

# WORK IN DENMARK



# WORK AND LIFE IN DENMARK



“It’s a great place for our family

Susana Fernandes and Tiago Silva moved to Denmark when Susana got a job in the Danish health sector. Tiago now works in the Danish food industry, and the family is thriving. [Page 6](#)



## Join a club!

The easy way to make Danish friends  
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## Danes speak their mind

How I came to appreciate the Danish workplace culture  
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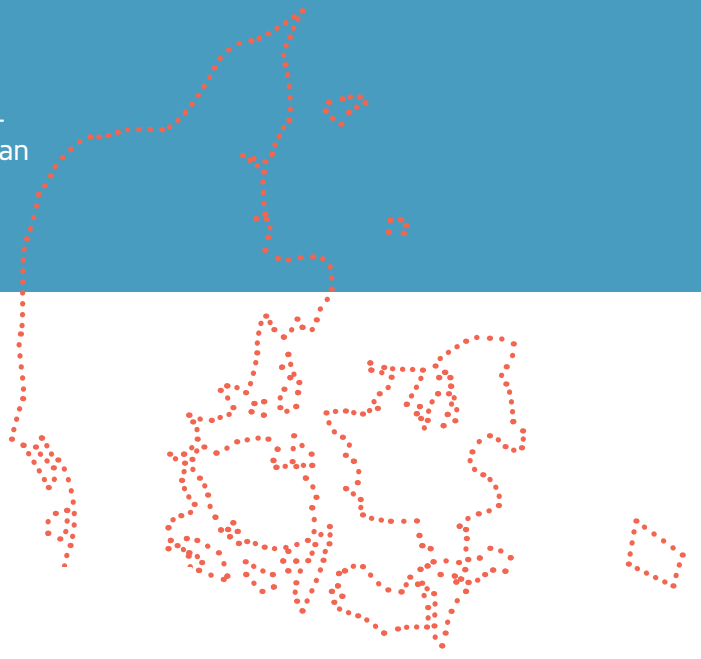
[Bringing your family](#)

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[Finances and welfare](#)



**When in Denmark,**  
with its 8,500 km of coast-  
line, you are never more than  
52 km from the seaside.



# A job in Denmark?

Thousands of well-educated foreigners come to Denmark every year to work and live. Many are attracted by the opportunity to combine professional challenges, comfortable living conditions and family-friendly working hours.

To meet the future need for well-qualified labour, Denmark needs to attract more talented people from abroad. That's why many Danish private and public organisations are keen to recruit highly skilled foreign workers and make great efforts to ensure that their international employees settle well into their new life in Denmark.

Workindenmark is the Danish Ministry of Employment's unit for international recruit-

ment. We facilitate contact between Danish companies and international employees and communicate our knowledge and experience to all interested parties.

This newspaper is for anyone who's considering relocating to Denmark to apply and develop their professional expertise. We hope that it provides the information you need to find out whether Denmark is the place for you.

You can read more about relocation, job opportunities in Denmark, and Danish culture and society at [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk)

*Although Denmark is a small country,  
direct flights connect us with many  
major international airports.*



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## Michelle Roborg-Sondergaard

- Head of Human Resources at LEGO Education
- Bachelor of Arts
- South Africa

### What is your first impression of the Danes?

It's easier to settle in here than in Switzerland, where my husband, daughter, two cats and I lived before. All the Danes we have met have been incredibly friendly and open-minded. Our neighbours have invited us over for dinner and have brought us flowers and baked us cakes.

### What has been the biggest surprise?

It rather surprised me that so many websites and documents are only in Danish because I know that's something the Danish authorities have been working on changing. Luckily, we had help relocating but my husband could have used some instructions in English when trying to install our new wireless internet at home, for example. It's important to learn the language where you live and after a few months I could already speak some Danish. Not enough to understand a Danish manual, though.

### How long do you plan to stay in Denmark?

It's hard to say but I'd love my ten-year-old daughter to grow up and attend university here. The Danish education system has high standards and when she's good enough at Danish she'll go to a Danish school. For now, she's attending an international school.

### Is the Danish weather a challenge?

I'm so impressed when I see Danes cycling about in the rain. It's up to you what you make of the weather and we're used to cold winters in Switzerland.

### What is your best advice for others considering working in Denmark?

Remember that it always takes longer to settle in somewhere new than you expect. And be open-minded and ask questions if there's something you don't understand.



# Free danish courses

Most Danes speak English, but it's a good idea to learn Danish if you plan on staying in Denmark for more than six months.

In many Danish companies, you'll get along fine without speaking Danish. However, proper integration at work, and particularly in Danish society, is far easier if you make the effort to learn to speak Danish. And if you bring your family, the advice is clear: take a Danish course.

There are courses at all levels, from beginner to advanced. The courses include day courses, evening courses and residential courses, as well as a number of distance learning courses.

Language centres are located nationwide. Here, instruction in Danish language and culture is provided to help recently arrived foreign nationals operate in Danish workplaces and society.

As a foreign worker in Denmark, you and your partner have free access to Danish courses for up to three years. Individual local authorities hold free Danish courses and can be contacted for information on the training they offer.

### A difficult language

The Danish language is reputed to be difficult – particularly when it comes to pronunciation. And although you may need only a few months of teaching to be able to understand a fair amount of Danish, most people find that it takes at least a year – and sometimes even two or three – to become really proficient in Danish.

Dusan Oravec arrived in Denmark from Slovakia. He's attended Danish classes for the last two years – two nights a week – and has chosen to supplement classes with private one-to-one tuition.

"I'm still shy when I go into a shop and have to speak Danish," says Dusan. "Danish is a difficult language to learn because the words are not pronounced as they are written. But I'll keep trying because if you want to become fully integrated into Danish society, it's important to speak the language."

**i** Learn Danish Online for free – visit [onlinedansk.ventures.dk](http://onlinedansk.ventures.dk)

Read more  
[workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk)  
[lifeindenmark.dk](http://lifeindenmark.dk)  
[dedanskesprogcentre.dk](http://dedanskesprogcentre.dk)

## Where would you like to live?

### In most parts of Denmark, you can choose between different kinds of accommodation.

House or flat? City centre or countryside? In a small country like Denmark, you're always just a car ride away from a city regardless of where you choose to live. Copenhagen is never more than seven hours drive away, no matter where you are in the country – and beautiful woodland and beaches are only a short journey away, too.

Most companies provide accommodation for their international employees on arrival. But this might be temporary or possibly not quite to your liking. So most international employees spend time finding more permanent accommodation that suits their needs. The Workindenmark centres can refer you to relocation agents or relevant estate agents.

