

MULTIPLICITY IN DENMARK

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHY?

- YOUR REFERENCE BOOK -



FOREWORD

This book addresses the new fellow citizens, who arrive in Denmark with quite a different cultural background to the Danish. It is difficult to find your way round the Danish society and understand the cultural codes of conduct and the current norms. If, as a foreigner in Denmark, you wish to become an active and influential citizen in the Danish democracy, you have to be confident, ready to roll up your sleeves, be curious and creative and be able to work with others.

With this book, Folkevirke wants to give its readers the courage to embark on this task and thereby achieve a happy and content future as fellow citizens of Denmark.

The book has been created in co-operation with groups of refugees and language schools throughout the country and Folkevirke have had several meetings with these groups. Going by the discussions and suggestions from the participants, the text has been adjusted to make sure the information supplied, covers the needs of new citizens.

The book is supposed to be a reference book. After each chapter there are links, which refer to places, where there the reader can obtain more in-depth information about each topic. It is written in a language, which should be easy to understand.

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DENMARK**

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»People smile at one another«
On the whole Danes are kind and polite towards each other. They do not often talk to people they do not know, but they always smile politely



PRESENTATION OF DENMARK

Denmark has a restricted monarchy, which means that although the queen is the regent, she has no independent power. Denmark is ruled by a government, which has been approved by the Danish Parliament, Folketinget. Folketinget is elected by citizens, with Danish citizenship. In Denmark you have the right to vote when you are 18 years of age. Both men and women can inherit the Crown. Currently in Denmark, we have a queen whose name is Margrethe the 2. When she dies, her oldest son will become king. He will be Frederik the 10th. Denmark is one of the oldest monarchies in the world.

DEMOCRACY

Denmark is a democratic country. According to a Danish philosopher, democracy is the friendliest way to agree to disagree! In Denmark democracy was introduced on the 5th of June 1849. Every year, this date is marked by flying the Danish flag from all official buildings, on busses and with speeches by Danish politicians.

Democracy means that the power in Denmark is divided in three:

- **The legislative power**, which is Folketinget.
- **The executive power**. The government passes the laws. Subordinate organisations are the police and the military amongst others.
- **The judicial power**, which are the law courts.

One example of how the power is divided between the three is: if you are arrested, the police will always inform you of the time at the arrest. This is because the arrested person must always come up before a judge within 24 hours. The judge – the judicial power – must assess whether the arrest, which has been carried out by the executive power is in accordance with the law.

THE CONSTITUTION/RIGHTS

The Danish democracy means, that we have religious freedom, freedom of speech and freedom to assemble and that your home is inviolable.

Religious freedom means that, citizens in Denmark have the freedom to choose their religion. This accounts for everyone within the border of the country, as long as all other rules, current in Denmark, are adhered to.

- **Freedom of speech** means that you are allowed to say what you mean. For instance, it is allowed to write letters to the newspapers, where you express your own opinion. You still have to stay within the rules. It is not allowed to offend someone's honour neither is it allowed to voice racism.
- **Freedom to assemble** means that it is allowed to assemble for meetings or demonstrations. The demonstrations will however have to get approved by the police.
- **Nobody can enter your home** without having been permitted to do so by the Courts.

All Danish citizens must be treated equally, and you cannot go to prison because of your religion, political convictions or where your family is from.

Citizens of Denmark are not allowed to carry guns without a special permit.

DUTIES

The Danes also have duties. As a citizen of Denmark, you have to observe all laws, which have been passed by the Folketing. As an example; parents have to take care of the upbringing and care of their children and make sure they receive education for at least 10 years.

FOLKETINGET/THE PARLIAMENT

Folketinget is elected by Danish citizens, who live permanently in Denmark, Greenland and the Faeroe Islands. All Danes, who are 18 years of age and permanently live in Denmark, can vote. The law decrees,

that there should be an election to the Folketing at least every fourth year.

The Government is elected by the Folketing. The Prime Minister is elected by the party, who gets the majority. Formally the Queen will appoint the Prime Minister and members of the government. A minister does not have to be a member of the Folketing. Folketinget is open to all. It is possible for all interested people to attend the meetings at the Folketing. It is also possible at all times to contact a minister by either calling or writing to the minister, and a reply can be expected within a few days.

THE LAW COURTS

The Law Courts are quite independent of the government, the Folketing and the Queen. The highest authority is the Supreme Court.

In Denmark there are three different law courts, who handle civil cases and criminal cases:

- **City Court**
- **High Court**
- **Supreme Court**

If you are dissatisfied with a verdict ruled by the City Court, you can have the case tested again in the High Court. Cases of principle can be tested in the Supreme Court.

Links

- *Democracy*: www.ft.dk/demokrati.aspx
- *The Constitution*: www.ft.dk/DemokratiGrundloven.aspx
- *The Constitution in easy Danish*: www.mbarra.webs.ull.es/dk-grundloven_letdansk.pdf
- *The Folketing*: www.ft.dk/Demokrati/Folketinget.aspx
- *The Law Courts*: www.domstol.dk/Pages/default.aspx



I WONDER WHY...

»The playgrounds are empty«

The playgrounds are empty, because parents are at work. They will not be empty during holidays and days off

»Danes have a special way of treating their dogs«

In Denmark, dogs must be on a lead, unless there is a sign saying that they can run freely, which can be in some woods and parks. Even though the dog is not on a lead, it is the responsibility of the owner, to make sure the dog does not attack other dogs or human beings. It is the law that you have to insure your dog

»It is important to draw the curtains at certain times«

If you draw the curtains during the day, the neighbours will think you are doing something others are not allowed to see – unless the sun is shining so much that you have to »get away from the sun«



»Why do you have to pay a TV-license fee and use of internet, when you pay tax?«

It is only those citizens, watching TV in their homes and using the internet, who pay a license. There are for example many older people, who do not use the internet. With regard to TV-license; both young and older people might live places where the TV-license is paid in other ways



DENMARK'S LANDSCAPES AND WEATHER

LANDSCAPES

Denmark is a small country, made up of many islands and a peninsular, Jutland, which borders onto Germany. It is about 43.000 square kilometres. The country is very flat, and the highest point is 170 m high and can be found in Jutland. Denmark is an agricultural country with many cultivated areas; grass for the cows, 4 different kinds of cereal – wheat, rye, barley and oats. Lately both maize and rape is also being grown.

