



FOUR-DAY WEEKEND

Copenhagen's Latest Revival

The Danish capital has been a global model for sustainable design and innovative cuisine for the last decade—and it shows no signs of slowing down. **by MARK JOHANSON**

S **EVENTEEN FLOORS** up, the elevator dings and I step out onto the top floor of a 1960s-era concrete grain silo in northern Copenhagen. It's a structure that towers above just about everything else in this low-rise city, and one that should have been demolished years ago amid a rush to find new real estate

in the burgeoning Danish capital. Instead, the silo underwent a radical facelift in 2017 and came out the other end a sleek, 38-unit luxury apartment building.

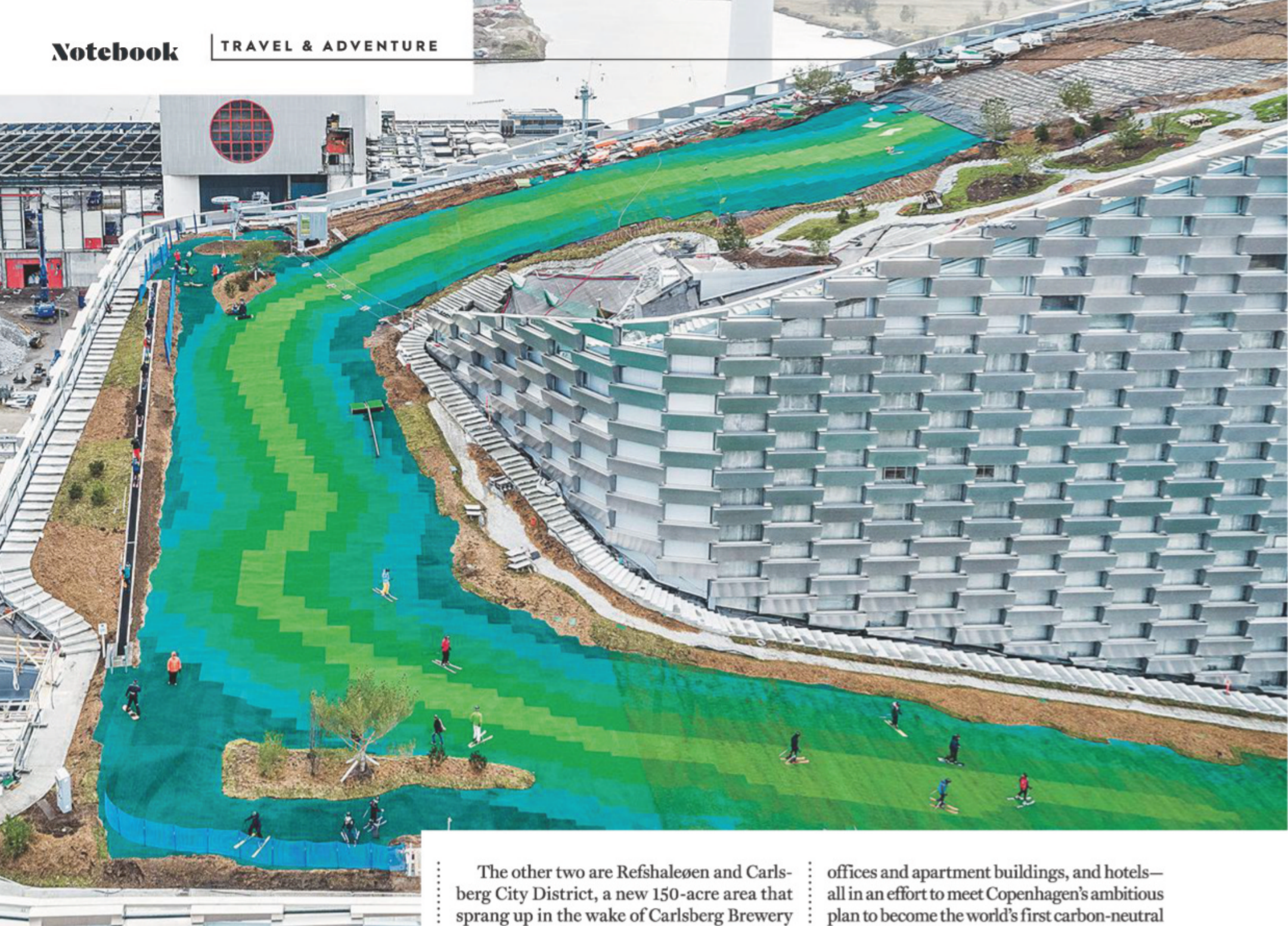
A steel exterior wraps around the concrete core, and angular balconies protrude at regular intervals, like a Tetris game come to life. The 17th floor, encased in floor-to-ceiling windows, houses Restaurant Silo, where I've come to