**i** Read more  
[Workindenmark.dk](http://Workindenmark.dk) under Housing  
[Lifeindenmark.dk](http://Lifeindenmark.dk) under housing



## Dealing with the paperwork

It's a good idea to take care of formalities as soon as possible when you arrive. And don't worry, help is at hand if you need it.

There are a lot of practicalities to deal with when you move to Denmark. You need to get a work and residence permit, and you have to register with various local authorities. It's also important to get your taxes, doctor and Danish driver's licence sorted out as soon as possible.

International Citizen Service International Citizen Service (ICS) is there to help. ICS makes contacting Danish authorities as easy as possible for you and your family.

All the authorities you typically need to contact are represented at ICS. So in most cases, you'll only need to visit

an ICS office to take care of paperwork and find answers to your questions. You can complete all your registrations at our offices – and get the help you need to start your working life in Denmark.

You will find an ICS office in each of the four largest Danish cities: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense and Aalborg.

**i** Visit International Citizen Service online  
[Icitizens.dk](http://Icitizens.dk)





## The most satisfied workers in the EU



1: 94%  
Denmark



8: 88%  
Germany



9: 80%  
France



27: 63%  
Greece

Answers "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with working conditions, percent. Selected countries.

Source: European Working Conditions Survey 2010 (EWCS).

# Danes speak their mind

Employees in Denmark make great demands on their bosses and don't think twice about speaking their minds. This is a major benefit according to lawyer Francis Slingsby, who moved from the UK to Denmark to be a manager at the Danish company DONG Energy Wind Power.

"Danes speak their minds openly – to their bosses too, whereas we Brits would be less direct. I get on fine with the Danish manner, which is constructive and effective. When holding meetings at work, we get to the point a lot quicker," says Francis Slingsby.

He and his Swedish wife Martina lived and worked in London until the couple moved to the Danish capital Copenhagen in the summer of 2013. Francis now manages a team of 14 employees at the Asset Performance and Partnerships department and has colleagues both in Denmark and the UK. The department is in charge of commercial management and partner relations when DONG Energy Wind Power is constructing and operating offshore wind farms.

Most of the employees in the department are Danes, and Francis has quickly come to appreciate the culture at Danish workplaces and the new demands it makes on him as a manager:

"The hierarchy in a Danish workplace is flatter than I am used to. In my previous

management positions, the manager's word was law. Here everyone gives their opinion if they think they have something to contribute. I find that rather refreshing, and it helps the team to move forward as one."

### Danes demand professional development

Francis Slingsby finds that Danish employees take their own professional development very seriously. This means that they request and expect thorough and regular feedback from their manager.

"As a manager, I have to be aware of how each individual employee's career is developing and be ready to give feedback or I risk my employees getting frustrated and stagnating. And I'm very impressed to see how much and how quickly they are making progress."

All the dialogue and employee involvement in Danish workplaces mean there are lots of meetings. Francis has become skilled at selecting which meetings he should attend – otherwise they would fill his entire calendar.

He finds the social conventions at work very informal and social. He eats lunch with his employees and the team knows a little about what is happening in each other's lives, also outside the office. But it took him a while to get used to the Danish sense of humour.

"Danish humour cuts close to the bone and Brits can feel it is rather rude. But it's always said with a twinkle in the eye and a smile so you realise it's just for fun."

### His wife got a job and a network

He and his wife, Martina Slingsby, are very happy to be living in Copenhagen. Though the city is only a tenth the size of London, they think it has almost as much to offer. And you can cross the city in 15 minutes by bike.

They feel they have settled down in Denmark in record time and attribute this partly to the help Martina received with finding a job and networking.

As Francis explains, after moving to Copenhagen, Martina took advantage of several Workindenmark offers for spouses.

One was a workshop that gave her advice on job hunting in Denmark. Today she has a dream job as a post doc at the University of Copenhagen and a number of the spouses she met through Workindenmark are now among the couple's circle of friends.

"I'm very impressed by Workindenmark. The help they gave my wife with finding a job and networking has helped us land on our feet here in Denmark. We got married when we moved here so this is the first chapter of our life together and we are off to a flying start."

## Teamwork and consensus

To be successful in a Danish company, you need to be able to act and think independently. At the same time, you need fairly advanced collaborative and communicative skills so you can work with colleagues and superiors and take part in decision-making processes.

In many Danish companies, work is project-based and the professional culture is consensus-driven, which means it's normal for employees to discuss the projects they are working on. But Danish workplaces are also characterised by another culture which international employees soon discover: the meeting culture.

There are far more meetings in a Danish workplace than most workers from abroad are used to. But these meetings have a purpose: they are a professional forum where employees get the opportunity to share their opinions and offer their assessments of the issues discussed – and everyone is expected to take an active part.

Another trait common to Danish workplaces is the fairly invisible hierarchy. Communication between managers and employees is very relaxed and two-way. Moreover, employees have a great degree of freedom to plan their own work. A Danish boss will not control every decision you make, but instead will trust that you have the expertise to know the right thing to do. With such freedom and trust, however, comes a great amount of personal responsibility.



Lawyer Francis Slingsby appreciates Danish workplace culture where everyone gives their opinion.

Photo: Tomas Bertelsen

## Did you know that...?

The employment rate for Danish women is one of the highest in Europe



### Damion Bailey

- Senior Interaction Designer at Designit, a strategic Design Consultancy with 15 offices worldwide
- Master in interaction Design
- USA

#### What was your first impression of the Danes?

I found the Danes very down to earth regardless of their status.

#### What has been the biggest surprise?

That I've taken a liking to strong liquorice. I never thought I would.

#### How long do you plan to stay in Denmark?

My time in Denmark has no expiry date and my family are here but there's a big world to see out there.

#### Is it necessary to learn to speak Danish?

I'm glad I've learnt Danish. You are marginalised if you don't know the language. It's the same in all countries.

#### Why did you decide to come to Denmark to work?

Initially, I came to Denmark because of my education and stayed on because of my girlfriend and family.

#### In what ways is a Danish workplace different?

There is a flat hierarchy with everyone speaking their minds no matter who they are. I think that's one of the major differences. It's much more 'top-down' in the US where I come from.

#### Have you got any Danish friends?

I have some close Danish friends and many Danish acquaintances.

## Dos and don'ts at work

There are unwritten rules in any workplace – and Danish workplaces are no exception. Follow the five dos and don'ts, and you're sure to get off to a good start in your new job.

