THE EXCHANGE JOURNAL

FEBRUARY EDITION

A day in the life...

For our February Edition, we thought we would change our style a little. We've almost made it through winter; the end is in sight, and we are now taking a moment to share stories and anedoctes about
the daily routines we've built for ourselves in our new countries. Despite the wide differences, from Cairo to Canada to Kazakhstan, we can muse over our commonalities. No matter how far away you are, alas university life prevails in a similar manner.

We hope you enjoy,

Lara, Bella, Sarah and Freya





ESSAYS OR SKIING:
TAKE YOUR PICK

February in Freiburg and my days are busy, whether that be with important academic obligations or with new experiences worthy of writing about. After returning to Germany from the Christmas interlude, I continued attending the same courses prior to the holidays until my classes finally concluded a few weeks ago. A fifteen-week teaching period for one semester is certainly longer than I am used to – and the work is not yet over. The next month or so will consist of me heading to the library each morning to hustle for a desk as my base for the day as I attempt the biggest academic challenge of my university career as of yet. Three "Hausarbeit" pieces ranging from 2000-6000 words are to be lovingly scribed in perfect German and submitted by the end of March. So, you could say each day in my life will turn into much of the same as the next few weeks roll on by.

However, intertwined within the days of essay writing focus and caffeine drinking frenzy, I am completing training for a personal project I have dreamt about for years. Unsure of how it would ever happen, there I was scrolling through the Freiburg Hochschulsport website when I found the opportunity to become a qualified skiing instructor whilst studying here. To say that I jumped when I was accepted onto the program would be an understatement. And so, this means leaving my flat in the dawn haze to catch the train to the mountains in Feldberg. "Hospitation" days are spent observing and helping the other instructors in the Kinderland or with the adult beginners – the actual teaching side of the course. But it is the "Praktikum" days which I love the most, where as a group we ski for five to six hours improving our "fahren" techniques and learning teaching methods in preparation for the exam. These days wreck my legs but leave me in awe that days between lectures can be filled with skiing. When I recently had a visitor from home, they exclaimed at how *awesome* it is for me to have access to such amazing opportunities, for me to be able to jump on a train and in an hour, I can find myself in a snow-covered wonderland.

While each day can be quite different, I still have a routine, places I frequent, a particular coffee shop where I spend all my time (and my life savings). My year abroad does not always look or feel like an experience of a lifetime, of course there are days of mundane hibernation paired with some form of bingeable TV show – it would be inauthentic for me to pretend otherwise. But it is these days which make all the others feel that much more rewarding.

by Maude Casey



RUNNING ON BURRITOS & DEADLINES: A DAY IN THE PARISIAN FAST LANE

BY ANA ARITIO

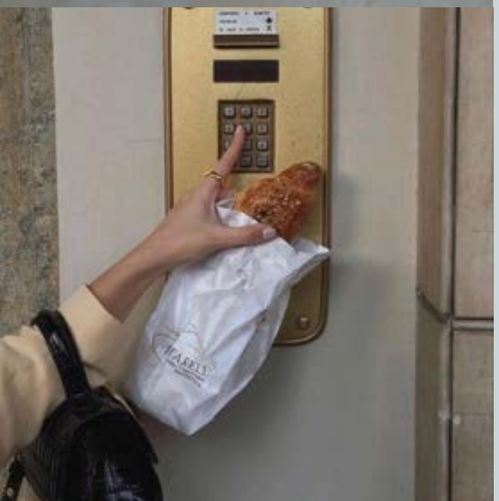
With the new year well underway, my days have settled into a rhythm—one that often feels like a never-ending cycle. Juggling French university, friendships, babysitting, and marathon training is no small feat, and fitting all these priorities into a single day can sometimes feel impossible.



Take Mondays, for example—a day when every aspect of my life seems to collide. To some, it might sound overwhelming, but for me, a packed schedule has always been, dare I say… fun?

I've always been a morning person; there's something deeply satisfying about tackling my to-do list early so I can fully enjoy my evenings. This past Monday, in particular, was a whirlwind. I woke up at my usual time—around 8:30—and headed out for a 12K plod along the river before dashing back home, jumping in the shower, inhaling some breakfast, and rushing to class. My first lecture ran from 11:00 to 12:00, followed by an hour's break before my two-hour tutorial from 1:00 to 3:00. That break is the perfect window to grab lunch with friends. Now that the weather is improving, our idealised dreams of picnicking in the Jardin du Luxembourg are finally becoming a reality.

