

THE COPENHAGEN EFFECT

How the world's most understated capital became fashion's quiet powerhouse — rewriting the rules with sustainability, soft tailoring, and an effortless cool the rest of us can only try to imitate.

BY LOREN DUTTON

Copenhagen has slowly inserted itself as the fashion capital of Scandinavia with colourful, edgy streetwear looks regularly going viral on social media.

As the rest of the world chases fleeting micro trends, the Danish capital has quietly set a new agenda: sustainable, functional, classic style that feels less like a trend and more like a way of life. Performative dressing is heavily shunned in Copenhagen as there is an emphasis layering for the weather, factoring in comfort and buying with intention.

“If Copenhagen were a person, that person would be generous, beautiful, elderly, but with a flair.”

Copenhagen is a global leader in sustainability with an extensive cycling program resulting in 60% of its population commuting by bike daily. The city's regulations also apply when it comes to the Danish fashion industry.

Brands involved in Copenhagen Fashion Week must meet strict sustainability requirements, providing evidence of their sustainability strategies and sharing where their unsold clothes or samples go. These initiatives also ensure that clothes are made with high-quality materials for longevity in order to reduce waste. CPHFW highlights how ethics and environmentalism doesn't have to compromise design and creativity.

While the clothes matter, the mindset matters more. In Copenhagen, fashion isn't about performance. The core

ethical and environmental beliefs of Copenhageners is what informs their fashion choices, prioritising high-quality basics that are versatile and multi-purpose.

It's no surprise that this grounded approach to fashion has shaped global trends — from the rise of soft tailoring to experimenting with texture and layering. Even the global obsession with “quiet luxury” echoes the city's long-standing belief that elegance should feel effortless, not extravagant.

Local labels like Ganni, Stine Goya and Cecilie Bahnsen have become global favourites by offering clothes that feel joyful but responsible. Their philosophy is simple: wearability first, waste last. Even emerging designers prioritise deadstock fabrics, repair programmes, and circular design practices.

In an era of fast fashion, microtrends and fashion fatigue, Copenhagen offers something rare: clarity. A fashion culture that celebrates longevity. And that is what gives Copenhageners their ‘effortlessly cool’ spirit that can only be replicated through intentional and ethical buying.



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