

Safety Tips for Denmark



INTRODUCTION

General advice by AFS international:

A Primary objective of experimental learning programmes such as those offered by AFS is to help the participant learn through observation, question, dialogue, discussion and experience. From experience AFS staff and volunteers understand that the opportunity to learn is great, but it is not necessarily easy. Participants encounter complex situations along the way and there is potential for confusion, fear and misunderstanding. If students are left to their own devices, the consequences could be very distressing. For these reasons, with the help of host families, local community AFS contacts and school personnel, AFS has devised the system of "Program Support" for all participants providing a wide range of supportive activities and services. The purpose is to provide a "Safety Net"... a consistently supportive environment in which participants can ask questions, obtain advice and get help.

AFS cannot supply all the possible answers but through our support systems, we can help to guide participants towards asking appropriate questions.

It is not possible to try to anticipate all possible situations pertaining to individual safety concerns. Many of these issues are specific to individual countries or parts of a single country. In general, AFS recommends talking with the host family, AFS local committee members or staff from the host school, soon after the student arrives at the host family, about any of the information in this guidebook and any question students may have about specific personal issues.

AFS suggests that students ask their host family about specific situations about which they are concerned or worried, recognizing that most of the information about the host country is prevalent in movies and in media publications, and that it may not be accurate for the country or the specific area in which the family lives.

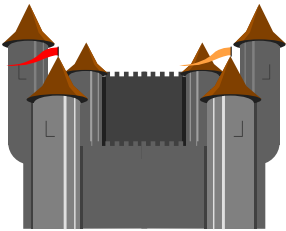
Within this context, what follows are some topics and general suggestions.

PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS

In or around home:



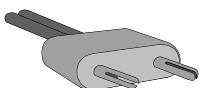
In general, the family is not likely to know what you are worried about, and needs to be informed about this by you. For example, such questions as "I have heard it is unsafe to walk around outside after dark, is this true here?" or "Is it safe to wear my jewelry to school?"



In general, AFS encourages you to ask the family about how they secure their home, for example: do they lock doors and windows? All the time? How should you respond when a stranger to the family is calling at the door? Will you receive a house key? Who can you call if you arrive home without a key or there is no one in the house? Your neighbors? Which ones? What should you do in the event of a fire? What does your family advise about answering the door when you are home alone?



Host families will usually explain how to go about making telephone calls, but may not realize that you might have concerns about how to answer the telephone, especially if you are not comfortable in using the host country language and are not yet familiar with people who may be calling. AFS encourages you to ask your host parents how you should respond when answering the telephone? Remember that international calls are VERY expensive. Always talk to your host family before using the family phone to call home!



In Denmark the voltage is 220V, which is very dangerous in cases of electric shocks. Some people use gas for cooking and you should be **very careful** when using such appliances (Don't leave them on when you are not home or when you go to sleep, etc....). This also goes for candle lights that are often used during the wintertime. Never leave a room with candles lit.



Although in some areas of Denmark people do not lock their doors and windows before leaving home, in most areas they do. If you are unsure, ask your host family for instructions.

Specific Advice by AFS Interkultur:

These are some helpful questions that you should ask your host family:

- Do you lock your doors and windows? When?
- Am I going to have a house key?
- Do you have first-aid equipment? Where is it?
- Do you have a fire extinguisher? Where do you keep it?
- What should I do if an emergency occurs? Who should I call?
- How should I answer the phone?
- What information should I not give strangers?
- Where do you keep the emergency telephone numbers?
- What should I do if I am alone and a stranger is at the door? What should I tell him/her?
- Are there any appliances that could cause a problem, and that I should be aware of?

Outside the home:

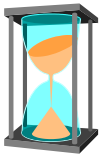
In some countries or in communities where there may have been incidents of crime or violence, (burglaries, purse snatching, thefts, assault, pick pocketing), there may be public service organizations (schools, the police, community service) advising local residents about the problem and giving recommendations regarding personal safety. Students should read what is available, share it with their host family and ask for any clarification. In general, if such information is not available, AFS encourages you to let your host parents know whenever you are concerned or frightened. Ask them what they recommend to help you feel more personally secure. When you are going out, AFS suggests that you leave at home the information about where you are going or telephone number of where you will be. Your host family knows the most about their community and is best prepared to give you advice about places it would be for you to avoid and how best to get around. In general, you should take their advice seriously and follow their recommendations.

