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Notes

NIGHT+DAY LONDON

Ins and Outs

Noteworthy Additions, Changes, and Closures from publication date through December 31, 2008

Key to Night+Day Symbols

Restaurants

Singles-friendly

- Communal table
- Food served at bar

(G) Gourmet destination

Nightlife

*Includes bars, clubs,
and entertainment*

- Cover or ticket charge
(otherwise, entry is free)

Restaurants + Nightlife

Prime-time noise levels

- Quiet
- A buzz, but still conversational
- Loud

Venues followed by an asterisk (*) are those we recommend as both a restaurant and a destination bar.

Key to Pricing

Hotels

Best deluxe room

£	£100–£199
££	£200–£299
£££	£300–£399
££££	£400 and up

Restaurants

Main course

£–	less than £10
£	£10–£19
££	£20–£29
£££	£30–£39
££££	£40 and up

Attractions

Entry or service

£–	less than £10
£	£10–£19
££	£20–£29
£££	£30–£39
££££	£40 and up

The Night+Day promise

Night+Day writers and editors use the same high standards in selecting and researching venues to be included in our Ins and Outs updates as we do for our books. Our local correspondents determine which new hot spots are the real deal and which are simply hype—just as you'd expect from Night+Day—to provide the kind of reliable information you need to make the best possible choices.

NightandDayGuides.com

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Kokon To Zai • Soho • Shop

Kokon To Zai is one of those little treasure troves that you'd have a hard time finding were it not for word of mouth. Tucked between hairdressers and cafés on a Soho side street, this miniature concept store stocks a quirky mix of nonetheless cutting-edge fashion from the likes of Marjan Pejoski, Vivienne Westwood, and Bernard Willhelm, as well as various other trinkets. The fact that the latest designers, fresh out of St. Martin, are usually seen here first has made it something of a reference point, so their own newly available label, KTZ, should be one to watch. The staff may seem to be too busy spinning vinyl to take any notice of you, but will happily strike up conversation about what's hot and what's not at the drop of an haute couture hat. *Mon-Sat 11am-7:30pm, Sun noon-6pm. 57 Greek St., W1D (Tottenham Court Road), 020-7434-1316, kokontozai.co.uk*

Neroli • Out-of-City • Spa

Definitely off the beaten track, this spa warrants a trip out to the quiet corner of southeast London for its excellent treatments and products. Increasingly hip holistic methods and organic ingredients are the name of the game here, as are the usual pedicures, hair removal, and tanning. The intimate décor, with muted floral motifs, soft lighting, and an ethnic feel, strikes the perfect balance of understated chic. Due to its location, the clientele are mostly 30-something local women, but men are not forgotten—there are a number of treatments available for the modern male, too. *Tue-Thu 9:30am-9pm, Fri 9:30am-7pm, Sat 9:30am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm. ££££ 43 Honor Oak Park, SE23 (Honor Oak Park Rail), 020-8699-9496, neroli-skincare.co.uk*

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of sauce and seasoning. It's enormously popular with refined lunching ladies and media types, so reservations are absolutely essential. *Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. ££* ☐ 20_22 Queen St. (Green Park), 020-7592-1222, gordonramsay.com/murano

Wild Honey • Mayfair • Modern European

With its wood-paneled walls, this Mayfair haunt has a cozy, clubby feel without being old-fashioned, thanks to contemporary white-and-eggplant-colored furniture and splashes of modern art. It's not the location alone that brings the locals in droves: impeccable asset managers, art dealers, and leisured types. The sensibly priced food is imaginative—think mackerel tartare or wild rabbit with foie gras boudin blanc—and just as much care has gone into the wine list, much of which is available in small carafes. If you haven't reserved, your best chance of snapping a coveted booth is Sunday. *Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm, Sun 12:30–3:30pm and 5:30–9:30pm. £–* = 12 St. George St. (Green Park), 020-7758-9160, wildhoneyrestaurant.co.uk

Classic London Attractions

Concrete • Soho • Shop

Carnaby Street may have been the place to be for London's snappy dressers back in the 60s, but the shops you find there these days are sadly starting to resemble those found on Oxford Street—far too mainstream, daahling. A few blocks toward Soho, however, there are a number of independent designers and compact concept stores that are keeping the area's tradition for cool threads alive. Concrete is among the best here, with an eclectic blend of men's and women's clothing from international designers and labels, such as Gaspard Yurkievich, Unconditional and Preen, as well as a horde of accessories and jewelry. The overall feel is a unique collision of street wear and couture, with oversized hoodies sharing racks with cashmere sweaters and tailored jackets. Amazingly, there always seems to be a sale on, and the staff are pleasantly chatty. *Mon–Fri 11am–7pm, Sat 11am–6:30pm. 35a Marshall St. (Oxford Circus), 020-7434-4546, concretelondon.com*

