

Delightfully Danish: It is a treat to visit Copenhagen

Dining Adventures

By David Rottenberg

"Danes are the happiest people in the world," Britt Sorensen said.

He promotes tourism to Denmark and was quoting the findings of a recent study that was conducted in major world countries. Danes seem more satisfied with their lives than residents of the other Western nations.

I arrived in Copenhagen a few days before and, in my brief visit, I totally agreed.

From all outward appearances, Danes looked well dressed, well cared for and prosperous. People I encountered were exceptionally friendly and almost everyone spoke English. The study of English is compulsory in school. Many Danes supplement their education by watching movies and TV shows.

Danes live in a society that offers "cradle to grave" care.

Medical treatment and even university education are free. Citizens pay high taxes to their government but wages must be high because, on a comparative basis, costs seem high.

I had arrived a few days prior to my scheduled sailing to St Petersburg aboard Silver Wind, one of the luxury cruise ships operated by Silversea Cruises. These vessels are exceptional. Cabins are large and comfortable. They only accommodate about 300 people, so it is easy to get to know many fellow travelers.

The staff to passenger ratio is high and service is excellent. And the voyage is all inclusive.

Guests don't have to be concerned about signing chits, tips or additional charges. There is an ease of mind that results, making the sailing experience more comfortable.

Danes usually begin the day with a hearty breakfast, if the

ring and cheeses to provide fuel for a busy morning. Front Hotel, where I stayed, is the sister property to Hotel D'Angleterre, Denmark's reputedly most elegant hotel.

But, by contrast to the classic designs and stuffed furnishings of the latter, Front's décor is modern Danish, with clean sweeping lines and state of the art electronics. It is well located, close to the water, the Nyhavn restaurant area and Kings Square. Service was excellent.

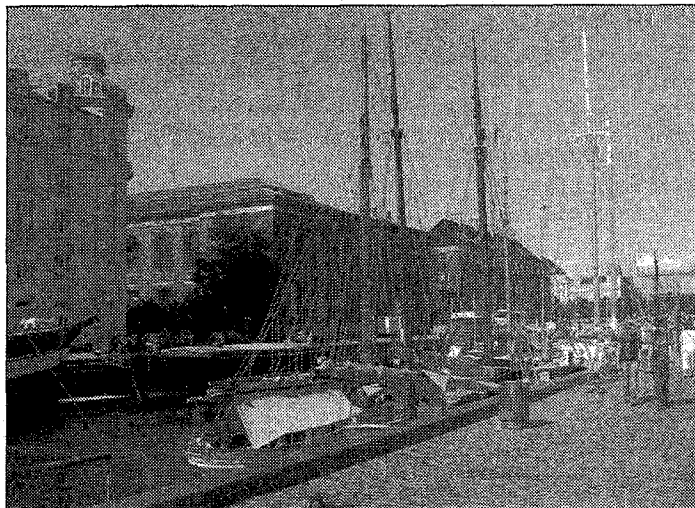
Central Copenhagen is a walking or cycling city. Bicycles are stacked everywhere. Special lanes allow riders to flow with traffic in relative safety. If all the bicycle riders used cars, the city would choke on congestion. Instead, traffic seemed to be smooth.

There are thousands of restaurants in Copenhagen but most of the fine dining establishments are located in the older part of the city.

In fact, Copenhagen has a collective of 11 Michelin stars. One of the most famous of these, **Noma**, recently was awarded two stars by Michelin Guide for its innovative Danish cuisine that features fresh local ingredients. But, as with so many such establishments, reservations must be made weeks in advance. Prices are commensurate with its reputation.

A number of restaurants are located in the Nyhavn area and at Tivoli. Nyhavn ("new harbor") is a picturesque neighborhood that lies on either side of a canal.

Tall masted boats are moored to the sides. Canal tour boats ply up and down the waters and tour buses stop nearby to load and unload passengers. It is a romantic, "Hans Christian Andersen" scene. In fact, the writer lived for a time in one of the homes looking out onto the water. Restaurants that line the street set out umbrellas, tables and chairs during the season and compete to attract diners. It



Courtesy photo

The Nyhavn area of Copenhagen, Denmark, is home to numerous popular restaurants, including Kommandanten, a two-star Michelin restaurant.

dine.

We did so at **Kommandanten**, a two-star Michelin restaurant.

The evening was beautifully mild, with the sun setting at almost 10 p.m. A river of pedestrians walked by, creating a colorful backdrop to the lovely presentation of dishes.

Fresh Scandinavian salmon is amazingly flavorful, more so than the typical farmed fish commonly served in San Diego

restaurants. Frommer quoted critic to say that, if God were to dine in Copenhagen, he would come to Kommandanten.

Tivoli, located near the central train station, is a very old amusement park that predates Disneyland by perhaps 70 years yet is still fully functioning and popular. The extensive grounds are filled with thrilling rides

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Dining

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such as a large ferris wheel, roller coaster and a ride that raises patrons high in the air to spin them round and round like rocks on the ends of strings. The area has a large lake at one end and a number of concert halls and music venues. On the evening I attended, I watched a concert given by Daniel Barenboim, the

illustrious pianist, who performed and also conducted the orchestra he created, comprised of Israeli and Palestinian musicians. Barenboim hopes to reinforce ideas of peace through music.

Groften is a highly regarded restaurant at one end of the park. We dined overlooking the lake, with a view of sweeping, weeping willows and the exterior of a "pirate ship," eagerly anticipating the Barenboim concert.

Traditional Danish cuisine emphasizes fish, fruits and vegetables. Lunch favorites include a variety of open-faced sandwiches on hearty multi-grain bread, often topped with shrimp or herring. I've even seen (but did not have an opportunity to sample) potato sandwiches. And surprisingly, hot dogs are popular, often sold from kiosks that are located on the street or in the center of the many squares located in town.

It is a treat to visit Copenhagen, either on its own or as part of one of the more than 300 cruises that leave the city every year. For more information about this splendid city, go to visitcopenhagen.com.

Rottenberg is editor of Dining San Diego Magazine and member of the California Restaurant Writers Association. Send comments to the editor@sddt.com. All letters are forwarded to the author and may be used as Letters to the Editor.

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