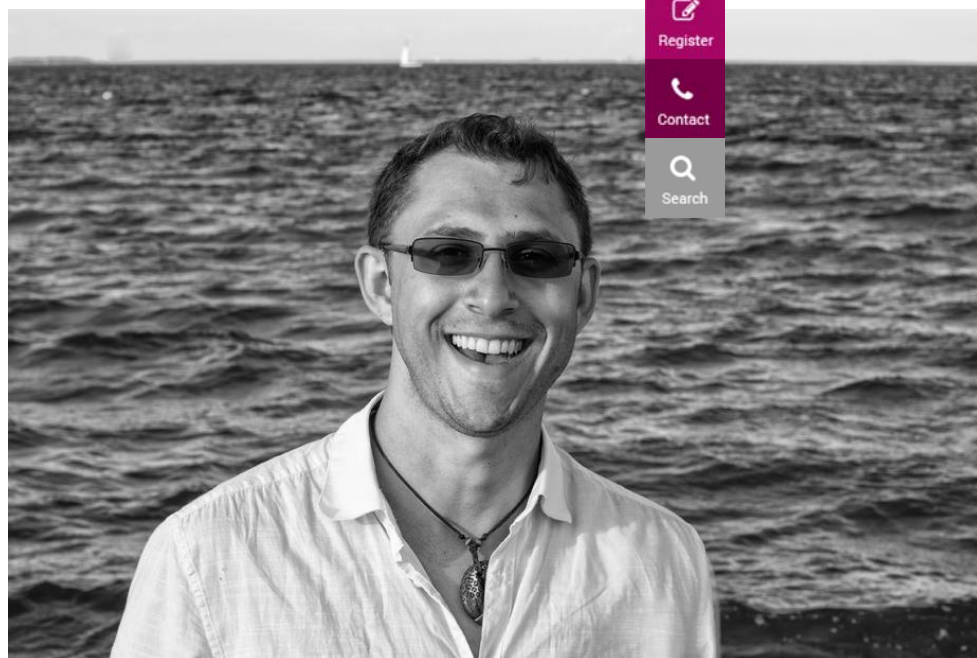


Social Denmark: The blogger's point of view

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Alex Berger is a travel writer, photographer and videographer with a focus on highly visual and long-form content. He's run www.virtualWayfarer.com since 2007 and is an active travel and tourism researcher with an emphasis on digital communication's influence on travel, hostel/backpacker culture, and study abroad.

Why the move to Denmark in 2011?

After working for three years in mergers and acquisitions in Arizona, I was eager to re-locate. I was offered a tuition waiver for a two-year full degree Master's at the University of Copenhagen. It also offered me a two-year visa to live abroad and explore Europe. I've fallen in love with Copenhagen. After finishing the degree, I applied for a green card and plan to stay several more years.

The Danish travel industry and social media. How developed and mature a relationship is it?

It is deeply divided and has a long way to go, but there have been major strides over the last year. The country has a handful of major players but by-and-large is only starting to undergo a social media awakening. The two most active brands are Spies ([link to related article here](#)) and the Danish-based booking meta search engine [Momondo](#) which is very globally aware and pro-active. Copenhagen-based startup [Everplaces](#) is also hard at work looking at ways of socializing the travel experience and industry as a whole.

Apart from the Spies video, any other examples of clever social media marketing campaigns in Denmark?

The Danes have a dry practicality and quirky sense of humour that periodically gets them in trouble ([Visit Denmark's quasi-disaster a few years back](#)) but also leads to fantastic content. Coke had two clever ones this year: "Slurp" at one of Copenhagen's central theatres and "The Happy Flag" which they ran at the Copenhagen Airport. The "Monkey Dance" has also been quite successful.

Why don't Danes love Twitter (and which is the most used/loved social media platform)?

The most used, hands down, is Facebook. LinkedIn is also very popular for professional interactions. Instagram has also been quite popular while Google+ usage is extremely low.

Twitter is present, and adoption is growing but the resistance to it is a difficult question. I believe a lot has to do with culture and conversational behavior. Danes are very particular about how they express themselves, preferring a structured turn-based approach where each individual is able to voice full/complete thoughts. Twitter's character limit

and format fundamentally prevents this while Facebook is very conducive to it.

Second, a key part of understanding the Danes is understanding the [concept of Janteloven](#). It essentially states that while everyone should aspire to excel, no-one should seek to stand out or think themselves better. The reasons individuals use Twitter and the content they share is in direct conflict with large parts of Janteloven. This contrasts with something like Instagram that allows for humblebragging and is a bit more collectivistic in nature.

The third component is that businesses don't have the incentive to use Twitter unless they're internationally facing. Standards for customer support and responsiveness in Denmark lag behind. It possibly ties into Janteloven and the Danish resistance to special treatment, unlike other nationalities who demand immediate attention when frustrated. Either way, Danish companies are just starting to monitor social media, ramping up responsiveness and awareness to match changes in their approach.

You produce a lot of content about Denmark - did you consciously set out to be a travel blogger in your own backyard?

Not at all - I only started blogging about Denmark in a more robust fashion eight months ago. My initial negative experiences with Danish DMO's and workload led me to de-prioritize all but my Danish photography. I also had concerns that an increased focus on Denmark would frustrate my long-time readers. In retrospect, I no longer feel this is an issue: the response to my in-depth insider's take on Denmark has been very positively received by long-time and new readers.

Do Danish DMOs now collaborate with home-based bloggers?

The good news is that larger Danish DMO's seem to be making a core pivot in their strategy and way of engaging. Historically, they have enjoyed a relative monopoly on Denmark's outward facing identity and this led to a certain level of arrogance and disconnect from the local community. In my first 10 months here, I repeatedly reached out to local DMOs and was generally ignored or rebuffed.

More recently, they have been making a much more concerted effort to engage local talent. I've seen a positive shift in how they engage with their communities and a more collaborative spirit, which I hope marks a core change in mentality and approach. I've also seen them engage much more heavily on social media, including collaborative sharing and a number of new collaborations predominantly with the Denmark based Instagram community. They've also started to engage on a limited basis as part of this transition with local bloggers.

How do you rate the output of domestic travel bloggers, generally? Beginners, getting there or experts?

In the last year, several new blogs have popped up as well a handful of digital magazines/co-authored blogs. I'd classify the majority of Danish bloggers as late-stage beginners, with the exception of one or two experts. I think there's huge potential here and I am currently in the early stages of attempting to nurture a Danish travel blogging community.

The exception to this is the Instagram community. There are a number of world-class IGers and the community as a whole is much more organized, professional, and engaged. They hold regular events, do cross-over and collaborative projects and have engaged with several major brands/DMOs.

And is there a developed mechanism for paying these bloggers to write about places?

The Visit Denmark and Wonderful Copenhagen DMOs have organized a series of trips over the last couple of years to bring in outside bloggers. They've also worked with a handful of external bloggers on more targeted/niche projects. To the best of my knowledge, monetizing is still extremely difficult and done on a case-by-case basis, predominantly funding by-way of private sources. Given the relative youth of the Danish blogging community as a whole I would say that Denmark is still lagging behind significantly when it comes to compensating bloggers for their work.

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