

SCAN|DESIGN FOUNDATION
BY INGER & JENS BRUUN

EXCHANGE STUDENT
EVALUATION REPORT

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B.S. Philosophy, Community Health: Health Science

Educational Institution Abroad: Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS)

Comparative Public Health Systems: Healthcare in Northern Europe

Copenhagen, Denmark

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Pre-Exchange –

I was interested in studying abroad the prior fall to that summer. Much of your program choice is narrowed down by your limitations: I could only be gone for a limited amount of time (3 weeks) before I had to return.

I knew I was interested in health, but decided ultimately for the Scandinavian program over courses in low or middle income countries, or even London, because the coursework more closely resembled the work I had done in the U.S. I also wanted to travel around Europe a little, and DIS did a great job taking us around outside of Copenhagen, and even Amsterdam and other small cities in the Netherlands.

The hardest thing about this trip was the funds to do it. I applied for several scholarships, got a part-time job, and reduced my spending for 4 months beforehand. Even then, I returned to the states with \$150 before my next paycheck in two weeks. A great way to save money is to find flights out of Seattle and then take the Bolt Bus or other transit up to that airport (something I didn't do). My flight was ultimately the most expensive thing, my peers in the middle of the country or east coast saved \$400-\$600 than I did flying out of Portland.

Arrival/Orientation/Housing

DIS provided us with housing that was included in the not inexpensive program costs. Nevertheless, the modern dorm style rooms, I shared mine with three other American students, were very comfortable. I would recommend really mapping how to get to the airport to the city to your housing beforehand. I got lost, because I did not accept DIS transport. But, the layout of European cities and the look of the buildings can be really confusing if you're stepping in with little preparation, even with a smart phone.

Although the orientations may seem like a waste of time for those thinking they prepared enough: show up. Just sit there and listen and you're going to find out *something* that helps. The orientation in Copenhagen was rather beautiful, in an old church (Danes are not very religious) and with classical Danish music.

Academics

My class had about 30 people in it, led by 3 very professional but laidback Danish instructors. The lectures were dense, however. I found that my strong background in philosophy and public health already prepared me to tackle a lot of the concepts presented and thus treat this study abroad as an opportunity to delve deeper and not just as a general introduction. There were many group discussions, but this is a program aimed exclusively for American students so don't expect a classical Danish university to be the same way.

The grading was a bit tough with two exams and a short paper, and the coursework is a lot for 3 weeks. One time we were in class from 9-3 or 4 PM. The instructors know that everyone wants to have a fun time, so they keep things interesting and let you out earlier often. You'll have the appropriate facilities to access internet and computers.

Health and Safety

Healthcare was provided if necessary. It never was, for me. But I can see this coming in extremely useful. I went during the summer, so sleep health was sort-of obliterated upon my return. It's bright most of the 24 hour day in Denmark during the summer.

Respect your dorm – if they do not allow alcohol or any other substance don't use them in the dorm. I'm looking at you, fellow west coasties!

Cultural Aspects

Danes have this sort of rule that many people in large cities may have as well: they like to be in public enjoying their shopping, the sun, or whatever else without you bothering them. Remember, you're some high-hoped American coming into and using their beautiful spaces. That's not to say never speak to one, Danes are generally friendly – just don't act a fool like one might more easily do here in the United States. A couple of my Program-mates tried hitting it off with some young women when we were out grabbing food: Danish women are not impressed by American bravado. I did, however, keep *some* American social tendencies as I think it's important for them to experience Americans as we experience Danes. Don't ask Danes how're they're doing: if you don't care don't ask.

Danes dress very nice, and have wonderful food if you go out of your way to find it. You may be tempted to save money by only cooking at home. But go support the Danish community! Plan \$10-\$11 per meal eating out. Also note, the packaging at grocery stores is different. Food culture in the United States is this pretty, mass marketed system so don't expect to find your brand or foods at the local discount grocery store in Europe.

Financial

A good place to start is saving 33% more spending money than you budgeted for spending. Travelling is expensive. The two greatest costs are the flight and the program fees. And although the program was definitely worth it, the countless amazing restaurants, the canoeing through Dutch canals and visiting castles, the fee is expensive.

The Scan-Design scholarship was the only reason I was able to afford the trip. I ended up paying for about \$1,500 out of my own pocket, but I worked for months prior to it and pulled out a little bit of loan through Financial Aid. You know, I met many students who went to prestigious universities and whose parents were alumni of the medical school they were applying to. They weren't that stressed about getting there and paying for everything. I think my experience was enriched by having to reach out to the community, plan, and fund-raise myself. Oh, and don't get whatever discount card is peddled to international students. Never once used it.

Overall Experience

I had an amazing time in Northern Europe, and especially Copenhagen. I could definitely see myself working overseas in Northern Europe, if the opportunity presented itself. I met some really pleasant Danes, and Americans. My experience is sort-of unique, I made much more Danish friends than I expected to. If you make it a point of getting out of the International Student bubble, it's rewarding. I definitely recommend studying abroad, and you can make it happen! Don't stress about the money – you'll find a way to make things work, and it always does in the end. Ride that chill wave.