

DENMARK

Pioneering the future

The Nordic nation has world-leading strengths in innovative high-tech solutions that are climate friendly, making it an ideal partner for countries looking to create their own green economies

Denmark is an economic success story. The Nordic country's gross domestic product has grown by an average 2.5% a year since 2013 and — although feeling the impacts of recent global inflation — its economy expanded by 1.8% in 2023 according to Statistics Denmark, significantly higher than the currently estimated 0.5% for the European Union as a whole.

This impressive performance is due to demand for Danish exports, reveals Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs Morten Bødskov: "Even though we are a small country, we have a handful of world-leading industries." Those industries include both century-old innovative specialisms such as pharmaceuticals, shipping and food, as well as newer sustainability-focused high-tech sectors. "We're in a world-leading position when it comes to areas like onshore and offshore wind, life sciences, bio-solutions, energy efficiency and water," he states.

Denmark is at the forefront of those industries because it committed to developing them before most other countries. "We wanted to have a green economy. What's happening in the US right now with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), for example, is really good; putting the focus on green transformation, supporting job creation, and moving unskilled and skilled workers into new green jobs. We have been doing that for a generation in Denmark," Bødskov asserts.

As a result of that choice, the country sits at the top of global green-transition indexes. However, that is far from being the only thing that Denmark excels in. For instance, the International Institute for Management Development currently places it first worldwide for overall competitiveness, fourth for digital competitiveness and seventh for talent. It is ranked first on the EU's European Innovation scoreboard, has one of the world's highest standards of living and happiest populations, plus state-of-the-art infrastructure and an extensive welfare state. And the triple-A-rated nation has achieved all of this while retaining an extremely low public debt to GDP ratio of around 30%.

The secret to socio-economic success

According to Bødskov, a major contributor to these achievements is a unique socio-economic model that stems from the fact that all stakeholders in Denmark — including the government, businesses, workforce and general public — consider themselves to be trusted, collaborative partners working toward common goals that will aid society.

The nation's pioneering development of green industries is a good example of this model working in practice. "We had clear targets and invested in education; the workers' unions asked for an education upgrade for the labor market and the employers' unions asked for state cooperation on educational investments within their factories. We created an internal market for green-transition industries and companies investing in those industries knew they had access to the EU market," he summarizes. "The Danish model of close co-



Picturesque Nyhavn harbor is located at the heart of Copenhagen, the Danish capital



Morten Bødskov
Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs

operation has existed for generations and it's the engine when it comes to reforming our economy."

Denmark is now working to keep up the momentum in its economy at a time of increasing international competition and geopolitical turmoil. "We're still ahead within our positions of strength, especially in terms of the green transition, although there's no doubt that the competition for green technologies will be harder in the future. That means we have to speed up educa-

tional investment cooperation and make sure that we have value chains associated with our industrial strengths. We're also looking to invest even more in our startup ecosystems," he states.

As well as benefiting Denmark, Bødskov believes that expanding the capabilities of the country's innovative climate-friendly sectors will be advantageous for the wider world: "Unfortunately, many things point in the direction of instability and insecurity. We need stable frameworks to develop strong societies together and I'm convinced that one of the main ways to do that is to invest more in green transition, which gives stability."

Partnering with the US on climate issues

He considers the US to be a central partner in encouraging global uptake of green technologies. The two NATO members share tight-knit bonds. As Joe Biden told the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen when they met last year in Washington: "Denmark is one of our greatest allies and most reliable friends, closest friends, and in lockstep in every global issue that we've been engaged in." For Bødskov, "The US is our most important ally. We have a very close relationship on defense and, with the changes in the world we are facing now, we are working even closer."

The US is also Denmark's biggest export market and investments between the two countries in both directions set records last year, with a substantial proportion of those investments concerning green technologies. In 2023, the minister

MORTEN BØDSKOV
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY, BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

"We're extremely proud that, as a small country, we're able to play such a significant role in the green transition of the global economy."

and US Ambassador to Denmark Alan Leventhal signed a memorandum of understanding that seeks to promote the green transition and further expand climate-related investment opportunities for businesses from both nations.

"Our countries are having ongoing discussions about how we can strengthen cooperation between Denmark and the US by, for example, implementing possibilities for green industries in relation to the IRA. The MoU was a product of that dialogue," says Bødskov. "We're extremely proud that, as a small country, we're able to play such a significant role in the green transition of the global economy and that's why we see the IRA as something positive. It's a possibility for highly competitive green Danish companies to produce for a market that has chosen to be green. That's not only good for our industries, it's good for American companies and American society, and it's good for the world."

The green-powered economic role model

Denmark has successfully challenged the idea that transitioning to sustainable energy comes at the expense of national prosperity

In its Fostering Effective Energy Transition Report 2023, the World Economic Forum ranks Denmark second worldwide, just behind Sweden, in terms of its progress toward becoming a green-powered economy. The country scores highly in all the report's assessment categories, including the sustainability, security and affordability of its energy systems, and exceptionally well for its regulatory frameworks and political commitment to the transition.

This commitment is evident from the targets in Denmark's Climate Act of 2020, such as a 70% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 relative to 1990 and reaching net zero by 2050. The government that was elected in 2022 wants to go even further, aiming to advance climate neutrality to 2045. Already, the nation has achieved an 80% reduction in its coal consumption and 50% in natural gas, while 64% of electricity came from renewables in 2023, mainly due to Denmark's early pivot to wind energy. By 2030, its heating and power systems will be practically free of fossil fuels.

What is perhaps even more telling is that the government is closing the tap on the North Sea hydrocarbon reserves that have made a significant economic contribution to the nation. "The Danish government, effective immediately, will refrain from state-initiated licensing rounds, marking a bold move for an oil- and gas-rich country. Existing companies with approved fields are per-

mitted to exploit them, but this allowance ceases by 2050," states Minister for Climate, Energy and Utilities Lars Aagaard.

Instead, the pioneer in offshore wind intends to utilize its North Sea waters to speed up the energy transition, he reveals: "Denmark aims to take strategic advantage of the country's location to phase out fossil fuels and help neighboring countries do the same. With shallow waters, abundant wind and proximity to Europe's electricity-demanding industrial cluster in northern Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and northern France, Denmark seeks to harness its renewable resources and cater to future customers beyond its borders."

To achieve this, the country is now executing its most extensive offshore-wind tendering program to date that could add up to 14 GW in capacity, more than doubling its current installed base. "Combined with a plan to quadruple onshore renewable energy, our green electricity production would then total more than the consumption of 25 million households, significantly exceeding Denmark's roughly 3.5 million," he says.

The country's potential to generate copious amounts of green electricity also makes green hydrogen a highly attractive prospect and another focus for the government is a partnership with Germany that will see a build out of infrastructure connecting hydrogen producers in Denmark with German consumers.



Lars Aagaard
Minister for Climate, Energy and Utilities

Furthermore, "The North Sea has emerged as a potential site for carbon dioxide storage and Denmark aims to develop both offshore and onshore CO₂ storage facilities. The capacity extends way beyond Denmark's needs," notes the minister. A tender for CO₂ capture and storage is set to open this summer, he adds: "This has garnered international interest, particularly from American companies eyeing investment opportunities in storage facilities linked to entities responsible for CO₂ capture, such as refineries, cement factories, power plants and waste incineration."

