photo: The Royal House of Denmark



# Education

## School life in Denmark

It's normal for kids to go into some kind of daycare from around the age of one. From that age, kids are in daycare, then kindergarten and then primary and lower secondary school, which is called folkeskole in Denmark. Folkeskole is made up of one year of pre-school class, nine years of primary and lower secondary education and an optional one-year 10th form.

After the mandatory nine years, the 9th or 10th graders can choose to continue into a high school level institution such as an upper secondary school or trade school, or into a vocational school or apprenticeship for various business areas. After 3 years of an upper secondary school level education, you are eligible to apply to other educations such as university, professional bachelor degrees, technical and business schools, etc.

## Education for all

Education in Denmark is mandatory for everyone in Denmark. Children start at six or seven and are finished when they turn 15/16 years old. A public school, private school, or home school can provide the education. As such, we do not have compulsory school attendance but rather compulsory education. More than 50% of graduating students go on to a higher level education.

## School culture

Students at Danish institutions are encouraged to play an active role in their learning process and take responsibility for carrying out projects independently or in small groups. In addition to attending classes, students are expected to participate in discussions and continuously develop their critical and analytical skills.



## How the Danes dress

Most Danish students dress in a style that lands between casual and fairly fashionable, often leaning towards functional minimalism and street wear. There's no tradition for formal dress codes, so suits, ties, and high heels are optional. (But if you want to rock it, go you!) Most people dress for a certain level of comfort and practicality, as most students use bikes to get around.

Casual does not mean sloppy though. Think jeans and sneakers, not sweatsuits and flipflops.

## Why do the Danes wear so much black?

No one really knows, but it's easy to keep clean when biking and makes laundry day a lot simpler. But you don't have to adopt this limited colour scheme.

Wear the colours you like and want to.

Btw; don't let the rumours of the "stylish Danes" fool you into spending all your money on expensive fashion brands. Most Danish students don't have the funds for that either, so cheaper brands and 2nd hand clothes are great choices too.

# Danish culture crash course

DENMARK HAS BEEN a unified country for more than a millennium and had very limited immigration from outside cultures until the latter half of the 20th century. This means that, culturally speaking, the Danes are a close-knit tribe with a very homogenous population, sharing a common culture and similar characteristics.

Some of these cultural characteristics might be different from what you are used to in your home country's culture, and it might seem like the Danes are impolite, ineffective, or simply just weird.

One of the things that are noteworthy about Danish culture is the lack of formal hierarchy.

You might notice that it is common for people in positions of authority to introduce themselves by first name, for your professors to be open to discussions with the students, and for people to treat you equally regardless of your financial or societal status. This is all rooted in the egalitarian worldview that is the basis for most Danish social conventions and interactions.



You are not considered more "important" as an individual, just because your formal role is more important.

This means that it is normal for employees on all levels to give input regarding work situations. If the point is valid and well presented, it will be considered, no matter if it comes from the manager or the intern. This is a result of Danish culture valuing consensus, and preferring to base decisions on this. It is not seen as admirable for a manager or a professor to come up with solutions based solely on their own opinions. Instead they will be applauded for including their subordinates or students in the decision making process.

The Danish work culture heralds the concept popularly known as the "work/life balance" and having a life "outside" your work or studies is seen as a commendable thing. Most Danes are members of various volunteer organisations (foreninger) and time off, whether being after the work day, work week or as

vacation time, is secured in most employment contracts.

Working way more than the standard 37 hours per week might be perceived as 'dedicated' in other work cultures, but will in most Danish workplaces be seen as unhealthy or even unproductive, due to the lack of time to rest and wind down.

One of the aspects of this cultural value is seen in how Danes think about taking sick leave. Yes, of course you should not call in sick for silly reasons (hangovers being one of those), but if you have the flu or are sick in any other way, you are supposed to call in sick and stay home if possible. No one will praise you for passing on the flu to the rest of the class or your entire office. Trust us on this one.