### Dos

- **Be proactive.** Don't wait for an invitation. The Danes tend to be reserved and might not automatically ask you out for a drink after work.
- **Participate.** Share your opinions at the many meetings you attend. Welcome to Consensus Culture Country where everyone expects to be heard.
- **Work independently.** Avoid asking permission for everything. Trust that you were hired because you have the right qualifications for the job. Admit to mistakes.
- **Motivate your staff.** If you're a manager provide challenges and professional development. Bonuses and titles are not so important to Danish employees.
- **Be informal.** Practice straight talking. Don't soften what you want to say in polite phrases and deference, as this only creates distance.

### Don'ts

- **Don't eat lunch alone.** This is not considered friendly. Join your colleagues where they usually go for lunch.
- **Don't question religious beliefs or political convictions.** Such issues are considered private and should only be discussed if your colleagues volunteer them.
- **Avoid working very late.** Particularly if you're a manager or have a family. Your Danish colleagues might think you are letting your children down.
- **Don't be late.** Danes are generally very punctual.
- **Never give orders.** Always explain why you have asked someone to do something. Danes want to know the reasoning behind the decisions made.

Source: Dennis Nørmark. Anthropologist and instructor on various 'Danish work culture' crash courses

## The Danish 'flexicurity model'

The Danish labour market is internationally known for its 'flexicurity model'. A mix of the terms 'flexibility' and 'security', this concept refers to a welfare state model that combines a flexible labour market with social security for all workers.

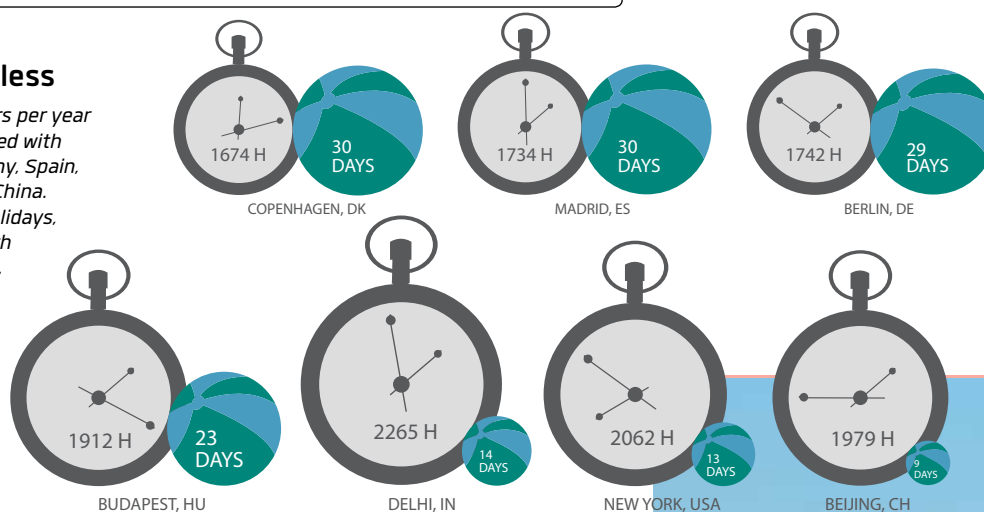
Most labour market issues are settled by employers and employees rather than by law. Employees choose a union representative who undertakes local negotiations on wages and other work conditions with the employer. In many work places, professional organisations play an active role and approximately six out of ten employees are members of a trade union.

## Unemployment insurance

Membership of unemployment insurance funds is entirely voluntary in Denmark. So it's not the workplace but rather the individual employee who enrolls and pays the membership fee. As an insured member, you receive unemployment benefit from the first day of unemployment, as long as you've been a member of the insurance fund for at least 12 months and can document 52 weeks of employment during the past three years. When receiving unemployment benefits, you are obliged to be available for work and actively apply for jobs.

## Everyone works less

In Denmark, working hours per year are relatively low compared with countries such as Germany, Spain, USA, Hungary, India and China. Danes also have many holidays, particularly compared with countries outside Europe.



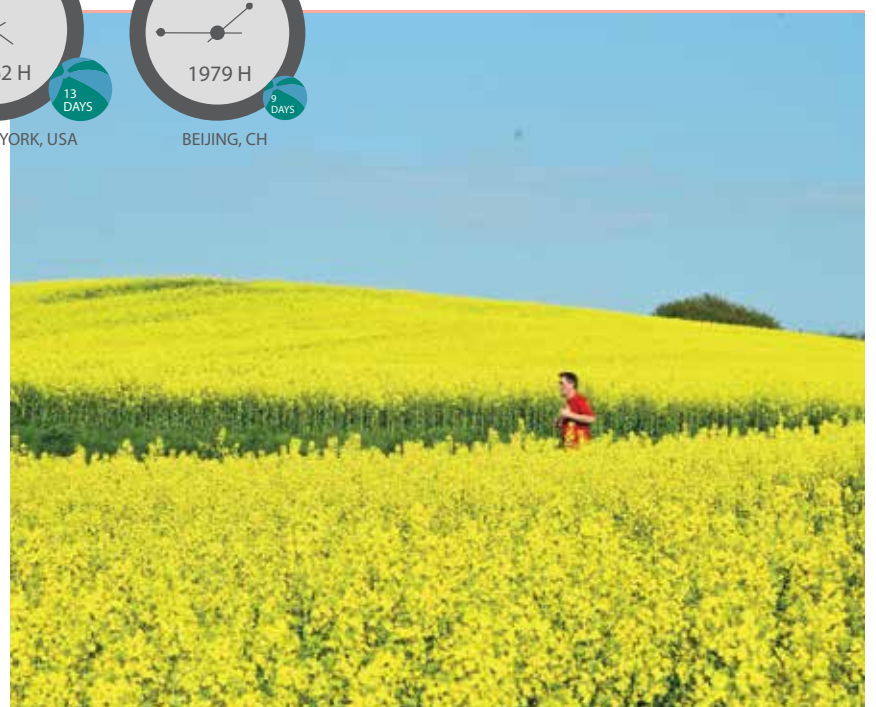
## Pension

All Danish citizens receive a state pension from the age of 65-67 depending on when they were born. As a supplement, most Danes contribute a monthly sum towards a private pension. Many employees' contracts state that in addition to a salary, the employer must pay an amount every month to a private pension scheme, which is paid out on retirement. As a rule, employees are also required to pay a fixed amount to the scheme every month.

