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Scandinavian Stars

This trio of **Nordic cities** entices newlyweds with a winning mix of chic surroundings and historic charm
by Audrey Tempelman

The Nyhavn waterfront

Copenhagen

WHY WE LOVE IT

It has miles of style. You don't have to be a design snob to fall for this urban beauty. Its cobblestoned streets, lively squares and copper rooftops are the picture of *hygge*—the Danish concept of cozy. With a pair of sturdy shoes, and some help from the delightfully trendy and friendly locals, you'll be able to explore this adorably compact city quickly.

HOW TO ENJOY IT

Get to know the H₂O. You'll never be far from water. Visit the northern "lakes"—really 17th-century moats—or amble along the many boat-lined canals. For some quintessential photo ops, wander the ramparts of Kastellet, the star-shaped fortress to the East; then visit The Little Mermaid, the diminutive bronze darling in the harbor nearby.

Stroll the historic center. Follow Strøget, the city's main artery, to Kongens Nytorv square, and walk the waterfront from Nyhavn to the castle at Christiansborg. There, you're a stone's throw from a 1960s throwback: the "free city" commune of Christiania. Before heading back across the bridge, buy pastries at Lagkagehuset (lagkagehuset.dk).

Time travel at Tivoli. Yes, the rides at Tivoli Gardens (tivoli.dk) recall Coney Island kitsch. But at night, under thousands of fairy lights, this pleasure garden becomes one of the city's most romantic spots; stay for the fireworks.

Tickle your taste buds. Local seafood is the specialty at Restaurant Koefoed (restaurant-koefoed.dk). At Søren K, overlooking the waterfront, dishes are refreshingly light, and flavors are unexpected—like foie gras with duck confit-spiced crisps and cherries (soerenk.dk).

WHERE TO UNWIND

Skt. Petri This sleek 268-room design hotel has plush beds and tri-toned palettes by Danish artist Per Arnoldi. The white lobby is chic as can be, as are its popular restaurants and bar (doubles from \$291; hotelsktpetri.com).

Hotel Guldsmeden Axel Located in the up-and-coming Vesterbro neighborhood, this hotel has a French colonial feel with Indonesian fabrics and romantic four-poster beds (doubles from \$205; hotelguldsmeden.dk).

For more info, visitcopenhagen.com

Stockholm

WHY WE LOVE IT

It's a capital of cool. Swedes consider Stockholm the center of Scandinavia—and it's easy to see why. Since the mid-1990s, it has rivaled Paris and London as a nexus of fashion, food and art. And yet even those seeking the newest thing will appreciate the old-world elegance of its squares and medieval buildings.

HOW TO ENJOY IT

Island hop. Stockholm is spread over 14 islands, each with its own personality. Start in Gamla Stan, the city's oldest section. Walk less trafficked Osterlanggatan up the hill to the castle, then head south to Södermalm for bohemian charm. Follow 300-year-old Fjallgatan to the path along Söder's scenic hilltop.

Sightsee by sea. Take the ferry to Skeppsolmen to see Moderna Museet's 20th- and 21st-century art (modernamuseet.se). From there, you're a short sail from Vasa Museet on Djurgården, home to a 381-year-old ship that sank in Stockholm harbor (vasamuseet.se).

Eat like a local. Head to leafy Swedenborgsgatan for Bistro Süd, where fine French fare is served amid Moroccan lanterns (bistrosud.se). The livelier Grill restaurant divides itself into six themed enclaves, among them a velvet-lined Moulin Rouge area and a chandelier-studded Versailles. But camp doesn't interfere with the cuisine: Grill serves perfectly charred meat with flavors as eclectic as the decor (grill.se).



A room in Hotel Rival

WHERE TO UNWIND

Hotel Rival It's owned by ABBA's Benny Andersson, and a stay here is as irresistible as the band's pop songs. Rooms are bright, with large movie stills and flower-lined balconies (doubles from \$202; rival.se).

Grand Hotel Stockholm Set on the harbor, this classic's gilded doors and crystal chandeliers signal its rooms' splendor (doubles from \$340; grandhotel.se).

For more info, stockholmtown.com



A dip in the Blue Lagoon

Reykjavik

WHY WE LOVE IT

It's a land of extremes. Iceland tempts with a landscape dotted with glaciers, geysers and rainbow-wrapped waterfalls, and seasons that veer from winter's continuous darkness to summer's midnight sun. Yet Reykjavik remains a cozy constant, with its colorful houses and inviting shops.

HOW TO ENJOY IT

Admire the views. On a clear day, walk along the harbor with majestic Mt. Esja in the distance. Shop along Laugavegur, where you'll find Kisan Concept Shop's fusion of French and Icelandic brands. The Harbor House, with works by Icelandic artist Erró, also merits a stop.

Take a coffee break. If you start to fade, there are java joints aplenty. Two to try: Grai Kotturinn (the Gray Cat) and Mokka Kaffi, the oldest café in town (mokka.is). Stay caffeinated, and you might even pace the party crowd that keeps Reykjavik rocking all night. Dining-wise, go casual at Icelandic Fish & Chips, where organic spelt-and-barley batter gives this artery-clogger a delicious crisp (fishandchips.is), or feel the gothic glamour at Silfur, in Hotel Borg, where ornate chandeliers and modern Mooi chairs are set against black velvet drapes (en.hotelborg.is).

Swim year-round. Reykjavik itself has seven spots to soak in geothermally heated waters, but for an otherworldly swim, head to the nearby Blue Lagoon's steaming expanse.

Go lava-spotting. Tour the Golden Circle, starting with the lava field of Pingvellir, where the first Icelandic parliament met. Refuel with cured lamb salad and fresh bread at Restaurant Lindin (laugarvatn.is), then continue to Geysir (after which all geysers are named) and Selfoss waterfall.

WHERE TO UNWIND

101 Hotel This artfully designed black and white boutique hotel has minimalist decor that manages to feel sumptuous and never spare (doubles from \$230; 101hotel.is).

Hotel Borg The city's first luxury hotel, recently restored to its glory, has 56 rooms offering effortless Art Deco elegance (doubles from \$227; hotelborg.is).

For more info, visitreykjavik.is