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THE TECH ISSUE

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Bet on the Cold Coast

As temperatures in the Med heat up, Denmark's beaches play it cool
By *Brandon Presser*

If someone invited you to a place they called “Cold Hawaii,” would you be tempted to go? What if they told you the soft-sand beaches seemed never to end? Or that the evening ritual was fried fish and pale ale beneath purple-pink skies? Or that the water was a parade of surfable waves? Never mind the best part: You’d have it pretty much to yourself.

That’s what it’s like on the shores of Jutland, in northwestern Denmark, where the mainland literally juts into the North Sea. The beach paradise is about a five-hour drive from Copenhagen and an hour away from Aalborg’s well-connected international airport.

But word is getting out. In 2023 the region saw a 119% increase in visitors from a year earlier, VisitDenmark reports, setting local records. There’s a thriving beach culture in the summer, which (for better or worse) is getting warm enough to enjoy swimming without wetsuits. European sunseekers, too, are newly discovering the area after being turned off by the Mediterranean’s ever-rising swelter.

They join the regular mix of Danes and Germans in Winnebagos looking for their own slice of a beachfront that goes almost uninterrupted for more than 150 miles. At its north end is the impressionist-influenced artist colony of Skagen—home to P.S. Krøyer and other painters of the late 19th century; at the south end are the breezy shores of Thy, where kiteboarders and windsurfers tack their neon sails. In between are working fishing villages such as Hanstholm, with restaurants like Det Gamle Røgeri lining the harbor and serving heaping, unfinishable platters of prawns and fried fish.

New hotels are meeting the moment, mostly with rates less than \$300 a night and coastal locations near the pine-forested thickets of Thy National Park. **Vorupør Badehotel** has a handful of simple, modernist rooms in a repurposed municipal building whose beach-facing walls have been replaced with floor-to-ceiling glass. The tent-covered grounds of **Vorupør Camping** have cabins with blond wood slatting and turf roofs. In the next village over, **Guesthouse Klitmøller** has a dozen accommodations arranged around a hidden interior garden filled with tropical fronds and bamboo details.



Vahineura Itchner and Mor Meluka, who founded **Cold Hawaii Surf Camp** in Klitmøller 15 years ago, say they’ve watched the area change over the past decade into a preferred summer spot for a wide range of northern Europeans. “Others around the world are catching on, too,” Itchner says.

Jutland is unlikely to get spoiled by crowds, even as it finds a place in the spotlight; tight government restrictions curb foreign investment and construction. Just in case you get booked out, though, here are other key seaside spots in Denmark.

Klitmøller Beach in Denmark's Jutland



● The Danish Riviera

Copenhagen’s old-money suburbs—best known for housing the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art—are like New York’s Hamptons or Montecito north of Los Angeles, with modern mansions and baroque brick estates. Stay at **Helenekilde Badehotel** (rooms from \$278), a century-old summer home in the village of Tisvildeleje that’s been lovingly expanded into an inn with about two dozen rooms. Ogle local architecture with weekendening Copenhageners, who bounce between beach walks, quaint restaurants and seaside saunas.

● Fanø

Put on your wellies and head out onto the mud flats of Denmark’s westerly island of Fanø for an oyster safari. Then check into the 300-year-old **Sønderho Kro** (room and board from \$408), easily the country’s most romantic hotel. The vibe is decidedly “captain’s shanty chic,” with timber walls, thatch roofing and cozy beds under deep eaves.

● South Funen Archipelago

Copenhagen is on one of the islands strung between mainland Denmark, Germany and Sweden. West of the capital, the South

Funen Archipelago is equally worth a visit for its fairy-tale landscapes of rolling dales and turreted castles. Fittingly, Hans Christian Andersen was raised here. Stay at **Stella Maris** (rooms from \$209) for old-school hospitality with languid water views, nautically themed rooms and buttoned-up French cuisine. While you’re there, ferry over to the tiny island of Ærø, where timbered bathing huts along the beach are painted in lively colored stripes.

● Bornholm

A new high-speed ferry—the world’s largest catamaran—has made it exponentially more comfortable to get to Bornholm, home to the original location of globally renowned New Nordic restaurant Kadeau. The gastronomic paradise is now a zippy 80-minute ride from the Ystad terminal in southern Sweden. (Confusing geography notwithstanding, it’s all seamlessly accessible from Copenhagen.) Stay at **Allinge Badehotel** (rooms from \$165), a Tudor-esque structure from the 1770s that was transformed in 2020—its 24 rooms are airy and sea-facing and retain plenty of throwback splendor.