## Taking time off

Danish workplaces are characterised by a good work-life balance. Many employees have flexible working hours and some even have a home office, allowing them to work from home certain days a week.

Danish office hours are usually between 9am and 4.30pm, and overtime is not as common as in many other countries. All employees have the right to five weeks' paid holiday a year – many even have six weeks. As a new employee, you have the right to five weeks of during your first year of employment, but you won't have earned the right to paid holiday until your second year.





### Did you know that...?

Denmark has one of the lowest crime rates in the world.

DK is the least corrupt country in the world together with New Zealand, according to Transparency International 2012.



## International schools in Denmark

- 21 independent primary schools are currently authorised to teach in other languages than Danish.
- The primary teaching language in Danish international schools is English – except at Prins Henrik's Skole (French) and Sankt Petri Skole (German).
- It costs an average of DKK 27,000 a year to attend a private school in Denmark.
- For a full list of Danish international schools, please go to [eng.uvm.dk](http://eng.uvm.dk)

## Public and private healthcare

In Denmark, public medical help and hospitalisation are free of charge, but there's a partial charge for dental care.



A visit to the local doctor is free of charge for you and your family, as is any other medical treatment in public healthcare.

Denmark has an extensive public health-care system that offers free consultations and treatment at a local doctor's, emergency wards and public hospitals.

Once you have your work and residence permit, you'll need to apply for a social security number (CPR number) and a medical card to get access to free healthcare for yourself and your family. The medical card ('sygesikringsbevis') is yellow and acts as your public health insurance certificate, so you need to produce it to receive treatment.

At your local Citizens' Service Centre ('Borgerservice') you can get assigned a doctor, whose name and address will be written on your yellow medical card. When you or a member of your family needs to see the doctor, you simply call the doctor's surgery and make an appointment.

Dental treatment isn't free in Denmark, but it is subsidised. So you pay a partial charge following each treatment. Denmark also has a number of private hospitals and health clinics where you or your employer pays for treatment. Many workplaces provide employees with additional health insurance that offers faster access to some forms of treatment.

The public health system has waiting lists for certain kinds of treatment, in which case you may choose a private hospital or clinic to avoid waiting for treatment. Whether you choose public or private treatment, the quality of medical treatment in Denmark is generally very high.

# Public childcare and schooling

**All families in Denmark are offered public childcare and can choose between free state schools or private schools.**

All children in Denmark are guaranteed a place in a childcare institution, and almost all Danish families use child daycare as it's normal for both parents to work once the child has turned one year old.

Childcare options consist of:

- day nurseries and local childcare (in private homes) for children 0-3 years old
- preschool ('børnehave') for children 3-6 years old
- after-school centres for children 6-10 years old.

Most childcare facilities are open Monday-Thursday 6:30 am to 5 pm, and Fridays until 4 pm.

Childcare is financed partly by the parents and partly by the municipality. Prices differ somewhat depending on the municipality and the type of childcare. The average price for children of 0-3 years old is approx. DKK 3,200 per month including meals. Some preschool facilities cost less.

### Preschool facilities for all children

Most childcare services are municipal, but in a few of the many privately owned facilities, the spoken language is English. To register, please contact the respective municipality – as soon as possible. A waiting list is not unusual, but most guarantee a place for children from the age of one.

Almost all Danish families send their children to a 'børnehave'. They have professionally trained staff, but children don't receive preschool teaching. Instead, these facilities stimulate children's social,

linguistic and democratic skills, primarily through play, mixing boys and girls, and welcoming children from all religious and social backgrounds.

### Primary education

When children turn six, they start school in Denmark – and ten years of primary and lower secondary schooling is obligatory. Most Danish children attend state schools, which are free of charge, while others go to private schools where the parents pay tuition fees.

Following primary education, children have free access to a number of secondary education programmes that prepare them for higher education. Danish universities and other higher education institutions are also public and free of charge.

### International schools

Many of the families who come to Denmark for professional reasons prefer to send their children to an international school, most of which are situated in or around the large cities. Some of the international schools have waiting lists, but the Danish government is prioritising the creation of more places at Danish international schools.



When children turn six, they start school in Denmark. Many schools have high-quality sports and leisure facilities.



The most popular names for baby girls are Sofia, Ida and Freja.



The top names for baby boys are William, Lucas and Victor.



### Werner Streicher

- Associate Professor, Center for Protein Research, University of Copenhagen
- South Africa

#### Do you plan to learn Danish?

I'll attend a Danish course so that I can understand enough of what people are saying to me to get by.

#### How do you like the Danish weather?

I worked for five years in the United States – close to the Canadian border – so I'm used to cold weather.

#### Do you consider the high taxation in Denmark a problem?

As a researcher from abroad, I pay a lower tax and find living in Denmark no more expensive than the States. The Danish tax might be higher, but it's counterbalanced by the number of free social services you get here that used to cost me a lot back in the States.

#### What's your first impression of the Danes?

In the United States, people are very friendly but perhaps not as warm-hearted when you really get to know them. Here, it's the other way round. The Danes can seem rather reserved at first, but when you get to know them they are very warm and friendly.

#### What has surprised you most about Denmark?

That so many Danes speak English. I'd read that nearly everyone in Denmark speaks very good English, but it was still a pleasant surprise when I arrived.

# Spouse found his dream job

Get help with your job application. That's the advice Tiago Silva gives other expatriates, who, like himself, come to Denmark because their partner got a job.

*Tiago Silva and his wife both have shorter working days after moving to Denmark. That leaves them more time to spend with their son.*

It was a leap of faith for Tiago Silva when he decided to leave his nice job in Portugal and work in Denmark. His wife, Susana Fernandes, had been offered a position as a psychiatrist at a Danish hospital and the family chose to take the plunge. A few months after arriving in Denmark, Tiago Silva found his dream job at Arla Foods, the global dairy company.

"We took a big chance and it paid off. I only had to apply for jobs and attend a Danish course for two months before landing my current job. I have highly skilled, friendly colleagues and work on exciting projects so I feel very lucky," he says.

Tiago Silva has a master's degree in food science and worked for a number of international food companies in Portugal. Working at a Danish company is much different and better in his view.

"Everything here is well organised and structured so I can work more efficiently while feeling less stress. Having a family life is a natural part of the company culture here," he explains.

#### Help applying for jobs

Finding a job in Denmark required a different approach than Tiago Silva was used

to. He therefore asked Workindenmark for help with compiling his CV in a Danish style and also gratefully accepted advice on how to find work. In fact one specific piece of advice from Workindenmark helped land him his current job.

