

ALL THINGS BIG AND SMALL

SEPARATED BY A MERE 2.3 KM, TWO SPOTS IN COPENHAGEN HAVE BROKEN RECORDS TO BE TITLED AS THE WORLD'S SMALLEST HOTEL AND LARGEST HOSTEL. HERE'S A LOOK AT THIS SCANDINAVIAN CITY'S SPECIAL ADDRESSES.

TEXT SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Travel experiences and narratives have become so nuanced and selective over the last few years that sometimes I feel that I might have categorically diluted the thrill of superlatives from my life. Jostling to climb the highest tower or peaking down the tallest bridge or taking a bite of the hottest chili are things that used to be considerable fun. The words 'offbeat' and 'niche' might have stripped the world of travel a fair bit of amusing deliciousness.



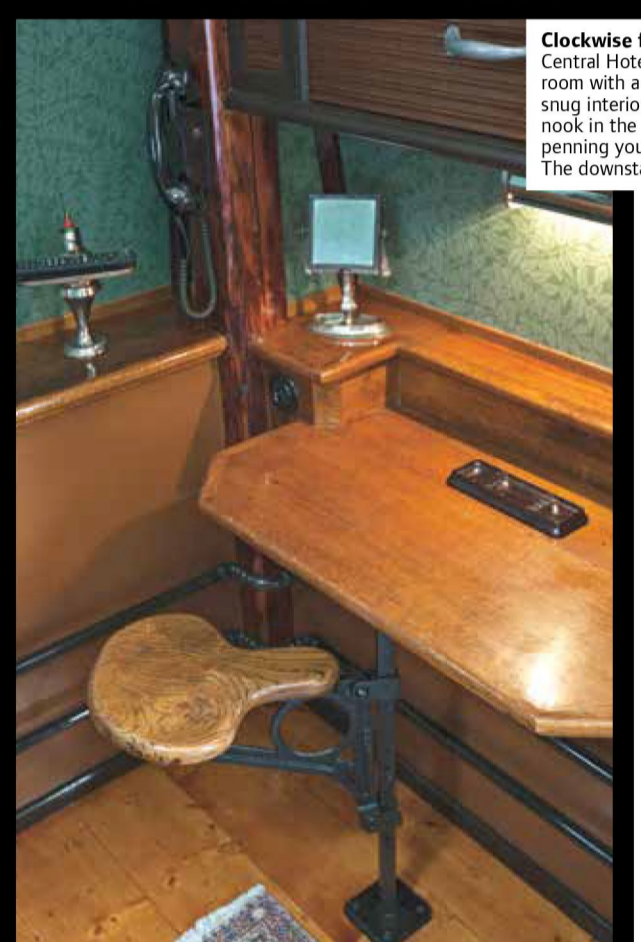
Facing page: An exterior view of the compact Central Hotel and Café.



UNIQUE STAYS



in these experiences. A friend and I had been discussing this, when I got a chance to go on a trip to Copenhagen – the perfect place to restate the flavour of astronomical statistics to my travels. Decidedly Scandinavia's most avant-garde destination, Copenhagen offers a relaxed vibe. The enviable cycling culture has a lot to do with it. As do the mesh of canals with slim boats cruising on its placid waters and the innovative restaurant and cafes. Fast acquiring Michelin stars. The place is literally a 'smørrebrød' of experiences with man-made lakes and canals to canoe down, the classic fairytale charm of the Tivoli theme park, remodeled 18th-century hip neighbourhoods, a famous jazz festival and veritable history around the genius of Hans Christen Anderson with Little Mermaid colonising a vital bronze speck on the waterside at the Langelinie promenade. And when you bite into an actual smørrebrød (Danish sandwich), multiple flavours explode in your mouth, mirroring the accents of the town – fresh, tangy, sometimes sweet, but altogether irresistible. While here, I was determined to



Clockwise from above: Central Hotel and Café's room with a view and snug interiors; A cosy nook in the corner for penning your thoughts; The downstairs café.

pay homage to two addresses that had been long on my list of things to do in the city. I followed the blue capillary on Google maps to Central Hotel and Café – the smallest hotel in the world! The slim streets from canal-side Nyhavn to Central, wended through the red-light-cum-hipster district of Vesterbro. A few stops later, Google deposited me outside a mono-roomed hotel, a combination of a café and a guest room on its first floor. Espresso-fuelled, I wore my cheeriest smile and asked the rather sparsely occupied waitress about the hotel. It would