Kew Gardens • Out-of-City • Garden

The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew date from the 18th century, with both remarkable flora and listed greenhouses, follies, and bridges. Of more recent interest, however, is the breathtaking Xstrata Treetop Walkway, whose meandering path through the canopies gives a true bird's eye view of things. For the worm's eye view, the Rhizotron display delves below the roots. Other human-made highlights include the steamy Palm House and its new aquarium, and the impressive Pagoda. Best of all, however, are the stunning year-round displays of flower and foliage. *Apr–early Sep: Mon–Fri 9:30am–6pm, Sat–Sun and public holidays 9:30am–7pm. Early Sep–late Mar: Daily 9:30am–3:45pm. £* [Kew, Richmond \(Kew Gardens\), 020-8332-5655, kew.org](http://Kew, Richmond (Kew Gardens), 020-8332-5655, kew.org)

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Hot & Cool London Hotels

City Inn Westminster • Westminster • Modern (460 rms)

Despite its vast size and ultra-modern, office-block appearance, the City Inn doesn't compromise anything in the way of personality or comfort. The rooms have all the mod cons and minimalist décor that you'd expect, as well as a few pleasant surprises that you wouldn't. The building itself has been cleverly designed so that all rooms have excellent views and plenty of natural light, while the famed 18-inch-thick walls ensure ultimate peace and quiet. Each room has its own iMac, Sky, and free Wi-Fi, as well as gorgeous bathrooms equipped with power-showers and stocked with toiletries from the White Company. With its own sleek lounge bar, Continental-style restaurant with terrace and impressive business suites, the City Inn attracts a lot of savvy locals and suits from the city, while the international guests reflect its location—the Tate, Houses of Parliament, and the London Eye are a few of the landmarks on its doorstep. £££ 30 John Islip St. (Pimlico), 020.7630.1000, cityinn.com/London

The Haymarket • Westminster • Trendy (20 rms)

A historic Nash building in the heart of theatreland gets the Tim and Kit Kemp treatment: liberal use of color, a judicious mix of cutting-edge designer and antique furniture, plenty of contemporary art, and a dash of wit for good measure. The thoughtfully equipped and individually styled rooms have everything from the world's largest headboards to TVs at the foot of the bath and bespoke products by perfumer Lynn Harris; book 100 or 101 (junior suites) for access to the tiny inner courtyard. Keep fit in the Busby Berkeley-esque basement pool or join the sleek crowd of actors and theatre-goers in the gloriously magenta Brumus Bar. £££ 1 Suffolk Pl. (Piccadilly Circus), 020.7470.4000 / 800.553.6674, firmdale.com

Foxtrot Oscar • Chelsea • British

We were beginning to worry that Gordon Ramsay's international fame and fortune had gone to his head. Foxtrot Oscar is another British restaurant hot on the heels of a string of patriotic gastropubs from the hotheaded chef's empire. Our suspicions that his record had its needle stuck were banished, however, with the news of his next restaurants set to open before the end of summer 2008, both Italian. All this is not to damn the food at Foxtrot Oscar, as it's of his usual high standards. It's just that we Brits are starting to tire of institutional classics, such as the battered hake with chips and mushy peas on offer here, delicious all the same. The British theme continues with the prim and proper décor of smart striped wallpaper and the carefully trimmed box topiary outside. As such, the whole experience seems to be a hit with the foreign clientele, but perhaps that was the plan all along. *Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6–10pm, Sat–Sun noon–4pm and 6–10pm.* £ ☐ 79 Royal Hospital Rd. (Sloane Sq.), 020-7352-4448, gordonramsay.com/foxtrotoscar

The Green Room • Hampstead • Continental

Booking a table at the Green Room is like being invited to a friend's house for dinner. The first thing to give this impression is the warm welcome from the bubbly owners—regardless of where you are from you are treated like a neighbor. The place itself is a home away from home with its cozy blend of rusticity and elegance, with simple wooden tables and chairs sharing the space with smart flocked wallpaper and a chandelier. Most comforting of all though, is the food. It's unfussy, with lighthearted takes on various European dishes. While the menu is never the same twice, firm favorites, like the surprisingly hearty fish pie, replete with mussels and langoustines, or the rich boeuf bourguignon, are set to stay. A lot of the diners are local, always a good sign, with cocktail-sipping groups of 30-somethings on the weekend giving way to quieter guests during the week. *Tue–Fri 6:30–11:30pm, Sat 2:30am–midnight, Sun 10:30am–5pm.* ££ ☐ 182 Broadhurst Gardens (West Hampstead), 020-7372-8188

Kazans • Out-of-City • Turkish

Kazans proves that, contrary to popular belief, there is some seriously good Turkish cuisine in the capital. This small, simply decorated dining room and bar may be a bit of a trek from the center, but the easygoing 30-something locals you'll find here know they're on to a good thing. Expect appetizing mezze followed by dishes of copious quantities of charcoal-grilled meats and vegetables, fiery with spices and slick with yogurt. *Mon–Fri 6–11pm, Sat–Sun 5–11pm.* £ ☐ 607–609 Garratt Ln. (Wimbledon Park), 020.8739.0055, kazans.com

Murano • Mayfair • Italian

Backed by the ever-present Gordon Ramsay, top female chef Angela Hartnett returns to the scene with her own restaurant. Murano, despite the hype, is remarkably unpretentious: the calm interior of creams very conservatively embellished with soft green and gold trim, and only the most demure of chandeliers. The food, however, warrants attention. Like all great Italian cuisine, the flavors and quality of the ingredients steal the show. No fads here, just perfectly executed cooking. There's great use of regional produce, from Cornish red mullet to Scottish beef, all served with flavor-packed vegetables and judicious use

