

# 100 FACTS: DENMARK

Written by Lars Thomsen



Illustrated by Emilie Naulot

# Prologue

*“You are subscribed to a daily random fact\* about Denmark. To unsubscribe, write **STOP.**”*

*This was my conversation starter when we just started talking, so I had an excuse to text Yvonne each day. We kept this up for 100 days and thus the 100 facts was formed.*

*In dedication to Yvonne and our wedding, this book was created and given as a wedding gift to our guests and loved ones.*

\*Some facts might not be accurate but I tried my best to verify them.

# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank the talented illustrator of this book, Emilie Naulot. I am grateful to you for putting much time and effort even under tough conditions. I am having trouble finding the words to say thank you. Warmest wishes from Hong Kong.

Special thanks to Hugo Pfister and Alexandra Szeto who proofread the texts and gave valuable comments.

My biggest thanks goes to Yvonne. You brighten up my day like how the sun lights up the earth. Without you my life would be very different and less exciting. I am looking forward to our lives as husband and wife.

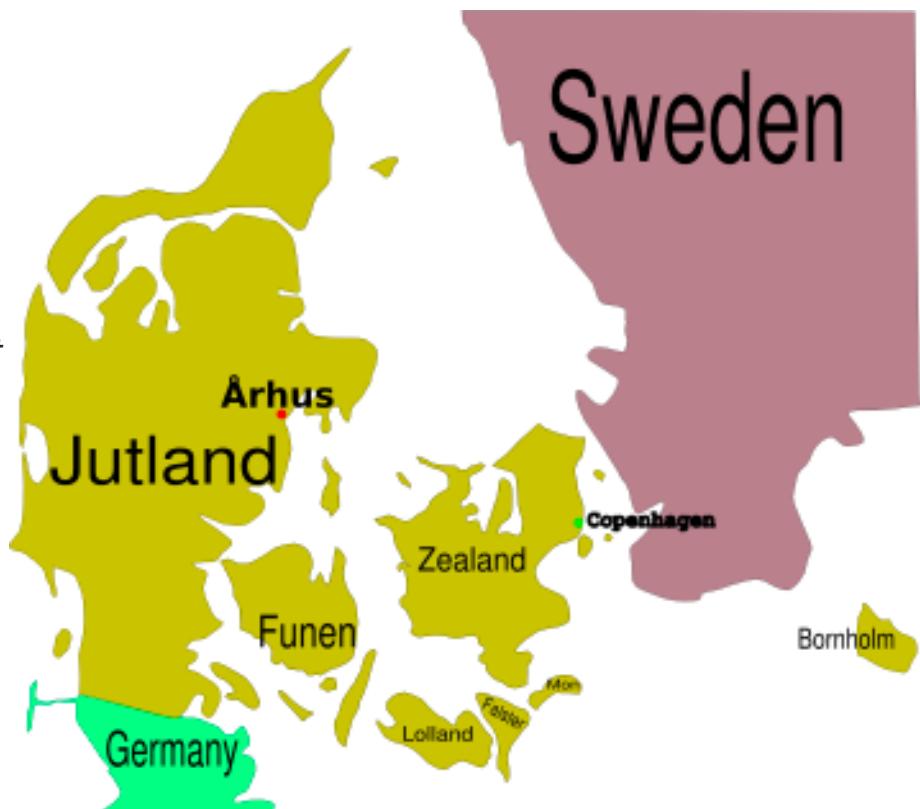
And lastly, thank YOU for being part of our wedding day and our lives. You mean a lot to both of us. We hope you enjoyed our wedding and that you will enjoy the book.

## FACT 1

# DENMARK IS AN ISLAND NATION

Denmark, which shares a border with Germany, consists of a peninsula called Jutland and 444 islands of which 76 are inhabited. The two biggest and most important islands are Funen (where H. C. Andersen was born) and Zealand (where the capital Copenhagen is located). Roughly the same amount of people live in Jutland and Zealand (2.6 million), whereas, only 0.5 million live on Funen. In Zealand, there is a bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden. Additional to the land border between Jutland and Germany, they have begun constructing a tunnel for better connections between Germany and Denmark.

*Fun fact: Due to the geography of Denmark, no matter where you are located there will at most be 52 km to the ocean. Therefore, all Danes have swimming lessons in public school, since we are surrounded by waters.*



## FACT 2

# THE DANISH FLAG

The Danish flag is called Dannebrog or “Danish Cloth” in English. The Danish flag has the Guinness world record of being the oldest national flag still used. It was officially adopted in 1625, but the story is older. Legend has it that the Danish flag fell from the sky in 1219 in Estonia under a battle. The flag was set to be a sign of God and the sight of it gave the Danish soldier new moral support to win the war, but the historical sources are sparse.

*Fun fact: The design of the flag is now known as the Nordic cross since it has been adopted by all Nordic countries except Greenland.*

*Fun fact: Danes use the flag for many different occasions since it is not seen as a political statement. We use it for celebrations, store sales, and as Christmas tree decorations.*

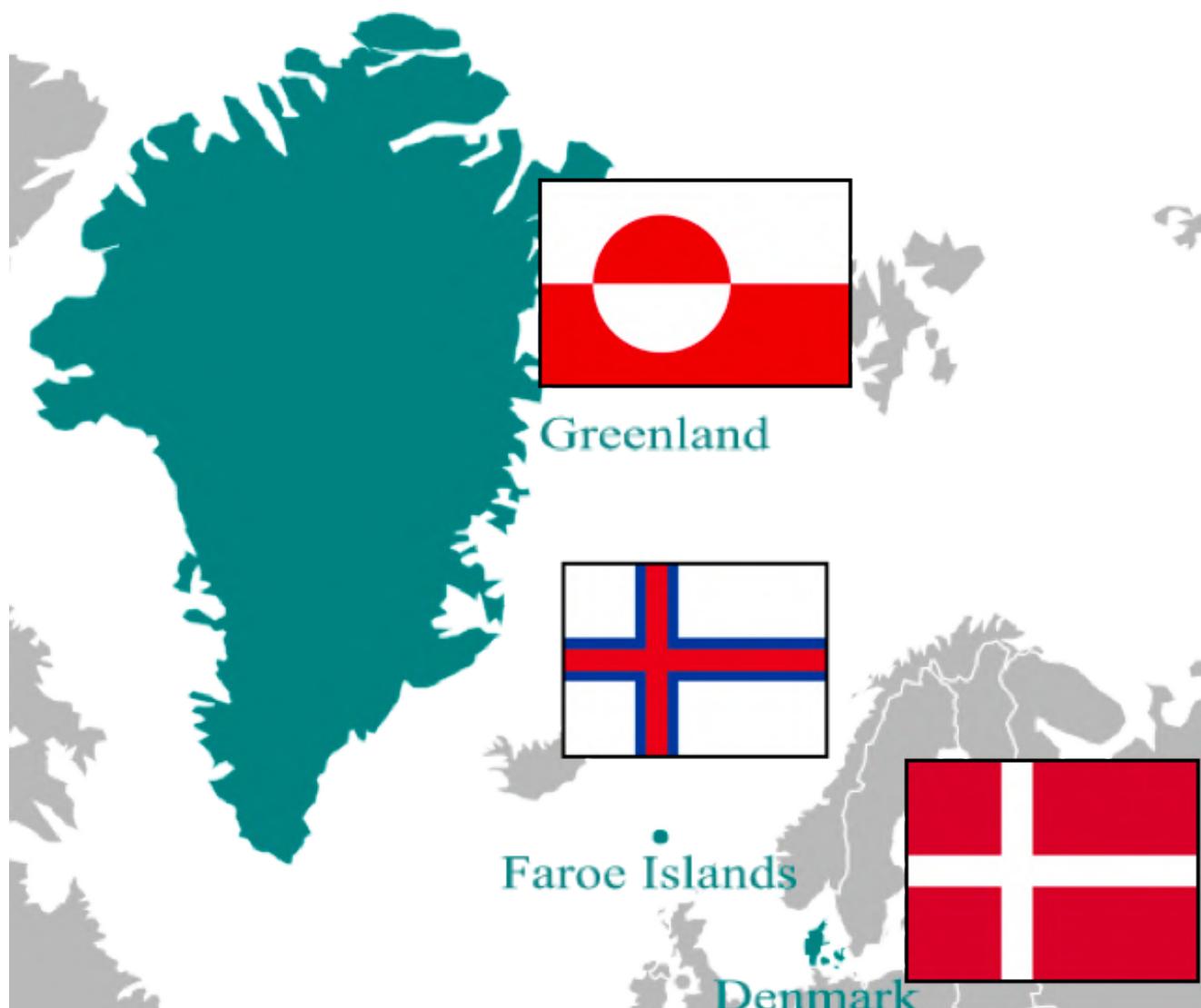
## OLDEST FLAG



# FACT 3

# SPOKEN DANISH

Danish is spoken as a native language by approximately 6 million people worldwide. Most of them are located in Denmark, but Danish is also an official language in both of the two former colonies, Greenland and Faroe Islands, which make up the Kingdom of Denmark. However, Greenland and Faroe Islands have their local languages in addition to Danish.



# FACT 4

# RIVERS IN DENMARK

In Denmark, we don't have any large rivers, our longest flow of water is Gudenåen, which is 158km. Therefore, it might more accurately be described as a creek instead. The river/creek with the higher volume of water is Skjern Å (named after my hometown). Skjern Å is only 94 km long, but it is wider, deeper and the flow of water is quicker, which makes it the biggest in terms of water.

*Fun Fact: Transportation on water has long been the best and most efficient way to transport stuff, so throughout history, most cities/villages are placed close to a water flow. Therefore, almost any city you see in Denmark (or the world) is close to some water flow. Later, cities grew rapidly due to railway connections as it became easier to transport goods by train.*



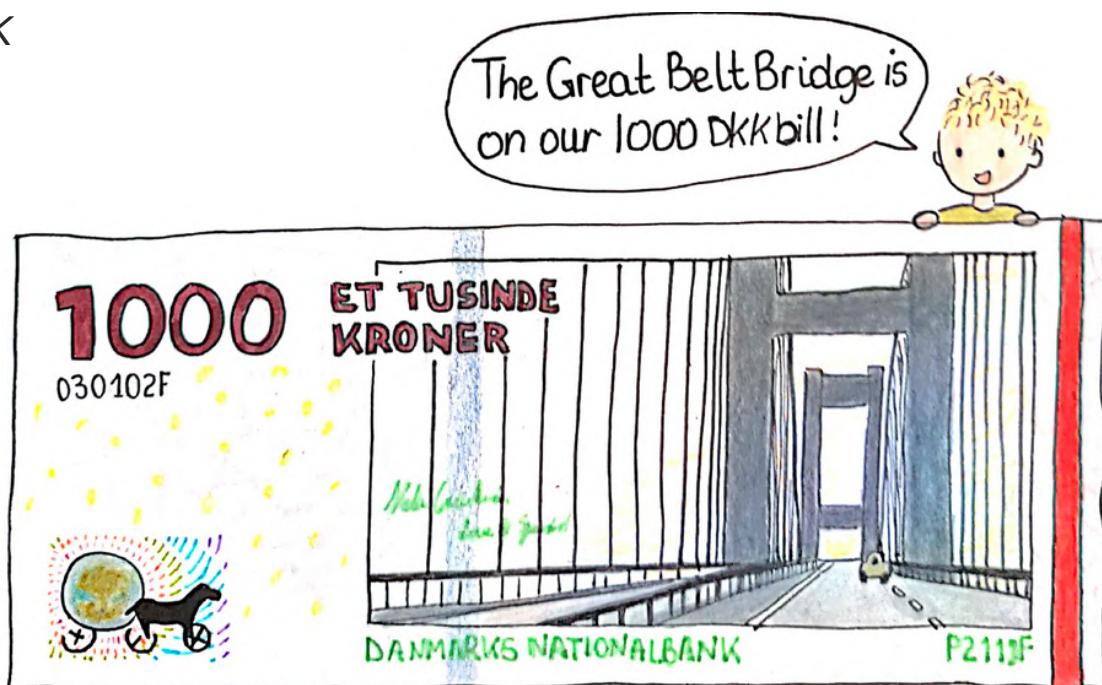
# FACT 5

# BRIDGES

# CONNECTING US

Denmark is an archipelago consisting of many islands. Therefore, bridges are vital as they connect islands to the mainland and are thus seen as a symbol of unification. Furthermore, the biggest building project in Danish history was the bridge between the two islands, Funen and Zealand, which is called the Great Belt Bridge. When completed, it should have been the largest suspension bridge in the world. However, due to delays, the Japanese finished their bridge before and it never had the world record. Currently, it is the 5th longest suspension bridge in the world with a length/span of 1624 meters between the two towers. The total length of the Great Belt Bridge is 6.8 km.

*Fun fact: In Denmark, we use Danish Krone (Crown) as the currency shortened as "DKK" internationally (or "kr" in Denmark). 100 HKD = 84 DKK*



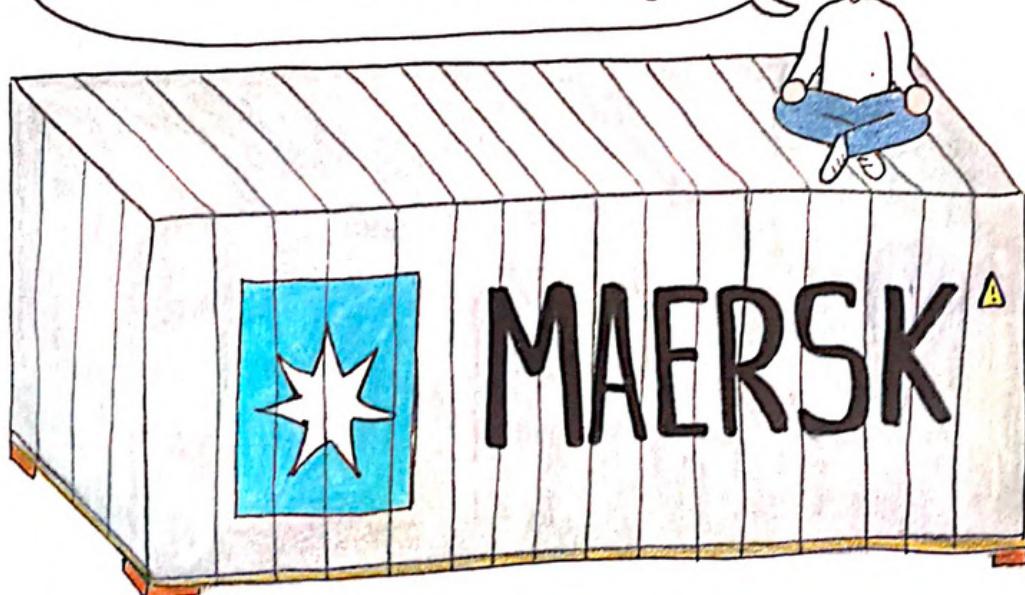
# FACT 6

# SHIPPING

Denmark is a major power in transporting goods on the water since we are surrounded by waters. Actually, 10% of globally traded goods are transported in Danish Shipping Containers with the biggest being MAERSK. This makes Denmark the 5th largest shipping nation only after Japan, Greece, China and Germany, and MAERSK is the world's largest container shipping company.



My grandfather was a cook on a ship, and he often sailed to Asia. His favourite story tells when he sailed to Thailand and the King boarded their ship, so he cooked for the Thai King !!



## FACT 7

# MOUNTAINS - WHAT ARE THOSE

Denmark is an extremely flat country. The highest point in Denmark is only 170 meters above sea level. This is just lower than the highest hill in Macau or just 30% the height of Victoria Peak in Hong Kong. With an average elevation of 34 meters above sea level, Denmark has the 5th lowest average elevation of countries in the world (disregarding small island nations).

*Fun fact: The most famous hill in Denmark is called: Himmelbjerget (The Sky Mountain in English). However, it is just 147 meters above sea level, so we are far from the skies.*



## FACT 8

# CYCLING IN SNOW - NO PROBLEM

Denmark is usually considered the second most bike-friendly country in the world after the Netherlands. Additionally, Denmark is very flat, so it is usually very easy to get around on a bike. Therefore, a large percentage use the bike to commute to work or in school. For that reason, even though Denmark is cold and rainy, 35% of people commute to work or in school using bikes. Whereas, in Copenhagen, nearly 50% of the daily commutes happen on the bike. Therefore, there are more bike commuters in Greater Copenhagen than in the entire USA.

*Fun fact: Around 90% of the population owns one or more bikes, which means there are twice as many bikes as cars.*



## FACT 9

# RAINY DAYS IN DENMARK

In Denmark, it rains or snow every other day. On average, Copenhagen has 170 rainy days with a total of 24 inches or 610 millimeters of precipitation (amount of rain) a year. Therefore, Copenhagen has the second most number of rainy days of all capitals in Europe. Brussels is number one with 200 days and London, which is being known for rainy days, only has 106 rainy days a year. However, when it rains in Denmark it only rains a little. Hong Kong gets 4 times more precipitation than Copenhagen in its yearly 140 rainy days.

