

Exploring the Scandinavian Culture in Denmark

During my penultimate year of study, I participated in the overseas exchange program organized by the College of Business and studied at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in Denmark. I would like to share some of my learning experiences in Denmark and encourage you to join this wonderful exchange program.



Figure 1 Departing Hong Kong to Denmark



Figure 2 At CBS campus

The culture of being green

Similar to Hong Kong, Copenhagen was originally a fishing village known as harbor (*Danish: Havn*). It has fascinating harbor views along the coast of the city, which attracts tourists to visit Nyhavn, one of the most famous harbor spots in Copenhagen. The harbor in Copenhagen was once highly polluted due to heavy discharge from residential sewage and industrial waste. Copenhagen Municipality invested heavily in expanding its wastewater treatment plants to remove nutrient salts and minimize the discharge of heavy metals. Nowadays, the water is clean and suitable for swimming. I swam there every weekend.

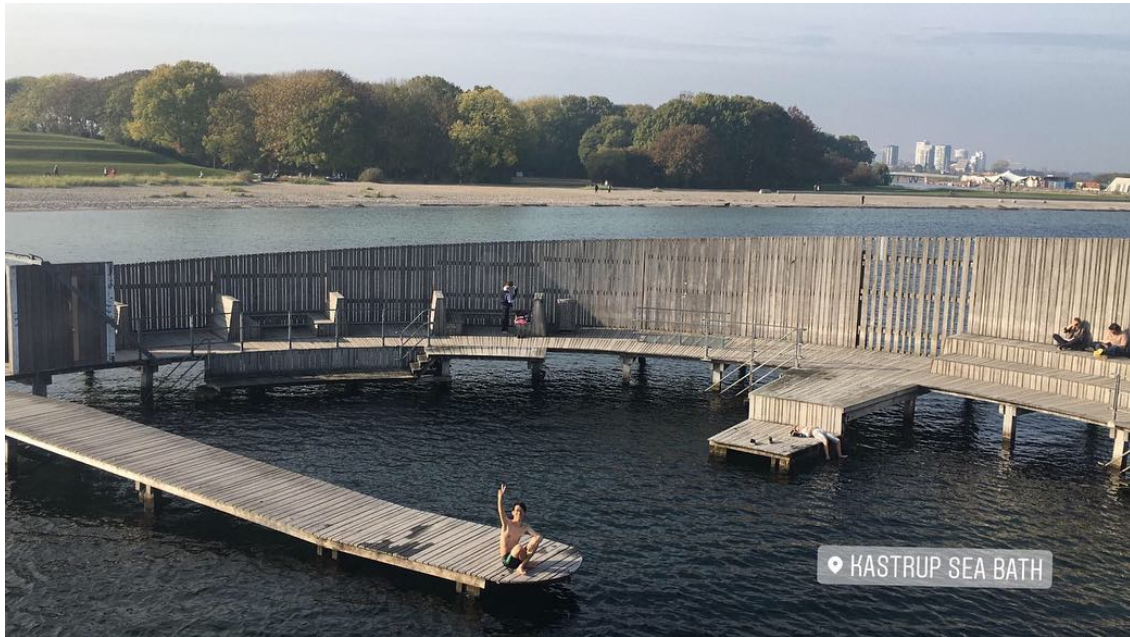


Figure 3 Swimming in Copenhagen harbour

Copenhagen is famous for its tremendous efforts in protecting the environment. It is one of the greenest cities in the world, and plans to be carbon neutral by 2025. In particular, the Danes cycle instead of driving cars for commuting to reduce carbon emissions. On average, Danes cycle 1.6 km per day! I bought a second-hand bike to travel around the city. Cycling every day not only made me healthier, it also helped me save money, as well as care for the environment. I discovered that it is common for Danes to recycle rubbish regularly. I followed their practice of recycling as well. I took some of my recyclable trash to recycling stations located in supermarkets and got paid \$1 DKK (*Danish Kroner*) per bottle and can. The culture of being green is deeply rooted in the Danes' minds, which made me reflect on whether Hong Kong should adopt the same practices for the sake of our planet's well-being.



