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EUC Vest Esbjerg Denmark 2013
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Before I start this report, I would like to thank the Scan Design, my instructor Jeff Cutis and everyone else involved for funding and organizing an experience of my lifetime. When I first heard about the exchange program to Denmark, I knew I had to apply. I am a marine mechanic myself and was aware Denmark is very involved in the marine industry. I had heard great things about the trip from the diesel students that exchanged in 2012 so I knew it was going to be an educational and fun trip but my expectations were blown out of the water. I was quite busy with commercial fishing in Alaska and working on getting my vehicle on the road the days before departure so when it came time to board the plane I hadn't looked into the trip much besides the schedule. Never the less I was completely ready to go on this adventure and enjoy it to its fullest extent.

The location of our hotel was a very nice and easy walk from downtown Copenhagen and made it easy to explore at our leisure for the two days we were there. I definitely suggest packing light. The necessity for a lot of extra "stuff" is non-existent. Throughout the whole trip we did a lot of traveling from places like Siemens to old castles. I suggest keeping a daypack with a camera, water, snacks, etc. with you.

The Danes were very warm and welcome to us the whole trip. They made it their ultimate goal to make sure we were having an all around good and educational time. The activities we did in both Denmark and Washington (when the Danes came over) were quite similar ranging from touring factories like Boeing and Siemens to bowling and skeet shooting. Most of the activities in Denmark were in some way shape or form involved marine mechanics, which was very cool for me as I am aspiring to build a career in that industry. The lifestyles of Esbjerg and Bellingham are fairly congruent from what I could see so I had no problem fitting into the culture for the two weeks I was there.

As for the layout of the educational system over there, the instruction, classrooms, registration, relations, and facilities were very similar to BTC. The same cannot be said for the structure. Students attend school for much longer and start at a younger age with a very specific career goal in mind. I think the concentration of a single career path is a good thing so people stick to and perfect what they are going into rather than being a jack of all trades and not know what direction they want to take. That particular fact about there educational system is something I really liked. It was very evident that all the classes were taken seriously and it seemed to me that the general population of the students I worked with, worked hard at their academics and were taught by elite instructors.

I was very pleased with my host's hospitality. He picked me up from the train and got me settled right in. He gave up his bed for the time I was there and slept on the couch. I was very grateful. He introduced me to his friends and made it a social experience for me which I enjoyed very much. I look forward to passing on that kind of hospitality to the Danes coming over in 2014.

Upon arrival at EUC Vest, I was immediately impressed with their classrooms, workshops and campus. The equipment was updated and laid out in a fashion for efficient learning. They had lots of room for different activities, aside from their classrooms, such as studying (in a group or personally), presentations and recreational sports. The food served in the cafeteria was delicious. The town and surroundings of Esbjerg was very similar to Bellingham, besides the mountains, and made me feel right at home. I never once had an uneasy feeling about my safety or health.

It was very easy to make friends with the Danish people. All of my host's friends were very warm and welcomed me in. One of my host's friends even took me to a soccer game a night my host had a family emergency. If we went out in the town for the night, the people out were eager to shake hands and converse. The biggest cultural challenge was definitely the language barrier. Not that they didn't know English well but the fact I didn't know Danish. Most of the younger generation knew decent English but were sometimes shy to speak it.

I was extremely grateful for the financial help I got from the Scan Design foundation. Without their help, affording the trip would not have been possible for me. I spent roughly \$700 a week and that included all the food I could eat, souvenirs, and activities on our free days. I carried cash throughout the trip via ATMs. The cost of living is definitely higher in Denmark than it is here in Washington. Most everything in the grocery store was proportionally higher priced along with gasoline and diesel. Jeff Curtis did a great job organizing and guiding us through the trip. He had all of his i's dotted and t's crossed. We had comfortable flight, layover, and train times.

I would highly suggest this trip to an aspiring marine mechanic or diesel mechanic. We saw a lot of engines and equipment throughout the trip giving perspective to the industry. This trip is not for the faint at heart. It is jam packed with activities and action. Overall I would rate the trip at 20 out of 10. It was an amazing experience and the magnitude of it frankly cannot be expressed on text. I figured we would see some cool things here and there but I can't think of one tour or activity I wasn't seeing something new or learning something I was going to take home with me. A couple things I learned I have been implementing in my own workplace with success. The greatest thing I benefitted from studying abroad was seeing the industry from a different perspective. I was able to look at how the Danes did things different than us and compare the two.

As stated earlier, it was an experience of a lifetime. I highly recommend it to anyone looking to study abroad in the diesel industry. Thank you Scan Design Foundation!!

Sincerely,
Miles Oczkewicz