



MY CITY*: COPENHAGEN

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MELANIE HAYNES SHOWS US AROUND THE PARKLAND AND PROMENADES OF THE DYNAMIC DANISH CAPITAL

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MELANIE HAYNES

Melanie is a British blogger and freelance writer who now lives in Copenhagen. She balances being a mum with writing a successful blog on what delights her about living in the Danish capital.



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Most of us live in cities. Even if a tiny part of us yearns for the country, it's hard to deny the excitement of town. We ask one person – clearly in love with their city – to tell us what makes it so special. Through their eyes, we can take a fresh look at where we live too.

How long have you lived in the city?

I moved to Copenhagen in 2008 and this has been my home for almost five years.

What drew you there?

My husband and I decided we wanted to have an adventure and try living in another country. We thought Copenhagen looked OK and we decided to give it a go. It was love at first sight! It felt like the perfect fit and it still does, and we now see it as our home for the future.

Where are you from originally?

I grew up in a small village in Kent, England.

What keeps you in the city now?

It's simply my home now – I can speak Danish and it's a great place to bring up children because there's a relatively positive work/life balance compared to the UK. I love the almost village-like feel of Copenhagen compared to other capital cities. It's also a place where you feel people care about their surroundings.

- 1 Melanie loves to relax in Nyhavn with a Shooting Star (Stjerne Skud) open sandwich, a delicious combination of prawns and breaded plaice on rye bread, and a Tuborg beer.
- 2 Nyboder, the 18th century naval quarter, adds sunshine to even the cloudiest day.
- 3 The environmentally conscious Danes use automatic blinds to keep their buildings cool on hot days.
- 4 Strøget, Europe's longest pedestrian street, is a shoppers' paradise, with the flagship stores of Royal Copenhagen and Georg Jensen here.
- 5 Buying local and exotic produce in Torvehallerne, the covered market, is always a pleasure.

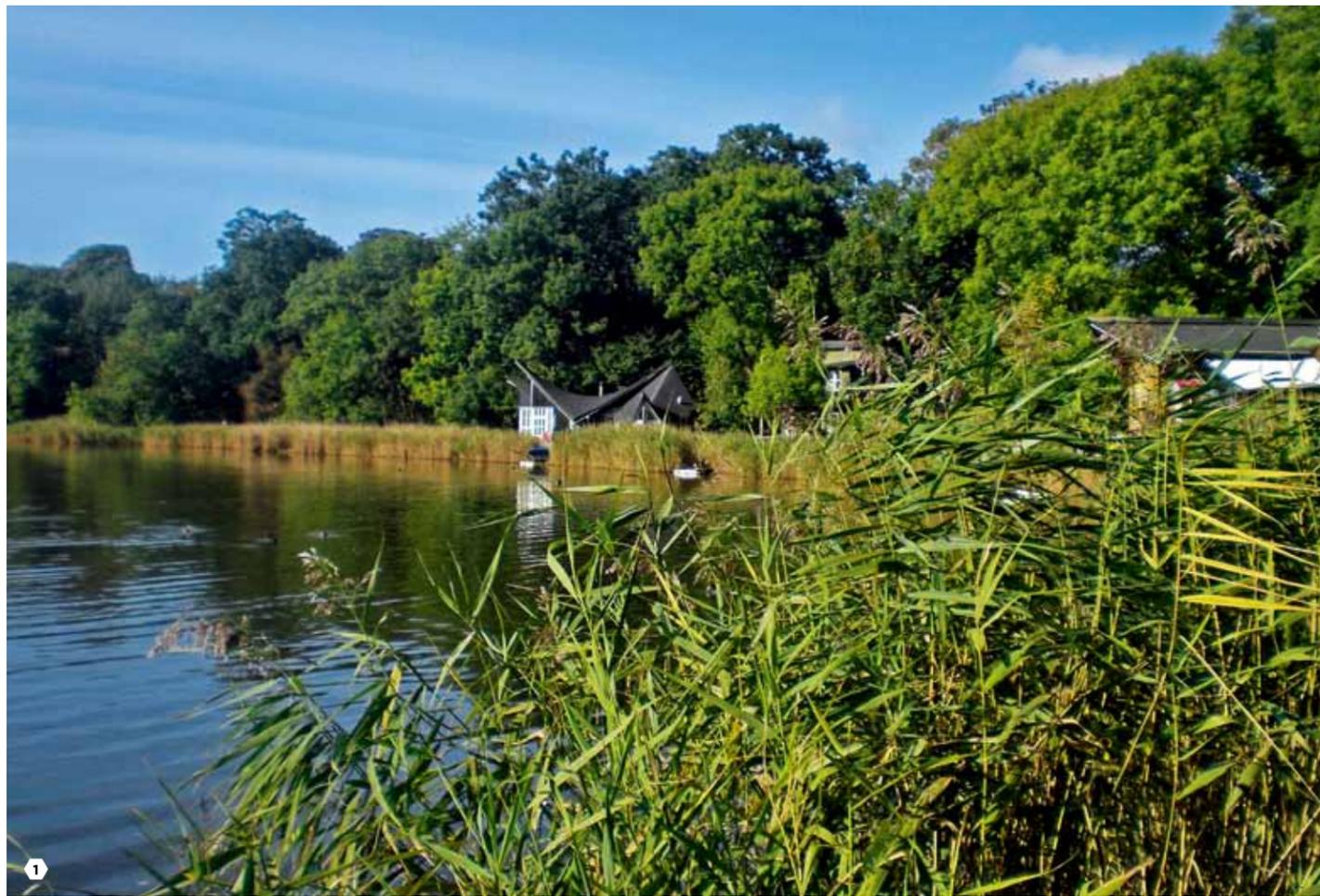
Which season makes your city feel most alive?