Classic London Hotels

The Rockwell • South Kensington • Timeless (40 rms)

While it's hardly rare to find a four-star hotel in South Kensington, the Rockwell is one of few that is independently owned. The décor may not have the wow factor of more palatial residences, but the pleasing mismatch of different styles gives it the relaxed feel of a decadent home, which presumably the Victorian building once was. All the rooms are unique and, with the exception of occasionally loud floral prints, share a clean, muted aesthetic and absolute quiet. Kitted out with all the usual mod cons, White Company toiletries, and broadband, there is only shortcoming may be the absence of bathtubs; but we guess the largely business clientele wouldn't find the time for a soak anyway. Of worthy mention are the top floor's mezzanine suites with huge windows, and the ground-floor rooms' private patios. The latter back on to a secluded terrace, which catches the sun for lunch and is fashionably lit for dinner and cocktails by huge glowing pots of bamboo. ££ 181 Cromwell Rd. (Earl's Ct.), 020-7244-2000, therockwellhotel.com

Classic London Restaurants

Bull & Last • Hampstead • Gastropub

There's something comfortingly countrified about the Bull & Last. The proximity to Hampstead Heath and the appeal of the eccentric mismatch of furniture and furnishings certainly has something to do with it, but the real rustic charm comes from the hearty fare and proper regional English ales. Native meaty dishes such as roast beef or ox cheek jostle for popularity with a few French classics such as the bolstering cassoulet. This is not your average pub grub: The ingredients are regionally sourced from respectable farms and chalked up on a blackboard for all to see. The place is packed with down-to-earth locals and Heath visitors on the weekends, so come by midday if you're after a table for lunch. *Mon-Sat 11am-11pm, Sun 11am-10:30pm. Food served Mon-Fri noon-3pm and 6:30-10pm, Sat noon-10pm, Sun noon-9:30pm.* £ ☎ 168 Highgate Rd. (Kentish Town), 020.7267.3641, thebullandlast.co.uk

The Fountain • St. James's • Modern British

Fortnum's regulars can relax. David Collins' restrained makeover of the venerable store's Fountain restaurant is wittily pretty, with its clean lines softened by crystal chandeliers, antiqued mirror columns, and judicious amounts of pink, from the marble bar to the leather seats. The menu of updated British classics doesn't disappoint, either: ham-hock terrine, steak-and-mushroom pie, and fruit crumble are immaculate, pulling off the tricky task of pleasing the old-guard of clients while creating new fans among the gilded Mayfair youth. Lunch early or late to miss the worst of the crowds. *Mon-Sat 7:30am-11pm, Sun noon-5:30pm.* £ ☎ Fortnum & Mason, 181 Piccadilly (Green Park), 020-7734-8040, fortnumandmason.com

The Levin • Knightsbridge • Modern (12 rms)

Champagne bars in the rooms, contemporary décor with a soft edge, and just 12 rooms: This boutique hideaway in the shadow of Harrods is a stylish home away from home. The sophisticated palette of pistachio, teal, and fawn in the Deco-influenced lobby is echoed in several of the rooms; others have splashes of claret or cherry. All, however, have state-of-the-art electronic gadgetry, superb showers, and flattering lighting. Book the sole suite for a bit of extra legroom, and be sure to try a bottle of the Levin's organic Sauvignon Blanc from the owner's own vineyard. As for the guests, they're a mixed bunch: young business types, as well as well-heeled older leisure travelers from abroad. What they have in common is a taste for the intimacy and privacy of a tiny city bolt hole. £££ 28 Basil St., (Knightsbridge), 020.7589.6286, thelevinhotel.co.uk

Hot & Cool London Restaurants

The Botanist • Chelsea • British

The Botanist is imbued with that rare essence of a perfect English summer. The soft greens and creams, natural wood, and botanical and zoological prints combine for contemporary elegance with a nod to the past. The menu succeeds in achieving the same: top-notch regional ingredients, such as Aberdeen Angus and Irish rock oysters, get a little Continental treatment without detracting too much from tradition. With breakfast running into lunch, and lunch to dinner via afternoon tea, there's a steady flow of well-heeled West Londoners and discerning tourists throughout the day, though mid-week dinners are quieter. *Mon-Fri 8am-11:30pm, Sat-Sun 9am-11:30pm.* £££ ☎ 7 Sloane Sq. (Sloane Sq.), 020.7730.0077, thebotanistonsloanesquare.com

Haiku • Mayfair • Pan-Asian

Asian food and "grazing menus" are both wildly fashionable at the moment, so any place that combines the two is a sure-fire hit, even more so when it looks this gorgeous. The three dimly lit rooms gleam with tropical hardwoods, marble, and stone, the result of a £3-million refurbishment to re-create the original Haiku in Capetown. On Thursday and Friday evenings in particular, the place buzzes with equally glossy, slim-hipped diners sharing small plates of everything from soft-shell crab tempura to Thai red duck curry from an extensive and geographically wide-reaching menu. There's a good selection of South African wines by the glass. *Mon-Sat noon-3pm and 6-11pm.* ££ ☎ 15 New Burlington Pl. (Oxford Circus), 020.7494.4777, haikurestaurant.com

