

# Escape Routes

ANY EXCUSE TO BROADEN THE MIND

## ADD SOME COLOUR TO YOUR LIFE IN AARHUS

One of 2017's European Capitals of Culture, Aarhus – Denmark's second city – has art, gastronomy and the essential hygge all sewn up, finds Stylist's Laura Millar...

As a former Viking settlement on the windswept, fog-bound east coast of the Jutland peninsula, Aarhus didn't immediately have me thinking 'perfect place for a winter February away'.

It's Copenhagen, after all, that usually gets all the attention, abounding with palaces, a picture-perfect harbour, churches and museums. But this compact university city – population only 320,000 – packs a significant artistic punch, and its high volume of students translates into a big creative scene, with start-ups, food trucks and galleries galore.

Checking into our hotel, the charming Villa Provence, its retro French interiors offer a stark contrast to the usual Scandi style, which has made it endlessly popular with well-travelled visitors. I love the chalky, pastel walls, vintage

film posters and free-standing bath, but I was also keen to see Denmark's more minimalist side.

A short walk away – and it's a very walkable city – you'll find Aarhus Ø, the rejuvenated port area. It used to be a wasteland; now it's home to jaw-dropping modern structures such as The Iceberg, a series of jagged, white apartments, and a quirky, angular observation point. Aarhus does have impressive old buildings, too, from its extraordinary town hall with functionalist clock tower (designed by Arne Jacobsen during World War II) to the elegant art nouveau theatre, with hand-painted façade and stained-glass windows.

The latter is in the Latin Quarter, the oldest part of the city. This is where I spend most of my time, happily navigating its warren of cobbled

streets lined with cosy cafes, cocktail bars, hip restaurants, and stylish independent and designer stores, from Isabel Marant to homegrown Danish labels such as Maku Design. That evening, after a couple of faultless

whisky sours at Pustervig, a chic, low-lit bar with a copper countertop on Rosengade, we head just up the road for dinner at acclaimed seafood joint Mefisto (Aarhus' foodie scene is no slouch; it's got three Michelin-starred restaurants already). Lobster soup, beef tartare, pan-fried flounder and Danish cheese warm us up nicely.

The next morning, we head to organic eatery Langhoff & Juul on Guldsmedgade for a brunch that couldn't be more Scandinavian: baskets of thick rye bread; open-topped sandwiches with raw cauliflower, sage and mushroom; and tasty salmon salad. Every male customer has a well-groomed beard, while the women clearly got the memo about wearing Breton tops on a Sunday.

Afterwards, it's a short walk to one of Aarhus' most fascinating cultural venues, the ARoS contemporary art museum, with its Guggenheim-like interior, where collections include works from the likes of Gilbert & George and Warhol. Six years ago, Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson produced *Your Rainbow Panorama*, a beautiful, multi-coloured, glass-paned circular walkway, which sits on top of the building. It's possibly the most Instagrammable thing I've ever seen. Look out, Copenhagen – there's a new contender for your crown.

**Fly London Stansted to Aarhus with Ryanair, from £19.99 one way; ryanair.com. Double rooms with breakfast at Villa Provence start at £160 per night; villaprovence.dk. For more info, see visitaarhus.com**



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