▲ The Nordhavn City District, above, was built from the remains of a former shipping port and is quickly becoming the trendiest neighborhood in town.

dine. Each of the tables has a pair of binoculars alongside the salt and pepper shakers, so as I chow down on a traditional open-faced sandwich of breaded plaice (a flounder-like fish), I peer over the city of 2 million.

The parking garage of the adjacent building has a gym with pullup bars and trampolines on its roof. Just behind that are two more former silos known as the Portland Towers, which are now ultramodern, eco-certified office buildings. Stylish redbrick apartment blocks line a concrete boardwalk around Nordhavn Bassin, an old shipping bay that's been transformed into a sort of urban beach and swimming hole. COBE, the design firm

RASMUS HOORTSHOJ / COURTESY SILO



behind the silo I'm dining in, have their offices a few blocks away, next to the city's largest primary school, whose fish scale-like facade of 12,000 solar panels provides 50 percent of the building's electricity.

All of these radical structures are part of the district of Nordhavn. None of them were here six years ago. For more than a century, Nordhavn was a key harbor for international goods. Today, it's a futuristic neighborhood that's a global model for innovation in architecture, design, and urban recreation.

Copenhagen's renaissance has been going on for some time now, but pockets of the port city continue to reimagine themselves on a near-monthly basis, pushing the boundaries of innovation faster than anywhere else on the continent. This makes the Danish capital one of the world's most exciting cities to see in action—with architects redefining sustainable design, musicians crafting extravagant multi-sensory experiences, and chefs building urban gardens and championing locavorism more creatively than anywhere else on the planet.

A big reason for the nonstop innovation is the exploding population; a 20 percent growth is expected by 2025. Because of that, Copenhagen, which is tucked onto a small island, has been on the hunt for new land for decades, and Nordhavn is one of three districts now rising from the ashes of old manufacturing zones.

The other two are Refshaleøen and Carlsberg City District, a new 150-acre area that sprang up in the wake of Carlsberg Brewery relocating its beer production to Jutland, the continental part of Denmark, in 2008. During my visit this spring, I based myself at the district's Hotel Ottilia, a 155-room inn constructed from the former malt and beer storage buildings, which are adorned with 64 golden disks on its facade, like giant beer caps. A block away is the Elephant Tower, a lavish former entrance gate flanked by four life-size pachyderms sculpted out of granite.

It wasn't until 2009 that this area first opened to the general public. Development company Carlsberg Byen P/S spearheaded a transformation of the brewery complex into a sustainable city district with bars and restaurants with adjoining gardens, energy-efficient

offices and apartment buildings, and hotels—all in an effort to meet Copenhagen's ambitious plan to become the world's first carbon-neutral capital by 2025.

"We're trying to get history moving in here," says Jens Nyhus, CEO of Carlsberg Byen, as we tour the budding neighborhood. The brick historic buildings have been juxtaposed against steel modern ones. "They always have elements that play off each other so we can make connections between the old and new," Nyhus explains, pointing at the gold disks of the hotel, which give way to gold-trimmed windows on an adjacent building.

Nyhus says the arrival of the hotel in January signaled the opening up of the district to visitors. But the \$2 billion redevelopment project is only one-third complete, with much more to come before it's fully open in 2024, including an upgraded Carlsberg Visitor Center next year.

