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CRAZY ABOUT COPENHAGEN

Culture, history and seaside living will make Copenhagen one of your happy places

By Becca Hensley



If you notice the Danish throngs smiling—don't be alarmed. The people of Denmark aren't laughing at you. They're laughing with you.

Year after year, the Danes rank as the happiest people on earth. What makes them so gleeful? For starters, it might be their official snack food: the smørrebrød. A towering, open-faced sandwich, this sculptural nosh can be nabbed for just a few kroner in cafés and bars throughout the country. Relish a plateful in the capital city of Copenhagen—washed down, of course, with a local Carlsberg beer—while sitting in one of the al fresco cafés in historic Nyhavn, the city's 17th-century waterfront entertainment district.

Copenhagen is a walkable city, so enjoy a stroll along the car-free Storget, the longest and oldest pedestrian thoroughfare in Europe. If you prefer to pedal, grab one of the bikes parked throughout the city, which cost just the small price of a deposit.

Take in the canal boats and admire the seaport lined with beaches, bike trails and the iconic Little Mermaid statue. Afterward, check out the Viking artifacts and naturally preserved people, also known as bog bodies, in the National Museum. Join royal fans at Amalienborg Castle for the changing of the Queen's guards every day at noon. Learn to juggle at the Circus Museum and visit the Open Air Museum to wander through more than 50 original farms, mills and houses, dating from 1650-1952. Dive into the sea—weather permitting. Try Amager Standpark, a popular beach just 15 minutes from the heart of the capital.

Allocate at least one day to nostalgic Tivoli Gardens—the second oldest amusement park in the world and the place where (it is said) Walt Disney gleaned inspiration. A precious jumble of elaborate bandstands, manicured bushes, toy railways and beer gardens, Tivoli dazzles with blooming flowers during the day and twinkling lights at night. Ride roller coasters and drive vintage bumper cars or enjoy a tasty meal at one of the 45 eateries on site.

When you've had enough of the city proper, take the train to the countryside.

Visit Roskilde for its famous cathedral and the fascinating Viking Ship Museum. Stop in Aarhus, a hip university town that has two renowned attractions—The Old Town, a lively living history museum, and Moesgard, an archeological collection best known for its Grauballe Man, a completely preserved bog body from the Iron Age. Or, trek to Elsinore for Kronborg Castle, said to have inspired Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

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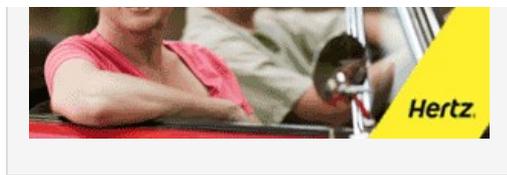
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