Collaborations through memorandums of understanding with the Netherlands and Belgium, and soon France, should establish secure paths for CO₂ transportation to Denmark, facilitating the industry's scaling. In addition, the Danish government is involved in discussions with its European Union counterparts about how captured CO₂ can

be integrated into the bloc's broader emissions trading system.

Not only is the Danish state recognized as a global leader in the green energy transition, so are Danish companies. This is particularly true across the wind-power value chain, with the goods and services of businesses like Vestas and Ørsted being in demand worldwide. What is less well known is that Denmark has fostered prominent exporters of a much wider range of technologies that can help to combat climate change, such as the energy efficiency solutions of firms like Danfoss and Grundfos, and Topsoe's hydrogen electrolyzers.

Denmark's dedication to clean energy makes it a magnet for foreign investors too, Aagaard says: "The nation is on track to achieve a fully green electricity system shortly, ensuring that products manufactured using electricity here are environmentally friendly. In addition, the security of supply in our electricity system surpasses global standards, providing a stable foundation for industries like data centers, automated production and biotech. Investors seeking these attributes should consider Denmark an attractive destination."

By successfully challenging the conception that transitioning to sustainability comes at the expense of economic prosperity, the country has become a role model for others. Aagaard's message is clear: "For a considerable time, the notion prevailed that going green equated to higher costs. That will not hold true in the future. Electric cars, for instance, outshine their fossil-fuel counterparts in terms of lifespan and cost-effectiveness. In the realm of electricity, solar and wind prices continue to decrease. Failing to adopt green practices risks subjecting industries to an inefficient system. While political interventions, such as subsidies, can be attempted, a crucial shift in mindset is the recognition that green initiatives can actually bolster and create a robust economy."

A GLOBAL LEADER IN CLIMATE ACTION



2nd-best nation worldwide for progress toward a green energy transition, according to the WEF



Aims to be a carbon-neutral country by 2045 and to reach 110% GHG emission reductions by 2050



Has already achieved an 80% reduction in coal use and 50% in natural gas



The global pioneer in offshore wind energy, with plans to more than double its current capacity



64% of its electricity was generated from domestic renewable energy sources in 2023



A 1st mover in hydrogen, carbon capture and energy efficiency technologies



Policies have been implemented to ensure 100% of its electricity is green by 2030



The world's 1st green energy island is being constructed in the Danish North Sea

Focus on innovation pushes the frontiers

One of the key reasons Denmark's economy is flourishing is a core focus on innovation, fresh ideas and an original approach to investment in research and development, especially projects that benefit society as a whole

Danish companies are renowned for their innovative approach to business and investment, with this proud feature one of the crucial factors behind the country's growing presence in the competitive, global economy. Enterprises of all sizes and active in a broad spectrum of industries, have carved out a reputation for excellence, specialization and agility when it comes to dealing with market hurdles and challenges.

Such components of Denmark's powerful economic engine go a long way to explaining the country's fiscal resilience to various challenges over the past decade. The nation scores highly for its strong business environment, as illustrated by its place at the head of the coveted IMD World Competitiveness Ranking.

Denmark not only reached the number one spot in 2022, but held its title last year in a comprehensive survey that analyzes and ranks nations according to how they manage their competencies to achieve long-term value creation. The country also scores top marks in other prestigious international rankings, including one from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for product market regulation, which is a proxy for whether regulation hinders competition.

CECILIE BRØKNER
CEO, INNOVATION FUND DENMARK
"While innovation requires openness to new ideas, strategic foresight benefits from learning lessons from past experiences."

Such international praise is music to the ears of the Danish Business Authority (DBA), which has worked hard to monitor and promote private-sector participation in the economy since it was established 60 years ago. The forward-thinking entity currently sits under the remit of the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs.

"Our mission is to make it easy and attractive to run a business in Denmark," explains Katrine Winding, director general of the DBA. "We underpin the ecosystems for entrepreneurs

and industrial strongholds in Denmark in our biggest sectors such as green technologies and life sciences, but also maritime, food and shipping. We're also pushing new potential strongholds such as power-to-X, newer green technologies, bio-solutions and quantum technologies.

"Nearly 99% of Danish enterprises are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Our role is to not only underpin our export strongholds but make it easier to abide by regulations as a local SME. Most companies want to be responsible and do what is necessary to pay their taxes, file their reports and so on. We need to make it easier for them to do so."

Transatlantic openings aplenty

The US is the country where Danish companies invest the most and its Inflation Reduction Act has created a wealth of business opportunities for companies worldwide. This is particularly true for Danish enterprises given the plethora of green capabilities required for the American green transition in terms of knowledge transfer and investment.

"We do not mind being in the US to do that and it's a great business opportunity for Danish companies in many areas, including wind and other green segments. For example, we are becoming a power-to-X country and are working on carbon capture and storage. We are also focused on bio-solutions in the food sector and life sciences sector."

Despite having been in the authority's driving seat for the best part of a decade and achieving plenty of success, Winding is clear as to where her attention is concentrated moving forward. "My top priorities are three-fold," she states. "The first is to enhance the ease of doing business in Denmark, which means cutting red tape with the vision of businesses being able to automate their entire administration.

"The second is to further the sustainable transition for all companies — both the large ones and SMEs — to make sure they reap the benefits of new markets. And last but not least, we want to help Danish companies adapt to the new geopolitical situation and make sure they benefit from the way the world is turning."

With Danish public and private sector bodies, entrepreneurs, researchers and businesses on the same page when it comes to creating val-



Denmark lives and breathes innovation, notably in the vital life sciences sector



Katrine Winding
Director General, Danish Business Authority



Cecilie Brøker
CEO, Innovation Fund Denmark

ue for the nation and solutions to society's biggest challenges, the success of Innovation Fund Denmark (IFD) has not surprised anyone.

By investing in sustainable solutions, the entity aims to fortify and foster strategic research and innovation initiatives throughout the country, challenging traditional investment norms by prioritizing impact over profit. IFD was created to invest in projects with high risk — and also high potential. This is done in an easy, simple and transparent way, with as little bureaucracy as possible. To date, the local currency equivalent of more than \$1 billion has been invested in around 2,000 active projects, although several thousand more have been completed over the years.

"As a non-traditional public fund, we rely on yearly negotiations for the research reserve in Denmark," states Cecilie Brøker, CEO of IFD. While this presents challenges in predicting our investment budget beyond a year, it reflects the strategic decisions of the Danish government.

"For example, in 2023 we made large, targeted quantum investments in alignment with the government's new five-year quantum strategy.

Danish quantum research stands on the shoulders of giants like Niels Bohr and the Niels Bohr Institute. Danish research institutions are undertaking groundbreaking work within multiple fields of quantum technology research and development and are driving forces behind several international initiatives in the field.

"Though we can only plan one year at a time, our investments must build on past knowledge. While innovation requires openness to new ideas, strategic foresight benefits from learning lessons from past experiences. Our commitment to impact involves requiring all applications to address the impact they seek, and we follow up on the value creation of the investments, but we acknowledge the need to improve our impact assessment at the program level. This represents a crucial aspect of our strategic vision moving forward."