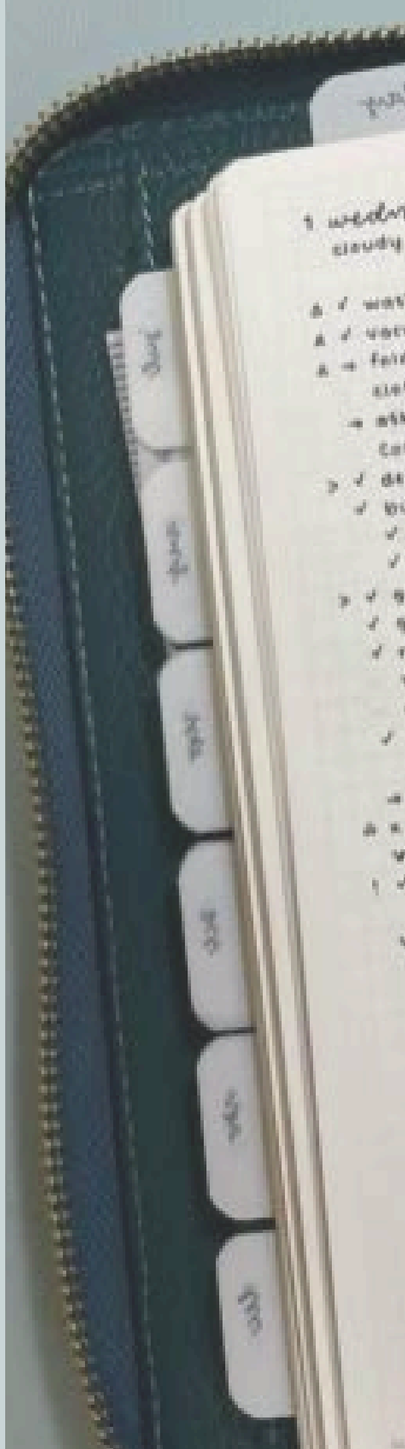
With my academic obligations done for the day, I shift gears to my other commitments—babysitting being one of them. I technically have a two-hour gap before work, but "free time" is a bit of an illusion. That evening, I was hosting a burrito night for a friend visiting from school, meaning my so-called break was spent dashing around Paris, hunting down last-minute ingredients. In hindsight, the chaos was more than worth it.



Babysitting usually runs from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m., but because I adore the family I work with, time flies. Before I knew it, I was sprinting back to the metro, stomach growling, with nothing but thoughts of guacamole and salsa on my mind. One small problem—dinner still had to be made, and I had less than 40 minutes until everyone arrived.

Five smashed avocados and a few overstuffed burrito wraps later, dinner was served—and disappeared just as quickly. Hosting dinners has become one of my favorite things about living in Paris, so evenings like these are becoming more and more frequent. Once the last plate was cleared and the apartment spotless (I physically cannot go to bed with a mess), I did a quick review of my university work, making sure I was prepped for the next day. French university is less coursework-heavy than Edinburgh but demands consistent class preparation.

With everything in order, I finally crawled into bed—ready to wake up and do it all over again the next day.



Almaty

– A Running Commentary

When moving to a new place, to keep those pesky feelings of unfamiliarity, overwhelmment and isolation at bay, it is vital to maintain a consistent routine. For this, my (almost) daily run has been my saving grace. Yet although the original objective of my running here had been to create a bridge between my London life and my new one in Kazakhstan; to continue an old, familiar habit in order to keep me sane, I have found that the Almaty jog has taken on a life completely of its own.

Along my usual running haunts of the Regents Park Outer Circle or the Edinburgh Union Canal, the runner is very much the rule and not the exception. To go two minutes without passing a fellow red-faced, struggling-for-breath, Fitbit-donning civilian is virtually impossible come rain or shine. And as you do inevitably pass your fellow runner, it is crucial to follow the proper etiquette. Avoid eye contact at all costs and do not adjust your pace or path at all to accommodate theirs. In fact, you must do everything in each other's respective powers to entirely ignore the existence of the other. In my years of jogging around British capitals, I can claim with confidence that I have never once exchanged a word with another human being on a run.

