

Danes don't bike because they are happy - they are happy because they bike.

A growing body of Danish and international research shows that everyday cycling is closely linked to better mental health, higher wellbeing and lower stress.

Why this matters now

- Mental health challenges and stress-related illness are rising globally
- Wellness tourism is booming, yet often expensive and inaccessible
- Denmark offers a simple, everyday alternative: **wellbeing built into daily life through cycling**

What motivates Danes to cycle

Research from the University of Southern Denmark shows that Danes primarily cycle for **intrinsic wellbeing reasons**, not obligation.

Top motivations for cycling in leisure time:

- "To do something good for myself"
- "To maintain or improve my health"
- "Because I enjoy the activity"

Top motivations for cycling as transport:

- "Because I enjoy cycling"
- "Because I feel good afterwards"
- "To maintain or improve my health"

Source: "Cykling i Danmark – under transport og som fritidsaktivitet", SDU, 2022

Cycling at scale: Denmark in numbers

- **2.2 million bike trips every day**
- **7.95 million kilometres cycled daily**
- **67% of Danes own a bicycle**
- **16,000 kilometres of dedicated bike lanes nationwide**

Source: Danish Road Directorate, National Bicycle Account

Cycling, health & wellbeing

- Just **6 km of daily cycling** meets national physical activity recommendations
- Cyclists report **greater physical wellbeing, mental resilience and social interaction** than car users
- Cycling reduces the risk of early death by **28%**
- Even **one hour of cycling per week** helps prevent serious lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease and certain cancers

Source: Active Living Research Unit, University of Southern Denmark; Danish Health Authority

Mental health & happiness

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), everyday cycling and walking support **better mental health and wellbeing** by embedding physical activity into daily routines. This makes active mobility a **sustainable and widely accessible alternative** to traditional exercise and a cost-effective tool for improving population mental health.

Source: WHO Europe, "Promoting mental health through cycling and walking", 2026

The societal benefits

- Every kilometer cycled generates a societal saving of 6.35 DKK (€0.85) – primarily through improved health.
- A regular cycling commuter can generate close to 14,000 DKK (€1.875) in annual societal benefits.
- At current cycling levels, Denmark generates roughly 50 million DKK in societal health benefits per day — around 18 billion DKK per year (using Danish Industry's 6.35 DKK per km estimate).
- Employees who switch to active commuting take on average five fewer sick days per year – equivalent to a reduction of more than 50% in typical sick leave.

Source: Danish Industry, "Effekter af cykling"

Expert perspective

"You activate a kind of natural happiness pill when you get on the bike."

— **Bente Klarlund Pedersen**, MD, Senior Physician at Rigshospitalet and Professor of Integrative Medicine

The tourist experience

In fact, when international tourists decide to bike, whether in the city or out in the countryside or coastal areas, they experience an overall better general level of service, have a better experience of the local urban life, culture and atmosphere, perceive a better value for money relative to overall quality, and lastly have a greater experience of the beach, coastline and nature.

Source: CYKELTURISTERNE I DANMARK I 2022, Visit Denmark Study, November 13 2023.

In summary

Cycling in Denmark is not just transport, it is a **daily wellbeing practice**.

By integrating movement into everyday life, Danes experience measurable benefits for physical health, mental wellbeing and quality of life at scale.

Sources & credibility

World Health Organization (WHO Europe) · University of Southern Denmark (SDU) · Danish Road Directorate · Danish Health Authority · Danish Industry · Danish Cyclists' Federation