Asked for a final comment, Brøker adds: "Choosing Denmark as a destination for employment, business or investment means aligning with a nation that values collaboration, upholds democratic principles and actively contributes to overcoming global challenges."



An increasing number of US companies are joining Denmark's cleantech ecosystem

a collaboration between ministries, life science firms and the regions that oversee public hospitals. This organization acts as the point of entry for companies conducting clinical trials, helping them to identify and contact researchers and coordinating quick and efficient feasibility processes. As a result, she says: "Denmark has the most clinical studies in Europe per capita and an important share of American-Danish collaboration and US investments into Denmark within life sciences are centered around clinical trials. Biotech is an interesting area for US companies as well, as our life science cluster, Medicion Valley, is one of Europe's top three clusters for biotech innovation."

Shared innovative strengths and concerns are promoting robust US-Danish relationships in other industries too, Vega Saenz adds: "For instance, Denmark is a stronghold in quantum technology and we're seeing increased mutual interest in collaborating and investing in that. There are also very promising areas for investors in cleantech, as Denmark has decades of experience of being a leader in the green transition. We already have examples of US investments into Denmark in green hydrogen, power-to-X and green fuels, which both countries are working intensively on; some big US enterprises are collaborating with Danish companies on green energy-efficient and grid-connected data centers; and a third area of high potential is carbon capture, utilization and storage."

With investment managers based in 12 diplomatic representations in global cities, including in New York and California, plus sector-specific expert staff that are always up to date on Danish advances in life sciences, cleantech and technology in particular, Invest in Denmark is an excellent first port of call for investors and investment funds that want to enter the country.

VANESSA VEGA SAENZ
DIRECTOR, INVEST IN DENMARK
"The US has the largest share of FDI in Denmark and I see no reason why this should not continue to be the case"

"We offer a free-of-charge service to introduce those businesses to Denmark, the sector they are interested in and our investment framework. We also help establish contacts and organize fact-finding missions in Denmark, so they can meet the different knowledge communities, business clusters and associations," says Vega Saenz. "Going forward, my priority is to continuously improve the ability of Invest in Denmark to match what Denmark has to offer and what it needs, with what foreign investors have to offer and what they need."

Building firm bonds in business and beyond

Danish commercial and cultural relations with the US are at a record level, but they remain full of promise, which is being unlocked with the help of business associations

An efficient and effective conduit for representing 230 companies that are actively investing in Denmark and the US, the American Chamber of Commerce in Denmark (AmCham Denmark) is a non-governmental business organization founded just before the turn of the millennium. For the last quarter of a century, the non-profit entity has been working closely with the Danish government to improve framework conditions for US investments into Denmark, as well as assisting Danish companies investing in the US with unique market insights and connections to the US government.

Bilateral relations are extremely strong in a host of areas, not least trade. In 2022, Denmark exported approximately \$13.2 billion of goods and services to the US, making it the Scandinavian nation's largest export market. In 2010 for comparison, the US was only in sixth place for Danish exports. "Denmark has a long tradition of international trade, but in the late 1990s the US market was still a huge challenge for Danish companies, hampered by several ill-fated attempts at entry," says Stephen Brügger, executive director of AmCham Denmark.

"Thanks to the efforts of the Danish Trade Council, the Danish Embassy in Washington and the Danish consulates, the US is no longer such a challenge for Danish companies. What AmCham brought to the table was international thought leadership and a US-Danish business network — helping Danish firms exchange knowledge and best practices."

Transatlantic trade still full of potential

Based just across the street from the US embassy in bustling Copenhagen, AmCham Denmark supports business growth and innovation within the Danish business landscape in a variety of ways, including the continual highlighting of the importance of foreign investments in Denmark.

As the voice of international business, the organization is committed to building a competitive business environment in Denmark and proactively assists Danish companies in a range of sectors to break into the lucrative US market.

"Although foreign-owned companies represent about 6% of all Danish enterprises, they create more than 20% of the private-sector jobs and are responsible for 27% of Danish exports," Brügger reveals, noting many of Denmark's largest and most successful businesses and brands are owned by foundations, meaning they are unavailable to buy. "Furthermore, foreign companies bring with them significant productivity gains and innovative practices, which are inevitably transferred to Danish firms."

"Since 2005, AmCham Denmark has been surveying foreign companies to identify key issues impacting their investments here. This information is in turn discussed at an annual foreign investment summit, where we highlight policy recommendations for the Danish government aimed at improving investment framework conditions.

"One of the key issues always on the top of our policy agenda is improving Denmark's ability to attract and retain talent — an issue that we raised back in 2007 and have helped achieve steady progress on. We aim to continue on the path to helping Danish companies succeed in the US, as well as attracting new US investments into Denmark."

STEPHEN SCHUELER, PRESIDENT
THE AMERICAN CLUB DENMARK

"We want to continue building a strong foundation between Denmark and the US and ensure that we are still here in another 100 years."

"Not just greenfield investments, but also helping companies here expand and attract further investments from their global headquarters. If you take the life sciences industry here, you've got great clinical trials going on, we have great health data — and making this a driver of growing our companies that are already here is essential. That's our main vision." With Danish and US relations undoubtedly at an all-time



Danish-US relations have never been stronger and are continuing to grow each year



Stephen Brügger
Executive Director, AmCham Denmark



Stephen Schueler
President, The American Club Denmark

high, the importance of seizing the moment and building on these strong foundations for the benefit of both nations is a key priority for public and private sector bodies, as well as more informal entities.

Strengthening ties between partners

One such long-established organization that is wholeheartedly committed to cultivating business, professional, social and cultural relationships among Americans, Danes and other members of the international community is The American Club Denmark in Copenhagen.

Founded more than a century ago, the club currently enjoys a membership of around 300, with those members representing a wide range of businesses, all with a common interest in the US. "We want to continue building a strong foundation between Denmark and the US and ensure that we are still here in another 100 years, we believe that our focus on four key areas and fostering relationships will build a stronger future," states Stephen Schueler, president of The American Club Denmark.

"Our efforts fall into four distinct areas. First, we work with the US embassy to help support and host American government del-

egations. Second, we foster business relationships between Denmark and the US. Third, we promote both countries' mutual culture. Finally, we build personal relationships between Danish and American members.

"For the latter, we support American families who are moving to Denmark and adjusting to the culture. We hold regular social events, such as golf matches, concerts and speaking events, and we celebrate American holidays, including Thanksgiving." Among its other activities, the organization supports charitable activities and academic scholarships.

Schueler, who is also chairman of European Maritime Finance and enjoys a presence on the boards of several other leading companies, has resided in Denmark for almost a decade and says the relationship has never been better between the two countries.

"I've been fortunate to have lived in five countries including Argentina and South Korea," he states. "Denmark has the absolute best relationship with the US. I cannot think of two countries that are more aligned and collaborative. We want to continue enabling that mission, especially through government, business, culture and by building personal relationships."

