

WHEN TO BOOK ♦ AARHUS

WELCOME TO AARHUS

CELESTE MITCHELL

It's the hippest, most happening European city you've never heard of; filled with pop-up bars, Michelin-starred restaurants and museums that would make even the most hardened architect swoon.

But you'd be forgiven for needing an atlas to pinpoint Aarhus (oar-hus). Denmark's second-largest city has long played in the shadow of Copenhagen three hours to the east.

Since being named Joint European Capital of Culture for 2017 and the European Region of Gastronomy (the first time one city has received both titles in the same year) it is Aarhus's time to shine. "People in Denmark know Aarhus, people in Sweden know Aarhus, but even in the UK only 6 per cent of people have even heard of us," Visit Aarhus's Anne Hubner says.

All that will change after the official start of the year-long list of events for Aarhus 2017, with the population of 330,000 set to swell in celebration of the artistic and culinary.

WHY VISIT

"Out on the streets, out in the backyards, I can already feel the atmosphere right now in the city because there are lots of new restaurants and bars coming up because of this focus," Hubner says.

"We're also having new hotels coming into the city now due to the interest in Aarhus as a place where you can take a short break."

Its New Nordic cuisine is putting Aarhus on the map, with four restaurants receiving Michelin stars in 2017. Frederikshol, Gastrome and Substans were awarded the first Michelin stars in Denmark outside Copenhagen in 2015 and this year, Domestic, joins the ranks.

Construction and regeneration projects have also been in overdrive in

Aarhus in the lead-up to its cultural crowning. The unmistakable Moesgaard Museum, built in 2014, bursts out of a hillside—all sharp angles and glass—and houses a 2000-year-old "bog body". The grass roof will become the stage for one of the Aarhus 2017 highlights, the Viking saga, *Red Serpent* (Rode Orm).

Another drawcard for visitors, The Garden, will take over the spaces of contemporary art museum ARoS and run 4km to the harbour. "You have Sculpture by the Sea at Bondi Beach ... this year we have made it The Garden," Hubner says.

From the cobbled streets of the Latin Quarter to the pretty canals, the best way to take in Aarhus is by bike, with beaches and forests both only a short ride away. At night, the sizeable student population keeps the night-life buzzing while two new street food markets provide casual, and wallet-friendly, Nordic menu options.

WHEN TO VISIT

"Denmark is especially beautiful in the springtime because everything is so green," Hubner says. "If you are interested in seeing the people and feeling the atmosphere of being Danish, coming at the time of The Garden from mid-April to June would be a nice time to visit. If you're interested in the Viking scene, *Red Serpent* will only take place in Danish (in May)."

With long sunny days, summer is prime time for festivals such as NorthSide—where the food and booze is organic, and the music spans from Radiohead to Frank Ocean.

WHEN TO BOOK

Most of the festivities happening during Aarhus 2017 are free but if you're keen to immerse yourself in *Red Serpent* atop the Moesgaard, tickets are now on sale.

Serious gourmets should also book ahead for Michelin-starred meals. "You need to book, but it won't be like Noma (in Copenhagen) where you need to book one year in advance, you can always get a table," Hubner says.

"But if you're coming from Australia, you'll want to book it before you come so you don't risk it."

MORE

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NORTHSIDE FESTIVAL

Summer is the time to visit Aarhus for music festival NorthSide.

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