A last cultural aspect that is worth mentioning is that Danish society is a very individualistically oriented one. The concept of the welfare state might make you think otherwise, but in general the Danes primarily identify as individuals and mainly feel responsible for their own and closest family's matters. You might notice that people don't talk much about belonging to a certain ethnicity, religion or region, or that they are mainly concerned with their own schedules and calendars when planning activities. This cultural aspect can also help you to understand why your Danish classmates don't approach you if they see you on the bus or in a supermarket. Your (and their) individual privacy will be considered important and many Danes would rather not impose on people in public if they don't know them very well.

The lack of formal hierarchy combined with the individualistic worldview often makes the Danes communicate in a very direct way. They don't feel the need to include titles or polite introductions when addressing people, and the respect for people's individual time and privacy will lead to most Danes not engaging in small talk with people they don't already know.

If you're curious about how to actually talk to your Danish classmates, jump to "Meeting the Danes" in chapter 6.

Trust, community, and the Danish welfare state:

[www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture](http://www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture)

The history of Denmark:

[www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/history](http://www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/history)

Culture, Etiquette and Business Practices:

[www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/denmark-guide](http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/denmark-guide)

The Danish society:

[www.studyindenmark.dk/why-denmark/quality-of-life-1](http://www.studyindenmark.dk/why-denmark/quality-of-life-1)



## Danish tongue twisters

You may be asked to say some of these Danish phrases to the amusement of your Danish friends.

### THE CLASSIC

**"Rødgrød med fløde"**

(Fruit porridge with cream)

### WORST ONE EVER:

**"Rådden, rødøjet, røget ørred"**

(Rotten, red-eyed, smoked trout...)

Not even the Danes can say this one, without dying a little

### OTHER FUN ONES:

**"Bispens gipsgebis"**

(the bishop's plaster dentures)

**"Får får får? Nej, får får ikke får, får får lam"**

(Does sheep get sheep? No, sheep do not have sheep, sheep have lambs)

Almost all Danes speak functional English and are willing to do so, so if in need, just ask. Strangely enough, the Danish reluctance to speak with strangers does not include helping someone asking for directions or information. Just don't try to chat them up or talk about personal matters as well...

## Jantelov

Janteloven, known in English as "The Law of Jante", is a cultural concept and is a literary reference from Aksel Sandemose's 1933 novel *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*.

Janteloven is used to describe the mentality of the small village people in the novel, but is often also used to explain the anti-elitist Danish mentality as a whole.

It is primarily used as a negative descriptor of the national mentality, often by people feeling martyred by Danish societal values, e.g. "Don't think that you're better than us..."

While it might hold certain amounts of truth (few Danes will praise bragging as an attractive personal trait for instance), it is important to remember that it is not a codex for behaviour in Denmark.

It is a cultural phenomenon from the past that pops its head up every now and then – and that most younger Danes rarely think about or adhere to.



## Things created by Danes

- LEGO
- Artificial insulin
- The loudspeaker
- Carlsberg yeast
- Wegovy



# Public holidays in Denmark

A lot of these are old Catholic holidays that aren't celebrated to a great extent in neither the Danish Church nor civil life. Easter and Christmas are the big religious holidays.

## New Years Day - January 1th

NYTÅRS DAG. Everything is grey and quiet. Shops are closed. Do it like a Dane: Eat takeout and watch the ski jumping competition on TV.

## Easter: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Monday

PÅSKE. Do it like a Dane: Many people take the entire week leading up to Easter off. By taking those three days off from work, you end up having a whole week free for vacation.

## Ascension Day

KRISTI HIMMELFARTS DAG. Falls on a Thursday – dates vary depending on Easter. Do it like a Dane: Take the Friday off too, and enjoy a long weekend before the exams kick in.

## Constitution Day - 5th of June

GRUNDLOVSDAG. Not everyone celebrates this day, which is the date the first constitution was signed. Some political groups celebrate with gatherings and speeches. Do it like a Dane: This is when the race towards the exam kicks in, so you probably won't notice.

## Whit Monday

PINSEDAG. A Monday in May/June (again depending on Easter). Do it like a Dane: Either read up on your exams – or have a party on the Sunday before, stay up late and hope to see “the dance of the Pentecostal sun”.

## Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day

JUL. In Denmark we celebrate Christmas on the 24th of December in the evening and the two following days are public holidays, normally spent with family and good food. Do it like a Dane: Get a Christmas tree, eat roast pork or duck, rice and almond pudding called Risalamande, and drink Gløgg (Danish mulled wine). Learn to make Danish paper decorations like braided hearts and paper stars and remember to set aside almost all weekends from late November for the long line of big traditional Danish “Christmas lunches”. The Christmas lunch (julefrokost) is the traditional celebration at the end of the year and is more of an evening party with buffet-style food and plenty of alcohol than a “lunch” in the actual sense.

## Other dates to remember

### Mardi Gras

FASTELAVN. The Danish version of Mardi Gras is called Fastelavn and falls on a Sunday in February. Kids celebrate by dressing up and playing a bunch of holiday specific games and by going trick-or-treating. Do it like a Dane: Dress up (think silly, not sexy or scary) and “beat the cat off the barrel” (slå katten af tønden) with your friends. This is an old tradition where you fill a wooden barrel with sweets and tape a paper cat on in. Whoever breaks out the goods inside the barrel is the “king/queen of the cats”.

### General Prayer Day

STORE BEDEDAG. A Friday between Easter and Ascension Day. This used to be a national Holiday as well, but was abolished as such in 2024, which led to a great amount of political discussions among the Danes. Do it like a Dane: Eat “hot wheat buns” (varme hveder) on Thursday evening. Traditionally the buns were made to be warmed on the prayer day, since you were not supposed to work or cook on this day.

### May 1st - Laybor Day

ARBEJDERNES KAMPDAG. Do it like a Dane: Most Danish students either don't celebrate it as a political holiday or use it as an excuse for daytime drinking. If you're politically active, there's big meetings and parades in all the larger Danish cities.

### Midsommer's Eve

SKT. HANS AFTEN. Do it like a Dane: The longest day of the year is over and it is celebrated by participating in Skt. Hans events with huge community bonfires, in the various districts and parks. Bring a blanket, your own beverages and food and sing along or listen to the traditional songs.

### School Breaks

Danish primary schools and high schools have two major weeklong breaks during the year. The Winter Break (most often in Week 7) and the Autumn Break in Week 42. These breaks are not included in the academic year as such, but if your professor has kids, they might reschedule classes to spend the vacation with them.

### First Wednesday in May - Testing the Sirens

This is not strictly speaking a public holiday, but each year, at noon on the first Wednesday in May, the air sirens are tested nationwide. If you're not familiar with this, it will be quite the surprise. Do it like a Dane: Relax, it's just a test!

More about Danish traditions and holidays:  
[www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/danish-traditions](http://www.denmark.dk/people-and-culture/danish-traditions)

# Blogs and fun sites about Danish culture

"A humorous guide for foreigners and their Danish friends":

[www.howtoliveindenmark.com](http://www.howtoliveindenmark.com)

Ten signs you've been in Denmark too long:

[www.thelocal.dk/20180412/ten-signs-youve-been-in-denmark-too-long](http://www.thelocal.dk/20180412/ten-signs-youve-been-in-denmark-too-long)

Top 10 signs you've been in Denmark too long, the gallery:

[www.thelocal.dk/galleries/lifestyle/top-10-signs-youve-been-in-denmark-too-long](http://www.thelocal.dk/galleries/lifestyle/top-10-signs-youve-been-in-denmark-too-long)

Comic strips about Denmark:

<https://satwcomic.com/the-world/denmark>

65 Things You Need to Know About Life In Denmark:

[www.oregongirlaroundtheworld.com/denmark/65-things-need-know-life-denmark/](http://www.oregongirlaroundtheworld.com/denmark/65-things-need-know-life-denmark/)

...and though it's a bit dated, it's still relevant. Why are the Danes so strange:

[www.uniavisen.dk/en/41-reasons-why-danes-are-so-strange/](http://www.uniavisen.dk/en/41-reasons-why-danes-are-so-strange/)

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