



THE FRONTRUNNER

Copenhagen is set to become the world's first carbon-neutral capital city by 2025 – but what's it like for a fun-filled break? **Lydia Bell** finds out.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN KAUFMANN



Ultra-hip Jægersborggade in the neighbourhood of Nørrebro (left); diners on the pier at La Banchina café in Refshaleøen (above)



Keramiker Inge Vincents ceramics store in Nørrebro (far left), and ceramicist Inge getting creative (left); the canal area in the 17th-century merchant town of Nyhavn (right)

IT WAS on a trip to Copenhagen that I got over one of my pet peeves: adults on e-scooters. The prejudice was based on nothing more than the fact that grown-ups on scooters, to my mind, look silly and annoying. It was a solid, longstanding bias until I was on my way to the hunk of post-industrial artistic chic that is Copenhagen Contemporary gallery with my friend, Alejandro, and we were running late. That's when we spied a handy row of rental scooters, just waiting. All we had to do was download an incy-wincy app and scan a QR code and we were off – zipping into the morning like hundreds of thousands of Copenhageners before us. We were wild, we were free and we were fast. We got there in half the time. I never knew the adult scooter club was so much fun.

In Copenhagen, you find yourself doing things you wouldn't otherwise partake in. This might include eating pickled herring or diving into a Baltic harbour for an ice-cold swim. The Danish capital is different to other places – it's constantly surprising, exaggeratedly gourmet and progressively, impressively sustainable. I'm here to have an indulgent mini-break with one of my

BFFs and we've made a concerted effort to choose green options, from accommodation to food and transport – and even shopping. Frankly, it's extremely easy.

We buzz around the city on rental bikes – available everywhere with the quick swipe of a credit card. Getting about on a bike epitomises life here, where there are more bikes than people; they amass prettily on every street, as much a part of the urban wallpaper as the classic buildings with their beautiful bone structure, the chilly, whale-grey harbour, the designer furniture and the attractive bearded Nordic men. Some 62 per cent of Copenhagen's locals get to work or their place of study on two wheels, often dressed well, with no discernible penchant for Lycra or aggression (unlike the cyclists in London). As there are dozens of rental companies, tourists gad about on bikes, too, and some of the better hotels have their own fleet.

One day we sign up for an entrée into Copenhagen's charms: a private bike tour with Sine Louise Schmidt, co-founder of Cph:cool (cphcool.dk). We start downtown, by the Øresund strait. Schmidt talks about how the old industrial waterside areas have evolved since the 1990s, when the shoreline had a desolated, abandoned air. Today, parts of those ports have been transformed into modern-day harbour baths, while windswept coastlines have become attractive urban beaches. In summer, businessmen strip off their suits and dive into the harbour; it's very clean.

Across the water is the outline of the tall, thin chimneystack of CopenHill (copenhill.dk). This is sci-fi fantasy made real. Opening soon, this futuristic-looking waste-to-energy plant will double as an artificial year-round ski slope and hiking trail, puffing giant smoke rings out of its apex while snowboarders whiz down it. Then there's Paper Island across the way, in the former newsprint storage area, where Japanese architect Kengo Kuma is designing an aquatic centre featuring indoor pools housed in large brick pyramids and a series of outdoor baths that terrace down towards the sea. Cool doesn't even begin to cover it.

Alejandro and I pedal to Jægersborggade for a spot of shopping. It's a street across the Dronning Louises Bro



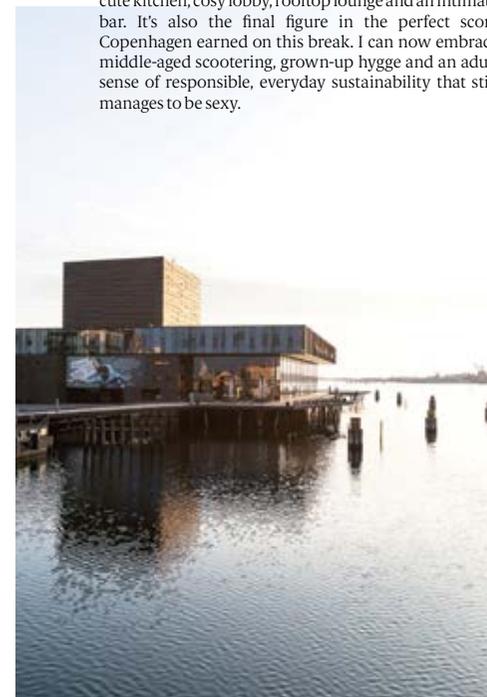


(Clockwise from left)
DØP makes hot dogs using only organic ingredients; the lobster hotdog at Toldboden; The Royal Danish Playhouse; Gemyse in Tivoli Gardens

We walk through Nyhavn, the 17th-century merchant town (it was a hub of prostitution and tattoo parlours until the 1970s but is now a pretty tourist honeypot), and over the three-year-old pedestrian bridge that connects Nyhavn with the Christianshavn district then continue onto the once industrial neighbourhood of Refshaleøen. There, we fall in love with Copenhagen Contemporary, which opened in summer last year in a huge former welding facility. Its large-scale avant-garde installations are awesome. We are agog at Claudia Comte's suspended and stacked debarked tree trunks and Donna Huanca's steel sculptures and vibrant abstract canvases scented with the sweet smell of palo santo wood.

