Danish Christmas traditions [1]

Come to Denmark over the Christmas season and you'll get the chance to experience a country steeped in Christmas traditions; some shared with other parts of the world, others distinctly and uniquely Danish. Bring a little Denmark into your Christmas, with this quick overview of Danish Christmas traditions.

Take home your own Advent wreath

Danish Christmas starts when the Advent wreath is brought out. One of the wreath's four candles is lit every Sunday in December. Traditionally the Advent wreath is made out of fine spruce cuttings, decorated with red berries and cones and white candles. There are red ribbons for attaching the wreath to the ceiling.

A little light each day: The calendar candle

Another Danish tradition in the lead up to Christmas is the calendar candle. The candle is marked with 24 lines and decorated with fir tree motives and dancing, red-cheeked pixies! The daily lighting of the candle tends to be a special time shared by the family at the start of the day. It's the children's job to blow out the candle exactly at the line-mark, ready for the next day!

A month of presents: Danish calendars

Advent calendars are called Christmas calendars in Denmark. Unlike the chocolate calendars found in other countries, Danish Christmas calendars contain 24 small gifts for children, or grown-ups that like to treat each other! For a different kind of calendar, tune in to Danish TV in December. The main TV stations broadcast their own Christmas Calendars, with 24 short episodes. Danish children watch eagerly every day and the excitement builds for the big night itself; 24 December!

Send a Christmas card with a special Christmas seal

Since their debut in 1904, Danish Christmas seals have been adopted by many other countries around the world. They are designed each year by specially invited artists and are very popular, as Danes love writing and sending Christmas cards! Probably the most famous designer so far is the Queen herself, Queen Margrethe II. Christmas seals are used to decorate letters and postcards and look like stamps. They are sold only around Christmas time and the proceeds go to children's charities.

Take part in a special celebration on Lucia night

Lucia is the Catholic saint of light. In many parts of Denmark, she is celebrated on the night of 12 December. Young girls in white sing in procession with candle head-dresses and the ceremony is very peaceful and atmospheric. Legend has it that Saint Lucia wore the candles on her head in order to keep her hands free, so she could feed the poor, hiding in the catacombs of ancient Rome.

Further reading

Prepare for a Danish Christmas Eve. [2]

Read about the Danish Christmas Food [3].

Return to our Christmas in Denmark page. [4]