And there are also woods and beaches. It is quite all right to visit both places. If it is a private area, you are allowed to go for a walk if you stick to the rules, which are posted by the entrance to the wood or the beach. The rules are normally, that you have to stick to the paths, do not erect a tent or have a picnic. You can only collect wood if you have got permission to do so. You can only fish, if you have a fishing permit,

whether it is fishing in a lake or the sea. There are 5.748.769 inhabitants in Denmark (2017).

WEATHER

There are four seasons in Denmark: Spring, summer, autumn and winter. During all seasons you have to be prepared for rain and stormy weather.

- **Spring** means that the trees develop leaves and the first flowers appear.
- **Summer** brings warmer weather, rarely over 25 degrees Celsius.
- During **autumn** the leaves of the trees turn yellow, red or brown, before they fall off the trees. The weather becomes quite windy and colder.
- During **winter** it never gets really cold. Rain changes and becomes snow. Lakes and the sea can freeze and often it is sub-zero degrees during the night.

In Denmark it is important to dress according to the season. During the winter, you have to wear a woollen sweater underneath your coat, a woollen hat, gloves/mittens and warm boots. Raincoat and wellington boots are necessary to have during all seasons. Umbrellas are not always suitable in Denmark, as it often is very windy.

Inside it is very warm. Typically the houses are heated between September to May.

Links

- *The landscapes:* [www.denstoredanske.dk/It,_teknik_og_naturvidenskab/Geologi_og_kartografi/Danmarks_geologi/Danmark_\(Landskabets_dannelse\)](http://www.denstoredanske.dk/It,_teknik_og_naturvidenskab/Geologi_og_kartografi/Danmarks_geologi/Danmark_(Landskabets_dannelse))
- *The weather:* www.dmi.dk/vejrl/

»All people cycle in Denmark – also small children«

At the same time as children learn to walk, they are given a bike with 3 wheels or, »løbacykel«, a bicycle with no pedals where the child motions the bike with their own legs. Many children cycle to nursery school.

At school all children have to pass a cycle test. A cycle ride will often be part of a holiday camp or an excursion. You can expect that all Danes can cycle and have a bicycle. Grown-ups cycle, because it is healthy and it is quicker to get from A to B that way in towns. There are many cycle paths, so cyclists quickly can get to where they need to go



»Why do Danes allow their children to sleep outdoors?«

Denmark is a peaceful country, where Danes leave their babies outside sleeping in their prams. Danish parents often leave the pram outside a shop if they are going inside to do the shopping. Parents also think it is good for the child to be outside in the fresh air



»Why is it important looking after ones garden, when living on a housing estate?«

For many Danes it is important to live in a house with a garden. Then the children can play outside and you can grow your own vegetables. It is also seen as a relaxing hobby to cut the lawn and the hedge. It is important to keep your garden tidy, so the shared hedge is nicely cut and not too many weeds spread to the neighbour's side

»Windows without curtains«

This has become more and more normal. The explanation is that Danes like the light a lot. Because Denmark is to the north geographically, we have very little light during winter months

I WONDER WHY...



»Why do you light so many candles?«

If you are coming from Africa, you may wonder why Danes light so many candles, when they can turn on the electric light to see. Danes light candles to create a special atmosphere called »hygge«. Especially during the winter time it is nice to light candles. This is why there are so many candles lit around Christmas time



LIFE STYLE

Danes are champions at trusting one another. They meet people with confidence and trust each other.

If Danes have agreed to meet at a certain time, you can be quite certain that they will arrive at the exact time for the meeting. This is because Danes do not want to waste each other's time, by being late – especially if you have to wait for others before you can start a meeting, just because other people are late for the meeting.

Being on time and not waste other people's time is important to Danes, because they have a tradition of meeting up and talking things over. Danes trust one another, so by talking together, an agreement will be reached, rather than start fighting each other. It is therefore important to Danes, that all, who participate in the meeting pay attention and are present. You do not normally talk over each other or talk on the phone during a meeting. All attention is paid to the subject you are discussing.

FOOD

Danes make a point of having healthy eating habits. Denmark is an agricultural country, and both meat and vegetables are often organically produced. When you buy food in the shops, it will say on the products if they are produced organically. Often they will cost a little more than normal produce. Danes are very interested in preparing and eating food, and the interest in eating food from other cultures is rising.

Danes have three main meals a day:

- **Breakfast** is eaten at home before you go to work or school. It normally consists of milk products, cereal or the like, as well as bread, toast, tea and coffee. Most Danes drink coffee all day. It is important that children have their breakfast before going to school or nursery.
- **Lunch.** For lunch most Danes have open sandwiches, which is a slice of rye bread with slices of cold meat of various types. The spread can be liver pâté, salami,

cheese, potato or cucumber. It can also be slices of hardboiled egg. It is expected that children bring a packed lunch to school or nursery. Many grownups also bring a packed lunch to work. At some workplaces you find a canteen, which will serve lunch during the lunch break.

- **Dinner.** If possible, the whole family will have dinner together. You normally have hot food – one or two courses. The Danish families often eat food from other cultures, like pasta or burgers.

SPORT

Most Danes are involved in some form of sports. The children have sport at school and also practise sport after school. Parents are members of fitness centres or sports clubs. Children are involved in sports in order to be more active and be with other children.

Grownups are involved in sports to stay fit, have a nice body and also to keep healthy. Also older people are involved in sports to maintain their good health. Even Danes in their 80ies and 90ies do gymnastic exercises sitting in their chairs, to maintain their good health. There is a membership fee to pay to be a member of a sports club.

