

# WELCOME TO DENMARK

- information about your exchange year in Denmark



<b>WELCOME TO DENMARK</b> .....	3
Get an idea about Denmark.....	4
<b>ENGAGE YOURSELF AND RISE TO THE CHALLENGE</b> .....	8
What to expect.....	8
Prepare for great expectations.....	8
The intercultural challenge – this is what AFS is about.....	9
Language: Start learning Danish.....	12
<b>YOUR AFS PROGRAM</b> .....	13
Your host family.....	14
School.....	16
AFS Activities.....	18
<b>TIPS AND INFO</b> .....	20
Your AFS-network.....	20
Responsibilities and obligations to AFS and Denmark.....	21
Emergencies – ask for help.....	23
Stay safe – think, ask and talk about it.....	23
What to bring.....	24

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## WELCOME TO DENMARK

AFS Denmark is excited to welcome you to **your intercultural exchange** year in Denmark. We are looking forward to meeting you soon. Being an exchange student with AFS is a unique and life changing experience: Get ready to meet new people, learn more about Danish culture as well as your own culture.

AFS volunteers, your host family and your local chapters are eager to meet you and will be dedicated to help you understand our culture and yourself, so you will get a positive unforgettable experience during your intercultural exchange year. You will be the one writing your unique story by carefully choosing the pieces with which you want to fill in this year.

AFS is a volunteer driven organization with the goals to obtain better intercultural understanding and competences for everyone involved. You are important because these goals cannot be reached without your involvement.

Wishing you all the best,

**AFS Denmark**



# Get an idea about Denmark



## Quick facts

**Geography:** Denmark consists of two major islands, 400 smaller islands (79 inhabited) and one peninsula. Longest distance by car: 6 hours from north to south.

**Climate:** We have 4 changing seasons with temperatures ranging from -10 to 30 degrees, and plenty of rain.



5.7 million



Capital: Copenhagen (1.3 mio. people)



Danish kroner (DKK). 1 euro = 7,5 dkr

### Most popular sports:

Adults:



Children/youngsters:





## Everyday life

Denmark is a confluence of modern, cosmopolitan cities; simple, historic architecture influenced by Nordic tradition with fairy-tale villages, town markets, country churches, and castles. Denmark is a flat country with moors, lakes, farmlands, and woodlands, and traffic-free pedestrian streets.

**The Danes** are known for being cosmopolitan, well-educated and open-minded people. Danes enjoy biking, so they made bicycle highways! Danes value their personal space and love to be cozy and comfortable - following the concept of 'hygge'.

**Food:** The most popular Danish lunch is a traditional open sandwich, called smørrebrød. At dinner time the family is normally gathered around the table enjoying a wide variety of meat and vegetables.

Did you know, that 9 out of 10 danes own a bike?

**Public transportation** is widely used getting from one end of the country to the other or getting around in town.

**Equality** is a key word in Denmark. The vast majority of people belong to the middle class, and the percentage of poor people is low. The idea that everyone should have equal opportunities is among other things reflected in the health care system as well as in the educational system. Students can study for free and receive financial support from the state. Health care is provided through our taxes and Danes have free access to health care.

**Religion** is in general not a big thing in Denmark and the country is among the less religious countries in the world. Although the majority of the population are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, most people do not practice religion in their everyday life.

Denmark is a monarchy  
- our Queen Margrethe has  
been the monarch since 1972





## Happiest country in the world?

Denmark has for years been ranked as one of the happiest countries in the world. There are many explanations as to why a relatively large part of the population is content and happy.

Here are some of the basic values and terms that describe life in Denmark. You will experience how they may influence your everyday life in both school, home and relationships.

## Find more info...

We encourage you to prepare yourself and investigate further interesting facts about Denmark, Danish culture and language through:

- the internet
- the library
- newspapers and magazines
- Danish music
- Danish comics etc...

... and meet Barby

from the YouTube-channel Geography Now. He makes a very correct (and funny) description on **life in Denmark** from a foreigner's perspective:



Click the picture above, use the url: <https://goo.gl/NlvQyc> or search for the video Geography Now Denmark on YouTube



# Engage yourself

## and rise to the challenge

### What to expect

Are you ready, excited or scared about your exchange year?

