

DENMARK

We were lucky enough to win the MMM competition for a one week touring holiday in Denmark at a site of our choice, including the ferry crossing. We elected to visit for three weeks on the basis that it was a long way to go [20hrs each way!] for just a week. Thus we were able to spend time travelling the length & breadth of Denmark. This is our diary of what we got up to:-

Wednesday 18th May to Friday 10th June 2011

Date	Activities
Wednesday 18th May	<p>Our long awaited, competition win, Denmark trip started at 12.30 am when we left King's Lynn en-route to Harwich. We stopped early at a picnic area in Thetford Forest for our packed lunch and arrived at the port by 2.30 pm even though check-in didn't start till 4.00. Last minute supplies and a diesel top up came from the Morrisons store close by the port facilities. Once through the booking in procedure we were joined in the holding area by an array of cars [some vintage; others very modern] who were taking part in the 5th Viking Rally through Denmark, Sweden and Norway. We also got chatting to the couple queued behind us who were Denmark veterans and gave us some good tips about where to visit etc. Boarding took place at around 4.45 pm and we were one of the last to drive up the steep ramp. Our cabin had a sea view and was fine - complete with an en-suite bathroom. As we departed, we were all serenaded by an accordion player on the rear deck - we have no idea why though! The boat, the Dana Sirena, appeared to be full and there were also a gang of Danish teenagers on their way home who were quite "lively"! There were various restaurants and a café area for refreshments but we only availed ourselves of a "glass" of tea for Kim and a Grolsh for Philip! A larger scale map of Denmark was also purchased which would come in very handy on our trip. Thankfully the crossing was very smooth and we both slept reasonably well.</p>
Thursday 19th May	<p>The coast of Denmark was spied late morning and we docked at Esbjerg, on time, at 1.00 pm. As the boat was not "roll on-roll off" we had to turn around in the car deck area which was unusual! This was our first trip abroad [you can't call our Shetland trip "overseas"!]& the first thing to remember was to drive on the right and to put on your headlights!! The easy way out of Esbjerg was to head for the main motorway and pick up the cross country route to Varde and then to transfer onto our intended northerly route. We did stop at an isolated picnic area just before Varde for the last of our packed lunch. The scenery on the way up past Oldgod, Herning and Skive reminded us of the Brecks and Fenland areas of home. The roads were very quiet and uncrowded and driving was uncomplicated and pleasant. A ready reckoner of the mph to kph conversion was required on the dash clipboard so that we could make sure that we stuck to the varying speed limits! Once past Skive, we were on the island of Mors which was to be our home for the next seven days. The campsite of Jesperhus had been recommended by the MMM travel consultants [Joyce & Gordon Pearce] as being one of the best [and most expensive!] in Denmark. Check in caused a bit of consternation until our booking, which had been made on our behalf by VisitDenmark, was found. We were allocated a pitch that had hardstanding, water point and electric hook up. All very easy and we were all settled by 5.00pm. A quick reconnoitre of the site with all its facilities followed [they even had cookers and microwaves which we had never seen on a site before!] and we had our first</p>

	<p>BBQ. This huge site has a combination of touring pitches, semi-static caravans [all with huge awnings!], tents and cabins and is very family orientated but it appeared to be quite peaceful and friendly.</p>
<p>Friday 20th May</p>	<p>The intention today was to bike the short distance into Nykobing to visit the Tourist Information Centre and then explore the immediate area. However, what we didn't realise was that today was a Danish holiday and thus most places were closed which included the Tourist Information Centre! We wondered why everywhere seemed so quiet! So after a quick tour around the marina and town [and a drool over the contents of a bakery/pastry shop en route!] we came back to site. However, the site shop had fresh bread and Danish pastries, so that was part of our lunch break. We decided to walk to the adjacent Blomsterpark which is part flower park, adventure playground and zoo! Thankfully the cost of entry [£22 each!] was included within our camp site fees which were part of the competition win. The tulips were generally past their best but the floral sculptures were well done. Back to the van late afternoon to chill out and start to plan for the rest of our time here.</p>
<p>Saturday 21st May</p>	<p>Today, we decided to head into the Thy area and explore with the van. Firstly, we called back at Nykobing to visit the Tourist Office but, as we didn't get there till 12.15 pm, it had already closed at 12.00pm!! We did come across a motorhome stop over point at the marina but there was no information about rates, length of stay etc. It looked to have only just been established but we hope that we may come across some more on our travels. Our route took us off the island of Mors across the arched bridge at Vilsund and onto some minor roads towards Vestervig and Agger. This was right on the coastal fringe and was very reminiscent of the North Norfolk coastline at Salthouse and Cley. We stopped at Agger and clambered over the sand dunes to the sea. We then turned north and entered the Thy National Park which runs along the coastline to Hanstholm. There were lots of quaint fishing villages, all reminding us of places like Old Hunstanton and Holme! Norre Vorupor had boats hauled up onto the shoreline; Klitmoller had been named "Cold Hawaii" due to the windsurfing World Cup that takes place in September - all we saw were some very unsuccessful surfers! All the sand dunes and heaths were all reminders of home territory! Heading inland, we passed through Thisted which appears to be largest town in the area. Back across the bridge at Vilsund and back to site by late afternoon. A round trip of over 100 miles but it has given us a good "feel" for the area. The lack of traffic on all the roads continues to amaze as well as the lack of litter anywhere!</p>
<p>Sunday 22nd May</p>	<p>The BBC weather forecast that we had printed off before we set out proved to be correct - it rained for most of the day! We had seen a notice board at the site entrance detailing a couple of local walks based from an adjacent car park. Our first attempt was interrupted by the first rain shower but we set off half an hour later in intermittent drizzle. The Blue route took us through open heatherland and pasture where we encountered our first Danish sheep! Then onto a couple of forest tracks which brought us by the Blomsterpark boundary. It was a very short walk [less than 2 miles] and we debated doing the Yellow route which would take us into the Limfjorden marshes but it would also be a lot more exposed to the rain. So we decided to return to the Blomsterpark as we knew that some of the exhibits were under cover and our passes were valid for the whole of our stay at this site. The zoo had a whole array of birds and mammals - especially cute were the meerkats and parrots.</p>

