

Student Exchange Evaluation Report

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I decided to go to Denmark to see what kinds of energy systems they used because I had the expectation they were very efficient and ahead in the energy game. Also to visit a Scandinavian country that valued happiness above riches. And since I am northern European, I was interested in the Nordic culture. I prepared by going to the library and getting tour guides, looking at maps of where we would be and investigating on the internet about Danish life. I visited the local AAA store and bought an electrical converter for my laptop and I also went to Bank of America downtown and got Kroners. Not sure I could have improved my prep, I was expecting to have some unknown factors and trusted that as a group we would handle it.

I recommend the Cabin Inn where we stayed this trip because it was walking distance from the train station and located close to bike rentals, restaurants and nightlife. The orientation at my college was brief and a little unorganized. It was not clear what were group responsibilities and what I was to achieve on my own. However when we arrived our group stuck together and communicated as best we could to work together and accomplish things. The host college was great in that we were allowed to partake in their cafeteria, which was very helpful due to the full schedule, and had a meeting place in the morning where we met. They had itineraries for us and updated them often. It was not so much the college but the hosts that helped us adapt to our new surroundings.

We got a great tour of the college campus and were given the opportunity to try out several programs such as culinary, machining, masonry, and tile work. We were given a presentation by the host college students about their program and although they seemed aloof at first, with some time there came to be more open and friendly communication.

The housing situation was overall good. We did not know which host we were to stay with until we got picked up at the train station but the welcome was warm and we were glad to see each other again. I stayed with two different hosts. My first host, who I later returned and ended my trip with, was very generous and went above and beyond to accommodate us and show us interesting things to see around his town and the towns close by. He was concerned about us being on time to school everyday and helped us translate and navigate in the community. My second host lived in a smaller town and worked at a shipyard. This was an interesting venture in that I don't think he told the company what I was doing there and it was an uncomfortable couple of days as I floundered around without a translator getting odd looks from the workers. We were very different in our interests and health habits and only after some insisting did I get some of the necessities I needed added to this bachelor pad. But that is what cultural exchange is all about, going outside your comfort zone and exploring another way of doing things. However his mother was a very gracious host and we ate there mostly. They were a lovely family with lots of different family members coming by and sharing in the feasts that were prepared. There were many laughs when trying to hold conversations with limited understanding and it made for great memories. I have built friendships with two women that I met there and am so grateful to have gotten to experience family life in that house.

The host campus was impressive in that it was very clean and orderly. There were a lot of programs to choose from and I saw a good mixture of youth intermingling with each other. The design layout of the school was fresh and chic and very respectable. The location seemed convenient but I could not really have an opinion on that aspect.

There were no health or safety concerns to speak of.

We integrated into the population by taking public transportation, lingering at sites where there were crowds gathered and bicycle riding all around Copenhagen, as everyone there does. We visited the malls, restaurants, galleries, aquariums, libraries, and tourist destinations that all kept us in close proximity to the locals and communicating needs in public places was a good practice in cultural integration. A social issue I encountered while visiting several regions in Denmark was the outlook of women. It seemed ok to devalue them and I felt like there needed to be more womens liberation evolving in this culture. Very old fashion views about where women should be in the work force and I met some quiet hostility while working in a small town shipyard as a female welder.

Scan Design had a huge impact on this trip. Their generosity was amazing and their financial support made it possible to experience a better trip. It is very expensive there by comparison, and their financial support helped ease some tension with phones, meals, tickets to attractions, etc. I think it is best to bring a large amount of foreign currency before leaving and I checked which credit cards charged the least amount of fees. I also used my debit card but some places were not debit card friendly so its better to be prepared with several different ways of payment.

The teacher that accompanied us on the trip was a great role model and a good combination of support and letting us figure it out. I think that the liaison between the two schools was a little vague in his preparedness meetings with us, perhaps he has done it so often that he assumes from feeling like hes has repeated himself, that we know more than we do about how to prepare for a trip like this. It seemed that our teacher was also left to figure things out for us with little support from BTC. She did great as a team leader and we solved all our hurdles together.

This exchange is best suited for people who can adapt and solve things without all the answers being handed to them. There was a lot of figuring out to do with the transportation and as a team we did great but I can see it swallowing up an inexperienced traveler. Especially with the train schedules being in a foreign language and maps being so overflowed with information. Someone with thick skin who can absorb all the fast paced tours we were scheduled to do and still have energy to be social with the host once back at their home.

I would rate this trip a 10 of course, it was amazing. I had no expectations so yes they were all met. It was a very fast paced visit and we were up from 6am to 10pm every day running around and being guided. If I could change one thing it would be more down time to absorb what was going on around us. But overall this was a great trip with lots of culture to take back and a new perspective to ponder, as well as a few new friends to share with and a stronger connection with the gentlemen that came here for the rodeo. Thank you is the least I can say to Scan Design and may your generosity revisit you triplefold.