Summer is the best season, particularly the early part when we seem to get more sunshine. The locals are still in the city and not in summer houses on the coast, so it's very vibrant. The summer is when people really make the most of longer evenings.

What does it feel like in October?

This is one of my favourite months. The seasons change very definitely here. It's still not too cold so we enjoy the fresh air before the real winter arrives. I had my son on 1st October and it was summer when I went into hospital and autumn when I left two days later. »

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY: LUCIE EVENDEN



“There are two colours of the CITY for me: the TRADITIONAL mustard yellow of older buildings and the BLUE of the skies”

What are the green spaces like?

There are many wonderful old parks in the city. The Botanical Garden on the edge of the centre is a beautiful place to wander around, especially the glass houses, but there are parks to match every mood, from sports to sunbathing or just people watching. Spring and the first sign of sun send everyone in droves to local parks and open spaces to strip off and get that much-needed vitamin D. We're also very lucky that there are many amazing beaches, such as Amager Strand, within about half an hour of the city centre by public transport.

Where's your favourite green space?

My favourite park is probably not that well known to people other than locals or plant enthusiasts. The Landbohøjskolen Park in Frederiksberg was our local park when we first moved here and is full of memories for me. It's part of the horticultural department of the University of Copenhagen and contains many interesting and unusual plants.

I love it as it's a real reflection of the seasons, from the bulb beds in the spring to poppies in the summer

to amazing leaf colours in the autumn. Even under a blanket of snow it's still my favourite place to be.

What's the light like?

The long summer evenings are what makes this city special to me. Whilst people are still active in the winter, the summer nights take it to a new level. In June it's still daylight at almost 11pm and the streets are busy with cyclists and people sitting outside cafés. There's a real carefree feel. By contrast, sometimes in the winter it feels as if it hasn't even got light before darkness falls and you spot cosy candles in apartment windows – the Danes love to light candles, something I've happily adopted. They even have a word for that cosy feeling: “hyggeligt”.

Where do you like to escape to?

Christiania, the freetown, close to the city centre. It's car-free and its residents lead a very alternative lifestyle. The main residential areas and the space down by the water feel miles away from normal city life.

What's your best discovery about the city?

I suppose it's how friendly and welcoming the Danes really are. Although somewhat reserved, I find them open and interested in others, especially about why you've chosen their country to live in.

What excites you on a daily basis?

It's hard to describe how living here makes me feel. In the mornings when we leave the apartment to begin our



day I often feel a little fizz of excitement in my stomach. I can't say why exactly but I only feel that way in Copenhagen. Perhaps it's the thought that there's still so much to discover.

What's your favourite way to get about the city?

I recently bought a cargo bike and it's a great way to get about with my son. I also love walking around the neighbourhoods ducking into interesting little shops.

Where do you like to go with friends?

I love to go for sushi, which is very popular here. The Danish chain Sticks 'n' Sushi has a restaurant on the 12th floor of the Tivoli Hotel right on the harbour and the views are stunning.

Where do you like to go alone?

