

Aarhus for UCD students – What to expect



Image: Cees van Roeden

Getting there: Aarhus is easily accessible by bus, rail, and plane. From Dublin you can fly to Copenhagen with SAS and get a train directly from the airport to Aarhus city centre (budget about €50 for the train). Alternatively Aarhus has its own small airport with a bus connection to the city centre leaving after every flight arrival costing about €14. You can't fly directly from Dublin to Aarhus but you can connect via Copenhagen with SAS or via Stansted with Ryanair.

When you arrive: Aarhus University has a buddy scheme where a Danish student will be nominated to meet you on arrival and take you to your accommodation.

Be aware that your phone might not work in Denmark if you don't have some sort of roaming set up with your network. And make sure to unlock your Sim before you leave otherwise your new Danish Simcard (available to buy in any supermarket/convenience store/petrol station) won't work.

E.U. citizens don't need a VISA to live and study in Denmark but within a few days of arriving it will be necessary to submit the paperwork for your License to Reside in Denmark. Usually there will be a day soon after you arrive where the international office will arrange for the immigration authorities to come out to the University and you can do it there and then. Once you have your License to Reside you can get your CPR number which entitles you to free healthcare, the use of public libraries, open a bank account, work etc.

Accommodation: As a part of the application process with Aarhus University you will be invited to apply for University managed accommodation. The accommodation offered by the University is spread out all over the city, ranging from on the campus itself to about 10km away in the outer suburbs. They offer three types of accommodation: 1) student residences – similar to Belgrove or Merville but not necessarily on campus. It is normal that about 12 people will share an apartment block, each with their own en suite bedroom and a shared living room and kitchen. It is normal that there will be a mix of Danish and international students in each block. 2) Shared-facilities house – a large detached house shared by maybe 10 students, usually all international students, each with

their own bedroom but typically sharing a bathroom and kitchen, typically in the suburbs within walking distance of the University. 3) A sublet apartment – sharing a private apartment with one or two other people, usually also international students. Every international student is guaranteed a place but not necessarily in the accommodation that you indicate as your first preference. If you don't want to accept the accommodation you are offered you will have to find a place to live yourself.

Expect to pay a similar rent in Aarhus to what you might pay in South Dublin (i.e. expensive!) For University managed accommodation you will be invoiced by the University, not your actual landlord. You can pay your rent with cash in any bank or if you have online banking you can do an electronic transfer. Similarly if have any complaints or need any work done (plumbing, electrical etc) you can contact the University's accommodation office. This type of work will normally be done at the landlord's expense. When you move out your room and common areas will be inspected and any damage or cleaning costs will be taken from your deposit.

On your day of arrival your buddy will usually take you to the accommodation office to pick up your key and your lease, or if the office is closed they may pick it up for you. Be sure to arrange this with your buddy before arrival (they will email you during the Summer) in case you need to find a hostel or hotel for the first night or two. The international office in Aarhus will be in touch with you about what to do on your arrival.

Also be aware that you may have to set up an internet connection at your own expense depending on your accommodation.

Your accommodation will probably be only very basically furnished. You can buy quite cheap furniture and homeware in IKEA in the outskirts of the town.

Settling in: Arriving in a new country can be quite daunting, but Aarhus University hosts about 800 exchange students who are all in the same boat as you, and arrange an intro week with a lot of social activities and it is easy to make new friends very quickly. The University also offers you the option of arriving early and taking part in a two week Danish language course. This course comes highly recommended – the class sizes are small, the atmosphere is social, the teachers aim not to offer you just a language class but a 'soft landing' into a new country and a new culture, and are happy to answer your questions about 'where can I buy this?' or 'how do I get here?'.

Money and shopping: Denmark uses the Danish kroner – about 7.4 kroner to a euro. AIB offer commission free exchange to students so you can stock up a bit before you go. In Denmark it is very normal for people to pay for even a packet of chewing gum with a credit card, which means ATMs are not as widespread as they are in Dublin so do your best to not be left without cash. Your Irish laser card will work in ATMs but not in shops, and there will be a transaction charge every time you use it so perhaps it will be worth the effort of opening a Danish bank account. Shop around because some banks charge a one off fee to open an account whereas others are free for students. With a Danish bank account you will get a debit card which can be used in shops and restaurants etc.