"I was considering another job at Arla Foods, and a consultant at Workindenmark recommended that I call and find out more about the position before applying. I wasn't used to that but called anyway and found out that they had another vacant position that suited my qualifications even better and they encouraged me to apply. That's the job I have today, so Workindenmark's help was very useful.

He therefore advises other accompanying spouses to get help from Workindenmark when applying for jobs.

#### More family time

Tiago Silva now has a shorter working day after moving to Denmark and so does his wife, Susana Fernandes, who worked many more hours a day as well as evenings and weekends when she was a psychiatrist in Portugal. In Denmark, the couple enjoy much more time with their three-year-old son, Henriques, and this has high priority as

an important reason why they chose Denmark rather than the other countries where Susana could have found a job.

"There were also vacant positions in other countries but Denmark was the best choice for us as a family, she explains."

## Job-seeking partners



In the majority of Danish families, both adults work, and if you are EU/EØS citizens, your spouse/partner does not need a permit to work here. As a non EU or EØS-citizen he/she is allowed to work full-time for the period his/her residence permit is valid.

Workindenmark can help your accompanying partner to search for a job by offering your accompanying partner a six-month programme consisting of: focused job-seeking seminars and seminars on how to write applications and CVs that appeal to Danish employers (and more – see the website). You can

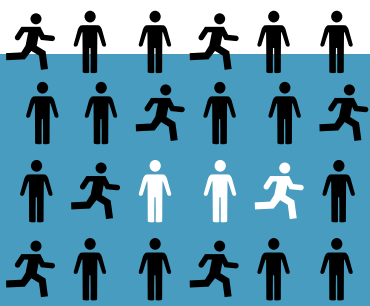
also upload your CV to Workindenmark's CV bank and use the jobbank.

Danish companies with many international employees also offer counselling for accompanying partners and may have their own job banks or networks that you and your partner can use. In connection with your job search, you may be required to have your qualifications officially evaluated. Read more on page 11.



Further information:  
[workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk)  
[newtodenmark.dk](http://newtodenmark.dk).





### Did you know that....?

The most popular sports among adult Danes are jogging, weight training and hiking. One in three adult Danes go jogging.

The most popular children's sports in Denmark are football, swimming and gymnastics and they are played at voluntary sports clubs.



Photo: Tomas Bertelsen

# Clubs are where the action is

*Inger Stokkink has found a shortcut to getting to know the Danes: The social life in numerous clubs.*

## Networking after hours

"When your family has settled in Denmark, it's important to work on your network," says Tiny Maerschalk, project manager at the International Community in Aarhus. She offers the following advice on how to build your network:

- **Join clubs, societies and networks in your local area** and participate in different kinds of events. The Danes are a little reserved and most of them go straight home after work to spend time with their families and engage in their recreational activities. That's why it's a great idea to join clubs if you want to meet Danes in a natural way.
- **Meet other people who are in the same situation as you.** A number of international clubs arrange social events where international families can meet and learn more about Denmark and Danish culture.
- **Create your own profile on relevant websites.** This will help you get in touch with other international families or Danes interested in meeting families from abroad. It may also put you in contact with new professional partners or other expats who share the same interests as you.
- **Learn Danish.** Even though you might find it difficult to begin with, it really pays off.
- **Involve your partner in your social activities.** Since many partners don't have a job, they often feel isolated. There are lots of communities that help partners get into networks or charity projects – and some also help people look for jobs or find relevant project work.

Dutch-born Inger Stokkink joined her local sailing club, swims throughout the winter with other enthusiasts, meets other IT nerds at a computer club and has sung with a choir. And has a lot of Danish friends to show for it.

"The workplace is not where you socialise in Denmark, so you need to find other places for that. And I found them by joining a choir and lots of other different clubs. That's where the action is," says 51-year-old Inger Stokkink, a freelance journalist who has lived in Denmark since 2010.

When her husband was given a permanent position as a professor of political science at the university in Denmark's second-largest city, Aarhus, the couple sold their house in Holland and bought a house in a small village outside Aarhus. One of the first things Inger did in the new country was to join a Danish concert choir.

"I sang in a choir as a young girl and realised from relocating in the past that it's a great way of meeting new people and becoming integrated in the local community. Singing in Danish also taught me the music and pronunciation of the Danish language," she explains in fluent Danish.

### Making friends at the sailing club

In Denmark she's also realised a childhood dream by learning to sail. As she lives close to the sea, she joined the local sailing club. Then after taking sailing lessons she bought her own boat, and now has a large network of other sailors at the club.

"I've learnt to sail with no one but Danes I didn't know. But when we're aboard a boat on the open sea, we have to talk to each other. It wasn't easy to start with but today I know a lot of people at the sailing club. Sharing a hobby makes you feel you belong."

### Chatting in the sauna and hacker space

She is also a member of a club for 'winter bathers'. During the six months of winter, the sea around Denmark is close to freezing point and many Danes enjoy the chilly thrill of jumping into the cold water and then relaxing together in a lovely hot sauna.

"My winter bathing club has a declared expectation that members must be open to getting to know other people. Danes can seem rather reserved and rarely make the first move to engage in conversation. But they thaw out when they're sitting in a hot sauna."

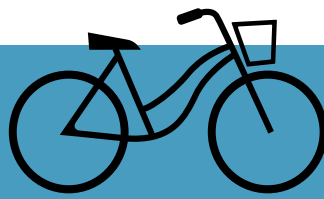
The club usually holds parties too. For example, the sailing season is celebrated by hoisting the sailing club flag and every year clubs hold Christmas parties. Inger Stokkink has found this a great way of learning Danish traditions and customs. However, it's also demanding and she's looking forward to the next meeting held by her computer club "Open Space Aarhus".

"As a foreign national, being outgoing and adapting to a different culture sometimes wears me out. Then it's nice to go to the computer club in a nerdy environment where people understand that it's OK to be different and not always do things the Danish way," she says."



Gymnastics, football and badminton are the most popular sports associations among adult Danes.

43%



of the Danes enjoy walks or cycle in parks and forests. 52 percent of all Copenhageners cycle to work, school or university every day.



**Alexandra Hayles**

- Masters in Economics
- Sustainability Innovator in CASA, a non-profit consultancy and research centre in Copenhagen
- United Kingdom

**How long do you plan on staying in Denmark?**

For some time, I expect – but obviously you can't predict the future. Since I have two school children who feel partly Danish and I like the freedom that life in Denmark provides, I'm likely to stay for a long time. I also love the Danish countryside and the fact that the sea is never too far away.