A great place to do business in Europe

Denmark's innovative strongholds in life sciences, technology and the green transition are major attractions for US investors

Foreign direct investments into Denmark have risen steadily from \$78.35 billion in 2010 to \$134.43 billion in 2022. Today, around 25% of its private sector revenues are generated by international enterprises, including over 400 from the US. "Representing 20% of all inbound investments, the US has the largest share of FDI in Denmark and I see no reason why this should not continue to be the case," asserts Vanessa Vega Saenz, director of Invest in Denmark, the national FDI promotion agency that operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Our role is to increase FDIs that boost productivity and innovation, that support the green transition and that promote growth and development throughout Denmark," she states. "We're not an obligatory channel for investors, but we provide assistance to those who seek it and, over the past three years, we've assisted 40 US investments into Denmark, primarily in life sciences, but increasingly in cleantech and technology."

The strategically located country that tops the latest International Institute for Management Development's World Competitiveness Ranking provides an advantageous base for operators in those sectors. For example, it has a strong, transparent framework for investments that makes it extremely simple to do business. "When we ask US companies why they decided to invest in Denmark, they highlight the ease of doing business, as well as access to innovative environments, the availability of highly skilled labor and our infrastructure," she reveals.

"They also mention the relatively low corporate tax rate, good and flexible labor regulations, political stability and quality of life. On various occa-



Vanessa Vega Saenz
Director, Invest in Denmark

sions, Copenhagen has been rated as the world's most livable city and we're often ranked as the second-most happy population globally."

In addition, Denmark stands out as a worldwide leader in productivity and as the number-one nation on the European Union's European innovation scoreboard. According to Vega Saenz, "Our success in innovation can be explained by our strengths in talent, research, digitalization, environmental sustainability, intellectual assets and the use of information technology. Another factor is the collaborative spirit that we have in Denmark, across disciplines and sectors and between the public and private sectors."

A great illustration of that spirit is Trial Nation,

Facilitating the global green transition

The Export and Investment Fund of Denmark enables the world to access Danish innovation

Denmark's status as a hotbed of innovative exports goes back more than a century to the launch of entrepreneurial firms that became and remain global leaders, such as Novo Nordisk in pharmaceuticals and Maersk in shipping. On top of this, the state has invested heavily to grow and increase the international presence of some of the country's other industrial giants, as well as emerging businesses with technologies that can also benefit the world. "We've shown foresight in developing new companies that meet the demands of the future, most visibly in the wind energy sector," notes Peder Lundquist, CEO of the Export and Investment Fund of Denmark (EIFO).

Historically, the state offered financial support to expanding and exporting firms through three bodies: the investment fund Vaekstfonden, the Danish Green Investment Fund and EKF Denmark's Export Credit Agency. At the start of 2023, however, those funds were merged to form EIFO, which now acts as the single access point for Danish companies and their international business partners that need risk-tolerant capital.

EIFO is tasked with promoting growth and innovation in Danish companies, strengthening exports and helping to make the planet greener by targeting its activities toward businesses that can contribute to domestic and global sustainability. With a portfolio around \$22 billion, EIFO offers a comprehensive range of long-term loans, working capital guarantees and export credits to Danish enterprises of all sizes and buyers of their exports, as well as making equity investments in the nation's startups and investing in funds focused on those businesses.

The AAA-rated agency provides financing throughout most of the globe, with over 500 staff based at its Copenhagen headquarters and offices in New York, San Francisco and Singapore. Around 70% of its current operations are connected to wind energy, states Lundquist: "We've played a major role in fostering innovation in smaller Danish companies in that sector and in bringing larger companies like Vestas to the world market." To illustrate the scale of EIFO's efforts to promote green technologies internationally, in 2023 it committed over \$1 billion to the construction of one of the world's biggest wind farms, a Polish-Canadian project in the Baltic Sea that will utilize Vestas turbines.

With EIFO's backing, Denmark has built on its strengths in renewables to become a prominent exporter of a diverse portfolio of innovative solutions that can speed up the world's green transition. "We work extremely actively with our companies to use the position we have in wind as a platform to create a similar position in new green technologies.



Peder Lundquist
CEO, Export and Investment Fund of Denmark

That particularly relates to hydrogen, ammonia and everything needed for future activity in transportation, production and agriculture," he reveals.

One example of this is EIFO's enabling of the rapid development and scaling of power-to-X technologies. Last year, for instance, it provided a guarantee valued at almost \$50 million to cover the construction of a new Topsoe facility. The Denmark-based firm will use the plant to manufacture its state-of-the-art electrolyzer cells for hydrogen production. EIFO is investing in the nation's many exciting power-to-X startups as well, including HPNow, which has developed an electrochemical technology for the sustainable generation of hydrogen peroxide, and Blue World Technologies that is manufacturing methanol fuel cells to decarbonize shipping.

As Lundquist points out, Denmark's nurturing of next-generation innovators has leaped forward over the last decade: "With targeted measures that were enacted by EIFO, often together with private-sector partners from the US, we've created a venture capital and startup ecosystem that is significant in European terms." The US is also a huge export destination for the country's green technologies. "EIFO has great access to the US and excellent relationships with all our partners there," he states. "For projects connected to larger investments that require a longer-term perspective, we come into the picture as a key partner because we enjoy very good levels of cooperation with American banks. We're involved in more and more projects that relate to the US and we intend to become even more active there."

An extended interview with the CEO can be read at denmark.businessfocus.org.uk/eifo



Copenhagen hosts a large and successful financial services and banking sector

Banking sector shines

Denmark's modern, secure and streamlined financial services infrastructure is first class

Boasting a robust financial services sector that meets international regulatory benchmarks, Denmark's banking industry receives valuable support from Finance Denmark (Finans Danmark), the country's leading business association for banks and mortgage institutions, as well as asset management, securities trading and investment funds.

The organization is the result of the 2016 merger between the Danish Bankers Association, the Association of Danish Mortgage Banks and the Danish Mortgage Banks' Federation, and it has an extensive membership list that is comprised of both domestic entities and Danish branches of foreign institutions.

"We are a trade association; our work is about getting the right regulatory framework for banks and other financial services operators to enhance society and allow it to prosper," says Ulrik Nodgaard, CEO of Finance Denmark. "That's our part of the game and that's what we focus substantially on. We've worked on a lot of regulation that has been implemented since the financial crisis, in which Denmark was significantly hit."

"But now, we're also focusing a lot on getting the balance right. Of course, financial regulation comes with a price. We have gained a sufficient level of protection and now we need to think about growth going forward. That's essentially the discussion we're having with the Danish parliament."

According to Nodgaard, Denmark stands out from the crowd in two areas of the banking and financial services sector. "The first is essentially a mortgage industry, which is quite unique, and, based on international comparisons, provides Danish households with cheap mortgages. It is a good system," he explains. "The other part that stands out is probably the asset management industry, which is quite well developed in Denmark and in Copenhagen in particular. We have the largest pension



Ulrik Nodgaard
CEO, Finance Denmark

wealth in the world as well as occupational pension schemes. That has led to the development of a strong asset management industry, which includes many of our members."

