

The 2015 Study Tour: Copenhagen

In October 2015, the NHMF study tour will visit Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. In preparation for this, I undertook a reconnaissance visit over a long weekend at the beginning of June in order to meet and discuss the programme with local colleagues who will play an integral part in ensuring a successful tour.

Firstly, I was shown around the Hotel Kong Arthur where delegates will be staying during the tour. It is centrally located, and about a fifteen minute walk from the metro station at Norreport. The hotel is clean and comfortable, with good conference facilities which we have booked for our introductory meeting on the Wednesday afternoon at 4pm. There is a coffee lounge there with WIFI if you arrive early. On the first evening we are eating in the Italian restaurant, La Rocca, next door to the hotel.

Later I met up with Claus Bech-Hansen (Glostrup Boligselskab), who has been actively involved with me in putting the programme together. He showed me two sites that we will visit during the tour. Firstly, a regeneration housing estate, which is of particular interest because of its detailed consultation with residents; and then Freetown Christiania, which was first established as a commune in 1971. It is a fascinating, and long lived example of communal living, and will provide delegates with an alternative perspective on how the state can work with communities to provide housing.

During my visit I also travelled to Malmo in Sweden, across the magnificent Oresund Bridge that links Denmark and Sweden and is the longest road (and rail) bridge in Europe. You will also have the opportunity to enjoy this experience when we visit Malmo on Friday 23 October. There we will meet up with Louise Lundberg (Grönare Stad AB). She is a leading expert in the field of sustainable urban development and greener cities. Louise will take us on a tour of two large housing estates which are of significance because of their use of sustainable solutions and community involvement in the neighbourhood regeneration. We will try to include a Botanical garden roof in the tour too.

Copenhagen is an attractive city, with a variety of good bars and restaurants. It was difficult to make a decision on where to eat on our second evening, but I think that you will enjoy the BrewPub restaurant, which provides excellent food in convivial surroundings. Another option to try if you are staying longer is the Det Killie Apotek which is said to be the oldest restaurant in Copenhagen. It was originally a pharmacy and the interior is interesting.

Finally, during my stay I jotted down a number of fairly **random points** as they occurred to me, which I hope will be of help to you in preparing for what I am sure will be an enjoyable and stimulating tour:

Denmark is expensive. VAT is charged on everything at 25% so check if prices quoted include tax.

The weather in Copenhagen is windy, and in October is likely to be wet and quite cold. Bring hat, scarf, gloves, a warm coat and good walking shoes.

The Danes do not dress formally so there is no need for a suit or tie.

Everyone speaks much better English than you will find in London. All school children start to learn English when they are 6 and they do not expect visitors to try Danish.

Copenhagen is in the throws of a massive construction programme. The Metro is being extended, old buildings are being restored and new ones constructed. There is a building site on every street corner. However, there are still many interesting buildings not covered in scaffolding so it is worth spending free time walking around the city.

If you are staying at the hotel over the weekend and want to use the Spa facilities it is a good idea to book a session or treatments in advance.

The food is delicious and mostly very healthy. Beer comes in very large glasses and although there is little drinking during the working day, bars do fill up after work. A beer costs around £5-£8. It is normal to ask for tap water with a meal. Service is not generally included so if you think things have gone well a 10% tip is appropriate. You only tip if you are completely satisfied.

People mostly walk or cycle and there is little evidence of obesity being a problem. It is generally a young city. The locals tell me that it is just that even their elders look young and healthy. I have a different hypothesis which we can explore together in October.

There is one danger to be alert to when walking around Copenhagen which is the cycle lanes. Transport is very well organized with space for cars to drive and park, cycle lanes beside most car lanes and pavements for pedestrians. We are not used to the cycle lane bit so be sure you don't stand in it. Cyclists are numerous, travel quite fast and can be coming from either direction so you will quickly find out that you are in the wrong place. Practice the green cross code.

Notes on travel:

The Copenhagen metro is very good and easy to use. Take the metro line from the Airport to Nørrebro station which takes about 15 minutes.

As you come out of the station up the escalators you are likely to be in the middle of the road. Turn to your right and walk north on Frederiksborggade passing a very interesting food market on your left, and then crossing over Linnestgade and Romsøsgade.

Keep going until to reach the lake, (which looks like a canal)



and turn left on to Norre Sogade. The hotel is 2nd turning left, at the end of the road, and is visible from Norre Sogade. This is a 10-15 min walk.

