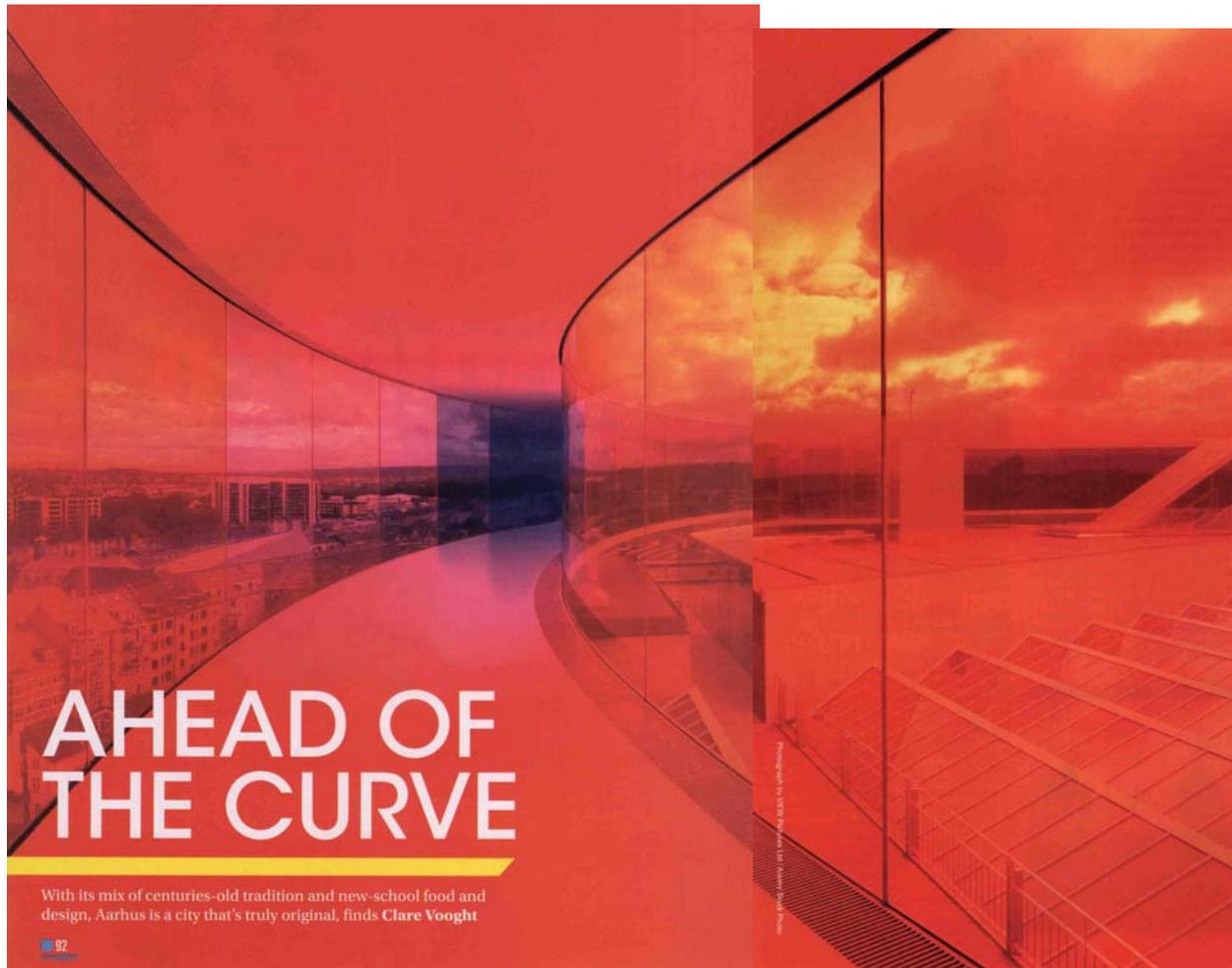


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# AHEAD OF THE CURVE

With its mix of centuries-old tradition and new-school food and design, Aarhus is a city that's truly original, finds **Clare Vooght**

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Aarhus

**I**f you're not impressed by a 400-ton, panoramic rainbow on the roof of a building – which, FYI, you can walk through and experience a change in temperature as you move from cooler blues through warmer indigos and violets to reds – then you should rethink your priorities.