L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon • Covent Garden • Modern French

One of the most hotly anticipated openings this year, super-chef Joël Robuchon's sexy take on Japanese-style counter eating has been pulling in a young and fashionable media crowd since day one. The décor, too, is sophisticatedly Oriental—all rich reds, black lacquer, and dark wood—but the food, prepared in front of the customers at the central bar, is definitely French. Mix and match from the list of small dishes, but make sure one of them is truffle-marinated potato. The noise of happy chatter peaks at around 8pm, but arrive early for a lemon and thyme martini in the rooftop bar. *Mon-Sat noon-3pm and 5:30am-midnight, Sun noon-3pm and 5:30-10:30pm.* ££ ☎ 13-15 West St., WC2 (Leicester Square), 020.7010.8600, robuchon.com

L'Autre Pied • Marylebone • Modern European

Join the frugal-ish foodies and well-heeled Harley Street doctors who've been packing into this eagerly awaited Marylebone eatery (little brother of two-Michelin-starred Pied à Terre) since opening day. Here the vibe is less formal, courtesy of an expertly mismatched interior of Oriental wall coverings, funky red leather banquettes, and cool lightboxes that is more brasserie than fine-dining. The food, however, is as complex, polished, and superbly flavored as at Pied à Terre, and just as carefully presented. Portions are dainty enough to leave room for dessert, of which bitter chocolate mousse with orange ice cream is the star. *Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6–10:45pm, Sat 6–10:45pm. ££* ☒ 5–7 Blandford St. (Marble Arch), 020.7486.9696, lautrepied.co.uk

La Petite Maison • Mayfair • Mediterranean

Not far from the upscale shopping delights of Bond Street, this light and bright newcomer—lots of crisp white napery and frosted glass—has an interesting pedigree: It's the baby sister to the Nice hot spot by the same name, and one co-owner also backs hotter-than-hot Zuma and Roka. The Nice original is a celebrity hangout; here the well-heeled clientele ranges from immaculately groomed ladies who lunch to besuited financiers and elegant young things from Sotheby's. The superb Mediterranean cuisine is apparently intended for sharing; fine for the hors d'oeuvres but best ignored for the smallish entrées. The terrace is packed at the first hint of sun. *Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 7–11pm, Sat 7–11pm. ££* ☒ 54 Brooks Mews (Bond St.), 020.7495.4774, lplondon.com

The Landau • Marylebone • Modern European

Interiors supremo David Collins does it again with this glamorously exotic dining room in the revamped Langham Hotel. The lush but airy “contemporary Oriental” décor—think jade and gold-embossed leather, burnished wood panels, and antique Chinese chandeliers, not to mention Vera Wang crockery—provides the perfect setting for business types and well-heeled gourmets here for the lavish grazing menu of classy modern European mini-dishes. Among the many winners: pumpkin soup, crepes, and quail egg; and roast breast of Challans duck, parsnip purée, and sweet meat sauce. Book well ahead if you want a table in the large bow window. *Mon–Sat 12:30–2:30pm and 5:30–11pm, Sun 12:30–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm. ££* ☒ Langham Hotel, 1c Portland Pl. (Oxford Circus), 020.7965.0165, thelandau.com

The Mercer • The City • British

The City's never been short on smart little places for power lunches and after-work drinks, so new pretenders on the scene need a special formula to attract the area's discerning business-people. The Mercer looks to be promising, with a large open-plan dining space that balances tradition and contemporary style and appears to be a hit with the younger, design-loving city-slickers. The bachelor-esque blend of white walls, dark wood, and black leather banquettes would be rather gloomy were it not for the tall windows and mirrors that instill the place with a certain elegance. The menu also caters to masculine palates, with resolutely British comfort food such as roast lamb with minted peas, and a steak, mushroom, and ale pie, occasionally giving way to lighter, Mediterranean-influenced dishes. Far more impressive, though, is the diverse wine list, its bottles including organic wines, British wines (yes they exist!), and Pétrus to blow the bonus on. *Mon–Fri 7:30–10am, noon–3pm and 5:30–9:30pm. £* ☒ 34 Threadneedle St. (Bank), 020.7628.0001, th Mercer.co.uk

T bar • Hoxton • Lounge

While tea is on offer here (in the daytime at least), the name refers to the building's former incarnation as a tea emporium. After a few teething problems this Soho nightspot, much more than a bar, has come of age, attracting some of the best names in new DJs, with queues that fill the street most nights of the week. The flora and fauna spotted here may not be as edgy as they used to be, but they are certainly still a very well-dressed lot, ranging from hip young Shoreditch scenesters to a more sophisticated crowd also seen at neighboring Shoreditch House. The warehouse-style basement lounge also doubles as an unusual diner in the daytime, serving up a healthy selection of sandwiches, soups, and salads. *Mon–Fri 9–11am and noon–4pm. Bar/club night varies, generally Wed–Sun 8am–2am; check website for details.* ☒ 56 Shoreditch High St., (Old St.), 020-7729-2973, tbarlondon.com

