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Denmark has always been high on my list of places to visit. My grandfather was an immigrant from Denmark and growing up I was always aware of my ties to the country. I knew we still had family there, and I knew some of the traditions our family celebrated around the holidays were of Danish origin. There is still a far amount of the family who lives in Denmark and I had always dreamt about getting out there to see them – though to be honest, it wasn't until I started the study abroad process that I realized how much of a tool it could be.

I selected the Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS) for a few reasons. One, it's in the heart of the city. There are so many things within walking distance that it's almost hard to do everything that you want to. Second, they have a great program that focuses on cutting edge topics in the international world. Third, since they are an institute focusing just on students studying abroad they offer lots of help and assistance to those students.

When I first left for Denmark, I expected the unexpected, as cliché as it may sound, I didn't really know what to expect. I read about the culture, and I still didn't quite know what to expect. I knew it would be different. I knew that Danes spoke Danish, I knew that the food would be different, and I expected the weather to be a little colder than what I was used to. But really, it was one of those things where you can never fully prepare yourself for what you find

Before my departure I prepared a lot, but mostly in terms of making sure I had everything I needed. I bought adapters, ordered a cell phone to use, bought translation books, made copies of important documents, got copies of my prescription records etc. I also took a class my school offered on submerging yourself in other cultures. While the class was required for my major, I found that it was good timing as it prepared me for emotional challenges I might face while abroad.

If I could do it over again I think I would focus less on the physical aspects of preparing and more on the less tangible side of it. For instance, I think it would have been great to journal more – to get out the anxiety and emotions. I was really nervous before I left and I wish I had taken

measures to help with that. I also think making a checklist of everything you need and combing over it one last time before you leave is smart and something I didn't really do.

The Copenhagen airport is really nice, if you're like me and arrive early to Denmark, the metro leaves right from the airport and is super easy to use. However, most students are able to use the DIS airport shuttle which will pick you up and transport you to your housing. If you're hungry and are looking for a cheap or quick snack, tradition Danish hot dogs are splendid and are super easy to find where ever you are.

After you've gotten to the city and settled in with DIS you'll get a chance to go to orientation. In my experience, my home school orientation was mostly about the tools that my university could offer me while I was gone and what they could do to help. It came with broad advice, but nothing specific to any region. The DIS orientation is a whole other story, however. Mine was held in the Tivoli hotel which is whimsical and fun to be in. You'll get a wonderful overview of the history of Denmark, fun facts and ideas of things to do while you're there, and you'll get to hear from important Danes. Afterwards, you'll meet new students and go on a scavenger hunt for important landmarks around the city. At each landmark a DIS employee will meet you and tell you a bit about the place and its history.

After orientation of course comes class, and my class was absolutely wonderful. I was only able to attend one class during my time, but it was honestly an amazing class. I took "Sustainable Food Systems" which focused on the ethics and economy behind different food systems. Registration happened when I signed up for the program.

DIS offers wonderful support. My class was small, only fourteen people, and our books were included in the cost of tuition, which is nice coming from somewhere I have to buy my books. Also included was a field study in England which was delightful. The class was split into two sessions every day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon – which gave you time to explore the city during the day. Student-teacher relations were less formal than I experience at my home university. We addressed our teachers by their first names and they would often bring us treats to class or treat us to lunch. Though I will say they graded a little harder than my professors in the states, however, they offered very clear instructions.

As for the behinds the scene stuff, I loved the library. My favorite part was the quiet study room. It had lots of outlets and super comfy chairs. It was one of my favorite places to go between classes to get work done. Since I was there for such a short time I didn't get to interact with the administration a whole lot, but the experiences I did have were all wonderful.

My class did a good job at challenging me but not overwhelming me. It was reading intensive, and I found that the readings made me question what I had learned elsewhere, which I think is quite valuable. The teachers did a wonderful job at facilitating difficult discussion and really pushed to have the class be the leaders in those discussions.

My favorite part of the academics was how it was applied at a global level. Though we were in Denmark we did not just focus on how things ran in Denmark and study how they ran all over the world. My teachers focused on comparing and contrasting cultures throughout the world. My least favorite part was how short the class was. Granted it was a summer class, but three weeks is not a lot of time to really learn a topic. However, I really loved the course and would recommend it to anyone who is interested in food or sustainability.

My housing arrangement was a little different because I did a home stay with my family. It was convenient as it was about a twenty minute bus ride to and from DIS, and even though I was staying with family I was often left up to my own devices.

During summer session at DIS students can only choose to arrange their own housing or to live in the dorms that DIS offers. I chose to arrange my own housing – mostly due to financial reasons and the fact that I had family living in the city. I did however have many friends living in the DIS dorms and many of them liked it. Some were closer to campus than others, but any living in DIS provided housing received a free transit pass and a food stipend. As someone living off campus I did not receive these things. Though I believe there are advantages and disadvantages to both, I would encourage future students to make a list of the pros and cons and figure out which situation is right for them.