Across town, Refshaleøen (pronounced ref-say-loon) has undergone an even faster metamorphosis. From 1872 to 1996, Refshaleøen was one of the largest shipyards in Europe. After being closed for a decade, it's now rapidly emerging as Copenhagen's coolest enclave, with the city's most popular food market, raging music festivals, sanctioned swimming zones, and the kind of open space that seems dedicated for spurring creativity.

One of the world's most prestigious restaurants, Noma, relocated to Refshaleøen in 2018 so that chef René Redzepi could create an urban farm. Meanwhile, one of the most

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RASMUS HØRSHØJ/COURTESY OF SILLO



Clockwise from above: Pouring a sample at Empirical Spirits; one of the many murals in the city; lunch at Copenhagen Street Food. Opposite page: The ski run under construction at CopenHill.



FOUR DAYS IN COPENHAGEN

WHERE TO STAY

Soak in the postindustrial vibe of the old Carlsberg brewery complex at **Hotel Ottilia** (from \$160). If you want to be closer to the action, the new **Scandic Kødbyen** (from \$116) is in the center of the bar-filled Meatpacking District.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

For sophistication without attitude try **Amass**, where multicourse degustation menus play out in a cavernous space blasting hip-hop. To learn the meaning of the Danish concept of *hygge*, lunch on fresh fish and natural wines at cozy **La Banchina**. **Broaden & Build** opened this January with 22 taps of craft brews and a gourmet snack menu, which includes the unforgettable "AFC" fried chicken. Taste test the future of alcohol at **Empirical Spirits**.

DON'T LEAVE WITHOUT...

...skiing down the urban slope **CopenHill** and scrambling back up on its high-rise climbing wall.
 ...visiting the ultramodern **BLOX complex** and its **Danish Architecture Center**—a creative hub for architecture, design, and new ideas—and then shopping for minimalist Scandinavian design objects at **Hay House**.
 ...joining the 41 percent of Copenhageners who commute on two wheels by pedaling the **Cycle Super Highway**, a roughly 300-mile network of bike lanes and paths.

cial ski slope off its 282-foot-high sloping roof. "The ultimate goal is that visitors won't notice the incredible complexity of the project while they're enjoying it," says Patrik Gustavsson, Amager Bakke Foundation's managing director. CopenHill, as the ski run is called, is 1,476 feet long and is made from a material called Neveplast, making it possible to shred year-round. The roof will also host a tree-lined hiking path, and the complex will sport one of the world's tallest climbing walls, at 279 feet.

When I visited the still-in-process project with Gustavsson, we took an elevator to the top. While standing at the windswept apex of the ski hill, it was hard not to smile at the ingenuity of it all. It is perhaps the world's most radical recreational side use of an industrial complex, and serves as the perfect representation of just how original the city is right now.

While atop the structure, I gazed into Copenhagen's historic center—with its church steeples and pastel houses—and realized I'd been in the city for days and had hardly bothered to check it out. And that was, perhaps, the real testament to the promising future of this burgeoning metropolis: The attractions these days are out on the edges. ■

hotly anticipated restaurant openings of 2019, Rasmus Munk's Alchemist 2.0, will use the core of an old warehouse for its space and will host marathons of gluttony—50 courses of food clocking in at five hours.

Also opened in that same warehouse over the last year is the art gallery Copenhagen Contemporary and the craft brewery Broaden & Build, where San Diego native Matt Orlando offers 22 beers, including a saison with lemon and fennel. And then there's Empirical Spirits, which is opening a tasting room where you can try its genre-defying liquors. One, called Fallen Pony, is a distillation of a quince tea kombucha and typically sells out within 15 minutes when released online each Tuesday.

Refshaleøen is also home to the world's highest indoor ropes course, Urban Ranger Camp, and the sauna complex CopenHot, where you can rent hot spas on boats and ply the harbor with a six pack of Danish beers. Perhaps the most spectacular addition to Refshaleøen, though, is the new waste-to-energy plant Amager Bakke, designed by Denmark's most well-known—and theatrical—architecture firm, Bjarke Ingels Group.

The odorless facility processes approximately 560,000 tons of municipal waste each year, supplying more than 72,000 apartments with heat and 30,000 with electricity. But that's not even the most innovative part of the building: This summer, it's opening an artifi-