Water Poet* • Spitalfields • Pub Grub

At first glance, the Water Poet seems like just another traditional boozier, albeit a smart one, tucked between corporate life in the city and trendier goings-on in Spitalfields and Shoreditch. But inside, it's a thoroughly modern gastropub with a beer garden, poolroom, and theatre—and even live cabaret on Saturday nights. Weekdays mean a suited after-work crowd, while weekends see market shoppers dropping in for a bite of lunch and the trendy denizens of the “ditch” kicking off nights out with a pint or two. *Mon–Fri 11am–11pm, Sat noon–11pm, Sun noon–10:30pm.* ☒ 9–11 Folgate St., E1 (Liverpool St.), 087.1971.4489

Hip London Attractions

The Beauty Lounge • Soho • Spa

This cult beauty palace, known for its high-quality therapies and individual make-up sessions, has moved into glamorous new premises in Kingly Court, the hip courtyard mall just off Carnaby Street. The look is 1940s Hollywood, but the treatments are thoroughly of the moment, from formaldehyde-free manicures to Ole Henriksen facials. The real draw, however, is the make-up lessons, where you can learn to create the latest looks from a make-up artist who works regularly for the glossies and for stars such as Keira Knightley and Scarlett Johansson, or just sit back and let them do it for you. *Mon and Fri 11am–7pm, Tue–Thu 10am–8pm, Sat 11am–6pm. £££* 1 Kingly Ct., (Oxford Circus), 020-7734-6161, beautyounge.co.uk

The Convenience Store • Notting Hill • Store

The rather facetiously named Convenience Store brings a dash of avant-garde style to the sartorial retro of nearby Portobello Road and its surroundings. The interior itself is uncompromisingly modern, if a little bleak, entirely clad as it is in concrete. The women's clothes here add the color, along with some seriously sharp tailoring from the likes of AF Vandervorst, Rick Owens, Veronique Branquinho, and plenty of other designers only the truly fashion-savvy have heard of. The vibe, however—as the name would suggest—is refreshingly unpretentious and accessible for such cutting-edge fashion. *Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.* 1a Hazelwood Tower, Golborne Gardens, (Westbourne Park), 020.8968.9095

membership gains you access to the rooftop terraces that are the building's trump card. The Jacuzzi, sun loungers, and a tented, cushion-filled lounge, make for a rather surreal blend of Balearic beach party and South London skyline. Members can also get 20% off the luxurious rooms upstairs that usually cater to visiting DJs, the largest of which is equipped with a four-poster bed, a vast tub, and its own set of decks. *Mon–Thu noon–midnight, Fri noon–4am, Sat 11am–4am, Sun 11am–midnight. Members 24 hours.* ☎ 467-469 Brixton Rd. (Brixton), 020-7326-4455, dexclub.co.uk

The Eagle • Clerkenwell • Pub

The Eagle has had a reputation as a cruisy yet decent gay pub for years, basking as it does in the pink glow from nearby Vauxhall. The leather and uniform parties have been relegated to weeknights these days, making way for a more casually attired and truly mixed crowd on the weekends. Sunday's famed Horse Meat Disco and the once-a-month Saturday night Carpet Burn see geeky hipsters, straight couples, and outrageous drag queens tearing up the dance floor to anything from indie to disco and clearly loving it. Special mention must go to the terrace out in back, as it's the perfect chill-out spot throughout the year, thanks to its funky gas-flame heaters. *Mon–Thu 9pm–2am, Fri 9pm–3am, Sat 4pm–4am, Sun 6pm–2am.* ☎ 349 Kennington Ln. (Vauxhall), 020.7793.0903, eaglelondon.com

The Roundhouse • Primrose Hill • Arts Venue

True to its name, the Roundhouse is a fantastic 19th century building, listed on the Historic Register, which formerly served as a railway turntable where steam locomotives were redirected and housed. In the late 60s it was redeveloped as a music venue, which saw the likes of Bowie, Hendrix, and the Stones in the 70s. Today, it has a shining reputation for the performance arts and rock and pop concerts, and it is often the first to showcase cutting-edge newcomers, such as the visionary dance troupe De La Guarda. The interior is in stark (though not Starck) contrast to the architecture, with a clean contemporary look that is flooded with natural light. The performances attract huge, diverse crowds that pack the theatre's cafe on show nights, and there's a big emphasis on young people with the studio workshops open to under-25s. *Mon–Sat 11am–11pm (last orders 10pm), Sun 11am–6pm (last orders 5pm).* ☎ Chalk Farm Rd., NW1 (Chalk Farm), 084-4482-8008, roundhouse.org.uk

Shunt Vaults • Bankside • Bar

Shunt is a bar quite unlike any other in the whole of the capital, dare we say the world over. Deep in a warren-like network of arched vaults and passages beneath London Bridge station, its décor is virtually nonexistent, with bare brick walls left untouched since Victorian times. More extraordinary still, the staff at Shunt are a madcap troupe of performers who put on various contemporary vaudeville pieces that involve the bar's somewhat bewildered drinkers. Expect anything from finding yourself aboard a transatlantic flight to taking part in a Dickensian reenactment. The bar menu is certainly not what attracts the young crowd here, which ranges from flummoxed tourists to nonchalant art students, most of whom are content to intrepidly explore the depths with a can of Red Bull in hand. It's a thoroughly thrilling experience for those who are prepared to step a little outside their comfort zone. *Wed–Fri 6–11pm, Sat 8–11pm (bar closes much later once inside).* ☎ 20 Stainer St. (London Bridge), 020-7378-7776, shunt.co.uk