Clubs are dependent on members doing voluntary work for the club. The coach mainly works as a volunteer; parents take the children to all the games and sports meetings and some parents wash the children's uniforms. It is also expected that parents sometimes appear as spectators at the games. See voluntary work!

RELIGION

In the Danish Constitution it says that »the evangelical-Lutheran church is the Danish national church, and is supported by the state«. This is why all Christian holidays are

holidays in Denmark. 77% of the Danes are members of the State church. The Christianity of the national church contributes to creating a society and culture, which enables Danes to be more inclusive of each other. It is not always easy to see, but Christianity and the national church are primarily a moral institution, which helps shape the norms and values of the society. Danes do not carry symbols to show which is their religion, as, which ever religion you belong to, is regarded as a private matter.

VOLUNTARY WORK

Voluntary work means that a person does a piece of work, without being forced to doing it. If you do not do it, you will not be punished for it. You cannot earn a salary for doing voluntary work. The work will have to benefit other people than yourself or your family. Voluntary work can be carried out by people of all ages. In Denmark, voluntary work is carried out

- in sports clubs
- at nursery homes
- among refugees
- at hospitals
- and many other places, where there is need of free help.

As parents, you can be asked to carry out voluntary work at your child's nursery, school and after school club.

Generally it is important, when looking for a paid job, to show that you have been involved in voluntary work too. Voluntary work show others that you are prepared to help without being paid for it.

SOCIETIES

It has been said that Denmark is a country full of societies. All Danes are members of one or more societies. You can be a member

of a union, a sports club or many other societies. If you collect stamps, you can become a member of a philatelic society or if you are a fisherman, you can become a member of an angler society. There are many different societies for many different purposes. Here you meet people with the same interests. You always have to pay a membership fee, if you want to be a member of a society.

ECONOMY

In Denmark you come of age, when you are 18 years old. This means that you are able to borrow money. It is fairly easy to borrow a small sum of money. But it is extremely expensive to borrow money – and they have to be paid back.

It is a good idea to give your children pocket money. They get a feeling for what they can buy and that it is also necessary sometimes to save up money, if you want to buy larger

things. It is very common that Danish children have pocket money from they are quite young. The amount grows as the child gets older. Pocket money is paid if children have helped with housekeeping or been looking after younger siblings.

In a marriage, the husband and wife have a shared economy. This means that you are both liable for debt, unless it is personal debt, like a student loan.

If you receive integration contribution, grants for your education, or pay in cash contributions, then these are all temporary contributions, and are paid by the county, if you are not able to support yourself.

Links

- **Religion/Feasts:**
www.kristendom.dk/hoejtider
- **Voluntary work:**
www.frivillighed.dk/guides/fakta-og-talom-frivillige-organisationer-i-danmark



I WONDER WHY...



»Why do Danes eat the same at Christmas every year«

Danes like traditions. Especially in connection with special festivities they find it important to »do as we normally do«. Traditions give security! This is why Danes eat the same at Christmas every year. This is only changed if families with different traditions marry

»That you can feel full by eating rye bread«

Danish food mainly consists of food which is grown in this country. Rye is a cereal which belongs in Northern Europe. Rye bread fills you up and is used as an important part of our lunch and packed lunches



HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS - TO BE A CITIZEN IN DENMARK

TO TALK TO ONE ANOTHER

Conversation is very important in democracy. It is important to have a discussion and not agree without becoming enemies and without seeing it as a personal insult.

If you state an opinion, it always has to be followed by »because« as it is expected that you always explain, why you think what you do. A discussion does not have to end with one party being right, but after the discussion, both parties might have obtained a better understanding of the subject.

There are some rules for a democratic conversation:

- When people talk, you have to use a language all can understand
- It is important to for all to tell the truth. You should not lie or tell stories, which are untrue. This could possibly happen at school, where a pupil says what she thinks the teacher wants to hear.

- It can be difficult to understand each other, if the people involved in the conversation, have different religious and cultural backgrounds. It can be difficult having a conversation about family issues, because different cultures can have different traditions for how to treat family members in different situations.
- In a democratic conversation you need to get to the point quickly and make it short. This is very Danish. In many cultures you tend to start by thanking teachers, families and those, who have arranged the event. In Denmark it is not necessary, as this is already implied – Danes get to the point, and do not waste time.

CORRUPTION

Denmark is one of the countries in the world with the least corruption. This means that you cannot buy any favours from i.e. the health authorities or the education authorities. You cannot give presents to public

employees; they are not allowed to receive presents. Danish law allows for journalists to ask to see certain important papers in a case and thereby see, whether the law has been adhered to and no corruption has taken place. If you are charged with breaking the law, you can ask to see the papers in the case.

The authorities are therefore very careful to observe the laws of Denmark and not receive bribes.

FAMILY

Parents are responsible for their children until they reach the age of 18.

It is not allowed, according to Danish law, to use violence in the family. You can go to prison, if you are violent. This is also the case if you hit your children.

Parents have the same rights and duties. Both parents have control over their children, the economy and the daily life of the family.

In a democratic family, tasks are solved in union. Children are given more freedom with age.

Boys and girls are brought up the same way; they are given the same opportunities and rights. Forced marriages are therefore not allowed.

At pregnancy and birth both parents are allowed leave from work. The mother is allowed at least 4 weeks maternity leave *before* the birth. After the birth both parents are allowed maternity and paternity leave. The mother's rights are the first fourteen weeks maternity leave. The father's (co-mother in lesbian relations) rights are 14 days leave within the first 4 weeks after the birth. After the first 14 weeks of maternity leave, both parents are in their full right to have parental leave for up to 32 weeks. They are also allowed parental leave on job-

seekers allowance for 32 weeks. Fathers are allowed to start the paternity leave within the first fourteen weeks after the birth. In Denmark it is up to the father to decide, whether he wants to take his paternity leave or not.

If you are on cash benefits, you will still receive cash benefit during the leave.

Circumcision of girls is forbidden according to Danish law. Although it may have been carried out abroad, the parents could go to prison in Denmark for this offense.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In Denmark we have a law for equal opportunities/rights and we have an Equal Opportunities minister.