I adore wandering around little side streets, exploring. I also love walking along the Inner Harbour. This area is



in the middle of real change and I'm fascinated by the new and innovative architecture and public spaces appearing here.

Tell us about the colours of your city.

Copenhagen is a colourful city. There are two colours of the city for me – the traditional mustard yellow of older buildings and the amazing blue of the skies, often in all seasons, which always makes me happy.

What types of shop do you most like to visit?

Design is what Denmark is famous for and there are many different shops selling elegant, stylish and original pieces for the home. There's a big movement of »

- 1 Taking in the green spaces in Christiania is always a wonderful antidote to the bustle of the nearby canal area in Christianshavn.
- 2 Grønnegade in the city centre is a pretty street to grab a coffee and cake after a busy day shopping on nearby Strøget.
- 3 Sushi is one of Melanie's favourite meals, but for more Danish fare she loves the pigs' cheeks in the BrewPub restaurant.
- 4 Copenhagen is a city of architectural contrasts and is ever evolving. Ørestad, a new quarter in the south of the city, is a good example.
- 5 Melanie uses her Nihola cargo bike to get around the city on the many cycle paths.

- ❶ Christiania has a visual surprise on every corner, but be aware of the 'no photography' areas in the freetown.
- ❷ Danes love seasonal produce and they snack on peas straight from the pod in parks and on the beaches.
- ❸ Verner Pantone chairs outside the Royal Danish Playhouse café bring sleek Danish design to the masses.



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ceramicists here and I love to visit their shops and workshops to see real originality. Helle Gram on Allegeade in Frederiksberg is one of my favourites.

What do you long for most when you've been away?

I think it's real weather and seasons. During our first winter here I spent Thanksgiving in New York and I was so disappointed to miss the first snowfall back in Copenhagen. Oh, and the pastries, of course.

What would surprise a newcomer to your city?

Probably how many people cycle here in high heels. Also how many independent shops, coffee shops and cafés there are. There's a real feeling of support for local businesses and small chains.

Where do you find your guilty pleasures?

Bakeries. It's a daily struggle (which I invariably lose) to resist all the delectable pastries and cakes on every corner. My recent downfall was the introduction of strawberry trifles in my local cake shop. ❸

MELANIE'S PRIVATE TOUR

FAVOURITE SHOP

Thiemers Magasin

Tullingsgade 24, 1618 Copenhagen
One of the few things I miss about living in the UK is browsing in bookshops, but this little place helps just a bit with a thoughtful selection of books and periodicals.
www.thiemersmagasin.dk

FAVOURITE CAFÉ

Serenity Cupcakes

Grønnegade 32, 1107 Copenhagen
The place to eat cupcakes. It's a beautiful café with superb cakes made by the adorable owner, Mariam Mistry. A lovely place to unwind.
www.serenitycupcakes.dk

FAVOURITE MARKET

Torvehallerne

Frederiksborggade 21, 1360 Copenhagen (Cleaver's, Stand G3; Ma Poule, Stand F9)
It's our Friday ritual to head to the covered market, Torvehallerne, for some weekend treats. My favourite stalls are Cleaver's butcher for meat and Ma Poule for French delicacies.

PLACE TO SEE BY NIGHT

Bella Sky Comwell

Center Boulevard 5, 2300 Copenhagen
The bar on the 23rd floor of this new hotel offers amazing views over the city across to Sweden. Great to watch the sunset with a glass of bubbly.
www.bellaskycomwell.dk

BEST VIEW

Round Tower

Købmagergade 52A, 1150 Copenhagen
The 17th century Round Tower in the city centre offers amazing views over the red roofs of the old areas of the city. The best part is the spiral ramp inside almost all the way to the top.
www.rundetarn.dk

THING YOU HAVE TO SEE

Harbour architecture

The harbour shows both old and modern development of the city with new buildings and public spaces appearing all the time. The Danish Architecture Centre, www.dac.dk, offers a number of 'podwalks' (downloadable audio tours), guided walks and bike rides.

FAVOURITE HOTEL

Admiral Hotel

Toldbodgade 24-28, 1253 Copenhagen
This historic hotel is perfectly located right on the harbour. It's a converted 18th century warehouse looking towards the Opera House.
www.admiral-hotel-copenhagen.com



MELANIE HAYNES is a freelance writer. She writes a popular blog, Dejlige Days, about living in Copenhagen, and also contributes to a variety of other travel and expatriate websites.
www.dejligedays.com