

## Denmark's International Study Abroad Program

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During the fall semester of my junior year in 2002, I chose to study abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark through Denmark's International Study Abroad Program, or DIS. Being a biology major with aspirations to continue on to graduate school, I needed to participate in a program that provided classes that were taught in the English language and counted as credit towards my major. The Marine Biology and Ecology program at DIS satisfied both requirements. While in Denmark, I took four classes, including Marine Biology of European Coastal Waters by Frank Leck Fotel, Ecology and Human Impact in the North and Baltic Seas by Anders Drud Jordan, Biology of Marine Mammals by Hanne Stranger, and the History of European Ballet by Heino Byrgesen. My general statement regarding all classes is that the academic program in Denmark stresses research paper writing more so than the academic program at Wofford, and grades are based solely on the research paper and a final written exam.

Study tours are an exciting and integral part to each class, as I traveled all over Denmark and to Finland to complete projects for my Marine Biology Program. I also regularly attended ballet performances at the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen for the History of European Ballet class. The Marine Biology Program was in a transitional state when I attended DIS; therefore, lectures in Ecology and Marine Biology were not to the standards of Wofford College. New teachers and a new program director are in place, however, so the class material may have improved. The Marine Mammals class and History of European Ballet class were both interesting and valuable.

Denmark is a very small and liberal country, and the Danes create this tolerant and welcoming atmosphere through their attitudes and traditions. I experienced this Danish culture first-hand because I chose to live with a host family. Rather than staying in a kollegium, which is similar to a dorm, I was matched with a Danish family based on my personality and interests. Host families live in Copenhagen or surrounding cities. Situations vary when placed with a family, but when a student was unhappy with his/her family, which rarely happens, the program changed the student's placement. I strongly advocate living with a host family because you directly experience Danish life and customs, and in the process you develop a relationship with the family that will be a life-long friendship.

The weather in Denmark in the fall ranged from moderate to freezing. In August and September the weather was warm to moderate; therefore, be sure to bring some warm weather clothing. After October, however, the weather gradually gets colder; and by December the highs are commonly near 30°F. Also, unlike South Carolina, the sun rises at about 8 or 9 am and sets at approximately 3 pm in December. This prolonged dark period takes some adjusting, but cities display an abundance of Christmas lights to brighten the outdoors.

My overall experience in Denmark was invaluable to my academic education and personal growth. I developed into a more independent individual by conquering small daily tasks, such as learning the train system to commute from my hometown, Taastrup, to Copenhagen. I interacted with students from numerous countries around the world and became more internationally aware of foreign affairs. I created a wealth of lifetime memories, including experiencing an infamous Finnish sauna and immediately jumping

into the Baltic Sea. I mastered research in Danish libraries and became more accomplished in my writing. Above all, I made friendships with my host family and Danish friends, all of which I will treasure for the rest of my life.