Cost of living is similar to Ireland. Groceries cost about the same as in Ireland, and just like here you can save money by shopping around. Netto, Aldi and Rema are all quite cheap whereas Fotex and

Fakta offer better choice and brand names. For convenience/late night shopping 7-11 and shops attached to petrol stations are widespread, open 24 hours and provide the basics.

Alcohol is slightly more expensive in Ireland, especially in nightclubs and in Irish bars. Cigarettes are a bit cheaper than in Ireland. Eating out in restaurants costs slightly less, but takeaways cost slightly more.

For shopping Aarhus city centre offers two big department stores, Magasin and Salling, a long pedestrianised high street with a lot of big name retailers, and a large shopping centre attached to the train station. Closer to the University there is another large shopping centre called Storcenter Nord.

Academic Life: Academic life will be quite different to what you're used to at home. Because it is your exchange year there are no core modules so you can pursue your interests. Classes are offered in English and tend to be 10 or 15 credits instead of 5 like you're used to in UCD so you can get away with only doing 2 or 3 courses a semester. Class is usually once a week lasting 3 or 4 hours, incorporating maybe an hour of lecturing followed by a class discussion where maybe one week you might have to do the group presentation that prompts the discussion. The atmosphere in these class rooms is very international with small classes and participation is encouraged. Unlike the UCD Arts Omnibus class sizes are small enough that everyone gets to know each other and the atmosphere is very social, even with your teachers. Speaking native English will give you an advantage over most of your classmates so a lot will be expected of you! Assessment is usually via a take home exam of lengthy final paper.

Going out in Aarhus: Aarhus is a small city with a large young and international population and a very student friendly nightlife. On campus there is Studenterhus, a student-run not for profit bar that offers subsidised drink and various social activities and theme parties. Every Tuesday it runs an international student's night, very popular with exchange students especially at the beginning of the academic year.

Each faculty runs a Friday Bar, where on Friday a student committee is permitted to put on a Bar with cost-price drink. Each faculty Friday bar has a different atmosphere. Some are wild parties lasting until the early hours and others are quiet and relaxing with board games.

If you live in a student residence you will probably have a subsidised bar to share with your neighbours at the weekend.

In Aarhus city centre there are a lot of nightclubs and music venues popular with students. Train, Gaz Station, Social Club, and Heidi's are some of the most popular.

There are two Irish bars; Tir na N'Og and Waxies, which both offer good Guinness and show all the soccer, rugby and GAA matches that you'd be afraid of missing. It's not unknown for them to employ Irish exchange students either so there is no harm in giving them your CV. There are also two British bars; Sherlock Holmes and the Golden Lion. All four of these places cater to English speakers and regularly have pub quizzes, karaoke nights and live music, and discount drink prices for students. Waxies has trad music every Sunday and the Golden Lion serves Roast Dinner on a Sunday so keep them in mind when you're homesick!

For a more Danish experience look out for Bodega's, which are small traditional Danish bars which sell bottles of beer (no draught) for cheap and offer a more relaxed atmosphere and don't fall under the jurisdiction of the Danish smoking ban. The most popular with students is Kurt's Mor.

Aarhus is packed with good restaurants. For good value go to Det Grønne Hjørne for the all you can eat buffet.

Every September Aarhus hosts a big street festival with free concerts and street theatre – definitely worth checking out.

While the weather is good enough Aarhus offers plenty of outdoor activities. There is a beach, a botanical garden, a lot of forest and a deer park. The University campus itself features a beautiful park with scenic lakes. In May the University hosts the annual inter-faculty 'Kapsejlad' – a boat race across the lake and one of the highlights of every Danish students' year – not to be missed.

Getting around: Aarhus is small and compact. The University is about a kilometre away from the city centre. The cheapest and easiest way to get around is on bike – Aarhus is incredibly cyclist-friendly. The yellow city buses cost slightly more than what you might be used to paying on Dublin bus but there aren't many places you can't get to on bus. At weekends there are night buses that cost double fares. The blue buses are regional and will take you to the outer suburbs.

For wider travel Aarhus has a bus station and a train station, and a ferry port, so it is very easy to get to other parts of Denmark and Scandinavia, indeed all over Europe.