

## What is Litter?

In 2023, I travelled to Copenhagen for the first time. Before I travel to a new place, I usually try to learn a little bit about it, and a few phrases in the local language. This time, however, I was so busy preparing that I didn't have time to learn anything beforehand. Oh well, I would still enjoy walking around and exploring. I prefer living in the countryside, but I enjoy visiting cities. I think that human beings are not meant to live in cities, biologically speaking. It's uncomfortable for us. So, I like to see the different approaches that people in cities take to make their environments and lives easier.

Speaking of making things easier, I certainly didn't make my own travel easy. I knew the flight was going to be long – usually it would only take about 11 hours, but because we had to go all the way over the north pole, this time it would be 15 hours in the air. Despite that, I had nothing to do on the day of departure, so I went to Kansai airport eight hours early. I thought I would buy some souvenirs and do a little work while I waited. But I hadn't realized just how much the airport had changed after COVID-19. There were no more souvenir shops before going through customs. So, I spent eight very bored hours before check-in. To make matters worse, by the time I checked in and got through customs, all the shops on the flight-side had closed. Dear me. What a wonderful 23 hours...

Anyway, when I finally arrived in Copenhagen, I noticed something interesting about the airport. So, Copenhagen, in Danish, is København – the second part, 'havn' is spelled 'H-A-V-N.' What I noticed was that 'airport' in Danish was 'Lufthavn,' with the same spelling. This gave me a clue to what the name Copenhagen might mean. The Danish language is very similar to English, and I noticed this a few times when walking around the town on my first day – the only free time I had before my conference. Despite not knowing any Danish, I could understand several of the Danish signs. For instance, I saw a sign that said 'Parkering forbudt,' and I instantly realized that it meant, 'No parking.' Unfortunately, because everyone spoke fluent English, I didn't hear much actual Danish spoken to me. I guess I'll do better to prepare next time.

Anyway, I mentioned that I like to see how people live in different cities around the world. Well, in a way, I didn't do this properly this time either. For instance, I needed some new shirts for my conference, so I took the easy way out, and went to the local Uniqlo. After exiting the shop, it began to rain. So, I took the easy option again – they have 7-Elevens in Denmark! Being so used to Japan, I expected them all to stock umbrellas. Well, the first one didn't. I had better luck with the second 7-eleven, though.

Having got my umbrella, I decided to sit down for a break. I spotted a bench beside a canal, sat down, and lit up a cigarette. Unlike Osaka, where plenty of people smoke, Copenhagen actually has lots of outdoor ashtrays. Beside every bench is a rubbish bin with an ashtray attached. Very convenient for smokers! Despite this, the presence of one kind of litter surprised me. In Osaka, occasionally you'll see some trash on the road, and, depending on the area, some cigarette butts, but it's usually quite clean. Copenhagen, by contrast, was spotless – I spent four days there, and never saw a piece of litter. Except for one thing – cigarette butts. Despite ashtrays being everywhere, no matter where I went, cigarette butts were just littered on the ground. I guess people in different places see litter differently.

Being such a hectic trip, I didn't get to enjoy Copenhagen as much as I usually would enjoy a new place. But the conference was a success, and thankfully, my flight home was a little easier. This time, we didn't go over the Arctic, but first flew south, and then across central Asia and China. It was still a long flight, but, it was good to finally get home and relax.

### Questions, Answers and Hints:

#### 1. Do you think the narrator is a generally well-organized person?

**Answer:** Probably not.

**Hints/Clues:** Firstly, he didn't prepare souvenirs, and tried to buy them at the airport, but hadn't

realized that the pre-COVID shops had closed. Secondly, on arriving in Copenhagen, his first thing to do was buy shirts for his conference – a more well-planned person would have had this prepared. Also, he noticed it was beginning to rain and sought for an umbrella – he had clearly not checked the weather, nor thought to bring an umbrella with him.

**2. Why was the flight four hours longer than usually (or, why did they have to fly over the North Pole or across Central Asia)?**

**Answer:** The Russo-Ukrainian War.

**Hints/Clues:** After the conflict escalated in 2022 with Russia’s widespread invasion of Ukraine, commercial flights over Russia airspace essentially ceased. Thus, from Japan this left two flight paths: Out into the Pacific and over the Arctic, or across Central Asia).

**Hints/Clues:** .

**3. What does ‘hagen’ in ‘Copenhagen’ (or ‘havn’ in ‘København’) mean?**

**Answer:** Port.

**Hints/Clues:** Immediately prior to introducing ‘havn,’ the narrator mentions the English word ‘airport.’ Immediately afterward, he discussed how Danish and English are very similar. The students can apply this to decoding ‘lufthavn = airport,’ i.e., ‘havn = port.’ Incidentally, the Japanese is the same construction, 空(*kū*: air)港(*kō*: port).

**4. What English word does ‘forbudt’ in ‘Parkering forbudt’ most closely resemble?**

**Answer:** Forbidden.

**Hints/Clues:** The explicit meaning of ‘Parkering forbudt’ is explained in the passage as ‘no parking.’ Also, a clue for the previous question, the narrator mentioned that Danish and English are similar. Students may be able to arrive at this answer from prior knowledge of English, but if not, should be prompted to consider what ‘No Parking’ is in Japanese (駐車禁止: *chūsha kinshi*), and look for English words for 禁止 (*kinshi*: i.e., ‘no’ in ‘no parking’) – looking through the various English options for ‘禁止’ should bring up ‘forbid/forbidden.’

**5. Was the narrator travelling to Denmark for business or pleasure?**

**Answer:** Business.

**Hints/Clues:** Although only briefly, the narrator mentions a ‘conference’ several times, suggesting business. Also, in the opening sentences, he states, ‘Before I travel to a new place, I usually try to learn a little bit about it, and a few phrases in the local language. This time, however, I was so busy preparing that I didn’t have time to learn anything beforehand.’ If this was a planned vacation, the author likely would have made time to learn something beforehand.

**6. Why do you think many people in Copenhagen are fluent in English, say, in comparison to Japan?**

**Answer:** Answers will vary.

**Hints/Clues:** No specific clues in the text, credit should be given for well-reasoned answers. Of course, the closeness of the languages (actually specifically mentioned in the text) is one key factor.