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Shanghai nightlife and cool bars

Everything you need to know about Shanghai bars, discos, cool clubs, jazz venues and trendy eateries from The Bund to Pudong.

by Amy Fabris-Shi

With photography by Charlie Xia

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GRIMY COMMERCIAL hub by day, Shanghai transforms after dark into a sparkling seductress. This is a party town from way back. Yesterday's opium halls and Somerset Maughams are today's private members clubs and Giorgio Armanis. Shanghai has returned to its rightful place as one of the world's great sin cities – and one gets the feeling that the party has only just begun. Welcome to Shanghai by night.

The Bund and the beautiful

After a half-century of neglect, Shanghai's iconic Bund waterfront is being dug up and transformed into a luxurious after hours destination. Shanghai nightlife mavens can trawl posh restaurants, cocktail lounges, jazz clubs, boutique hotels, day spas and the fashion flagships dotted between old banking headquarters along the main stretch of Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu, as well as in the atmospheric backstreets. More dilapidated heritage gems are set to be gussied up by top global brands in the years to come. The thoroughfare itself is undergoing renovation for the 2010 World Expo that will see traffic diverted underground and new landscaping along the famed riverbank.



Barbarossa: chic/ photo: Barbarossa

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It's a far cry from a decade ago when restaurateur Michelle Garnaut opened Shanghai's first independent international restaurant in the old Nissin Shipping Building on the waterfront. Back then, the Bund was a long shot – but **M on the Bund** proved to be a very popular pioneer. This eminently stylish institution is still one of the Bund's best, serving contemporary European fare such as its signature slow-baked, salt-encased leg of lamb, accompanied by an excellent seasonal wine list. Downstairs, the pink-tinted **Glamour Bar** has a sophisticated 1930s vibe and excellent straight-up martinis. It also plays host to a diverse collection of artists, panel discussions, musical recitals and an annual writers' festival (tel: [86-21] 6350-9988, 7/F, 20 Guangdong Lu).

Five years after **M, Three on the Bund** opened right across the alley (tel: 6323-3355, www.threeonthebund.com, 3 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu). The Michael Graves-designed beauty is home to some of the city's top tables, an Armani flagship boutique and the first Evian spa outside France. This building is where the local cognoscenti start or, perhaps end, their Shanghai nightlife carouse, casually tousled yet immaculately chic. On the top floor, **New Heights** (tel: 6321-0909) serves Western food with a nod to Southeast Asia. It's the most casual and affordable option and boasts the best view in the house from the wraparound terrace.



Bund cool, Aqua: photo: Aqua

On the fourth floor, **Jean Georges** (tel: 6321-7733) is the three-star Michelin chef's only signature restaurant outside New York. Inspired by old Shanghai grandeur, the moody lounge is filled with pony-hair club chairs and eel-skin benches leading through to a luxurious burnished copper and cobalt blue dining room. If you're not dining on an expense account, try the Nougatine experience nightly from 6-11pm. Seated at white-clothed tables in the more relaxed bar area, you can sample a selection of JG favourites starting at just Rmb58. We recommend the black truffle and fontina pizza. This is Shanghai dining at its best.

The Gothic castle at 6 Bund (6 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu) is also home to several upscale restaurants and a couple of fun lounges. Our pick is **Japanese Sun** with **Aqua** on the second floor (tel: 6339-2779), which is remarkably good value for the Bund. Its adjoining Aquarium Bar has a cool underwater vibe, curtained beds – and sharks. The bijou **Dolce & Gabbana Martini Bar** (tel: 6323-2277) between the men's and women's D&G boutiques on the ground floor is a fashionable spot for a restorative espresso or 'tini between shopping.

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Bund 18 (tel: 6323-7066, www.bund18.com, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu), in the powder-grey neoclassical former Macquarie Bank Tower, features Hong Kong chef To Chi Hoi's trendy Cantonese cuisine at **Tai Wan Lou** (tel: 6339-1188) on the fifth floor. One floor up, **Mr and Mrs Bund** (tel: 6323-9898) is a show-stopping Shanghai restaurant. Taking a break from the molecular cuisine that made his name at **Shangri-La's Jade on 36**, French chefs Paul Pairet returns to his roots offering modern French bistro fare – some rustic, some glammed-up – with over 200 dishes meant for sharing. It is open for dinner nightly and continues as a supperclub until 4am five nights a week. Be sure to book a window seat and save room for the excellent desserts.



