



Aarhus, Denmark: what to see, plus the best restaurants, bars and hotels

The 2017 European Capital of Culture has cool museums and galleries, and a wide range of modern Nordic food and drink, all within a compact walkable city centre

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When Aarhus was named joint European Capital of Culture for 2017, even seasoned travellers had to reach for an atlas. Denmark's second city has long lived in Copenhagen's shadow, but its cultural coronation has put a spring in its step, and increasing numbers of visitors have started succumbing to its charms.

One of which is its size. A small, compact city, with a population of just 330,000, Aarhus's attractions are easily explored on foot or bicycle. They include: ARoS, the contemporary art museum whose rainbow-coloured roof installation can be seen from all over town; the cutting-edge architecture of the revitalised harbour area; the

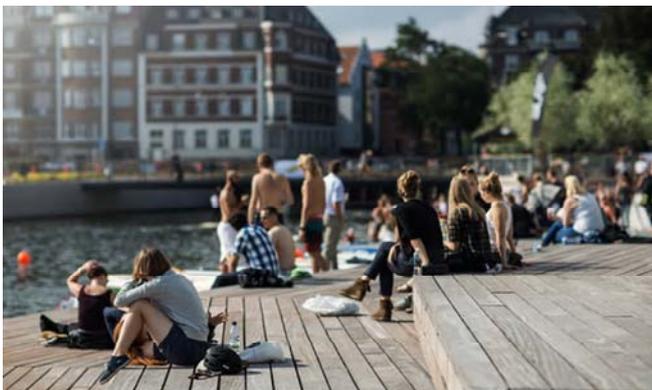
gobsmacking redevelopment of Godsbanen, a goods station turned cultural centre; and the medieval streets of the Latin Quarter. A bike also comes in handy for making the most of the city's location on the Jutland peninsula. On two wheels, you're barely 15 minutes from a forest or beach.



Contemporary art museum ARoS.

Despite its size and provincial mien, Aarhus is a lively place. Students comprise more than 10% of the population, making it Denmark's youngest city. And it's getting younger. Graduates now stick around for work rather than heading straight for Copenhagen. Another sign of the times is the "buggy park" at the new public library, which rings a tubular bell every time a baby is born in Aarhus - a metaphor, perhaps, for the city's renaissance. Visiting families will appreciate free entrance to city museums for under-18s.

Aarhus is buzzing with new bars, cafes and restaurants - many of which showcase New Nordic cuisine, including a trio of Michelin-starred restaurants. While for visitors on tighter budgets, there's a new street-food market in town.



Aarhus waterfront

But it's the city's year-long status as Capital of Culture that has lifted local spirits. A highlight of the jam-packed calendar is Red Serpent, which promises to be the largest outdoor show staged in Denmark. Held on the dramatic sloping roof of the Moesgaard Museum, it will feature Viking battles, fire and galloping horses - and should certainly put Aarhus on the map.

WHAT TO SEE



Moesgaard Museum. Photograph: Alamy

Travel through time and terrain

The Moesgaard Museum is an essential stop, thanks to its bucolic setting in the southern suburbs and its fascinating exploration of pre-history. The museum has a magnificent collection of archaeological and ethnographic treasures and presents them in an intelligent way. An “evolutionary stairway” chronicles the origins of mankind as it sweeps visitors towards the exhibits. The highlights are Grauballe Man, the world’s best-preserved Iron Age “bog body”, and the spectacular views from the museum’s sloping grass roof.

Adult £14, moesgaardmuseum.dk

Walk round the rainbow



Clourful path on the roof ofARoS. Photograph: Alamy

ARoS has a world-class permanent collection, including works by Carsten Höller, Bill Viola and Andy Warhol. Ron Mueck’s five-metre-tall sculpture of a crouching boy is unmissable, but even more memorable is Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson’s Your Rainbow Panorama - the 150-metre-long circular walkway that sits like a crown above the roof. Its rainbow-coloured glass panels reward visitors with an unrivalled panorama of the city.

Adult £14, aros.dk

Port of cool

Aarhus Ø is the redeveloped harbour area. As well as cutting-edge buildings like the eye-catching Iceberg building, you’ll find hidden bars, harbour baths, a large urban garden and promenades.

Relive Danish history



Photograph: Getty Images

Equally engaging is Den Gamle By, an open-air museum that explores how Danes lived in three decades - the 1860s, the 1920s and the 1970s. The reconstructed market town, built with 75 historical houses relocated from around Denmark, is peopled by characters in period dress, including maids baking cakes and cobblers hard at work making shoes.

Adult £15, dengambleby.dk

Get back to nature

Just uphill from Den Gamle By is the city's Botanical Garden. The highlights of this award-winning attraction are four climate-controlled greenhouses, each devoted to a different region - including deserts and mountains. With play areas and engaging exhibits, it's especially good for families.

Free, visitaarhus.com/botanical-garden

Explore the Latin Quarter



Latin Quarter

The cobbled streets of the Latin Quarter have half-timbered houses and hidden courtyards, along with cafes and restaurants, boutiques, galleries and shops. One of the best is Designer Zoo (Badstuegade 19), which showcases 100 contemporary Danish artisans. For the peckish there are pastries at Nummer 24 (Graven 24, on Facebook) or local and regional foods at Landmad (Studsgade 6).

