

DENMARK BY DESIGN

Consistently ranking as one of the world's most liveable cities, Copenhagen citizens have a lot to be proud of says Lonely Planet's Caroline Sieg



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Top Nyhavn area
Far left Viking art works,
Left Rosenborg Slot,
Right Degas' Little
Dancer Sculpture

LOCALS STYLISHLY CYCLE PAST GABLED

townhouses, cobbled squares and canals smug in the knowledge that their home is a cut above the rest. This dynamic city packs in a millennium of history and culture in its museums and attractions, ranging from reconstructed Viking ships to Dutch design icons to the finest jazz on the continent.

THE MUSEUM SCENE

Spring has sprung with March seeing a return of the sun and longer days. March also sees the opening of the Open Air Museum (www.copenhagenet.dk). One of the world's oldest museums, it's also one of the biggest and includes more than 100 buildings which span the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The Statens Museum for Kunst (The National Gallery, www.smk.dk) is housed across two buildings: a 19th-century landmark and a modern, concrete and glass structure. European art dominates, from the mediaeval age to the Renaissance – including works by Rubens and Dürer – while the usual modern suspects such as Picasso and Matisse and an excellent collection of contemporary Danish artists round out the collection. Pieces are hung in chronological order and many of the new pieces live in the old red building, while much of the aging items sit in the minimalist white space. In short, the old in the new, the new in the old. This aesthetic juxtaposition reflects Denmark's ability to seamlessly mix history with the present.

Classical sculpture dominates at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (www.glyptoteket.dk), named by combining the word Glyptothek (sculpture) with Carlsberg, as in the beer: the museum's pieces stem from Carl Jacobsen, the son of the founder of Carlsberg brewery. From March through to December 2010, explore their special exhibit showcasing Edward Degas' bronze sculptures.

The Danish are immensely proud of their Viking ancestors who colonised wide areas of Europe from the late eighth to the early 11th century. For the full scoop on these explorers-cum-warriors and their modern-day descendants, head to the Nationalmuseet (The National Museum, www.natmus.dk). Viking tools, bronze horns, a Sun Chariot, 18th century midwifery business signs (symbolising the beginning of women owning their own businesses) and a recreated 1970s bungalow living room are just a sampling of the largest collection of Danish cultural history. Their children's wing includes

exquisite antique toys and a 6.5-metre-long full-scale replica of a Viking ship.

A fairy-tale moat never ceases to enchant even the most jaded traveller, and the one enclosing Rosenborg Slot (www.rosenborgslot.dk) doesn't disappoint. As you walk across the wide swath of water to the 17th-century castle, striking turrets and Dutch Renaissance grandeur greet you in full splendour. Inside the masterpiece sit the crown jewels, portraits spanning the 300 years of the royal Danish family until the 19th-century and art and furnishings owned by previous noblemen.

To learn about Jewish history in Denmark, head to the Dansk Jødisk Museum, (Jewish Museum, www.jewmus.dk) which chronicles the broad story of Jewish life and examines their co-existence and identity through four centuries. The Daniel Libeskind-constructed space uses unorthodox lighting shapes and intriguing geometry to highlight the Jewish experience, and the collections of art, artefacts and audiovisual recordings emphasise the Jewish concept of mitzvah (a good deed).

You need to hop on a coast-hugging 35-minute train ride to get there, but Scandinavia's finest modern art museum Louisiana (www.louisiana.dk) is well worth the picturesque journey. Its permanent collection starts with post-Second World War pieces and continues through to the present day, including works from the CoBrA movement, Pop Art and minimalism by Warhol and Sol LeWitt, sculptures by Alberto Giacometti and the museum's centrepiece, David Hockney's A Closer Grand Canyon. Until June 10, 2010, catch the Colour in Art exhibit, featuring big names such as Monet and Kandinsky to Richter and Hockney. The show examines the connection between artists and colour in the 20th century.