Equal opportunities between the sexes mean that women and men have the same rights, duties and possibilities within all important areas of life. There are equal rights between citizens of different sexual orientation, religion and birth. Equal rights mean too, that all citizens in Denmark are supposed to be equal with regard to salary, education and political influence. It is not allowed in Denmark in job ads to apply for a member of staff of a certain sex. A woman, who is pregnant, cannot be fired, because she is pregnant. At a job interview, the employer is not allowed to ask a woman, if she is pregnant or is planning to have children.

THE WELFARE STATE

The Danish democracy has laid the foundation for the welfare state. The wish is that all should have the same possibilities; those who cannot manage on their own will get assistance and that the state will look after the old and the sick people. This is only possible if all citizens between the age of 18 and 65 work and pay tax. Denmark is the country

in the world where citizens pay the highest tax. It is not allowed to earn money and not pay your tax. If you earn money, and not pay tax, the money is referred to as »black money«. If the state realises that a citizen has been working without letting the tax authorities know, you will have to pay back the money you owe as well as a large fine to the state. In particularly grave incidents, you end up in prison.

NemId

NemId means »easy ID« – an easy way to identify yourself. You need it if you want to contact your bank from a computer or open letters from public authorities. It could be with regard to payment of pensions, notes from the tax authorities, letters from the county or letters from the hospital. All these notices are today sent by the public authorities to the citizens by e-boks.dk – and this is where you need to log on with your NemId.



To use NemId, you have to sign up as user and chose a personalised user password. When using NemId after having set up a password, you log on by using the code from the key card. This key card you receive by contacting Nets.dk. You can also receive help from »Borgerservice«/CitizenService. One of the advantages of using NemId, is that you can contact your bank or another public authority from any computer and

whenever you want to. Or see the documents you need to see, both in Denmark and abroad.

Nine out of ten Danes have got NemId.

ETHICS AT THE WORKPLACE

In Denmark it can be difficult to see who the manager is, who makes all the decisions and who the employee is. There is rarely a difference in dress code or the time you come to work or where you sit in the canteen. Many decisions are made at meetings between the manager and employees through discussions, where all have the right to speak. Normally you are told well in advance what the meeting will be about, so you can prepare yourself.

THE DANISH MODEL

Most Danes are members of a union. You are not forced to be a member of a union but some workplaces appreciate that all employees are members of the same union. You have to pay a fee to be a member. On the other hand, the union makes sure that you get the salary you are entitled to. In case of illness or accidents, the union will help. At larger workplaces there is a shop steward, you can go to, if there is anything you do not understand or something you are dissatisfied with. The shop steward will then talk to the boss.

If you leave your place of work, you ought to ask for a reference, which you can show the new place you are going to work. This is both the case whether you are fired or if you have resigned.

The union will talk to the employer about the salary. The State rarely gets involved. The way the labour market works, is called »The Danish Model«. Because employees and the employers decide the salary and working conditions together, there are very rarely strikes in Denmark.



»Many things are for free«

Those things which are for free are paid for by the State. The state consists of those citizens, who live in Denmark and they work and pay tax

Links

- *Handbook for the Study Group:*
www.folkevirke.dk/aktiviteter/studie-kredsmateriale/
- *Inspiration for Study Groups:*
www.folkevirke.dk/aktiviteter/studie-kredsmateriale/inspirationsmateriale-til-studiekredse/
- *Corruption:*
www.transparency.dk/korruption/korruption-i-danmark/
- *Equal opportunities:*
www.retsinformation.dk/forms/r0710.aspx?id=160578
www.sowf.men-care.org
- *The Welfare State:*
www.denstoredanske.dk/Samfund,_jura_og_politik/Samfund/Moderne_demokrati_og_konstitutionelt_monarki/velf%C3%A6rdsstat
- *»The Danish Model«:*
www.bm.dk/da/Beskaeftigesomraadet/Arbejdsret/Det%20arbejdsretlige%20omraade.aspx
- *Asking for a reference:*
www.loenguiden.dk/opsigelse-anbefaling.html

I WONDER WHY...

»The Danish tax system«

The short version: The welfare state survives on the fact that all who can, work and pay their tax of the money they earn. The money goes to the state. The State consists of all the people, who live in Denmark. The money coming from tax is divided according to a budget, which each year has to be approved by the Folketing. This is called the Finance Act (Finanslov). In the Finance Act (Finanslov) it says how much money will be spent on roads, schools, health authorities, defence, social contributions like cash contributions for the unemployed, state pension, child pay, student loans (SU) and many other things. It is only possible to divide the money up, which has been received in tax and other money the state has earned during the year, like sale of oil, the states' buildings and other things. However, the largest amount comes in from the tax, which is paid

»Danish caseworkers are very straight-forward and do not waste time«

Many new people coming to Denmark feel that Danes do not express sympathy when they advice people. They go straight to the point and answer the questions. They are professional and do not waste time on things, which are unnecessary. The caseworker feels that by giving a quick answer, they can save time, which can be used to work on other cases

»Why do Danes bring in a tree at Christmas?«

With the Christmas tree the Danes celebrate that »the tree of life from the Garden of Eden« has been brought into our world. The star at the top of the tree symbolises the star of Bethlehem Christmas night. The tradition originally stems from Germany, where the first Christmas tree is mentioned in around 1500. The Christmas tree is mentioned for the first time in Denmark in Holsten in 1796. In Copenhagen, a family had a tree in their sitting room in 1811



SOCIAL CONVENTIONS – MANNERS

Foreigners visiting Denmark have noted the very relaxed way Danes associate with one another. It can cause problems when the Danish relaxed culture meet with the more formal culture, which is very normal in other countries. In the formal culture it is very important to respect the traditional hierarchies and titles, which is seen at places of work and universities. Foreigners sometimes misunderstand the Danes as being unprofessional and rude, when we are too jolly and informal at business or political meetings and do not use a long range of formal greeting phrases.