Bar Rouge: Sino sirens/ photo: Bar Rouge

Bund 18's top-floor **Bar Rouge** (tel: 6339-1199) is party – and promiscuity – central. Designed by Imaad Rahmouni, a protege of Starck, the bar features 33 hand-blown Venetian chandeliers, Sino sirens splashed across the walls and a scenic terrace. Between show-off bottle juggling and setting fire to the bar, the bartenders may deign to make you one of their signature ginger melon martinis. Downstairs, **Lounge 18** (tel: 6323-8399) attracts a similar crowd.

M1NT Club's venues in Hong Kong, Cannes and Shanghai are owned by shareholding members and come with an exclusive members-only door policy. The macho **Shanghai club** sprawls across a 2,000sqm, 24th-floor penthouse, offering 360-degree views from behind the Bund. It also features a 17-metre shark tank, raunchy pop art murals and shareholders-only hot tubs on the rooftop terrace. A good concierge should be able to get you in. (tel: 6391-3191, 24/F, 318 Fuzhou Lu)

LAN Club (tel: 6323-8029, 102 Guangdong Lu), which occupies an entire four-storey neoclassical mansion near the Westin hotel, is another highly ambitious mega-venue offering Chinese, French and seafood restaurants, multiple lounges and a small nightclub. Down the road, at the glorious intersection of Fuzhou and Jiangxi Lu, **Hamilton House** (tel: 6321-0586, 137 Fuzhou Lu) is a trendy French brasserie and cocktail lounge in a soaring 1934 Art Deco mansion. Their marmalade-laced Breakfast Martini is a good choice – at any time of the day.



Sasha's: colonial vibes

Just past the Bund, in the historic Hongkou district formerly home to the Japanese concession and Jewish Ghetto, **Chinatown** (tel: 6258-2078, 471 Zhapu Lu) brilliantly references Shanghai's 1930s "Sin City" days. The burlesque club transforms a heritage Shinto shrine with theatre boxes, hard-hitting cocktails and high-kicking show girls. Open Wednesdays to Saturdays, it's a bit off the beaten track but there is no cover charge and shows feature New York crooner Frank Brae, Shanghai acrobats and a six-strong chorus line. Good fun.

Highs and lows in Pudong

Pudong has perked up considerably and some of the Shanghai nightlife throb has moved here. It is steadily becoming a viable option for a good night out. Park Hyatt's **100 Century Avenue** (tel: 6888-1234, 91-93F, Shanghai World Financial Centre, 100 Century Ave, Pudong) is the highest restaurant and bar on the planet, stretching from the 91st to 93rd floors of the 101-storey Shanghai World Financial Centre. Despite its high profile, it's not the least bit highfaluting. Filling the 91st floor is a very cool and convivial tavern with Western, Chinese and Japanese show kitchens and a 750-label cellar. The à la carte menu here allows you to mix-and-match different cuisines, and highlights top quality produce including seven types of US oysters, Australian Wagyu beef and fresh fish from Tokyo's Tsujiki Market. The 92nd floor hosts a jazz bar and quieter **Oriental lounge** with a small dance floor and ballroom dancing four nights a week, while the uppermost level is a private dining space for 100 people adorned in mod-Nordic style and lorded over by mischievous ceramic mooseheads.

In the basement of the **Shanghai World Financial Centre** (2/B, 100 Century Ave, Pudong), celebrity chef Salvatore Cuomo's 3,000sqm upmarket food hall incorporates eight different restaurants including an Italian Restaurant and Grill, Japanese Yakiniku, Crystal Jade dim sum counter and a relaxing lounge bar. Gourmet European grocer Bottega is a great place to pick up picnic supplies.

Tucked away by the riverside behind the Oriental Pearl Tower is Salvatore Cuomo's original Pudong location, **The Kitchen** (tel: 5054-1265, Unit D, 2967 Lujiazui Xi Lu), another Shanghai dining favourite. The airy Italian is a great place for sundowner drinks looking across the water to Puxi, and its woodfired oven turns out arguably the city's best pizza.

Pudong Shangri-La's penthouse bar is another destination in its own right offering creative cocktails and jaw-dropping views. Downstairs, the Japanese institution **Nadaman** serves teppanyaki and yakitori in a Zen-like setting with sleek granite surfaces and big paper lanterns. **Yi Café** is buffet brilliance, with 10 show kitchens presenting cuisines from China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. (tel: 6882-8888, Pudong Shangri-La, 33 Fucheng Lu, Pudong).