The Normanby • Various • Gastropub

Gastropubs are two to a penny these days, so it takes more than scampi and chips and a plasma screen to satisfy the punters. Fortunately, The Normanby has all the requirements and more. Yes, if you want to catch the match you can do so, but if you'd rather have a quiet pint, or an impromptu lunch or dinner, you don't have to suffer the fans, such is the clever layout of the dining room and bar. The décor is smart and contemporary, and there's a great selection of beer on tap, from Hoegaarden to Guinness. Best of all, though, the food really lives up to being "gastro," with more elaborate bistro dishes sharing the menu with the usual pub fare. *Mon–Thu 11am–11pm, Fri–Sat 11am–midnight, Sun 10am–11pm.* ££ ☎ 231 Putney Bridge Rd. (Putney Bridge), 020.8874.1555

Rhodes W1 Restaurant • Marylebone • French

Exquisite French food in an equally refined setting: No wonder star chef Gary Rhodes' new fine-dining restaurant has been winning plaudits since it opened. Designer Kelly Hoppen's restrained but luxurious décor—neutral linens and velvets, dripping crystal chandeliers, ornate mirrors—is the perfect backdrop for palate-pleasing classic French cuisine, such as pressed foie gras with warm duck salad. As for the wine list, it's dominated by excellent finds from the Old World. All this serves to attract a moneyed and discerning clientele of business people, especially at lunchtime, and foodies of a certain age. *Tue–Fri noon–2:30pm and 7–10:30pm, Sat 7–10:30pm.* £££ ☎ Great Cumberland Pl. (Marble Arch), 020.7479.3737, rhodesw1.com

Sake no Hana • St. James's • Japanese

Alan Yau, the man behind Hakkasan and Yauatcha, ventures into new territory with his first Japanese eatery. It certainly looks the part, thanks to a stunning interior by award-winning architect Kengo Kuma, with cedar and bamboo struts and beams, subtle lighting, and cleverly positioned screens. The sharing menu of dainty dishes, such as marinated lotus root salad, is very à la mode with willowy Mayfair damsels and their besuited menfolk; however, it's arranged by style of cooking, so you'll probably need help from the fabulously dressed staff. The drinks list is dominated by sake, not surprisingly. Take your shoes off at the tatami tables. *Daily noon–3pm and 6am–midnight, Sun 6am–11pm.* £££ ☎ 23 St James's St. (Green Park), 020.7925.8988


Scott's • Mayfair • Seafood

It's rare that a long-standing institution can be transformed into the epitome of trendiness, but that's just what Scott's has done. Originally a Victorian oyster bar and fish restaurant, Scott's has been a Mayfair destination since 1968. The modern new interior is accented with lots of sea-inspired architectural details among the multitudes of burgundy banquettes. With a giant crustacean display designed by Future Systems architects and walls covered in works by major British artists, the restaurant is clearly making every effort to shed its former image—and so far, the trendy new formula is working beautifully. The food is great, the atmosphere is surprisingly inviting, and the celebrities are arriving in droves. If you can't snag a dinner reservation, you may have more luck at the oyster bar. *Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 5:30–11pm, Sun noon–3:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm.* ££ ☎ 20 Mount St., (Green Park), 020.7495.7309, scotts-restaurant.com


Skylon • South Bank • Modern European

On the fourth floor of the refurbished Royal Festival Hall, sole survivor of the 1951 Festival of Britain, this airy restaurant, grill, and bar combo attracts everyone from local business and media types to a dressed-down arty set, who come for lobster with pink grapefruit vinaigrette or steak sandwiches. There's a nod to the '50s in the muted palette and retro-modern flourishes of the décor; check out the coffee pots inspired by the original Skylon sculpture. And the tables to aim for? The ones by the 20-foot floor-to-ceiling windows, of course, which offer unparalleled views of the city's riverscape. *Daily noon–2:30pm and 5:30–10:45pm.* ££   Southbank Centre, Belvedere Rd. (Waterloo), 020.7654.7800, skylonrestaurant.co.uk


St Alban • St. James's • Contemporary European

The latest venture from restaurateurs Jeremy King and Chris Corbin, the clever duo behind the Wolseley (and formerly of the Ivy and Le Caprice), shows that their Midas touch is as potent as ever. This time they've gone for a cool, retro-futuristic look—think circles and curves with bright seating and icy-white everything else—and an imaginative Mediterranean menu. What hasn't changed is the impeccable service and the A-list and business-tycoon clientele. Book well ahead if you want to join them, especially for the hot nights from Thursday to Sunday, though spontaneity might just work on Monday at lunch. There isn't a bad table in the place, though the center is a bit more see-and-be-seen, and the edges are a bit more private. It has an excellent list of wines by the glass—perfect if you're solo or want to try a different wine with each course. *Daily noon–3pm and 5:30pm–midnight.* ££  4–12 Regent St. (Piccadilly Circus), 020.7499.8558, stalban.net