Specific Advice by AFS Interkultur:

Denmark is a very safe country. There is no big difference between boys and girls when it comes to safety. But like any other country, you should be cautious as there may be some places in local areas that you should avoid going to, although this is very rare. You should try to find out some of the local security habits by talking to your host family. And remember – do not dress too provocatively!

In general, you should try to avoid being alone in train stations late at night unless you have to. In some areas (e.g.: Copenhagen) these places might be dangerous. If walking alone late at night you should try to walk in streets that are well lit and that have people walking in them. Alternatively try to arrange somebody to walk with you – for instance if returning from an outing with classmates. Somebody might be going your way.

When walking in crowded areas you should take care of your valuables (for instance at Copenhagen Central Station), as pick pocketing is more common in crowded areas, and especially on busses.



Public transportation in Denmark is perfectly safe to use. You should just make sure you know the time of the last bus or train, so you can plan for an alternative if you need to return home late at night. Be aware that especially in the countryside or in small towns public transportation at night might be quite limited.

In Denmark traffic keeps to the right, remember this when you cross the street or ride the bicycle. A lot of Danes, and especially students, ride the bicycle. Be careful, they sometimes drive very fast 😊 Please be aware that you will need lights on your bike. Ask your host family to help you with this.



It is illegal in Denmark for civilians to carry weapons. Apart from authorized people (police, security people, etc.) only gangs carry weapons, but there are very few of them in Denmark.



You may want to go to other countries abroad with your host family during your stay in Denmark. In such cases you would first have to check at the embassy of the country in question to see if you need a visa to that country. We would like to point your attention to the fact that having a Danish residence permit does **NOT** mean that you can go to all European countries without a visa, even if Danes are not required to have a visa in order to go there. However, your residence permit will permit you to travel to all the Schengen countries. You can see a list of Schengen countries at:

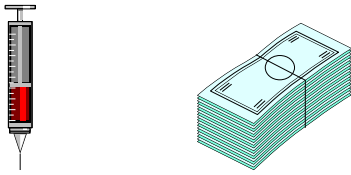
http://www.eu-oplysningen.dk/euo_en/spsv/all/82/

Be aware that for instance the United Kingdom is not a part of the Schengen cooperation of open borders. If in any doubt ALWAYS contact the embassy of the country you plan to visit.

You should also be aware of the consequences that might follow if you do not adhere to the legal requirements when traveling to other countries. These could range from paying a fine to getting **withheld** by the country's authorities.

In School:

Avoid taking a lot of money or expensive jewelry to school.



Drugs may some times be sold under cover at Danish high schools. But violence at school does not constitute a major danger. Drinking is common at school parties, but students should be careful that they do not compromise their own set of values. They should also pay attention to the fact that drinking habits may vary from one family to another. Talk to your host family and friends about this. Your AFS contact person will also be able to help you.

Laws, Illegal drugs, alcohol abuse:

All participants are forbidden to use illegal drugs and substances. Violating these rules is cause for dismissal from the program and immediate return to the home country. It is most important that you remember this should you find yourself in a situation where illegal substances are being used. Similarly, strong abuse of alcoholic beverages could be cause for dismissal from the program.

In general, knowing the culture is usually the best preparation for knowing how to handle uncomfortable social situations. It is also good for your host parents to meet your friends and to know with whom you spend your free time. If you are invited to go to a party or other event such as a rock concert or soccer game and are not sure whether it is safe to go, AFS recommends that you find out a little about the party or event, where is it being held and who will be there. Usually your host siblings, parents, friends or teachers at school can give information about the event and the people expected to attend. Some host parents may also "forbid" students to attend certain kinds of parties, soccer games, etc. Students should respect the parents' advice, even if their friends may be going.



Many countries have a 'legal drinking age', and people are not allowed to drink if they are below this age. In Denmark that age is 18 but it does not disallow drinking below this age. It just prohibits selling alcoholic beverages in restaurants to people below 18. So, it is very common that you find people less than 18 drinking and it is socially acceptable in many families.

