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Travel

A Dead Cert Copenhagen does Halloween with flair

By Brittany Shoot

SOME MIGHT SAY DENMARK has no use for Halloween. After all, Scandinavia's smallest country already has a pre-Lenten holiday known as Fastelavn, which, with its black-cat symbol, dressing up and treats for children, has a vaguely Halloweenish air. But in recent years, catering to children on a weeklong autumn school break, the arrival of Oct. 31 has been embraced as an excuse for kids to don costumes and stuff themselves with candy twice a year in-

stead of just once. Often ranking at the top of the U.N. global happiness survey, Danes will use any excuse to throw a good party. Going to be in Copenhagen this Halloween? Here's how to get in on the Danish brand of ghoulish fall fun.

1. Tivoli Gardens

The country's second oldest amusement park (tivoli.dk) is Copenhagen's Halloween headquarters, reopening off-season to host pumpkin carvings and rides decked out with ghosts and goblins. Tivoli's festive features include roller-coaster rides after dark, a musical adaptation of

Dracula, a zombie parade at twilight and a competition for the largest pumpkin. The celebration is only in its sixth year at the park but has proved so popular that Tivoli will stay open an additional week this year to accommodate thrill-seeking visitors.

2. Nimb

Once inside Tivoli, the sprawling Nimb hotel-and-restaurant complex (tivoli.dk/nimb) is hard to miss and a perfect spot to sample some of Copenhagen's best seasonal fare. At the French bistro Nimb Terrasse, a hearty pumpkin soup is the perfect way to warm up after a chilly ride on the famous Star Flyer swings. Expect gore-themed items on the menu in

the cozy, child-friendly Nimb Bar (including a "bloody" tomato-juice cocktail for the kids). For an adults-only night cap, swing by the cellar-level Nimb Vinotek, which boasts one of Denmark's most extensive wine lists—and glasses splattered with fake blood for the holiday.

3. Kronborg Castle, Helsingør

Built from 1574 to 1585, Kronborg Castle (www.kronborgcastle.com) is best known by its nickname, Hamlet's Castle. Scholars believe that William Shakespeare's

Frighteningly good fun Tivoli draws thousands each year with its themed rides and decorations

17th century tragedy was partly inspired by a Norse myth about a vengeful prince called Hamlet, or Amleth. Appropriately, the English dramatist set his play in the country's most well-known castle, perched on the banks of the narrow strait that separates Denmark and Sweden, a 50-km drive from Copenhagen. While the mythical prince never lived in the Renaissance palace that is now a UNESCO World Heritage site, Kronborg has been the subject of a number of well-publicized contemporary ghost-hunting expeditions.

Special Halloween flashlight tours take place from Oct. 13 to 21 and come complete with scary stories and white sheets that children can wear to get into the spooky spirit.

4. Assistens Cemetery

When the gray clouds occasionally clear from the Copenhagen skies, autumn picnickers and strollers head to Assistens Cemetery, where the grounds are so lush the tombstones scattered throughout almost seem like an afterthought. No known ghosts haunt these paths, but during a postlunch walk, you might spot some headstones bearing famous names like those of writer Hans Christian Andersen, philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and Nobel

Prize-winning physicist Niels Bohr. If you see a marker littered with beads and bling, stop to pay your respects to the once reigning queen of the Danish reggae scene, rapper Natasja Saad, who was just 32 when she died in a car accident in Jamaica in 2007.

5. Politimuseet

One of the city's most overlooked museums highlights Denmark's dark side. Staffed mostly by retired officers, the police museum features a current exhibition on evil, focusing on several notorious Danish serial killers. On

display for the first time are bits of evidence from the cases against serial child murderer Dagmar Overby and Peter Lundin, who first served time in the U.S. for killing his mother (when the family lived abroad) and is now serving life in Denmark for a grisly multiple murder.

The museum's equally compelling permanent displays include the nation's largest collection of fake paintings (confiscated from forgers) and a room dedicated to the art of crime-scene investigation. Ask about the evening walking tours, which require a minimum of six people to visit several historic murder sites around town. Check opening days and hours at politimuseum.dk. You'll even get a cup of complimentary coffee with the price of admission.

