VELKOMMEN TIL DANMARK
Dear YFU exchange student,

YFU Denmark greets you with a warm welcome. We all look forward to your arrival here in Denmark and with this Welcome Letter we would like to prepare you for your exchange experience by giving you an impression of your future host country and the population.

Europe, Scandinavia, Denmark — Maybe you will travel far or maybe you already live close by but we are sure that you are already excited about spending one year abroad.

Chances are that you have already heard about Denmark: The welfare system, the beer, fairytales by H.C. Andersen, sailing, hygge, freedom of speech, religion and opinion...

Some of what you have heard will appear to be true but be prepared, for only by living among us you will get to know the Danes.

We all – your host family, the volunteers and the YFU office – will support you. We hope that you will come to Denmark with great motivation and pleasant anticipation to learn about us and our life here. We are happy to have you here with us soon!

Yours, YFU-Denmark

Native name: Danmark
Area: 43.093 km².
Population: 5.5 million.
Coast line: 7,313 km.
Highest point: 173 m. Yding Skovhøj.
Biggest island: Sealand 7,031 km².
Islands: 450 - 90 inhabited.
Capital: Copenhagen - (København) (Biggest city in Scandinavia)
Currency: Danish Kroner. (DKK)
Time Zone: UCT+1.
Head of state: Queen Margrethe II.
Largest Cities and inhabitants
1. Copenhagen - 1.810.000
2. Århus - 290.000
3. Odense - 190.000
4. Aalborg - 168.000
5. Esbjerg - 88.000

Religion: Christian Protestant Church & Evangelical Lutheran - since 1536.
YFU-Denmark

YFU-Denmark has existed for 50 years. Today we have approximately 800 members; many of these are involved as volunteers in all different ways. The inbound program has a core group of volunteers both Danish returnees and former ex-change students who have decided to come back to Denmark. This group you will meet at the arrival orientation and at the mandatory YFU weekends during the year.

YFU-Denmark has its own house where most of the YFU activities take place. It is located in the middle of the country right by the train station – so prepare yourself for some train rides.

The house (Huset) is also the national YFU-office. The staff here is always ready to help you.

Apart from our staff in the office, there are many volunteers living all over Denmark who will help you throughout your exchange year when you need help or just need to talk to someone who has tried to be an exchange student. Your YFU-Volunteer will live nearby and will be there for you whenever you need him/her!

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5690 Tommerup
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Email: yfu-danmark@yfu.dk
Web: www.yfu.dk
The exchange experience is in your hands!

We, the volunteers and the office staff, will be there for you whenever you need help. But don't forget who is playing the leading part in this experience and play an active role to have success in your exchange year. You have to be motivated to learn about Denmark and its people, and you have to be interested in the persons who will soon become an integrated part of your day-to-day life: Your host family and your class mates. If that is the case, then there is no obstacle to an unforgettable and once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Preparation

You probably already had a glimpse at a travel guide. That is a good idea because it gives you a first impression on your host country. But you can do more to prepare yourself well for your exchange year.

The most important part in a full integration in the Danish society is, of course, the language. Although most Danes speak English more or less fluently, you will not become part of the Danish society if you don't learn the language. But don't worry, even if you don't know yet many words, you will learn Danish over the course of the first months, provided that you actively engage with your host family, your new Danish friends and at school. You will have active language training at the arrival orientation as well as YFU –Denmark will lend you a CD-rom with a language program to practice on your host family’s computer. Don’t be afraid to try and speak – people will respect you very much for trying.

You can already prepare yourself at home. If you have internet access you can visit this site:

http://www.speakdanish.dk/index.htm
Arrival orientation and other YFU activities

After collecting your luggage, and going through customs you will be picked up by a YFU-volunteer at the airport. Please don't leave on your own! If you get lost or need any help you can call the following telephone number. YFU-Danmark +45 64 76 30 06.

From the airport you will go by train to Huset in Tommerup. The trains are safe and clean. You will be picked up at the train station by a YFU volunteer.

When you arrive you will take part in a one week arrival orientation with all the other exchange students and a group of volunteers. The main content of the course is language training and learning about Danish culture.

