

A high-heeled cyclist in a crisp suit passes me on the street, making a hands-free call as she pedals. It's just after 3pm on a Friday, and the concrete promenades lining Copenhagen's three rectangular lakes – commonly mistaken for a single river – are baking in the unexpected spring heat. At the nearby harbour, a powerboat carrying businesspeople guns down the satiny stretch of water towards Sweden. On days like this, “bridging” is also a thing in the Danish capital, where a denim-clad crowd perches along the walls of Dronning Louises Bridge, sipping cans of pilsner and socialising until sunrise.

You can't possibly have made it through 2016 without hearing the word *hygge* (pronounced hue-gah). Just in case, it's the Danish ideal of appreciating life's simple pleasures: family, friends, nature, soothing environments, a feeling of “a cosy togetherness”. As a nation, Danes make time in their daily lives to appreciate the small but important things. It seems the rest of the world needs a manual to implement this – *The Little Book of Hygge: the Danish Way to Live Well* was a bestselling book in 2016. And, consistently stealing the top spots of “most liveable” and “happiest” in city rankings, Copenhagen is certainly getting something right.

The enviable Danish lifestyle could be a trump card when it comes to attracting overseas talent. “I don't think this factor should be underestimated,” says Claus Lonborg, CEO of Copenhagen Capacity, which supports foreign companies, investors and talent seeking opportunities in Greater Copenhagen.

“If you want to attract young talent, you need to offer a cool place to live, with the right framework for developing a business. Today, young people want to know: ‘What's it like living in Copenhagen? Where can I hang out?’ They spend [more] time communicating about these things [than] about the actual job and company they'd be working for.” →

The prototype “floating island” in Copenhagen's harbour by Australian architect Marshall Blecher and Magnus Maarbjerg of Danish design studio Fokstrot

THE HYGGE LIFE

The Danish capital combines business and pleasure with aplomb. Is Copenhagen's progressive attitude at the heart of its success?

PHOTO: MARSHALL BLECHER



WORDS ROSE DYKINS



WHERE TO STAY

Copenhagen Strand Hotel

Fully renovated last year, this four-star hotel sits along the waterfront in the genteel district of Gammelhavn with its understated cafés. The 174 airy rooms feature pale blue and light wood furnishings, and the inviting junior suites offer harbour views. There's a small boardroom for eight people, and the Danish pastries drizzled in chocolate served at breakfast are reason enough to stay. copenhagenstrand.com

Hotel Sanders

Opened last autumn, Hotel Sanders celebrates its location across from the Royal Danish Theatre by marrying the aesthetics of grand theatres and Danish colonialism in the design of its 47 rooms, suites

and apartments – velvet, leather and rattan furniture combine to create a high-end eclectic feel. Guests can order drinks, coffee or snacks to enjoy amid the greenery of the fifth-floor conservatory, which has a retractable roof. hotelsanders.com

Radisson Collection Hotel, Royal Copenhagen

Part of the new Radisson Collection brand, this eye-catching property was designed by modernist architect Arne Jacobsen in the 1950s, and was known as SAS Royal Hotel. Following a full refurbishment, the curvy furniture and egg chairs pay homage to the building's place in design history, while there are a handful of signature suites fitted out to reflect the style of famous architects.



The spacious Sanders Apartment at the Hotel Sanders

There's also a meeting space and a grill restaurant. radissoncollection.com

Manon Les Suites

The oasis-like central courtyard of this five-star property, with its stylish cabana-lined pool and jungle of potted and hanging plants, is an Instagrammer's

dream. The exotic 87 suites feature wooden blinds, Balinese four-poster beds and metro-tiled bathrooms. The cushion-covered rooftop deck is set up for sunbathing and there is a sauna, too. It's a 15-minute walk from Copenhagen Central station. guldsmadenhotels.com

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

According to the “2017 Better Life” report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Danish people have one of the best work-life balances in the world, with only 2 per cent regularly working long hours (more than 50 a week), compared to the international average of 13 per cent. At the same time, in a study from Expert Market that divided the GDP of the world's biggest economies by the number of hours worked per person, Denmark was ranked the fourth most productive country in the world (after Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden, respectively). What's more, Denmark is consistently voted the best place in the world to be a woman – thanks to its flexible parental leave policy, its earnings-based childcare system and its active promotion of gender equality. To top it all off, national healthcare and education are virtually free.

A SCANDI STATE OF MIND

It's easy to paint Denmark as a utopia when, of course, not everything is rosy. Its harsh anti-immigration policies have been widely criticised by the international community, and its normally buoyant economy had taken a slight dip at the time of writing this.

But overall, Denmark's progressive nature has created a society that outsiders look upon with admiration, and a fitting business environment for blue-sky thinking. A key aspect of this is Denmark's digitised lifestyle, which

cultivates great conditions for launching and testing new products. “The Danish government committed to the digital agenda early on,” says Lonborg. “Everything from renewing your passport to getting a work permit has been completely digitalised.