In Denmark all people have a third party liability insurance and as this has been a big issue among our hostfamilies, AFS now pays for this type of insurance for all participants. However, this insurance does not cover damages in the home of the hostfamily. If such damage occurs, participants and their natural parents are still fully responsible and must cover any cost involved in connection with such claims.

AFS students are subject to the laws of their hosting country. Neither AFS nor the national government (embassy or consulate) of the students' home country has the ability to protect the student from punishment with respect to drug use, theft and other legal offenses.



As an AFS student you are not permitted to drive. In Denmark a person must be 18 years old to get a drivers license. We expect that the AFS students do not get in any motor vehicle with a driver below that age, or someone without a license, or with someone who has consumed any alcohol (In the Danish law it is strictly forbidden). If you are in this situation, you should contact your host family or someone from AFS, and they will tell you what to do to get home or direct you to a place where you could go. Remember, though: hitch-hiking is forbidden!

Sexual Harassment:

Cultures differ in their views of what is the appropriate sexual behavior and practices of young people. Often clarification of attitudes may be necessary, and here, again, the advice of people you have come to know and trust is very valuable. Knowledge about the people you socialize with is important, and this is best acquired through increasing knowledge of the culture. Equally important are your own values and beliefs regarding your behavior. In societies where some young people are sexually active, there are also many who are not. You should not compromise your own personal values and beliefs regarding sexual behavior.

You may be unsure in some situations if you are being sexually harassed or if a particular person's behavior would be considered normally friendly. An important source is your own instinct. Also, often your host siblings/parents and friends will be able to advise you about normal behavior of people you do not know. Others to whom you can turn for advice or help are teachers at school, and the AFS contacts within your community or at the national office.

Specific Advice by AFS Interkultur:

Sexual harassment is likely to happen in any country. Females especially are subject to harassment. For example if guys whistle after a female student, she should avoid contact with them by not looking at them. If a car pulls up beside a student, do not get in.

Young people might be subject to a sexual approach. Try to avoid this by moving away from the person or by loudly yelling at the person to intimidate him or her. Also, wear discreet clothing.

In the event of an actual assault, the student should first notify the host parents. Then the family can take over and notify the police, AFS and arrange for a medical check-up.

If you realize that someone is following you, try to go to a public place (a shop, a restaurant) and ask someone for help.

EMERGENCIES

The role of military or police authorities may vary from country to country. Each country is different.

In most countries adolescent boys are more likely than girls to find themselves being questioned by the police or other civil authority officers. AFS advises that you show respect and cooperation with the authorities, even though you may be innocent of any crime and think that you are being treated unfairly.

Should such a situation occur before you learn the local language properly, it is unlikely that you will understand what is being said by the authority figure. In general, the best advice would be to say that you do not understand what is happening and identify yourself as an exchange student. It is advisable for students in Denmark to always carry their health insurance card (Yellow Card) and a copy of their passport,. This is important not only in the event of being questioned by authorities, but also in the unfortunate event of a personal accident or if you become a victim of a crime and may not be able to effectively communicate.

In the case of an emergency you should try to call your host family, the local contact person or the AFS national office. The number of AFS Interkultur's office is **38 34 33 00**. In case of an emergency you may call a mobile phone after working hours (10 am to 3 PM) - the number is referred to on the answering machine. There is also an emergency number that you can dial anywhere and it is "**112**", Through this number you can be connected to the police, the fire department and/or an ambulance. Abuse of this number may be punished with a fine.

In case of a national emergency the student should follow the advice of the government or the local authorities. The national AFS office will immediately contact the students in order to provide the necessary help.

Denmark is a small quiet country, away from any international center of tension. You should be aware however, that there is a potential risk of international terrorist actions everywhere in the world.

CONCLUSION

The best general advice AFS can recommend regarding issues of personal safety are:

- Get to know the host culture well through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, your friends, and the AFS local contacts.
- Take seriously any concerns that your host family and school have expressed and follow their advice.
- As stated in the participation document you sign prior to leaving home, the national AFS office will make recommendations and give guidelines for physical welfare and security. Take this advice seriously and follow these guidelines.

We hope you will enjoy your AFS Experience in Denmark, and we hope that you will do your best to get the most out of your stay, and the life in your host family, while you are here.

Best regards

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