Almaty, Kazakhstan. The summer months are one thing. My first brave trainer-clad outing is to become a monumental ego check, as I am forced to take a pause after just ten minutes of huffing and puffing along a main road in one of the most polluted cities in the world. I eventually regain some courage and my breath, and so I pick up the pace again, only to be met with a man playfully blocking my way with his arms and laughing and joking while refusing to let me pass. I am not in the mood.

Winter. My lungs have finally acclimatised to the compromised air quality. And so, I venture into the -15°C snowscape, proudly flaunting my Arsenal FC fleece and admittedly tiny running shorts- the only sports bottoms I own. Almost immediately, a perturbed voice overpowers my noise-cancelling headphones, *Devyushka, devyushka! Vam ne holodno?* "Girl, girl! Are you not cold?". "*Net!",* I reply with a smile, carrying along my merry way. This interaction is repeated twice more in the space of one twenty-minute jog, and many more times on respective runs. Upon reflection, I have realised that this question is completely in accordance with the well-meaning Kazakh obsession and anxiety regarding the bodily temperature of others.

Everyone warns you about the threat of catcallers on the street. I just didn't anticipate that the biggest culprits would be the *babushkas*.

By Rosa Pike









Finding the BALANCE in Cairo

You might imagine every day in Cairo is based around a visit to an ancient wonder or a vital sight of the city. Admittedly, when hosting visitors I have twice done a pyramid trip in the morning before school, but it generally doesn't cross my mind at all. Mainly, my day-to-day is incredibly mundane.

Something I have learned is that this year on exchange is not a total pause on the rest of my life. I am still trying to beat my instagram addiction, do diss preparation, and keep in touch with friends - none of those are put on hold, they just have new challenges attached.

From Sunday to Thursday, my days revolve around studying in a language school for 3 – 5 hours a day. My tasks range from short story writing, creating news videos, and writing reports on climate change, all in arabic of course. It is a strange but brilliant mix, and I do get a bit of whiplash going from vocab on election fraud to metaphors about the beauty of nature.

Falling back into a class routine more similar to school than uni has been comforting and challenging at once, and the long hours of classes have brought me closer with other Edinburgh students I barely knew before. The school has an incredibly supportive community of teachers and students, who have played the biggest role in making this megacity feel like home.



Whilst most of my afternoons are spent in cafes or libraries to get on with homework, sometimes I drag myself to the gym after school, just a short walk over the river. The interior of the gym is drastically different from what I am used to - walls plastered with aggressively macho muscular imagery - a little off putting to say the least, but I tend to stick to a treadmill overlooking the Nile, the novelty of which really doesn't get old.

Sometimes, though, the balance can shift too far towards routine.

As a friend observed so painfully accurately, I am a creature of extreme habit, happiest nestled deep within my comfort zone. I can often go weeks doing the exact same thing, having temporary love affairs with specific cafes, unable to fathom the thought of leaving them for another.

However, I still challenge myself to find room for adventure. Some of my recent forays into the 'new' include starting yoga, pilates and climbing, listening to a podcast a day, walking the hour long journey home, reading books by Egyptian authors, and exploring a new mosque, museum, or area of the city each week.

I know I need to 'carpe diem' or some such cliche, but at the end of the day, I am also just living here, I can't be a perpetual tourist for a whole year. Right now I am just trying to find equilibrium between the comfort of repetitive routine and the necessary educational exploration of this wonderful, enormous city.

By Sarah Challan Flynn

Montréal : How to Adapt
Cold, cold, cold by Freya Siebert



Montreal has just experienced the most snowfall in 48 hours that has happened in the last 170 years. The pavements, the roads, the parks are snowed under, lumps of snow are piled up on the sides of the roads as tall as I am.
Yet, I write this the sun is startin to shine through, to warm up. Its zero degrees and a man walks past my window in a t-shirt and shorts. But things don't just stop here when it's cold, in fact Montrealer's seem to do more, live life MORE. In Edinburgh at the slightest mention of high winds or heavy rain, I'm miserable, Here people don't bat an eye. Runners' layers up, dogs wear protective jackets, festivals change their names from 'Picnic' to 'Igloo fest'. The city adapts. It manages to be happy and full of colour and life all year.