*Fun fact: The coldest month in Hong Kong (January with 17 degrees) is similar to the hottest month in Denmark (July with 18 degrees).*

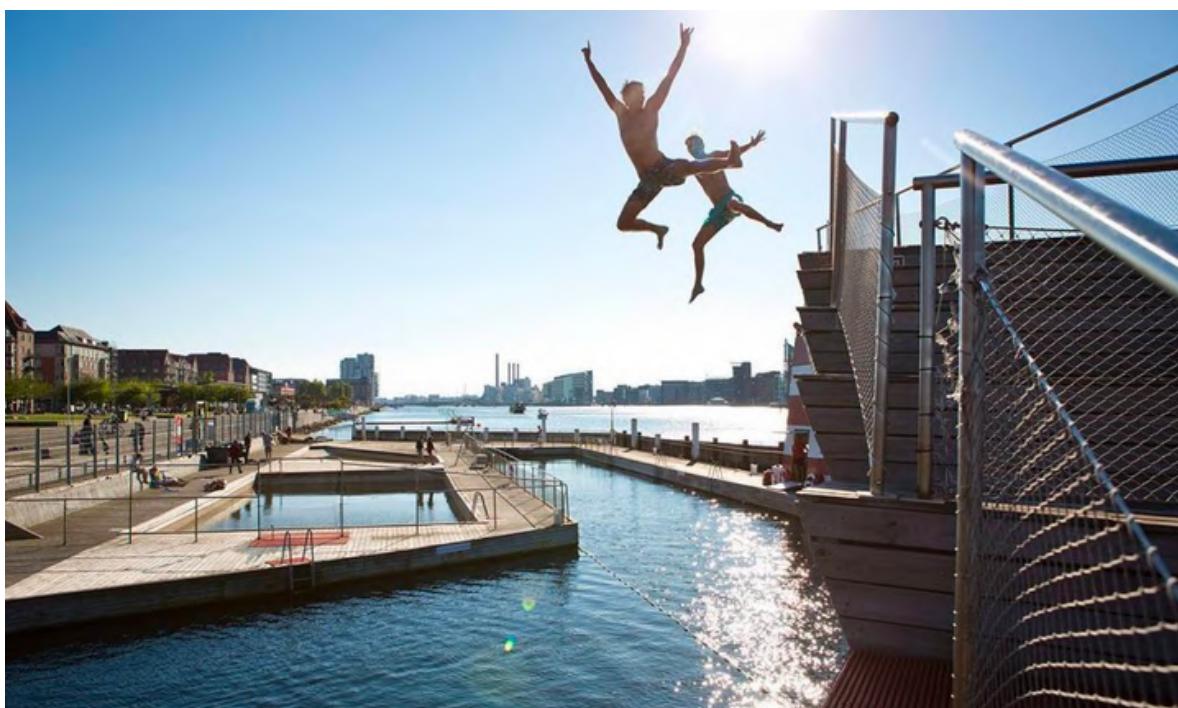


# FACT 10

# SUMMER IN DENMARK

Days with temperatures above 25 degrees are called official summer days in Denmark. The average amount of summer days in Denmark is around 10 days per year, but lately (due to global warming) we have seen more of them. E.g. 2018 where Europe experienced a heatwave, we had a record of 71 summer days. The year with the fewest amount of summer days was 1974 with only a single day above 25 degrees was recorded.

*Fun fact: The Danish weather is very mild compared to how northern it is located since it is surrounded by water. In the winter, the ocean heat up, so only a few days are colder than 0 degrees. In the summer, the ocean keeps the temperature below 30 degrees. However, we do experience the four seasons.*



## FACT 11

# WINDY DENMARK: WIND TURBINES

Denmark is a very windy country since it is surrounded by water. However, Denmark puts all that wind to good use. In the 1970s, Denmark was a pioneer in developing wind turbines. Roughly, 47% of the energy production is produced by wind turbines, which is the most in the world. To this day, Denmark remain a massive exporter of wind turbines around the world. Danish Vestas is one of the biggest and most famous wind turbine companies in the world, which was developed close to my hometown.

From 1924 to 1978, my great grandfather and my grandfather ran the windmill of my hometown. It was used to make flour, and also produce electricity. Today the mill is our local museum.



## FACT 12

# DANISH WELFARE - TAKE OUR MONEY

Denmark is often seen as a social-democratic country along with the rest of Northern Europe due to our welfare system. The welfare system in Denmark includes free healthcare, free school (including university; you get paid 6000HKD if you are over 18), 1 year of paid maternity leave, and more. These systems are expensive, so Danes pay some of the highest taxes in the world.



*Fun fact: The lowest and highest income tax is 40% and 56% compared to Hong Kong's of 0% and 15%. Additionally, we have 25% sales tax (0% in Hong Kong), so the Danes pay for all this extra welfare in our taxes. Our tax system is called: "Skat", which literally means "taxes" in Danish.*



# FACT 13

# DANISH DEMOCRACY

In Denmark, we have a representative democracy meaning we elect people to represent us in the parliament. In total there are 179 people in parliament from 14 political parties. Due to the many parties, there has not been a single part that had won a majority of votes since 1909. So the biggest party has to make a coalition with other parties to ensure there is not a majority against them (negative parliamentarian). The minority government also makes sure they have to cooperate with all parties across the political spectra to make laws, so we are not as highly polarised as in USA and UK (yet).

*Fun fact: The voter turnout in the Danish election is one of the highest in the world with 80.3%, and the Faroe Islands and Greenland each elect members for parliament.*



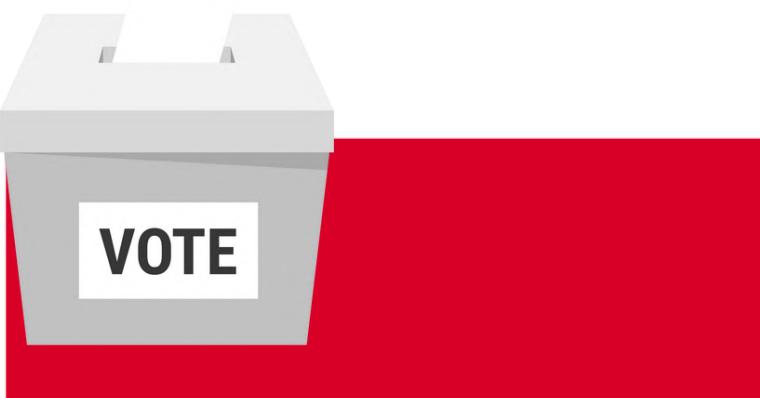
**FOLKETINGET**



## FACT 14

# VOTING RIGHTS IN DENMARK

After 1849, Denmark got its first constitution and went from a monarchy to a democracy. To vote, you had to be above 30, own a home, not receiving governmental grants for poverty, have no criminal charges, and most importantly be MALE. Thus only 15% of the total population or 72% of men above 30 were able to vote. In 1915, a new law gave women the right to vote as the 5th country in the world. Furthermore, in 1915, the age of voting was lowered to 25, and the rule about owning property was canceled. Also, only really bad crimes could strip one's right to vote. The voting age was lowered throughout history until 1978 where it settled on 18 years as we currently have. Also, you can no longer lose your voting right for any crimes you have committed.



# FACT 15

# NO NATIONAL DAY IN DENMARK

Denmark is one of only two countries in the world that do not have an official National day. The other country is Great Britain. To understand this, we need to know why countries have National Days. There are three primary reasons: obtaining independence (USA), having a revolution (France), or a great unification (Germany). Denmark and Great Britain haven't experienced such occasions. However, Denmark has something which resembles a National Day where we celebrate our constitution, but it is marked as a political day and not a unifying national day.



# FACT 16

# RELIGION

According to a survey, 19% of Danes said religion was important in their daily life - making Denmark the 3rd lowest nation. Additionally, Hong Kong is ranked 7th lowest with 26% not finding religion important in their daily life. Around 25% of Danes are atheist or agnostic, so people still identify as religious, but they just don't find it important in their daily life. Therefore, most Danes are what we call culture Christians where they only go to church for baptism, marriage, and funerals, and practice their faith at home.

*Fun fact: It is very uncommon to ask people about religion in Denmark as we see it as a private matter, and some might even find it rude.*



## FACT 17

# LEAST CORRUPT COUNTRY

According to the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, Denmark is the least corrupt nation in the world. However, recently there have been some scandals within the military and banking world, so we might dropdown. The small amount of corruption means Danes in general put a lot of faith in the government, other institutions, and each other, so we simply do not expect to be cheated or something bad to happen.

*Fun fact: In Denmark, it is normal to let your 6-year-old go to the playground alone with no supervision at all or let them go to a friend's place by themselves.*

*We even let babies sit in their carriers outside the building without much supervision (baby alarm and maybe visual sight) or even restaurants. So it is common to see baby carriers with a napping baby or empty when walking down the streets of Copenhagen.*



## FACT 18

# CORONA VIRUS IN DENMARK

According to a study, 95% of Danes think the government has done a good job handling Corona. Whereas, it is less than half in the US or UK. At the same time, 72% think the coronavirus has made Denmark more united, which is also the highest score among the 14 participating countries. The wide acceptance of how the government's handling of the situation is probably due to the Danes' high trust in institutions and government. Therefore, Danes might be more willing to accept the COVID-19 restrictions made by the governments since they believe the government wants what is best.

*Fun fact: Something which might have increased the feeling of uniting Denmark is that under lock-down, they started to do community singing, which was aired live in TV and you could appear over Zoom.*



## FACT 19

# DIGITALISING THE PUBLIC SECTOR

According to a United Nation study, Denmark has, for the second time in a row, the most digitalized public sector in the world ahead of South Korea, Estonia, and Finland. In Denmark, you can practically do everything online. You can pay your taxes, you can get married (fill the paperwork online, so you only need to go to church), you can even get divorced, you can book a hospital or doctor's appointment, and much more. Pretty much all shops (hairdressers, electricians, restaurants, do-it-yourself-stores) have a website where you can order, book, or see what they sell online.

*Fun fact: This digitalizing has crippled the Danish Postal Service as very few letters are sent from the public or banks, so they are running with a huge deficit.*



# FACT 20

# PARENTAL LEAVE

Denmark is usually ranked top 5 among countries in the world for parental leave. As a family, you have the right to 52 weeks of partly paid parental leave. The 52 weeks are structured as follows: The mother has the right to 18 weeks full payment starting 4 weeks before the expected date and 14 weeks after. The father has a right to 2 weeks of full salary parental leave. However, the remaining 32 weeks of parental leave is partly paid (53% of full salary), and it can be freely shared between the couple.

*Fun fact: In general, women take more parental leave, hence, more likely to miss promotion at work. They are also more likely to spend less time at their job and more at home with the kids. Therefore, it is suspected that parental leave contributes to the “pay gap” and it is debated if you should “force” men to take more leave. Update: Men now have 11 and women have 11+4 weeks of leave with a new law and they can freely share the remaining 26 weeks*



# FACT 21

# GREEN NEW DEAL

Denmark has, as the first and only country, made commitments by law (95% of parliament voted yes) to be climate neutral by the year 2050. Unlike other countries, Denmark will not use the highly debated emission offsets where rich countries buy carbon dioxide quotas from poor countries to be climate neutral. The law ensures that each year the government has to present how they will reduce the carbon dioxide gases and it has to be passed by the parliament. Therefore, all governments in the future will also be responsible to reach this goal.

*Fun fact: Denmark has a sub-goal to cut the carbon emission by 70% compared to 1990 where it was at its peak. The parliament is currently talking about making it illegal to buy new pure petrol cars in 2030, so it has to be electric cars, hydrogen vehicles, or a mix.*

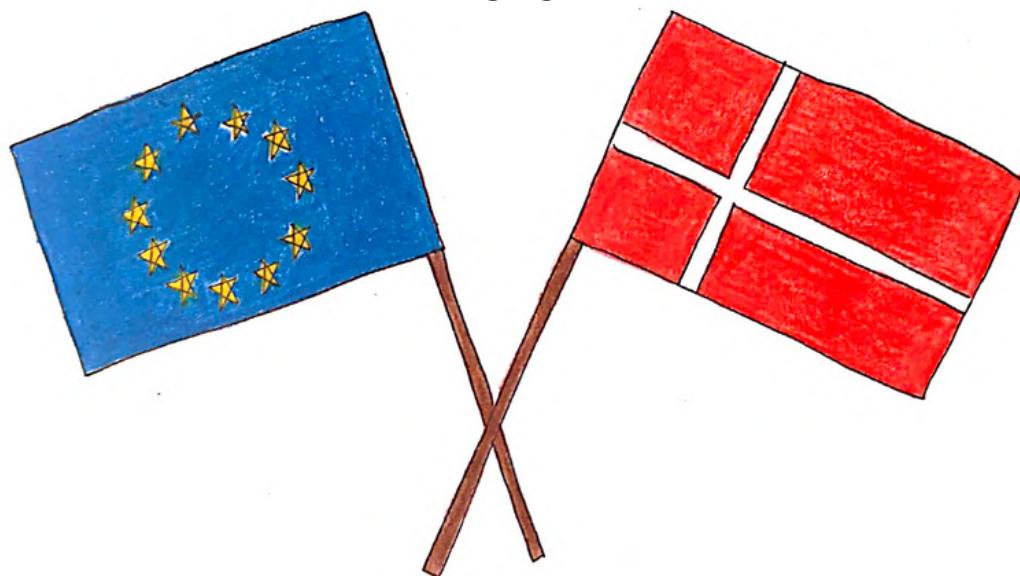


## FACT 22

# DENMARK IN EU

Denmark was one of the first countries to join European Communities (EC) which is now known as the EU. EC was founded in 1957 by Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, France, Italy, and West Germany, so they were able to trade coal, steel, and other stuff freely between each other. United Kingdom wanted to join EC and since the UK was Denmark's largest exporter they filed for membership at the same time, but got declined in 1961, and were approved later in 1973. Denmark is very skeptical of the EU and so is the UK. And Denmark almost singlehandedly stopped the European Union forming in 1993, by voting no to give more power to the Union. But an agreement was achieved that Denmark was exempted on four different things, most noticeably the Euro and defense policy.

*Fun fact: After Greenland gained some home rule in 1982, they voted themselves out of the EC due to fishing rights.*



# FACT 23

# DENMARK IN NATO

NATO stands for North Atlantic Treaty Organization. There are 30 current members in NATO and it has an important treaty/law, which says an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all. NATO was created in 1949 and it was founded by Denmark along with 11 other countries (9 European countries and USA and Canada). NATO is a response to the two world wars, which all started in Europe, and by having such a strong military alliance, they hoped it would keep the peace in Europe. So far, it has done so, but there has still been some civil wars in Europe after the Soviet Union fell and the former Soviet countries gained independence.

*Fun fact: Iceland threatened to leave NATO 3 times due to a fishing rights dispute with the UK, and due to Iceland's strategic locations a lot of pressure was put on the UK to stop the conflict. These disputes are known as the Cod Wars.*

*Fun fact: In 2009, the Danish Prime Minister stepped down from his position to be the general secretary of NATO, so, we got a new Prime Minister who wasn't elected.*



## FACT 24

# TRAVELLING IN THE WORLD

Currently, the Danish Passport is ranked 5th over the most powerful passports in the world since you can access 187 countries' Visa-free with it. The most powerful passport is Japan with 191 Visa-free entries. With the passport of Hong Kong, you can travel to 170 countries Visa-free making it the 19th most powerful passport. Denmark used to have the most powerful passport from 2006-2012 except in 2010 where it got second place.

Fun fact: We call the color of our passport Rødbede-farvede (English: Beetroot colored)



## FACT 25

# HAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

According to World Happiness Report, Denmark is the second happiest country in the world. We used to be the happiest until 2017, but Finnish people have overtaken us. Damn you, sauna enthusiasts! Our social welfare system means very few people struggle to bring food to the table to survive. And Denmark is an equal and classless society where most opinions are heard regardless of social status. For example, we don't greet people of higher status first when being in a group. Remember, we are only the happiest on average. Most people are content with their lives and neither super happy nor very sad. Thus, you won't find many over-the-top happy people in Denmark or Finland.

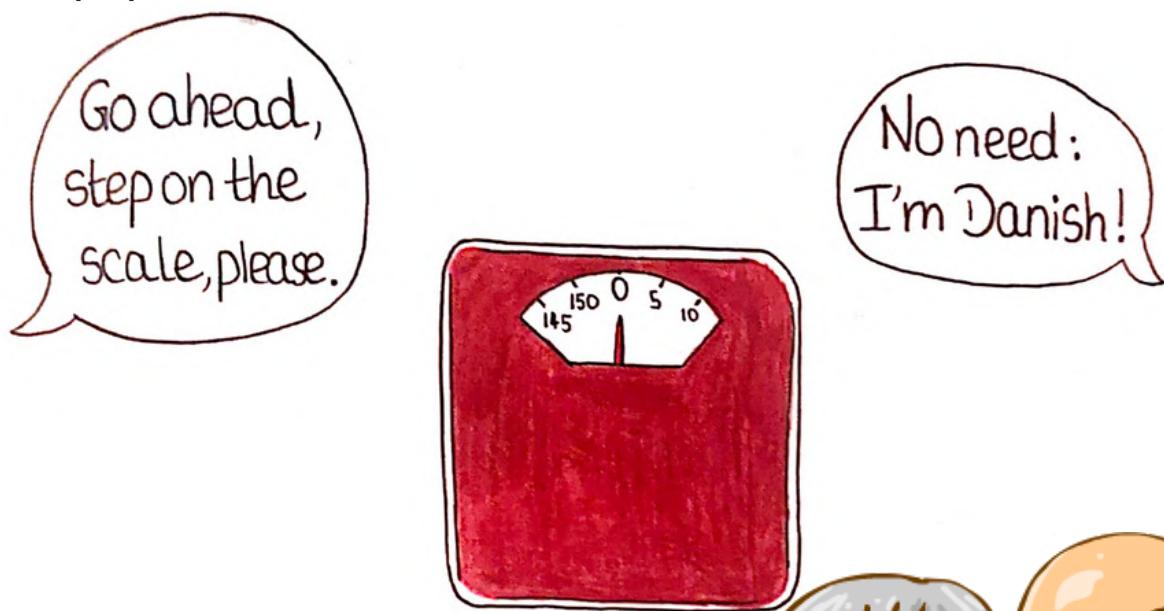
*Fun fact: The classless society has led to some diplomatic problems with China and Japan since we often don't send the chairperson to the meeting, but a specialist in the field. Some societies/cultures will see this gesture of not sending the chairperson (someone of high rank in the company) as being rude and degrading to their importance.*



FACT 26

# LEAST OBESE WESTERN COUNTRY

Denmark is the least obese western country with an average BMI of 25.3, which they share with France, Romania, and Switzerland. Also, Denmark has the lowest percentage of obese people (defined as  $BMI > 30$ ) in the EU with 19.7%. UK has the second-highest percentage in the EU where an entire 27.8% of their population has a BMI above 30.