For example you will be served some of the national dishes:

- Rye bread—rugbrød
- Liver paste—leverpostej
- Danish relish—remoulade
- Bread with different meat/topping—smørebrød
- Meat balls—frikadeller

Of course there will also be time to hang out, make new friends and have fun

About six weeks after your arrival, there will be a post-arrival seminar.

In November there is a mandatory YFU weekend (midyear) as well as one in May (re-entry). The last couple of years the students have also arranged a voluntary weekend in February.

At the mandatory weekends you will have time to reflect on your experiences in Denmark as well as have social activities with the other students.
Good to know about Denmark and the Danes

- We like punctuality—so be on time if you are going to meet someone or is invited somewhere.

- When you visit a Danish home please take off your shoes—only if it is a party and you are dressed up with nice shoes you should keep them on.

- We do not have a word like ”please” —being polite is in the words you use (for example: would you be so kind and pass me the bread)

- We do not talk loudly in public—you will probably find trains and busses very quiet.

- Using public transportation is safe and very common in Denmark.

- Meeting people you will either shake hands (firmly) or hug—depends on the situation and the age of the person.

- Danes are often very private persons—it may take time to get to know them (do not give up!) when they make you their friend you do have a friend for life.

- Danes do not so often meet outside of their homes they go to each others houses to hang out—If your host family says you can invite friends over they mean it—feel free to do so.

- Our after school activities often take part in the late afternoon or after supper. We have many clubs for all kinds of things. These are not connected to the school but are run by volunteers.

- Many families have a dog or a cat. They live inside the house and are clean and well taken care of.

The bicycles

We love our bikes and use them very much all year long. In many cities there are special bike paths to ride your bike. We use the bikes to go shopping, to go to school, to go to work or simply just for recreation. Please practice riding a bike before you come!
**The educational system**

The Danish school system is based on the concept of learning to take responsibility for your own “learning for life”. This results in teaching where students always play a very active democratic role in lessons and very often assignments are given to be solved collaboratively in groups. It also requires that the students find their information themselves, with a high level of criticism and of course the counselling of the teachers.

This way of teaching and learning has made the Danish youth a group of very involved and mature students in the way that they know that what they learn they learn for them and not for the teacher….. and it has made Denmark a country of citizens that are very participating, flexible and curious yet sceptical.

So do not be fooled when you start school it all may seem very free but the students have been taught this way since the first grade.

**The international school**

Being a small country and a having a language spoken only by us the schools very much emphasize international education. English is taught from the 3rd grade and German from the 7th. Language training actively involves the students and you will find that the younger generations in Denmark are fluent in English. In the gymnasium you can also choose to learn Spanish or French.

**School life**

The school day normally starts at 8 am and finishes at 3pm. After school you hang out with your friends or do your home work.

We do not have school uniforms in Denmark and the dress code is quite free—also for the teachers.

At most schools you have to bring your own lunch—some schools may have a small cafeteria where you can buy food, but it is often very expensive.

Many students bring their own laptop to class but you will do ok without one.

Maybe you will get a mentor to help you in the beginning but you should be prepared to get actively involved and not wait for your class mates or teachers to tell you what to do.
The weather

Spring, summer, autumn and winter—you will experience it all during a year stay in Denmark. Summers can be sunny and warm, but just as well rainy. Winter may offer snow and ice or just cold and rain.

Please bring everything from shorts and T-shirts to winter boots and gloves—don’t forget a raincoat.

Being situated where we are the light of the day also changes during the year. In mid summer there will be light until about 11 pm—this gives us a wonderful opportunity to stay outside in the summer nights. In the winter it will get dark around 4 pm—then we just stay inside and light tons of candles to make thing cosy (hyggeligt).

The money

The currency in Denmark is Danish kroner. Even though we are a part of the European Union we have voted and decided to keep our own currency instead of changing to Euro. You can ONLY use Danish kroner in Denmark.