That is what this year away has specifically taught me, the art and power of adaptation: of layering up, of changing. So, every morning I get out of bed, I stare at the snow, and a love the fact the sun reflects off its white surface. I layer up until I no longer walk, I waddle, and leave the house excited (mostly). There are small yellow diggers that drive along the roads, and even smaller ones for the paths, to rid the city of the snow. Once a man in the digger smiled and waved at me, another time they stuck of their middle finger – such is life.





The funny thing about the city being so cold is that you feel so warm. Walking for a few minutes and I begin to sweat. That really sums up the experience, even when it's cold and dark, new and scary, a few minutes of exposure and you're warm again.

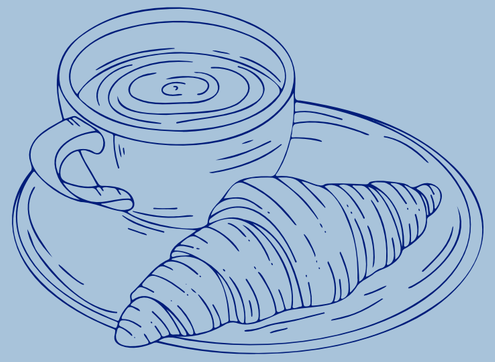
I can't quite fathom leaving, of de-shedding all these layers I've put on and built up here but I'm excited to adapt again, come back to Edinburgh and the cold, cold, cold…



Day in the life

at l'Université Côte d'Azur

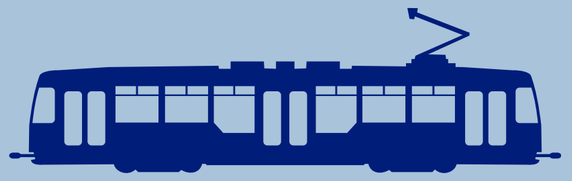
by Nieve Jackson



First things first - I pop into my local boulangerie on my way to uni. My life has changed for the better since I have been introduced to the "Pain au Chocolat aux Amandes"! This also came in at €1.50 so there are zero complaints from me.



To get to my campus, I take the tram and then the bus. In total, my commute takes about 35 minutes because live in the city centre but campus is a little further out. I personally think this is best because I'd rather travel for uni than after nights out/evening activities, but this is definitely something to think about when you're choosing accommodation!



Made it to campus ! My first lecture was "Sociolinguistique" from 10-12. I was deep in concentration in this lecture because it was a challenge, so I only have this as a picture to show for it…

The longer contact hours are definitely something I've had to adjust to! I can't say I've been converted to it however, I do like that we can cover whole topics in one session.

My degree at Edinburgh is French and History and, as you can tell from the two classes I have today, I have had the opportunity to study courses which are a bit outside of my normal degree - I think this is a selling-point of the exchange, another way in which it broadens your horizons.

After class, I started my commute home. I tend to walk to the tram stop in the afternoon rather than take the bus because I have more energy… Also, there is something very uplifting about walking home with this view!





In the evening,

I met some of the other international students for a catch up on the beach. In my view, coming to another country is a big deal and having a support network who speak your native tongue is very comforting so, I would say it's just as important to fully immerse yourself into the international student scene as it is to get to know your local classmates

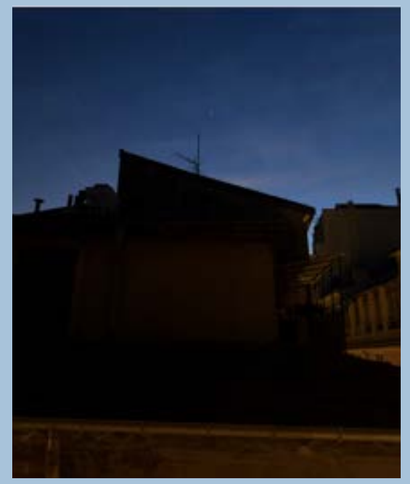




Eventually it did get chilly. It may be 15 degrees warmer than Edinburgh at this time of year but once you acclimatise, 10 degrees starts to feel freezing! Naturally, we diverted to the pub on the way home for a couple of French pints (they're not quite Tennent's standard)



And finally, I made it back to my apartment after a jam-packed day of study and fun!





A weekend in Copenhagen:

BY LARA AND BELLA

ART, BIKES AND DJS...





