

# Quest Program DENMARK



## The Kingdom of Denmark



is a country in the Scandinavian region of northern Europe. It is the southernmost of all the Nordic countries. The mainland is bordered to the south by Germany and is situated southwest of Sweden and south of Norway.

Denmark borders both the Baltic and the North Sea. The country consists of a large peninsula, Jutland (Jylland), and many islands, most notably Zealand (Sjælland), Funen (Fyn), Vendsyssel-Thy, Lolland, Falster and Bornholm, as well as hundreds of minor islands often referred to as the Danish Archipelago.

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. Denmark has a state-level government and local governments in 98 municipalities.

The capital city of Copenhagen includes the Tivoli gardens, the Amalienborg Palace (home of the Danish monarchy), and the famous Little Mermaid sculpture. The second largest city in Denmark is Aarhus. Aarhus dates back to the Viking Age and is one of the oldest cities in the country. The largest cathedral in Denmark, and the second largest cathedral in Northern Europe, is Aarhus Cathedral.

Denmark was ranked “the happiest place in the world,” in surveys taken from 2006 to 2008, based on standards of health, welfare, and education. The 2008 Global Peace Index survey ranks Denmark as the second most peaceful country in the world, after Iceland. The capital and largest city, Copenhagen, was ranked the most livable city in the world by Monocle magazine in 2008.

The national language, Danish, is closely related to Swedish and Norwegian. These Scandinavian countries share strong cultural and historical ties. This means that if you learn Danish, you will also probably understand a bit of Norwegian and Swedish. Denmark is also tied to Scandinavian countries through its population. About 9% of the Danish population has foreign citizenship, a large portion of which is Scandinavian.

## Denmark Statistics

Area: 16,640 square miles

Population: 5,557,709

Capital: Copenhagen

Language: Danish

Government: Parliamentary Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy

Currency: Danish krone

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A nonprofit corporation committed to advancing intercultural educational student exchange.



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The dominant religion in Denmark is Lutheran. In fact, 82% of the inhabitants of Denmark and 90% of the ethnic Danes are members of the Lutheran state church.

The Danish climate is part of the temperate zone. Winters are not particularly cold, with January and February temperatures around 32°F. Summers are cool with August temperatures around 60°F. There is a lot of wind year round; however it's stronger during the winter. Denmark has an average of 170 rainy days a year, with the most rainfall in November.

Denmark is the birthplace of many world-renown people. Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen is known for his fairy tales, such as *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Ugly Duckling*. Other people who have made a name for themselves outside Denmark include Karen Blixen (pen name: Isak Dinesen), Nobel laureate author Henrik Pontoppidan, Nobel laureate physicist Niels Bohr, the comedic pianist Victor Borge, and the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard.

Traditional Danish food includes frikadeller (fried meatballs, often served with potatoes and various sorts of gravy), karbonader/ krebinetter (breaded and fried minced meat), and steak and potatoes. Fish is also widely eaten, especially on the west coast of Jutland. A favorite traditional condiment, remoulade, is eaten with french fries, fried plaice, salami and roast beef sandwiches. Smoked fish dishes from local smoking houses or "røgerier" are increasingly popular, especially on the island of Bornholm. One of the most interesting aspects of Danish food is the wide variety of attractive open-faced "rugbrød" (Rye-bread) sandwiches, traditionally served for lunch, or as they say "frokost." This usually contains fish, such

as marinated herring, smoked eel or hot fried breaded plaice. This sandwich can also be made with meat, such as cold roast beef with remoulade and fried onions, roast pork and crackling with red cabbage, hot veal medallions, Danish meatballs (frikadeller) or liver paté with bacon and mushrooms.

## School life

The Danish education system provides access to primary school, secondary school, and most kinds of higher education. Attendance at school, "Folkeskole," is compulsory for a minimum of nine years, and a maximum of ten. About 99% of students attend compulsory elementary school, 86% attend secondary school, and 41% pursue further education. All college education for Danish students is free, thanks to the tax system. Following graduation from Folkeskolen, there are several other educational opportunities:

- Gymnasium; academically oriented upper secondary education.
- Higher Preparatory Examination (HF); similar to Gymnasium, but one year shorter.
- Higher Technical Examination Program (HTX); with a focus on mathematics and engineering.
- Higher Commercial Examination Program (HHX); with a focus on trade and business.