You can expect:

- an exciting, fun, challenging and life changing year
- meeting people and making friends from all over the world
- an extended family
- not to be able to imagine what lies ahead of you
- care and support by dedicated volunteers
- an opportunity to gain cultural knowledge and consciousness

Prepare yourself to take part in your own and other people's learning journey, and prepare yourself to change by engaging, sharing and reflecting on your experiences and challenges. If you adjust, adapt and integrate with an open mind, you will learn a lot about our culture as well as about yourself. And by the way:

AFS will **support** you all the way.

### Prepare for great expectations

We hope that you cannot wait to learn about Danish culture and language, and that you will be determined to take responsibility for your exchange experience by becoming part of your host family and your Danish network. Let them become the most important people in your life during the next year.

We expect you to:

1. Learn Danish
2. Engage yourself in school:  
Danish students are taught to take responsibility for their own learning. Don't expect the teacher to take action for your lack of participation in class or low grades.
3. Be part of your family; they are the most important people in your everyday life. The cultural meeting takes place in your host family.
4. Seek friendships and share your experiences with others.
5. Be active by attending sports or pursuing your interests. This is the best way to meet new friends as well.
6. Engage yourself and rise to the challenge; it will sometimes be hard, but you will grow from it!



## The intercultural challenge – this is what AFS is about

### Connecting lives, sharing cultures

Being on an AFS exchange means being part of something that is bigger than yourself. Cultural exchange is a two-way street.

Your host family, Danish friends, teachers and classmates at school are also experiencing an intercultural exchange. Your willingness to talk and share your culture is therefore important for them.

**Cultural exchange** is about sharing experiences. It is mutual.

### Your achievements

During your exchange stay you will gradually understand what it means to belong to another culture with different values.

You will be able to see your own culture and your host culture from the outside. What your host family and friends in Denmark take for granted, may be surprising and new to you.

What you take for granted at home, may suddenly become clear to you as something culturally defined.

Your beliefs may challenge the beliefs of people around you. Stereotypes or prejudices that your host family may have had about your culture, may challenge you. Your ideas about Danish people will probably also be challenged along the way.

This might all be overwhelming, but something you will definitely learn and grow from. You will learn new skills and abilities to change perspectives, while adapting to a new culture and experiencing cultural differences.