It is funny how when you have lived somewhere for over six months, how easily you fall into the habitual slip of daily, and perhaps a little mundane life.

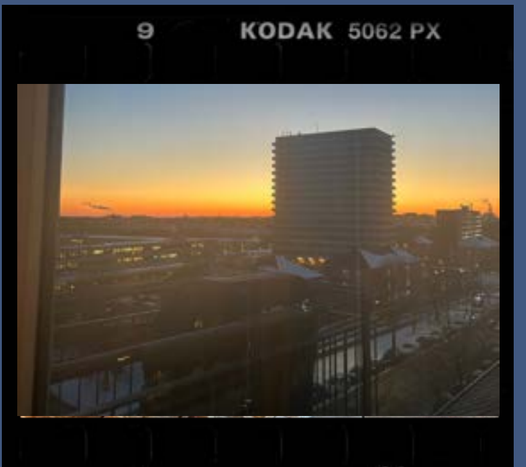
You focus so much energy on settling in, making friends, finding a job etc. that it is almost without warning that one day, you take a look around you, and realise the steady routine that you have built for yourself; the realisation that you truly do live here now.



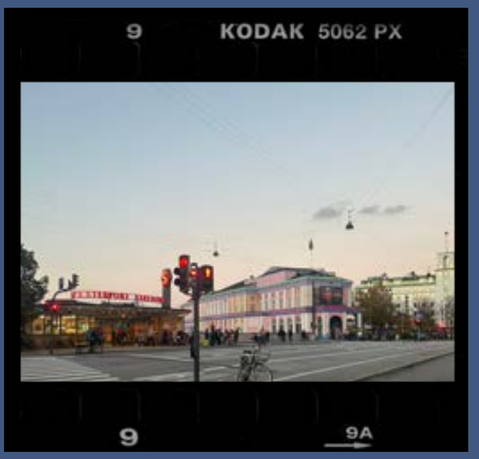


February is always a hard month for me, however the cold wind of Copenhagen sneaking into every gaping air hole it can fit into has made it ever so slightly more challenging. This made the daily biking even more challenging - i never thought i would say it, but i miss the warmth of the London tube

I was also apprehensive about facing the dark months of the northern hemisphere. I have been pleasantly surprised however - maybe it's the Danish appreciation of hygge or maybe it's just my frontal lobe developing, but this winter has been a little easier. And surprisingly, the cycling culture has actually been my favourite thing about living in Copenhagen, forcing me to take regular exercise amid the winter blues.







For this ‘day in the life’, we thought we might describe a day in Copenhagen at the weekend, in order to showcase some of the fun variety that this city has to offer.When I’m not working in the local coffee shop, I am usually trying to race out of the house to the vintage clothes market, panicking that all the good clothes will be gone if I don’t get there at 11am when it opens… usually I arrange to meet or bump into a friend and if the sun is shining we will go for a coffee.



My routine differs slightly week to week, as I often work in a bar on a Friday or Saturday night, so spend the morning recovering from my late shift finish and then haul myself out of bed to take a walk through one of Copenhagen's stunning parks, maybe even catching sight of Fredericksburg Park Zoo’s elephants (ethically pretty dubious…)



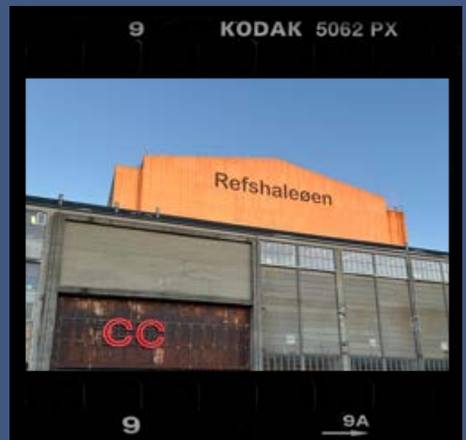
Copenhagen’s creative Scene is unmatched - Every weekend, you can find a new gallery opening or a DJ set… Last Friday, I attended the opening of Emma Talbot’s new exhibition at Copenhagen Contemporary, where I got to hear Emma speak about her work, explore the exhibition, and enjoy a live DJ set afterward. The DJ just turned out to be Main Phase … and all for free …