We spend an afternoon sailing on an electric picnic boat called a GoBoat, weaving in and out of the canals, getting hailed by and beeped at by pleasure boats. Alejandro is an appallingly uncoordinated sailor but I barely notice as I've got an excellent rosé in hand.

We end the trip paying deference to another Danish concept, that of hygge. You may groan at the mention of this defunct marketing term, which conjures images of smug vegan-pie-eating types in woolly jumpers warming their toes by log fires. But transmitted with exquisite sophistication, it works. Hotel Sanders, created by Danish ballet dancer Alexander Kølpin, is low-lit and warmed with fires and charisma. Tucked away on a small street behind the Royal Danish Theatre, it has a cute kitchen, cosy lobby, rooftop lounge and an intimate bar. It's also the final figure in the perfect score Copenhagen earned on this break. I can now embrace middle-aged scootering, grown-up hygge and an adult sense of responsible, everyday sustainability that still manages to be sexy.



bridge from inner Copenhagen in the gentrified neighbourhood of Nørrebro and abutted by Assistens Kirkegård cemetery – the magical green oasis where Hans Christian Andersen is buried. Once a hangout for drug dealers, the street has evolved into one of the most idiosyncratic shopping areas in Copenhagen. There'll never be a Gap or H&M here because one big housing association signs off on all potential business ventures. This is a vibrant, ideas-based repository of entrepreneurialism where we browse organic skincare products, stationery, knitwear, ceramics, a sneaker and coffee store, a tiny caramel factory and a place selling lamps made from ash veneer. The artisans work in situ and they all have something friendly to say.

We also spend an awful lot of time eating. We join the artful hipsters for lunch at Reffen, a street-food playground set in shipping containers, selling everything from Romanian grilled lamb to Greek gyros. We pig out on South Indian dosa, masala chai and mango lassi.

Amid the informal Scandi beauty of Adam Aamann's gorgeous Aamann's 1921 restaurant in the heart of the

Flight path

CPH

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city, they pimp up the traditional Danish smørrebrød open sandwich and revere the organic, seasonal, local and sustainable. Our dégustation includes intense delights such as salmon with grated horseradish and beef and beetroot tartare with capers.

At Toldboden, an eatery by the old ferry terminal in the harbour, we have fancy fish and chips and glorious lobster hot dogs. And from the green kitchen of Gemyse, in the middle of Tivoli Gardens, we devour stellar vegetables. We eat early, at 6pm, when late spring sunlight pours into the beautiful conservatory-style building. Mette Dahlgaard's multi-course vegetable-based menu is mind-blowingly good. A dish described by the waitress as "yoghurt packages in a sour-milk grandma sauce dripped with mocha" sounds truly hideous but is actually incredibly delicious. The drinks are sublime, too, including a chamomile and elderflower cocktail, Central Otago riesling, organic Oregon chardonnay and local Tivoli Seductive Bock beer. Afterwards, we hit the rides in the surrounding gardens in what is surely the world's most tasteful amusement park.



Street-food hub Reffen (above); bicycles are the best way to get around Copenhagen (top right); the Music Carousel at Tivoli Gardens amusement park

Address book

Stay

Manon les Suites Super-green wind-powered modern hotel with a great indoor pool and fabulous organic breakfasts on the rooftop (guldsmedenhotels.com).

Hotel Sanders: Luxury hygge (hotel.qantas.com.au/hotelsanders).

See and do

Cph:cool Fun bike tours around the Danish capital (cphcool.dk).

Copenhagen Contemporary The city's major new gallery (cphco.org).

GoBoat Solar-powered picnic boats to explore the canals (goboat.dk).

Tivoli Gardens The most refined theme park in the world (tivoligardens.com).



Shop

Jægersborggade

Karamelleriet caramel factory (number 36; karamelleriet.com), **Tante Tot** knitwear (number 5; tantetot.dk), **Keramiker Inge Vincents** ceramics (number 43; vincents.dk), **Sneakers & Coffee** (number 30; sneakersandcoffee.dk), **Flaco Design** lamps (number 53; flacodesign.dk).

Downtown The new flagship store for Danish design company Paustian (paustian.com).

Eat

Reffen Hipster hangout where street food is sold from shipping containers (reffen.dk).

Aamanns 1921 Beautifully designed, buzzy restaurant where sandwiches are the hero (aamanns.dk).

Toldboden Climate-friendly waterside eating and drinking venue (toldboden.com).

Gemyse Incredible organic-vegetable-loving restaurant inside Tivoli Gardens (nimb.dk).

DØP Amazing organic hot-dog stands (døp.dk).

Manfreds The relaxed wine bar sibling of Michelin-starred restaurant Relæ, on happening Jægersborggade (manfreds.dk).

Gro Spiseri Roof-garden-to-plate rooftop eatery in the climate-resilient Østerbro neighbourhood (grospiseri.dk). ●