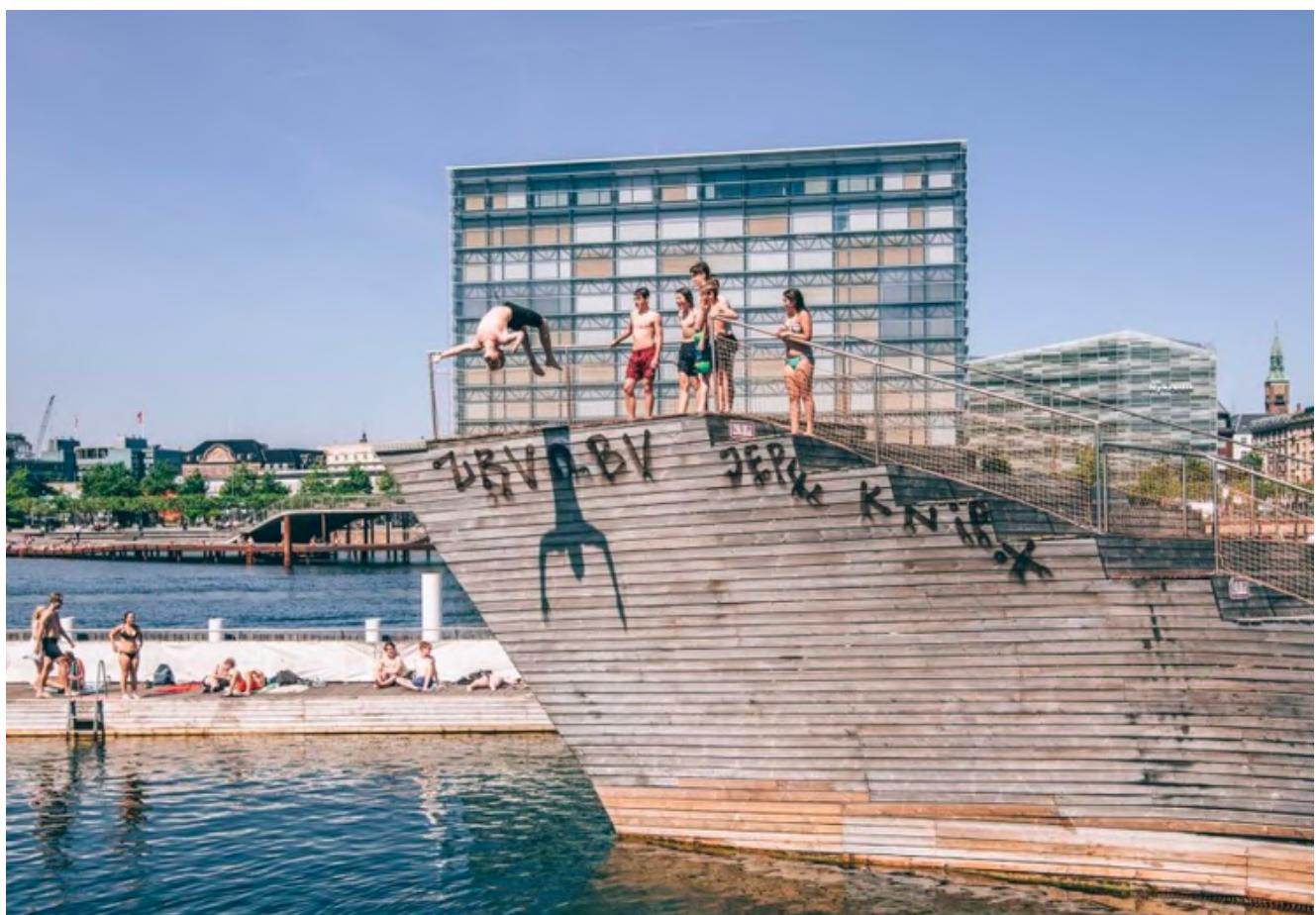
*Fun fact: Even though we are the least obese country, the average life expectancy of Danes is the lowest in western Europe, but still higher than Eastern Europe.*

FACT 27

# CLEAN WATER

In all areas of Denmark, people drink the water directly from the tap and it is considered very safe. Tap water in Scandinavia is considered to be some of the best and cleanest in the world.

*Fun fact: Not only the drinking water but also water in channels and rivers are so clean that you can swim in them. Therefore, in the Harbour of Copenhagen, the city council has made platforms, so you can easily access the harbor for swimming. The water in this area is tested often to ensure good water quality.*

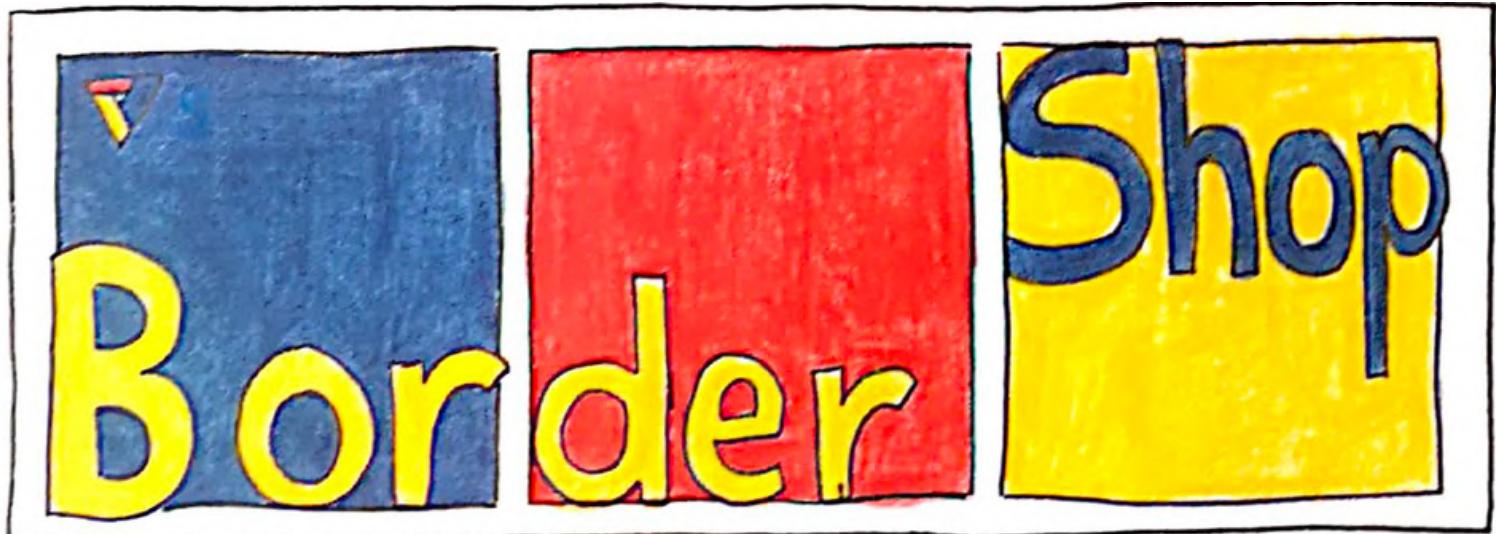


## FACT 28

# THE CHAIN OF ALCOHOL

In the Nordic countries except for Denmark, alcohol stronger than 3-5% alcohol is only sold in government-approved/owned shops. Alcohol is generally expensive in Nordic countries but most expensive in Norway. Therefore, people from Norway go to Sweden to buy cheap alcohol. People from Sweden go to Denmark and Danes go to Germany and Germans go to Poland or the Czech Republic to buy alcohol and so on.

*Fun fact: This movement of buying alcohol in neighboring countries has given us border shopping. The most visible kind of border shopping is along the German side of the Danish-German border where huge stores are selling mostly Danish items cheaply. All signs are in Danish, German, English, but the Danish signs are the biggest, so it feels like you are shopping in Denmark.*

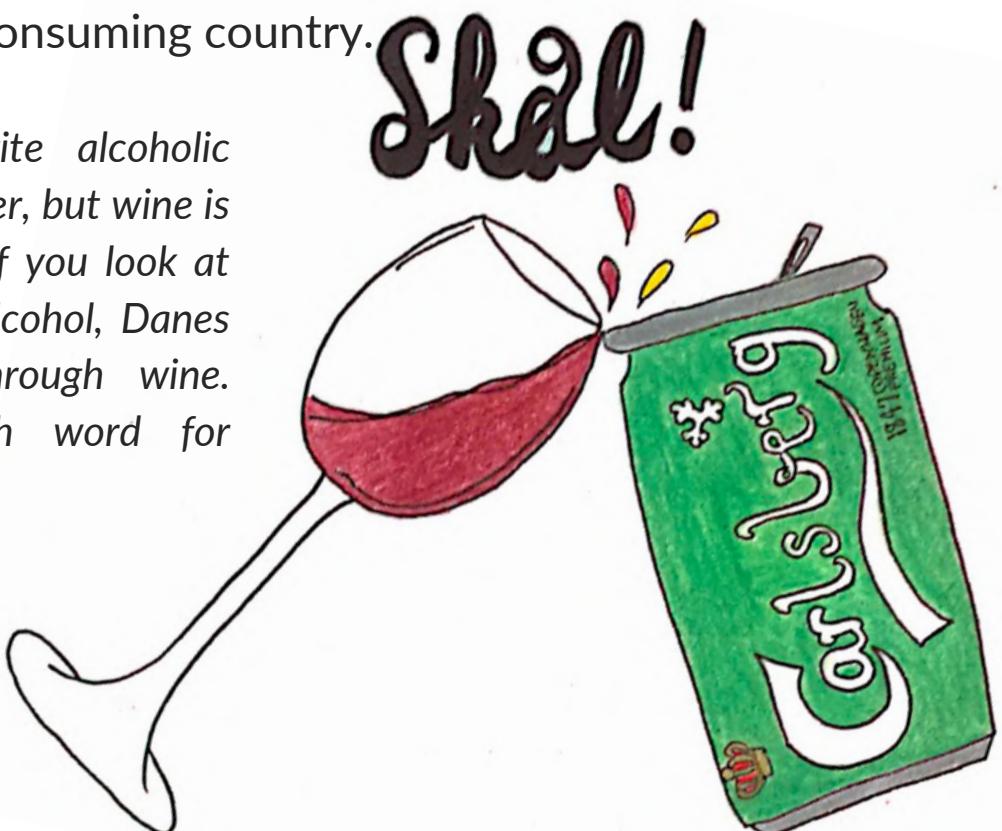


## FACT 29

# ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

There exists no minimum age for consuming alcohol in Denmark. However, you have to be over 16 to buy alcohol with less than 16.5% alcohol in stores and you have to be 18 to buy alcohol above 16.5% or to order at bars/restaurants. Also, the Danish 15-year-olds are known to be the most frequent and largest consumer of alcohol in Europe. The relatively low age restrictions for alcohol consumption are believed to cause the youth of Danes to drink so much so early. However, if we look at the entire population, Danes only consume 11.4 liters of pure alcohol per year on average which ranks Denmark as the 26th most alcohol-consuming country.

Fun fact: The favorite alcoholic drink in Denmark is beer, but wine is starting to catch up. If you look at the amount of pure alcohol, Danes get most alcohol through wine. SKÅL is the Danish word for CHEERS



FACT 30

# CARLSBERG - DANISH BREWERY

Carlsberg is the 4th largest beer company in the world and it is sold in over 140 countries. Carlsberg was established in 1847 in Copenhagen and it is named after the founders J.C. Jacobsen's son, Carl. In 1883, scientists of Carlsberg were able to isolate and grow a certain good yeast strain to brew beers, and after the discovery, they chose to freely share the yeast strain in the world. Therefore, this type of yeast is the most popular for brewing beers today, so Carlsberg has had a large impact on the industry.



*Fun fact: The scientists at Carlsberg were able to extract the original yeast discovered in 1883 from a 133-year-old bottle. The beer was named 1883 and you can buy it in stores.*

*Extra fact: The pH scale used to measure the strength of acids was developed in a laboratory under Carlsberg in 1909.*



# FACT 31

# LEGO



LEGO is probably the most famous Danish company. The first LEGO blocks were created in 1949 by Ole Kirk Christiansen in a small town close to where I grew up. LEGO comes from the Danish words LEg GOdt, which translates to play well. LEGO is sold around the entire world and is one of the most successful toys ever created. It is currently the number 1 top-selling toy brand in the world, selling for around 6.8 billion USD a year. Therefore, the family Kirk Kristiansen is the richest in Denmark with a net worth of 20 billion USD.

*Fun fact: If you put all LEGO bricks produced just in the year 2012 (45.7 billion pieces) side by side, you could make them stretch around the world 18 times.*

*Extra fact: There are currently 8 LEGOLAND (theme parks) around the world. The closest to Hong Kong is in Japan.*

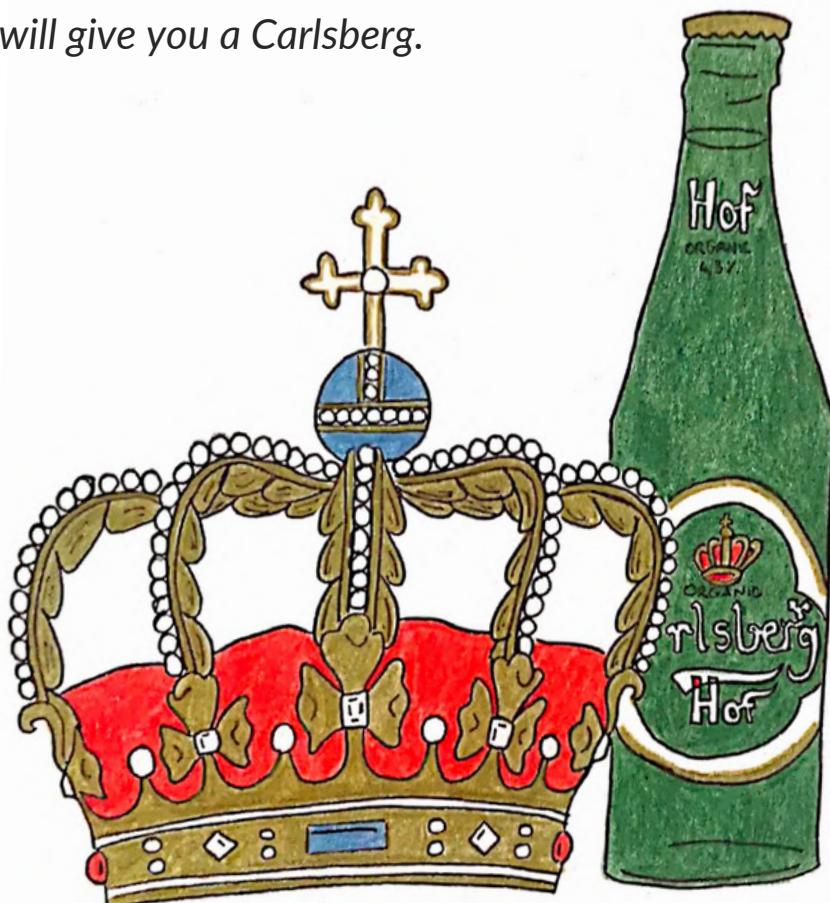


FACT 32

# ROYAL WARRANTS OF APPOINTMENT

Companies delivering to the Danish Royal Court can call themselves 'Kongelig Hofleverandør' (Royal Warrants of Appointment) and use the Danish Royal Crown in their advertisement. Around a 100 Danish companies are 'Kongelig Hofleverandør'.

*Fun fact: After Carlsberg redesigned their brand to include the royal crown, the beer got to be known simply as 'Hof' ('Royal Court'). A few years later, they started to include 'Hof' in their advertisement and even wrote it on the beer bottle. To this day, you can still go to a bar and ask for a 'hof' and the bartender will give you a Carlsberg.*



# FACT 33

# COAT OF ARMS

The Danish State Coat of Arms consists of three pale, blue lions wearing crowns with red lily pads in the background and a big Royal crown on the top. The Coat of Arms dates back to King Canute in 1194, so it is really old and has not changed much since. All of the Nordic countries have lions in their Coat of Arms. It is quite weird that we have lions in the Coat of Arms since lions have never natively lived in Northern Europe. So lions is used as a symbol courage, nobility, royalty, and strength.

*Fun fact: The Coat of Arms for Greenland is a standing polar bear and Faroe island uses a ram (male sheep).*



# FACT 34

# FREE PRESS

Denmark, as the first country in the world, made the press 100% free on 14th September 1770 (250 years ago) while we still had a monarchy. Beforehand it was illegal to say something negative about the monarch and everything was checked before it could be released as prints. Just like what is happening on social media, fake news started to spread slandering the monarch and Johann Friedrich Struensee (the king's doctor who was effectively in charge since the king was mentally ill). The total press freedom didn't last long. On 7 October 1771, a royal decree was issued that once again made writers and printers responsible for their publications. And on 20 October 1773, all political press should undergo review as well.