	<p>The rain showed no sign of abating, so we came back to the van by early afternoon for lunch. The rest of the day was spent catching up on various diaries and generally chilling out.</p>
<p>Monday 23rd May</p>	<p>During yesterday afternoon the site emptied - very few people were left when we awoke this morning. As the day was bright, although blustery, we got the bikes out again and, after a brief battle with the washing machines Danish instructions, we set off towards Glyngore. This was a village we had seen from the main bridge at Salling Sund just before we got to this site and it looked the quintessential Danish village of low level buildings with terracotta roofs, white walls and a large dominant church complete with a tall tower. It sits on a spit of land with a marina/port at the end. The ride across the bridge was windy but we did get some good views up & down Limfjorden. The village itself was deserted which was becoming quite a regular occurrence! There just doesn't seem to be the hustle & bustle that we have been used to! The Tourist Information centre appeared to be in the process of moving, so we didn't get to find it but we did have the last of our fruit scones on a bench by the marina, sheltering from the wind. The return trip was "into" the wind which made it hard work. When we got back to the junction to the site, we decided to continue back into Nykobing. This time the Tourist Information Centre WAS open, so we were able to collect lots of brochures on various areas that we hope to visit during this trip. Back to the van by mid-afternoon after a bike ride of 16+ miles. We do need to start planning for the rest of this trip!</p>
<p>Tuesday 24th May</p>	<p>Another blustery day and it started with intermittent drizzle. We decided to carry on from Saturday's coastal trip and headed towards Hanstholm which is at the northern extremity of the Thy National Park. During WW2, the Germans built Northern Europe's largest fortification as part of the "Atlantic Wall". The bunker is now a museum and was well worth the visit [+ entry was free!]. The large gun emplacements were still intact and the actual bunkers recreated the living conditions of the men. Worryingly, the start of the museum exhibits were either in Danish or German - i.e. no English, but the displays in the bunker were tri-lingual! This site was in a strategic location to dominant the entry into the Baltic with a similar installation in Kristiansund in Norway. A very informative museum. Before heading out of Hanstholm we called in at a shopping centre and bought some more of our daily quota of Danish pastries! The next port of call was Bulbjerg which has a rocky outcrop and is the only nesting place in Denmark of the Kittiwake. It was very windy on the clifftop and most of the birds were hidden from view. A WW2 lookout post was also a display area for what we might have expected to see! By relocating to a lower car park we were able to see the cliffs and the birds from sea/dune level - it was still as blustery but whipped up sand was added now! As a contrast, we had seen details of a bird hide at Vejlerne Naturcenter which was described as Northern Europe's largest bird sanctuary. This was sort of on the way back, so we diverted to try & find it. It was a bit further out of our way than Philip thought! It was two thatched buildings linked together with a bridge over a wide dyke. We saw swans, greylag geese & the usual gulls but very little else! Back to the site by 6 pm having covered over 120 miles! The roads were still so quiet - really unbelievable when compared to UK. Most of the landscape is dominated by numerous wind turbines which would certainly be earning their keep today !!</p>