Hamilton House: photo: Hamilton

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For laid-back happy hour drinks, head to **Blue Frog** alongside the enormous Super Brand Mall. This popular Shanghai chain offers 2-for-1 house pours daily from 4-8pm, good burgers, free Wi-Fi and a pleasant terrace surrounded by skyscrapers.

Playtime in People's Park

Constructing an Arabian palace on historic green space in the heart of the city was a questionable move by Shanghai's town planners – but the party people aren't complaining. Deep in People's Park, on the edge of a still lake, candlelit **Barbarossa** (tel: 6318-0220, 231 Nanjing Lu) glimmers like a mirage. Step inside to find three storeys of maharajah chic filled with North African antiques and the European trip-hop beats. Food and service can be lacklustre but you won't much care after a cappuccino-flavoured sheesha pipe on the terracotta rooftop.

The same group has also opened a sprawling club next door to the Four Seasons. **Sin** (tel: 6267 7779, 23/F, 211 Shimen Yi Lu) lives up to its name with a suitably decadent design incorporating a dance floor, hot pink cushiony nooks and city views from the 23rd floor.

On the rooftop of the old British Racing Club, now the Shanghai Art Museum, **Kathleen's 5** (tel: 6327-2221, 5/F, Shanghai Art Museum, 325 Nanjing Xi Lu) is an elegant restaurant in a glassed-encased terrace beneath the original clock tower. The food plays second fiddle to the ambience. **The Backroom Bar** is a charming place for cocktails and the occasional tango milonga.



DR Bar. Minimalist venue

Also on People's Square, JW Marriott's 40th-floor **Champagne Bar** (tel: 5359-4969, 399 Nanjing Xi Lu) is a top spot to kick back in style and drink in the vertiginous views of the Square (which is actually round) and the city radiating beyond. It's a good spot to contemplate your Shanghai nightlife options.

Shikumen chic – Xintiandi bars and clubs

Site of the Communist Party's first clandestine meeting in 1921, the 19th century shikumen neighbourhood of Xintiandi (Lane 181, Taicang Lu) is now a hub for all manner of glamorous delights. If you have the cash, you can't really go wrong with the venues here – there are more Shanghai dining options here than you can shake a stick at – but some are more memorable than others.

T8 (tel: 6355-8999, No 8, North Block Xintiandi) serves global cuisine in a lacquered Zen setting, with an impressive list of boutique wines. If you're craving Chinese, Xintiandi has two worth trying: **Crystal Jade** (tel: 6385-8752) and **Din Tai Fung** (tel: 6385-8378). Casual American bistro **KABB** has a faithful following and great hangover brunches on weekends.

Fans of Liuligongfang will love Taiwanese owner Yang Hui Shan's showcase restaurant **TMSK** (tel: 6326-2227, www.tmsk.com, Unit 2, House 11, North Block).

Perch on a crystal stool at the bar or head up the carved staircase to a sumptuous dining room complete with musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments on a small stage.

The dark, sultry **DR Bar** (tel: 6326 8008, House 15, North Block) next door is owned by the architects of the Xintiandi development, Ben Wood and Carlos Zapata.



Cotton's: Warm elegance

Their minimalist venue showcases design materials sourced in China, from the ink stone slabs to the trio of vodka shooters served in a Chinese "cricket jar".

To the manor born in the former French Concession

Shanghai bars and restaurants have made full use of the city's rich architectural heritage and many of the city's finest old villas are now atmospheric tipping grounds.

Private members club **KEE Shanghai** (tel: 3395-0888, 3/F, 796 Huaihai Lu) occupies the upper floors of twin 1920s French Concession villas just off Huaihai Lu. The club is part of Richemont Group's luxury headquarters, and sits above flagship 'homes' of Alfred Dunhill and Vacheron Constantin. Its classic European restaurant and luxe scarlet lounge adorned with art and antiques, lead out to a colonnaded balcony overlooking a quiet garden. A good concierge should be able to get you in to this posh Shanghai dining venue.

Sasha's (tel: 6474-66289, Dongping Lu) has been the long-time resident of a big red villa formerly home to the infamous Soong family. The bar offers a relaxed, colonial vibe, pool table, reasonable happy hours and an expansive courtyard with comfy wicker chairs. Steakhouse, **Prime**, sits on the second floor. Sharing the garden, Mexican cantina **Zapata's** (tel: 6474-6166, 5 Hengshan Lu) is still the place to be on Wednesdays – free margaritas for the girls, '80s house music and dancing on the bartop assured.