Suka • Fitzrovia • Malaysian

Join a good-looking, well-heeled crowd of models and media types in New York Chef Zac Pelaccio's Malaysian-with-a-twist eatery in the ultra-cool Sanderson, in the space formerly occupied by Spoon. The new look is simple but sleek, with a moody palette of browns. Seating is at long, wide communal tables, with low-hanging Starck lighting, and the food is similarly designed for sharing: Main courses are dominated by platters for two, such as rib-eye with Sarawak pepper. On fine Friday and Saturday evenings, when the place is at its liveliest, try to grab one of the coveted tables on the pretty garden terrace *Sun–Wed 5–11:30pm, Thu–Sat 5pm–12:30am.* £££  Sanderson, 50 Berners St. (Oxford Circus), 020.7300.1444, sanderson.com


Terra Nostra • The City • Italian

Italian Terra Nostra is a welcome breath of Sicilian life into the rather stiff-upper-lipped Britishness of the city's restaurants. The contemporary, Mediterranean-themed décor may not be anything to email your colleagues about, but the cuisine certainly is. It's fairly standard Italian, no real surprises here, but what makes it sing is the quality of the ingredients and evident skill of the chef. There's plenty of fish and shellfish on the menu; the linguine with crab, parsley, and chili is the highlight of the pasta dishes, while simply grilled swordfish is simply delicious. Carnivores will not be disappointed by classic lamb and veal dishes, and the desserts are definitely worth indulging in. The lunch crowd is almost exclusively male and suited, though dinner is a little more mixed and relaxed. *Mon–Sat noon–10pm.* £  27 Old Bailey (St Paul's), 020.3201.0077, terranostrofood.co.uk

Great Queen Street • Holborn • British

Judging by the name, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the people behind this pub-like restaurant lack imagination. The first glance at the menu threatens to give the same impression. This is certainly no place for culinary pretensions. The stars of the scene are simple British classics—simple, yet of the best quality ingredients and well delivered. Crab mayonnaise has never tasted so good this far from the coast. The décor is no-nonsense either, just solid pine furniture and plain red walls. Considering that it's packed with a diverse range of contented diners every night of the week, keeping it simple clearly does work. *Mon 6–10:30pm, Tue–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–10:30pm, Sun noon–2pm.* £££  32 Great Queen St. (Drury Ln), 020.7242.0622


La Giaconda Dining Room • Soho • European

A little gem of a restaurant that nestles in the no-man's land between Soho and Covent Garden, La Giaconda is easily overlooked. The tiny dining room is rather dark and sparsely, but smartly, decked out, and the menu looks rather unprepossessing at first glance: The honest descriptions of ingredients don't quite do justice to their quality, execution, or presentation. Whether it's good old English pigs' trotters or an Italian *vitello tonnato*, there's a sense of fun and imagination to the dishes, which are clearly a hit with the laid-back diners. *Mon–Fri, noon–2:15pm and 6–9:45pm.* £  9 Denmark St. (Tottenham Court Road), 020-7240-3334, giacondadining.com

Le Café Anglais • Notting Hill • British/French

A classy restaurant in a shopping mall is a rare thing, but this buzzy and unpretentious eatery just north of Hyde Park on the fringes of Notting Hill pulls off the tricky act helped by an imaginative menu of French and British classics cooked to perfection and soothing Art Deco styling with a cool palette of pale gray and rich claret. Join the hip and youthful crowd of locals for Sunday brunch, and be sure to order the impeccable Parmesan custard and anchovy toast, or linger for a hearty lunch, ordering something from the rotisserie and a glass of bubbly from the adjoining Champagne bar. *Daily noon–3:30pm and 6:30–11:30pm.* ££  8 Porchester Gardens (Bayswater), 020-7221-1415, lecafeanglais.co.uk

Water Poet* • Spitalfields • Pub Grub



This multi-tasking pub serves hearty bistro dishes in its restaurant, platters to share at the bar, and a lovely roast on Sundays. *Mon–Fri 11am–11pm, Sat noon–11pm, Sun noon–10:30pm.* ££  9-11 Folgate St., E1 (Liverpool St.), 087.1971.4489

Hip London Nightlife



Dex • Various • Members' Club

Brixton has seen some dramatic changes in the past couple of years, its rather gritty reputation having been softened by the arrival of hip and increasingly smart nightspots and restaurants. Dex has really put Brixton on the map; however, such is the current popularity of members' clubs. While the beautifully renovated Art Deco bar, club, and restaurant are open to guests, signing up for



Brickhouse • Spitalfields • Modern European

This trendy East End nightspot attracts an arty and prosperous crowd, who come to enjoy the nightly DJs, entertainment such as cabaret and circus acts, and ambitious Modern European fare such as white tomato soup with basil, and pavé of beef with confit parsnip, red wine jus, and grain mustard ice cream. The former-brewery setting has been decorated in appropriately post-industrial chic, with stark white walls enlivened by plenty of modern art and lots of metal and glass. Eccentrically, the top floor has several made-up beds ready and waiting for those who need a lie-down afterwards. *Tue–Fri and Sun noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm.* £   The Old Truman Brewery, 152c Brick Ln. (Liverpool St.), 020-7247-0005, thebrickhouse.co.uk