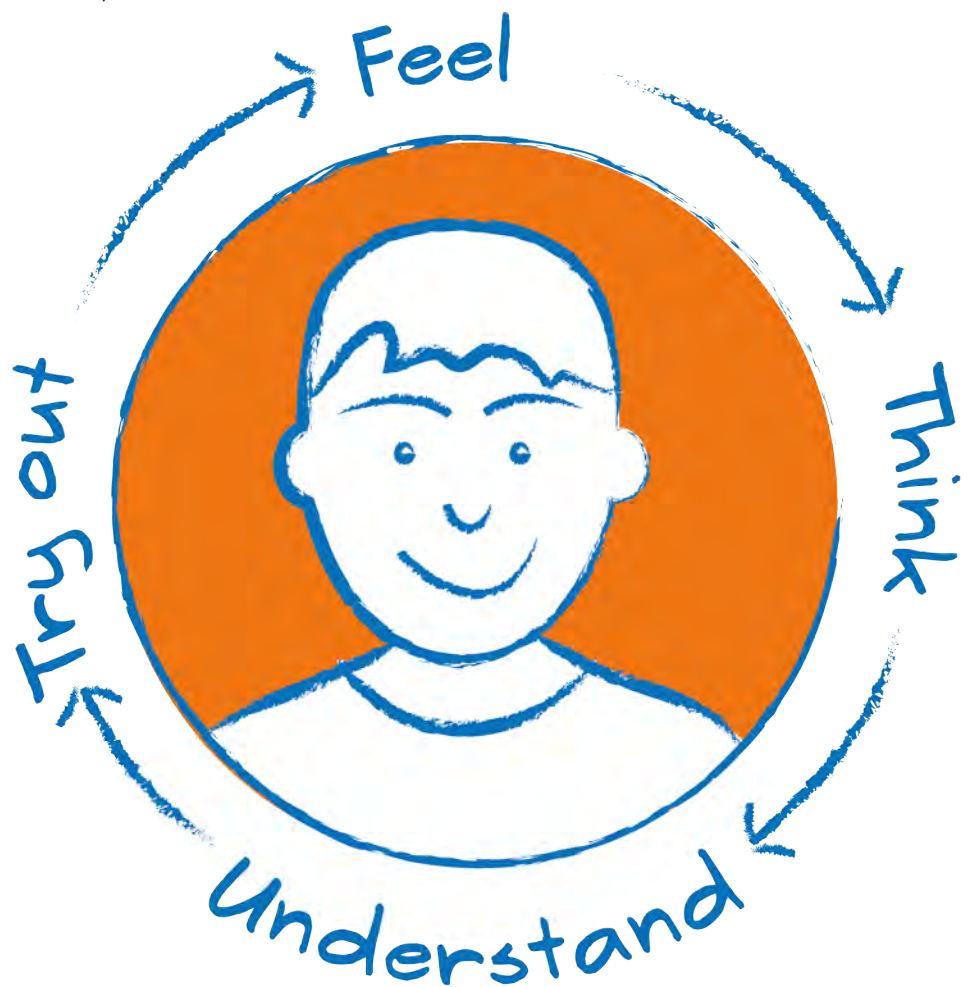
## Involve yourself

- and focus on your new life

It is up to you, how and with whom you choose to involve yourself. Ask your host family or contact person for advice regarding how to adapt into our culture in the best possible way.

Share your adaptation challenges with your local chapter, and remind yourself that adjustment issues are quite normal and natural.

We know by experience that too much contact with your family or friends at home may increase your homesickness, loneliness or feeling of difficulties.



Have you asked QUESTIONS yet?

Take a step back, observe and ask questions. You may find this challenging at first. But you will soon realize how it will improve your intercultural learning and your life in Denmark.

## Your experience through the AFS-year

During your stay one thing will be certain: you will be challenged.

Prepare yourself for the feeling of not being able to recognize yourself and your reactions. This is normal.

Students experience their exchange stay differently. Excitement, exhaustion, homesickness and confusion are normal feelings. It is important that you talk with your host family, friends and contact person about your feelings, so that they can help you and support you along the way.

It is not unusual to have small or big personal challenges during your stay. These challenges often grow halfway through your stay, and AFS define them as a natural "cultural shock" which might make you feel tired, confused and uncomfortable. Give yourself time to digest the challenges and ask for help to understand your reactions.

Most importantly, express your feelings and thoughts to the people around you. At the mid-stay camp you can share your experiences with other AFS'ers, and the experienced volunteers in your local chapter will also be ready to support you.

Challenges are quite normal and they offer you the possibility to learn, understand and discover new things about yourself. We promise you that your challenges will arise and disappear again.



How can you prepare to meet another culture?

- Being curious and interested in exploring your own, as well as the new culture, is crucial.
- Think about what matters to you and how you can share this with others: music, books, art, interest in politics/history, sports etc.
- Think about, how you usually cope with different issues: Do you go for a run? Call a friend?
- At the same time be open to other people's stories and views.
- Keep your ears and eyes open to what is around and be mindful.

Your host family, local chapter, contact person, school and volunteers on AFS-camps: AFS supports you!



## Language: Start learning Danish

It is important that you already now start learning Danish to prepare yourself for your new life in Denmark. Upon arrival you will attend 8 weeks of intensive online, interactive Danish course to help you kick start your Danish language.

We expect you to learn Danish during your exchange stay. Of course you will be relying on English in the beginning of your stay, but you should gradually begin to speak more and more Danish.

We want it to be a fun and exciting experience for you to learn our language, so venture into learning Danish and do not be

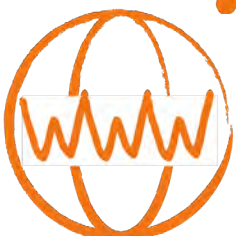
hard on yourself when you make mistakes; focus on communicating the message!