Given the vast number of Danish companies and institutions that are committed to cementing the country's position as a green superpower over the coming years, it is no surprise to hear that more than \$100 million of green investment has already been pledged by this sector, including into housing.

"There's a lot of experience regarding green investments in Denmark," Nodgaard confirms. "For example, the whole asset management community in Copenhagen has really strong competencies in terms of investing in green projects. Also, investors can invest their savings in green funds. At the same time, households can secure better finance deals if they go green. For example, if they choose an electric car, they get a better package than if they opt for a conventional car."



LOOKING FOR A GATEWAY TO THE EUROPEAN MARKET?

The laboratory for new technologies

At the forefront of creating and adopting both digitalization and sustainability technologies, innovative Denmark is a powerful showcase for novel solutions that can drive green economic transformation

Denmark offers a unique environment for researching, developing and scaling groundbreaking technologies, says Jens-Peter Saul, group CEO of Ramboll, the global sustainable architecture, engineering and consultancy company. "I call it the Danish Lab. Being based in Denmark, we experience an open society ready for innovation, allowing us to try out and adopt new technologies early." That environment has turned the country into a top performer in digitalization, according to European Union rankings, with thriving clusters of companies working in sectors like robotics, artificial intelligence, fintech, cleantech and acoustics. It also supports a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem: in 2023, the EU estimated that this system contained eight unicorns and 17 potential unicorns valued at around \$100 million to \$1 billion.

JENS-PETER SAUL
GROUP CEO, RAMBOLL

"Being based in Denmark, we experience an open society ready for innovation, allowing us to try out and adopt new technologies early."

Notably, "Denmark has consistently been forward thinking on sustainability. There's a consensus around science and a recognition across the entire political spectrum that we must adopt more sustainable practices," states Saul. "Cities like Copenhagen recognized this early on. It made strategic investments in liveability, transforming itself into an attractive hub that drew in talent, enabling new technologies to flourish. Offshore wind, for example, emerged as one such innovation, with pioneering companies originating from Denmark."

Those pioneers include Vestas, the designer and manufacturer of wind turbines that have become a ubiquitous presence around the world; Ørsted, the largest developer of offshore wind power; and Ramboll. "We were involved in the very first offshore wind projects around 30 years ago, when it was considered a small niche. Despite skepticism, we built on our experience and have supported 70% of offshore wind farms constructed globally," he comments.

Today, Denmark is the world's center for wind-power technologies: over 30,000 people work in the industry, while Vestas alone boasts an ecosystem of 1,800 local businesses that supply it with cutting-edge goods and services. That vast green knowledge base has given the country a head start in many other sustainable technologies. For example, Ramboll's current worldwide operations that bring in annual revenues of over \$2.3 billion, "span sectors including transport, energy, environment, construction, health, water, management consulting and architecture. This diverse portfolio significantly contributes to the green energy transition, decarbonization, urbanization, the circular economy and biodiversity," he notes.

Some of the most innovative projects the group is working on are in its home city. "Copenhagen stands as one of the most successful capitals in the green transition. Amager Bakke, an engineering masterpiece in the heart of the city converting waste to sustainable energy, exemplifies Danish innovation. Not only is it one of the world's biggest waste-to-energy stations, it's also the cleanest and an architectural showcase. We're now engaged in its trial for carbon capture and storage," enthuses Saul.

Going forward, he reveals: "Denmark is poised to be a first mover in the large-scale deployment of green hydrogen, thanks to its offshore wind technological expertise and experience. It also has some leading players in hydrogen technology. We're setting the stage for Denmark to emerge as a global leader in the green hydrogen space, akin to the trajectory of its offshore wind development."

Exploring opportunities in hydrogen

Thomas Egebo, president and CEO of Energinet, the state-owned transmission system operator (TSO) for electricity and gas, agrees that green hydrogen and other power-to-X technologies are high-potential areas for the nation: "We're committed to exploring new opportunities in this segment." To kickstart the emerging industry, the TSO is preparing to invest in a large-scale network of hydrogen pipelines that will connect proposed production and storage sites for the fuel in Denmark with an interconnection point at its German border. "The real benefit lies in leveraging the infrastructure to maximize the utilization of our offshore wind resources. With ample offshore wind potential in Denmark, having both green electric-



Denmark has the world's highest share of fluctuating renewables in its electricity mix



Jens-Peter Saul
Group CEO, Ramboll



Thomas Egebo
President and CEO, Energinet

ity and the option to convert some into hydrogen for export represents a pivotal step toward a more sustainable and integrated energy future," he says.

Denmark already has the world's highest share of fluctuating energy in its electricity mix, 64% of which came from wind and solar overall in 2023, while it generated more than 100% of its power needs from those sources 18% of the time. The government's target is for the electricity system to be independent of fossil fuels by 2030. To support that, Energinet has ramped up investments in its state-of-the-art smart grid infrastructure. "We envision a future that is highly electric, digitalized and seamlessly integrated across countries and sectors," says Egebo. "The challenge lies in balancing this fluctuating system. Our collaboration with neighboring countries in energy system integration has proven beneficial in this. It enables electricity to flow between Nordic countries, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK."

To enhance the utilization of the nation's wind resources further, Energinet is currently developing two innovative energy island projects that will pool the power from multiple offshore farms and convert it into high voltage direct current electric-

ity that can be efficiently exported over long distances. "We're also working closely with partners globally, particularly in regions with extensive fluctuating renewables like the US. By sharing expertise and solutions, we aim to pioneer advancements in managing and integrating renewables into the grid," states Egebo.

THOMAS EGEBO
PRESIDENT AND CEO, ENERGINET

"We aim to pioneer advancements in managing and integrating renewables into the grid."

He would encourage US enterprises with an interest in sustainable technologies to explore the possibilities the country offers: "Denmark is a compelling showcase for the green economic transformation, positioned at the forefront of innovation. Our collaborative and open approach makes Denmark an ideal partner for businesses looking to engage in the green transition."

Pioneer in unmanned systems and robotics

Already a global leader in command and control solutions and sensors, UXV Technologies is rapidly expanding and diversifying

Most successful Danish tech startups have, at some point in their journeys, tapped into the nation's extensive support mechanisms to grow their businesses. One that stands apart from this pattern is UXV Technologies, which was founded in 2014 and has rapidly expanded organically, without any external investment, to become a global leader in command and control solutions and sensors for unmanned land, air and maritime applications.

UXV's pioneering design, development and manufacture of drone and robotics technologies have made it a trusted partner to governments and companies in North America, Europe and Asia. "Beyond extensive work in the defense sector, we count Boston Dynamics, Caterpillar and others among our civilian clients," says Steven Friberg, CEO and co-founder of UXV. "Our contributions extend to Boston Dynamics' robotic dog Spot and autonomous vehicles that have become integral in the offshore wind industry."

The firm's winning strategy has been to focus creating highly technical customized components at scale that its clients can easily integrate into their own unmanned-vehicle (UV) or other robotic systems. For example, about two years ago the US Army's Department of Defense Innovation Unit contracted it to design a handheld ground control station—the Soldier Robotic Controller—that allows users to operate UVs effortlessly. "Our achievement is monumental, as it's currently the most versatile controller on the market. It means having one controller that seamlessly works with diverse radio systems, enabling control over many robots for tasks like weapon systems, driving and flying. We also introduced a swappable radio modules ecosystem, which has become a US government-owned standard, giving the freedom to interchange radios," Friberg explains.

