

# DENMARK

*"Going on this experience made me get a new perspective about my home country and the world. And I think the difficulties, the differences and the travels I went through made me a stronger person. Now my heart is in two places. I have a second home in Denmark and families and friends there whom I will cherish for a long time." Atinoot Tanparn, participant from Thailand, 2003-2004.*

*"All roads lead to...Denmark!*

*"It is almost eleven years ago I came to Denmark for the very first time. I applied for an AFS exchange-student program, not knowing much where to go. I ended up in a tiny village on the island of Sealand having an unforgettable experience. Today, I find myself with a job in a Danish consulting company, doing what I love, keeping up my Danish and learning from yet another fantastic place in the world!" Mauro Lucardi, architect, participant from Argentina, 1991-92*

Denmark, a nation of 406 islands, has less poverty and a narrower disparity between rich and poor than any other country in the European Union. In part, this is because its citizens pay the world's highest taxes, for which they receive lifelong social security, state-supported medical care and excellent education. Relaxed, tolerant and sophisticated, the Danes welcome all visitors and are avid consumers of world culture. Significantly, Denmark's publishers produce 12,000 new books a year, an astonishing output for a population of only 5.5 million.

## **AFS & Your Experience**

In 1957, Danish program alumni founded AFS Denmark as the American Field Service in Denmark. Current members (approximately 2,000) are former AFSers, host parents and other people interested in the ideas of AFS. AFS Denmark has a national Board of Directors and more than 50 Chapters throughout Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

## **Landing in Denmark**

Your flight will arrive in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. After the airplane lands and you collect your baggage, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be met by AFS Denmark staff and volunteers.

## **Arrival Orientation**

Upon your arrival, you will take part in an orientation camp arranged by AFS Denmark. This camp lasts for about three days and takes place before you go to your host family. The camp will teach you about Danish culture, history, customs, the educational system and other aspects of Danish society in order to prepare you for meeting your host family and school. At the camp you will also be taught some Danish.

At the language and orientation camp, participants do most of the practical work: cleaning, cooking, shopping, etc. This involves hard work, but it will be an unforgettable experience. You will make friends from all over the world and join in games, singing and dancing. In other words, it will be fun!

After the camp, you will meet your host family. They will either pick you up or you will be taken by a volunteer to a meeting point where they will fetch you.

## **Living in Denmark**

### **Lifestyle and Family Living**

The Danes tend to be cosmopolitan in their attitudes and lifestyle. Their country is located at a major crossroads of international trade. As a result, they have been subjected to foreign intrusion, influence and

intermarriage. The Danish standard of living is high. Danes are well educated and respected for their accomplishments in science, art, literature and architecture.

The nuclear family is still the most common lifestyle, but divorce rates are quite high in Denmark and many kids stay with single parents or have stepparents and stepsiblings. Fathers and mothers both usually work away from home, so all family members share the housework. Some common jobs you may be required to do are: setting the table, washing and drying dishes, washing your own clothes and helping prepare dinner. It is also usual to make your own bed each morning and to keep your room tidy. If you are unsure about how to perform any household tasks, ask your host family.

The Faroe Islands are comprised of a number of small islands north of Scotland, and like Greenland, they have a home-rule system under the Danish Crown. Both Greenland and the Faroe Islands offer a special atmosphere unique to that of small, close-knit communities, and they feature spectacular natural scenery. Ideal candidates should be in good health, motivated to stay in close contact with nature and interested in being adopted not just by a host family but by a whole town. Danish host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives. Placements are mostly rural and may include the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Danish teenagers dress casually. They like jeans with shirts, T-shirts and sweaters. On special occasions, more formal dress is expected: for women a dress or blouse and skirt; for men a jacket, slacks and tie.

Seasonally appropriate clothing is essential. Denmark is mild, even warm in summer, but it can be very cold and windy in winter. Therefore, you will need warm underwear, sweaters, boots, a warm jacket or coat, scarves, mittens and caps. AFS recommends that you send your winter clothes by parcel post before your departure. It will take approximately two months for them to reach Denmark. Alternatively, bring enough money to purchase warm clothes when in Denmark, as you risk being charged customs duty if the clothes you send are new.

### **Diet and Meals**

Traditional open-faced sandwiches known as *smørrebrød* are popular. Dinner usually includes meat or fish, potatoes, rice or pasta and vegetables. Sometimes dessert is served. Staples of the Danish diet include roast pork, fish, beans, brussels sprouts, fresh vegetables and grains. Vegetarianism is extremely rare, making vegetarians difficult to place.

The evening meal is usually the main meal of the day. It is served between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. and is often a time when the whole family is together. Students take a packed lunch to school; you may be required to make it yourself.

Danes tend to eat meals rather than snack from the refrigerator. Food in the refrigerator is not necessarily available for general consumption. If you want a snack, always check whether it is all right for you to eat something from the fridge.

### **School**

Most AFS students attend one of two types of public schools. They are either placed in the 10th grade of *Folkeskole* or in the 1st or 2nd grades of the *Gymnasium*.

The Folkeskole is the school for pupils from approximately 6 to 16 years old and includes one year of pre-school, plus grades 1 through 10 (the 10<sup>th</sup> grade is optional). The curriculum in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade includes subjects such as Danish, English, history, physical education, math, religion, physics, biology, German, French and drama. Some of these are optional, which varies from one school to another.

The Gymnasium is a three-year school that prepares pupils for further education. Students are accepted after completing the Folkeskole and are usually between 15 and 19 years old.

The school year runs from early August to late June. School is Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The schedule for all schools includes one week of vacation in mid-October, two weeks for Christmas holiday, one week for a winter break in February and one week for Easter break.