No matter where you choose to live, DIS is in the heart of the city and just by being there you will gain lots of exposure to the Danes and their culture. Within walking distance of campus are city hall, Tivoli, Rosenborg Castle, Amalienborg Castle, and Christianborg castle. You are also

right by Nyhavn (New Harbor) which is full of great restaurants. Plus there are at least two large museums in the area, and it's full of amazing food and great shopping.

Though there are lots of people in the area I never worried too much about theft. Though some of my classmates had wallets stolen, you really don't need to protect your valuables more than you would in any other city. The cobblestone can be tricky to walk on, so I suggest sturdy shoes so you don't trip and hurt your ankle (like I did), but otherwise, it's a fairly safe city. The water is clean and healthy and anyone who did need medical assistance was covered through the program.

Meeting members of the community was fairly easy since I was living with a family. However, I did often venture out to meet other members. DIS offers a buddy exchange which will pair you with a Dane and several other students to go on outings, eat meals together, and so on, which was really nice and a way to experience more local things. I also liked to hang out in my local park. Danes have a reputation for being shy, but I actually found that many of them will talk to you when you're in a park. It was a wonderful way to hear stories and learn about cool new things to do and try.

I didn't run into too many cultural differences. Things are different, but most of the things that really stood out to me were the lack of coffee or food to go and the lack of open container laws. It is not unusual to see teenagers drinking on the street which was something I had to get used to. One thing that was a little challenging was that Danes tend to always use a knife and fork – even for things that I wouldn't, like an open face sandwich. When I was with Danes I had to remind myself to use my knife and fork even if it's not what I would have done in the situation. I also had a really hard time adjusting to how light it was in the early morning. I remember waking up at four in the morning and it being completely sunny, it's definitely something I never adjusted to.

I didn't receive the Scan Design Foundation fellowship until I was already in Denmark, but it certainly gave me a more worthwhile experience. I was expecting my money to be quite tight while I was abroad, and instead it really gave me the opportunity to see whatever I wanted and to be able to experience things that I might not have been able to afford otherwise.

Everything in Copenhagen sounds really expensive at first, but when you get used to the exchange rate things aren't as bad as they first sound. For me, my card only charged a 1% transaction fee for use in Denmark. I went to the ATM every day to get out my money for that day so that I could balance my money. Dansk Bank was my favorite, there's one right by campus and they offer a really good exchange rate. The debit cards in Denmark are different, so not store or restaurant will take foreign ones. I recommend always having a least some cash on you.

Depending on your living situation how much money you need will vary. I can't tell you the cost of rent because I didn't have any, but for food I spent about three to four hundred on store bought food and eating out within a month, and then about three hundred dollars on transportation for a month. Depending on what you want to do and what you want to buy I would factor in at least two hundred more dollars for museums, Tivoli, and goods. Sometimes you'll have to pay for things you're not used to pay for. For example, water is rarely free and sometimes you have to pay to use the bathrooms in popular areas. Though these things are relatively cheap, it's good to keep in mind that you might encounter them.

As I've mentioned, I didn't receive the fellowship until after I had already been in Denmark for a week or two, but honestly, everything has run smoothly. My home institution was quick at notifying me what I needed to do and that the money was on its way to me. Clearly I would have loved more contact before I left, but with the situation the way it was, I've had lots of help and assistance.

I think DIS is a great program for students who really want to learn about something on a global perspective. DIS covers the hot topics and teaches them from multiple points of view. I also think it's a great program for students who love history and culture. There is so much to learn and see in Copenhagen that it's really impossible to do it all. However, you are often left to your own devices. There are not a lot of group activities outside of class, so I definitely recommend it to students who are more independent and want a chance to explore the city on their own time.

Overall, I really loved going to DIS. They offer internships to students who have finished their degrees and I'm already hoping to go back I loved it so much. The professors really show that they care for the topic they're teaching and the students they're teaching it to, and since the program is small it's easy to really get to know your fellow classmates.

I think the expectations I had were fairly realistic. If anything, I think I doubted how connected I would feel to Copenhagen and DIS when I left. I never expected to meet so many amazing people and form so many bonds. The Scan Design Fellowship really allowed me to do what I wanted and not worry too much about being to afford seeing the culture. The academics if anything were a little harder than I expected them to be, but I really took a lot out of the class, and I really value that.

The greatest benefit was getting out of my comfort zone and learning about a new culture, but also learning about myself, and about my heritage. Going to DIS was an incredible learning experience on multiple levels. It wasn't just about sitting in the class room. However, it can be really challenging being abroad on your own. Even though I had family and friends from my home institution with me, sometimes you will get homesick – it's just a reality – and sometimes when that happens it's hard to deal with, but I think you always come out on top.