“As a citizen, if every time you interact with your government, it's digital, you automatically become much more tech savvy, which develops quite an interesting test market for new technologies. I think that savviness is what's driving and inspiring people here.”

Skype (a joint venture with Stockholm-based entrepreneurs), Unity (the creators of the leading global platform for building computer games) and Just Eat are some of the success stories from Copenhagen's thriving tech sector, each of them unicorns (companies valued at more than US\$1 billion). Major IT corporations have a presence in the city, including IBM, Microsoft and Google, which has its Nordic headquarters in the city. What's more, the University of California established its first out-of-state university campus in the Danish capital.

How do Copenhagen's startup conditions compare to the other Scandinavian capitals? “There are probably more similarities between the Nordic countries than there are differences,” says Lonborg. “We have so much shared history and culture. Having said that, there are a few ways in which Copenhagen stands out. We have the best-connected airport in the Nordic region. In a regional

ABOVE FROM LEFT:
A cyclist in
Christianshavn;
Amager Square;
the inner
harbour bridge

COPENHAGEN

THE HYGGE LIFE

continued from page 29



...context, we're not that expensive. And it's very easy to work with the authorities."

He adds: "We also have what we like to call 'flexi-curity' in Denmark. We are one of the countries in the world where it's the easiest to hire and fire people. Investors know that you may not be successful in the first rounds of funding, so you have to be able to scale up or down if needed. It's much more difficult in Sweden, France and elsewhere in Europe, which costs companies money and time."

The Danish government has also taken steps to place entrepreneurial acumen at the heart of its policies, some of which may seem a little out there. For example, in May, tech millionaire Tommy Ahlers – also star of TV show *Shark Tank*, the Danish equivalent of *Dragon's Den* – was appointed as minister of education and research. Having made his millions by selling his startups to Vodafone and Citrix Systems Inc, Ahlers has reportedly criticised Denmark's current education system for not being elitist enough, saying that an "academic proletariat" exists due to the sheer number of university graduates. Instead, he believes the system should ensure that fewer students make the grade, only those who prove they can handle the pressures of starting a business. It will be interesting to see how his vision pans out.

In addition, in a landmark move, the Danish government has announced plans to integrate the sharing economy into its tax and labour laws. Although Uber was booted out of Denmark last year for failing to comply with the existing regulations, Airbnb recently agreed to report all homeowners' incomes from the home rental company to the Danish authorities, in order to crack down on tax evasion (a massive no-no in a

country where the average citizen hands over 45 per cent of their income to the public purse). In addition, Airbnb will limit the number of days that Danish homeowners can list their property to 70 days per year. In return, the government will give people letting their homes via Airbnb a tax-free allowance of up to 40,000 kroner (£4,690) a year. This happy medium could set a precedent

for countries all over the world, which are also accepting that the sharing economy enterprises are here to stay, but seeking a solution to reign them in and make them behave more like traditional businesses.

GRAND DESIGNS

The international fervour for all things Scandi – fuelled in no small part by the popularity of TV series such as *The Killing* and *The Bridge* – has steadily bolstered tourism to Copenhagen, and served the city's hotel industry well. "We've seen this tremendous increase in tourism – we hotels have had a pretty good time over the past five years," says Peter Borup, director of Copenhagen Strand hotel. "All Copenhagen hotels here have undergone some kind of renovation during this time. And, now the crisis has passed, international investors are looking at Copenhagen. Projects are underway that will increase the number of rooms in the city by about 40 per cent over the next three or four years."

Recent visitors to the Danish capital will have noticed the amount of drilling taking place in the city's pretty public squares, and the kilometres of hoarding painted with edgy artwork in an attempt to compensate. The development of a new metro line, Cityringen, has been a long time coming. When it is complete in 2019, the circular route will connect the districts of Vesterbro, Nørrebro and Østerbro. Afterwards, this line will also be extended by lines branching off to the north (Nordhavn

extension, coming 2020) and to the south (Sydhavn, coming 2023).

In a rather nifty move, the soil dug up during the construction of the new metro line has been converted into reclaimed land – forming the new floating business and residential district where the Nordhavn line will terminate. Situated in the city's North Harbour, Nordhavn is loaded with swanky apartments and industrial charm.

Speaking of floating, in March Copenhagen's harbour gained a rather intriguing addition – a wooden island sprouting a single linden (lime) tree. Designed by Australian architect Marshall Blecher and Magnus Maarbjerg from Danish design studio Fokstrot, the 20 sqm structure is not only a resting place for kayakers and open-water swimmers, but it doubles up as event space, and was used to host talks about the future of harbour cities. It's intended to be the first of a "parkipelago" – a network of nine islands that will add interest and activity around Copenhagen's waterways. The idea is for them to be connected together for festivals or events, each one different: a sail-in café, a

diving board, a mussel farm, a stage and a sauna are some of the current intentions.

"The harbour has been cleaned up so that it's fully approved for swimming, and we've established outdoor facilities where you can take a dip after work," says Lonborg. "How many cities around the world are there where you can live downtown and swim in the harbour?"