Figure 4 On my bike

Culture shock

Although I love the way that the Danes treat our planet, there were several difficulties in daily life at the beginning of my overseas exchange study. At first, I was desperate to open a bank account; I never imagined it could take 1 month to get my bank account opened! In contrast, it takes only two working days at most to open a bank account in Hong Kong! Because I did not expect it to take so much time, my cash ran out before I got my account opened. Luckily, there was a backup plan, but I paid a considerable amount in charges for the overseas ATM withdrawal service. I learned that I should double-check the requirements of the banks next time.

There were some minor incidents, too. Unlike in Hong Kong, supermarkets in Denmark close at 6 pm and are not open on Sundays or public holidays. Public organizations, such as the Copenhagen Municipality, close at 4 pm every day which makes it difficult to arrange your schedule. I had to plan things well ahead of time, as I normally left school late. In the end, I understood that this was just a different way of living. I started to feel comfortable and appreciate the relatively slow-paced lifestyle in Denmark, as life often passes by before we can really enjoy it.

Developing new hobbies and student activities

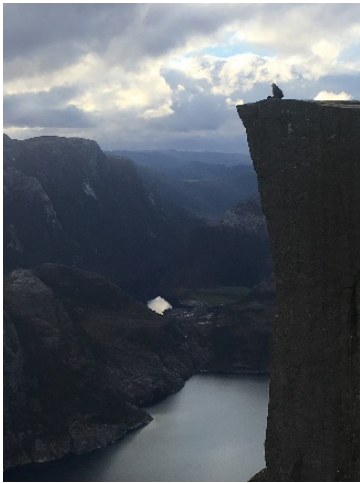
In CBS, I joined various student activities, which drove me to embrace and learn new things. I joined the CBS running club. We did a 10-km run every Monday and Thursday along the harbor. I had no prior experience in running and it really killed me to run as it was freezing outside starting from October! In the end, I was grateful that I had developed a new hobby and made lots of new friends. Other than joining CBS Running, I joined the CBS Management Consulting Club to deconstruct different complex business cases with likeminded peers. I gained unique insight into the management consulting industry at the partner events. My public presentation and analytical skills improved, which definitely helped me to get an internship offer from Deloitte Consulting in Hong Kong.



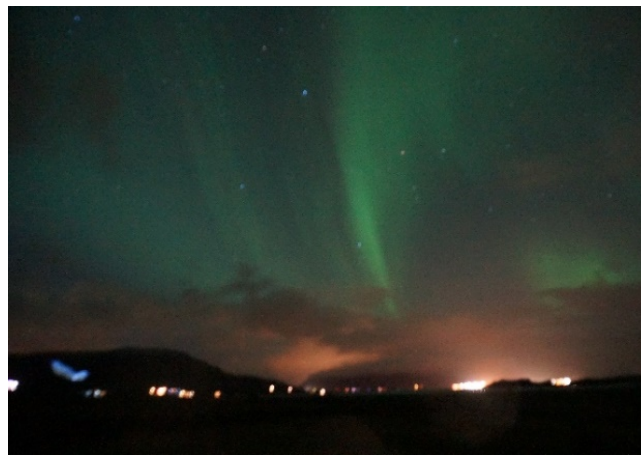
Figure 5 Friends in CBS Running

Scandinavian travel experiences

At the end of the semester, I took my first-ever solo trip to Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden), Oslo and Bergen (Norway). This was my very first time planning an itinerary, and booking flight tickets and accommodation on my own. After my solo trip, I went to Iceland and met up with my girlfriend, who I hadn't seen for almost half a year. Our memories of Iceland, particularly the night when we saw the aurora borealis in Reykjanesfólkvangur, will definitely last forever. There were plenty of magnificent spectacles that I won't forget. If you are planning to travel to Nordic countries, I strongly recommend that you visit the Preikestolen in Norway, Glacier Lagoon (Jökulsárlón) in Iceland, and Tivoli, the second-oldest operating theme park in the world, in Copenhagen. I would rather let you experience these places yourself than describe any more.



Preikestolen in Norway



Aurora in Iceland



Tivoli in Denmark

Concluding remarks

The overseas exchange in Denmark truly broadened my horizons. By experiencing the Danes' way of living, I learned to be independent and embrace new challenges. I would like to express my gratitude to the College of Business for offering such a wonderful exchange opportunity in Denmark.