

# Why this guide?

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We used to speak of Globetrotters, world travellers in pursuit of fun, but nowadays more and more people are travelling for reasons related to work. I call them “Worktrotters”.

Globalisation has accelerated this travelling phenomenon.

The international workforce now transcends national boundaries. To achieve an “informational” equilibrium – and also for reasons of cost – jobs and skills are increasingly moving across borders. This will occur even more in the future (i.e. internationalisation), with higher levels of competition for skilled or specialised individuals, a dynamic that used to be confined within one country.

People also travel more in their free time, as well as study abroad. So it is not surprising that there are more and more intercultural couples. Given that many of them are well educated, this group will play a greater role in the future as competition for qualified labour intensifies. These couples will build up a life together in the country that offers the best opportunities for *both* of them.

After some deliberation, we made a decision in 2006: I would move to Copenhagen to live with my “Danish prince” in Copenhagen; as a software engineer there were more computers for me there than ships in southern Germany for him as a naval architect.

Before moving, I felt confident that I was well-equipped for my move to Denmark.

For one because my heritage and upbringing is multi-cultural: my ancestors come from Luxembourg, I am German, born in Romania and I grew up tri-lingual.

Secondly, I had experience living in several countries already (Germany, Romania, Sweden, and the USA), and had worked for the large international IT company IBM for many years. In my career I worked with teams from many countries, and thus I considered myself familiar with all kinds of cultures. Moreover, I made enquiries about Denmark as much as possible prior to the relocation. And ultimately, you learn best by experience, don't you? So, off I went.

Looking back, there are many things I would have liked to have known beforehand and possibly been spared. Nothing dramatic, but I often found myself in surprising situations. The first major surprise came when I read on my payslip that a 60 percent tax rate had been applied to my salary because

I didn't hand in my tax card at work. Good grief! I had ordered it, but in the confusion of the first few days, I had forgotten to pass it on to the accounting department.

Many other confusing situations followed. If only I had known more about Denmark, I could have avoided so many mistakes and pitfalls ...

At some point I started to think it would be a pity if my experience was of no use to others. This is what motivated me to write this practical guide. It is my hope that the information collected in this book will help you transition into the Danish way of life.

And now let me introduce you to my Denmark.

Welcome!

Best of luck in Denmark!

Velkommen!

Held og lykke i Danmark!

Dagmar Fink

## Target audience

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The Worktrotter's guide is primarily written for professionals that move to Denmark to *live* and *work*. These include both people that are moving permanently and those whose career bring them to the country only for a couple of years. On arrival, they will all be faced with similar practical problems.

There are, of course, many different aspects to immigration. Refugees and immigrants from non-Western countries will obviously face additional challenges from those I describe here. Grasping those is altogether more complicated and would demand a different perspective, one that is outside of the scope of this edition. Nevertheless, this guide could no doubt be helpful for them.

The book also has the potential to spark interest from the Danes as it will help them to get to know their country through the eyes of foreigners.

When you move you must be well prepared especially when you emigrate. This book examines life in Denmark from various perspectives and will help you make well-informed decisions.

For those who have decided to take the step, a number of practical questions arise. What needs to be done, and in what order? What deadlines need to be observed? Where do you turn in a particular situation? How is this or that handled in Denmark? You can, of course, find answers to most of these questions on the Internet – after a long search – but at the beginning, you often have no idea what information you need. And many of the websites are either only available in Danish or have limited information in English.

This book will provide you with all the details you will initially need and is written in compact form in easy-to-understand language. It will also provide more than 500 web links, addresses and information on where you can find more details. You will get a comprehensive overview of the most important things to consider when starting out in Denmark. The guide is meant as a “starter-kit” – especially relevant for the first couple of years as a new resident gets settled.

The information is tried and tested, and contains many tips from other internationals making it an invaluable resource to you.

# How to read the guide

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The book is divided into two parts:

The first part contains general information about Denmark. It gives a brief overview of the country's history, geography, political system and monarchy, as well as Danish habits and etiquette. It also introduces important Danish personalities and companies that have had a great influence on the country and continue to do so.

The second part can be read as a user's manual. The chapters are arranged in the order in which the topics are likely to be relevant for getting settled. It does not necessarily need to be read in sequence however. On the contrary, you can look up the topics of interest to your situation at any given moment.

In addition, you will find a list of important contact information at the end of the book to help you settle down in Denmark quickly.

All the information in the book relates – at least, insofar as what is available – to the year 2009. Since Danish administrative legislation is often subject to change, information will be reviewed and updated regularly – and made available on the Worktrotter website <http://www.worktrotter.dk/guide>.

The guide points to important websites where you can find further information. But web links can quickly become outdated. That is why every link in the book has a number. They are tagged with (Lx), in which x is the number of the link. You can find the list of links via <http://www.worktrotter.dk/guide>. Registered users of the Worktrotter website can thus avoid the need to key in the full hyperlink. And it gets even better: the hyperlinks are regularly reviewed to ensure relevance, so that the information you access is up-to-date. **Note:** if you do not have Internet access in Denmark yet, you can use the Internet free of charge at libraries.

Throughout the book British English is used, but where necessary the American word is provided in cases where expressions may be unclear.

The guide contains a lot of Danish terms (always in singular form) that you can use as search words on the Internet. They can also serve as a tool for orientation in everyday life or when you make a request to the authorities. These terms are highlighted by being underlined.

The book includes many tips. However, some of them concentrate on the Copenhagen area. I would be very grateful for any hints and tips you might have about other parts of the country. Please send any such input to [feedback@worktrotter.dk](mailto:feedback@worktrotter.dk).

You will find certain companies named in various contexts. When this occurs, it is never meant as a recommendation but merely as an illustrative example.

It is inevitable that the content of this book is, to a large extent, based on my subjective perception and my own experience. So there is no guarantee of objectivity. However, to supplement my own perspective, I conducted interviews with 15 expats from nine different countries regarding their experiences. These interviews are summarised in Chapter 6. The input of many others is referred to throughout the guide.

Despite the intensive research that went into writing this guide, the reader may still find imperfections or even mistakes – that is unavoidable. I would appreciate your ideas and suggestions, pointers to errors or omissions, and, of course, positive feedback. Please send your information to [feedback@worktrotter.dk](mailto:feedback@worktrotter.dk) so that mistakes can be corrected and your feedback taken into account in future editions. Corrections will be made available on <http://www.worktrotter.dk/guide>.

# Thanks

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I received a lot of helpful advice, information and materials in order to write this book. I would like to thank everyone involved for this support.

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