You will get the most out of your cultural exchange when you master Danish as you will be learning much more about Danish culture and people that way. Language is the code you need to learn, to understand e.g. jokes and song lyrics, which again will give you a deeper insight into Danish culture and values.

Once in Denmark, you will most likely be offered an additional language course after the 8 week's online course. Allow 200\$ in your budget to be spend on additional language lessons/tuition.

### Tips to language learning

1. Be courageous and believe that it is alright to be a beginner.
2. Don't focus on mistakes. It is better to start talking. You will eventually learn the grammar!
3. Put up goals for yourself. For instance: "By the end of September I want to be able to have a simple conversation in Danish".
4. If you don't know a specific word, don't stop talking. Use another word instead or use the English word. You can also use body language.
5. Repeat words and sentences, so you learn them by heart. Sum up what you have learned so far.
6. Organize a language "tandem" with a native speaker, who is interested in learning your mother tongue. You speak, for instance Spanish, for half an hour and Danish for half an hour twice a week. This way you will both be learning a language.
7. Take notes when you learn new words and sentences.



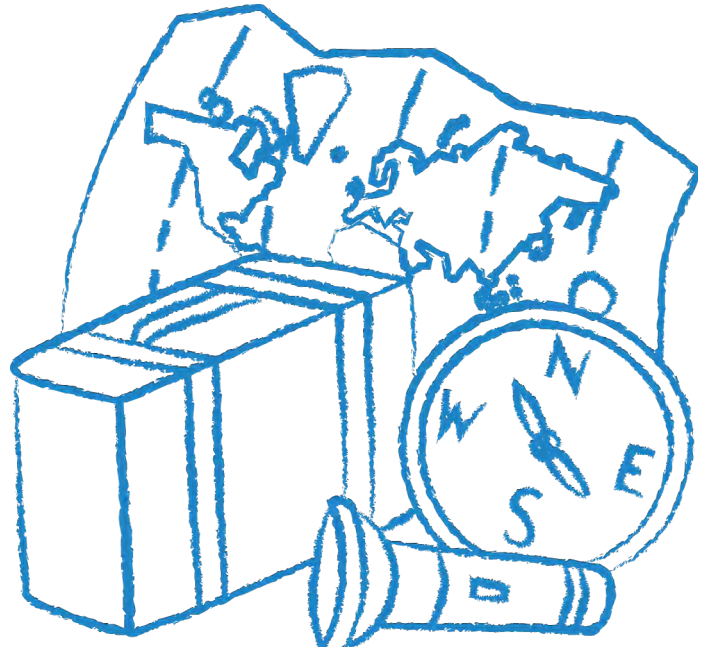
These are links to learn Danish online free of charge:

- [onlinedansk.ventures.dk/emneside.aspx](https://onlinedansk.ventures.dk/emneside.aspx)
- [lexin-billedtema.emu.dk/billedtema/sprog/engelsk.html](https://lexin-billedtema.emu.dk/billedtema/sprog/engelsk.html)
- [www.duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com) or the app

# Your AFS program

## AFS will give you:

- New friends from all over the world
- A Danish host family
- A Danish host school
- Interactive online Danish course
- Orientation camps during the year
- Activities in your local chapter
- A local contact person



## Your host family

Host families in Denmark, like all AFS host families worldwide, are volunteering and are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

Interculturel exchange goes both ways. This means your host family may also experience intercultural challenges just like you.

You can live anywhere in Denmark, including Greenland and Faroe Islands, however, you will likely be in a rural or suburban area.

## Life in a typical Danish family:

### Values

- Punctuality, planning and responsibilities.
- Sharing daily life with one another.
- Trust and confidence.

### Family types

- Both parents work full-time and are often away from home during the day.
- Small school children are used to travel by themselves.
- Family members are treated equally.
- Parents, teachers and elders are usually referred to by their first name.
- Each family member contributes and takes part, also in the house chores.

### Free time activities

- Parents are usually very involved in their child's school life and activities. Expect to share your experiences in school with your host family.
- All family members often attend sport clubs or other local activities after work and school.





## Ask questions!

Making an effort to understand your host family's values, routines and roles will help you get to know what they expect from you.

