

## Scandinavia tours for mature travellers

### Reading List

#### **The Almost Nearly Perfect People: Behind the Myth of the Scandinavian Utopia**

by Michael Booth

The Danes are the happiest people in the world, and pay the highest taxes.

'Neutral' Sweden is one of the biggest arms manufacturers in the world.

Finns have the largest per capita gun ownership after the US and Yemen.

54 per cent of Icelanders believe in elves.

Norway is the richest country on earth.

Michael Booth has lived among the Scandinavians, on and off, for over ten years, perplexed by their many strange paradoxes and character traits and equally bemused by the unquestioning enthusiasm for all things Nordic and *hygge* that has engulfed the rest of the world.

He leaves his adopted home of Denmark and embarks on a journey through all five of the Nordic countries to discover who these curious tribes are, the secrets of their success and, most intriguing of all, what they think of each other. Along the way a more nuanced, often darker picture emerges of a region plagued by taboos, characterised by suffocating parochialism and populated by extremists of various shades.

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#### **The Vikings**

by Else Roesdahl

Far from being just 'wild, barbaric, axe-wielding pirates', the Vikings created complex social institutions, oversaw the coming of Christianity to Scandinavia and made a major impact on European history through trade, travel and far-flung consolidation. This encyclopedic study brings together the latest research on Viking art, burial customs, class divisions, jewelry, kingship, poetry and family life. The result is a rich and compelling picture of an extraordinary civilization.

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#### **The Year of Living Danishly: Uncovering the Secrets of the World's Happiest Country**

by Helen Russell

When she was suddenly given the opportunity of a new life in rural Jutland, journalist and archetypal Londoner Helen Russell discovered a startling statistic: the happiest place on earth isn't Disneyland, but Denmark, a land often thought of by foreigners as consisting entirely of long dark winters, cured herring, Lego and pastries.

What is the secret to their success? Are happy Danes born, or made? Helen decides there is only one way to find out: she will give herself a year, trying to uncover the formula for Danish happiness. From childcare, education, food and interior design to SAD, taxes, sexism and an unfortunate predilection for burning witches, *The Year of Living Danishly* is a funny, poignant record of a journey that shows us where the Danes get it right, where they get it wrong, and how we might just benefit from living a little more Danishly ourselves.

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### **The Tragedy of Hamlet: Prince of Denmark**

by William Shakespeare

*Hamlet* is Shakespeare's most popular, and most puzzling, play. It follows the form of a "revenge tragedy," in which the hero, Hamlet, seeks vengeance against his father's murderer, his uncle Claudius, now the king of Denmark. Much of its fascination, however, lies in its uncertainties.

Among them: What is the Ghost--Hamlet's father demanding justice, a tempting demon, an angelic messenger? Does Hamlet go mad, or merely pretend to? Once he is sure that Claudius is a murderer, why does he not act? Was his mother, Gertrude, unfaithful to her husband or complicit in his murder?

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### **Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow**

by Peter Høeg

She thinks more highly of snow and ice than she does of love. She lives in a world of numbers, science and memories--a dark, exotic stranger in a strange land. And now Smilla Jaspersen is convinced she has uncovered a shattering crime...

It happened in the Copenhagen snow. A six-year-old boy, a Greenlander like Smilla, fell to his death from the top of his apartment building. While the boy's body is still warm, the police pronounce his death an accident. But Smilla knows her young neighbor didn't fall from the roof on his own. Soon she is following a path of clues as clear to her as footsteps in the snow. For her dead neighbor, and for herself, she must embark on a harrowing journey of lies, revelation and violence that will take her back to the world of ice and snow from which she comes, where an explosive secret waits beneath the ice....

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**Vasa: A Swedish War Ship**

by Frederick M. Hocker

Vasa was the most modern warship imaginable in 1628. Her ability for fast and aggressive sailing, the multiple gun deck and the heavy, custom-made guns were innovations. She was meant to be a key asset for Sweden in a bid for power in Northern Europe. But as with most brilliant innovations there are also failures, and the ship sank on her maiden voyage, a spectacular, costly and embarrassing fiasco.

This book contains new information about the ship and the people who built and sailed it. And then there's the story of the discovery of the wreck and its challenging and exciting recovery. The dramatic story-telling is backed up by ground-breaking research, as Fred Hocker unfolds new facts that have now been brought to light.

The 17th-century was an era of visual symbols. Photographs and historical reconstructions have been made especially for this book. Important themes are shown on double-page spreads and there is a fold-out guide to Vasa's rich ornamentation - a powerful symbolic reference to the glory of the Swedish king.

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**Escape from the Third Reich: The Harrowing True Story of the Largest Rescue Effort Inside Nazi Germany**

by Sune Persson

The Swedish Red Cross expedition to the German concentration camps from March to April 1945 was the largest rescue effort inside Germany during WWII. Led by Count Bernadotte of Wisborg, the mission became known for its distinctive buses. Each bus was purposefully painted entirely white except for the Red Cross emblem on the side so that they would not be mistaken for military targets. According to conservative figures in May 1945, at least 17,000 prisoners were transported to Sweden by these white buses.

In the first book to detail this remarkable and hazardous operation, and with never-before-published photographs of the bus journeys, the details of Bernadotte's harrowing expedition to Ravensbruck concentration camp and his secret negotiations with Heinrich Himmler are revealed

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**Gustav Vigeland: His Art and Sculpture Park**

by Tone Wikborg and Ruth Waaler

Vigeland's work belongs within the humanistic tradition in art. He has been preoccupied with man at all stages of life. Oslo's Vigeland Park, is the largest sculpture park in the world by a single artist, boasting over 200 pieces by Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland. The collection, dubbed "The Weirdest Statues in the World" by The Daily Mail, includes everything from a woman embracing a giant lizard to a naked man fighting flying babies, and everything in between.

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### **Letters written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (Oxford World's Classics)**

by Mary Wollstonecraft

This engaging volume was pioneering feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's most popular book during her lifetime. Difficult to categorize, it is both an arresting travel book and a moving exploration of her personal and political selves. Wollstonecraft set out for Scandinavia just two weeks after her first suicide attempt, on a mission from the lover whose affections she doubted, to recover his silver on a ship that had gone missing. With her baby daughter and a nursemaid, she traveled across the dramatic landscape and wrote sublime descriptions of the natural world, and the events and people she encountered. Fascinating appendices include Imlay's commission to recover his lost silver, Wollstonecraft's recently discovered letter to the Danish Prime Minister asking for assistance, the private letters she wrote to Imlay during her travels in Scandinavia, a chapter from Godwin's memoir of Wollstonecraft, and a selection of contemporary reviews.

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