Cocktail gem **Constellation II** (tel: 5465 5993, 1-2/F, 33 Yongjia Lu) is a more refined affair. Taking its interior cues from the roaring 1930s its

two floors joined by a spiral staircase are filled with quiet nooks and leather armchairs bathed in the glow of antique lampshades. Immaculate cocktails are shaken by Japanese-trained barman/owner, Kin. Down the road in a two-storey heritage villa on quiet Anting Lu, **Cotton's** exudes warmth, with four open fireplaces, a large garden terrace and genuinely friendly vibe (tel: 6433-7995, 132 Anting Lu).



Let your hair down at Zapata's

Another alfresco Shanghai dining option is **A Future Perfect** in the popular B&B, Old House (tel: 6248-8020, No 16, Lane 351 Huashan Lu). Awholesome, organic approach is evident in the recycled decor and a healthy menu of steaks, salads and smoothies. Best of all is the spacious walled garden under a leafy canopy where Panton-inspired cantilevered chairs and a futuristic outdoor bar are strikingly juxtaposed against the original 1930s facade.

South Beauty 881 (tel: 6247-6682; 881 Yan'an Zhong Lu) combines artfully presented Sichuan and Cantonese dishes and cutting-edge designs by Japanese architects SuperPotato. But the real gem is the property's original 1930s mansion, home to 19 dramatically decorated private dining rooms around a lipstick-red bar. Rooms seat from two to fifty people and there's a lovely rooftop terrace.

Another excellent option with an Asean kick is **Lost Heaven** (tel: 6433-5126, 38 Gaoyou Lu). Tracing the folk cuisines of the Dai, Bai and Mao ethnic hill tribes through China's Yunnan province and into Burma and Laos, the richly spiced curries are served in a suitably exotic villa setting.



TB: Trendy haunt/ photo: TB

Casa 13 (tel: 5238-2782, Rm 13, 1100 Huashan Lu) is a dash of Mediterranean in the courtyard of a heritage Spanish villa. This warm, romantic venue with chandeliers strung from high ceilings serves hearty seafood, roasted meats, risottos and pasta, accompanied by an impressive wine list. The Casa's owner Eduardo Vargas, is a Shanghai dining powerhouse – among his other popular Shanghai restaurants are **Vargas Grill** (tel: 6437-0136, 3/F, 18 Dongping Lu), **Bistro Burger** (tel: 6170-1315, 1/F, Mansion, 291 Fumin Lu) and **Osteria** (tel: 6256-8998, 226 Jinxian Lu), where the excellent Rmb198 Italian *prix fixe* menu is complemented by a well-priced wine list.

Catalan chef Willy Trullàs Moreno helms delightful villa restaurant, **El Willy** (tel: 5404-5757, 1/F, Diage, 20 Donghu Lu). Innovative dishes on the menu here include scallop with ceviche, avocado and crispy shallots, and chocolate coulant with green tea ice cream and tomato cardamom jam. Atucked-away garden hosts alfresco seating and occasional organic farmers markets.

Designer Wang Xingzheng has a passion for Chinese culture and his three bars should not be missed. **Yongfoo Elite** (tel: 5466-2727, www.yongfoelite.com, 200 Yongfu Lu) is a rarefied members club in the old British consulate evoking the Shanghai of popular imagination rendered in mahogany, old leather, crystal chandeliers and Chinese lanterns. The Shanghainese cuisine is nothing to write home about, but an evening spent draped across a canopy bed in the garden sipping gin-and-tonic and listening to Beijing opera in the background certainly is. **The Door**, way out in Hongqiao (tel: 6295-3737, 4/F, 1468 Hongqiao Lu), and Xian Qiang Fang (tel: 6351-5757, 5/F, 600 Jiujiang Lu), located in an old theatre near People's Square, are similarly decadent.

A walk on the wild side – Julu Lu and Tongren Lu

Time to dive into the seed or, at any rate, skirt past it. That's right. The cheap lipstick heart of Shanghai nightlife, **Julu Lu** caters to all tastes. Near the junction of Changshu Lu is a row of down-at-heel girlie bars with names like **Goodfellas** and **Badlands** and propositions by the yard. However, the **Fumin Lu** end is infinitely classier. For its jaw-dropping industrial-chic interior and nouvelle Japanese cuisine, book one of the mezzanine tables at **Shintori Null II** (tel: 5404 5252, 803 Julu Lu). The same group also owns bar/restaurant **People 7** (tel: 5404-0707) next door, known for its fun password-protected entrance and trick toilets.