Wednesday 25th May	<p>Today was to be our last day at the Jesperhus site and we decided that it would be a relaxing one! A visit to the laundry room was our first task but that ended up with us needing a visit from the site technician to show us what we were doing wrong as we couldn't get the machine to run! If we had been given an English pre-payment card rather than a Danish one, we might have been able to do it correctly ourselves!! We also found out that the cost of our 7 night stay was in the region of 2,000 DKr which equates to about £250. Excluding the cost of the flower garden entry, the nightly fee was therefore about £32 which is substantially more than we have ever paid in the UK - it was good job VisitDemark were paying! In the early afternoon we decided to have a last visit to the Blomsterpark, which was quiet with it being mid week. We got extremely lucky as they had just cleared out all the tulip beds and there were masses of bulbs spread out on the ground that could be bought. A carrier bag full cost 40DKr [£5] which was an absolute bargain. Next years garden planting will have to take into account all these new bulbs! A lazy rest of the afternoon - from tomorrow we have to start "fending for ourselves" when finding sites to stay at! We have a loose itinerary for the next two weeks but no sites booked at all!</p>
Thursday 26th May	<p>We didn't get away from the site until just before noon and our route towards Lokken took us back past the bird hides that we visited on Tuesday and we stopped again for the first part of lunch [more Danish pastries & a flask of tea!]. We saw a few more birds than last time - a pair of avocets and some lapwing on the ground and in the air. The coastal resort of Lokken is set behind a long stretch of sand dunes and looked quite prosperous, but again, it was empty! There were some historic monuments in the dunes that were quite photogenic [according to the tourist information brochure!]. The second part of lunch was taken in the bus station car park! We had decided to head for an overnight stop at Tars which is inland but on the way up towards Skagen. It is identified in the "All the Aires" book and is located behind a motorhome dealership on an industrial estate but you wouldn't really have known that at all. We had a pair of Oystercatchers on the grass just by the side of the van for a while! The book had this stopover as being "free" but, on arrival, there were stickers saying that the nightly charge was 50Kr [£6.25] which included electric hook-up. This was fine by us and we were the only ones staying. Hopefully we can find some more like this on our travels! Philip was determined to have a BBQ even though it was raining and ended up sitting under the adjacent trees for cover!</p>
Friday 27th May	<p>Today's activities were dominated by the weather! Having left Tars by 10.00 am we headed past Hjorring where we picked up the motorway before reaching Hirtshals. The route then swung east towards Skagen and we arrived in the town just before lunchtime. This is the most Northerly point in Denmark and the spit of sand at Grenen is where the North Sea meets the Baltic Sea. The main car parks in the town seemed not to be suitable for motorhomes, so we stopped by the port area in a roadside parking area. The town was partly pedestrianised and we strolled through it and bought our postcards & stamps before heading for our daily "fix" at the bakery! As we left, the heavens opened and it really threw it down [incl. hail & thunder!] and we were both soaked by the time we got back to the van. The original idea for today was to walk out to the spit of sand marking the two seas joining and explore the immediate area. Due to the rain, the plans had to change! We called at Grenen Camping which was a potential overnighting point to see if they had availability and what their nightly charges were. They had space [lots of it, even though it was the start of the weekend!] and the charges were high but not exorbitant. We then headed up to the tip</p>