Clever Danish design greets you all over Copenhagen. It's a supreme blend of style, function and form present in everyday objects – chairs, lamps, cutlery, anything useful and necessary – and the Danes are fanatical about it. Analyse the full visual range of Danish classics at the Dansk Design Centre (www.ddc.dk) and be sure to see what's on in the exhibition space, known for its innovative, wow-factor shows. The Short Cuts show, running until May 28, presents Danish and international design icons of the 20th century.

If Danish design piqued your curiosity about industrial design, head to the Kunstinstitutmuseet (Danish Museum of Art & Design, www.kuns





In Christiania, whimsical murals, colourful sculptures and outrageously-decorated, self-built houses dominate

tindustrimuseet.dk), located in a rococo building and former hospital. In addition to well-designed objects, the museum also houses decorative applied arts, with sections dedicated to textiles, dresses and studies of European porcelain.

ROLLERCOASTERS AND BOHEMIANS

Denmark's number one tourist attraction, Tivoli Gardens (www.tivoli.dk), is an enchanting blend of fun park, beer garden, pantomime theatre, outrageous architecture, boating lakes and fireworks smack in the city centre. Crowds gather for the summertime "Friday Rock," a free live music performance to start the weekend (past singers include Sting and the Beach Boys). Interestingly, Tivoli also boasts its own wind turbine and is on track to be the world's first sustainable amusement park by 2012.

In 1971 a group took over an area of abandoned barracks in the city and developed their own set of rules and laws, creating a state independent of the Danish government. This alternative society, Christiania (www.christiania.org), is worth a stroll to see why it calls itself Life Surrounded by Art. Whimsical murals, colourful sculptures and outrageously-decorated, self-built houses dominate while live music and theatre graces the streets. Situated in the midst of a fashionable, prime real estate section of town, the government has

FACT FILE
WHERE TO SLEEP AND EAT
NOMA

Hotel D'Angleterre
Kongens Nytorv 34, DK-1050
Copenhagen K
+45 33 12 00 95
www.dangleterre.dk
Chandeliers, marble floors and 250 years of history fill this palatial landmark which consistently attracts celebrities such as Catherine Deneuve and U2.

French-colonial touches, four-poster beds and Persian rugs assembled with a modern twist.

NOMA

www.noma.dk
Sample award-winning Nordic cuisine such as musk ox, horse mussels and Faroe-Island langoustines at this innovative seafood-focused restaurant – many ingredients are expertly seasoned and cured on slabs of basalt stone.

HOTEL GULDSMEDEN

Helgolandsgade 7-11, DK-1653
København V
+45 33 31 32 66
www.hotelguldsmeden.dk
With three design hotels in the city, this eco-conscious Danish Hotel group offers Balinese-inspired retreats,

IDA DAVIDSEN

www.idadavidsen.dk
Danes are mad about their quintessential open sandwich, Smørrebrød. Choose from 177 superb toppings at this legendary cellar bistro in the royal quarter of Fredriksstaden.

threatened to shut it down for years, but for now this bastion of counterculture remains a self-proclaimed autonomous neighbourhood.

JAZZING IT UP

Jazz arrived in Copenhagen in the 1920s and reached a Golden age during the Second World War, when it was used as a channel to express resistance and protest – after the war ended the city became known as the jazz capital of Europe and it maintains this stature today. The Copenhagen Jazz House (www.jazzhouse.dk) is the top venue for major performers and serves as a focal point during the Copenhagen Jazz Festival (July 2 to 11, 2010, www.jazz.dk), one of Europe's biggest and most celebrated music festivals. Roughly 850 events take place at around 50 venues across town. Copenhagen's other foremost jazz venues, La Fontaine (www.lafontaine.dk), the city's oldest with late-night jam sessions, and Mojo (www.mojo.dk) are two year-round favourites that play host at the festival.

TWO-WHEELING IT

No visit to Copenhagen is complete without hopping on a bike. There are dedicated cycle lanes along every main road, and it's the most popular mode of transport. Tool around on your own bike by grabbing one of 2,000 free city bikes (May to Dec only) or better yet, take a themed bike tour: City Safari's (www.citysafari.dk) offerings include architecture rides, historic highlights and routes that take you in the footsteps of Hans Christian Andersen, Copenhagen's literary hero. 🚲

Smooth as silk

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