
November 5, 2006

36 Hours in Copenhagen

By SETH SHERWOOD

Corrections Appended

[COPENHAGEN](#) is in the midst of a renaissance. This seaside Danish capital may be famous for its venerable castles and copper-domed landmarks, but signs of its rebirth are spilling onto its storybook lanes. Downbeat hotels are being gutted and infused with dynamic new life. Young designers are reinvigorating Danish furniture and home décor, carrying the streamlined torch passed down by Arne Jacobsen and other towering figures. Most impressively, fresh-faced chefs are revisiting long-neglected Nordic ingredients and elevating a national cuisine traditionally dominated by pork and sausages. This postcard city is no longer a museum piece, but a lively up-to-the-minute metropolis brimming with creative energy and youthful optimism. Like the country's most famous export, Lego, contemporary Copenhagen is colorful, accessible and effortlessly cool.

Friday

4 p.m.

1) TAP INTO THE PAST

Two liters of beer for breakfast. No, that's not a suggestion. That's the amount of suds Danish Royal Navy sailors used to consume daily, as tour guides happily announce during the one-hour boat voyage and history lesson offered by DFDS Canal Tours (45-32-96-30-00; www.canaltours.com). Departing from Nyhavn, Copenhagen's touristy but highly picturesque 17th-century harbor, the sightseeing trips (60 kroner for adults, \$10 at 6 kroner to the U.S. dollar) glide past both Renaissance-era icons (like the Stock Exchange) and modern architectural feats (like the new Copenhagen Opera House).

5:30 p.m.

2) ONCE NAUGHTY, NOW NICE

Disembark and soak up some local color — and maybe a few local Tuborg or Carlsberg beers (35 kroner, generally) — at the outdoor cafes around Nyhavn. The inlet's north side, once called the “naughty north” for its drunken sailors and bordellos, now houses beautifully restored 18th-century town houses and tall-masted ships. Literary types should gaze at No. 67, the longtime residence of Hans Christian Andersen, that 19th-century conjurer of little match girls, ugly ducklings and unclothed mermaids.

7 p.m.

3) NORDIC NOSH

Not many Michelin-starred restaurants feature musk ox as a cornerstone of their menus. But then again, not many restaurants are so passionately dedicated to glorifying the obscure fare of the Nordic climes as Noma (Strandgade 93; 45-32-96-32-97, www.noma.dk). Headed by René Redzepi, a chef who formerly diced and drizzled at superstar restaurants like the French Laundry in [California](#), the kitchen creates artful collages from Scandinavian ingredients like Greenland shrimp, Faroe Islands shellfish, Icelandic seaweed, rhubarb, wood sorrel, raspberries, hazelnuts, aquavit and, of course, musk ox. The beer menu boasts many Scandinavian artisanal ales and porters, and barley wines. Five food courses run 585 kroner; seven courses are 685 kroner.

10 p.m.

4) DANCING DANES

Some of Copenhagen's coolest bars are niched along Nansensgade, a narrow one-way street becoming known for its ethno-chic and design boutiques. Join the fabulous thrift-store hipsters at Barbarellah (Norre Farimagsgade 41; 45-33-32-00-61), a retro-kitsch cocktail lounge, for a Cuban Bucanero beer (39 kroner) and D.J.-spun funk and soul. Afterward, strut to Culture Box (Kronprinsessegade 54A; 45-33-32-50-50), a stylish newcomer that brings international D.J.'s like Derrick May and Mouse on Mars for house, breakbeat and electronica music.

Saturday

11 a.m.

5) ART OF THE ANCIENTS

Rarely has beer money been put to such good use. Backed by his Carlsberg beer empire, the 19th-century industrialist Carl Jacobsen built the impressive Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Dantes Plads 7; 45-33-41-81-41; www.glyptoteket.dk), a Beaux-Arts-style art museum, and stocked it with ancient and classical treasures. Standouts include the massive 13th-century statue of Ramses majestically seated with the god Ptah, as well as top works by Manet, Gauguin, Rodin, Degas and other French masters. Admission is 50 kroner.

1 p.m.

6) A TASTE OF TIVOLI

A perennial favorite of screaming children, the historic amusement park Tivoli (www.tivoli.dk; admission: 75 kroner for adults) is suddenly causing gourmands to squeal with delight as well. The reason is the Paul (45-33-75-07-75; www.thepaul.dk), an elegant and airy Michelin-starred restaurant with furniture by the cult Danish design firm GUBI. The chef, Paul Cunningham, changes the menu often, but always features seasonal and regional ingredients including pigeons, which he roasts to sublime delicacy and tops with a pungent syrup of licorice root. He also turns humble

parsley into a luscious green crème brûlée. The seven-course dinner menu is 700 kroner.

3 p.m.

7) DESIGN TIME

Stroget, the ever-popular pedestrian-only retail strip that threads through the centuries-old town houses and majestic squares of central Copenhagen, is your yellow-brick road to Danish design. The Georg Jensen store (Amagertorv 4; 45-33-11-40-80) is a sleek boutique devoted to Jensen, the silversmith, and other legendary Danish designers. Then hit the side streets, where the new innovators of Scandinavian style are hiding. Stilleben (Laederstraede 14; 45-33-91-11-31; www.stilleben.dk) sells exquisitely wrought and luminously hued ceramics, porcelain and glassware from young creators. Shunning minimalism, the furniture designers at Hay (Pilestraede 29-31; 45-99-42-44-00) favor bright colors, soft forms and fuzzy textures. Fashion also gets that modern Scandinavian touch at Munthe Plus Simonsen (Gronnegade 10; 45-33-32-03-12; www.muntheplussimonsen.com), an emporium of autumnally colored prêt-à-porter garments enlivened by playful fur trim, Arabesque stitching and other embellishments.