GREETINGS

In larger cities, Danes rarely greet people they do not know, whereas in smaller towns, people often greet each other when passing, just as many people greet each other in the areas where the summerhouses are. If you meet someone you know in the morning for instance at work, and when the children go to school, you say »Godmorgen«.

The rest of the day you say »Goddag« or »Hej«. »Godmorgen« and »Goddag« are quite formal, whereas »Hej« is very informal. If you have arranged a meeting with the doctor, the teacher or the employer, you shake hands by your right hand – a firm grip, and look the other person in the eyes during the whole conversation. Danes only hug and kiss people on the cheek, whom they know really well, like family and friends.

HOW TO ADDRESS EACH OTHER

In Denmark, most people use »du« for »you«. This is part of the egalitarian culture we have in Denmark. In some supermarkets and other shops, they still address customers with »De«, which is an old and very polite way to address each other. It has however not been used much in the past 40 years. Some places it is still regarded as polite to address older people using »De« instead of »Du«. It can be difficult to decide when to use »De« and »Du« and if you are in doubt, choose »De«, and then the other person can suggest that you say »Du«.

Generally it is expected that you talk to each other in a polite way and do not use abusive language about other people, also when you do not agree and may even become unfriendly. If a person says »Tak«, it is normal that you reply with »Selv tak«. The English »Please« can be translated with »Vær venlig«.

Parents are responsible for the fact that their children talk nicely about other children, parents, teachers both at the school and nursery, no matter whether you agree with what is being done and said. Parents must set a good example and be good role models.

EATING HABITS

When eating fast food like sausages by a »pølsevogn«, burgers and pizzas, many Danes use their fingers; otherwise they use knife, fork and spoon. The table is laid, so each person has their own knife and fork, and the serving spoons in the dishes with the food, is only used for serving, not for eating with. This cutlery is used for moving the food from the dishes to the individual plates.

Soup is eaten with a spoon and pudding is eaten with a spoon or dessert fork.

Warm food and open sandwiches are eaten with the knife in your right hand and the fork in the left. The food is cut, using the knife as you eat – you do not cut up all the food in one go. The knife is only used for cutting and to push the food onto the fork. You put the fork in your mouth – never the knife.

If there is nobody serving the food, then you help each other by passing the dishes from person to person. Normally at more formal dinners you sit man, woman, man, woman and it is regarded as polite if the man offers the dish to the woman, who sits to his right, first.

If there are items of food you cannot eat, like the bone from a chicken, you push it to the edge of the plate, not out on the table cloth or the table.

You wipe your hands in the napkins by your place.

When you have finished eating, you lay down the knife and fork together on the plate next to each other at the equivalent to »5.30« o'clock.

The host decides when the meal is over and says »Velbekomme« and then all people by the table reply »Tak for mad« (thank you for the food) when you leave the table.

Links

• Greetings:

www.da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilseform

• How to address each other:

www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,_religion_og_filosofi/Sprog/Sprogvidenskab,_overbegreber/tiltaleform



**»You have to make an appointment,
as to when you want to visit«**

Many, who settle in Denmark, wonder why they just cannot go and visit without having arranged it in advance. In Denmark it is normal to phone or send a text before turning up visiting friends. It is not allowed not to turn up at school or work, because guests have arrived. For Danes, work and arrangements are most important and hospitality comes second



»Danes appear closed«

In Denmark it is not normal to invite people you do not know so well, back to your home. Danes are not as hospitable as other cultures. In Danish homes, guests are not likely to be invited unless work, cleaning, homework and other daily chores are done

I WONDER WHY...

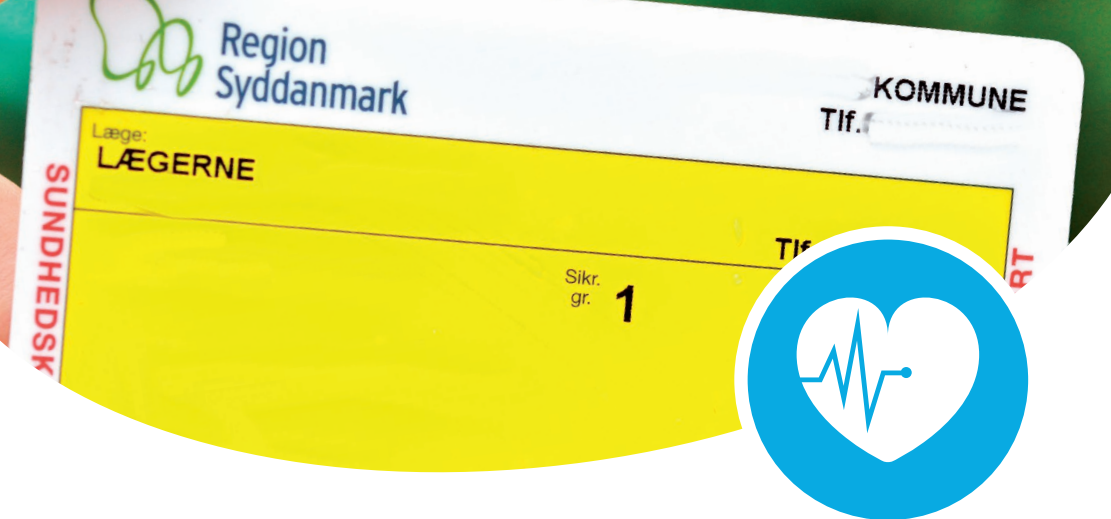


»Danes are always on time«

For Danes it is important to turn up at the agreed time. It is important to come to work on time, and come to school on time and start meetings at the agreed time

**»Danes are often standing outside in the
street, when they have a party«**

Danes often stand in the street, because they smoke. Many Danes do not smoke in their house, to prevent their children from becoming »passive smokers«. Besides this, it is not permitted by law to smoke in public rooms. Shops are not allowed to sell tobacco to people under the age of 18



MEETING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

In Denmark, the State looks after the citizen from birth to death. All citizens have an ID number. With this number you can contact »Borgerservice« – CitizenService in the county you live. At this public office you can receive help with everything a citizen need from the Public Denmark.