UXV received the Transatlantic Company of the Year award from AmCham Denmark in 2023 in recognition of its innovative strength, impressive growth trajectory and commitment to the US market: the firm's revenues have risen by at least 100% annually over the last four years and around 85% of its sales are to clients in the US. As a result of its success, UXV outgrew its manufacturing capacity in Denmark, he states: "In 2023, we inaugurated a new factory in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, allowing us to expand production tenfold. We also established a sales office in Austin."

Among UXV's latest innovations is a soldier-borne compute module that interfaces with other ecosystems to provide the soldier with consolidated information from multiple sources. A series of groundbreaking gimbal platforms



Steven Friberg
CEO, UXV Technologies

with advanced sensors that stabilize equipment on moving objects—is in the pipeline as well.

"The newest of these presents a substantial business opportunity because none of our competitors has the technology. You can mount it on a drone, vehicle or plane and it features high zoom, a thermal camera, a laser rangefinder and a powerful computer, making it beneficial for search and rescue, for example," he asserts. Another gimbal being developed incorporates specialized technology for inspecting solar panels. "It operates 50-times more efficiently than conventional methods for testing panels" reveals Friberg. "We're diversifying our vertical markets and expanding aggressively, while ensuring sustainable financing for our initiatives and that UXV remains competitive."



Steering transport and logistics forward

The country's vastly experienced shipping, logistics and infrastructure companies are at the vanguard of their global industries

Denmark's reputation as an exporter of innovative technologies extends to its extensive transport and logistics services and infrastructure sectors. Take shipping, the country's biggest exporting industry, with its exports valued at over \$72 billion in 2022, 27% of the national total.

The land of the Vikings is home to one of the world's ten-largest maritime sectors, which includes many home-produced global leaders in shipping and logistics, including Torm, DFDS, J. Lauritzen, Norden and, of course, A.P. Moller - Maersk. Established in 1904 as a small steamship company, today Maersk has hundreds of container vessels that travel the globe, as well as 65 terminals in 36 countries and more than 7 million square meters of warehousing capacity worldwide. As Charles van der Steene, Maersk's president for North America, puts it: "We've come a long way as a company to become a true end-to-end logistics provider for our customers."

Maersk has expanded especially rapidly since 2018, boosting its capabilities in air, land and sea, with a substantial portion of its investments being targeted at North America. "We've long been a leader in US ocean logistics and currently move approximately 13% of ocean container volume in the US, while our terminals business APMT is one of the largest US operators," states van der Steene. "Our US land-side logistics segment is experiencing significant growth and much of our investment is directed toward this expansion, opening new distribution centers and enhancing our last-mile and middle-mile capabilities."

His strategic priority is to accelerate the company's ability to deliver integrated and sustainable logistics solutions globally. "It's not unusual for there to be 20 parties involved in one shipment, with 20 sets of paperwork. If any of these people get delayed, everything stops. Truly integrated logistics reduces complexity by providing an all-in-one solution," van der Steene explains. "Supply chain disruption is a constant in today's world, so resiliency is critical and, when it comes to resiliency, you need a logistics partner that investing in tech solutions."

Within the industry, Maersk is at the forefront of technologies that can optimize punctuality, visibility and real-time information for customers, such as autonomous truck driving, robotics, artificial intelligence and machine learning. "We're actively engaged with numerous startups, handling some aspects in-house and collaborating with partners to stay ahead of the curve," he asserts.

The company is a leader in low-carbon technologies too. For example, "Maersk recently deployed the world's first green methanol-enabled container vessel and we have 24 more planned to come online beginning in 2024," says van der



Charles van der Steene
President for North America, A.P. Moller - Maersk

Steene. "Maersk is committed to being a first mover in our industry for climate action. We aim for 25% of all ocean cargo to be transported using green fuels by 2030 and have an ambition to be net zero across our business by 2040."

Knowledge sharing in new technologies

Denmark's government is also an active advocate for greener shipping. In 2021, for instance, it created a partnership to develop zero-emission fuels, vessels and related infrastructure with the US, Norway, the Global Maritime Forum and the Maersk McKinney Moller Center for Zero Carbon Shipping. And at COP28 in December, it announced an additional partnership venture with the US and the Maersk McKinney Moller Center that will finance and execute studies for green shipping corridors in the Global South.

CHARLES VAN DER STEENE
PRESIDENT FOR NORTH AMERICA
A.P. MOLLER - MAERSK

"Maersk recently deployed the world's first green methanol-enabled container vessel."

Denmark is equally focused on promoting solutions that will encourage greener land transportation. For instance, it is introducing a road-pricing system next year that will see transponders installed in all vehicles, with users paying tolls based on their carbon footprint. This system is being developed by Sund & Bælt, the government-owned private company that is also responsible for constructing and operating the country's largest road and rail transport infra-



Maersk aims to be net zero for carbon across its business by 2040

structure projects—schemes that have improved connectivity within the country and cemented Denmark's status as a transport and logistics hub for Northern Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltics. These include the 17-kilometer Great Belt bridge between the islands of Zealand and Funen and the 15.9-kilometer bridge-and-tunnel structure linking Copenhagen and Malmö in Sweden.

"Currently, we're working on the largest project in Northern Europe, a 19-kilometer submerged tunnel between Copenhagen and Hamburg in Germany, which will come online in 2029" reveals Sund & Bælt's CEO Mikkel Hemmingsen. Infrastructure like this is expensive. One way the company is ensuring its work is financially sustainable is by aiming at a project lifespan of 120-200 years.

"This means building solid projects that stand the test of time. To complement this, we're digitalizing our maintenance process to make upkeep as efficient as possible," he says. "In addition, our objective is the industrialization of the infrastructure sector by, instead of creating everything from scratch with each initiative, re-using production facilities and know-how to complete projects on time, to standard and within budget, while also bringing our carbon footprint down 70%-80%."

Sund & Bælt is now exporting its vast experience in large-scale tunnels and bridges to infrastructure developers in other nations. "We believe that the best way we can collaborate with international companies is by sharing knowledge. For example, we've entered a partnership with IBM to build a digital asset management system, through which we can share our data models and expertise. We've also entered into a collaboration on a drone that can scan infrastructure to detect cracks in concrete, which has allowed us to extend the projected lifespan of the Great Belt bridge to 200 years, and the AI imaging behind this process can be shared with companies in other countries," states Hemmingsen. "So, while we're busy building infrastructure in Denmark, we're also building our resources and making them available to our international peers."

INNOVATING THROUGHOUT HISTORY



Danish Vikings brought the world battle-axes, hair combs and long boats



LEGO bricks were launched by a Danish company in 1958



Henrik Stiesdal, known as the godfather of wind, designed the first modern wind turbines



Both Skype and Google Maps were originally created by Danish entrepreneurs



The anti-obesity drug Wegovy emerged from a collaboration between the University of Copenhagen and Novo Nordisk

Investing in a greener shipping industry

By focusing its investments on eco-class vessels, European Maritime Finance is supporting the transition to cleaner fuels

Headquartered in Copenhagen, corporate finance company European Maritime Finance (EMF) has become a leading driver of the global shipping industry's transition to greener vessels by targeting its investment portfolio toward eco-class, new-build and secondhand shipping projects.

