

Danish culture



Many Danes have a hard time defining what is typically Danish. Most people find that the most important Danish 'trades' have to do with democracy, history and the interaction between the people. However, there are of course some traditions etc. that are typically Danish. Listed below are some of them.

Food

In almost all Danish cities you will find a 'Pølsevogn' which means a sausage cart. They serve Danish hotdogs in different versions, and Danes normally drink chocolate milk with the hotdog.

In home cooking some of the Danish specialties are 'smørrebrød' which is an open sandwich, 'frikadeller' which are meatballs, and 'hakkebøf' which is a burger served with potatoes, sauce and fried onions.

Generally, the Danes eat relatively healthy and are very consumer conscious. Thus, the Danish consumer market for biodynamic food is one of the world's largest markets.

At a Folk high school you have at least three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. Most meals are served as a buffet. Many schools serve hot dishes for lunch and a cold buffet for dinner. This is different to most Danish homes, where the hot meal is served at dinner time.

If you have special needs concerning your diet due to allergies, religious conviction or being a vegetarian, make sure to let the school know. The meals will to a wide extent be supplemented according to the different needs among the students.



Alcohol

In Denmark you are allowed to consume and buy alcohol from the supermarkets (not at bars and restaurants) by the age of 16. Most Danes have their first alcohol experience in their early teens and it is a natural part of their social life and party culture.

Some foreigners are surprised by the Danish youth's use of alcohol and that they really do party on until morning.

Do not ever feel obligated to drink more than you wish to!

Most folk high schools have an alcohol policy and some schools forbid the use of alcohol during weekdays.

Please also be advised that drugs are prohibited. If you are caught using them you will be expelled.



Sports

Danes love sport. About three out of four children and young people and half of the adult population are engaged in sports activities in their leisure time. Denmark has the highest number of sports facilities per capita amongst the European countries.

The most popular activities are gymnastics, soccer, badminton, swimming and handball. Fitness, aerobic, roller-skating and jogging are other popular activities.

Participating in different sports activities is a great way to get to know other people. There are numerous options. Some education institutions have their own sports facilities, which are only open to students and staff. You can also join an independent sports club, however, these memberships are often more expensive.



Hygge

'Hygge' is an important element of the Danish culture. The word is difficult to translate, but those seeking to grasp its meaning will quickly realise that it is closely associated with having a good time together with friends or family and with eating and drinking.

Humour

Humour is another essential element. To many Danes, humour and irony are closely linked. Understanding this irony is an important part of understanding the Danish mentality.

You might sometimes find that it is easy to misunderstand Danes during a conversation due to the excessive use of irony. In those situations you should not be afraid to ask.

Self irony is also a big part of the Danish mentality, so if you feel that a Danish person might be trying to make fun of you, it is most likely not the case at all. In these situations you also should not be afraid to ask either, and hopefully, you will be able to laugh at the situation.

Jantelov

The 'Jantelov' is a special part of the Scandinavian culture, adopted in the 1920ties from a novel written by Aksel Sandemose. 'The Jante law' is a group mentality that negatively portrays and criticises success and achievement by individuals as inappropriate, thus you will not find many Danes flaunting their success.



Music

Denmark is also known for its many music festivals. During the summer, there is a wide range of both Danish and international rock, folk and jazz music to choose from. The most famous festivals are the Roskilde Festival, the Skanderborg Festival, the Folk Festival in Tønder and the Copenhagen Jazz Festival. The Roskilde Festival is one of the largest and most trend setting events on the European rock scene.

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