*Fun fact: It was Johann Friedrich Struensee's second law, which he made after gaining full control due to the mentally ill king. He probably did it since his book got censored when he was younger. He was hanged in 1772, so other noblemen could gain power and control the mentally ill king.*

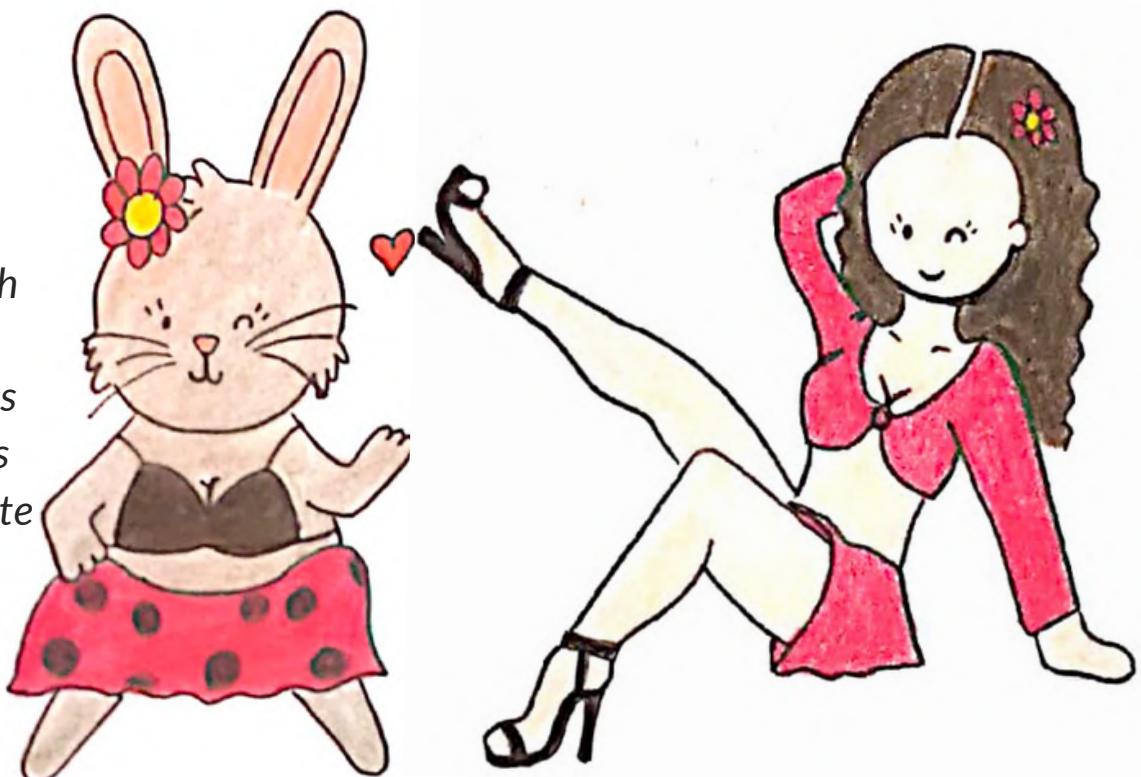


## FACT 35

# LEGALISATION OF PORN

Denmark was the first country in the world to legalize watching, making, and distributing porn in 1969. It was meant to decrease the consumption of porn, but it had the opposite effect. One positive effect was that sexual crime declined in Denmark, which might be contributed to the legislation. Therefore, Denmark became one of the leading makers of pornographic material in the early 1970s, which spiked tourism as well as export. However, as more countries legalized it, the production started moving out of Denmark. Now the US is the largest producer of porn, and the industry is worth between 6-100 billion American dollars.

*Weird fact:  
Denmark did  
not have any  
laws against  
having sex with  
animals until  
2015, so it was  
legal as long as  
it did not violate  
the animal  
cruelty law*



FACT 36

# LEGALISATION OF SAME-SEX UNIONS

On the 1st of October 1989, Denmark became the first country to legalize same-sex unions. And in 2012, Denmark became the 11th country to legalize same-sex marriage. Only 29 countries worldwide have legalized same-sex marriage and in 2019 Taiwan became the first and only Asian country to have legalized it. In 72 countries, homosexuality is criminalized and in 11 countries it can lead to the death penalty.



## FACT 37

# THE QUEENDOM OF DENMARK

The official name of Denmark is the Kingdom of Denmark and it includes the two former colonies Greenland and Faroe Islands. However, there has not been a king in Denmark since 1972 where King Frederick the ninth, who did not leave any sons behind, died. Therefore, the Danish constitution was changed, so women could inherit the throne if no male heirs were born. Hence, the oldest daughter (Margrethe) of King Frederick became the Queen of Denmark after his majesty's death. Recently, in 2009, the Danish constitution was changed again, so now it will be the firstborn child, regardless of gender, who inherits the throne.

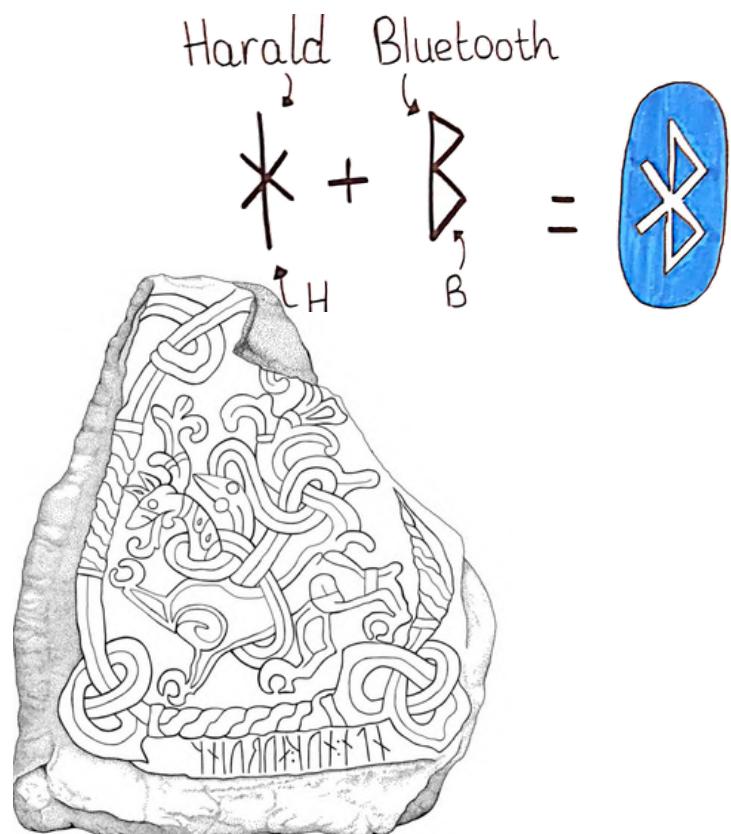


## FACT 38

# OLD MONARCHY AND BLUETOOTH

Denmark is the second oldest continuous Monarchy in the world. Only the imperial family in Japan has reigned for longer. The Danish royal family can be traced back to Gorm in the year 936 who united most of Denmark under one rule and became the first official King of Denmark. His son, Harald Bluetooth, united the rest of Denmark and made the Danes Christian according to the famous Jelling stone. The current Queen Margrethe's bloodline can be traced back to Gorm. However, due to war, politics, and high child death, the line of succession is not going directly through the main branch, but also some sub-branches of the family tree.

*Fun fact: The Bluetooth functions on mobile phones is named after the second Danish King, Harald Bluetooth. They chose the name Bluetooth, since the King united all of Denmark to a single rule, and the Bluetooth function was meant to unite communication protocols between mobile phones and computers. The Bluetooth symbol is made by combining the two nordic runes for H and B*



FACT 39

# VIKINGS

During the Viking Age, from the 4th to 11th century, vikings from Denmark raided, raped, and plundered the coast of Europe. In 793, the Danish vikings raided Lindisfarne Abbey in Britain - marking the first of many viking raids in Britain.

Monastery and churches were particularly popular aims to raid. Vikings discovered that Britain had a large amount of wealth and they started to settle on the island instead to do trade (it is from here the Danish words in English originate from). The vikings had a superior army and ended up making northeast England effectively ruled under Danish law. This area known as Danelaw was formed in the year 885 by Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian vikings.



## FACT 40

# DANISH ORIGIN

Here are 10 famous English words that originate from Old Norse (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian before the 15th century). Most of the words are directly associated with the Viking Age where many vikings settled in Southern England.

Cake

Steak (means to fry)

Egg

Until (means up to)

Husband (means master of the house in Old Norse)

Ombudsman (mean the proxy representative)

Knife

Window (means wind eye)

Reindeer

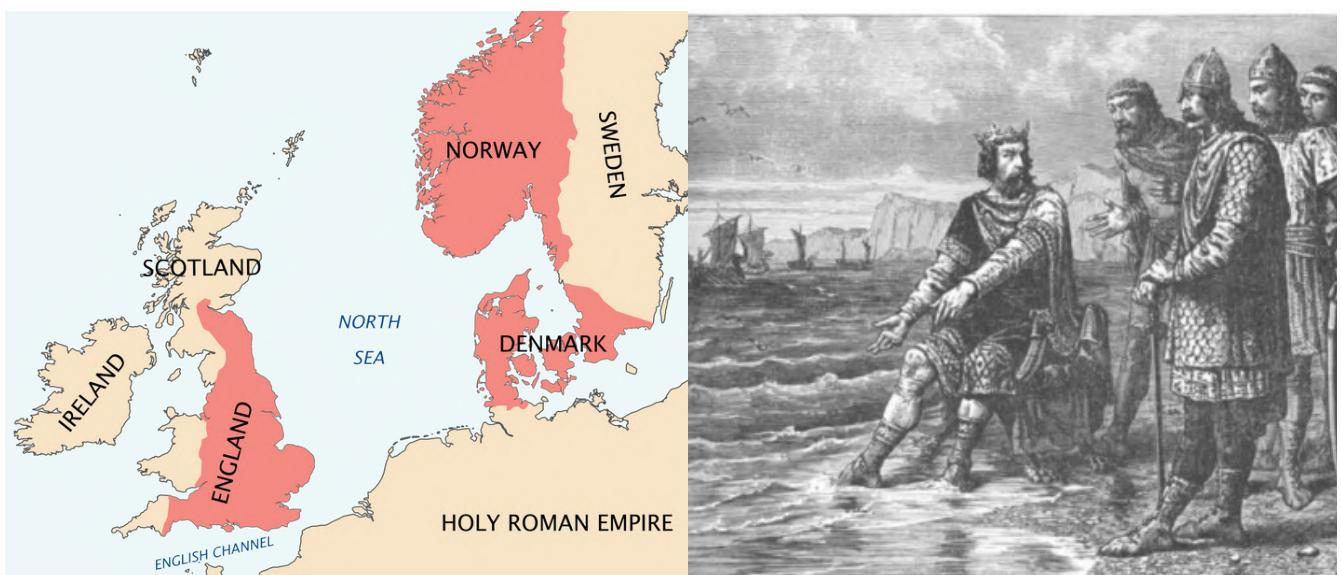
Ugly

# FACT 41

# CONQUERING BRITAIN

Canute, the grandchild of Harald Bluetooth, conquered England in 1016. He became king of Denmark in 1018 after his brother's death, hence, uniting England and Denmark under one rule. In 1028, he conquered Norway and parts of Sweden as well - making him the single ruler of the North Sea. His rule was rather well-liked in England since the viking raids no longer happened and the coast was once again safe. Unfortunately, the Danish-England-Norway alliance quickly died after the death of Canute in 1035. Norway rebelled after his death and his children died a few years after him - destroying the alliance.

*Fun fact: Legend says Canute sat in a chair in the ocean and commanded the water should not rise (tide), but the tide did come. He, the most powerful King in all of Northern Europe, could not make the tide stop, and thus showed God's power is supreme to humans.*



## FACT 42

# THE EXPANSION TO THE EAST

King Valdemar the Second was king from 1202-1241, and he started his reign by bringing Holstein (Northern Germany) and Hamburg back to the Danish realm. And he kept expanding east along the Baltic Sea from Lübeck in eastern Germany to Gdansk/Danzig in eastern Poland. On request from the Pope, he also invaded the heathens in Estonia to make them subdue to Christianity and conquered Estonia in 1219. It was in these battles that the Danish flag is set to have fallen. After the many successful wars, Valdemar the Second got to be known as Valdemar the Victorious after his death. Denmark kept control over Estonia until 1343 where Denmark sold Estonia.

*Fun fact: The Estonia invasions occurred over two cold winters where the Baltic Sea was fully frozen and they could walk their troops over the sea from Denmark. This hasn't happened in a long time (1708 was the last time it was frozen in Denmark).*



## FACT 43

# THE POLITICAL QUEEN

Due to the political situation in Scandinavia and the smart political play of Queen Margrethe I, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and most of today's Finland went into a union in 1397. The countries would still be independent, but they were under the common rule of Denmark (similar to the UK). The Kalmar Union lasted from 1397-1523. It ended since the Swedish nobles were dissatisfied with the Danish King who wanted a more central state with less power to nobility and more to the king and citizens.

First, in 1520 Denmark won the uprising of Sweden which started in 1518. However, the king slaughtered a lot of Swedish nobility and it became known as the Stockholm Bloodbath, which they could not forgive. Sweden continued to want to get out of the union and succeeded in 1523. After Sweden left, the Kalmar Union was no more, but Denmark and Norway went into a union (Denmark-Norway) which lasted until 1814.

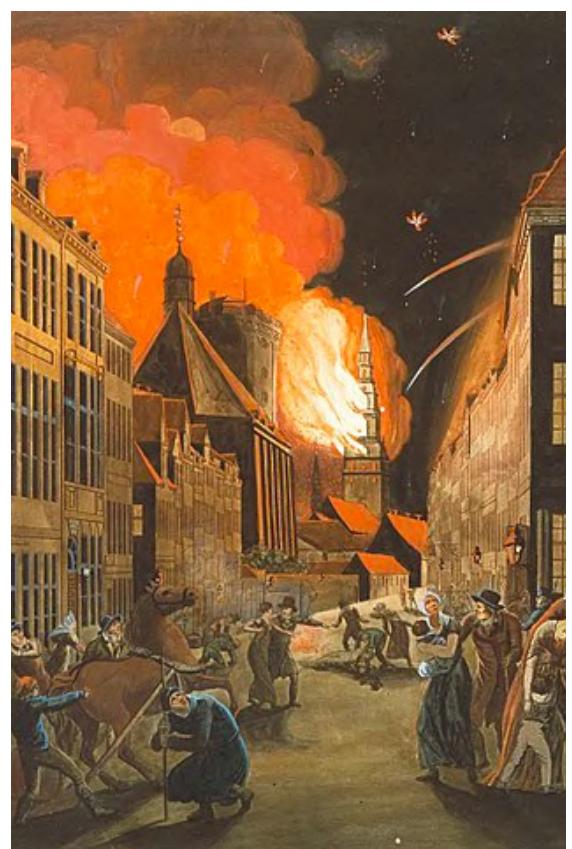


## FACT 44

# LOSING NORWAY AND THE NAVY

After the Kalmar Union, the Kingdom of Denmark still consisted of Norway, Northern Germany, Iceland, Faroe Island, and Greenland. Denmark was still a major player in Europe and had the second-largest fleet (only England had a bigger fleet). Napoleon started to gain influence in France, and England was afraid of the French and the Danish fleet joining sides to attack England. Therefore, England launched a surprise attack in 1801 and destroyed part of the Danish Navy. Denmark still stayed out of the Napoleon war and remained neutral.

In 1807, England was once again afraid of a possible alliance with France and went to attack Denmark. They surprised bombarded and destroyed 3/4 of the capital of Denmark. Denmark was forced to surrender and give up their entire fleet to England. In response to this treatment, Denmark ended up joining France against England and thereby not being neutral. Napoleon and thus Denmark ended up losing the war, and Denmark had to hand Norway over to Sweden in 1814.



## FACT 45

# LOSING SOUTHERN DENMARK

Denmark initiated the Second Schleswig War by making a political move to fully incorporate Northern Germany (Schleswig) into Denmark by violating a treaty, so Germany and the Austrian Empire declared war against Denmark, which began officially on the 1st of February 1864. Denmark was ill-prepared for war and had hoped to solve it diplomatically by giving up their claim on the most southern part of Germany (Holstein and Lauenburg) in exchange for letting the northern part (Schleswig) merge with Denmark.

Unfortunately, the Danish allies in the UK, France, and Russia had their problems overseas and could not come to aid. Therefore, Denmark was not ready for the war and was severely undermanned to defend its long border, and Denmark was only superior in the sea. The Prussian and Austrian troops quickly conquered Jutland and Denmark had to surrender giving up 40% of its area and likewise 40% of the population.



## FACT 46

# THE REUNION - TODAY'S BORDER

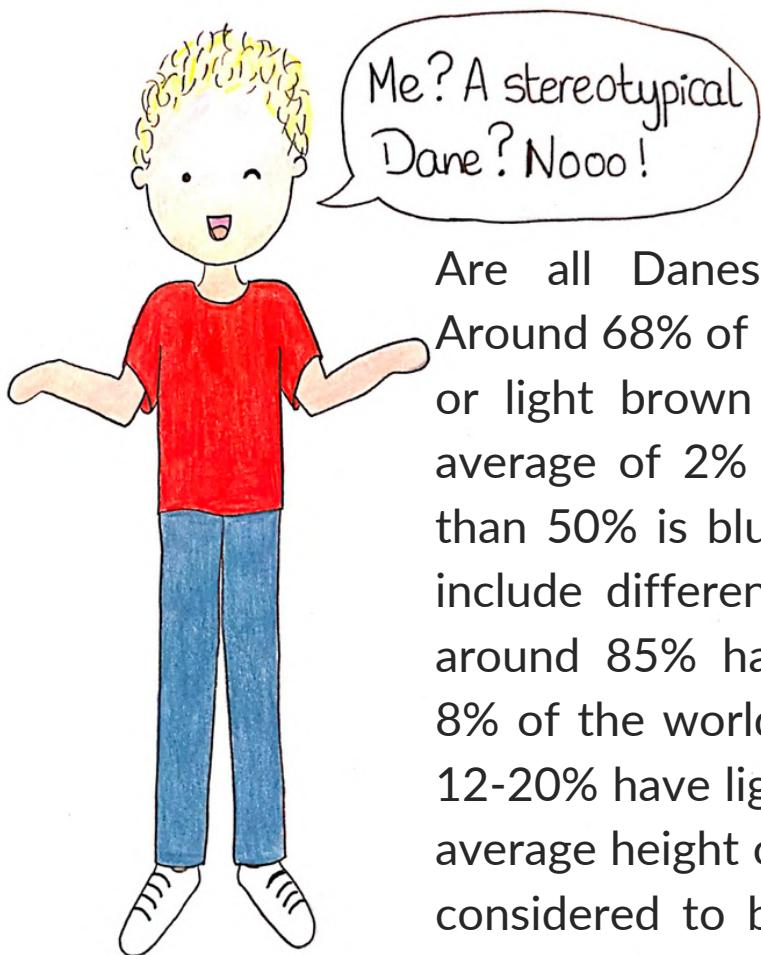
After 1864, Denmark lost a lot of land to Germany, so people who always considered themselves as Danes now lived in Germany. However, they could live pretty much as usual and keep talking Danish as their 1st language due to the Danish majority. However, in 1914, World War 1 (WW1) began and Germany was at war. This meant a lot of 'Danes' in Schleswig suddenly had to fight and die for Germany in war. Germany ended up losing the war in 1918. Major powerhouses in Europe, such as France and UK, wanted to weaken Germany, so it was decided Denmark should regain some of Schleswig.