Licensed by the European Union as an alternative investment fund manager, EMF was founded in 2014 by Martin Haugaard, who chairs its investment committee and has decades of experience in the industry: "We're focused on three sectors: pure car and truck carriers (PCTCs), product tankers and dry bulk carriers," he states. "The backbone of our strategy is setting up special purpose vehicles that allow semi-professional investors to participate in shipping investments, which were previously the preserve of large ship owners, pension funds and other entities that are able to raise at least half a billion dollars at a time. We give European qualified investors the opportunity to participate with lesser capital amounts."

To date, those investors have been rewarded with exceptional results: between 2018 and 2023, EMF's projects had an average 17-month duration and 73% return on investment. "Many ship owners are good at buying vessels, but not at selling them when the time is right. As fund managers, we can exit a market when we think it's high and enter other sectors when we find them attractive. This has been a key factor behind our consistently good track record, along with discipline and prudence," he reveals. "We also benefit from a large client base, which gives us a competitive edge from being able to raise equity from a wide spectrum of investors."



Martin Haugaard
Founder and Chairman of the Investment Committee, European Maritime Finance

Another crucial factor has been the incredibly strong team at EMF, which includes people who were previously senior executives at major investment and pension funds, or shipping companies like Maersk, Torm, Norden and Hafnia. An additional advantage is the partnerships that the team has fostered with global ship owners, fleet operators and shippers. EMF's robust relationships within the latter group mean that its new-build projects can move forward faster than others. "Before the financial crisis there were over 900 shipping yards in the world. Today, only around 350 are fully operational, so there's pressure on shipbuilding capacity," he explains. The compa-



European Maritime Finance's latest assets are all IMO A-rated for carbon efficiency

ny's closest collaborator is the Greek shipping leader Atlas Maritime, adds Haugaard: "We've built our track record together. Atlas is our commercial and technical manager and has owned up to 50% of our investments over the years. Its commitment and hands-on approach reassures our investors."

What makes EMF truly stand out, however, is its dedication to sustainability. All of its recently acquired assets and commissions are state-of-the-art, eco-class, fuel-efficient vessels that are A-rated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for carbon efficiency. Those ships include product tankers and dry bulk carriers that can be powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG), as well as dual-fuel PCTCs. These will primarily run on LNG, but will be ready for ammonia as an alternative, which could make their fueling 100% green. Haugaard is confident that the investment market for PCTCs like this has huge potential, not least because, "Pension funds increasingly see our car carriers as being green infrastructure."

Demand for all the vessels EMF specializes in is set to expand exponentially and quickly. One reason is the IMO's global introduction this year of its A-E carbon efficiency rating system for commercial ships, with oil giants, electric vehicle manufacturers, retailers such as H&M and Ikea, plus other substantial international shipping clients already opting to pay a premium for transporting goods in A-rated vessels to lower their

carbon footprints. A second factor is that the EU is making it mandatory to purchase carbon credits for emissions in its waters. This will cover 40% of a vessel's emissions in 2024, which will rise to 100% within three years.

To capitalize on the potential this offers, EMF is also expanding. "In a continuation of our European Union financial license, we plan to target US family offices and institutional investors. We

MARTIN HAUGAARD
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
EUROPEAN MARITIME FINANCE

"We expect to launch the world's first 100%-green shipping fund within the next few months."

expect to launch the world's first 100%-green shipping fund within the next few months as well, which will be in the size of \$5-8 billion. That significant milestone demonstrates our commitment to be the frontrunners in supporting the industry's green transition. We're excited and optimistic about entering the US market, as we believe we have funds and projects available to attract US investors," says Haugaard.





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European Maritime Finance

Connecting investors with global maritime investment opportunities

www.maritimefinance.dk





Egeskov Castle's award-winning park is an excellent location for a picnic



Green Copenhagen's waterways are clean enough to swim in

Hygge: The cozy route to wellbeing

Denmark invites tourists to share its embrace of hygge, a key factor behind its ranking at the top of the World Happiness Index

Pronounced “hoo-gah”, the Danish word “hygge” stems from an Old Norse term meaning wellbeing. It was adopted by Denmark over 200 years ago and rapidly became a core component of its cultural and societal identity. For Danes, hygge is a way — in their opinion, the best way — of life.

The word is usually translated to “coziness”, but in reality it encompasses warm comfort, contentment, enjoying everyday simple pleasures and sharing those experiences with friends, family or like-minded people. As Meik Wiking, CEO of the Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen, wrote in the introduction to his bestseller *The Little Book of Hygge*: “Hygge is about an atmosphere and an experience, rather than about things. It is about being with the people we love. A feeling of home. A feeling that we are safe.”

It is a way of life that encourages you to find time to unplug, savor the moment and create meaningful memories, and Denmark's embrace of the concept is a major reason why the nation has ranked as a top performer in the University of Oxford's World Happiness Report every year since it was first published a decade ago.

Rooted in mindfulness and human connection, hygge also feeds into the Danish commitment to community support and trust within society, both factors that can have a big impact on national happiness levels, according to Wiking: “Denmark famously enjoys high levels of trust — which tourists will notice.” A great illustration of this can be found at farmers' markets around the country that are unmanned, as customers are trusted to pay for the fresh local produce.

Hygge-hunting visitors to Denmark will expect to find plenty of cozy cafes and bars warmed by crackling fires and glowing with soft candlelight. They will not be disappointed, as its cities, towns and villages are packed with welcoming examples. What they might less be prepared for is the variety of pleasures they offer. Two diverse highlights in Copenhagen, for instance, are sampling hot cocoa and cinnamon pastries at a 17th-century cafe in the cobblestone streets of the waterfront Nyhavn district, and sipping an artfully mixed cocktail at Gensyn Bar, a reimagined dive bar that has retained its homely environment. At the latter, locals may ask you to take part in a friendly game of Danish pin billiards, a traditional and unique cue sport.

The ability to leisurely share good food — a central tenet of hygge — is also abundantly catered for, from hearty meals at village restaurants to sensory feasts at Michelin-starred New Nordic Cuisine venues. December 2024 marks the last chance to experience the most famous of these, Noma, before it closes to reinvent itself as a laboratory for food innovation. Despite its revered status, Noma is built on the principles of hygge, with its highly influential chef, René Redzepi, having moved the global gastronomic world away from formal service and elite products like foie gras toward simplicity and locally sourced ingredients.

Outdoor simple pleasures

Hygge is far from limited to indoor activities: for example, joyful family picnics in Denmark's parks and gardens are considered quintessentially hygge, as are bike rides and long strolls through coun-

tryside, woods, forests and, especially, along the country's 4,500-mile coastline, which offers plentiful opportunities to relax and take time out to appreciate the beauty of nature and the wonders of human history.

