Danish castles and manor houses [1]

Denmark is one of the oldest monarchies in the world and its long legacy is perfectly preserved in its many fine castles, manor houses and gardens. Many are still used by the royal family today and most are open for you to explore, with exhibitions, museums, art collections and other events throughout the year.

Royal palaces

The winter residence of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II [2] is Amalienborg Palace [3]. You can visit two of the palace's four nearly-identical Rococo buildings, right at the heart of Copenhagen. Fredensborg Palace [4] is the summer residence of the Royal Family in North Sealand [5] and its open for you to visit during the month of July. The Monarchy’s website [6] contains a full list and details of all royal palaces in Denmark.

Fortress castles

Many of Denmark’s castles started as fortresses, protecting against invasion. Koldinghus [7] to the south served this purpose close to the border with Germany. A fire destroyed the original castle in 1808, but an impressive reconstruction now overlooks the city of Kolding [8] with an excellent museum. Kronborg [9] served as a fortress at the mouth of the sound between Denmark and Sweden for centuries. This World Heritage castle [10] was the setting for Shakespeare’s Hamlet and you can reach it in a day trip north of Copenhagen [11].

The palaces of Parliament

The current Danish Parliament sits in the buildings of Christiansborg Palace [12], with over 800 years of history. Several parts of the palace are still used by the Royal House and you can look around on a guided tour.

Other famous Danish castles

The unique Rosenborg Castle [13] lies at Copenhagen’s centre amid the beautiful King’s Garden (Kongens Have). You can see the Crown Jewels here and marvel and an extensive collection of royal art. Head to the island of Funen [14] (Fyn) to discover the world’s best-preserved renaissance water castle, Egeskov Castle [15]. This stunning building on a lake is built on piles driven into the earth and legend has it that a whole forest was felled to provide the timber.

Hans Christian Andersen's favourite retreats

For centuries, Danish castles were power bases for the royal houses, nobility and a narrow élite. They also provided sanctuary for great artists who were often invited to take up residence and entertain noble families. The writer Hans Christian Andersen and the composer Carl Nielsen were frequent guests at Danish castles and manor houses.

Manor houses of Denmark

In addition to Denmark’s royal palaces, the many castles and manor houses of the nobility lie like gems in beautifully scenic settings. A visit to these will take you back to Denmark’s grand past and a rich architectural history, with styles as diverse as Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo. Many manor houses have been in the same family for centuries and are open to the public to view.

Further reading

Read more about The History of Denmark [16].

Search for castles and manor houses in Denmark [17].