

DENMARK

Hosts with the most

In Copenhagen, a new platform called Silvers lets tourists connect with fascinating retirees

SUZANNE MORPHET
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Our first dinner in Copenhagen is in the elegant Frederiksberg neighbourhood, but not in one of its many excellent restaurants. Instead, we're heading to the home of a stranger. A woman named Mette Weber is hosting an intimate dinner party for us and half a dozen others this April evening.

All my husband and I know is that Weber is a member of an enterprise called Silvers and loves meeting new people and having deep conversations. So do we. Over decades of travel, we've experienced how hard it is as tourists to genuinely connect with locals. Chatting with a coffee barista or taxi driver doesn't quite suffice.

Weber greets us warmly and invites us to mingle with others while she prepares dinner. Her home is filled with art, including vibrant paintings and collectibles from her years living in Indonesia, Malaysia and Swaziland (now Eswatini).

The other guests are mostly visitors, ranging in age from early 20s to mid-50s, and come from Colombia, Poland, Hong Kong and the U.S. At 76, Weber is the oldest person here. And that's what we expected, because Silvers, as you probably guessed, is about giving senior citizens a way to share their life experiences with younger people.

Silvers began in 2024 after founder Francisco Tomas Ferreiros, an entrepreneur who moved to Denmark from Argentina, noticed that many retirees want to pass on a lifetime of knowledge but lack the opportunity.

"What we're doing is very simple," explains Ellie Nicholson, head of community for Silvers. "We're bringing people back around the dinner table, placing seniors in the role of host, and using food as a way to connect people."

There are similar initiatives around the world, though Silvers is unique in its focus on retirement-age hosts. In Japan, for example, Borderless Visit offers travellers the chance to dine at a stranger's home, but hosts can be any age. Internationally, the long-running, volunteer-run Servas encourages overnight stays and meal-sharing to promote cultural understanding, also with hosts of all ages.

Silvers now has more than 35 hosts, including architects, artists, a life coach, an urban designer and a sustainability expert. Guests can browse their profiles on the Silvers website and see the dates of upcoming events (mostly dinners, which cost about \$110 per person).

Over bowls of laksa (Malaysian noodle soup), we introduce ourselves, then Weber does the same. An author and columnist, she tells us how she began writing in Asia, where she'd moved for her husband's work. Without knowing the



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The dinner party at Mette Weber's home in Copenhagen. The guests were mostly travellers, coming from places like Colombia, Poland, Hong Kong and the U.S.



JESPER DALMOSE

Silvers host Jesper Dalmose is a Copenhagen-based visual artist in his 70s.

local language, she couldn't work as a nurse and became severely depressed. "So I wrote letters to friends and family, and my dad said, 'Why don't you write a book?'"

Weber now shares her passion with guests. After dinner, she gives us a seven-minute exercise where we "don't think, just write" non-stop. She tells us it will help us "get to know ourselves."

With the evening drawing to a close, I realize I'd rather get to know more about Weber than myself. She's dropped tantalizing tidbits about belonging to the Adventur-



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Mette Weber cooks dinner for guests at her home.

ers' Club of Denmark and being on the board of a group called Aeldreoporet ("the seniors' revolt"), which helps fight ageism. As a senior myself, I wonder how she's handling this stage of her life, but

there's not enough time and too many of us for me to monopolize the conversation.

A couple days later, I meet Jesper Dalmose, another Silvers host in his 70s, and I have him all to myself. A visual artist, Dalmose takes guests, usually young people, for a swim at his local beach, often under a full moon.

As I brace myself for the cold plunge — it's only the first of May — Dalmose tells me his secret for enjoying the brisk water, which he applies to aging too. "You just have to be calm and very slow," he says as we sink into the Baltic Sea. "I'm slow in anything I'm doing, and I have the feeling that life is getting longer."

Towelling off afterward, we're surrounded by a group of boisterous teens ready to swim themselves. I marvel at how easily Dalmose relates to them, agreeing to take their photos and joking in Danish. Aside from his older physique, he could be one of them. That's the lesson I take home: keep mixing with people of all ages. And don't be afraid to go into the homes of strangers.

SUZANNE MORPHET TRAVELLED WITH SOME TRIP SUPPORT FROM VISIT COPENHAGEN, WHICH DID NOT REVIEW OR APPROVE THIS ARTICLE.



SUZANNE MORPHET

A city view during the writer's Copenhagen trip in the spring.

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