At dusk, I stroll up to

Islands Brygge, the city's original "harbour bath". The winding walkway connects to the wide promenade, creating sectioned-off areas of crystal clear water. A few swimming-capped heads bob in and out of the water, while the walkways are teeming revellers, tucking into barbecued snacks from a food truck and chattering over the sounds of a brass band, living the hygge life. Seeing the city at its best, it's undeniable that Copenhagen has the right DNA for being the world's happiest city. **BT**

"How many cities are there where you can live downtown and swim in the harbour?"

BOGOTA

LIFTING THE CLOUDS

continued from page 45



...further densely forested Andean ranges run north-south. The roads, considered dangerous in the dark days of guerrilla warfare, are in a terrible state of repair. Business people and tourists fly, even for relatively short distances.

Six years ago, President Santos inaugurated the US\$70 billion Vias 4G infrastructure programme. Latin America's largest road-building scheme, it involves 47 projects spanning 8,000km of roads and 3,500km of four-lane highways as well as expansion of ports and railways, all to be completed by the end of the decade.

Duque has signalled his support for the 4G programme, progress of which was delayed by Brazil's Odebrecht scandal. If he keeps his word and speeds up the implementation, and oil prices stabilise and private sector demand increases, growth – according to the World Bank – is expected to strengthen gradually over the 2018-2020 period, accelerating to 2.7 percent this year, and 3.6 per cent by 2020.

Juan Guillermo Moncada of the Instituto de Ciencia Política (ICP) believes megaprojects could play a key role in Colombia's future prospects. "4G will reduce transportation and connectivity costs, and probably make Colombia a more attractive investment destination.

"There are other big projects in line, including seven new airports, a new port in the Uraba Gulf and various fluvial ports along the Magdalena River that will improve its navigability."

Tourism is, arguably, less an indicator of economic health than of good PR. But Colombia has some desirable USPs.

It's within easy reach of all the countries of the Americas: five hours from Atlanta, and 6.5 hours from Buenos Aires. It's the only South American nation with Pacific and Caribbean coasts. It has several well-preserved colonial cities, the three Andean ranges, the Amazon river as well as Magdale – the region to the west of the river of the same name that was the inspiration and backdrop for Gabriel Garcia Marquez's magic realism. It's also one of the world's 17 "megadiverse" countries, according to Conservation International, and is a favourite for intrepid birdwatchers.

INVISIBLE EXPORTS

ProColombia – the government body that promotes invisible exports – claims that, between 2010 and 2017, visitor numbers increased by 13.5 per cent, almost three times the global average. International flights have grown accordingly, with Colombian flag-carrier Avianca – Latin America's second biggest airline by fleet size and revenue – leading the way. A recent tourism campaign assured visitors, "The only risk is you'll want to stay". But it's not all a bed of hand-picked exportable roses.

COCAINE ECONOMY

US government observers claimed Colombia's coca cultivation had increased 11 per cent to 209,000 hectares (516,450 acres) in 2017, and potential cocaine output rose 19 per cent to 921 metric tons in the same year. In June, president Santos authorised the use of low-flying drones spraying controversial herbicide glyphosate – linked by the World Health Organisation to cancer.

Meanwhile, Duque's past links with right-wing paramilitaries has raised questions about the future of the current detente. In the March elections, FARC

candidates polled less than 1 per cent. Colombia's second-largest left-wing guerrilla force, the ELN (National Liberation Army), is still officially active. In June 2017, three people died when a bomb exploded in a shopping centre in Bogotá's Zona Rosa; a fringe group called the People's Revolutionary Movement (MRP) was held responsible.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Floods, landslides, earthquakes and other natural disasters routinely blight Colombia; infrastructure problems are by no means limited to the roads, and the poor always suffer disproportionately. It remains to be seen if Duque will balance advancing the economy with tackling long-standing challenges such as income inequality and

economic efficiency.

Then there is the Venezuela problem. According to the Red Cross, more than one million refugees have arrived since 2017; while declaring solidarity with the needy, Santos put more troops at the border to deter them. If anything, Duque is likely to tighten immigration controls.

By any standards, these are massive challenges. But consider Colombia's point of departure.

In the late Eighties, if Bogotá wasn't the global media's "most dangerous city on earth", then Medellín was, or else Cali. Over the past decade I've been to Bogotá five times, and once each to the infamous "cartel" cities. In the capital, I was seduced by the sophistication of the Bogotanos, the bicycle-only Sundays, the energy of its young workforce. In Medellín – drug lord Escobar's old fiefdom – it was the public art, eco-minded civic spaces and new cable-car network. In Cali, it was the petrol-grade firewater and the scintillating salsa dancing – which is everywhere, and always was, even when times were really tough.

You've got to admire Colombia, but to really know its people you also have to enjoy yourself. If you go there on business, set aside time for pleasure – because there's heaps of it on offer. **BT**

"In the capital, I was seduced by the sophistication of the Bogotanos, the energy of its workforce"