The Danish government decided to hold an election in 1920 to decide the border. The Northern and Central Schleswig could vote to remain in Germany or join Denmark. In Northern Schleswig, 75% voted to join Denmark while 25% voted to stay in Germany so they became Danish, but the Central part voted no. This still sets our border today.



# FACT 47

# DANISH STEREOTYPE



Are all Danes blond, tall, and blue-eyed? Around 68% of people in Denmark have blonde or light brown hair, which is more than the average of 2% in the world. Only a bit more than 50% is blue-eyed in Denmark, but if you include different light color eyes like green - around 85% have light-colored eyes. Around 8% of the world population are blue-eyed and 12-20% have light-colored eyes. Lastly, with an average height of men at 180.3 cm, Denmark is considered to be the 3rd tallest country. The average height of a girl is 167.5 cm. In Hong Kong, the average male height is 170cm and females 158.8 cm.



*Fun fact: In Denmark, we have a very popular spread called leverpostej (liver pâté). And most Danes have a hair color similar to it, so we have named the hair color after the spread. The color is also used as an insult for typical boring Danes.*

## FACT 48

# NORDIC LANGUAGES

In the 2nd to 8th centuries, all nordic countries talked the same language known as Proto-Norse. In the Viking Age (8th -15th century), the language evolved into what is known as Old Norse. And Old Norse had two branches: East (Sweden, Denmark), West (Norway, Faroese Island, Iceland). The Western Old Norse evolved into what is today known as Icelandic and Faroese (Present-day Norwegian is not considered to originate from Western Old Norse since it is more closely related to Eastern Old Norse due to the long Danish/Norwegian alliance from 1537-1814). The Eastern Old Norse evolved into Swedish, Danish, and modern Norwegian. In the 16th century, you could start to classify Swedish and Danish as different languages and not just dialects. Approximately 20 million people speak a Nordic language.

*Fun fact: Danish, Swedish and Norwegian can actually understand each other's language to a certain degree.*

### PROTO-NORSE

#### WEST OLD NORSE

OLD  
NORWEGIAN

ICELANDIC

FAROSE

#### EAST OLD NORSE

MODERN  
NORWEGIAN

SWEDISH

DANISH

## FACT 49

# DENMARK LOVES NORWAY

After Denmark lost the Napoleon wars, Denmark had to give up their long-lasting union with Norway (1537-1814). But they did not want Norway to be part of Sweden, so they tried to declare Norway as an independent country. However, Sweden attacked Norway in 1814 and it ended with Norway being part of the Swedish Kingdom until 1905 where they finally got their independence.

*Fun fact: The long union of Denmark and Norway can especially be seen in our written language. Actually, in food declarations Norwegian and Danish are illustrated in the same section since most words are the same and they can save space on the nutrition labels.*

### DK/NO Ingredienser:

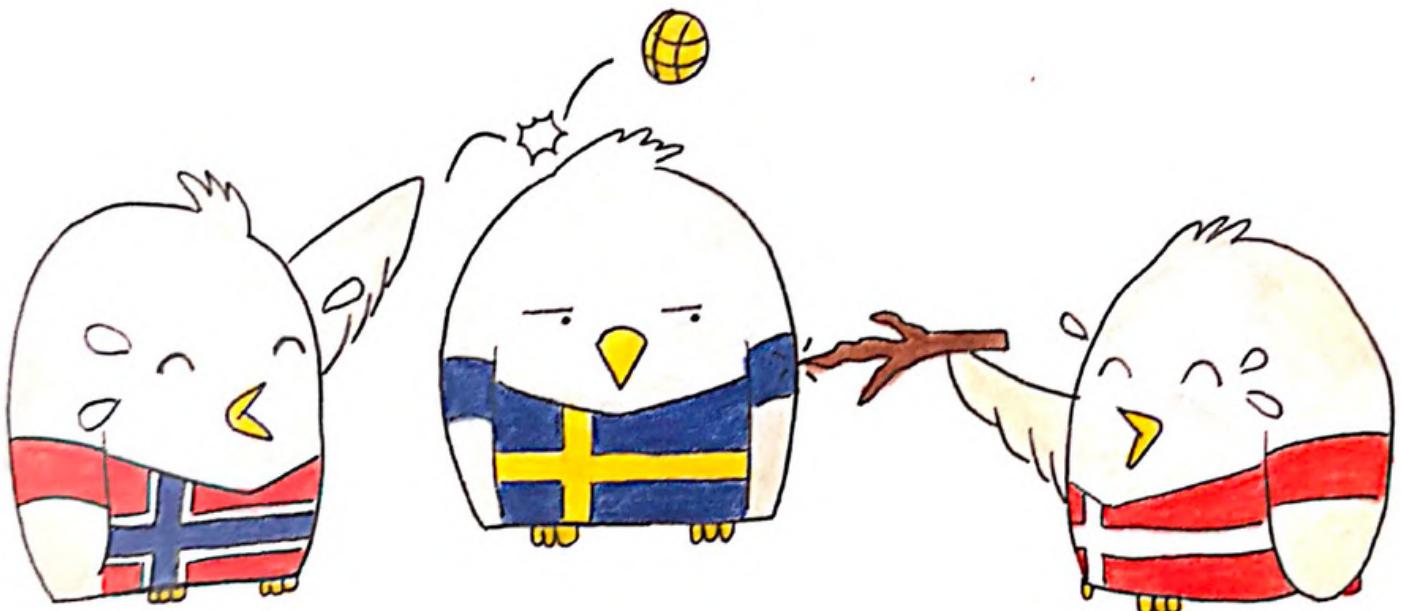
Stivelse (fra kartoffel/potet, ris), salt, **mælkprotein/melkeprotein**, hvedemel/hvetemel, dextrose/ glukose, palmefedt/palmegefett, **gærerekstrakt/ gjærekstrakt**, valle-/mysepulver (**mælk/melk**), maltodextrin/maltodekstrin, surhedsregulerende middel (citronsyre), løg/løk, **mælkesukker/melkesukker**, estragon 1,3 %, sukker, aroma, emulgator (**sojalecithin /soyalecithin**), krydderier/ krydder, hvidvins-/ **hvitvinsekstrakt**. Kan indeholde spor af æg/egg, selleri og sennep.

## FACT 50

# SWEEEEEEEDEN

Denmark and Sweden are believed to hold the record for most wars fought between two countries. Since the 15th century, the two countries have fought 14-28 wars with an official paper trail. However, the exact number depends on the definition of war and it is hard to find official papers before the year 1400. Therefore, Danes and Swedes are still rivals to this day in sports.

*Fun fact: Sweden won the last few wars in the North, so both Norway, Denmark and Finland have Sweden as their main rival in sports. A victory over Sweden is always celebrated more than any other counties.*



# FACT 51

# GREENLAND IS GIGANTIC

Due to Greenland being part of Denmark, Denmark is the largest (area-wise) country in Europe and the 12th largest in the world since Greenland is the world's largest island. Also, the Kingdom of Denmark is the second least populated country in the world with only 2.7 people per square kilometer. Mongolia is the least populated with 2.1. However, if you count Greenland on its own, the population density is only 0.03 people per square kilometer. Hong Kong is the fourth most densely populated region with 6782 people per square kilometer.

*Fun fact: Due to Greenland, Denmark is one of only 8 countries to own land within the arctic circle. Also, Denmark has the largest national park in the world, which is located in North-East Greenland.*

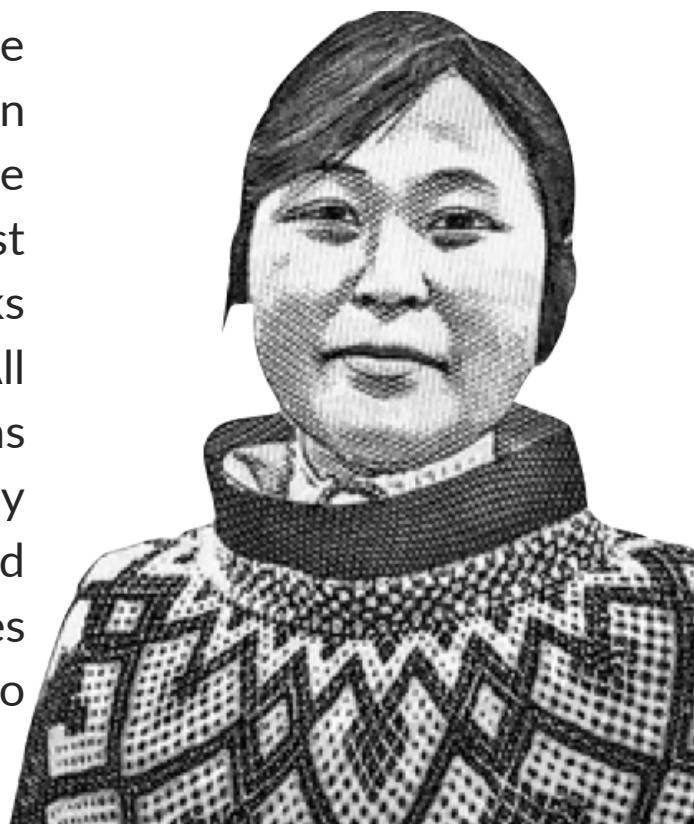


## FACT 52

# HISTORY OF GREENLAND

People have lived in Greenland from 2500 BC to 700 AD. The Vikings (re)colonized Greenland from 980 AD to 1400 AD. Around the same time, Greenland was repopulated from the north by immigration from Canada, and it is these native people who live throughout Greenland today. The native Greenlandic people are called Inuit and speak either Western Greenlandic or Eastern Greenlandic. Their ancestors immigrated from Siberia (East Russia) to Alaska to Canada before settling in Greenland. Denmark was given ownership over Greenland in 1814.

Today: 89% of the population of 55,000 people in Greenland are native Greenlandic. Western Greenlandic and Danish are the official languages, and most Greenlandic are bilingual (speaks Danish to a different degree). All education above high school happens in Danish, so to get an education they need good Danish proficiency, and the lack of educational opportunities pushes the smart youngsters to Denmark where they settle down.



# FACT 52

# ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

Greenland has different a culture, language from Denmark, so they aim to become a fully independent country. However, it is difficult because Greenland is a massive country with few people - making it is expensive to administer. Greenland is therefore financially dependent on yearly aid from Denmark. Greenland is also facing some domestic problems, such as alcoholism, poor education, and a high suicide rate that needs to be fixed before independence can be a success.

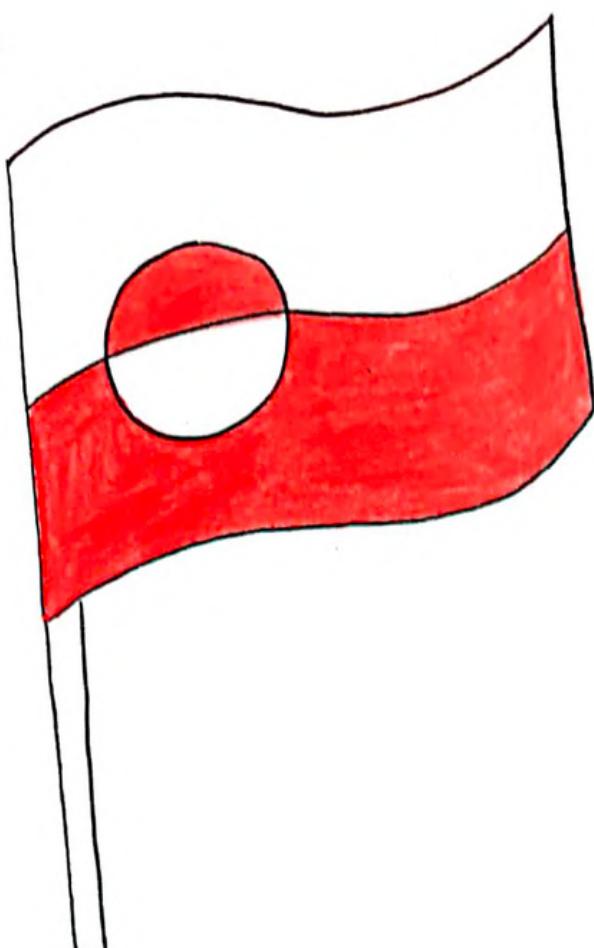
*Fun fact: The Greenlandic number system is based on the native language up to #20. Numbers above 20 are based on the Danish system since they didn't need to count higher.*

*The Danish number system is a confusing mix between a standard 10 (#10-#40) and 20 base (#50-#90) counting system. Two examples of the 20 base counting system:*

**60** is pronounced as tre(3)-sinde(times)-tyve(20) = tresindetyve and shortened to **tres**.

**70** is pronounced halvfjerde(half four=3.5)-sinde(times)-tyve(20) - shortened to **halvfjerd**s

Therefore, the Greenlandic number system is even more complicated than the already bad Danish number system.



## FACT 54

# DENMARK AS COLONIAL POWER

When Denmark recolonized Greenland in the 18th century, the Danish state didn't do a lot to integrate the native people. They were able to live pretty much as usual (unlike native people in the USA or Canada). This changed after the 2nd World War. Denmark was occupied by Germany. Due to the strategic location, the USA took over Greenland and build many military stations (some are still active today). After the war, the USA wanted Denmark to better protect the region and take care of Greenland and 'modernize it' - the USA even proposed to buy Greenland for 100 million dollars. Some of the integration initiatives for Greenland to become an official part of Denmark were outright bad, such as:

Legalizing alcohol, sterilizing 6000 women who were deemed unfit for children, and taking children away from their parents to grow up in Denmark, so they could become "model citizens". The experiment was an inhuman failure and left the Greenlandic people worse off and after matches can still be seen today.



*Fun fact: USA (Trump) wanted to purchase Greenland again in 2019, but was denied.*

## FACT 55

# GREENLAND AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Denmark, pressured by the USA made alcohol legal in 1953. The Greenlandic people did not have a culture of alcohol and it quickly became a huge problem. Around 65% of children reported alcohol problems in their homes on regular basis. What is worse - 33% of children (below 18) have been sexually assaulted. In total 70% of children born between 1990-1995 have reported growing up under alcohol problems, physical violence, or sexual assault. This is a crazy number to consider. However, it is still very taboo to talk about and most sexual assaulters still go free and the children have to meet them often (sizes of cities are typically 500-3000 people).

*Sad fact: If Greenland was a country, they would have the highest suicide rate in the world - more than double as many as the second place. 83 people out of 100,000 people commit suicide in Greenland each year. The high suicide rate can be coupled to the above problems and no hope for making themselves a better life and the cold depressing weather can also have a role.*



## FACT 56

# GREENLANDIC STEREOTYPES

Both extremes of Greenlandic people live in Denmark, but very few average Greenlandic people. We have the well-educated who see a better future in Denmark, we have the addicts who are in Denmark to get cheap drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, it is only the addicts and mentally ill whom normal Danes encounter since they are often homeless and therefore visible in the city, so this is how the majority thinks all Greenlandic people are. Therefore, Danes often have some prejudice that Greenlandic are alcoholics and drug addicts since it is only them they encounter.

*Fun fact: The average age of sexual debut in Greenland is 14 years (16 years in Denmark). Sexually transmitted diseases and abortion rates are also higher in Greenland*



## FACT 57

# FUN GREENLANDIC FACTS

- Denmark has a territorial dispute with Canada over a small island in the northwest of Greenland. The dispute is peaceful and the two militaries exchange alcohol on the island.
- In Greenland there exists no roads connecting different cities since the distances are large and people are few and the ever-moving ice makes it impossible to build bridges/roads.
- Greenland has the second largest ice body (Antarctica has the largest) with 80% of the area in Greenland covered by ice or 1,710,000 square kilometers. If all this ice were to melt, then the global sea level would on average rise 7.2 meters!
- By drilling holes in the ice sheet, scientists can look at how much CO<sub>2</sub> was in the atmosphere 100,000 years ago and estimate the temperature as well.



In Greenland, you cannot be kicked out of your house because of the artic weather: it is too cold, you would die outside!

FACT 58

# COOLEST MILITARY UNIT

Greenland has the coolest military unit in the world, called Slædepatruljen Sirius (Sirius Dog Sled Patrol). This is the world's only military dog sled patrol. The patrol controls the border of North-East Greenland where no people live permanently and makes sure no foreign power sets up camp. Patrolling is done in pairs (2 people) and using dog sleds with about a dozen native Greenlandic dogs. The length of a single patrol can be up to four months and often without additional human contact except for the other person and of course the dogs. The patrol started in 1941, so the Germans could not settle at the eastern coast undetected. They ended up discovering and destroying a German weather station during World War 2.

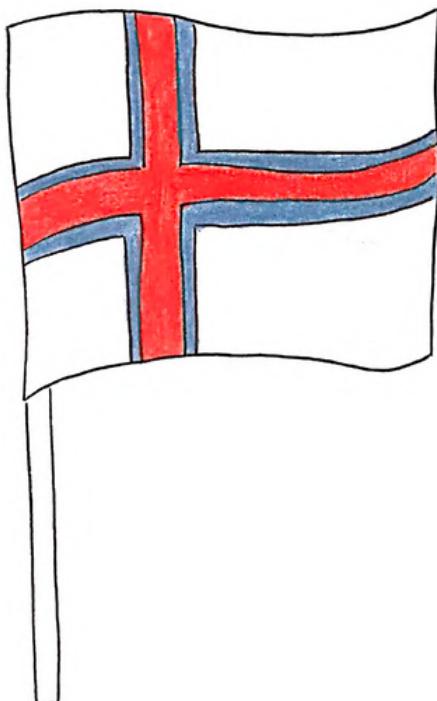


FACT 59

# FAROE ISLANDS - THE FORGOTTEN

The islands are located halfway between Norway and Iceland and around 50,000 people call it their home. The Faroe Islands are often forgotten in Danish media where the focus is on Greenland. Here are some facts:

- No point in the Faroe Islands is further than 5km from the sea.
- People population: 50,000. Sheep population: 70,000.
- Sheep are used for mowing the grass.
- There is no prison in the Faroe Islands. Prisoners being held for more than a year and a half are sent to Denmark.
- Faroese people have an average lifespan of 82.6 years old, which ranks 12th out of 186 countries worldwide.



FACT 60

# ICELAND - FORMER COLONY

Iceland had a referendum after the 2nd World War and decided to become an independent country from Denmark with more than 95% voting for a republic.