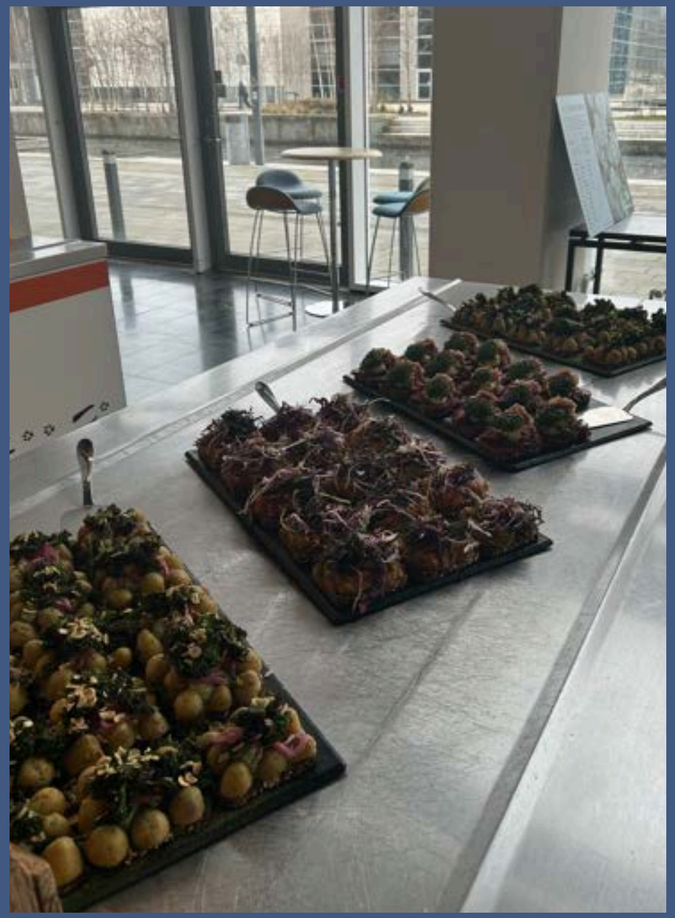
That said, these free events are a lifesaver in an otherwise outrageously expensive city. The days of £2.75 Southsider pints are long gone, replaced by 40cl beers averaging £6-7 each. With our budgets feeling the strain, we’ve found a workaround—weekly student Friday bars on campus, where the drinks are cheap, and the atmosphere is somewhere between a raucous night out and a chaotic year 6 disco, now fuelled by Tuborg Classic.

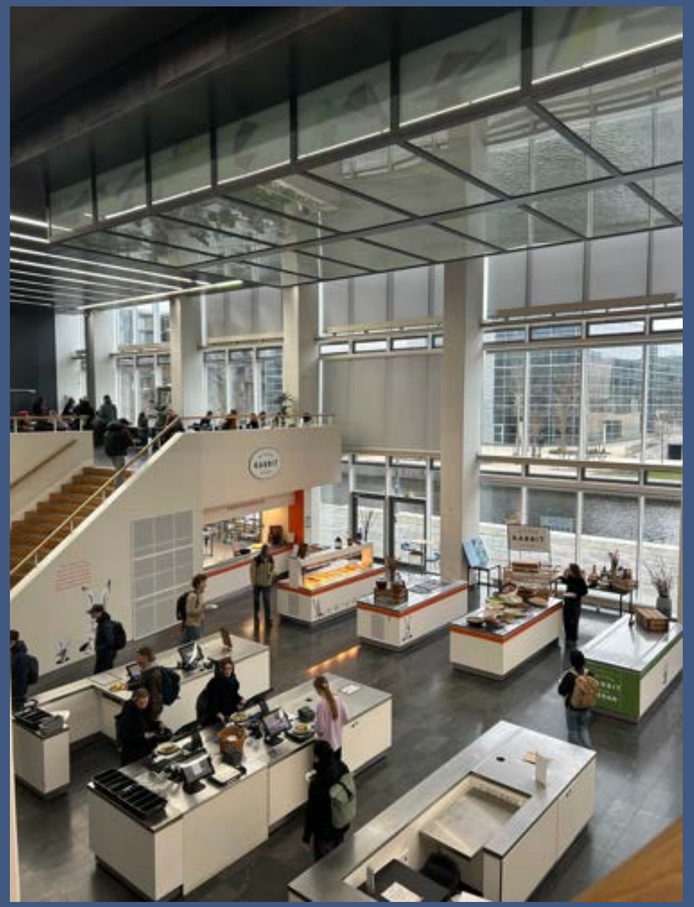


In an ideal scenario we might head out to one of the many amazing techno clubs that Copenhagen has to offer, before spending a relaxing Sunday morning at the La Banchina sauna, sweating out the hangover and recovering for the week ahead.