	<p>off Denmark and it started raining again! As an alternative to the spit walk, there was the Skagen Bunker-museum which was another part of the WW2 fortifications. Unfortunately it was nowhere near as good/informative as the Hanstholm museum that we had visited on Tuesday. With the rain showing no sign of abating, we decided to head to the site & book in. We chose a suitable pitch for our one nights stay but obviously didn't site ourselves correctly as, when a large caravan decided [after much wandering around the site] that it wanted to be next to us, we had to move over by 1.5m to allow them to occupy the whole of their pitch! Danish tuggers!! The site backs directly onto the sea and there were a number of German outlook posts/pill boxes on the beach that were probably a lot further inland during WW2. Coastal erosion seems to be a problem as there were some artificial rock barrier reefs just offshore very similar to the ones at Sea Palling. Tomorrow we hope to get up early & bike up to the spit and do our walk before setting off South.</p>
<p>Saturday 28th May</p>	<p>Although the weather was reasonably bright, we could see dark clouds on the horizon heading towards us, so we decided to abandon the biking idea and take the van instead. That meant that we didn't have to get up quite so early! The walk out to the spit was quite blustery and seemed to be popular as there were lots of people doing the same thing. Some, however, were transported out in a large "bus" towed by a tractor. The location itself, where the North Sea meets the Baltic, was very rough. It is so unusual to see two sets of waves coming from different directions and just "clashing"! Naturally, photos were taken of us both at the very tip of Denmark trying to stop our feet from getting wet! During the walk back to the van it started to drizzle so, for a change, we timed it right! On our way back to Skagen we stopped off to photograph the Det Gra Fyr [the Grey lighthouse] which, at 48m, is one of Denmarks tallest. We had also seen photos of what looked like an ancient "trebuchet" but was, in fact, the earliest Danish lighthouse called the Vippefyret and had a suspended open fuel basket. This 1958 timber reconstruction was located on the edge of the town. It was then onto the local EuroSpar for supplies but we only bought fresh vegetables that we could easily identify rather than the numerous untranslatable meat products, whose origins we were not totally sure off! Of course, the requisite number of pastries & rolls were also purchased! We were both surprised at the high cost of food in general. It was also the first use of the Visa Debit card, which actually worked, much to Philips surprise! Tonight's intended stopover point was identified from the Aires book as the marina at Voersa which is on the coast just below Frederikshavn. The trip South had been in driving rain, but it did dry up as we arrived at the empty site. There was no one around so we pitched up and connected to the electric before walking down to the breakwater entrance in even more blustery conditions. The marina itself is by the side of a newly created nature reserve and we saw various birds such as a pair of Common Terns, Cormorants and Eider Duck. We had been joined by a couple of other motorhomes by the time we returned and then it started to rain again - heavily! We also did some planning for the days ahead, identifying things that we wanted to see and locating potential sites up to & including the visit to the Danish capital, Copenhagen, next week.</p>
<p>Sunday 29th May</p>	<p>It continued to rain overnight but we awoke to sunnier skies although it was still a bit cloudy & blustery. We had been joined during the evening by another motorhome - this one from Matlock! We had a long chat with them this morning about their own trip and we picked up some useful ideas. Coincidentally, they had stopped at Tars [our Thursday night stopover] on the Friday and had been wondering who had put the Morrisons plastic rubbish bag in the bin!!</p>

The facilities at this marina were superb - the showers were brilliantly hot and everywhere had been so well looked after. We both said that, if this place existed in the UK it would have been trashed in a week - a sad reflection of the current times in UK. We were away from site at about 10.30 am to begin our trek down to Silkeborg. But first we needed to fill up with diesel but the first place we tried wouldn't accept the Visa Debit card but thankfully, the next one did. The "all in" rate per litre was marginally cheaper than UK - we have seen a large variation in diesel prices on our travels; by as much as 1DKr per litre, so there is no fuel "cartel" operating in Denmark! The route South was mainly motorway, past Aalborg, Holbro & Randers. We had the option of a couple of aires sites in the area and first called in at one at Horn which was essentially the hardstandings in front of a private dwelling! Whilst they had electric hook up there was no toilet disposal which wasn't an immediate issue but could be if we stayed longer than the one night. We then headed into & through Silkeborg itself and onto a circular route through the Danish "Lakes" area. We came through a forested area that bordered the southern edge of the main lake and identified a good walking area to return to. The highest point in the immediate area is a tower at Himmelbjerget but we didn't stop as it was quite busy at the weekend, but we hope to return. Then it was back towards the town via the north side. The other site option we had was one at Parup, about 10 miles west of Silkeborg. Initially, we couldn't find it but when we did, we wished we hadn't bothered! It was supposed to cater for 20 motorhomes but it appeared that the local scrap yard had moved in! It was totally unsuitable, so we decided to head back to Horn where, at least we knew the facilities were as stated in the aires book. Needless to say, it had been raining from early afternoon and it didn't stop all evening! We were the only ones at the aire.

**Monday
30th
May**

Thankfully the overnight rain had ceased and we had clear blue skies during the morning. Having taken advice from the aires owner, we found the most suitable parking place [for a motorhome] in Silkeborg and it was free! The Tourist Information Centre & Museum were a short riverside walk away. The Hjejlen is the oldest operative paddle steamer in the world and was built in 1861 - thus it is celebrating 150 years in service. It runs up & down the river & lakes between Silkeborg & Ry. It was berthed close to the city centre but wasn't running today but we did get some photos of it. At the Tourist Information Centre we collected some more brochures for this area but also for Copenhagen so that we can start planning that part of the trip. Close by was the Silkeborg Museum whose "claim to fame" is having "The Tollund Man" in its collection. He is supposed to be 2,400 years old and was found in a close by peat bog in the 1950's. He was remarkably well preserved. However the rest of the museum was a bit of a disappointment to us as only part of the exhibits had English description even though the brochures had sung the museums "praises" in English! Before heading out into the lakes area we strolled through the modern shopping precinct and collected the bread rolls and pastries for lunch/supper. We returned to the parking area that we had stopped at yesterday and struggled to find somewhere to park!! Five minutes later it was apparent that the Silkeborg Ramblers Association were in the area and this was where they had parked up and started from! Another five minutes and we were on our own! The short waymarked walk was on tracks that led us through the forest and down to Borre So lake. The trail followed the edge of the lake until we come to a staging area that was the pick up point for the lakes ferry. There were five or six Danish [or maybe German] ladies trying to attract the ferry's attention as it went past! Wolf whistling and waving! Eventually the ferry turned towards us and they were collected. It would have been a long walk home