1 US Dollar = about 5,2 Danish kroner. 1 Euro = about 7,4 Danish kroner

We have

Coins:
50 Øre—(half a krone)
1 krone
2 krone
5 krone
10 krone
20 krone

Bills:
50 kroner
100 kroner
200 kroner
500 kroner
1000 kroner
A bit of history and politics

Denmark is an old Democracy
Danish democracy is rooted in the Democratic Constitution from 1849, and the Danes have been governed by this well functional democratic Constitution ever since, signed by King Frederik VII on the 5th of June - giving the Danes their personal liberty and democratic rights, which mainly means freedom of speech - freedom of the press and free elections. Every year the constitution day - Grundlovsdag- is celebrated with many arrangements and meetings, by all of the democratic- and freedom-loving Danes. Men and women have equal rights and many women have a career. All minorities are protected by the constitution

Home of the Vikings as well as the heartland of the great Viking society during the historical Viking age from around 800 to about 1050 AC - is a very important part of Denmark’s history and culture that formed the way to build up the Danish kingdom. As a descendant of the Vikings - Danes are commonly connected with the terms of being a Viking with adventurous blood running through their veins.

Denmark is one of the oldest kingdoms in the world and dates back to the first Danish monarch, King "Gorm the Old" (910 -958 - King of Denmark 930 - 958), who established his reign in the 10th century.

The Danish Royal Family and Monarchy is a very popular institution in Denmark and is highly supported by the Danes. The Kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy and Queen Margrethe II of Denmark has a constitutional role - which means that she cannot perform political acts independently – but she is still the head of state. There is a straight monarchical line from old King "Gorm" (910-958) to our currently reigning monarch Queen Margrethe II, who has ancestral links stretching back over 1,000 years.

The Danish flag Dannebrog is very popular. Many private houses have a flag pole and use the flag when something in the family is celebrated. If you do not have a flag pole you use small table size flags, paper flags etc to indicate celebration. Our flag is more a symbol of celebration to us than it is a national symbol.
Family life.

Your new host family will greet you as a son or a daughter and be prepared to make you a part of their life. Being open, honest and paying attention is the best way you can integrate yourself.

Most arguments start from tiny misunderstandings, so remember: always ask when in doubt about something!

YFU has all kinds of host families: mom, dad and children, single parents, couples without children, couples with small children, couples who’s children already moved out and they are placed all over the country —they all have one thing in common though, they are looking forward to welcoming you in their homes.

Equality between men and women is high in Denmark. Most women have a full time job, so household chores are taken care of by the whole family not only the mom. Also women have equal power of authority over children, finances etc.

Most Danish families sit down to eat supper together. Then you will talk about what happened during the day or the next upcoming family event. That also means that we do not do a lot of snacking between meals as eating supper together is very valued.
Useful Tips

**Visa Issues**

All students coming to Denmark need a valid passport.

If you are not from a EU country to enter Denmark you need to apply for your residence permit at the local Danish embassy. This can take up to 3 months, so please be sure to apply **right away** when you get the papers from your local YFU. Some countries also need a visa to be allowed to enter Denmark—please ask YFU

For EU students you need a copy of your birth certificate and a consent from your parents (this form you will get from your local YFU). You will apply for residence permit when you arrive.

Scandinavian students can enter the country and study without any permit.

**Insurance**

All students arriving in Denmark need to have insurance.

You will come with your own insurance or with an insurance provided by YFU in your home country. Please make yourself familiar with the type of insurance that you have. Please read the instructions of your insurance carefully. In a case of an emergency you personally need to contact the insurance company. Ask your parents or YFU before your departure to give you written instructions of the claim procedure if you have to go to doctor or you break or lose something. Usually you have to pay and then make your claim to your insurance company. Our office staff will assist you if you need any help.

*When in Denmark you will get a social security number and be able to go to the doctor without paying—you own insurance should however cover your whole stay.*

**Pocket Money**

We cannot tell you exactly how much pocket money you are going to need per month. This depends on your lifestyle. It will probably vary between 900 and 1200 Danish kroner per month. If you want to go on trips with your school or with your host family, you are going to need more money. Besides, you should budget some more money for the first and for the last month of your stay.

