



Nyhavn,
Copenhagen

PICTURE: Viggo Lundberg

Pedal power

As the Tour de France's Grand Départ heads for one of the most bike-friendly parts of the world, it's a good time to sell a Danish cycling holiday, says **Rhonda Carrier**

Cycling is a huge part of daily life in Denmark. Nine out of 10 people who live in this green, pleasant – and largely flat – land own a bike. And in Copenhagen cyclists cover the equivalent of 400 editions of the Tour de France (roughly 1.4 million kilometres) every weekday.

So it's fitting that this summer the world's greatest bike race departs from Copenhagen on July 1. From there it will head west through Roskilde, Nyborg and Vejle before ending up in Sønderborg on July 3.

Denmark has form when it comes to holding major global cycling events: it was host to the 2011 World Road Race Championships and location for the start of the 2012 Giro d'Italia. So expect the Grand Départ to be celebrated in true Scandi style. No doubt the event will attract plenty of sports fans keen to catch a slice of the action and to join in with the celebrations.

"The Grand Départ is always a special moment for the Tour de France, as that is where the riders' procession begins," says Clément Cicuto, general manager for Europe at Sports Tours International, which is running trips to this year's Grand Départ. "There's a ceremony with a team presentation, and it's always exciting to see who will wear the Yellow Jersey at the end of Stage 1. This is truly a special trip for cycling fans."

Many cycling fans staying in Copenhagen throughout the year (not just in July) will be inspired to hop on two wheels themselves for a tour of the capital. And most of the city's hotels provide bikes for guests (we can recommend 71 Nyhavn Hotel, Tivoli Hotel and Wake Up Copenhagen). Other travellers, meanwhile, might be inspired to book their own guided or self-guided cycling adventures a little farther away from Copenhagen.

“The Grand Départ is a special moment for the Tour de France and it's exciting to see who will wear the Yellow Jersey at the end of Stage 1

GRAND DÉPART PIT STOPS

The Danish leg of the Tour de France has four stages, enabling visitors not only to enjoy wonderful Copenhagen but also to discover other parts of the country.

After a presentation of the race teams at Copenhagen's iconic Tivoli Gardens, the event kicks off with individual 13km time trials through the city's streets, past some of its major sights. Visitors can then follow the riders as they ➤

DESTINATIONS

SPORTS TRAVEL | DENMARK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Knudshoved Lighthouse, Nyborg; Tour de France Grand Départ; Nordkyststien, North Zealand; Holmsland Klit, western Denmark PICTURES: Daniel Villadsen Photography; Sarah Green/VisitNordsjælland; niclasjessen.com

race between Roskilde and Nyborg, before the final leg between Vejle and Sønderborg.

All of these cities warrant time to explore in their own right. West of Copenhagen, Roskilde is best-known for its Viking Ship Museum with 11th-century vessels and an active boatyard, and also for its cathedral with its tombs of Danish kings and queens. From here the route continues west across the dramatic Great Belt Bridge to the city of Nyborg on the island of Funen.

Vejle, on the southeast of the Jutland Peninsula, at the head of Vejle Fjord, is a creative city with a blend of forward-thinking art, design and architecture, and a fantastic food scene. Meanwhile, Sønderborg, farther south in Jutland, is best known for its impressive castle and museum.

GO YOUR OWN WAY

Beyond the Tour de France stages, there are countless other bike routes for clients to follow through Denmark too. They include the North Sea Cycle Route, from the German border in the south all the way up to Skagen in the northern tip of the Jutland Peninsula; the Limfjord Route, exploring Denmark's largest fjord; and the Baltic Sea Cycle Route, taking in medieval castles and pretty market towns in the south of the country.

North Zealand is a paradise for cyclists, and its farmland, forest and shoreline are easily accessed from Copenhagen. Inntravel offers self-guided

“North Zealand is a paradise for cyclists, and its farmland, forest and shoreline are easily accessed from Copenhagen

cycling itineraries that take in the region's white-sand beaches, with their brightly coloured huts, royal castles and charming villages.

Whichever part of Denmark your clients wish to visit, it's likely to be best explored by bike. It's how the Danes would do it, anyway. **TW**

BOOK IT

A six-night self-guided Copenhagen & The Danish Riviera cycling itinerary through North Zealand with **Inntravel** costs from £1,195, departing from May 14, excluding flights but including quality bicycle hire, routes and accommodation. inntravel.co.uk

Inntravel also offers a four-night Danish Castles & Coast cycling break from £960. inntravel.co.uk

Intrepid Travel's tailor-made team offers bespoke cycling adventures in Denmark. intrepidtravel.com

HOW TO SELL

“This isn't meant to be a pun, but Denmark is so geared up for bikes! There are cycle lanes, making it very safe. And even if there isn't a cycle lane and you're on the roads, Danes really do give cyclists priority, even in Copenhagen.

“I think the fact that the Grand Départ is starting in Copenhagen really puts Denmark on the map as a destination for cycling.

“On our Copenhagen & The Danish Riviera cycling itinerary, you also get to see more of Denmark – and not many people really know Denmark outside Copenhagen. You've got this really hip city, then just half an hour away are these little picturebook villages with thatched roofs and flowers around the doors – it's a real contrast. It's nice to get the chance to see both sides of it.”

Rebecca Bruce,
product manager,
Inntravel



AGENT TRAINING

Visit Denmark will be hosting a webinar on how to plan a cycling holiday in Denmark at 4pm on March 29. Register here: tinyurl.com/DenmarkWebinar