

## = The Almost Nearly Perfect People =

The Almost Nearly Perfect People : The Truth About the Nordic Miracle is a 2014 nonfiction book by British journalist Michael Booth . In the book , Booth focuses on the five Nordic countries ? Denmark , Iceland , Norway , Finland and Sweden ? dedicating a section of the book to each one . He began writing the book after migrating from England to Denmark , based on his perceptions of the Nordic region before and after moving . He wanted to present an alternative perspective to the extremely positive depiction of the region in British media . The book received mixed reviews : some critics found it to be overly critical with poor humour , others praised its tone and informativeness .

## = = Background and release = =

Michael Booth began writing The Almost Nearly Perfect People when he moved from England to Denmark about 15 years before its publication in 2014 . Before moving , he had perceived Scandinavians to be a " bearded , woolly jumper @-@ wearing , recycling bunch of people " , but afterwards was surprised by how different each of the Nordic countries seemed to be . He wanted to write a book to explore these differences and to explain what he saw as a " fascinating dysfunctional family dynamic " between the five Nordic neighbors . He was further inspired by the " Nordic wave " phenomenon that gained popularity in the 2000s and 2010s when the western world became fascinated with the Nordic countries and their ways of life . In particular , he wanted to investigate Denmark 's consistently high scores on various happiness indexes , since these figures conflicted with his own observations that " they didn 't seem that happy " , and also challenge the perception that the Nordic nations as a group are " little jolly green countries in the north " .

Booth undertook four years of research while writing the book , including travelling to each of the countries and interviewing prominent political and cultural figures of each nationality . In writing about each country , he tried to examine both their successes and their weaknesses to " rebalance the utopian view " of Scandinavia held by many British people and to present a different perspective of the region than the extremely positive depiction in a lot of British media . The tone of the book was inspired by Simon Winder 's Germania , which combines humour with an historical and travel @-@ based narrative .

The book was published in English on 14 February 2014 by Jonathan Cape . Its first publication , however , was in September 2013 as a Danish translation . Although the manuscript was in English , it was translated and published first in Denmark . On 23 October 2014 , the book was translated into Finnish . The Polish translation came on 7 October 2015 . In addition , a Norwegian translation of the book is planned .

## = = Content = =

The Almost Nearly Perfect People is divided into five sections for Denmark , Iceland , Norway , Finland and Sweden . Beginning with Denmark , Booth explains the Danish concept of hygge ( " cosy times " ) , which he sees as conformism . He criticises the Danish population 's environmental footprint and notes that their taxation rate and levels of personal debt are among the highest in the world . Moving to Iceland , Booth details the banking practices that led to the collapse of the country 's largest banks in the 2008 financial crisis , as well as the popular belief among Icelanders in the existence of Huldafólk ( elves ) .

In Norway , he highlights the rise of far @-@ right politics , the widespread opposition to immigration , and the multiple high @-@ profile Norwegian neo @-@ Nazis . He notes that despite having a " nature @-@ loving " reputation , Norway has a large ecological footprint , and that the sale of fossil fuels accounts for much of the country 's wealth . He recounts Finland 's history of heavy alcohol consumption and its high rates of murder , suicide , and antipsychotic drug use . He explains the Finnish concept of sisu and what he sees as the resulting obsession with machismo .

Sweden receives Booth 's strongest criticism , where consumerist influences are blamed for the apparent downfall of the Nordic model of social democracy and recurrent failures of the Swedish

justice system . He argues that Sweden , with its strict rules of social etiquette , has a strong culture of conformity .

Denmark

Chapter 1 - Happiness

Chapter 2 - Bacon

Chapter 3 - Gini

Chapter 4 - Boffers

Chapter 5 - Chicken

Chapter 6 - Vikings

Chapter 7 - 72 per cent

Chapter 8 - Hot @-@ tub sandwiches

Chapter 9 - The bumblebee

Chapter 10 - Denim dungarees

Chapter 11 - The Law of Jante

Chapter 12 - Hygge

Chapter 13 - Legoland and Other Spiritual Sites

Chapter 14 - The happiness delusion

Iceland

Chapter 1 - Hakarl

Chapter 2 - Bankers

Chapter 3 - Denmark

Chapter 4 - Elves

Chapter 5 - Steam

Norway

Chapter 1 - Dirndls

Chapter 2 - Egoiste

Chapter 3 - The new Quislings

Chapter 4 - Friluftsliv

Chapter 5 - Bananas

Chapter 6 - Dutch disease

Chapter 7 - Butter

Finland

Chapter 1 - Santa

Chapter 2 - Silence

Chapter 3 - Alcohol

Chapter 4 - Sweden

Chapter 5 - Russia

Chapter 6 - School

Chapter 7 - Wives

Sweden

Chapter 1 - Crayfish

Chapter 2 - Donald Duck

Chapter 3 - Stockholm syndrome

Chapter 4 - Integration

Chapter 5 - Catalonians

Chapter 6 - Somali pizza

Chapter 7 - The party

Chapter 8 - Guilt

Chapter 9 - Hairnets

Chapter 10 - Class

Chapter 11 - Ball bearings

= = Reception = =

The Almost Nearly Perfect People received mixed reviews from critics :

Mariella Frostrup described the book for The Guardian as a " comprehensive and occasionally downright hilarious explanation of the Nordic miracle " and praised its " companionable , lightly mocking tone " .

Alwyn Turner gave the book 4 ( out of 5 ) stars in a review for The Daily Telegraph , writing that " if [ Booth 's ] tone is sometimes a little too jokey , his enthusiasm is contagious " and that " the real joy of the book " lay in the collection of interesting trivia .

The Literary Review 's Bernard Porter found the book to be " a thoroughly entertaining read , written brilliantly " , but criticised its largely impressionistic nature and the lack of sources and references .

Ian Thomson of The Guardian described the book as " informative , if strenuously humorous " , but felt that Booth 's " schoolboy humour " was at times " pretty embarrassing " .

Anna Vesterinen , writing for the Rationalist Association , felt that Booth relied too much on quoted studies and surveys and ought to have included more interviews with " ordinary locals " .

The Financial Times ' Richard Milne wrote that , despite Booth 's tendency to reinforce some stereotypes , " Behind the jokey tone is a lot of good material " , and described the book as " a welcome rejoinder to those who cling to the idea of the Nordic region as a promised land " .

Sara Steensig opined in the GB Times that the book 's section on Iceland was somewhat superficial and that Booth 's analysis of Sweden was too critical , but nevertheless , " while he does make a lot of fun of the Nordic countries , I think you can feel his affection for the inhabitants too . " .