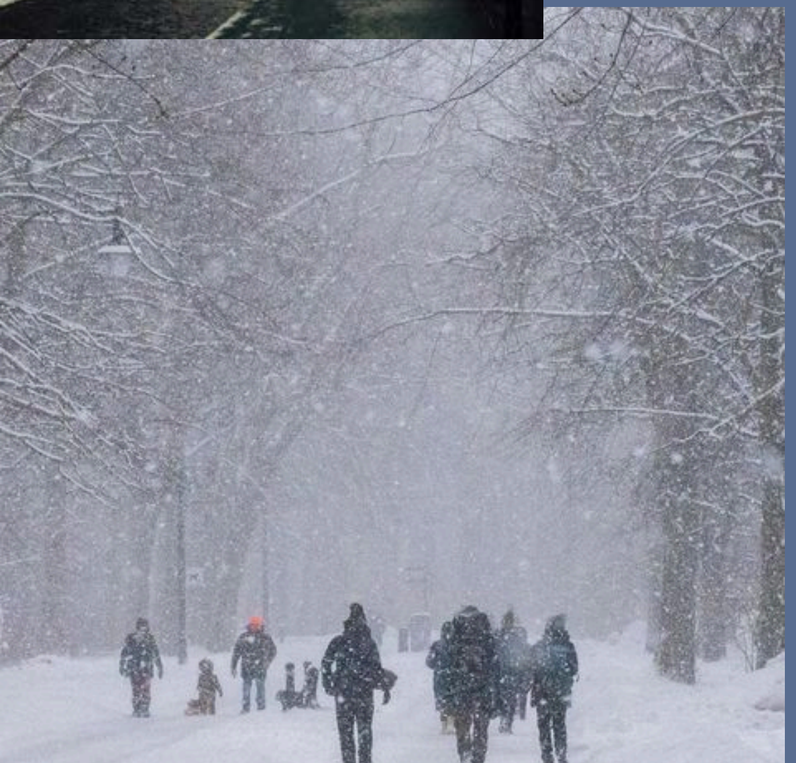
A sneak peak into the selection of smørrebrød at UCPH South Campus!











A cold day in Montreal

I will wake up, and it will most likely be sunny even when the snow is built up so high you can't get through it. I will open the curtains to my lovely view of the accommodation bins and smile. I will try and do some morning homework, but then remember I am on exchange and take it easy. I will layer up; I made it until January without a proper coat and was going to go the full mile but kept getting sick. I live a few minutes from a safe injection site so walking to the metro is always a stark reminder of the city's depressing indifference to its Fentanyl problem. I don't ever want to get desensitised to it. I will head to class, where I will be confused and not really agree with anyone because I do not understand or maybe like how the Canadian mind thinks about literature. It is too abstract over here, and there is an attempt to make everything about your own identity. But I think I am just jealous at how big and loud everyone feels they have the right to be, and how good they are at thinking differently.

Then I will get lunch, and it will be a magical poke bowl straight from the library, every single day. Exiting the library you may catch a hockey game or some unserious candidates ice skating in the rink on the middle of campus. Then the rest of the day may be filled with some surprise pop quizzes and getting called on. So you probably deserve to have some fun in the evening after all that. Every Thursday and Friday there are nights by different departments offering a beer from 60p. Everything about these events and this place is a little "cringe", and I have never loved anything more. People are cool in a very different way here; I've thought a lot about this and I think it comes down to the fact that they try, very hard, and don't think to hide it. I like this place a lot. It is still subtly racist though, and in a much more overt way than at home. It is very very cold, and the people are very French. Although I have come to love the French and develop a disdain for the Quebecois so make of that what you will. But it has an art and a culture and an energy that make you want to be everywhere and everything, and has started to make me sad when I walk around because I have to think a bit more now about the fact that I'm leaving at some point. I'd recommend it.

by Duha Bilal