

At the end of their AFS exchange in Denmark, we asked some recent AFSers from the USA to answer two questions:

- ❑ What elements of your host culture, compared to US culture, did you find most difficult to adjust to in the areas of family, school and/or social life?
- ❑ Please note any advice you would like to share with AFSers destined for your host country.

Here are some of their responses:

Speak Danish! Danes understand that Danish is a tough language for foreigners and will applaud any attempt you make at the language. DO NOT be afraid to make mistakes! Really try with the language, because once you start speaking the language, so many more doors open up. The people who had the best experience were those that learned the language the best. Also, be prepared for anything. Prior to leaving for Denmark, I learned all about the American government and facts about my state. When I got there, the first question my class asked me was, "What do the girls in your class wear?" Be prepared for anything!

Andrew, Year, 2009

Make an effort to learn Danish and put yourself out there even when you're not sure you're saying something right. The more you try, the more you learn. And the faster you learn Danish, the faster you make friends and REALLY get into the culture!

Francine, Year, 2008

Don't bring too much stuff you can always buy clothes, shoes, etc. there and you will want to bring so many things back...Go to language school and try your best to learn Danish you will not regret it. Also spend your money wisely but remember you only there once take advantage of every opportunity you can.

Haegen, Year, 2008

Go to Fridays café; all schools have it. Also make sure you charge into language school from the start or life is going to be a challenge through the whole year. Also don't be too put off if people don't like you; they are allowed to not like you. It doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong.

Kyle, Year, 2008

My advice to AFSers going to Denmark is to live in the moment, learn from your mistakes and move on, do not be afraid to get out of your comfort zone to talk to your classmates and other exchange students, and try

attending what other invite you to like parties or just hanging out, and if have fun because when you have fun you learn the most, it makes learning the language easier and making good relationships easier too.

Allison, Year, 2008

Danish people can seem cold or distant when you first meet them, especially in school. You must be assertive and put yourself out there to make friends and close bonds. If you're shy or have problems making friends it can be REALLY difficult making friends in the Danish culture.

Francine, Year, 2008

The Danes are very reserve but it was only a problem at the beginning, after a while they opened up and i made great friends

Sebastian, Year, 2008

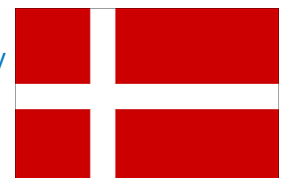
I think all three of these areas are difficult in their own way. For school, don't worry if you are not participating as much as the other students [because] you don't understand the language. With your family, try to do things together but also remember to go do things by yourself or with friends. With friends, if you make friends with kids from your host country, [that is] great but remember the exchange students are pretty rad as well and will understand all the stuff you feel on your year abroad.

Haegen, Year, 2008

The most difficult thing to adjust to in Denmark is that sometimes people come off as cold so as an exchange student you have to make an effort to be involved with the family and at school.

Allison, Year, 2008

The activities outside of school were quite different. I did not fully take advantage of the opportunities. I wished I would have done something to have



helped me adjust to the culture and language quicker.

Andrew, Year, 2009

No matter what new country you go to, it won't be a walk in the park. This experience was one of the hardest I've ever had, but the most rewarding. This comment is not to discourage anyone, but rather to let you know that there are two sides to the story. Also, make the most of your trip, don't be afraid to try new things, but don't deny who you are either.

Danielle, Year, 2005

Talk to them and they will talk back, even if they seem to not want to, normally they do want to respond, but they are too shy. Also, be on time! Danish people are very punctual and find it offensive if you are late. And most of all live every day to the fullest! You won't believe how fast your time in Denmark will go!

Greta, Year, 2004

It took a while to feel comfortable in my family and at school, but the people helped me out by being friendly and if I unknowingly broke some culturally taboo it helped if they were straightforward and direct about explaining my error to me.

Lael, Year, 2003

The Danish people are definitely a different type of people. At first you may think that they are more reserved than you would prefer. But after a while, if you keep an open mind, you will see that they are wonderful people who are very open and willing to consider what you have to say and to respect your thoughts and ideas. Don't give up. It's hard sometimes, but if it weren't, it wouldn't be worth it in the end.

Susie, Year, 2003

Keep an open mind. Accept the way that your host family lives and try your utmost to live that same way. Watch and learn and give every single second of your attention everything that it's worth. The most important thing is that you realize that you are doing the coolest thing that you could ever do...Do your best and be your best and learn it and live it.

Susie, Year, 2003

You should try to mix it up with as many people as you can and be really open to new things and new situations because you never know how things are going to turn out.

Lael, Year, 2003

The most important thing I can suggest is to attend school so that you get to know your classmates really

well. The most rewarding feeling I have from my year is that I know my class in Denmark considered me as much a part of the class as any of the others. The fact that I had a wonderful host family and that my host brother had previously spent a year in the U.S. really helped me to fit in with my family, but I did need to get used to more frequent visits from their friends and family. My suggestion is to not really question anything they ask of you (unless it is completely unreasonable), because it is only what they would ask of their own children. School wasn't a very difficult adjustment, because I liked the Danish school system much more than the American one. Schedules are based around an entire week instead of one day, which makes it much less monotonous. You stay with the same group of about 25 in all your classes. And the school parties are awesome!

Andrew, Year, 2002

Keep an open mind! It's not right, it's not wrong, it's just different.

Margo, Year, 2002