The rainbow panorama by Olafur Eliasson on top of **ARoS** art museum is just one of many reasons Aarhus – Denmark's second-largest city – merited its European **Capital of Culture 2017** title. Its inventive

New Nordic food sourced from local Jutland (the sticky-up peninsula of Denmark) producers is another. And then there's its experimental architecture (it has residential flats created to look like icebergs) and its general design kudos: I fell for Aarhus, because everything here is created to be beautiful.

*Aarhus claimed its Capital of Culture award alongside Paphos, Cyprus this year. It becomes the first Danish city to do so since Copenhagen was chosen in 1996.*

As well as all the modern stuff, this historic Viking town has plenty of fascinating (and gory) history, if that's what you're into – immortalised in tech-conscious, interactive museums, plus lots of old buildings and cobbled streets to wander around, especially in its buzzy Latin Quarter. The city emanates effortless Danish cool. So if you're a fan of Scandi cities, book yourself a budget flight now.

### **Day one: Aarhus Ø, Dokk1, ARoS and the Rainbow Walk**

#### **Morning**

Aarhus is entirely walkable, but I make like a Dane and cycle around Aarhus Ø, a new canal-veined dockland quarter that's essentially an experimenting ground for

architects. In the past few years, various new housing blocks have sprung up, from swanky, sustainably built student accommodation to the striking Iceberg – angular waterside apartments designed to look like enormous shards of ice jutting up from the sea. The waterfront here is home to events such as group volleyball and salsa, and live concerts: keep an eye out if you're visiting in summer, especially for yoga, exhibitions, lectures, live bands and club nights at the Dome of Visions, a temporary space that moves around the area.

Then take a peek at Dokk1, which houses the coolest library and civic centre you'll see. It's been named the world's best library, and the beautifully lit interior is worth a look: with plenty of interactive tech touches and Scandi 'design porn' flourishes. The tubular bell inside – the world's largest – is testament to community-focused Danish society: it's rung whenever an Aarhus baby is born via a button in the local hospital.

#### **Afternoon**

Absorb more culture at ARoS art museum, where you'll find that rainbow. I wouldn't normally bang on quite so much about a gallery, but this one's more of a concept. Its design is based on Dante's Divine Comedy, and a visit begins with a dark, underground black-walled hell downstairs, home to an abandoned club space called 'The Mirror' with neon lights, a fallen disco ball and discarded beer bottles. Along a few more dark, warren-like corridors, I find an opening onto a metal balcony that turns out to be enclosed with mirrors that make the tiny space appear to go on and on. As you keep going up, floor by floor, gallery-goers travel through purgatory, through constantly changing exhibitions, up to the more virtuous, permanent Old Masters collection on the 8th floor. When you reach the roof, you're in heaven – the aforementioned rainbow walkway that provides a colour-saturated view across the city.

#### **Evening**

This year, thanks to some innovative cheffing in local kitchens using all the fresh produce that comes from the countryside surrounding the city, Aarhus and the Central Denmark Region has won a European Region of Gastronomy accolade. Head to Aarhus Street Food, a casual market with independent food trucks including Stegen & Dellen, serving Danish meatball sarnies with heaps of crackling, and condensed street food incarnations of restaurants such as Copenhagen's Grød, which serves porridge, risotto and daal. On my visit I have a creamy Grød risotto made with purple broccoli, raw apple and thickly grated parmesan as a live

band – fronted by a girl who’s the spitting image of Amy Schumer – plays Femme Fatale by the Velvet Underground.

### Day two: Old Town, Latin Quarter and the Moesgaard Museum, Kulbroen

#### Morning

I find that there’s a fine line between hipster culture and history re-enactment, when witnessing bearded gents brewing casks of ale, 1800s-style, for guests to try at Aarhus Den Gamle By (the Old Town Museum). Stuffy old museum this is not – visitors can also get a look at life in Denmark through the ages, with **pickling demos**, quince porridge tasting in a reconstructed 19th-century grain merchant’s house, and a 1970s commune, rebuilt just as the Skansen commune was in Aarhus at the time. There are record players, poster maps of the

*Pickling is an important food tradition all over the Nordics, originally used as a way of preserving produce picked over the summer months to last the cold winter.*

People’s Republic of China, very 1970s prints, plus interviews with real occupants about life in the commune and interactive mirrors that put you in virtual

hippy-style garms.

After my history fix, I wander back towards town via Mollestein, a picturesque street with enough brightly painted houses with trailing flowers and vintage bikes chained up outside – enough to keep your Instagram feed going for a while.

