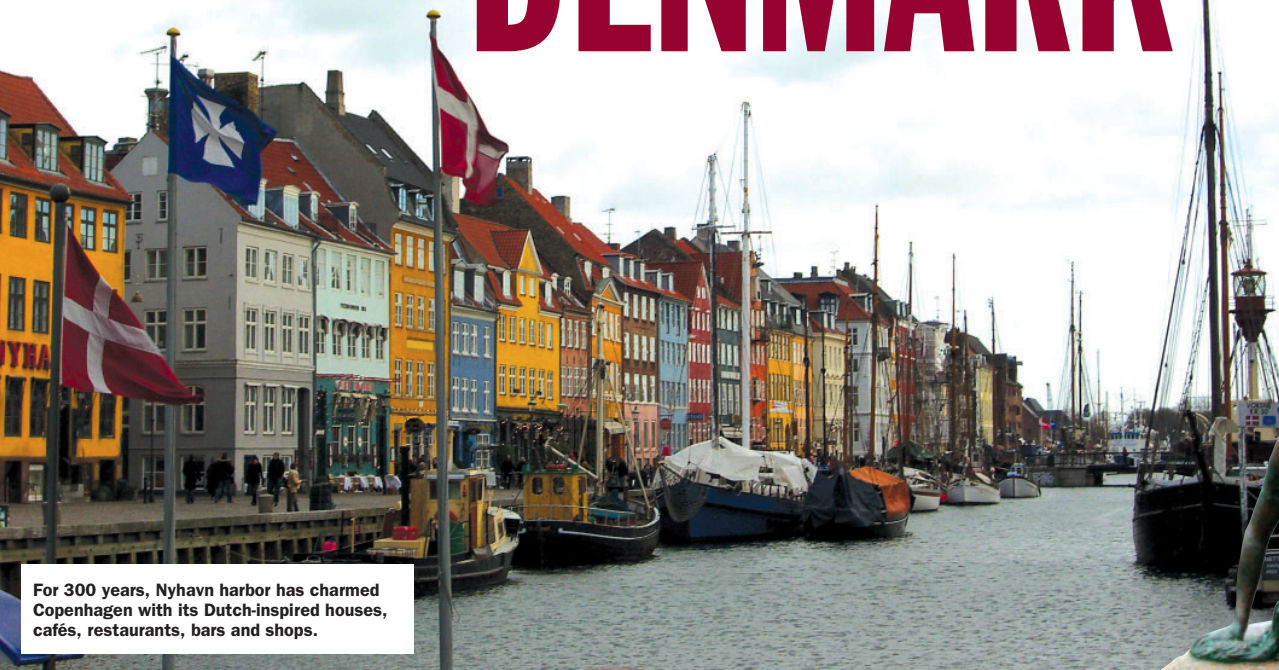


THE SURPRISES OF DENMARK



For 300 years, Nyhavn harbor has charmed Copenhagen with its Dutch-inspired houses, cafés, restaurants, bars and shops.

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Visit a place, and you'll learn more about the people who live there than you could ever discern from a travel guide (no matter how thorough and entertaining the author may be). While Denmark has captivated even the most famous writers—Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is set in the country—even the most studious visitor will find plenty of surprises. Among my discoveries on a recent visit to Copenhagen:

DANES LOVE TO PARTY

Among the sculptures at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek is a replica of "The Thinker" by Auguste Rodin. "Every country has a theory about he's thinking about," said tour guide Ida Saval, while escorting our group through the collection. "We are free thinkers in this country, and we say he had a good time last night and is trying to remember where he put his clothes."

RITUALS RULE

Before sipping an alcoholic beverage (typically a shot of aquavit or glass of beer), Danes toast their companions by raising their glasses and exclaiming "skål" (which sounds like a blend of "skull" and "school"). They then make eye contact with each person at the table, take a sip, and then, before putting their glasses back on the table, make eye contact with each person at the table

again. This is repeated with each round, so don't drink with a large group of Danes if you're in a rush.

DETAILS MATTER

The Danish Museum of Art & Design isn't the only place that celebrates the importance of design in Danish culture. Stores along the pedestrian shopping street Strøget burst with collections from various producers, such as Georg Jensen's daisy jewelry honoring Denmark's national flower. But look anywhere: Even a public phone booth is a work of art when shaped like a question mark.

HISTORY ENDURES

A painter is trained for nine years before trusted with Royal Copenhagen porcelain production traditions; some patterns are more than 230 years old. Visit the Royal Copenhagen Collection, above its flagship store on Strøget, to see a display of several rare pieces.

IT'S EASY BEING GREEN

From sustainable fashion to organic cuisine, conservation and environmentalism are a routine of everyday life in Copenhagen. Forty-five percent of all food consumed in city institutions is organic—the world record! Wind turbines generate about 20 percent of the country's electricity. Nearly 40 percent of Danes ride bicycles rather than drive cars; visit between May 1 and Dec. 15, and you can ride around the city

in one of Copenhagen's 1,300 free bikes.

RELEASE THE INNER CHILD

At the center of Copenhagen is Tivoli Gardens, an amusement park founded in 1843 that boasts a three-loop roller coaster, a pantomime theater, rock concerts every Friday, 40 restaurants and more. It's open from mid-April to mid-September and certain times around Halloween and Christmas.

ART CAN BE FUNCTIONAL

The Radisson SAS Royal Hotel is both a comfortable place to stay and an enduring monument to its designer. Famous Danish architect Arne Jacobsen designed everything from the exterior façade to the lobby chairs in the building, which is the world's first design hotel and Copenhagen's first skyscraper.

OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Castles in Denmark aren't stuffy museums; they're actually used by current Queen Margrethe II, who heads up the oldest monarchy in Europe. Go downstairs in Rosenborg for a close-up look at her jewelry collection, or visit the Great Hall in Christiansborg Palace to see the bright, contemporary tapestries depicting European history that she received as a birthday gift.



The herring bar at Faergekroen offers many varieties of the traditional Danish fish dish.



The Little Mermaid statue honoring the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen is Copenhagen's No. 1 tourist attraction.

IF YOU GO

Getting There

Delta offers nonstop flights from Atlanta to Copenhagen. To get that "I'm in Scandinavia" feeling while en route, choose SAS Scandinavian Airlines, which offers nonstop flights to Copenhagen from the Dulles Washington, D.C., and JFK New York airports.

Know Before You Go

A valid passport is required to enter Denmark, which is a member of the European Union but doesn't use the Euro.

The Danish currency is the krone, which is divided into 100 øre. Purchase a CPHCARD card for access to about 60 museums and attractions, as well as travel on public buses and trains; a 24-hour card starts at approximately U.S. \$30, depending on the exchange rate at time of purchase.

Where to Stay

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More Information

Wonderful Copenhagen—Tourism Office
+45 70 22 24 42
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FUNKY FUSION

Cross a traditional Danish open-faced sandwich (or smørrebrød) with sushi, and the result is smushi, modern plays on texture and color served on small slices of rye bread exploding with flavor. Try smushi at the Royal Café on Strøget. Or stick with Danish tradition and belly up to the herring bar at Faergekroen in Nyhavn. **SP**