Ask as many questions as possible in your new family! It's considered respectful behavior and shows your interest and willingness to understand their culture.

What can I do to show my appreciation?

What do I expect from myself? Or from my contact person?

What do I expect from my host family?

How do I share my concerns?

Who understands me well in Denmark?

What questions can I ask?

How may I share my background to help my host family understand where I come from?

Do I prioritize my time well between my host family and friends?

How do I adjust to live in my host family?

What is important to me?



## School

Danes are proud of our welfare system. Most kids and young people go to public schools, which are all accepted and considered high level academically.

The Danish school system allows you to discover how Danish youth life is. The school year stretches from early August to late June. And a normal day is from Monday to Friday from 8am to 3pm.

You will enter either 9th or 10th grade in primary school (folkeskolen), first or second grade in High school (gymnasium) or a Vocational school. This is depending on your academic records and age. We try to find the best solution for you to have success in your new school.

### Vacation breaks:

- Autumn (October break)
- Christmas (between Christmas and New Year)
- Winter (February break)
- Spring (April break)
- Summer (from late June to early August)

### Grades

Schools are not obligated to give exchange students grades, but you may ask the school for a statement or transcript at the end of the year.

### Attendance and exams

While you're in school it is expected that you attend classes, do your homework and hand in all your assignments on time. Failing to do this, you may risk your school placement. Your school has a counsellor, who is ready to support you if you fail classes or have difficulties.

We strongly advise you to sit your exams at the end of your school year. This will complete your intercultural experience and make you proud.

### Trips

Your school may offer you to join a school trip to another European country. You don't have to join the trip. If you choose



to attend you should count on spending approximately US\$ 600.

### Vocational work experience

Work experience is part of the Danish Primary school's curriculum, and lasts for one week. If you do not wish to sit the exams, you may also be offered to do Vocational work training (Erhvervspraktik) instead, while your fellow students study for their exams.

Here you will volunteer and work in a business or office in your local community and learn more about the Danish work life. Ask your local chapter or host family to help you find a company or place where you can do your vocational training.

### About your stay in Denmark

You are an **exchange student with AFS** on a temporary residence permit. This means that you have obligations and responsibilities towards AFS and Danish immigration laws.

Your Danish residence permit requires that you **ATTEND** school, but does not allow you to work while staying in Denmark (unpaid work experience is ok).



#### Tips:

In the Danish schools interaction and discussions are a very important part of the everyday life.

Be ready to have open discussions with teachers and for a lot of group work with the other students.



## AFS activities

### National camps

You will attend 4 camps during your AFS program:

- Ankomstlejr – Arrival Camp (August)
- Efterårslejr – Post Arrival Camp (October)
- Vinterlejr – Mid Stay Camp (February)
- Afskedslejr – End of Stay Camp (May or June)

AFS has an educational approach to your experiences. We are organizing AFS camps with experienced volunteers, who have committed themselves to get to know and understand your culture, as well as teach you about ours.

All camps are a mandatory part of your exchange year. Volunteers will work to support you through your intercultural journey. You will enjoy meeting the other exchange students, have lots of fun and share as well as reflect upon your experiences.

### Your local chapter

Your local chapter is one of your most important contacts through your exchange year. They will arrange social activities and events, and will do their best to make you feel at home in Denmark.



To be continued  
back home with  
AFS

Activities with your Local Chapter



End-of-stay Camp



Your learning journey

Life with your Host Family



School



Local Chapter

# Tips and Info

## Your AFS-network



Did you talk to your [Host family](#)?



What about your [Contact person](#)?



Did you talk to your [Local Chapter](#)?

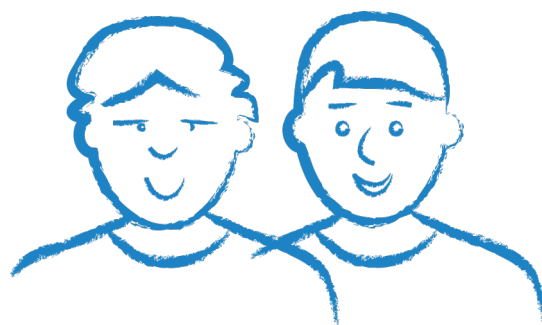


Or maybe the  
[AFS National Office](#)?

