

CONSIDERATIONS IN YOUR FIRST 12 MONTHS AS AN EXPAT

1. LANGUAGE

By now you may have got used to the sound of Danish and maybe even know some phrases. You can improve your language skills by taking a crash course, reading the local newspapers and finding ways to practice it with the Danes. There are many tools online to help you out if you are not too keen on hiring a language tutor.

2. GET TO KNOW THE CULTURE

Things will always be different in another country! If you can't find the brands you are familiar with, then be adventurous and try a local brand. Perhaps you will not feel like a local but if you stay positive and venture outside of your comfort zone, you will not feel like a tourist either. Make a list of things about Denmark and the Danes that puzzle you. Get into the "Curious George" mode, start exploring!

3. KEEP YOUR MENTAL HAPPINESS DESPITE THE WEATHER

It can be a bit of a mystery how the Danes, year after year are rated as the happiest people on the planet. How is that even possible with long cold grey winters, short days of sunlight and long dark nights? You are right about that but before you start feeling grey yourself, remember the Danish word "Hygge." That's the time to light candles indoors, drink hot cocoa with whipped cream and invite your friends home for dinner.

4. ACCEPT A TRIAL AND ERROR APPROACH

Be aware that the unexpected can and will happen. You will experience a few social hiccups along the way. Fear not, you just need to be a little proactive in learning the new norms. Ask your Danish colleagues or fellow students about local customs and habits. They will be more than happy to help understand social norms. Making small mistakes is common and it is all part of the process of moving to a new country.

5. GET OVER YOUR HOMESICKNESS

This is one of the essential tips for new expats. The sooner you get over your homesickness the better for your mental well being. How? Adapt to your surroundings and Adopt a new routine to your local lifestyle. Turn to the park instead of TV or head out to the coast and watch the sunset in the evenings. At first it may seem difficult but don't be too hard on yourself, give it time. Remember it is not only about missing 'home' it is about feeling comfortable where you are right now! Tell your friends about your new life – it helps being socially connected.

6. REMEMBER THAT CULTURE SHOCK IS TEMPORARY

Time abroad is rarely just one long dream. A Norwegian scientist once described the 4 stages of culture shock:

- From the point of a honeymoon feeling where everything is new and exciting.
- To a phase of frustration
- To where dissatisfaction kicks in
- To where everything irritates you

So hang in there. The two last phases are adjustments. Thereafter comes the feeling of comfort. Finally you will Accept and Adapt and reap the benefits!

7. TAKE PHOTOS

Perhaps you will fall in love with life in Denmark and even choose to live here happily thereafter or you may know the expiration date of your expat life. Take photos and keep a diary. Make sure not to just document the days you went sightseeing but particularly describing your experiences of your Danish daily life.