Blue Frog / photo: Blue Frog

Nearby, an old electronics factory retains its buzz as the well-heeled watering hole **Manifesto** (tel: 6289-9108, 748 Julu Lu). Be sure to try one of their creative cocktails like the Belgian white chocolate martini. The downstairs restaurant, **Mesa**, has a good modern Australian menu and fabulous weekend brunches.

For booze, babes and beats, the seedy masses head to **Tongren Lu** bar street. The most sophisticated of the bunch, **Blue Frog** (tel: 6247-0320, 86 Tongren Lu) wins points for its slick but super-casual ambience, daily happy hours (4-8pm) and famous 100 shooters. Within stumbling distance, **Malone's** (tel: 6247-2400, 255 Tongren Lu) is a beefy American bar popular with the beer-swilling masses for its super burgers, sports and Filipino house band. The top floor of this massive bar has been refitted as a slightly more sophisticated chill-out zone, complete with a country-western crooner. **Big Bamboo** (tel: 6256-2265, 132 Nanyang Lu) and **The Spot** (tel: 6247-3579, 331 Tongren Lu) kick on until late with a variety of sports on big screens, bar sports and beer swilling.

Also on Tongren Lu, **City Diner** (6289-3699, 2/F, 146 Tongren Lu) is open 24 hours. Their hearty portions of all-American comfort food go down a treat after a long night of drinking.

Shanghai clubbing – dance until dawn

Packed to the gills and reeking of parfum and pretension, the enormously popular **Baby Face** (tel: 6375-6667, Unit 101, 138 Huaihai Zhong Lu) consists of two separate dance areas, a central bar that you'll be lucky to get to and exclusive mezzanine lounges requiring a Rmb2,500-Rmb3,500 minimum order. There's a cover charge on weekends, brutish bouncers manning the door and floor, and a largely local crowd.

In Fuxing Park (2 Gaolan Lu), **Muse at Park 97** (tel: 5383-2328) and club **Guandii** (tel: 3308-0725) attract a glittery Chinese crowd – don't forget your dice and aviator specs. **Velvet Lounge** (tel: 5403-2976, Bldg 3-4, 913 Julu Lu) is a favourite late-night lounge for expats and locals alike with curtained enclaves, a DJ, dance floor and great thin-crust gourmet pizzas.

MAO (tel: 138160-95660, 46 Yueyang Lu) stands for Music Art Oasis, and features a recycled chrome and concrete interior, all-natural cocktails and a grassy backyard chill-out zone. At the end of the night head to the tiny **Dragon Club** (tel: 5404-4592, 156 Fengyang Lu), which kicks on until 7am at weekends.

Mellow mood – all that jazz

Shanghai and jazz are synonymous and two of the city's best-loved live jazz clubs are within a stone's throw of each other on Fuxing Lu. The plush **JZ Club** (tel: 6431-0269, 46 Fuxing Xi Lu) hosts a varied weekly line-up of vocal jazz, Big Band, Latin and Shanghai jazz, headlined by popular Shanghai-based musicians, such as flamboyant Chinese vocalist Coco Zhao and guitarist Lawrence Ku, while the long-running **Cotton Club** (tel: 6437-71108, Fuxing Xi Lu) is a much rawer venue with a dark, smoky interior and righteous blues.

In a heritage villa behind the Bund, **House of Blues & Jazz** (tel: 6323-2779, 60 Fuzhou Lu) revives the golden Shanghai Jazz Age, complete with wood-panelled walls, art deco furnishings, fat cigars and stiff G&Ts. The musical roster brings top jazz and blues bands from the international circuit for three-month stints, along with 'mellow Monday' gigs by local performers, and jam sessions on Sundays.

For the full Shanghai feast, pick up Silk Guide's handy, pocket-sized **Shanghai Eat & Drink Guide**, packed with 120 Chinese and international restaurants, cafes and bars, along with dumping kiosks, finest Bund vantages, Chinese cooking schools, places kids will love to eat, best-of lists and much more. Order online at www.silkguides.com for free delivery to your hotel room or residence.

Shanghai nightlife waits for nobody, so strap on your beer goggles and enjoy the ride.

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Future Perfect/ photo: Future Perfect



South Beauty: Sichuan fare