

## 020621 Life in Copenhagen

Despite the intensity of my studies at the end of the last semester, I have been getting into Copenhagen more often and meeting a lot more people. One impetuous is that I have found a new church in the city. It is called the International Church of Copenhagen (ICC) and is a church set up by the Lutheran Church in the US, the ELCA. It might seem odd to set up a mission in a country which is 95% Lutheran, but the purpose of the church is to serve the need of the English speaking community. Other international churches offer services in German, Chinese and a variety of other languages. The congregation of the ICC is made up of a lot of international students as well as people who have come to Copenhagen from all over the world to work including the US, England or South Africa. There are even a few Danes who wanted to try something other than the stale state churches which are sadly not all that welcoming to newcomers.

I have come to the conclusion that most expatriates are really interesting people who are fun to be around. I think that there is something about a moving to a new country with a new language and other challenges which draws a certain type of person. Plus the travel leads to more of an open mind and a willingness to try new things. There are definitely exceptions such as some of the questionable foreigners who I ran into in China. But in all, I really like the international community both at DTU and at the ICC.

There is one family, the Dorn-Lopez's who are particularly neat. They moved to Copenhagen last August on a three year assignment with a Danish oil company. They have lived all over while working these contracts. The husband and wife are originally from the US and that is where their three daughters were born. However, when the youngest daughter was 8 months old, they moved to Norway for six years. From Norway, the next stop was Lafayette, Louisiana which must have been a bit of a culture shock. My friend Renee is from Lafayette and it is a great little town and the family enjoyed the stay. But, then after a few years they were off again, this time to Venezuela for a few years. Last August, Donald was offered a new position in Columbia or one in Denmark. They had their belongings all packed and just needed to decide which place to go to. They decided that the challenge of sailing across the Atlantic in their sailboat was more attractive than moving to Columbia where they would have to fear for their safety. So, they packed up their boat and made the voyage to Copenhagen.

There is something about children who grow up in foreign countries and the Dorn-Lopez family is no exception. Their daughter is very mature for her age, speaks at least three languages and is independent. She attends high school at an international school where the classes are in English which makes the learning easier. I truly think that the international travel is really good for kids in that they get a chance to see that there is more to the world than what they see at home. I will certainly encourage my own kids (someday) to study abroad and to travel.

Back to Copenhagen, it is a beautiful city and we have been discovering more restaurants and places to go. The long beautiful days are great for dining outside at the outdoor cafes and restaurants. However, it is a common practice to have a different, more expensive menu for the outdoor seating or a big surcharge at the end of the meal which is a lesson learned the hard way.

But I love to wander the cobblestone streets. There is just something about the architecture that makes it European, but it can be difficult to say exactly what it is. The brightly painted buildings distinguish the buildings as Danish. Furthermore, there was a law made by one of the kings that all windows should be at the same level. Therefore, a lot of the streets are lined with buildings which have identical windows and without spaces between them. As my friend Monica pointed out, it gives the rows of buildings a flat look since you only see the sides of the building block at the end of the row of building.

On my last night in Copenhagen, Micah, Isabelle and I went for dinner along one of the cobblestone streets. We sat as bicycles and the new bicycle taxis went past. We ate at a place called Riz Raz which serves great vegetarian Mediterranean food as well as an all you can eat buffet. The buffet always spurs a bit of a competition as to how many plates can be consumed. Everyone was feeling a bit full and we tried to make it worse for each other by joking about eating pickled fish with chocolate sauce and mayonnaise on the side. Afterwards, we walked through the pedestrian streets to Nyhaven which is a ritzy area with expensive restaurants lining a canal. My Danish friends taught me that those who can't afford the expensive drinks buy beers and sit along the canal to enjoy the atmosphere. We sat with our bottles of beer and chatted as people wandered past. Sometimes, this one guy will come to sing to the crowds and people actually pay him to stop singing.

For not the first time in the past month, I looked around at my friends, the beautiful city, the warm, bright nights and thought to myself, wow, this is really truly incredible place and incredible experience and wow, this is my life. It has been a remarkable year in Denmark. I think that probably one of the best things about living in Copenhagen is that even on the most stressful days of university when the work is piled high and there is no end in site, I can look around and say, ya I am living in Denmark and seeing and experiencing some pretty neat things and someone is paying me to do it. That kind of all puts it into place. I am pretty lucky to be doing this.

I am writing this as I am flying back to the US which is why it is probably a bit disjointed. As much as I am looking forward to seeing friends and family, I was defiantly not ready to leave Europe. But, I suppose that is a really good thing. Plus I will be back for more adventures soon. I am flying Iceland Air and I can now add Iceland to the list of counties that I have been to but can not claim since I was only in their airports. However, I will be correcting that in August when I will be leaving the airport and spending some time in Reykjavik. I am having some problems with my tickets, but the hope is to meet Micah in Reykjavik for a few days as I go back to Europe and he goes the other direction as he returns to the US for a time. Hopefully it will all work out.

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Jeff

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 [Previous](#) | [Next](#)  | [Return to Main Page](#)

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