The Jutland peninsula's coast, for instance, is an excellent place to find hygge. Dotted by traditional seaside villages that serve up the freshest of simply cooked fish in their harbor restaurants, the region also boasts attractions such as wide sandy beaches; huge windswept dunes; an ancient forest that is the mythical home of trolls; and just off the peninsula's shores is Wadden Sea National Park, one of the country's seven UNESCO World Heritage sites that is among the most important locations for waterfowl on the planet.

MEIK WIKING
CEO, HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

“Hygge is about an atmosphere and an experience ... It is about being with the people we love.”

The island of Zealand is equally full of treasures, not least on the 124-mile stretch of its coast that is known as the Danish Riviera. Less than an hour from Copenhagen, the pristine beaches and quaint towns in this area have made it a popular vacation destination for the capital's residents that are looking to unwind.

Another unforgettable Zealand site is Kronborg Castle, a renaissance masterpiece that is another World Heritage site and which was immortalized as Elsinore, the birthplace of Hamlet, by Shakespeare in about 1600. Around 435 years later, Arne Jacobsen designed Bellevue, a beach complex just outside Copenhagen and much of this architecture is still standing, including an iconic blue-striped lifeguard tower. As in the rest of his work and that of the country's other renowned mid-century designers, the spirit of hygge is evident in the Bellevue buildings' simple, yet

warmly inviting, considered and playful forms.

A year-long hygge season

Unsurprisingly, Christmas is a high point in the hygge calendar. It begins on a Friday in November with J-Day, when Danes flock to bars to celebrate the launch of local breweries' Christmas beers. During the following festive period, Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen is an essential experience, as transforms itself into a magical winter wonderland. The world's second-oldest amusement park is filled with fairy lights and candles, hundreds of trees are covered with baubles and Christmas market stalls keep visitors cozy with delights such as mulled wine, roast chestnuts, sweet dough balls with jam and enveloping woolly scarves.

Craft and food-based Christmas markets occur throughout the nation, with one of the best being held in Odense on Funen island. This small, charming city was the birthplace of fairytale writer Hans Christian Andersen, a man who had a different take on what Danes consider to be their country's everyday pleasures. As he put it, “The whole world is a series of miracles, but we're so used to them we call them ordinary things.”

Very different, but still life-affirming simple wonders open up to tourists in summer. The months are filled with outdoor events and street festivals that enable people with similar interests to connect, with just two examples being Roskilde, one of Europe's biggest music festivals, and Copenhagen's vibrant Pride Week. Nyhavn harbor is among the summer-long hotspots for the capital's residents who want to share time with family and acquaintances. Picnics, basking in the sun and renting a solar-powered electric boat to cruise the nearby canals are some of the activity options available to them. For Wiking, “One of my favorite things to do in Copenhagen is to go for a swim in the inner harbor, where the water is so clean you can swim in it. I enjoy meeting up with a few friends after work, going for a swim and having a beer. Whether I am rich or poor, that is something I can always enjoy and brings me happiness.”

The ideal destination for all travelers

With additional direct flights from the US launching this summer, its now even easier to enjoy Denmark's rich tapestry of unique experiences

Denmark was the only European country to surpass its pre-pandemic international tourist numbers in 2022, with guests spending 30.8 million nights in its hotels and other accommodation, 6.8% more than in 2019. Katja Moesgaard, CEO of the tourism board VisitDenmark, reveals why the Nordic nation is an increasingly popular year-round choice for families, couples and solo travelers: “Denmark's affable demeanor, warm and secure ambiance, pristine white sandy beaches, everyday wonders and world-class cuisine collectively distinguish it as an ideal place to visit. Rather than being centered around a singular attraction, Denmark offers intimate and distinctive experiences across its natural environments and culture.”

Made up of 444 islands, its vast coastline contains wonders that range from ancient chalk cliffs to expansive dunes. For Moesgaard, “Highlights include basking in the sun with the locals at our harbors, where you can purchase fish directly from fishermen; embarking on the world's tiniest cruise in Jutland that offers all-inclusive trips to small islands; indulging in a stay at historic seaside hotels; and surfing in what we call Cold Hawaii on the northwest coast.” Beyond the seafloor, there are fascinating forests, atmospheric castles, Viking remains, traditional rural villages and cozy cities that combine heritage with contemporary architecture and design. “The storytelling woven into Denmark's fabric spans hundreds of years. This is complemented by our modern art and culture, creating an unparalleled fusion across the nation,” she explains.

Another nationwide asset is fabulous gastronomy that is focused on seasonal local ingredients.



Katja Moesgaard
CEO, VISITDENMARK

Denmark currently boasts 43 Michelin stars and some of the world's best restaurants, including Noma, Geranium and Alchemist. One novel way to sample the country's produce is to harvest it yourself, notes Moesgaard: “An illustration of this is a regenerative ecotourism experience on the west coast, where tourists can participate in collecting invasive oysters, followed by an evening tasting paired with champagne — which is an enjoyable way to contribute to ecological balance.”

This example demonstrates that Denmark's status as global green champion extends to its tourism sector. “We proudly lead as one of the most sustainable travel destinations, with VisitDenmark's vision being encapsulated in its brand-



Kayaking in the harbour, Copenhagen

ing: “Tourism you can live off and live with.” This emphasizes the importance to us of promoting tourism that is not just sustainable but is regenerative,” states Moesgaard. “For instance, we encourage environmentally conscious activities, such as offering free kayak rides to tourists who engage in canal cleanup efforts, an initiative that has helped make Copenhagen's canals clean enough to swim in.”

Furthermore, the country promotes sustainable transportation options like biking and public transport to both the local population and visitors. “Thanks to its compact size, Denmark is remarkably easy to navigate and explore, with manageable distances compared to the vast expanses of the US. Notably, you are never more than 32 miles from the ocean,” she enthuses.

The nation is also easy to reach. Its main gateway is Copenhagen Airport, which was used by 26.8 million travelers in 2023, with over a million of them flying from or to US airports in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston and Miami. Connectivity between the Danish capital and the US will rise from June, when Scandinavian Airlines launches a daily service to Atlanta and adds more daily flights to New York. On top of that, this summer will see American Airlines fly to Denmark for the first time. “The opening of a new direct daily route from Philadelphia to Copenhagen by American Airlines is a promising development,” says

Moesgaard. “The US holds a position of priority for us and we're focused on ensuring that American tourists have convenient access to Denmark throughout the week.”

VisitDenmark's office in New York — one of nine that the agency operates around the world — has played a key role in raising the country's profile in the US by building robust relationships with tour operators, travel agencies and journalists, and by implementing innovative marketing cam-

KATJA MOESGAARD
CEO, VISITDENMARK

“Don't miss out — come and experience the Land of Everyday Wonder for yourselves!”

paigns that promote Denmark's unique stories. As a result of its efforts, Copenhagen welcomed more guests from the US than from any other nation apart from Germany in 2023, Moesgaard states: “Our aspiration is to encourage US tourists to extend their stays and immerse themselves in the country's rich tapestry of experiences. I invite everyone to see what Denmark has to offer. Don't miss out — come and experience the Land of Everyday Wonder for yourselves!”



DENMARK
THE LAND OF
**EVERYDAY
WONDER**