#### Afternoon

Stop to eat at Langhoff & Juul, an organic restaurant where the mantra is ‘the best things in life either make you fat, drunk or pregnant’. At lunchtime, beautifully presented salads and open sandwiches are created with sustainability in mind, using

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local ingredients. From here, you're in prime position to explore the Latin Quarter – the oldest part of the city. It's full of cobbled streets to explore, and I'm transfixed by the cooler-than-your-front-room design shops, clothing boutiques and galleries that are also tattoo parlours (true story – check out Société G28). Grab a coffee while checking out the art for sale in Tank, then check out an installation in LYNFabrikken – a gallery housed in an old factory building.

Don't forget the Aarhus Cathedral, either, situated in a pretty square in the heart of

the **Latin Quarter**. And if you're still feeling history-hungry, head to the edge of town to the Moesgaard Museum of archaeology

*The Latin Quarter is was built in the 14th century, after the city oversaw the destruction of its old Viking fortifications. Today it's one of the buzziest parts of town.*

and ethnography for – among various other immersive installations – a virtual-reality experience on an Iron Age battlefield. We see arrows on screens coming

towards us and hear swords clinking, along with other gorier battle sounds, here. The building itself is pretty cool too – as tends to be the Danish way – and it looks like its grassy, slanted roof is opening from the ground on a hinge. It doubles as a toboggan run in winter, too.

#### Evening

Head to Sårt on hip Jægergårdsgade to start your night with Danish tapas and an epic cheese and charcuterie board, and few glasses of wine. Continue resetting the culture/booze balance in an apothecary-style setting with a Nuclear Daiquiri made with absinthe and Lemon Hart overproof rum,

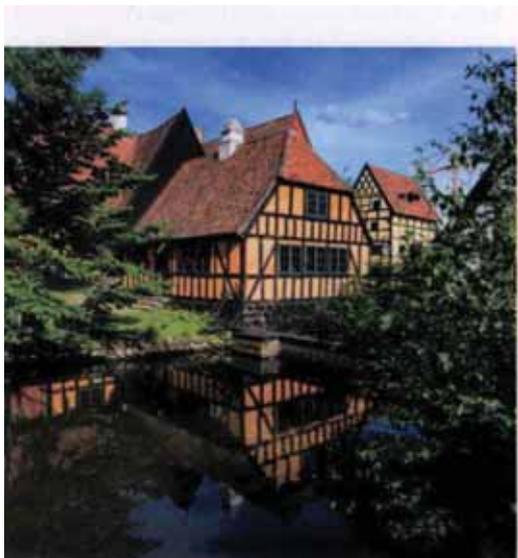
or a Fattie Bum Bum, with Johnnie Walker Gold Label, port, and marshmallow and nettle stout syrup from St Paul's Apothek. The cocktails are as cool, inventive and unique as the rest of the city. ☺

Ryanair has direct flights from London Stansted to Aarhus from £19.99 one-way. For more information, see [visitdenmark.co.uk](http://visitdenmark.co.uk) and [visitaarhus.com](http://visitaarhus.com). For European Capital of Culture 2017 events, visit [aarhus2017.com](http://aarhus2017.com)

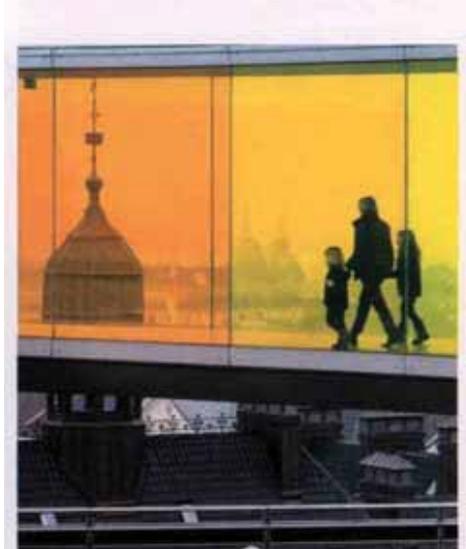
## STAY

The Radisson Blu is a nicely designed option and an easy walk from the centre of Aarhus. Rooms are simple, modern and plenty of them have good city views (nightly rates from £102 per room, [radissonblu.com](http://radissonblu.com)). Hotel Oasia is a bit more youthful, with black-and-white Scandi cool points and furniture made by sustainably minded Danish brands (nightly rates from £105 per night, [hoteloasia.com](http://hoteloasia.com))

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