This model shows who you can talk to, if you experience any problems during your stay in Denmark.

Your Host family and your AFS network in Denmark are ready to help you.

So if you need help - just ask for it!



Calling your parents is the last option



## Responsibilities and obligations to AFS and Denmark

You may find Denmark flexible and tolerant in many ways, but there are still rules to follow. If disrespected or broken, it will lead to an immediate termination of your program.

This is an invitation for you to talk to your host family, your AFS contact person, or your support person at the AFS-office, if you have any doubts about which obligations and rules you must comply to.

### AFS rules

Your obligations towards AFS:

- Danish law\* must be respected
- Driving is not allowed (all vehicle requiring license)
- Consuming drugs is not allowed
- Hitchhiking is not allowed
- Pregnancy is not allowed

Visits from home:

Are NOT recommended and will most likely be rejected by AFS as they are considered an interruption to your and your host family's adjustment cycle. Your host family may feel obligated to accept a visit, and you will find it difficult to choose between two different sets of parents, friends and cultures. Always ask permission and involve your local chapter before agreeing, arranging or accepting a visit!

High risk activities:

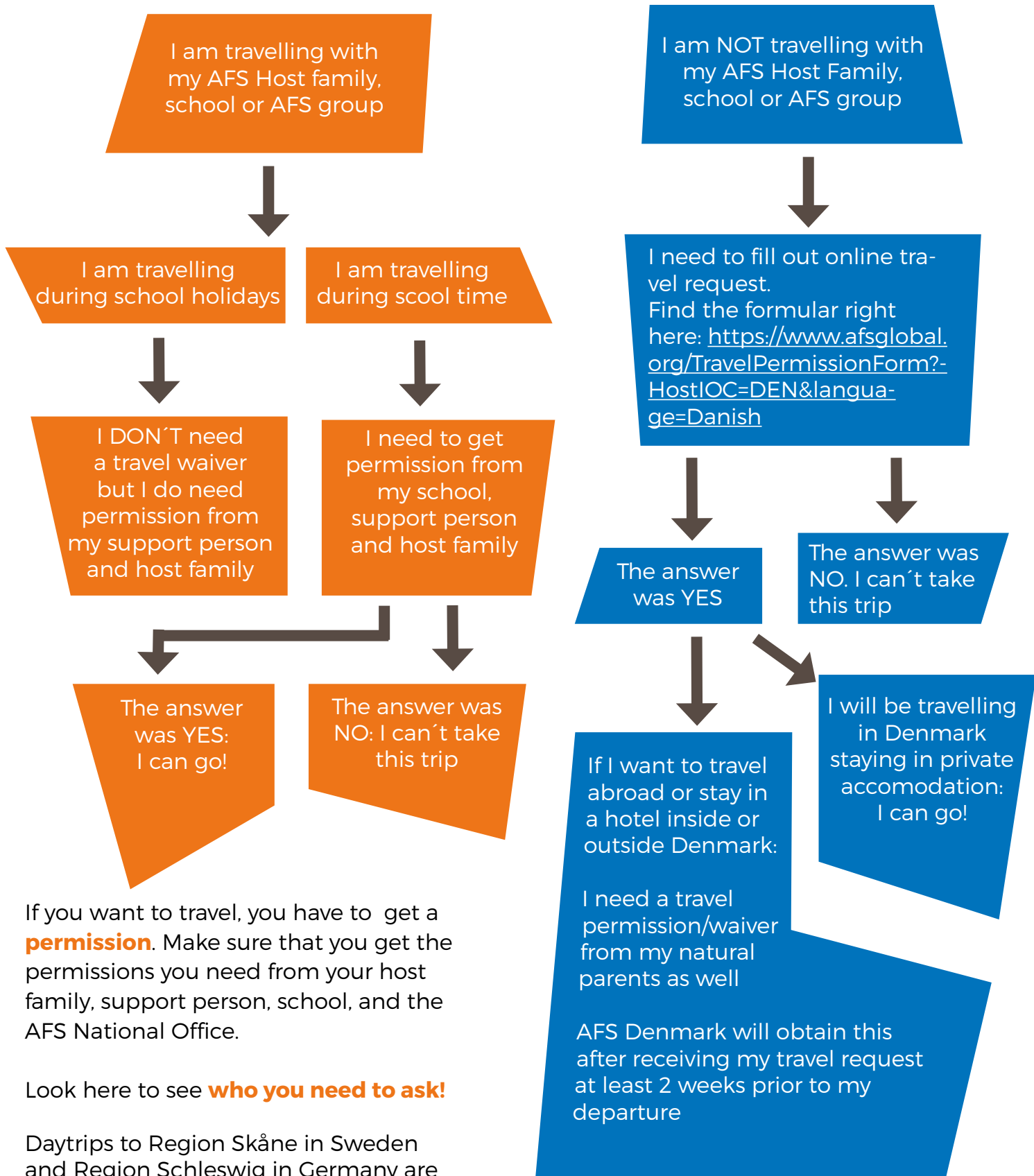
Some activities will be considered at high risk and will need your natural parents' approval on a signed Activity Waiver. Please contact your local chapter for more information on specific activities.