Here are some fun facts about Iceland:

- There are more than 125 volcanos (some still active) and 269 named Glaciers (making up 11% of the landmass).
- Iceland is famous for its outdoor hot springs which are geothermal heated so you can bath during the winter.
- Danish is still taught to roughly 95% of students in school, however, the younger generation is much better at English.
- Iceland has some pretty amazing northern lights since it is close to the North Pole
- Between 30 and 40% of Icelanders will not deny the existence of elves.



FACT 61

# DENMARK WAS A SLAVE NATION

Denmark used to be a slave nation like most other countries in Europe. They operated on the Danish West Indies, which today is known as the U.S. Virgin Islands, from the late 18th century to the abolition of slavery in 1848 (a few years before the U.S. freed the slaves in 1865). Slaves were “traded” in Africa for weapons and materials. They were then shipped to the Danish West Indies where they worked mostly on sugar farms. The processed sugar was shipped back to Denmark and sold both in Denmark and to other countries. After world war 1, Denmark sold the Danish West Indies to the U.S. in 1916 and it was renamed to U.S. Virgin Islands in 1917.

*Fun fact: The islands are the latest piece of land the USA has purchased. Other purchases include Alaska.*



FACT 62

# SPORT: FOOTBALL

Football is considered the national sport of Denmark since it has the most active members. Around 330,000 Danes play football in local clubs. The men's national team of football had their absolute greatest triumph in 1992 when they won the European Championship. In Denmark, we still celebrate the victory like yesterday. Just a few years ago another movie was made about it. We like the story because it has a close resemblance to the famous story 'The ugly duckling' by H.C. Andersen. Denmark did not even qualify for the tournament but Yugoslavia had to pull out of the tournament due to civil war, so Denmark was given a wildcard. Most players were on vacation and had to hurry back to prepare for the tournament. Denmark's win in 1992 is widely considered to be the biggest surprise of the event's history.

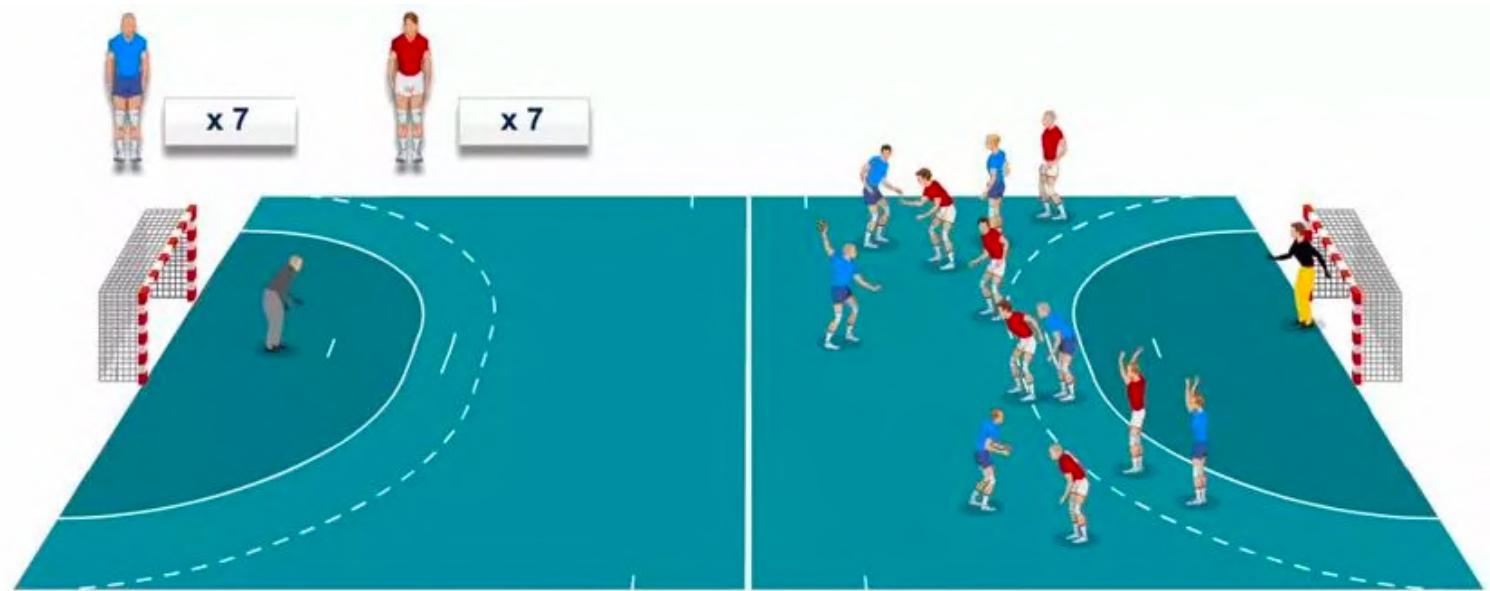


# FACT 63

# SPORT: HANDBALL

Handball is a mix between Basketball and Football. Handball is often seen as the second most popular sport in Denmark. The idea of Handball was developed in Southern Denmark at the end of the 19th century. In 1917, the first official rule book of Handball was published, but it was primarily played outdoors and it appeared in the 1936 Olympic Games for the first time. However, the modern indoor version we see today first appeared in the 1972 Olympics. Unfortunately for the sport, Handball is only really played in Europe and North Africa and South America.

*Fun fact: My hometown has one of the best handball teams in Denmark.*

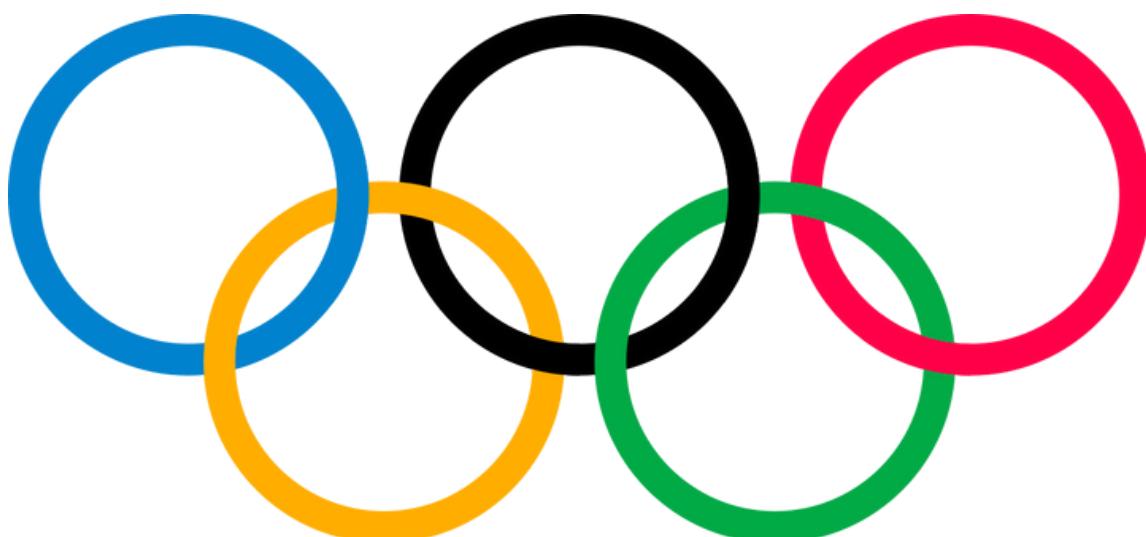


# FACT 64

# THE OLYMPICS

Denmark has participated in every Olympic Games since the first in 1896 - except for the 1904 games. The 1904 game was sparsely attended with only 12 countries participating due to the long travel to the USA from Europe. In total Denmark has won 195 medals. Sailing is the sport that has produced the most medals for Denmark. This is pretty natural since Denmark is a nation surrounded by sea, and there is never more than 52 km to the sea in Denmark. Additionally, rowing, canoeing, and swimming have also won us many medals. Cycling is in 2nd place with 26 medals and shooting in 3rd with 18 medals.

*Fun fact: Denmark has only won 1 medal at the Winter Olympics. This happened in curling. The reason we are bad at winter sports is natural since Denmark doesn't have mountains (highest place 170 meters above sea) or enough snow in the winter, so skiing is impossible.*



FACT 65

# EUROVISION

Eurovision is a yearly European song contest where countries across Europe compete for who has produced the best popular song. Each country has a panel of music experts, which gives points to the 10 best performances, and you can only vote for countries other than your own. In recent years, the audience is also able to vote for their favorite, so the audience gives 50% of the points and the experts give the last 50%. Eurovision started in 1956 and Denmark has participated 58 times since its first appearance in 1957. Denmark has won Eurovision 3 times making Denmark the 6th most winning country of all time.

*Fun fact: The Eurovision final draws approximately as many TV viewers as the champions league final in football. Both have around 180 million viewers.*

EURO**HEART**VISION  
SONG CONTEST

FACT 66

# FAMOUS DANES: H. C. ANDERSEN

H.C. Andersen is probably the most famous Dane in history. He has authored many famous fairytales, such as The Little Mermaid, The Emperor's New Clothes, and The Ugly Duckling. His fairytales have been translated into 125 languages, so people across the world can enjoy them. He lived from 1805 to 1875 and he ended up writing 212 fairytales before his death. H.C. Andersen never had kids nor got married, but he had many love interests throughout his life including both females and males, but no one reciprocated his feelings. His legacy, however, lives on through his fairytales.

*Fun fact: In Copenhagen, there is a statue of the little mermaid and, due to the fame of H.C. Andersen, it is one of the most popular tourist attractions - even though it is just a small statue.*



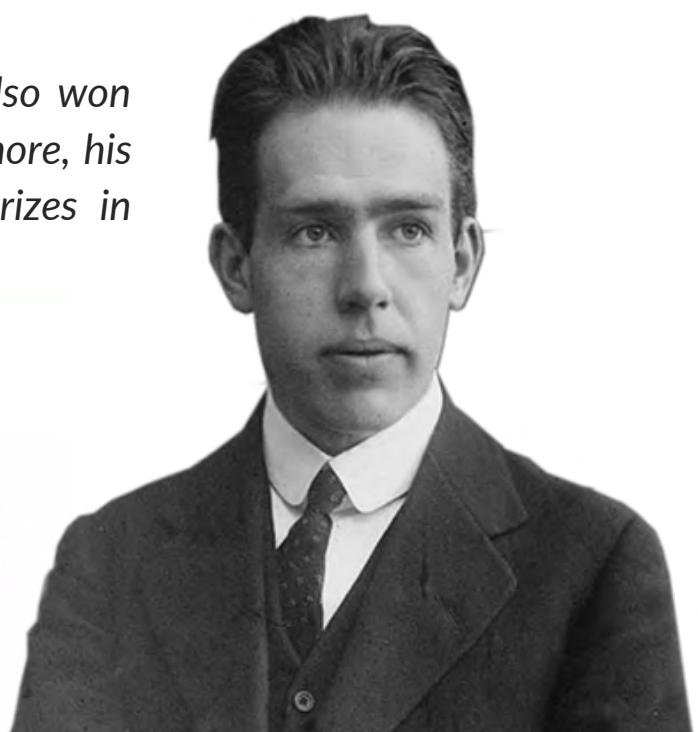
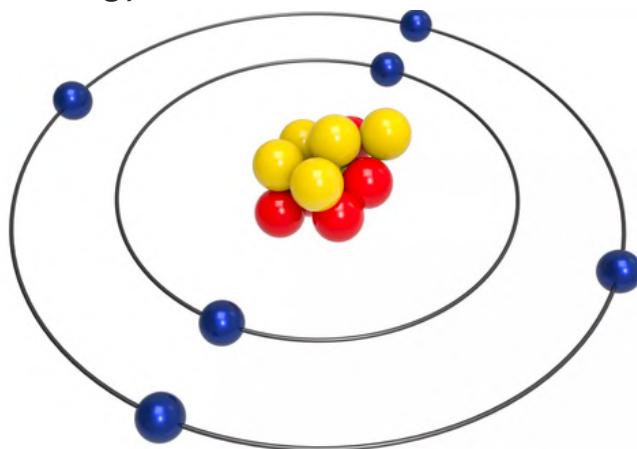
FACT 67

# FACT 67 FAMOUS DANES: NIELS BOHR

Niels Bohr, born in 1885, is most famous for his work in atomic physics where he proposed a simplistic model of an atom, which became known as Bohr's model. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for his atomic model in 1922. As a Jew, Niels Bohr helped other Jewish scientists fleeing to Sweden and he fled to the USA himself in 1943 from the Nazis. In the USA, he was a part of the Manhattan Project, which goal was to develop the atomic bomb. After seeing how much death and destruction the bomb caused, he advocated it should only be used as atomic power plants and never as a weapon.

*Fun fact: Niels Bohr was awarded a lifelong supply of free beer by the Carlsberg foundation.*

*Extra fact: One of Niels Bohr's sons also won the Nobel Prize in physics and furthermore, his father was nominated for 3 Nobel Prizes in psychology.*



FACT 68

# FAMOUS DANES: TYCHO BRAHE

Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) revolutionized the scientific approach in astronomy by carefully noting down the position of each star. If the stars moved slightly between January to June this would signal the earth orbits the sun. However, he was unable to detect any movements because he could only use his eyes (telescope got invented 7 years after his death), so he wrongly concluded the sun must orbit the earth. One of Brahe's assistants, Johannes Kepler, used Brahe's observations to formulate his laws of planetary motion and support his model with the sun being in the center and earth orbiting it.

*Fun fact: At the age of 19, Brahe lost the bridge of his nose in a sword fight with a fellow student. For the rest of his life he wore a metal nose prosthesis.*

*Extra fact: He noticed a very bright star that suddenly appeared in Cassiopeia. This was actually an exploding star (supernova).*



FACT 69

# FAmous Danes: JØRN UTZON

The Danish architect, Jørn Utzon, became world-famous after designing The Sydney Opera House in 1956, which consists of 14 outer ‘shells’, and if you were to assemble them they would form a perfect sphere. He said the design was inspired by peeling an orange. In 2007, the Sydney Opera House was added to the World Heritage List, which is the highest honor for an architect. Today, Sydney Opera House has 10.9 million annual visitors and has become the most iconic building in Sydney. Unfortunately, the construction didn’t go well. This was Utzon’s first major project and he had arguments over which materials to use and went over budget and time. He was later fired.

*Sad fact: After being fired, Utzon vowed to never set foot in Australia again, so he never saw the finished Opera House before his death in 2008.*



FACT 70

# CRAZY TRADITION: 30 YEARS OLD

In Denmark, we have a tradition that if you are unmarried at age 30, your friends will cover you in pepper on your 30th birthday. The origin of this tradition is that the Danish word PeberSvend (English PepperLad), is synonymous with being old and unmarried. The word originates back to the 16th century where young merchants who sold spices, such as pepper, were not allowed to sleep with or marry women or, if they were allowed, they couldn't find one since they were traveling a lot. Therefore, PeberSvend quickly became synonymous with older men who were unmarried. The women also got a similar word for being old and unmarried PeperMø (PepperMaiden). Your friends give you pepper as a way to taunt you and say you have to hurry up to get married so you don't become like the spice traders.



FACT 71

# CRAZY TRADITION: FOR 25 YEAR-OLDS

When you turn 25 and are unmarried in Denmark, you will get covered in cinnamon by your so-called friends to mark that you still haven't tied the knot. I experienced this tradition first hand. The cinnamon tradition is not very old compared to the pepper at 30, and we have no official record of why it was started. The first evidence is from the 1960s in Northern Jutland, and people guess, due to the similarities, that it was invented so your friends could tease you one additional time of being unmarried. But we have no idea of why cinnamon and not another spice. It quickly became a success and spread to most of Denmark by the early 1970s.

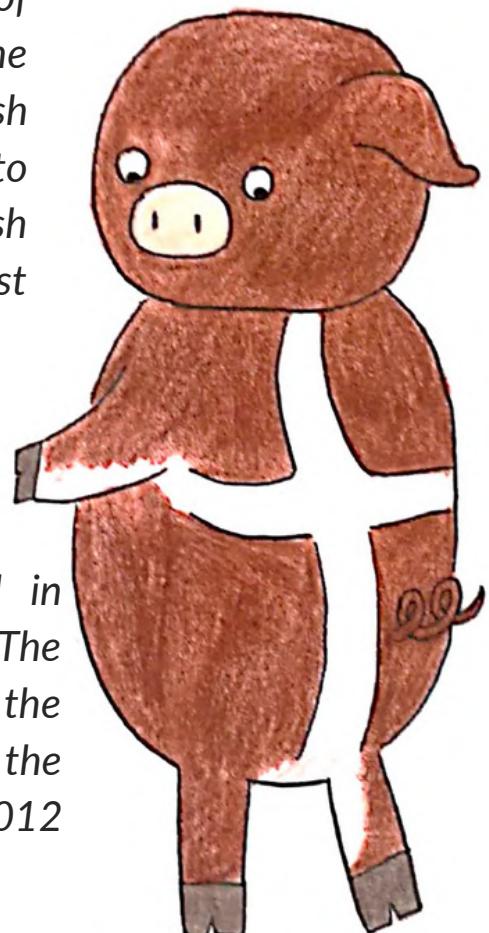
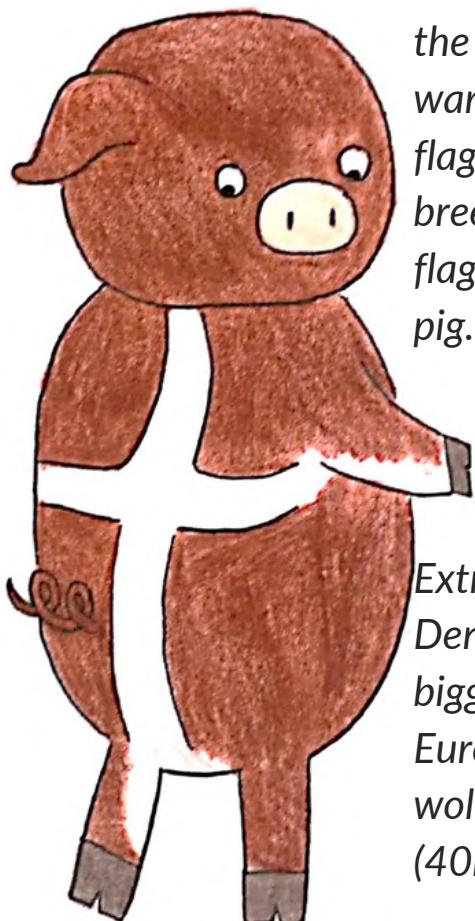


FACT 72

# PIG, PORK, FLAG?

In Denmark we love pork. There are twice as many pigs (14 million) as people. Around 28 million pigs are produced annually in Denmark. Therefore, we cannot eat all the pigs ourselves, so we export them mainly to Germany, the UK, and China. This is why you can find Danish pork on the shelves in Hong Kong. However, in Faroe Island (Danish colony), there are twice as many sheep as people since they prefer sheep over pork.

