

# Copenhagen

Copenhagen has always been a destination for design buffs, while the foodies discovered the Danish capital a decade ago. But if you are serious about classical music, says **Albert Ehrnrooth**, Copenhagen should definitely be on your bucket list

As a fellow Scandinavian, I am a little bit jealous of the way the Danes have managed to position themselves as the main representatives of all things Nordic. Fans of Danish TV series like the crime drama *The Killing* and the political thriller *Borgen* flock to Copenhagen. The Scandi-noir crowd head straight for the impressive City Hall built in Neo-Renaissance style inspired by its counterpart in Siena. The edifice featured heavily in *The Killing*, which briefly made the Faroese jumper very sought after.

Danish chairs from the 1950s and 60s designed by Jacobsen, Juhl and Wegner never went out of fashion. The Design Museum has all the classic Scandinavian furniture and glassware on show and their shop sells a good range of contemporary objects of desire. On the same street, Bredgade, there are many shops selling vintage furniture and antiques. Marmorkirken (the Marble church), situated between the shops and the Design Museum is hard to miss. Climb the grandiose dome, modelled on St Peter's, to see the Opera in the distance and Amalienborg Palace nearby.

I am first off to Amalienborg Slot, to check out Mary Donaldson's digs. Before long she will become the Queen consort and have a number of royal palaces at her disposal. The Amalienborg complex consists of four separate residences with identical classical façades grouped around an octagonal square. Queen Margrethe II has made her home in Christian IX's old Palace. She is said to have the 'common touch' and rococo is the most common

style around this courtyard. Christian VIII's palace is open for visitors all year around. On show are a number of private royal apartments representing various eras and carefully preserved behind glass. What they have in common is that they are cluttered; Danish monarchs of bygone days clearly always had to be on their guard not to bump into furniture.

Whatever you do, do not miss the changing of the guard which, when the Queen is in residence, takes place in the square at noon. If you're lucky, you get to hear The Band of the Royal Life Guards that occasionally accompanies the marching soldiers. This duty is followed by a short stand-alone concert.

You can just tag along with the bearskin hatted sentries as they stride back to their barracks. This will take you to Rosenborg Slot, Copenhagen's most delightful royal palace. Built originally as a summer residence for King Christian IV (1577-1648) it was turned into a shameless celebration of absolute monarchy. The Great Hall with the royal throne made of unicorn (OK, narwhal) tusks and the three life-size silver lions is proof of the Renaissance ruler's wish to be compared with the Biblical King Solomon. The 'hygge' (cosy and comfortable) Winter Room was kept a secret until 2005. During restoration work, circular openings were discovered in the walls. They turned out to lead down to the cellar where in the 17th-century musicians played, hidden from the guests. The sound channels in the wall transmitted their performance upstairs.



DENMARK

**TRAVEL INFO****Average Temperatures:**

Winter: 0°C – Summer: 17°C

**Currency:** Kroner (AU\$1=DKK4.99)**Best time to visit:** The weather is most pleasant in the summer – sea temperatures reach 18°C – and there are plenty of open-air festivals.**TOURIST INFORMATION**

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● COPENHAGEN



Nyhavn

Christian IV was a warrior king but also a significant patron of music. Among the many composers he employed were John Dowland and Heinrich Schütz. Did they ever gig in Christian's underground hideout?

The Treasury is located in a fairly recently built basement and some of the coronation regalia is stunning. Christian IV's crown encrusted with tiny allegorical figures, diamonds and other precious stones needs to be seen to be believed.

A few hundred yards to the north of Rosenborg lies Statens Museum for Kunst (the Danish National Gallery). If you're short on time head directly for the artists from Denmark's 'Golden Age' (approximately 1800-1850) and the even more individualistic painters from the late 19th century. In this section the highlights are Vilhelm Hammershøi's restrained interiors, with an atmosphere indebted to Vermeer.

The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek across town from Statens Museum is a testament to what the profits from producing very decent beer can buy you. During his lifetime master brewer and art patron Carl Jacobsen (1842-1914) amassed a brilliant collection of art and antiques and gifted it to the nation. He also built the original gallery to house it all. In Northern Europe no museum can match Glyptoteket's display of Mediterranean Antiquities, mummies and the complete set of Edgar Degas' bronze figures. On top of that you will see some of Gauguin's very best paintings. The well-established Winter Garden is lovely for tea but in the summer the roof terrace is the preferred option. Check out the chamber music concerts and recitals that are organised in the Auditorium.

Walk across the street from Glyptoteket to Tivoli Gardens, one of the oldest and most magical amusement parks in the world. The wooden roller coaster (1914) still has a

brakeman on board. Apart from the thrill-seeking rides, look out for the exotic architecture from palatial Moorish to Pagoda. There are also plenty of traditional Danish restaurants (no Noma!) on offer. The park is best enjoyed in the evening and I strongly recommend a visit to the iconic pastel coloured concert hall (1956) with its massive seawater aquarium in the foyer. During the summer this concert venue is the Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic's home and there are also regular open air concerts. Tivoli still employs four different orchestras.

Copenhagen is a very walkable city, however if you want to see the home of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra (DR SymfoniOrkestret in Danish) you will

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have to rely on public transport or a taxi. Koncerthuset is part of a futuristic complex that houses the Danish Broadcasting Corporation in Ørestad. The main concert hall's acoustics are considered among the best in the world. The fact that Fabio Luisi this year took over as principal conductor, a role which he also fulfils with the



Amalienborg Slot

Metropolitan Opera, shows that the DR SymfoniOrkestret has high ambitions.

To claim that the Royal Danish Opera is Scandinavia's leading opera company is perhaps a sign of over-confidence but they do still employ a soloist ensemble that reaches high standards. Henning Larsen's Opera House (2005) certainly is a landmark. It seems to float on the water but there are actually five floors below surface. It had to be special because it is one of the most expensive opera houses ever built. It was all paid for by the family that controls Maersk, the world's largest container ship operators. The distinctive light sculptures are by the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. The bulging auditorium wall is clad with maple that has been coloured orange and the locals have christened this interesting construction 'the pumpkin'. I am not sure if the pumpkin coach from Hans Christian Andersen's Cinderella was an inspiration but I am quite proud that I have so far managed to avoid any mention of the Little Mermaid statue (inspired by the author's story). Believe me, it looks better in the pictures than in real life. ●



Det Kongelige Teater

### Danish dance delights

The Royal Danish Ballet is one of the world's oldest ballet companies (1748) and their famous school is not much younger. Both are based in Det Kongelige Teater (1874) which is now mainly used for ballet. Try to see influential Danish ballet master August Bournonville's version of *La Sylphide*, which is performed with its original choreography from 1836. The company's current artistic director Nikolaj Hübbe excels in this repertory and was also a principal dancer at the New York City Ballet. The resident orchestra is the venerable Det Kongelige Kapel. The Royal Danish Orchestra is also at home at the Opera and occasionally gives concerts.