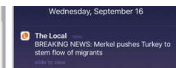




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Lifestyle



You might be tempted to hop on the bus, but stick with the bike – you'll probably get where you're going faster. Photo: Colourbox

How to take on the Danish winter like a true Viking

The Local · 19 Jan 2016, 09:30



Relocation expert Melanie Haynes offers some tips for newcomers and long-time residents alike to get through the dark and cold Danish winter.

- **Life as a modern expat: Happy (virtual) Holidays**
- **Drop 'us and them' and embrace new life abroad**

Winter in Copenhagen bites — literally. By winter I don't mean the 'winter lite' of November and December - I mean the bleak midwinter of January to March (or even April). The first part before Christmas feels like a novelty — maybe you get a bit of snow and the days are short but there is the thrall of the Christmas hygge and twinkly lights. This is the good part of winter.

When January first arrives it brings with it the true reality of winter — a season that seems to never end with full days of no direct sunlight. In fact, in January 2013 Denmark saw the sun for a mere 17 hours in the whole month. And snow. Luckily the world does go on in Copenhagen when it snows — the traffic is a little slower, there are fewer bikes on the road and the buses and trains are packed but everything still works.

One can't always choose the time of year they move to a new city, but it must be said that a relocation to Denmark in January or February presents extra challenges to the settling-in process.

To get through the Danish winter, it helps to have a strategy to survive – particularly for new arrival.

With that said, here are some tips to help you take on winter like a true Viking.

Remember that it has to end



Photo: Joao Alves/Flickr

Repeat to yourself that no matter how long the winter feels, it will end. Eventually. It may be almost a third of the calendar year some years but the summer will be come around and make us forget the grimness of the winter. When I speak to new expats moving here in the winter it is the first thing I say. The summers (even bad ones) help you forget the winters. It's a bit like childbirth.

Be kind to yourself



Photo: [Alessandro Valli/Flickr](#)

This is something I really believe in for successful relocations — be kind to yourself. Whilst it is good to get out of the house everyday for health and sanity, sometimes it is OK to just hunker down and hibernate for a few days. Back when I lived in Berlin we had a two week run of temperatures no warmer than -16C in the daytime. After moisture around my husband's nose froze on his walk to the station, my son and I didn't leave the house until the mercury rose. Of course this isn't an option all the time but there is nothing wrong with a day of Netflix and hot chocolate if you can.

THE LOCAL



Just through any journey, make sure you are prepared to sweat as soon as you get on the road or enter any shop.

Get on your bike



Photo: Alex Berger/Flickr

Stick with your bike. The first thing many people do on a wet or snowy day is ditch their bike for public transport - I am certainly guilty of this at times. However, the bike lanes are the first to be cleared after a big snowfall. Copenhageners, at least in the city, tend to drive cautiously in the snow, even with winter tyres, so buses will also be running slower than usual. The trains take it easy on icy or wet rails. All this is great for general safety but not if you want to get somewhere quickly. Stick with your bike but make sure you get something to cover the lower part of your face as the wind will be blowing directly at you no matter what direction you travel, a strange Copenhagen anomaly.

Stay healthy

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Looking after your health is super important in the winter here. I never took supplements before I lived in Denmark but I would heartily recommend a decent Vitamin D supplement. We usually get it from the sun and since that isn't going to happen in the winter, our bodies need the boost. It will make getting up in the dark a lot easier and keep winter depression at bay. Eat well — fresh fruit and vegetables are easy to get ahold of here and organic produce is a lot more affordable and accessible than in other countries I have lived. Invest in a daylight lamp. This is another piece of advice I constantly give and I really believe in the benefits in warding off tiredness and winter depression. And moisturise!

Find some candles and coffee



Photo: [Jacob Bøtter/Flickr](#)

Although I do advocate a little hibernation, it is also great to find a cosy warm coffee shop to sit a spell — either on your own or with friends. Even for a quick hot drink — the restorative nature of sitting in a place designed to make you feel warm and cosy will do just that and help you brace yourself for the next trip out into the cold.

Above all, keep repeating the mantra — “summer will make it all worthwhile!”



life in Copenhagen on her blog [Dejlige Days](#) and after experiencing relocation to Copenhagen and Berlin, she runs a settling-in service aimed at helping expats called [Dejlige Days Welcome](#). Her ebook, *Dejlige Days: A Guide to relocation*, will be published in February.

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