Preparation for exchange

You want to get your immigration documents ASAP, so that you can plan when to fly in and out of Vancouver. Term starts in late January, so if you leave Vancouver around mid-January, it will be much cheaper than flying before Christmas. Be sure to check the processing times.

The temperature in Copenhagen is similar to Vancouver, but more windy. Scarves and beanies are essential, especially while biking. I found that gloves were very helpful as well! Start joining buy and sell groups based in Copenhagen: they usually have bikes up for sale all the time, and it is possible to get a good steal.

Denmark is notorious for being an expensive country. That said, unless you’ve got a bottomless wallet, be prepared to cut down on eating out and shopping for material goods, and look out for offers. For groceries, Netto is my personal favourite: they have good offers every week, and the one close to me is open 24 hours a day. While cards are accepted almost everywhere, they often come with a small fee for using them.

This should surprise no one, but Denmark is a very bicycle-friendly city. Get a bike when you’re here, bike to school, take city trips (only 20 - 30 minutes away from CBS), explore the local neighbourhoods, even the ‘dodgy’, not-so-touristy areas surrounding the city. Copenhagen is a safe city, so don’t be afraid to explore by yourself!

And – be prepared for all the great food you’ll find!

During Exchange

Before arriving in Copenhagen, I’d made arrangements with my Buddy to pick me up from the airport. He brought me to my dorm safely, while explaining some tips and tricks to get by. Orientation runs for two weeks, and I’d arrived in the middle of it, so I jumped right in for the second
week: it’s mostly fun social activities, alongside presentations designed to help you settle into CBS as soon as possible.

I stayed in Porcelaenshaven, in a medium-sized room, and I would recommend it. At PH, you share a bathroom with one person max, and have a stove and mini-fridge in your room, with access to a study area/library in the building itself. It’s the only accommodation that is officially affiliated with CBS, and is less than 15 minutes walk to your classes!

Classes can overlap occasionally, your schedule changes every week, and lecturer rooms and the lecturers themselves can be different depending on week. It’s a very online-friendly environment, situated within several beautiful buildings, each with their own distinct features and feelings to them. Grading is 100% based on the final.

Cafe Nexus is the campus pub, which frequently hosts events such as Trivia Nights and Karaoke Nights. Every Thursday, deejays are invited in, and the campus becomes a hive of activity, fun, and beer - which is drunk very frequently in Denmark. In the Spring term, the CBS Case Competition is held, and I’d recommend attending the Open category - it gives you a taste of what it’s like to be solving a case among the world’s best. This year, McGill won the CCC!
Reflection

The main challenge here was the cultural difference. Denmark is a country of heavy drinkers and smokers, and while I enjoy the occasional drink, it was a little overwhelming to be expected to grab a beer whenever hanging out with others. Give it time. You’ll find people who think somewhat like you, and that helps you settle in a little more. Be brave, and try to smile and talk to people regardless of language or background. You may not be fully settled in, but it will make life a little easier and more comforting.

I spent a lot of time on Skype, talking to friends and family... although you get used to the distance after a while, heads up: it doesn’t really get easier, even though you will see them after only a few months. However, this was my first time really living alone, and it definitely helped me grow a lot as an individual - being in a country where I knew absolutely no one added to the experience. It doesn’t matter if it was something big like taking care of a sick friend at 2am at the airport, or if it’s something small like understanding how the laundry service works. You’re on your own (unless you came with a friend!), and you have to figure things out eventually.

Overall, the experience was extremely rewarding, despite hitting a number of curveballs along the way. You might be homesick, and lonely at times, but it will be worth it. There will be good and bad days, the academic lifestyle might take some getting used to, and it might be odd to walk into grocery stores and see almost nothing in English. In the end, this is Copenhagen, and this is what you have come for: the difference between Copenhagen and Vancouver, and the distinct difference between the two cities.

Tips

- Live like the Danes do, and get a bicycle. It’s cheaper in the long run, with train tickets costing up to 15 kroner (about 3 CAD) per journey, and allows you to explore the city at your own pace.
- Take advantage of the free things there are in the city: admire Nyhavn at night when it’s all lit up, or head to museums on Tuesday or Wednesday, when some of them are free.
• Get all administrative stuff out of the way as soon as possible. This includes finishing residence forms, getting your CPR number, and setting up a bank account, should you decide to get one. Things can drag on for weeks at a time.

• Lebara provides you with a free SIM card upon your arrival, and their phone plans are very cheap, especially in comparison to Vancouver. I got the 3GB plan, with no added calling credit, and so far, it has worked out fine. There isn’t much free Wi-Fi available, and having data helped me a lot when I got lost, and needed to find alternative routes.

• If you’re looking to travel on weekends, Ryanair and EasyJet are two of the most frequently used low-cost airlines. If you read all the rules properly, they are reliable, and service is often friendly.