#### \* Danish Law

You are obliged to comply to Danish laws

- Drugs are illegal to consume in Denmark.
- Age limit for buying alcoholic beverages and cigarettes in shops is 16.
- Age limit for buying alcohol and cigarettes in a bar is 18.
- Legal driving age is 18.
- Legal sexual age in Denmark is 15.
- Age limit to get a tattoo is 18.
- AFS cannot protect you if you violate laws or get arrested during your year.

## Travelling



## Stay safe

### - think, ask and talk about it

During your experience you may find yourself in new and difficult situations, where you may not be aware of how you need to act and stay safe in our country.

Most exchange students find Denmark to be a quiet and safe country to live in. Still you may find situations where you feel unsafe, may not know how to react, or you may feel challenged in a foreign language.

#### Quick facts about safety in Denmark:

- **Public transportation** is considered safe.
- The minimum age of **sexual activities** is 15. You can be prosecuted if you have sex with minors.
- We recommend that you always use contraception if you have sex.
- It is not allowed for people under 16 to buy **alcohol**. And you have to be 18 years to buy strong alcohol. It is not legal to buy hash and other **drugs**.

And please remember: Danish people are always willing to help. Just ask :-)

#### Tips:

- Ask questions to your host family, teachers at school, friends and local volunteers.
- Talk to your host family about safety and how to feel comfortable and safe during your exchange stay.
- Use your common sense.
- Do not ignore feelings of uncertainty or feelings of having to compromise your own personal behavior, values or beliefs.
- Seek advice about what to do: When you are out at night? Alone at home? How to engage in relationships with new people?

## Emergencies

### - ask for help

In case of an emergency please do not hesitate to contact one of the options below. Please keep all the numbers below in your telephone.

#### IF YOU NEED HELP:

- Call your host family
- Call your AFS contact person or AFS local chapter
- DIAL to reach the AFS DUTY OFFICER +45 24 21 34 36 when not able to reach your host family or local chapter in emergencies and crisis related to your life and safety

#### IF YOU ARE IN DANGER:

- DIAL 112 (POLICE or AMBULANCE) when your life is in danger
- DIAL 114 (LOCAL POLICE STATION) to reach the local police station
- DIAL 118 (LÆGEVAGTEN) to reach a doctor in the hospital when sick and not able to reach your house doctor - typically on nights/weekends



## What to bring?

- ☐ Bring a variety of clothes, from winter coat to bathing suit
- ☐ Personal belongings such as glasses or contact lenses
- ☐ A mobile phone
- ☐ A laptop for school
- ☐ Your passport and copy of your residence permit (if any)
- ☐ Liability insurance
- ☐ Medications for personal use
- ☐ Gifts or souvenirs from your country
- ☐ Credit card or money for personal use— life in Denmark is expensive, so we suggest you count on bringing a minimum of 2500\$ for your year
- ☐ Courage, engagement, openness, and lots of smiles :-)

Welcome to Denmark 



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