

TRAVELLER



DESIGNS ON DENMARK

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The Hotel Alexandra in Copenhagen has such a reputation for acquiring vintage furniture that the staff often field phone calls: “We’re going to be emptying our late aunt’s summer house, are you interested?” And it really does feel less like a hotel and more like your favourite Danish aunt’s house — admittedly an aunt with an unerring eye for design who has a spacious and welcoming home in a convenient location. In a building that dates to 1882, the Hotel Alexandra has been run by its founder, Jeppe Muhlhausen, for 30 years, and has been likened to a living Danish furniture design museum.

Room #338 - Finn Juhl

And we aren’t talking one or two pieces in a room, and otherwise cookie-cutter hotel furniture. Every piece throughout is either original or designed to be sympathetic to Danish design in the mid- 20th century. There’s a lesson in Danish design at every turn in the Hotel Alexandra. A small lift services the 61 rooms across three floors, but it’s worth taking the carpeted stairs to read the stencils on the walls explaining the design ethos, or to flip through the art and architecture books on display on the landings overlooking the courtyard. In the lobby, there’s an enticing lounge area with an eclectic mix of chairs on a bright blue abstract rug, while floor-to- ceiling wooden shelves display yet more books and miniature replicas of Danish chair designs.

A few of Hotel Alexandra’s staff remark that room 338 is one of their favourites and it’s easy to see why. The generous corner room is flooded with light from three tall windows, and a gold plaque on the front door honours the designer Finn Juhl. It’s his designs which make this room so special — particularly the armchairs facing the bed and the matching two-seater lounge in a recessed window. The armchairs are called NV-53 easy chairs, and I instantly fall for the sea-blue fabric and sleek timber arms. Sketches of Juhl’s chair designs also adorn the walls.

Jeppe has a soft spot for Australians as he once worked at the Sydney Opera House and he proudly tells me that Opera House chief executive Louise Herron is a frequent guest. He gives many excellent recommendations. I’m already intending to go to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and he endorses this decision (not only because his grandfather was once the museum’s head of exhibition)

You don’t have to be an expert in Danish design to enjoy the Hotel Alexandra — but it’s impossible not to appreciate it more after staying there. It’s a charming hotel in a great location, with friendly staff, and an excellent adjoining bar and restaurant.