*Fun fact: German occupation of the southern Denmark after the war in 1864 banned the Danish flag, so farmers spend years to breed a pig resembling the Danish flag. The pig is known as protest pig.*



*Extra fact: The largest animal in Denmark is the Stag (200kg). The biggest predator in Denmark is the European Badger (10kg) until the wolf (re)settled in Denmark in 2012 (40kg)*

# FACT 73

# MINK, FUR, AND COVID

Denmark is the world's largest mink producer. 40% of the world's mink pelts are produced in (tiny) Denmark and the Danish mink is considered to be the best quality. We had around 2000 Mink farmers in Denmark and they produce annually over 20,000,000 minks for a total price of 0.5-1.5 billion Euros - making it the fourth most produced animal in Denmark. The biggest export market was China which buys one-third of all minks produced in Denmark. The minks are usually fed with leftover parts. However, due to mink getting infected by Corona and producing a mutation that could transfer to humans, politicians ordered all minks killed in Denmark, so Denmark no longer produces minks.



*Fun fact: In Denmark, we have a population of 5.7 million people, but we produce enough food for 15 million people. Thus, we are a large exporter of animals, crops and furs.*

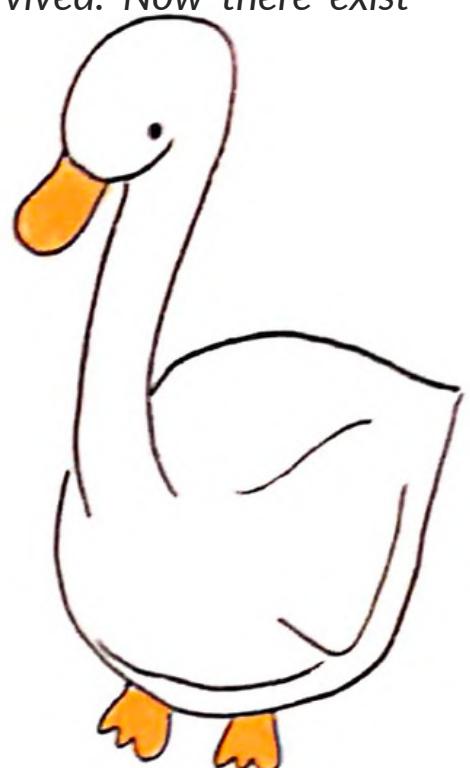


FACT 74

# THE NATIONAL ANIMAL

The national bird is the swan and the national mammal is the squirrel. In 1984, the Danish national television station (DR) had a vote for which bird should be the national bird. The swan won the popular vote, which might be contributed to H.C. Andersen's fairytale "The Ugly Duckling". In 2004, a newspaper had a vote for which animal should be the national mammal of Denmark. Here, the squirrel won by a small margin over the hedgehog. The national animal of Hong Kong is the Panda.

*Fun fact: Back in the 1920s the swan was close to becoming extinct in Denmark due to legal hunting. Therefore, a total ban against hunting them came in 1926, which secured that the species survived. Now there exist plenty of swans in all of Denmark.*



FACT 75

# THE NATIONAL DISH

In 2014, we had a popular vote to determine the national dish of Denmark. Here, the classic pork recipe called 'Stegt flæsk med persillesovs' won. The dish consists of pork fried very crisply and it is served with parsley sauce and potatoes. The dish is a very traditional dish that has been known since at least the 1890s and has remained popular since. The classic Danish dish "Smørrebrød", which is open-faced sandwiches, placed second in the vote, and it is also worth mentioning since it is the most famous of the Danish food classics. Smørrebrød is simply a slice of rye bread with various combinations of toppings such as pickled herring, roast beef, and eggs topped with mayo and shrimps. The dish was invented in the late 18-hundreds as an easy and handy lunch you could bring for work.



FACT 76

# DANISHES ARE NOT DANISH

The pastry known as ‘Danish pastry’ or simply ‘Danish’ is actually not from Denmark, but is built on a bread tradition from Vienna in Austria. It is the same kind of pastry you use to make croissants. A group of Austrian bakers, who settled in Denmark in the mid-1800s, brought the baking tradition to Denmark baking tradition, where it further developed into what is today known as Danish.

*Fun fact: The reason we call them Danishes in English is that it was Danish immigrants who brought the dish to the USA. In Denmark, we don't even call them Danishes, we give credit to the place of origin and call them Viennese bread (bread from Vienna).*



FACT 77

# BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD

Denmark has 24 restaurants with a total of 32 of the sought out Michelin stars. This makes Denmark the powerhouse of the Scandinavian cuisine and attracts a lot of food tourists. The Danish restaurant for New Nordic food called noma has been declared the world's best restaurant in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2014 and is currently ranked 2nd in 2019. noma has two Michelin Stars and its cuisine can be considered as an interpretation of nordic food more than classical nordic food itself, so it is fancy and minimalistic. They focus on a lot of homegrown food that is in season and freshly-caught seafood.



FACT 78

# MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

The Danish Company, Arla Foods, is the fourth largest dairy company in the world and their products can be found worldwide. Famous brands include the butter Lurpak, and Castello Cheese, and Arla Milk.

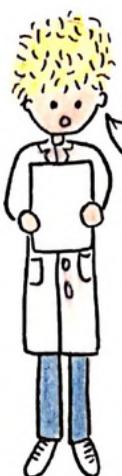
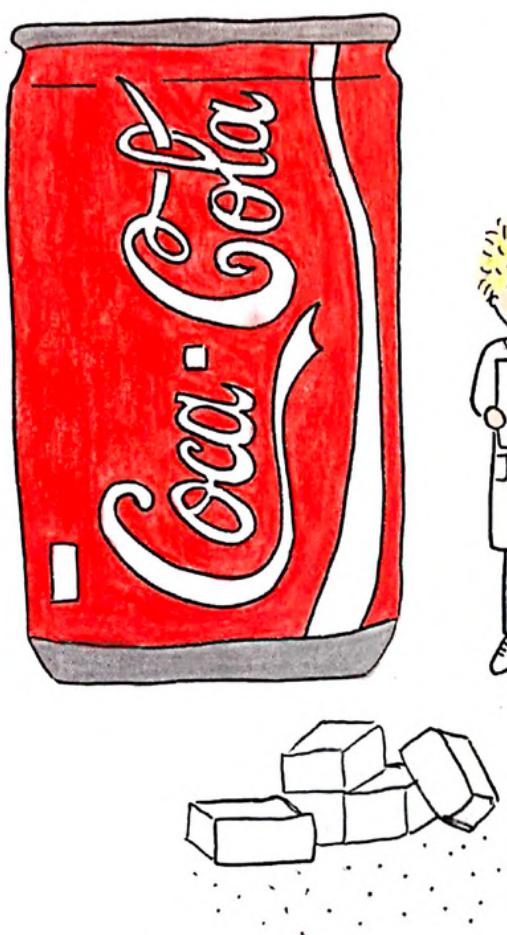
*Fun fact: Denmark has the lowest percentage of lactose intolerance people in the world with only 4% of the population being allergic. In China it is 85% of the population who are allergic. Denmark consumes the 8th most amount of milk with 295.5 kg per person per year. Finland consumes the most with 361 kg per person per year, and Hong Kong consumes 105 kg of milk per year per person and it is rapidly growing each year.*



# FACT 79

# SOFT DRINKS

Denmark consumes the second most amount of soft drinks in Europe with 125L per person per year (Germany drinks 140). The consumption of soft drinks is increasing in Denmark since 2014 where the government abolished the sugar tax - making soft drinks cheaper. They did this to decrease the border shopping in Germany. The high amount of sugary drinks is one of the main contributors to empty calories and obesity.



In one can of Coca-Cola, there are 10 cubes of sugar. One cube = 4g of sugar.  $10 \times 4 = 40$ . 40g of sugar?! And that would be even more in the USA, since the amount of added sugar is legally defined in Europe!

FACT 80

# DENMARK HATES MASKS

You are not allowed to cover most of your face in Denmark when in public unless you have a valid reason (it is cold, it is Halloween and you are dressed up). The law was crafted to stop Muslim women from wearing a Burka/Niqab in public, which most Danes see as oppression of women. Another argument for the law was to make interaction easier since facial expressions are an important tool for conversation. However, wearing a Burka is also part of freedom of religion and to express oneself, so it was a highly controversial law and was heavily debated in Denmark.

*Fun fact: Denmark was the country with the fewest people wearing a mask in public at the beginning of the pandemic. Only 4% of the population wore a mask in public, and 83% said they have never used masks before according to a survey in August 2020. In September 2020 a law was passed mandating that you had to wear mask in public transport and restaurant.*

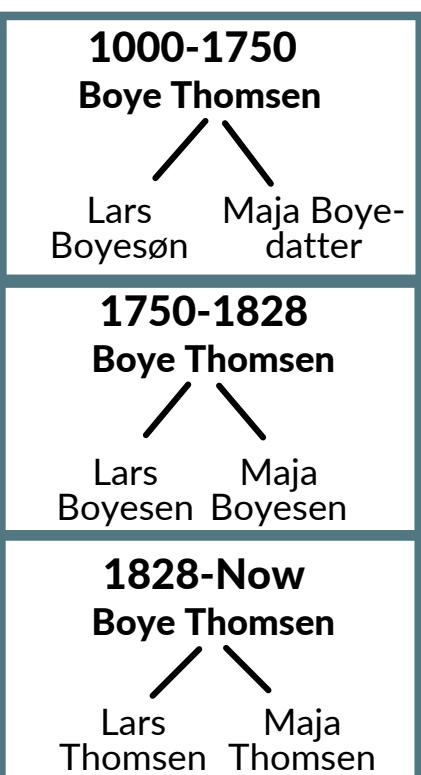


# FACT 81

# NAMING IN DENMARK

Back in the Viking age and Medieval time, people got their last name after their fathers. As an example, my father is called Boye Thomsen, so my name would be Lars Boyesøn (where *søn* means son) and my sister would be named Maja Boye-datter (datter meaning daughter). Between 1750-1850, people started using 'sen' instead of 'søn' as the last name for both boys and girls, so in this time we would be called Lars/Maja Boyesen. And in 1828, they made a law, so people would inherit their family name as the last name. It is here Thomsen comes from, it is a family name from early 1800 that has been inherited for many generations.

*Fun fact: The government has a list of 7,000 names that you are allowed to name your baby - if not on the list you have to seek an exemption. And if you encounter people with their last names ending with 'sen', they are likely to have Danish or Norwegian roots.*

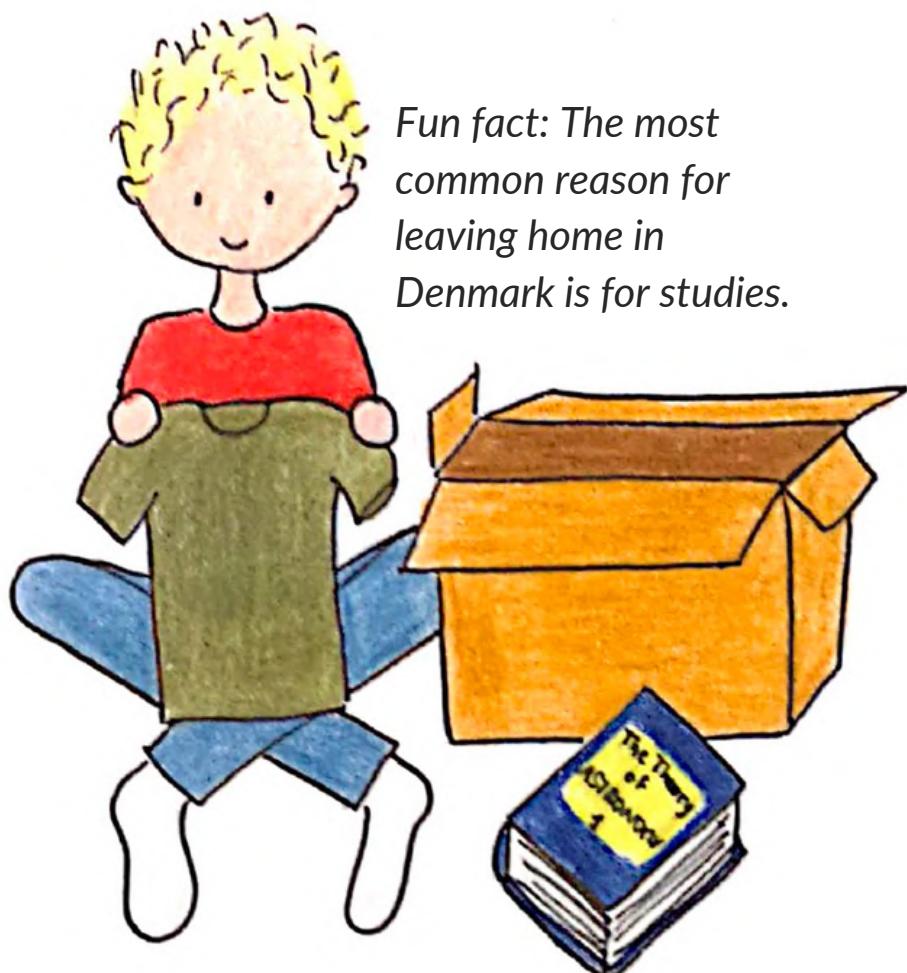


# FACT 82

# MOVING OUT EARLY

Denmark is the country in the EU with the lowest percentage of people above 25-34 of age living in their parental home by 3.8%. The EU average is 28.5%. The highest percentage is found in southern countries, such as Italy (49%), Croatia (58.7%). On average, Danes move out at the age of 21.1 years. If you live in the big cities, such as Copenhagen and Århus, you are more likely to move out when you are older due to the expensive rent and convenience of close education.

The reason Danes move out early is to show the world that we can handle ourselves and be independent. This less family-oriented view, have the unfortunate effect of the elders being lonely because they don't want to be a nuisance of their kids.



*Fun fact: The most common reason for leaving home in Denmark is for studies.*

# FACT 83

# LAW OF JANTE

The 10 commandments were written down in the 1930s. Even to this day, it still affects Scandinavian society.

- 1. You're not to think you are anything special.**
- 2. You're not to think you are as good as we are.**
- 3. You're not to think you are smarter than we are.**
- 4. You're not to imagine yourself better than we are.**
- 5. You're not to think you know more than we do.**
- 6. You're not to think you are more important than we are.**
- 7. You're not to think you are good at anything.**
- 8. You're not to laugh at us.**
- 9. You're not to think anyone cares about you.**
- 10. You're not to think you can teach us anything.**

The commandments are saying to put society ahead of the individual, not boasting about individual accomplishments, and not being jealous of others - we are all equal. It has some good sides such as you shouldn't think you are better than others, which leads to a less hierarchical society and workplace. It might also have helped to keep the high standard of social welfare and pay a lot in taxes even if you don't get a lot of benefits immediately. However, it can make you feel insecure about yourself and think you are not good enough and shouldn't say your opinion.

# FACT 84

# SHOPPING STREETS

The shopping street called Strøget in Copenhagen (the capital of Denmark) is a street only for pedestrians (people on foot). Strøget is said to be both the longest (1.1 km) and oldest (1962) of its kind in the world. However, there exist currently two newer pedestrian streets which are longer. Additionally, there is a pedestrian street in the Netherlands that are older. Thus, neither claims are actually true, but it is still one of the oldest and longest pedestrian streets that exists in the world.

*Fun fact: My hometown Skjern has the smallest pedestrian street in Denmark. It is only 30 meters!*



FACT 85

# OLDEST AMUSEMENT PARKS

Denmark has the oldest and third-oldest amusement parks in the world, which are still open. The oldest is called Dyrehavsbakken (in English: The Animal Park's Hill) and it opened in 1583 and is located north of Copenhagen. The third oldest amusement park is called Tivoli and it is located in the center of Copenhagen. Tivoli opened for the first time in 1843 and it is by far the most famous of the two with around 4.6 million visitors every year.

*Fun fact: Tivoli was a large inspiration for Walt Disney to create Disneyland, which opened in 1955. Extra fact: the word Tivoli is synonymous with amusement parks in Denmark.*



FACT 86

# MIDSUMMER (SANKT HANS)

In late June, Danes (and other Nordic countries) celebrate the summer solstice. This tradition is known as Midsummer, but we call it Sankt Hans in Danish (or Saint John in English). It is a tradition dating back before the Viking age where people held bonfires to ward off evil spirits. The holiday was later incorporated into Christianity and hence the name has changed to Saint John's (Hans) Eve where we celebrate the Saint. However, we kept the tradition with large bonfires.

*Fun fact: In the early 20th century a peculiar tradition started, We put a witch made of straws in the fire to remember the witch burnings in Denmark that occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries.*



FACT 87

# FASTALAVN (NORDIC HALLOWEEN)

The Nordic tradition called Fastalavn is a hybrid between Halloween and Carnival and it is usually celebrated in February. In Denmark, we have one barbaric ritual called "slå katten af tønden" [in English: Knocking the cat out of the barrel]. Back in the old days, fastalavn was celebrated by drinking lots of alcohol and beating a barrel with a cat inside. Beating the barrel with the cat inside was believed to work as a safeguard against evil. The barrel tradition has been practiced for centuries and records show it happened in Copenhagen in the early 1500s until the 1800s.