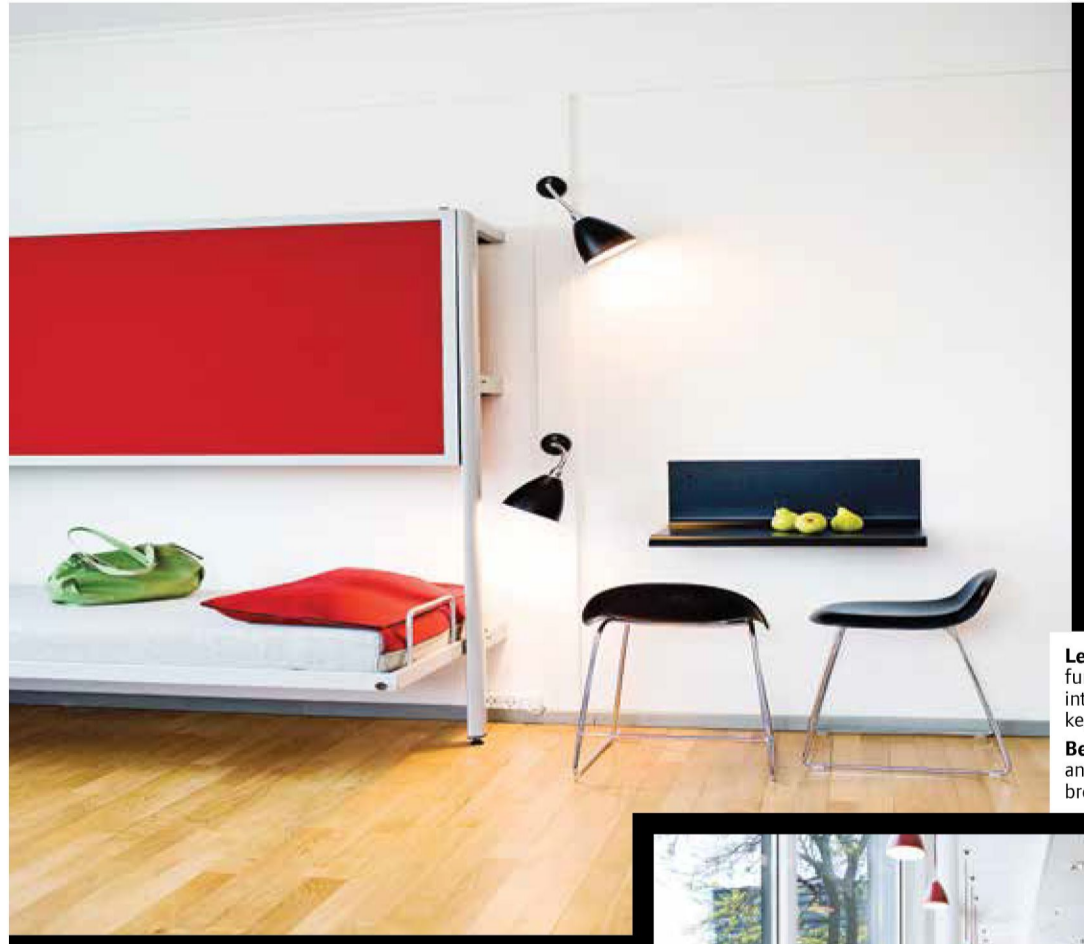
Central Hotel & Café



Above: The towering Danhostel seen from a canal tour in harbour of Copenhagen. Left: The contemporary-styled common room at Danhostel.

have been surprising to see her busy, since only two tables spilled out on the footpath outside the café. And the table other than mine was unoccupied. The address belonged to a cobbler before World War II, who lived here for more than two decades before the war started. The occupants or their jobs remained a mystery for almost forty years after the war, but when current owners, Leif Thingtved and Jacob Kamp found the place in the 80s, it belonged to a goldsmith. The duo didn't do much to refurbish the hotel. The idea was to keep history alive by letting a traveller step back in time. Though, they did add a dash of Danish hospitality. Fresh flowers and a refreshing drink await the guest in the room. It is not bereft of other hotel trappings as well. Wi-Fi, a flat screen TV, a comfy bed, an iPhone docking station and a mini bar make for the essentials. Booked through the entire summer, the hotel sees hundreds of tourists who want to sink into the bed of the world's smallest hotel. Such luck stays with only one permanent occupant of the room – a picture of British comedian Ronnie Barker. It's only fair as the owners are huge fans. Choc-a-block bookings through the summer suggest that there is nothing diminutive about the hotel, other than its size. With that thought, I thanked the waitress and made a dash for the other address – Danhostel – Europe's largest hostel.

Pearl Buckwalter / Alamy / iStockphoto.com; Mikko Saario



Left: Minimalistic, functional, chic room interiors are Danhostel's key offering. Below: The spacious and well-designed breakfast area.



Tickled by the juxtaposition of the smallest and largest pad in the world, separated only by 2.3 km, I walked with a smile on my face towards the hostel. With Copenhagen's unfavourable exchange rate for many countries, it is no wonder that many travellers land up here at the world's largest hostel. The lure of budget accommodation and meeting over 1,000 other hostel occupants from different parts of the world is hard to resist. Located in an old trade union headquarters, the hostel lacks the atmospheric vibe of world hostels and Copenhagen's hipster thrum. It's just that big. The glitzy glass-walled building could well be a hotel. Danhostel is a bona fide maze of dorms and rooms with two, four, six, eight or ten beds in each. The only good thing is that the hostel looks over the Copenhagen's central canal. Easy access to the railway station and the town hall square is the other

high point. Standing hunched over the reception, chatting with the host, I saw many newly found friendships being forged over swimming plans in the open-air harbour pool by the Islands Brygge waterfront close by. As tempted I was to dip my feet in this unique public pool of Copenhagen, it was time to head back to my hotel. But before that, I made a quick stop at Central again. After all, writing a postcard to the same friend, from the smallest hotel in the world, held an odd thrill. ■

QUICK FACTS

GETTING THERE
Jet Airways operates daily flights to Amsterdam from Mumbai and Delhi. From here you can fly our codeshare partner KLM to Copenhagen.

ACCOMMODATION
Central Hotel & Café Tullingsgade 1, 11610 København, Denmark. Tariff 1,800 DKK per night, including breakfast. www.centralhotelogcafe.dk
Danhostel HC Andersens Blvd. 50, 1553 Copenhagen V, Denmark. Tariff starting from 160 DKK per night, including breakfast. www.danhostel.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION log on to www.visitdenmark.com

Mikko Saario