	<p>for them otherwise! They had failed to put up the green indicator on the landing to tell the ferry to stop! Our route now came inland to pick up a circular track around Slaenso which was a land locked lake. It was very peaceful with hardly a ripple. Soon we were back to the van [still on its own in the car park!] and the GPS showed only 2.1 miles! It seemed much farther! We then headed back to Himmelbjerget and it was very quiet compared to yesterday. The tower was built in 1875 to commemorate the Danish Constitution and has been a popular focal point for everyone in the area ever since. The views across the lakes were stunning and we were there on our own for a change. A quick local walk was followed by a well deserved ice cream. We did call by the Ry Tourist Information Centre but it had closed at 4.00 pm [we were there at 4.15 pm] but does open at 7.00 am! Back to the aire at Horn by 5.30 pm and the BBQ was fired up whilst sitting in the sun!</p>
<p>Tuesday 31st May</p>	<p>On leaving the site we called back at the Ry Tourist Information Centre and got some very useful advice from them concerning where to visit in Copenhagen and other areas. They also pointed us in the right direction for a short walk around Mosso lake that was on our way South. A quick stop at the Ry supermarket was also required. The walk "objective" was a "Fugletarn" which, in Danish, is a bird hide! The walk was along lonely forest tracks - the hide itself was elevated so a good view over the lake was achievable. Sadly, the only birds on the water were a pair of Grebes, a lone moorhen and a distant swan! Lunch was taken in a picnic area on the way out of the area before we hit the motorway South. The journey to our overnight stopover in the amusingly named town of Middelfart was uneventful apart from the persistent rain and the crossing of the water between Jutland and Funden on Denmark second longest bridge. The aire was at the local marina and already had four other motorhomes in attendance when we arrived mid-afternoon. It had seven dedicated hardstanding overlooking the boats & dinghies. The hook up procedure was a bit traumatic requiring a trip to the Harbourmasters office and lots of button pushing to get our electric card etc. The Norwegians next door were even more baffled than us as, we at least, had an English translation on the meter board! It was still raining on our arrival but did clear up after supper although it was still damp & overcast.</p>
<p>Wednesday 1st June</p>	<p>Today we started with clear blue skies and, for a change, it stayed like that! After chatting with our Norwegian neighbours and then finding out that we hadn't been charged anything for our electric card, we set off East. But first we came back over the Lillebaelt Bridge, again, to take some photos in the dry. The motorway drive was uninspiring until we got to the Storebaelt Bridge which is 18 km long and is the second longest bridge in Europe. It was very impressive and the subject of lots of photos whilst en route and once we had reached the other side! There is a small headland at Korsor where we stopped for lunch and took in the view. The Lonely Planet book had mentioned that there was a museum dedicated to all aspects of the construction of the link but we couldn't find it. On enquiring at the railway station, we were told that it had closed "years ago"!!! However, we did get to visit the Iceboat Museum which described when the sea between the two islands froze and they needed special boats to break through. So a revised itinerary was now required and we headed up towards Roskilde where the Vikingskibs Museet was located. All the exhibits here told the story of how five Viking ships were found to have been scuttled as a defensive barrier in the 11th century. The timbers were remarkably well preserved and have been exhibited in a purpose built hall. There has also been numerous reconstructions of the vessels with the largest one, the "Sea Stallion from Glendalough" [originally built in Ireland!]</p>

being replicated and sailed from Denmark to Ireland and back in 2007/8. There were also "active" displays of all the various skills that were required to build the boats. As we left, a group of youngsters were sent off in a Viking boat with oars to sail around the fjord! A very good museum and it was good to see so much interaction with the visitors rather than musty old museums that we seem to have in the UK. Our intended stop over tonight was to be at the Marbaek Marina at Frederikssund - again one from the aires book. On arrival it was difficult to see where we were supposed to park! However, after having varying degrees of success when chatting with the locals, we pitched up by the main jetty and hooked up into the electric supply provided for the boats. Whether this is where we should be was in doubt as there was no Harbourmaster to ask! We had passed the local train station on our way to the site, so got the bikes off to find out what time the trains go to Copenhagen etc. It appears that they run every 20 minutes which means that we won't have to rush tomorrow. Kim almost got run over on our way back when she failed to stop at a road junction - to much verbal abuse from the Danish driver! Another BBQ whilst watching the sun go down over the marina with a cold beer!