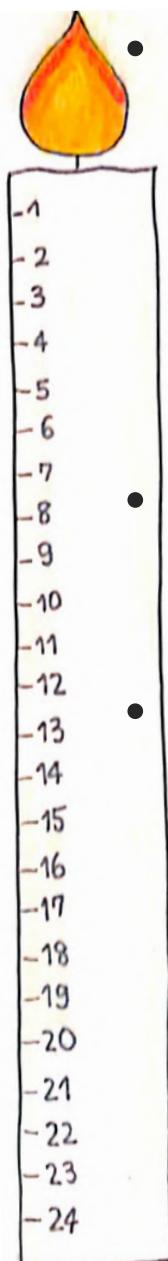
The cat was usually not killed, but allowed to escape when the barrel was broken. Today, we put candy inside the barrel instead of a cat. If you are lucky enough to be the one who knocks out the bottom of the barrel (making all the sweets fall out) you become kattedronning (queen of cats). The one who knocks down the last piece of the barrel becomes king of cats (kattekonge).



## FACT 88

# TRADITIONS UP TO CHRISTMAS

- Carlsberg releases the popular Christmas beer at the start of November.
- We have Christmas buffets with family/friends and coworkers from six weeks to right before Christmas day. The buffets consist usually of bread with toppings and different meat. The most iconic dish is marinated Herring with some strong liquor called snaps. Another dish exclusively eaten in Dec. is æbleskiver (similar to waffles) and glögg (mulled wine).
- In Denmark, we have an advent decoration with 4 candles. On each Sunday of Advent (4 Sundays leading up to Christmas Eve), we light up a new candle.
- For each day in December until Christmas we have some daily activities: we light a candle divided into 24 parts each day. We watch a new episode of a Christmas series on TV (24 episodes). And kids get a small present for each day in December leading up to Christmas Eve - it can be candies, clothes, or small toys.



FACT 89

# CHRISTMAS DAYS TRADITIONS

We decorate the Christmas tree on the 23rd of December (or earlier) and keep it up to the 3rd of January since visitors might come over in the holiday. Denmark celebrates Christmas on the eve (24th) before Christmas day (25th), which is an old Scandinavian tradition. The Christmas Eve dinner is all about traditions. Usually, we eat duck or pork with boiled/caramelized potatoes, and brown gravy.

For dessert, we eat something called Ris à l'Amande - it's a cold, creamy rice pudding made with vanilla and almond. In the dessert, a whole almond is hidden and the one who finds the almond wins a small gift. After dinner and before we open the Christmas presents, you have to join hands and sing Christmas hymns while walking around the tree (Scandinavian tradition). And then we start opening presents - one at a time. The next 3 days, we usually celebrate Christmas with the extended family.



FACT 90

# THE DANISH ROYAL LIFE GUARDS

The Royal Life Guards was founded in 1658 by King Frederik III after Denmark-Norway lost a war to Sweden and had to give up what is Southern Sweden today. The King didn't think the peace treaty of Roskilde with the Swedes would last and thus felt in need of a guard. The Royal Guard today serves two purposes: it is an infantry combat unit, which regularly sends soldiers to international operations, such as Afghanistan. And it is a ceremonial unit that guards the royal family and their castles, providing permanent guard at Amalienborg Castle, Kastellet, Rosenborg Castle, and Fredensborg Castle, among others.

*Fun fact: Each bearskin hat is made from the fur of an entire bear, and they are supposedly very heavy - according to my brother in law who was a royal Guard. To be part of the Royal Danish Life Guards you have to be above 175 cm.*



# FACT 91

# STUDYING IN DENMARK

80,000 students applied to university in Denmark in 2020. Out of them, 70,000 got accepted for one of their choices, which is the highest number of successful applicants recorded. There are 4 big university cities in Denmark, which also correspond to the 4 biggest cities. Copenhagen has around (90,000 students), Århus (45,000 students), Odense (30,000 students) and Aalborg (25,000 students). University in Denmark is free. You get paid around 6000 HKD a month to attend. Therefore, taking education is seen as a job and you are not expected to work in your spare time. This enables people from poor families to get a higher education. If you come from an EU country, you have the right to the government fund as well if you work a minimum of 10 hours a week.

*Fun fact: Many university programs in Denmark do not require good grades - you only need to have passed high school.*

UNIVERSITY OF  
COPENHAGEN



# FACT 92

# ÅRHUS, #2 CITY

Århus is the 2nd biggest city in Denmark with 240,000 people calling it home. It is located in the center east of Jutland to the east coast. In Denmark Århus is mostly known for being a hip city for the youth since around 10% of the population is students due to the big university located there. All these students have made Århus the youngest city in Denmark with an average age of 37 years and the largest age group is 20-29 years. Furthermore, more than 40% of the population has an academic degree, which is also the highest in Denmark.

*Fun fact: Only 4 cities in Denmark have a population above 100,000. The other three is: Copenhagen (1,100,000), Odense (150,000) and Aalborg (120,000).*



FACT 93

# ROSKILDE - THE VIKING CITY

Roskilde is located 30 km west of Copenhagen and it is the 10th largest city in Denmark. It was a very important city in the Viking age and was the previous largest city before Copenhagen. Roskilde is home to one of Denmark's most important cathedrals, which was built in the 12th and 13th centuries on the site of a 10th-century wooden church. Currently, 130,000 tourists visit the cathedral each year and since 1995 it has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since 1450 all Danish kings have been buried in Roskilde Cathedral.

*Fun fact: The Roskilde Festival is a Danish music festival held annually south of Roskilde. It was created in 1971, and it is now the 10th largest music festival in Europe and the largest in Northern Europe.*



FACT 94

# HAMLET: THE DANISH PRINCE

The Shakespeare play: "Hamlet" is about a Danish prince and was written between 1599-1601 and became the longest Shakespearean play. The play centers around Hamlet and his revenge on his uncle who has killed Hamlet's father. The play is built on a Scandinavian legend prince Amleth of the Jutes (most of today's Jutland) which was depicted in an old Icelandic Poem from the 10th century. When Shakespeare pictured the castle in the play, he used a real castle known as Kronborg for reference. One reason he chose this castle might be the Danish King around this time had some grandiose parties to impress nobility around all of Europe.

*Fun fact: In the basement of the castle sits a statue of an old Danish Viking, "Holger the Dane". Legend says: If Denmark is ever in trouble, then he will wake up from his slumber and help the Danes defeat their enemies. My hometown bought an original copy of the statue to sit in the city center.*

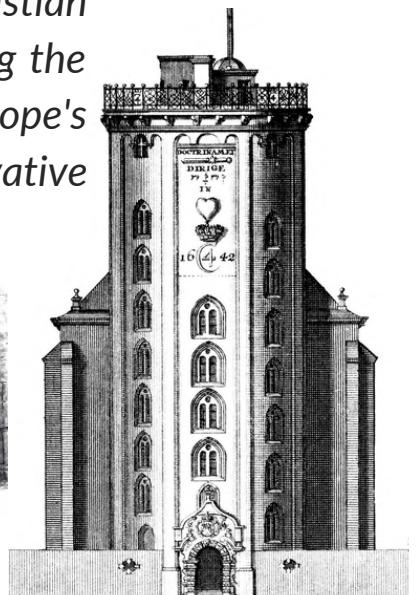


FACT 95

# COPENHAGEN HISTORY

The Danish name of Copenhagen is København and the first written record of people living in Copenhagen dates back to 1043. Back in the days, the city was just known as 'Havn' meaning harbor and the city was of little strategic or political importance. Most of the people in "Havn" earned their daily bread by fishing. In the next two centuries fishing and trading turned the small fishing village into a flourishing town. And the city became known as Merchant's Port (Købmanden's Havn, which after some years turned into København). And in 1343 King Valdemar (Father of Queen Margarethe the first who founded Kalmar Union) made Copenhagen the capital of Denmark.

*Fun fact: Some of the most iconic buildings and tourist attractions in Copenhagen were made under King Christian the fourth, who almost bankrupted Denmark in making the capital more beautiful. For example, he made Europe's oldest ever stock exchange, the Børsen, and the innovative Rundetårn Observatory.*



FACT 96

# COPENHAGEN TOURIST INDUSTRY

Tourism in Denmark is a major economic contributor at approx 82 billion DKK in revenue and 120,000 equivalent full-time jobs annually. Most of the tourist comes from our neighboring countries: Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Netherlands, but Denmark has seen an increasing amount of tourist from East Asia - especially China and Japan. Copenhagen is the most visited city in Scandinavia and attracts around 30 million travelers a year. This means that Copenhagen gets 6 times more visitors than the entire population of Denmark. Copenhagen has 4 of the top 5 most visited tourist attractions in Denmark. The only non-Copenhagen attraction making it in the top 5 is Legoland ranking 3rd, which is located quite close to my hometown.

*Fun fact: In Copenhagen, cemeteries often double as park spaces, which means it's not uncommon to see couples lounging next to tombstones, or a family having a picnic near a gravestone. This is due to a lack of green spaces, so the cemetery is taken into use.*



FACT 97

# COPENHAGEN ATTRACTI0NS

**Nyhavn:** Created between 1670 and 1675 as a gateway from the sea to the inner city, Nyhavn was notorious for beer, sailors, and prostitution, gaining a reputation as the city's entertainment district. However, the area has transformed into a popular tourist area with high prices and fine dining. Whenever Denmark is shown in news it is usually a picture of Nyhavn.

**The Opera House:** The Danish Royal Opera House is a rather new building completed in 2004. The opera house was a gift to the city by the shipping magnate Maersk McKinney-Møller.

**Christiania:** Christiania is a former military base that sat abandoned for many years. In 1971, a group of hippies broke down the barricades and began squatting there. Approximately 900 people live in the area and it is mostly known for selling Hash/Weed openly. Hash/Weed is illegal in Denmark but the police don't enforce the laws in Christiania very strictly since they are unwanted by the settlers.

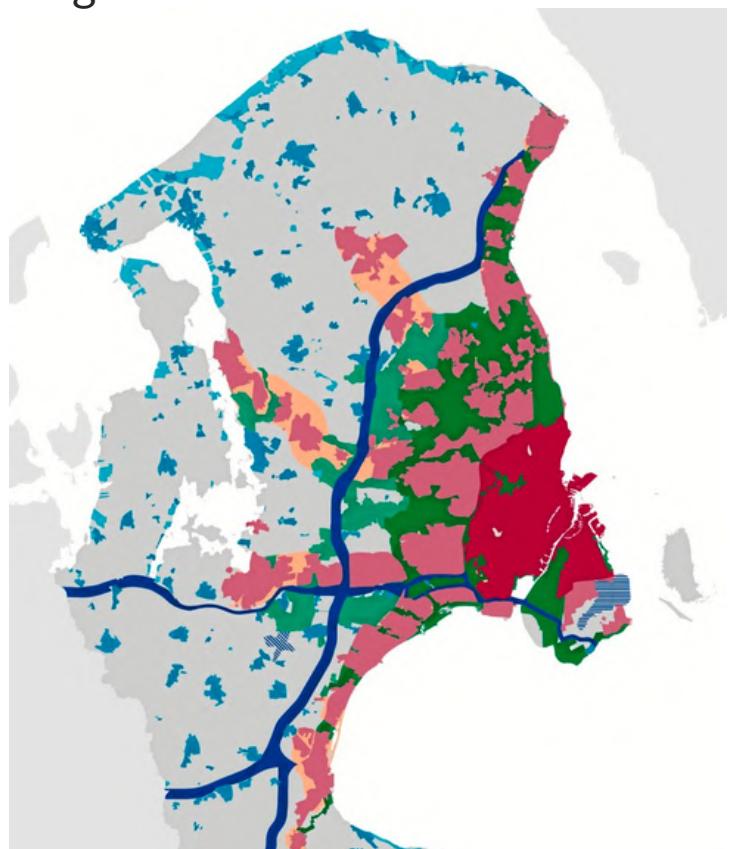


FACT 98

# COPENHAGEN DEVELOPMENT

In 1947, the Finger Plan of urban development was decided to develop the Copenhagen Metropolitan Area. The finger plan consists of developing cities (urban areas) along 5 fingers. Each finger is centered around a local train system, known as S-train, and in-between the fingers are green areas (or wedges). It was made to provide land for farmers and to have green areas and forests close to the city. Also, they were afraid the city would end up as London with a giant circular urban area and no large green/nature areas. Additionally, this planning is a big help against floods since some large regions can absorb the water.

*Fun fact: Recently, a sixth finger (green area) has been added. It is located on the small island to the east in the region called Ørestad. More than 2 million people live the 5 (6) fingers, and it contains 34 municipalities.*



FACT 99

# COPENHAGEN FIRES

Copenhagen had 3 major fires in only 80 years. The most devastating fire was in 1728. Due to dry weather, strong winds, and narrow streets, the fire managed to destroy around half of the old city from the Middle Ages and 30% of the entire city. However, more importantly, the University of Copenhagen and the national library burnt down, and a lot of records and knowledge were lost in the fire. It was later decided that the burned-down areas should have broader streets, so the fire would have more difficulty spreading. It was in the aftermath of this fire, the long pedestrian street 'Strøget' was built. Another fire occurred in 1795 and destroyed most of the remaining old city and 50 streets and prominent churches and castles. The last major fire in Copenhagen was in 1807 under the English bombardment of Copenhagen.

*Fun fact: Due to the 3 fires in just 80 years, only a few houses and buildings date back before the 18th century in Copenhagen. And most of the historical buildings seen today are replicas of the original.*



# FACT 100

# SKJERN - MY HOMETOWN

Skjern was originally a small village located close to the Skjern River (biggest in Denmark), and since the Middle Ages (1105) there have been bridges so people could cross the meadow and wetlands. In 1875, Skjern got a train station and the city grew slowly from the small village to a larger place containing a small service sector. In 1900-1975, Skjern became an industrial city and the population grew quickly and farming was no longer the most important job/service in Skjern. Since 1975, the population has continued to grow but at a much slower rate, so now it is home to 7800 people and now the service sector and industrial sector are the biggest.

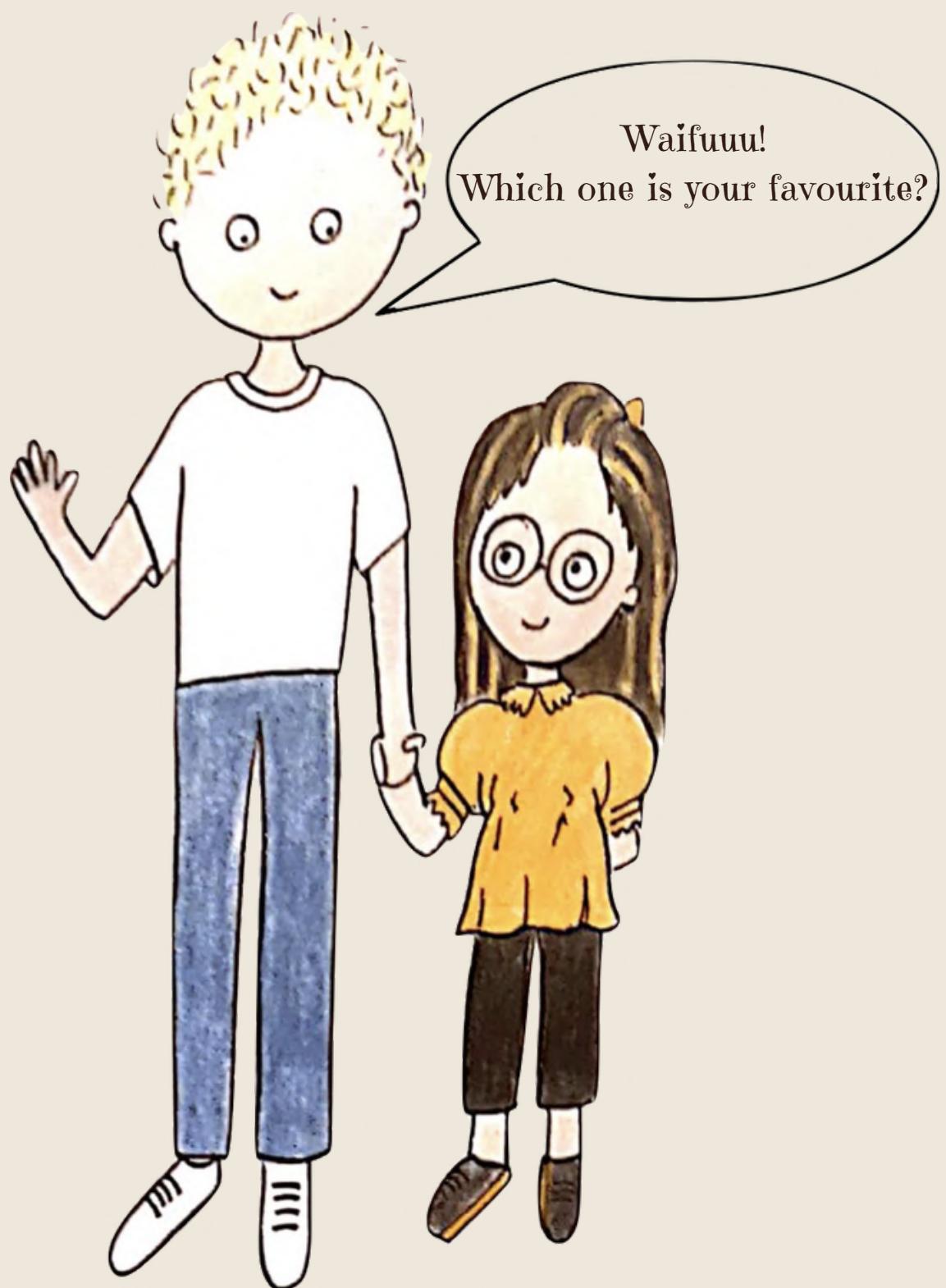
## Fun facts about Skjern:

- Denmark's smallest pedestrian Street
- The biggest river in terms of volume.
- Skjern comes from an old Danish word meaning clean and is probably related to the river.
- The oldest part of Skjern Church dates back to the 1100s, but it has been rebuilt multiple times. Most recently in 1915 due to population growth
- Skjern has the largest wooden suspension bridge in Denmark.



**NATURENS RIGE**  
Ringkøbing-Skjern Kommune





Waifuuu!

Which one is your favourite?