**Do you find living in Denmark expensive?**

I don't like the high Danish income tax. Personally, however, I feel it has its advantages too. In general terms, the Danish tax system prevents great differences arising between rich and poor, and it makes Denmark a safe place to live, with a relatively low level of crime.

**Do your children go to a Danish or an international school?**

I recently moved to Copenhagen and my children go to private Danish schools. I was considering an international school when we moved from the island of Funen but have changed my mind. I feel that the Danish school system can provide a more holistic approach.

**Why?**

In the United Kingdom, children get stressed from a results-only approach. In Denmark, by contrast, schools focus more on the whole person, helping children become confident and responsible citizens. I like that.

**Have you made any Danish friends?**

I've been very open in order to get to know the Danes and that has given me a fantastic network of helpful and kind people.

Your five first words in Danish

**'Hygge'**

Cosiness, relaxing, having a good time. Danes love to 'hygge' and use this word a lot.



**'Rødgrød med fløde'**

Red berry pudding with cream. For non-Danes, the name of this traditional dessert is almost impossible to pronounce ... but the Danes love putting foreigners to the test.



**'Rugbrød'**

At lunch, many Danes eat rye bread with cold cuts of meat etc. – unless they have a hot meal served in the company canteen. Danes have been eating rye bread for millenniums and many, especially older Danes, can't live without it. Some pack it in their suitcases when travelling abroad.



**'Du'**

The informal 'you'. In Denmark, more or less everyone uses this informal mode of address – even when talking to people they don't know. Hardly anyone use the more formal 'De', even when addressing their boss.



**'Christmas lunches' ('Julefrokost')**

At most workplaces, Christmas lunches (and summer parties) are a regular tradition for all the employees, where everyone eats and is entertained together. Many families visit each other and eat traditional Danish meals between Christmas and the New Year.



The happiest nation

The Danes live comfortable and safe lives – and time after time, Denmark is nominated the world's happiest nation.

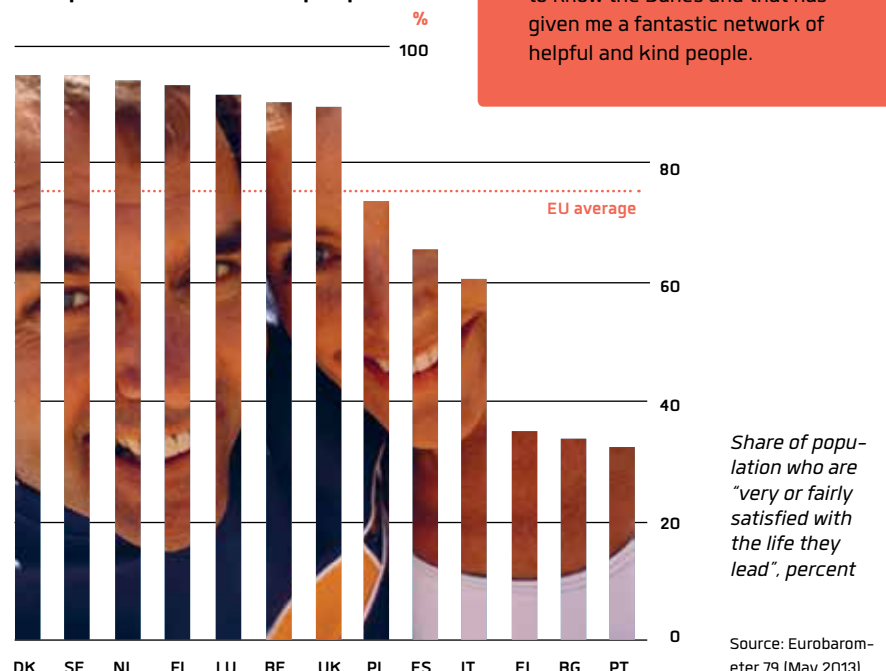
In several surveys, the Danes rank as the people with the highest life satisfaction in the world. But why should the Danes be happier than other nations? Christian Bjørnskov, a Danish researcher who's looked into the criteria for life satisfaction, ventures one explanation: the Danes place great trust in their fellow citizens.

"Generally, the Danes don't need to fear corruption or violence on trains," he says. "If you lose your wallet in Copenhagen, you're very likely to get it back – although sometimes the money might be missing. We live in a safe society, we trust our fellow citizens, and we don't have the kind of worries that other nationalities have to deal with on a daily basis."

**The Danes have the highest life satisfaction score**

The Eurobarometer survey 2013 measures individual wellbeing by asking respondents: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the life you lead?" 96 percent of the Danish respondents declared themselves "satisfied" with the life, they live, which is an impressive score. By comparison, the degree of life satisfaction across the European Union averaged at 75 percent according to this survey. In countries such as Greece, Portugal and Bulgaria only about a third of the population declared themselves satisfied with the life they lead.

**Europe's most satisfied people**



Working parents



It's quite natural for Danish men to participate in household activities and spend time with their children.

During the day, most Danish residential areas are rather deserted. In three out of four Danish families, both parents work and their children are in day care.

Denmark is the country in the world with the highest proportion of women on the labour market: it also rates very high when it comes to gender equality.

There are more female than male students enrolled in higher education, and the Danish labour market is governed by equal pay legislation. Generally, women still receive smaller monthly salaries than their male counterparts, but that's because the jobs that typically attract women have a lower salary level than professions that are traditionally male dominated.

Danish women still do most of the housework – 60 percent according to a recent study – but in many families, the couple share domestic duties. And it's quite natural for Danish men to cook, do the shopping and spend time with their children.



## About Workindenmark

Workindenmark is the Danish Ministry of Employment's unit for international recruitment. We facilitate contact between Danish companies and international employees, and communicate our knowledge and experience to all interested parties.

## Tips for job seekers in Denmark



- Check whether you have the relevant qualifications for the job and whether you qualify for a Danish work and residence permit.
- Use your network.
- Get help and advice from job-seeking experts.
- Post your CV at [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk).
- Target your application to suit Danish employers, and make sure the application is short and precise.

# Let's help you find a job in Denmark

Finding a job in Denmark isn't simple, but there are ways to make the hunt easier.



If you want a job in Denmark, it makes sense to gain in-depth insight into how the job market works and get specific help and advice from e.g. the government institution Workindenmark. See box.

Workindenmark helps both Danish companies wishing to recruit highly qualified foreign workers and highly qualified job applicants from abroad applying for jobs in Denmark. Highly specialised engineers, researchers, IT staff, some kinds of health-care personnel and economic and financial specialists are in particular demand.