**Thursday
2nd
June**

We awoke to another clear, "blue sky" day. Today we celebrated having our van for five years! It doesn't seem that long to either of us but this is our 80th trip and we have covered just under 23,000 miles. How time flies! We managed to raise ourselves up early enough to get to the train station by 9.30 am and the ticket purchase was easy once we had been pointed in the right direction as to the cheapest ticket for a "day return"! The ride took about 50 minutes even though we had an unexpected change about three stops before Copenhagen Central [not easy to know what is being said over the tannoy when it was in Danish, but, as everyone got off, we soon got the message!]. We had decided to follow the City Guide which gave a 3 hour walking tour of the touristy parts of Copenhagen. First we passed the Tivoli Gardens and then through the main shopping area which was strune with rubbish - it looked like there had been a riot the night before - very un-Danish! Everywhere within the city were multi-coloured elephant statues which, of course, were ideal photo opportunities for us tourists! We soon came by Nyhavn which is the old port but is now inundated with restaurants and the start of the canal cruises. Very colourful though. We noted that, at noon, the changing of the guard took place at the Amalienborg Palace [the royal residence]. As you would expect it was heaving with tourists and we just added to their number! Next up was the Museum of Danish Resistance which was very well done in a low key sort of way. Particularly poignant were the final letters of those resistance fighters due to be executed. Also on this walk was the statue of the Little Mermaid perched on a rock in the harbour - again a tourist magnet! We now passed through the Kastellet [old citadel], the Kings Gardens with Rosenborg Castle in its grounds [plus an awful lot of people sunbathing!] and finally the Botanical Gardens, only to find that the main conservatory had closed at 3.00 pm [we were there at 3.15 pm!]. We were now heading back to the train station but not before we stopped off for a cup of tea and a Danish pastry! However, we were a bit concerned about not being able to identify our train back to Frederikssund on the departures board. We were soon put right by the Information Office and eventually found the correct platform but had to change trains again en route back. The bikes were still there and we were back to the van for another BBQ by 6.00 pm. An enjoyable day - we didn't stop walking. We both said that we were glad to have visited Copenhagen but have decided that we don't like cities - give us the fresh open countryside anytime!

Friday 3rd June	<p>After sunset last night we were treated to an impromptu firework display - no idea why though! We decided to move today but to where was any ones guess! We got away from the marina by 11.00 and headed back towards Roskilde and their Tourist Information Centre for inspiration! Roskilde has a superb church which dominated the area - lots of photos taken of that! We had identified a site at Munke Bjergby as a possible stop over point so were anxious to do something in that area. We were given a pamphlet of a potential walking/biking area at Saerloose so, after a supermarket stop at Osted, we arrived at a parking area in the forest. After a lunch break we headed off on our bikes onto the forest tracks [rather than the mountain biking tracks, which looked like hard work!]. Very quiet & peaceful - only encountering a handful of people on our 4.5 mile ride. It was the perfect antidote for our weary legs after our Copenhagen adventure. We arrived at the aire at Munke Bjergby at about 5.00 pm - it is run by a motorhome owning couple and is free to stay - the only charge is for water & electric! Two French motorhomes were already on site but there was plenty of space for us. We had a BBQ for the third night running as it was such good weather - we were struggling to find shade though!</p>
Saturday 4th June	<p>Today was probably the hottest day of our trip - clear blue skies with very little breeze. We decided to bike into the nearest town which was Soro. We were struggling to decide where we actually were as we had come in from a different direction to that shown in the aires book. Thankfully the site owner was able to give us written directions after attempting verbally in a mixture of Danish, German, French & English! The route took us onto forest tracks before encountering Pedersborg on the outskirts of Soro. The tourist information centre in Soro didn't have much local biking information so we grabbed a town plan and went from there. Soro So was the local lake, so we headed in that direction and came across a water fountain and a quiet jetty plus dragon & damselflies. After circumventing part of the lake we came back to the town centre for our, by now, daily Danish Pastry requirement. We caused confusion in the shop by trying to order "one of each" from the display but thankfully a local interpreted for us! Back to the van by early afternoon - a 13.5 mile ride. We tried to chill for the rest of the day, but it was difficult with it being so hot. Such a contrast to this time last week when we were at Voersa and it was raining. We did manage to converse with our French neighbours and identified a few potential sites for them to choose on their trip. Unfortunately they were stuck here as they had electrical problems with their van and can't get it seen to until Monday. There could be worse places to stay!</p>
Sunday 5th June	<p>It promised to be another hot and humid day so we were glad to be heading towards the west coast where, hopefully, there would be some breeze. After dumping our waste water and taking on board fresh, we settled up with the site owner for the vast sum of 80 DKr! That equates to £10 for a two night stay - that has really brought down the average nightly fee summary that Kim has been collating! We were away from site by 10.00 am en route to Ribe and headed straight for the E20 motorway that runs across the country from Copenhagen to Esbjerg. The crossing of the Storebaelt bridge was just as amazing as last time - there was a travel stop at the western end of the bridge that gave us good photo opportunities from that side. We were running low on fuel, so had to make a stop just before the Lillebaelt bridge but the run was straight forward and we arrived at Ribe just after lunchtime. There were a number of options for places to stay in this area but we decided on one called Storkesoen that was only 1km from the town [Denmarks oldest apparently!] and</p>

