

Copenhagen Calling

By Molly Arost Staub - Vacation Agent Magazine

Europe's popular port continues to lure visitors with fabulous sightseeing and shopping

Copenhagen was named Europe's Leading Cruise Destination in 2006 by the World Travel Awards* for the third year running; it also awarded the city the World's Leading Cruise Port in 2005. Why the popularity? Factors include the spectacular sightseeing, modern efficiency, lack of red tape, friendliness of the locals and universality of spoken English. The people at the cruise port have been striving to maintain and upgrade that reputation.

Copenhagen counted 280 cruise ship arrivals in 2006 with 399,000 passengers; of those passengers 43 percent constituted Americans. And 104 ships used Copenhagen as a turnaround port.

In addition, Copenhagen Airport opened a dedicated check-in terminal last April exclusively for cruise passengers. They may check their baggage in early, giving them extra hours for sightseeing or shopping before boarding their flight. The terminal has 16 check-in desks and will operate on days when the most cruise passengers are expected.

ARRIVAL: The port boasts two major cruise piers, the Langelinie Pier and the Freeport Terminal; some ships occasionally dock at the Nordre Toldbod. From Langelinie Pier, passengers may walk to the city center in less than 30 minutes, passing some of the famous sights. Bus number 26 from the pier to the city center leaves every 20 minutes. The ride takes approximately 15 minutes and costs about \$2.50. A taxi to the city center costs about \$12 to \$15 and takes approximately five to 10 minutes. Most fun is taking the waterbus, which departs hourly. A one-day ticket costs about \$6.50, with hop-on-and-off privileges.

From Freeport Terminal, shuttle buses usually wait right outside the vessels. A taxi to the city center costs about \$16 to \$25 and takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

MUST-SEE ATTRACTIONS: Clients with children, along as well as the young at heart, will revel in this city that's proud of its Hans Christian Andersen heritage, with reminders of its most famous citizen everywhere. The top tourist attraction is the sculpture of the tale-spinner's Little Mermaid, which sits at Copenhagen's harbor. The bronze sculpture, created by Edvard Eriksen in 1913, surprises first-timers with its tiny size.

Suggest your clients take a waterbus tour from here – so they can see how the canals and waterways lend an open feeling to the city. Or at the bustling Nyhavn section, where colorful 17th-century buildings line the harbor, fishing boats are moored, and outdoor cafes add to the fun, for hop-on, hop-off tours of canal-related sights.

The famed Tivoli Gardens, a melange of amusement park rides, upscale restaurants, theater and concert performances amid immaculate, gorgeous gardens, boasts a regular ride: "The Flying Trunk." This Hans Christian Andersen section depicts 32 Andersen fairy tale scenes in a charming manner.

Hans Christian Andersen's Wonderful World displays simplistic scenes of several of the fairy tales for little ones. In the Legacy Room, though, scholars will find letters and first editions of the author's works, along with the original manuscript of "The Stone of the Wise Man."

Denmark, of course, boasts the world's oldest monarchy, and Copenhagen hosts a clutch of castles with gardens. Clients shouldn't miss the Amalienborg Palace, the Royal Couple's winter residence. The guard changes at noon daily. The 17th-century Rosenborg Palace offers a way to see how former royals lived and displays the fabulous collection of crown jewels.

Lovers of modern Danish design find museums and furniture galleries to suit their tastes as well. Think Bang and Olufsen, Daniel Libeskind's Danish Jewish Museum or displays at the Danish Design Centre.

Clients should leave time for a leisurely stroll along Stroget, Europe's longest pedestrian shopping street, lined with eateries, boutiques, department stores – often peppered with street entertainers. While the shops are not as elegant as they were once, many internationally recognized names abound, and Georg Jensen is still here.

The Museum of Danish Resistance will appeal to anyone interested in World War II; mementoes and numerous photographs taken during the Nazi occupation are exhibited. It proudly displays a self-made tank used during liberation from the Nazi occupation. Free appointments must be pre-arranged. (henrik.lundbak@natmus.dk). Clients may visit Carlsberg Brewery, to learn about founder J.C. Jacobsen and his philanthropies. Guests can tour the facilities and sample the beers.

For an elegant waterside lunch with a view of 18th-century buildings and the modern Black Diamond (the new part of the Royal Library), suggest Restaurant Viva, located on a moored houseboat. The eatery specializes in seafood and shellfish, including open-faced sandwiches. But the popular queen of smorrebrod, Restaurant Ida Davidsen, serving five generations, offers 250 choices of the open-faced sandwiches. The children's selection even features a chocolate smorrebrod!

Amber, of course, is considered the Nordic gold. Shops featuring it used in jewelry are ubiquitous, but the House of Amber is probably the largest and oldest. Royal Copenhagen is the spot for porcelain collectibles, such as plates and figurines, while Georg Jensen still features stunning contemporary silver designs in jewelry and house gifts.

Among the major lines visiting Copenhagen are Celebrity Cruises, Costa Cruises, Crystal Cruises, Cunard Cruises, Holland America Line, MSC Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, Orient Lines, Princess Cruises, Regent Seven Sea Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, Seabourn Cruises and Silversea Cruises.