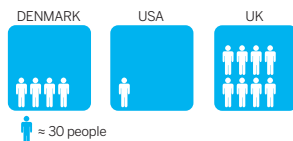




population per sq km



Denmark Today

Happiness & Harmony?

The Danes are, overwhelmingly, a happy bunch. If you believe those contentment surveys and liveability lists, Denmark is one of the happiest nations on earth with some of the best quality of life.

It's not hard to see why: despite the bumps of the Global Financial Crisis, it has among the highest per-capita GDP in the European Union and unemployment is relatively low. Education is free, and its social-welfare programs are the envy of many.

But there is more to the Danes' contentment. Stroll around Copenhagen or almost any Danish town and you'll experience some of the most harmonious civic spaces anywhere.

Look a bit closer, however, and – as in a Hans Christian Andersen fable – you'll find a darker side, too. As with other European nations, there's been a gradual shift to the political right in this famously liberal nation. Concern has grown over immigration – particularly from Muslim countries – and an erosion of traditional values.

For all the talk of assimilation and the comprehensive state effort to achieve it, racial, cultural and religious fault lines and prejudices remain. This challenge to tolerance has unnerved many Danes, while many of them avoid confronting their underlying resentment towards non-European newcomers.

Politics & Economics

After a decade of conservative rule and with a sluggish economy due to the Global Financial Crisis, Denmark's political pendulum has again moved left. In the 2011 elections, a new, centre-left coalition took government after a close election fought largely over which side was better equipped to steer the Danish economy out of its malaise. The new

- » Population: 5.56 million
- » Area: 43,098 sq km
- » Coastline: 7314km
- » Highest point: Møllehøj 171m
- » Unemployment: 4.2%
- » GDP per capita: \$36,600

Top Icons

- » **Queen Margrethe** The much-loved monarch
- » **Dannebrog** The Danish flag
- » **Hans Christian Andersen** The master storyteller
- » **Vikings** More than just marauders

- » **Legø** The plastic brick that changed childhoods
- » **Hygge** Cosiness and contentment

Top Tunes

- » **'Wonderful Copenhagen'** (Danny Kaye) Don't pretend you haven't been singing this to yourself since you got here
- » **'Barbie Girl'** (Aqua) Contender for most annoying song ever