	<p>had fishing lakes associated with it. We had a brief look at the site before doing a quick tour through the countryside to the island of Mando and then came back to Ribe. There was a large car park on the outskirts that appeared to cater for motorhomes having waste water disposal & fresh water points as well as toilet facilities. So we parked there and walked into the centre which was quiet given that it was a Sunday afternoon. Cafes were the main businesses open. The cathedral is the focal point in the town but the tower was clad in scaffolding which spoilt any photo opportunities. We did manage to find a bakery with a good selection of pastries though - I think we can "sniff" them out by now! Philip hadn't seen an English newspaper for two & a half weeks and was having "withdrawal symptoms" but saw a two day old copy of the Daily Telegraph on sale at a horrendous cost, but still bought it! Whilst at the car park we topped up with water and made our way to the site. There was nobody about, so we pitched up & hooked up. There were two other GB motorhomes parked up and we got chatting with them later. They were from Northants & Essex and on their way to Norway for three weeks and had only arrived that afternoon. They said that they were well stocked up with supplies after I mentioned how expensive things were there after our earlier conversations with our Norwegian neighbours in Middelfart! A quiet, peaceful site and an evening spent watching a few anglers attempting to catch their suppers!</p>
<p>Monday 6th June</p>	<p>Thankfully it was nowhere near as hot today - in fact it was overcast and blustery at times. Having already seen the centre of Ribe yesterday we decided to head out on our bikes, following the Ribe Vestera [River Ribe we assume!]. Unfortunately the road was a dead end, just disappearing into the distance/sea but we did see some type of harrier which we think might have been a Montagu's Harrier. So we headed back into the town and stopped by the cathedral where some archaeological excavation works had been taking place. Lots of skeletons found by the looks of the photo boards. We also called at the large supermarket that had been closed yesterday for vegetables [& more pastries!] but will return tomorrow for supplies for our last few days in Denmark. Back to the van for an early lunch before deciding to visit a nearby fugeltarn [bird hide] noted on the local map overlooking some marsh areas. It was, in fact, an "udsigtstarn" which seemed to be viewing platform rather than a hide. We did see a harrier in the distance as well as a heron but not much else. An early finish to our biking today although we had covered 13 miles. So a lazy afternoon catching up with the Saturday papers that our GB neighbours had kindly left for us. By now a whole new set of foreign neighbours had arrived but thankfully there was plenty of room for them to park up without encroaching on our "space"!!</p>
<p>Tuesday 7th June</p>	<p>There was no need for a quick getaway today as we were only relocating further up the coast, just north of Esbjerg. Most of our foreign neighbours had departed by the time we were ready by mid morning. We stopped at the local motorhome carpark to dump water and take on more fresh. We also stopped at our favourite Danish supermarket, Kvickly, [not sure how you pronounce that!] for essential supplies for our last two full days. Then it was heading North around Esbjerg and stopping at Varde to raid their Tourist Information centre for maps etc. for the area where we were to overnight. We were given a large fold out map of the immediate area which showed lots of bike rides of differing lengths which will be useful tomorrow. Initially we missed the turning off the main road so ended up on the coast at Nymindegab where we found a shingled car park for our lunch break. The dunes and coastline were so reminiscent of North Norfolk - perhaps we are getting homesick! Once we had back tracked we found the site at Houstrup quite easily. It was highlighted in the aires</p>