Visit the cultural powerhouse



Godsbanen

Godsbanen, a cluster of industrial buildings in a former railway freight yard, was repurposed in 2010 to house dozens of creative businesses and spaces, including design firms, theatres and workshops. From concerts to markets, there's usually something interesting happening in this 10,500-square-metre space. Outdoor workshops are housed in anything from yurts to recycled shipping containers.

Free, godsbanen.dk

Up-and-coming neighbourhood

Few areas exemplify the city's renaissance like Frederiksbjerg, south of the railway station. It has a fun outdoor market twice a week, and main drag Jægergårdsgade, which stretches east towards the old meatpacking district, is jam-packed with bars, shops and restaurants. Souvenir hunters should head to Nr4 (no 51, nr4.dk), which sells items by Danish and Icelandic designers. Foodies can sample farm-to-table cuisine at Saart (no 6), and craft beer at Mikkeller (no 61), a bar run by the Copenhagen brewery. St Pauls Apotek (no 76) is a fun cocktail bar in a former pharmacy.

WHERE TO EAT

Aarhus Street Food



In a former car park near the bus station, Aarhus Street Food was an instant hit when it opened last summer. A wide range of vendors operate out of recycled shipping containers. As well as staples such as *banh mi*, *shawarma* and tacos, there are Danish dishes such as dumplings in curry at Grandma's House and roast pork sandwiches at Stegen og Dellen - both best washed down with a beer from Ølfred.

Ny Banegaardsgade 46, aarhusstreetfood.com

Domestic

This effortlessly cool spot in the Latin Quarter has a fondness for preservation: every corner seems to contain a jar of pickled roots and shoots - and dishes showcase local and seasonal produce, presented with visual flair, such as fermented gooseberries with pine oil, or cod with cabbage and buttermilk. With exposed brick walls and cosy snug for after-dinner drinks, Domestic's setting is spectacular.

Tasting menus from £57, +45 61 437010, restaurantdomestic.dk

Hærværk



This trendy spot in Frederiksberg won a Bib Gourmand last year - and no wonder. The cooking is excellent, the prices reasonable and the menu changes daily, depending on what's in season. With most ingredients sourced from within 40 miles, it's a prime spot to sample New Nordic cuisine, and the vibrant wine list even includes a Danish red to match the menu. Hærværk means "vandalism", but there's nothing ugly about it at all.

Tasting menus from £52, +45 50 512651, restaurant-haervaerk.dk

Kohalen

This no-frills pub is as Danish as it gets, and the best spot in town to try traditional dishes such as cured herring, *smørrebrød* (Denmark's famous open sandwich) and *pariserbøf* (local burger), washed down with beer and a *snaps*.

Mains from £8, booking advisable, +45 86 121481, kohalen.dk

Pondus



Photograph: Søren Gammelmark

The baby brother of Substans - one of the city's Michelin-starred restaurants that's worth a splurge - Pondus describes itself as a Danish bistro and offers a more affordable meal. The kitchen favours seasonal Nordic ingredients, such as

lingonberries and sea buckthorn.

Three courses £34, +45 28 771850, restaurantpondus.dk

Saart

This Frederiksberg newcomer is run by a trio of chefs and a young organic farmer. Together they make as much as they can from scratch, including charcuterie, bread and pasta. The vibe is fun - there's classic rock on the stereo and a cartoon of Courtney Love on the wall - and the cooking is exemplary. The best dishes are meant for sharing: brimming bowls of pork ravioli with cream and fennel, say, or a rough-and-tumble salad of marinated octopus and roasted cashew nuts.

Tasting menu from £40, +45 86 120070, saart.dk

WHERE TO DRINK

Mig og Ølsnedkeren



Mig og Ølsnedkeren

This year-old bar in the Latin Quarter always has 20 microbrews on tap from Denmark and beyond. They're shown on a big blackboard behind the bar, and owner Nick Olesen is a genial chap who loves to make new craft-beer converts.

Mejlgade 12, on Facebook

La Cabra

At this cool cafe in the Latin Quarter, well-trained baristas promise a "Nordic coffee experience". That begins with beans bought directly from farms and lightly roasted on site to retain their natural aromas and flavours. Fashionable without being intimidating, La Cabra is always packed, and its toasted sourdough sandwiches are especially good.

Graven 20, lacabra.dk

La Plage Deux

This elegant spot at the eastern end of Jægergårdsgade does classic cocktails, champagne by the glass and plates of oysters - if possible, try those from nearby Limfjorden - rated as among the best in the world by Noma founder René Redzepi. There's often live jazz, too.

Strandvejen 2, laplage2.dk

WHERE TO STAY

Villa Provence



Villa Provence.

All 39 rooms and suites at this three-star hotel are individually decorated in Provençal style, and have charming details such as clawfoot tubs. The breakfast is excellent, and the cobbled courtyard has fountains and lime trees. Villa Provence is right in the city centre, a perfect retreat after a long day.

Doubles from £150 B&B, villaprovence.dk

Comwell Aarhus

This stylish, modern four-star hotel's 240 rooms are furnished by the Danish design house HAY. Along with panoramic views of the city, it has a well-stocked bar - gin fans will be spoilt for choice - and the street-food market is a stone's throw away.

Doubles from £141 B&B, comwellaarhus.dk

Møllestien 49 and 51



Ceramicist and musician Lissa Ladefoged runs these two self-catering cottages for two (plus child) with pretty south-facing gardens, one of which she has maintained in its original 18th-century style. Møllestien's half-timbered houses and cobbles make it the city's prettiest street, and the ARoS art museum is a stroll away.

From £93 a night, house-in-aarhus.com

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