7 p.m.

8) PARLEZ-VOUS FRAPANESE?

East and West sit down for a style summit at the buzzing restaurant Umami (Store Kongensgade 59; 45-33-38-75-00; www.restaurant-umami.dk), where the über-chic décor melds Zen minimalism and lightness with Scandinavian angularity and warm wood tones. Similarly, the menu unites French and Japanese cuisine — call it Frapanese — in dishes like sake-steamed mussels with chili and coriander (90 kroner), seared foie gras with eel and pear (165 kroner), and grilled veal tenderloin with wasabi (210 kroner). The restroom, which suggests a futuristic bank vault, is an arch nod to the monied [Helmut Lang](#)-clad masses who pack the place.

10 p.m.

9) RED LIGHT NO MORE

A former haven for hookers and basement sex shops, the western Vesterbro neighborhood now abounds with salons, upscale eating places, vintage clothing boutiques and the city's edgiest nightlife. "Bachelor parties — no thanks," reads the door of Boutique Lize (Enghave Plads 6; 45-33-31-15-60). The cooler-than-school bar is routinely packed with rock 'n' rollers, creative types and slumming society girls. The music, which ranges from punk to electro to hip-hop, sounds best with a glass of the house ale (35 kroner). For a quieter cocktail, try Kulby (Oehlenschlaegersgade 53A; 45-40-78-58-23). The décor at this new bar may be stripped-down Danish minimalism — raw brick, wood-plank floor — but the vibe is warm.

Sunday

11 a.m.

10) ROYAL TREATMENT

It's good to be king. How good? Judging from a visit to Rosenborg Palace, the former royal residence (Ostervoldgade 4A; 45-33-15-32-86; www.rosenborgslot.dk; 65 kroner for adults), if you are a king you can strum an ivory guitar, play chess with amber pieces, drink from nautilus-shell cups and romp around in rooms bedecked in frescos and Brobdinagian fireplaces. Dating to 1606, the long-disused castle also safeguards the Danish royal jewels, including the dazzling crown of King Christian IV, Rosenborg's creator. Encrusted with pearls, rubies and sapphires, the six-pound gold behemoth would make Zsa Zsa Gabor blush.

Monday

11) CELEBRITY SANDWICHES

For classic Danish smorrebrod — ornate open-faced sandwiches on buttered bread — descend into the cozy basement confines of Ida Davidsen (Store Kongensgade 70; 45-33-91-36-55), a Copenhagen institution since the 19th century. The late entertainer Victor Borge, a former patron, lives on today as a smorrebrod of salmon, shrimp, crayfish and caviar (120 kroner). Hans Christian Andersen is likewise immortalized in bacon, tomato, paté and horseradish (50 kroner). With so much 21st-century style infusing Copenhagen right now, can a smorrebrod named after the supermodel Helena Christensen be far behind? The restaurant is open Monday to Friday and is closed on Saturday and Sunday.

The Basics

Kastrup Airport is about eight miles from [Copenhagen's](#) center. Continental Airlines (www.continental.com) offers round-trip fares in November from [Newark](#) airport starting at around \$500. From Kastrup, the best option is catch the shuttle train from Terminal 3, the main international terminal. The 12-minute journey to Copenhagen Central Station costs 27 kroner (about \$4.65 at 6 kroner to the U.S. dollar).

A bicycle is the best way to get around. Rent one at Kobenhavns Cyklebors (Gothersgade 157; 45-33-14-07-17; www.cykelboersen.dk), from 60 kroner a day and 270 kroner a week.

The Copenhagen Island (Kalvebod Brygge 53; 45-33-38-96-00; www.copenhagenisland.com) is a new addition to the city's hotel scene. The glassy atrium gives the 326-room hotel an upscale business polish. Weekend doubles start at 1,345 kroner.

The stylish Hotel Skt. Petri (Krystalgade 22; 45-33-45-91-00; www.hotelsktpetri.com) is the kind of place that has its own CD of chill-out music and its own brand of caviar. Housed in a former department store, the hotel's 270 rooms were designed by Per Arnoldi, a top Danish graphic artist. Doubles from 1,995 kroner.

For contempo-cool intimacy, try the Hotel Guldsmeden Bertrams (Vesterbrogade 107;

45-33-25-04-05; www.hotelguldsmeden.dk), which opened in April 2006. The town-house hotel combines old-world details with modern amenities like flat-screen TVs. Doubles from 1,345 kroner.

Correction: Nov. 5, 2006

A map with the 36 Hours column about Copenhagen on Page 13 of the Travel section today omits numbers corresponding to numbered places in the article. A corrected map can be found online.

Correction: Nov. 19, 2006

The 36 Hours column on Nov. 5 about Copenhagen misstated the days of operation for the restaurant Ida Davidsen, a notable place for sandwiches, which serves lunch only. It is open Monday to Friday and is closed not only on Saturday, but also on Sunday.

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