Gymnasium, HF, HTX and HHX all aim to qualify students for higher education at universities and colleges.

The school day for students normally begins at 8am and finishes at 3pm, Monday to Friday. During the school year there is an autumn break in the middle



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of October, Easter break, and vacation time around Christmas and New Year. Exchange students normally stay with their host families during these vacations.

## Host Family Life

Communication is essential to a healthy student/host family relationship. Whether talking about a cultural difference, problem, or positive experience, the bonds of mutual trust and affection strengthen when the student communicates openly and freely with the family. With communication and time, the student truly becomes a “member of the family.”

It is true that Danish youngsters have more freedom than most teenagers their age, however, it is expected that parents know where their children are and when they will be home. Host parents expect children to be responsible and trustworthy and make sensible decisions. The same is expected of exchange students. Children receive respect from their parents because children are reciprocally respectful of their parents and they don't abuse their privileges.

Most Danish teenagers are used to organizing their own spare time. They are independent and decide for themselves what they do after school. It is very important that exchange students do not sit back and wait for host families to plan their spare time activities - that is not the way it is done in this country. The host family will of course assist in activities, but the student must show some initiative and come up with suggestions. This process is fun if the student is prepared to get to know a new culture and willing to accept another way of thinking. Each family is different, so it is important that the exchange student doesn't compare the host family to their natural family.

Most exchange students find the Danes very relaxed and easygoing, but don't be fooled into thinking that they don't also have a temper at times. Exchange students will discover many cultural differences, which will require flexibility and adaptability.

Try to speak Danish! Try again and again, and then keep trying. Exchange students might feel that the Danes are making fun of them as they speak, which will happen, but stay positive! They will ask students to say “rødgrød med fløde” and they will roll around laughing as students try. Students can then think of the most difficult sentence in their own language and ask the Danes to say it once they have stopped laughing. Afterwards, everyone will be laughing together. Nobody expects exchange students to speak perfect Danish, but students will be admired for trying to get by. Plus, students can be proud of themselves, with good reason, when they get the hang of this difficult language!

Be prepared for sarcasm. Most Danes tend to be rather sarcastic and they are very fond of irony. So, don't be offended and don't think that Danes mean every word literally. Students might think that they are being insulted, when it is really just Danish sarcasm. Therefore, it is better to ask questions when in doubt, rather than be offended for no reason. A student's sense of humor will be put to the test. Smile and be happy! In some situations this is easier said than done, but do try. No matter how difficult the adjustment to life in Denmark, remember this: Exchange students have not received a life sentence, but rather, have been given every possibility to have a fantastic cultural experience. Take the opportunity and make the most of it!



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## Program Extras

Students are strongly urged to become involved in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, clubs, social events, art, music, and drama (as long as these activities do not interfere with their academic progress). Danish courses are usually offered by the local community, and are a great way to meet others who are trying to learn this difficult language. Whereas in many countries, extra-curricular activities are tied to the school, in Denmark these activities are outside of the school arena.

Quest arranges trips during the year to Copenhagen, Aarhus (the next biggest city in Denmark), and Odense, where Hans Christian Andersen was born. Since the group of exchange students in Denmark is rather small, the students experience a special bond during the trips. Almost everyone participates in the activities and makes lasting friendships. The trips include sightseeing tours and private host family accommodations, so that the students are able to experience different Danish family lifestyles.

## European Tour

At the end of June, Quest offers a three-week bus tour around Europe. Students get to visit 10 countries together with other students from all over the world. The price includes accommodations, half board, sightseeing, most entrances and activities, Disneyland in Paris and more. Please ask for more detailed information regarding the tour.

## About Quest

Quest International was founded in 1999. We are a nonprofit organization committed to international, educational student exchange. Our goal is to promote cultural awareness and international understanding by offering quality, educational and cultural programs for students, host families and schools. Our staff is dedicated to creating a positive exchange experience for all program participants.



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