BIRTHS

Most children in Denmark are born at a hospital. Ask »Borgerservice« or at your doctors, which hospital you will be referred to. At the hospital you will be offered pre-natal classes and guidance. These classes are for both the father and the mother of the child. The father can attend the birth, if he wishes to. If a midwife is attending the birth, she will sort out the birth certificates. If no midwife is attending the birth, the parents must inform the local parish of the birth no later than 2 weeks after the birth. A birth certificate has to be filled in, and then the child automatically receives a CPR-number (civil registration number).

A child must be given a name, before he/she is 6 months old. If you go to www.borger.dk, you can do it digitally. At a christening in the church, the child receives his/her name and will then automatically become a member of the State church.

NURSERY

Most citizens from the age of 18 and up are either working or in education. All children are therefore looked after at a nursery from they are about 1 year old or by a day carer. A day carer is a person who is employed by the county to look after 4-5 children in her/his own home. The nurseries are staffed by specially trained staff, who look after the children. The day carer attends a shorter education. You have to pay both places to have your children looked after.

NURSERY SCHOOL

When children are about 3 years old, they start going to nursery school. They will stay here until they start school at the age of 6.

The year before they start school, the children learn the alphabet and numbers. The school expects that children, who have been to nursery school, know how to dress, can sit quietly while receiving a message from the teacher and function as a part of a group. It is also important too, to follow the development of the child's language. The staff are all educated nursery school teachers. You will have to pay for your child/children to attend nursery school.

SCHOOLS

Denmark has compulsory education for nursery school as well as from 1st to 9th class. The compulsory education is therefore 10 years. This does not mean that the children have to go to school, but they have to be taught either at a school or privately i.e. if the parents teach the children. If the children do not go to school, the public authorities will control, that the child has learnt what is required by law, and which is noted in the official teaching plans.



It is free to attend public school, whereas you pay if the child is attending a private school. School uniform is not used at any schools. Boys and girls attend the same classes. At sports, girls and boys are often separated, so the boys have a male teacher and the girls a female teacher. At school the pupils often work independently in small groups. Classes can also take place outside school, either on an outing or a school camp.

Both at nursery, nursery school and school, it is expected that parents participate actively in their child's daily routine. Parents need to make sure that the children attend on time, bring a packed lunch, do their homework and do not have a late night. There are parents' evenings and talks between teachers and parents outside school hours. Parents will have to attend these meetings at certain times.

After 9th year at school, the students can apply to get into college or any other youth education. Attending college is three years. It does not cost anything to acquire a higher education. When students are over 18 years of age, they can receive a state education grant, called »Statens Uddannelsesstøtte« in Danish, »SU« for short.

It is normal to have a job before/after school; from the child is 13 years of age they can either do a paper round or bring round advertising magazines. Many young people have a job to supply the »SU« as long as they make sure home work is done for both school and further education.

OLDER PEOPLE AND THE HANDICAPPED

Older people and citizens with a handicap receive help for free from the county they live in. The county decides which kind of help can be offered through talks with the citizen, the family and the doctor.

The help is offered where you live and function day and night.

If you cannot manage at home on your own, there are public nursery homes, where you can live. Here the staff is employed to make sure that the residents rooms are clean, food is served and that personal hygiene is attended to. You have to pay for this service. The county also offers senior housing. This is a smaller home, which has been designed especially for elderly people or a handicapped person. Here you pay for the rent of the home.

HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Receiving help from a doctor or going to the hospital in Denmark is free of charge. If you are ill, you contact your doctor and ask for an appointment, and you must turn up at the appointment. If you do not turn up or forget to cancel the appointment, you might be asked to pay a small fee for the inconvenience. Visiting the doctor is a personal affair and you see the doctor on your own; parents do take their children to the doctor.

All health staff adheres to the professional secrecy act, so no members of the family have the right to know, what has happened between the patient and the doctor. The patient can ask that one member of the family attends the visit to the doctor with the patient.

If you are hospitalized, the family can come and visit. When you receive visits, you will have to show consideration towards other patients. You should therefore not receive too many visitors at the same time, and all visitors must speak in a quiet voice. Children are welcome, if they are quiet.

Children from the age of 0 to 18 are treated for free at the dentist. After the age of 18, you have to pay for dental treatment.

PRISONS

If you receive a prison sentence, you serve the sentence in one of the Danish prisons. In the prison you sit in your own cell and receive your food.

The inmate is offered a job inside the prison. Inmates can normally receive a visit once a week. The inmate will have to send a visiting permit to those he/she would like to have visiting. This is the rule at prisons in Copenhagen. There may be other rules at other prisons in the rest of Denmark. Those, who visit the prison, will be checked in various ways depending on the conviction of the inmate.

There are different kinds of prisons and convictions:

- **Suspended sentence**, which is the last warning before you go to prison. If you do not break the conditions, you will not have to go to prison.
- **Being in custody**; where you are until you are sentenced.
- **Community service**; you can receive community service if you break the criminal law or the law on road traffic. Community service means that that the convicted still lives at home and goes to work. During his/her spare time the convicted will be working voluntarily at a public institution. The conviction can be anything from 30 to 300 hours.
- **Open prisons**, where you sleep at the prison, but otherwise can spend time outside the prison.
- **Tagging**; this is electronic tagging. A conviction you normally receive at lesser offences.
- **Closed prisons**. The inmates here are people with longer convictions and unconditional punishment.

DEATH

At death, the doctor has to write a death certificate, on which he will also write the cause of death. The doctor will also let the authorities know about the death.

The family should contact a funeral director, whom then will take care of all the practical things with regard to the funeral. At hospitals and nursing homes, the staff often offer

help with contacting the funeral director. Many Danish funeral directors – especially in larger towns, are experienced with keeping the traditions of citizens from other cultures or sending the deceased back to their home country.

There are graveyards for most religions in Denmark.