The list below may give you a first impression on common expenses in Denmark:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-shirt</td>
<td>50-400 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeans</td>
<td>100-1200 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>300-1000 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>60-80 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bus</td>
<td>12-20 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Mac</td>
<td>30 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>40-60 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>15-40 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deodorant</td>
<td>20-50 Kroner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamp DK</td>
<td>5,5 Kroner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transportation school: up to 350 a month

Photo copy for school: 200 for a year

Soccer: app. 600 / one season

Fitness: app 200 / month

Big Mac: 30 Kroner

Please take into account that you will need more pocket money than at home because you will have to buy things that usually your parents buy for you at home, sanitary products like a personal shampoo, for instance.
YFU Support System
Just as you have your ups and downs at home, you will most probably have them in Denmark too. It is important that you are prepared to face them, and a lot of people are ready to support you.
You will be able to solve most of your problems and get answers to most of your questions by communicating with your host family, friends and YFU contact persons.
Your will have a senior contact and a junior contact. They will live relatively close by and will be there to assist you when you need help. You will get the names, addresses, E-mail and telephone number of your YFU-contacts at the Arrival Orientation Seminar. Please contact your YFU-contact at least once a month and let him/her know how you are doing!
Since all your contact persons are volunteers and not paid for being involved with YFU, there might be occasions when they cannot come to see you immediately when you want them to. In matters that need urgent attention you can always contact the YFU-office.

Visitors from Home
Years of experience in organizing exchange between students and families tell us that visits from home can be a much bigger problem than you and those who wish to visit you might assume. There are two main reasons for this:
During your exchange year you will have a host mother and/or a host father making perhaps unfamiliar rules in your new and unaccustomed environment. You will become used to asking them for permission, advice and information. If your natural parents enter into this situation, you will suddenly be confronted with advice derived from a different set of rules and values. This is a very difficult situation for most exchange students, and it frequently causes a break in the developing relationship to the host family. A visit by someone from home is likely to interrupt your own adjustment to the new culture in a negative way. You will be strongly reminded of home and will speak your own language. These things make it particularly difficult to readjust after your visitor has gone.
The second reason why a visit from home can be a problem is that it can burden your host family in ways that are not necessarily apparent. Sometimes host families cannot be as generous as they would like to be, or they simply do not know what role they should assume. Should they stop being your parents because and while your natural parents are here to visit? This situation might put your host family, your natural parents and yourself in a difficult position. For these reasons we would like to ask you to contact YFU before planning any visits and that you carefully consider the concerns that we have mentioned. The visits will typically only be approved if scheduled toward the end of your exchange and if the process of adaption into your host family has successfully taken place.
Special note to the parents
After your child has arrived at his or her host family, we would like to encourage you to write to the family and to tell them a little about yourself and perhaps to express your appreciation for the warmth which they have extended to your child. They would truly appreciate this gesture. We would also like to recommend that you don’t call your child all too frequently on the phone/skype etc; it is our experience that this can induce or enhance homesickness while giving host families the impression that their student doesn’t feel quite at home. From our experience a scheduled conversations every two weeks is a very good solution. If you should phone your son or daughter at his/her family, we would encourage you to exchange a few words with the host family as well. It is really nice for everybody involved if host family and natural parents can establish a good relationship.

Special note to you
Being a YFU student means that it will be quite a special kind of year for you. You will be living in a foreign family in a foreign country. It will hopefully be a year which improves your abilities to learn, to adapt, to communicate and to understand. Ask questions, when you do not understand. Keeping your eyes and ears open is crucial. And do not forget humor. With a positive attitude you will experience a truly unforgettable year.

Being an exchange student is definitely not an easy task. You will find life in Denmark very new to you. It is a unique way for you to experience a new, maybe totally different way of life – and learn about yourself while doing it. The exchange experience is different for every student. However the fact that you will come to Denmark as a YFU student will add something special to your life. There will be interesting things happening and certainly your abilities as a world citizen will improve. And may be at the end of your exchange year to Denmark the old YFU saying will become true: “It’s not over, it’s just the beginning..”