Schools in Denmark are co-ed and do not require uniforms.

### **Teen Life**

Soccer is the most popular sport in Denmark. People also enjoy handball, badminton, swimming, sailing, rowing and jogging. In Greenland and the Faroe Islands, hiking, dog-sledding and skiing are popular. Families spend a great deal of time watching television. The Danes enjoy great holiday traditions and celebrations. On weekends, Danish teens, like most teens around the world, like to get together with friends to talk, go to parties or see a movie.

Danish schools and local community organizations offer various activities. These include sports, music, crafts, drama and scouting. Getting involved in these activities is a great way to meet people your age who share your interests.

### **AFS Activities**

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Denmark will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) to talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

Some local chapters may organize special events, activities and trips for your enjoyment. In addition to the arrival camp, you can look forward to a weeklong mid-stay session in another region of Denmark. You will stay with another host family and meet other AFSers in the same region. The camps are required of all AFSers, and your travel expenses will be reimbursed by AFS.

There are two regional weekend meetings during the year, one in September and one in November. A written assignment will be given to students to present at functions in the local chapters.

Last, but definitely not least, is the "End of Stay." You will get together with other AFSers right before you return home. The "End-of-Stay" is about looking back at your exchange experience and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future.

### **Travel**

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Denmark, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Denmark. We strongly discourage travelling on your own or with friends.

### **Spending Money**

For personal spending money, we recommend that US\$2,000 should be sufficient for a yearlong sojourn. Upon arrival in your host community, you can open a bank account and request your parents at home to transfer money to you as you need it.

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things such as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility. Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them.

### **Safety and Support**

Denmark is safe, and you should do well if you follow the normal precautions you would use in your home country.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Dane. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medical purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Denmark may have additional rules.

### **Health Precautions**

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Denmark (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

### **Documents**

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices in your region and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. It is your responsibility to obtain your visa and pay the fees. However, AFS will let you know how to proceed and will provide you with the documents you need to apply for the visa.

### **Program Prices**

All participants are required to pay participation fee **and** do a mandatory fundraising. To get further information, please visit our website [www.afscanada.org](http://www.afscanada.org) or contact us.

The program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

## **Country Information**

### **Geography and Climate**

Denmark is about the size of the U.S. state of Massachusetts or the Dominican Republic and is made up of the Jutland peninsula and small islands in the North and Baltic Seas. It lies to the north of Germany and south of Sweden across a strait joining the Baltic Sea to the North Sea. The land is relatively flat with some hills and is made up of moors, lakes, farmlands and woodlands.

Denmark's climate can be unpredictable, and skies are often overcast. Despite the influence of the western trade winds off the north Atlantic, which are warmed by the Gulf Stream, the weather is often windy, and winters can be quite cold. January temperatures average about -1°C (30°F), and July warms to about 18°C (65°F).

Greenland is the largest island in the world. It is a part of Denmark, but its home government handles all internal affairs. Most of Greenland is covered by glaciers, and its climate is mostly arctic.

The Faroe Islands are located in the north Atlantic about 1,200 km (800 mi) from Denmark. They enjoy home rule within the Kingdom of Denmark. The islands are volcanic in origin, and the climate is typically oceanic: stormy, changeable and wet.

### **Population**

Denmark has a population of 5.3 million.

### **Language**

Danish is Denmark's official language. In Greenland, the predominant language is Greenlandic which is closely related to languages spoken by the Inuits of northern Canada, Alaska and Siberia.

### **Government**

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy. Legislative authority is held jointly by the sovereign and the parliament, or *Folketing*. The Folketing consists of 179 members who serve four-year terms.

### **Religion**

Most Danes belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, but only about 5% of them actively attend services.

## **Launching Your AFS Experience**

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experiences. To get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Danish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Denmark, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Denmark and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Denmark. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Dane. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or AFS Interculture Canada office. In addition, AFS Denmark will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Danish people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

### **Curiously Danish**

- ☀ For children's birthdays in Denmark, presents are placed around their beds while they are sleeping, so they will see the presents as soon as they awake.
- ☀ The LEGO company was founded by Ole Kirk Christiansen in Billund, Denmark, in 1916. Today it has more than 9,000 employees worldwide. The Danish words *Leg* and *Godt* were put together to make "LEGO." Later, it was discovered that in Latin, the term "Lego" means "I put together" or "I assemble."
- ☀ Julemanden brings Danish children their Christmas gifts. His elves, called *Juul Nisse*, are said to come from the attic, where they live, to help Julemanden. Children put a saucer of milk or rice pudding out for them in the attic and hope to find it empty in the morning.
- ☀ The first claim to a national flag goes to Denmark in the 14th century. King Valdemere II united the entire nation under the now familiar white cross on a blood-red field when they marched off on a crusade against then pagan Estonia. This flag was originally square in shape and has evolved into the rectangular shape common today but in the same color and configuration. This flag also forms the basis for all other Scandinavian flags showing an elongated cross on a colored field.

### How to Apply

You first have to fill out the Preliminary Application form that you can find on our website at [www.afscanada.org](http://www.afscanada.org). If you don't have access to Internet, call us at (514) 288-3282 or 1-800-361-7248 and we will send you the document by mail.

### Quick Facts

Student age (upon arrival)	16 years to 19 years	
Country data	Size	43,094 km <sup>2</sup> (16,634 mi <sup>2</sup> )
	Population	5,336,394
	Official language	Danish
	Government	Constitutional monarchy
	Currency	Danish krone (DKr) = 100 øre
Useful website	<a href="http://www.denmark.dk">http://www.denmark.dk</a>	
AFS Denmark website	<a href="http://www.afs.dk">www.afs.dk</a>	