Links

- **Meeting public institutions:**
www.borger.dk/
- **Births:**
www.altomboern.dk/artikel/den-normale-fodsel#
- **Borgerservice:** www.borger.dk/
- **Register a birth:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/foedselsregistrering.aspx
- **Nursery:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/Dagpleje-vuggestue-boernehave-og-privat-pasning.aspx
- **Nursery school:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/Dagpleje-vuggestue-boernehave-og-privat-pasning.aspx
- **Schools:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/skole-og-uddannelse.aspx
- **The older and the handicapped:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/aeldre.aspx
- **Health authority:**
www.borger.dk/Sider/sundhed-og-sygdom.aspx
- **Dentist:**
www.tandlaegeforeningen.dk/Patienter/Priser/tilskud_tandpleje_2013/boern_unge_under_18_aar_sektion/boern_unge_under_18_artikel.aspx
- **Violence:**
www.lokk.dk/For-fagfolk/Lovstof/Danske-love-og-regler/

»The mix of the sexes«

It is very natural in Denmark to mix girls and boys. Both sexes have the same rights and possibilities. In Denmark there are schools for both sexes. Boys and girls go to the same class and sit at the same table. There are however separate toilets, dressing rooms and baths for girls and boys at schools

»Wonder why so much fun is had in school – the children love going to school«

That is exactly why children love going to school – because there is a lot of fun involved in it. Danes recon that it is easier for children to learn new things, if they are happy and feel well

I WONDER WHY...



»Teachers are very friendly«

In the Danish public school, it is important to have a good relationship with the parents. So of course the teachers are friendly and determined to build up a good relationship with parents and the pupils



»Danes behave strangely at parties!«

When Danes celebrate a special day or a person, speeches are made and a lot of »hurrah« will be said. It is also very normal that one of the guests have written a song, which is about the person, who is being celebrated. It will be written on a tune everyone knows. A copy of the song is given to all the guests, who then sing the song



CELEBRATION DAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

BIRTHDAYS

Friends from the nursery or school are invited home to celebrate the birthday of a child. The children must arrive at the time stated on the invitation and bring a small present. The guests will be treated to drinking chocolate (hot or cold) or fizzy drinks and a layer cake. Candles are lit on the cake; one candle for each year the birthday boy/girl has lived. These candles can be bought in the supermarkets and are called »lagkagelys«. The birthday boy/girl must blow out the candles, preferable all in one go and then the cake can be eaten. The birthday party lasts about 3 hours. Games will be arranged for the children, one example is a treasure hunt. The participants will have to find a »treasure« using a map, the grown-ups have drawn. The treasure normally consists of sweets. Often the rest of the family of the birthday boy/girl will attend the birthday party.

Teenagers also have a birthday party, where the family will come to the home. The birthday boy/girl might have a party for his/her friends. Grown-ups have birthday parties too which are most likely to take place at home. It is only when you have a »special« birthday, »rund fødselsdag« (like 30, 40, 50, 60 etc.) that you have a big party. After you turn 60, you then have a big birthday celebration every five years. Big birthdays are parties, where you invite family and friends for dinner. If you have room, you have the party at home, otherwise at a restaurant. When Danes celebrate a birthday or other special days for a person, speeches are made and the word »hurrah« is said a lot. It is also very normal that one of the guests have written a song, which is about the person, who is being celebrated. It will be written using a tune everyone knows. A copy of the song is given to all the guests, who then sing the song.

FLAG DAYS

In Denmark there are official flag days. These are noted on calendars and in diaries. On these days, flags will be flown from all public buildings. Private people can also fly the flag, but they do not have to. If you have a flagpole, you raise the flag at birthdays. At deaths, the flag is flown on half mast. At funerals the flag is on half mast outside the church, where the funeral is taking place. When the service is over, the flag is raised to the top.

The name of the Danish flag is Dannebrog and Dannebrog is often used in Denmark. Dannebrog can also be found on the Christmas tree and tiny paper flags can be found on birthday cakes.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

All Christian public holidays are holidays in Denmark.

At Christmas, »1. and 2. Juledag«, the 25th and the 26th of December are public holidays. Christmas day is also a day off, but not a holiday. Christmas (»juleaften«) in Denmark is on the 24th of December, and is celebrated in the evening, where you eat special Christmas food, walk round the Christmas tree, while singing Christmas songs/hymns and give each other Christmas presents.

At Easter, the public holidays are Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, 1st Easter day and 2nd Easter day. Easter falls on different dates every year, but always from a Thursday up to and including the following Monday. Great Prayerday is always on a Friday.

Christ's Ascension is always on a Thursday. Lent is in May or June. Lent is always on a Sunday. In Denmark you have a second day of Lent on the following Monday and it is a public holiday.

OTHER HOLIDAYS AND PARTIES

Shrovetide is held in February. This day sees

in the Lent (faste) in the Christian church. Lent lasts 40 days and finishes at Easter. Shrovetide is always on a Sunday. Sunday and Monday are celebrated by children dressing up and beat »katten af tønden« (the cat out of the barrel). This is done by children hitting a wooden barrel with a wooden club while the barrel is hanging up. The child, who manages to knock the bottom out of the barrel, will become »kattedronning« (cat queen) and the child, who knocks down the last wooden board, will become »kattetekonge« (cat king). The barrel is full of sweets and/or oranges, which are then divided up among the children. In Denmark, only few people fast.

Constitution day is on the 5th of June. On this date, king Frederik the Seventh signed Denmark's free Constitution. This is often celebrated by either a half or a whole public holiday. It is a flag day and throughout Denmark, and Danes gather to hear politicians give speeches. This normally takes place outdoors.