	<p>book as being "very nice" and so it proved. It is actually a farm stop and tea rooms with the camp site at the rear. However, it has a proper toilet block with showers, washing up area etc. The owner spoke very little English but we managed to understand each other eventually and found a secluded area to pitch for our final two nights.</p>
<p>Wednesday 8th June</p>	<p>The weather forecast for today that we had been given at Ribe said that the morning would be dry but the afternoon wet, so we tried to adapt our itinerary to suit that. By using the bike map that we got yesterday we intended to head south & west to the coast at Henne Strand first. However, what we assumed were cycle tracks were, in the main, the cycle paths on the main roads, so weren't much fun. So we abandoned this mornings route and cut back onto "National Route 1" which appears to be the Danish coastal cycle path. This took us through the forest tracks of Blabjerg Klitplantage which was much better. A swift 8 mile ride. So we were back to the van before noon for lunch and then out again for our afternoon [pre-rain] ride. This time we headed north & west to pick up Route 1 again until it got to Nymindegab. Most of this was on a tarmac path running alongside a railway track. We turned off it at the car park where we had lunch yesterday and then headed south on a tarmac & concrete road running parallel to the sand dunes. There was more evidence of the WW2 German "Atlantic Wall" with concrete pill boxes & bunkers with varying degrees of graffiti on them! We did stop off at one of the remote car parks behind the dunes before we clambered over them. Philip paddled in the North Sea [the one and only time either of us entered the sea on this trip!] and Kim collected more pebbles/rocks from the shoreline for her extensive collection! We then came inland through the Nyminde Plantage and retraced our outward route back to Houstrup. A brief call at the local QuikSpar was required for beer & chocolate biscuits! We had encountered spots of rain on the ride but as soon as we were back to van, it started in earnest and continued for the rest of the afternoon & evening. An enjoyable ride of 13 miles. Heavy overnight rain which was a bit of a concern given that we were on a grass pitch!</p>
<p>Thursday 9th June</p>	<p>As the ferry didn't depart from Esjberg till late afternoon, we were in no hurry to leave site so had a leisurely get away. We didn't need to check in till about 4.00pm so decided to stop off at a couple of places on our way to the port. Firstly we headed to "Blavandshuk Fyr" [the lighthouse] which marked the most westerly point of Denmark. Built 110 years ago, it warns of the Horns Reef which stretches some 40 km into the North Sea. It was surrounded by thatched seaside holiday cottages in the sand dunes which was unusual. We called by at Oksbol on the way out of the area and managed to get a large circular Danish pastry for our neighbours, [who were doing plant watering duties whilst we have been away] plus some "bollers" [assorted rolls!] & pastries for ourselves [to make up for supper & breakfast on the boat]. Then it was onto the outskirts of Esjberg to get a close up view of the "Mennesket ved Havet" sculpture [Men at sea!] which are four 9m tall white men sat looking out to sea over Esjberg harbour. We saw them when we arrived and they are visible for miles around and we always intended to get a closer look on our way back. Luckily we had clear blue skies to take a series of photos of them. They were certainly striking and unusual. We "killed time" a bit here and had lunch as we had a couple of hours before we could check in for the ferry. When we arrived at the terminal we were quite near the head of the queue and after a lengthy wait, we got through the check in process only to see four black Model T Fords arrive together who were part of a rally for "Friends of Laphroaig" and were members of the Danish "Ford T Klubben". They were off to the Scottish isle of Islay stopping at</p>

	<p>Harwich & Loch Ness en route. The loading of the boat was quick and we actually left the dock early. It was certainly noticeable that the boat was less busy than our outward trip. [i.e. no noisy students!]. Thankfully the sea was very calm and we managed to get a reasonable nights sleep on our 18.5 hour crossing.</p>
<p>Friday 10th June</p>	<p>Due to dock at noon [UK time], we awoke at 7.30 am to see the coast of East Anglia and the large wind turbine at Lowestoft was immediately identifiable. It was good to be able to identify the coastline accurately as we had visited many of the features there like Southwold, Aldborough, Orford, Shingle Street etc. on our previous travels. We docked on time and were one of the first to disembark and were on our way soon after. We were home by 3.30 pm but discovered that one of the bolts on the bike rack had sheared off and the retaining clamps had broken - thus the bikes were very precariously suspended on the back the van only held on by one bolt! It probably happened when Philip didn't slow down enough for a bridge at Wormegay - a mile or so from home!! So some repairs required before our next trip.</p>

So our first overseas venture went very well and we enjoyed it, especially as the ferry & first weeks site fees were part of the competition win! We were impressed by the cleanliness in general [apart from one section of Copenhagen, which we were later told, was probably due to the end of term antics of students!] and the friendliness of the Danes. Thankfully the majority of the people we encountered were fluent in English. The roads were relatively free of traffic apart from the motorways at weekends and driving on the "wrong" side didn't really create too many problems. We feel that we have seen most of Denmark on this trip having almost circumnavigated it and were very glad of the Aires book that was also a motorhome magazine competition win. After our first week at Nykobing Mors, we stayed at aires exclusively apart from one night on the commercial site at Grenen. The rates varied from 120DKr [£15] per night to being free, so our site expenditure was pretty low. Our major expense seems to have been the daily Danish pastries & fuel!! Overall mileage was around 1,500 and we seemed to be getting about 28 mpg which was pretty good. So where to next??