Workindenmark will also help you contact the Danish authorities on reaching Denmark to make starting your job as easy as possible.

Workindenmark also has three centres, located in Copenhagen, Odense and Aarhus, where you can call in and get help with any issue relating to job hunting. The [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk) website is the official Danish

website for international recruitment and job seeking. This website includes an extensive job and CV database where you can post your CV or search for vacant positions in your professional field. Danish employers also post job adverts on the site when looking for new employees.

### How do I apply?

With more than 1,000 vacant positions, [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk) is a good place to gain an overview of jobs for English speakers in Denmark. Many other positions are posted in other job databases and on company websites. Workindenmark has published a folder 'Tips for your job search' that clearly lists these Danish job sites.

### A good CV counts

You must have a good CV that targets Danish employers. In many other parts of the world, employers want a CV to briefly list qualifications and work experience. In Denmark, however, they must also reflect your personality, and Danish job applicants spend a lot of time perfecting their CVs.

If you're searching for a job while based outside Denmark, it's a very good idea to get advice on writing a CV – from [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk) and other sources. You can post your CV in Workindenmark's CV bank free of charge so that companies can see which jobs interest you. Workindenmark will also present your CV to relevant companies.

### Personal advice on finding a job

When you find a job you want, Workindenmark can help you engage in dialogue with your potential employer, which covers how to apply for the job and present yourself at a job interview. See box.

### Help getting started

Workindenmark offers a range of help for employees who have recently arrived from abroad and their accompanying families, including:

- The folder "Welcome - we appreciate your interest in Denmark".
- Personal advice on finding a job for your spouse and on language training etc.
- A single point of access to Danish officialdom – via the scheme International Citizen Service (ICS). This means that all paperwork and guidance related to settling in Denmark can be dealt with in one place.
- Information on labour market rules for foreign workers and companies in Denmark, including efforts to combat social dumping.



Find Workindenmark at [workindenmark.dk](http://workindenmark.dk) – or call +45 72 22 33 90.

Visit [icitizen.dk](http://icitizen.dk)

## High wages, free welfare ... and high taxes

Income tax is high in Denmark. But this is counterbalanced by higher wages and many free welfare services that are very expensive in other countries.

Denmark is a classic welfare state. Helping fellow citizens when they get ill, become old or lose their jobs is considered a joint responsibility. The same goes for high quality childcare and free schooling for everyone.

This explains why Danes are one of the highest taxed populations. When it comes to income tax, most citizens pay almost half of their salary in tax. In addition, most goods include 25 percent VAT ('Moms' in Danish). Cars, petrol, alcohol and other goods are also taxed in order to limit consumption.

Like the taxes, Danish salary levels are among the highest in the world, and many welfare services that strain household budgets in other countries are either free or state-subsidised in Denmark. Medical help, hospital treatment, schooling and elderly care are all free – and day care for children is far cheaper than in other countries. This means that the purchasing power in the Danish capital of Copenhagen is the same as in other European cities.



### Researchers and key employees can get tax reductions

In terms of taxation, researchers and key employees in Danish companies can get favourable terms if they are recruited abroad. In that case the total income tax is approx. 32 percent for five years – considerably lower than normal tax levels. And expenses for double housekeeping can be deducted.



Read more about the Danish tax system at [skat.dk](http://skat.dk) (go to the English section).

## How to get a work and residence permit in Denmark

All EU citizens and citizens from the Nordic countries are free to reside, study and work in Denmark. Citizens from non-Nordic and non-EU countries who want to work in Denmark must hold a residence and work permit in order to reside and work in Denmark.

A number of schemes have been designed to make it easier for highly qualified professionals to get work and residence permits in Denmark.

Read more about the schemes at [newtodenmark.dk](http://newtodenmark.dk).

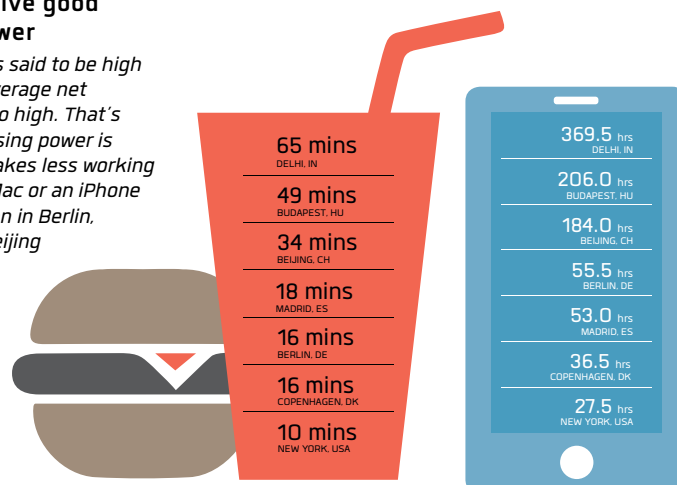
If you qualify for any of the schemes, you can bring your partner and children under the age of 18 if you can document that you are able to support your family while staying in Denmark.



Read more about work and residence permits at [newtodenmark.dk](http://newtodenmark.dk)

### High salaries give good purchasing power

*The cost of living is said to be high in Denmark. But average net wages here are also high. That's why actual purchasing power is relatively high. It takes less working time to buy a Big Mac or an iPhone in Copenhagen than in Berlin, Budapest, Delhi, Beijing and Madrid.*





## Attractive personal qualities

Here are some of the important personal qualities Danish employers typically look for in an applicant:

- initiative
- ability to work independently
- team player
- personal and professional enthusiasm
- good communication skills

# A good financial setting for the family

Noemi and Attila Simon, a couple from Hungary, both found their dream jobs in Denmark and are ready to buy their own home and start a family. The Danish welfare model appeals to them.

Noemi and Attila like their flat close to the fjord in the province of Holbæk but are ready to invest in a home of their own with room for children. They both have permanent jobs in Denmark and see it as a good place to settle down.

"We'll buy a home when we find the right one because we like it here and want to stay. When we have children, it will be a good place for them to grow up," says Noemi Simon.

The Danes have a good work-life balance and a very positive approach to life, according to Noemi.

"When I'm back in Hungary, people think I'm more stressed. The Danish mentality is more in line with "things will work out". I really like that.

### A lot in return for taxes

She and her husband have heard only good things about Danish preschool centres and schools. The high income tax and house prices in Denmark don't put the couple off.