Sct. Hans evening is on the 23rd of June. This is midsummer, and is celebrated by lighting a bonfire and often a politician is making a speech by the bonfire. Participants gather round the bonfire and sing »Midsommervisen«; a song written by one of the most well known Danish poets, Holger Drachmann. As the song is difficult to learn by heart, you are always given a copy of the text. At the top of the bonfire, there is a large doll, which is made to look like a witch. When the doll catches fire, we say here in Denmark, that she is »flying off to Bloksbjerg.«

Halloween is celebrated on the 31st of October. It is a holiday coming from English speaking countries. It has become very popular in Denmark. In the evening, when it is dark, you put hollowed out pumpkins outside the house. The pumpkins look like faces



with holes for the eyes, nose and mouth and inside there are candles. Many decorate with false cobwebs, spiders and other scary things. The children are often dressed as Dracula, ghosts or skeletons. It is important to look »scary«! Children then go from door to door and ring doorbells and ask for sweets. It is a good idea to have sweets ready at home, if any children should turn up. Mortens Aften is on the 10th of November. This is not a public holiday. This evening you normally have goose for dinner as a reminder of Morten Bisp, who was a martyr because he hid in a goose pen, where the geese cackled and therefore betrayed him. Morten Bisp lived from about year 315 until 11th of November 397. Many Danes eat duck, as goose has become quite expensive to buy. Sct. Lucia is celebrated on the 13th of December. This is not a public holiday. At schools, nurseries and care homes, Lucia

brides with her »temes« sing the song »Santa Lucia« in memory of Santa Lucia or the holy Lucia, who lived from about 283 till 304. She was a Christian virgin, who died a martyr. Both Sct. Hans, Morten Bisp and Santa Lucia are saints from the Roman Catholic Church, which Denmark left in 1536. In the Lutheran church there are no saints. These celebrations are an old tradition, which Danes still follow. It has nothing to do with our faith. In Denmark you can marry either in church or at the town city hall. When you have been married for 25 years, you have a big party for family and friends, which is called »silver wedding anniversary« (sølvbryllup). When you have been married for 50 years, you celebrate your golden wedding anniversary (guldbryllup). When you have been married for 60 years, it is called a diamond wedding anniversary (diamantbryllup). When you have been married for 65 years,

it is called crown diamond wedding anniversary (krondiamantbryllup). Both when you have been married 60 and 65 years, you receive a greeting from the current regent. In December there are Christmas parties at most Danish workplaces. The company Christmas lunch/dinner goes back to the time of the Second World War (1940-1945). It became the norm that people gathered to eat together at your place of work. Both employers and employees sat together and ate and wished each other Merry Christmas.

At a company Christmas party nowadays, it is the unwritten rule that you are allowed to drink a little extra, flirt and eat more than normal and then dance and party the night away. If you do not wish to participate in this, it is ok to wish work colleagues a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and then leave the party.

Links

- *Public holidays and parties:*
www.culkas.eu/themes/feasts/

I WONDER WHY...

»I do not want my child to attend children's birthday parties. In Denmark they drink beer at birthday parties«

When in Denmark, you see children with either beer bottles or beer cans. It is not because they drink the contents, but because they take the cans to the supermarket. In Denmark the price you pay for the container the beer/wine is in is refunded, when the container is empty (bottle deposit). The children therefore take the bottles back to the supermarket to get the money back. Children under 16 years of age cannot buy beer or wine in Denmark. They have to be 18 years of age to be able to buy alcohol, which is drinks with a 16,5% of alcohol or over



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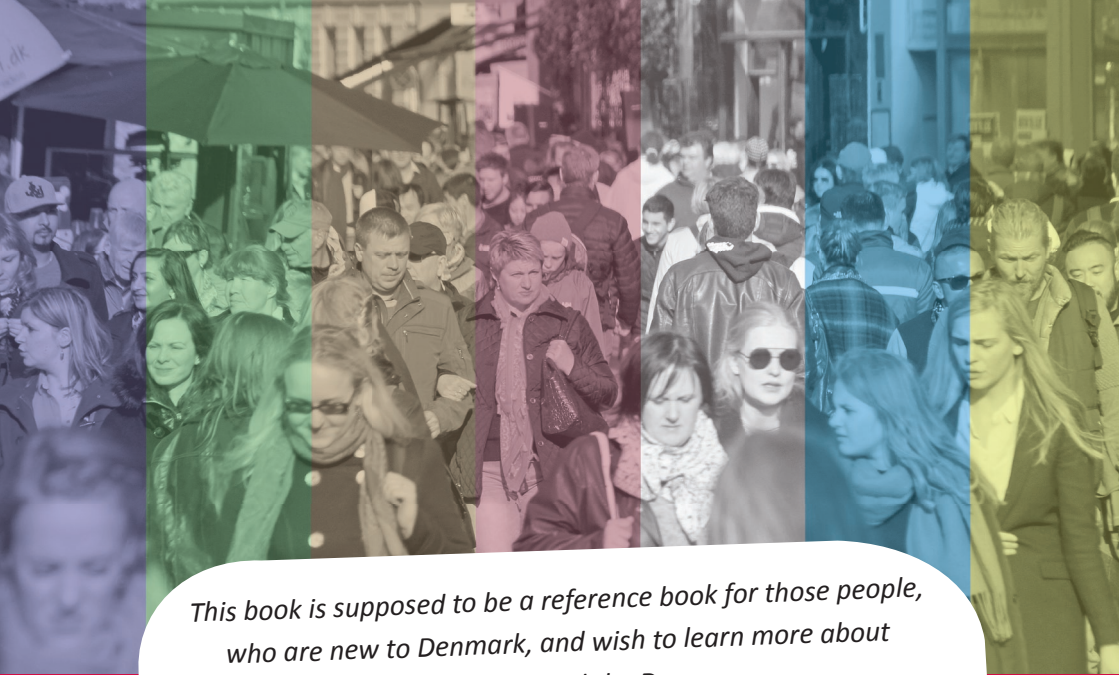
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This book is supposed to be a reference book for those people, who are new to Denmark, and wish to learn more about the country and the Danes.

The book should be easy to read and has got links to the internet, where you can read more about each topic.

The book can be obtained in both Danish and Arabic.

...ENJOY READING!



FOLKEVIRKE

Social, kulturel og politisk oplysning