

# crowning GLORY

**Mike Yardley** gets to indulge his royal obsession at Copenhagen, seat of the world's oldest monarchy

**W**ith a thousand years of history, Copenhagen's stature as a cutting-edge design capital is indisputable, but this city of cobbled squares and soaring copper spires is also home to the world's oldest monarchy.

I'm a walkover for anything regal, so staking out the royal trappings of the city topped my checklist. No matter how long you're staying in town, I'd strongly suggest you purchase the keys to the city, a Copenhagen Card, which not only bundles together free admission to nearly 90 attractions and museums, but is your passport to ride their public transport system, with free and unlimited travel. If you're planning on ticking off a lot of sights, the Copenhagen Card is an absolute steal. [www.visitcopenhagen.com](http://www.visitcopenhagen.com)

For a taste of Royal Copenhagen, all roads lead to Amalienborg, the winter residence of the Danish royal family where the royal palace is not one, but four different carbon-copy Rococo palaces flanking a square. The four palaces were built by four noble families in the middle of the 18th century on direct orders by the King Frederik V. The king needed a new royal palace but he didn't want to pay so the four families were given tax immunity for 40 years as token for their services to the crown.

Every day at noon, you can watch the change of guards in the courtyard. When HM the Queen is in residence, the ceremony is accompanied by the Royal Guards music band.

I popped into the Amalienborg Museum where you can explore the royals' private living quarters and the Gala Hall. Gazing down the western axis of the Square, the adjoining Marble Church is a spectacular sight, modelled on Rome's Pantheon. Commissioned by King Frederik V in the mid 18th century, its

astonishing dome, the largest church in Scandinavia, was the ultimate royal vanity project.

The king's ostentatious quest ran aground several times due to the cost. In fact, it wasn't until 1874 that a financier bought it lock, stock and barrel, and finished the construction.

But the best royal pomp can be enjoyed at Christiansborg Palace, which remains the most important building in Denmark today. This sprawling palace comprises the Danish Parliament, the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister's office and the Royal Reception Rooms. Regally decorated in bucket-loads of gilding, tapestries, rich burgundy velvet furnishings and priceless works of art, you can roam through the Throne Room, the Dining Hall, Great Hall and the Library.

The reception rooms are routinely used for state occasions and banquets. I also enjoyed diving into the Royal Stables, which are every bit as impressive as London's Royal Mews. When the stables were built in 1745, 250 horses stood among the stables' marble pillars. There were about a dozen royal horses in residence when I popped by, alongside the massive fleet of royal carriages used for ceremonial purposes.

When strolling the Stroget, Europe's longest network of pedestrianised shopping streets, peruse the magnificent crockery at Royal Copenhagen's flagship store. Take to the water on a canal tour to soak up the city spirit, while staking out lesser-trafficked parts of Copenhagen and drooling over lustrous landmarks like The Little Mermaid. You'll even get the chance to admire Her Majesty's Royal Yacht up-close.

I based myself south of the city centre at AC Hotel by Marriott Bella Sky Copenhagen, a staggering ultra-contemporary confection of two leaning glass towers, connected by a top-floor bridge. Booking.com research increasingly shows that Kiwis love staking out distinctive accommodation experiences and this daring piece of Danish architectural design is certainly out of the box. Enjoy soundproofed rooms, floor-to-ceiling windows and a fabulous wellness centre complete with hot tubs, massaging showers, sauna and steam baths. [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

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