"Both my husband and I have well-paid jobs and don't mind paying relatively high taxes when we get so much in return. The Danish welfare system works well and guarantees high-quality childcare, education and health care.

34-year-old Noemi works as a chemist for Novo Nordisk, a major pharmaceuticals company. Her 39-year-old husband is an engineer for NOV Flexibles. They applied for jobs in Denmark because Noemi had spent some time as a research chemist at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) – first as an exchange PhD student and later as part of a post doctoral fellowship.

### Help with finding a job

Finding a permanent job in Denmark has been a lengthy process for both Noemi and her husband. They have both accepted the free Danish lessons provided by the government, have had a Danish mentor through the language school and have attended several courses for job seekers. For example, Noemi has participated in Workindendmark's courses for spouses, which she says provided valuable knowledge on the culture in Danish workplaces.



Photo: Tomas Bertelsen

*A free efficient welfare system is well worth the relatively high Danish taxes, according to the Simons.*

"I have good qualifications but was helped to present them in a way that would appeal to Danish employers. I was also equipped to attend Danish job interviews, where you have to answer more personal questions than I was used to."



Read more about Workindendmark's spouse programme at [workindendmark.dk](http://workindendmark.dk)

## Large reputable Danish companies

Danish companies are known for being very well-run. Here are some top scorers from an image survey published in the Danish Berlingske Business Magasin. The survey included more than 4,000 top Danish executives' ratings of the companies' management, credibility, quality, employees, communication, competitiveness, financial strength, innovation and responsibility.



## Assessing foreign qualifications

When looking for a job in Denmark, it might be helpful to have an assessment from the Danish Agency for Higher Education. This brief statement describes what your foreign qualifications correspond to in Denmark: Which educational level and, if possible, which field of education. An assessment can make qualifications easier to understand for Danish employers. It's no guarantee of employment, however.

If your profession is regulated by law, you don't need to ask for a qualification assessment. Instead, you must apply for an authorisation to work within your profession. This rule applies if you work with various hazardous materials or heavy machinery, for instance, and if you are employed in certain healthcare professions.

If you are a citizen of an EU/EEA country and work in Denmark for short periods of time only, it might be sufficient to send a report to the public authority that regulates the sector you work in.



At [fivu.dk](http://fivu.dk) – the Danish Agency for Higher Education website – you'll find information about recognition and transparency of qualifications.



# Test

## your knowledge of Denmark

1. In 2011, Denmark elected its first Prime Minister who is:  
a) Under 30 years of age  
b) A woman  
c) Homosexual
2. In 2012, the Danish national men's team became European champions in the sport of  
a) Handball  
b) Football  
c) Basketball
3. Which Danish film director helped invent the 'dogma' concept, which won international acclaim in the 1990s.  
a) Lars von Trier  
b) Bille August  
c) Susanne Bier
4. Besides the Jutland peninsula, Denmark consists of a number of inhabited islands. How many?  
a) 12  
b) 48  
c) 72
5. The hottest temperature ever recorded in Denmark was:  
a) 29.7 C  
b) 36.4 C  
c) 41.2 C

Answers: 1b, 2a, 3a, 3a, 4c and 5b.



Waving to HM the Queen in front of the royal castle in Copenhagen is a popular event for many families – pictured here celebrating her 40-year reign in 2012.

## The Danes' love culture

The Danes are the EU nation that spends the most time and money on culture.

Danes visit the cinema more often than any other nation in the EU, and in recent years, Danish TV and film production has stepped into the international limelight in grand style. Some 5.5 percent of the Danes' total spending is devoted to books, films, and other forms of culture compared with the EU average of around 4 percent. In line with Sweden, Finland and Latvia, Denmark has Europe's largest share of artists.

## A democracy and a modern monarchy

Denmark is a parliamentary democracy. The Danish parliament is called 'Folketinget', and the Danes elect their parliamentary representatives at least every four years.

But Denmark is also a monarchy, currently with a Queen as its ceremonial head of state. The Danish royal family has no political influence, but is of great symbolic value to the Danes. The members of the royal family are actively involved in Danish society through their many representative duties. And as most Danes are proud of their royals, they follow events in this family closely in the columns of tabloids and weekly magazines.

The Danish monarchy goes back more than a thousand years, and has become very international in recent years. Queen Margaret and her two sons, Crown Prince Frederik and Prince Joachim have all married non-Danes.



## Design and architecture

Appreciated all over the world, Danish design is characterised by simplicity and functionality. Furniture classics by designers such as Arne Jacobsen, Børge Mogensen and Hans Wegner are collector's items that command high prices at Danish and international auctions.

Many famous buildings all over the world have been designed by Danish architects. Jørn Utzon drew the Sydney Opera House and the houses of parliament in Kuwait. Johan von Spreckelsen is responsible for the Grande Arche de la Fraternité in Paris.

On the home front, Danes enjoy entertaining within the comfort of their own four walls, the primary venue for socialising. Most even prefer inviting friends over for dinner rather than going to a restaurant.

Compared to the way many other nations decorate their homes, Danish interiors are generally very sparse – with only a few, quite simple, pieces of furniture. Even though less is more, the Danes spend a great deal of time and money on decorating their homes. The Danish climate might explain this. The winter season in Denmark is cold and dark: the temperature drops below 0°C / 32°F and stays there for months. With so much time spent indoors, it stands to reason that the Danes display a warm affection for interior decorating.

Then when the summer finally arrives, and it's warm and light until almost midnight, the Danes can't wait to get on their bikes and enjoy the fresh air.



Photo: Pelfoto

"The Killing" is just one internationally acclaimed TV series produced by Denmark in recent years.

## Michelin stars and pastry

Danish gastronomy is celebrating great triumphs, but Danes also enjoy a regular hotdog.

Danish and Nordic cuisine has risen to great heights during the past years. A number of Danish restaurants have been awarded Michelin stars by the prestigious gourmet restaurant guide. One of them is the Copenhagen-based restaurant Noma, which for some years has been named one of the best restaurants in the world for "mould-breaking Nordic food that takes nature's bounty to new levels". Gourmet enthusiasts, "foodies", fly in from all over the world just to enjoy a meal at Noma.

When it comes to everyday food, however, Danish cuisine is quite down-to-earth. The Danes eat a lot of meat, typically accompanied by potatoes. Pasta and rice dishes are also quite popular.

But you will also be introduced to specialities such as Danish pastries, marinated herring and open sandwiches piled high with delicious cold meats.



"The Iceberg" – newly built apartments on the waterfront in Aarhus.

## The Danish weather