Cha Cha Moon • Soho • Asian

Finally: an independent restaurant to rival Wagamama. The exciting collision of Southeast Asian cuisines results in quality fast food. That's not to say it isn't delicious: The soup noodles and stir-fried noodles are fragrant and flavor-packed, with copious amounts of duck, pork, seafood, or dumplings livened up with unusual combinations of vegetables and flavorings. Side orders are equally tasty: The spring onion pancake is particularly comforting. Communal tables and windows into the kitchen may well be the norm, but the bank of high tables and stools overlooking the dining hall are a welcome addition for single diners. Expect queues of virtually all London's demographics for lunch and dinner; come between 4pm and 6pm to avoid them. *Mon–Thu noon–11pm, Fri–Sat noon–11:30pm, Sun noon–10pm.* £-   15–21 Ganton St. (Oxford Circus), 020-7297-9800

Crescent House • Notting Hill • Modern European/Gastropub

Join the trendy Notting Hill set for drinks or superior bar food—suckling pig sandwich, say, or potted Morecambe Bay shrimp—at this new arrival, an old pub wittily revamped in retro style, with a padded red-leather bar, olive walls, and 1920s lighting. In the grander, paler upstairs dining room, feast on the likes of Aylesbury duck breast, thyme polenta cake, carrot puree, port-glazed figs, and English asparagus, all beautifully executed. On fine weekends, with Portobello Road market in full swing, you'll want a table in the walled garden—as will everyone else, so get there early. *Mon–Sat 6:30–10:30pm.* ££   41 Tavistock Crescent (Notting Hill), 020-7727-9250, crescenthouse.uk.com

Dans le Noir? • Clerkenwell • French

Sister to a restaurant by the same name in Paris, this place's borrowed name sums up its concept quite simply: You dine in pitch-black darkness. This may sound like a recipe for disaster, but everything runs smoothly thanks to the staff, who prove that blindness is anything but a handicap. Struggling through your meal is a quite hilarious, and more important, very humbling, experience. To get the most out of your meal, choose one of the four surprise menus, indicate any dietary requirements you have, and leave your culinary hang-ups at the bar. The cuisine, though not exceptional, is a cunning mix of flavors and textures that will definitely keep you guessing. A spot of eavesdropping reveals the idea to be hugely popular with clientele from the world over, so booking is a definite must. *Mon–Thu, 1st sitting 7pm and 7:30pm, 2nd sitting 9pm and 9:30pm; Fri–Sat 1st sitting 7pm and 7:15pm, 2nd sitting 9:15pm and 9:45pm.* £££   30–31 Clerkenwell Green, EC1 (Farringdon), 020-7253-1100, dansle Noir.com/london



Textur • Marylebone • Modern Eclectic

Join the Marylebone set at this chic new eatery run by the former head chef and sommelier of the gourmets' favorite Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons. The setting—an airy and elegant space with swirly stucco decoration brought bang up to date with clean-cut furniture—is as imaginative as the cooking, an equally successful blend of classic and modern. Feast on dishes such as slow-cooked Lancashire suckling pig with baby cabbage, squid, and soy bonito sauce. Linger in the lounge bar before or after for the superb wine list and classy cocktails. *Tue–Sat noon–2:30pm and 7–11pm.* ££   34 Portman St. (Marble Arch), 020.7224.0028, texture-restaurant.co.uk

Tierra Brindisa • Soho • Tapas

Soho's not short on Spanish restaurants, but it used to lack a respectable tapas bar. Tierra Brindisa fits both bills, with fully fledged sit-down meals and tapas, served either at its lively bar with a view of the kitchen or in the more sedate dining room. Flavors are intense and authentic, with the ubiquitous jamón ibérico sharing menu space with delightfully fresh fish. The décor is slightly lackluster in comparison; the plain white walls and simple furnishings feel more Scandinavian than Mediterranean. It's all proving to be a big hit with Soho's lunching media types and weekend revelers, so be sure to book ahead. *Mon–Sat 11am–11pm.* £££   46 Broadwick St. (Oxford Circus), 020.7534.1690, tierrabrindisa.com

Tom's Kitchen • Chelsea • Modern British

Chef Tom Aikens' new venture, close to his eponymous Michelin-starred eatery, has been a wow with everyone from young royals to Chelsea soccer stars since it opened in September. The simple décor—think white-tiled walls and scrubbed oak tables—is matched by a menu strong on revamped British classics made with seasonal ingredients. Solo diners get the best kitchen views from the 12-seat counter, which is saved for walk-ins. The second-floor bar (first floor in the UK) is a cozy spot to linger over a house cocktail or two; try the Silver Angel, a fresh and fruity delight. Note: Tom's has started serving breakfast, a rare thing in Chelsea. *Mon–Fri 7–10am, noon–3pm and 6pm–midnight; Sat 10am–3pm and 6pm–midnight; Sun 11am–3pm and 6pm–midnight.* ££   27 Cale St. (Sloane Square/South Kensington), 020.7349.0202, tomskitchen.co.uk

Tom's Place • Chelsea • British

Latest in Tom Aikens' bid for culinary domination of West London is this rather tongue-in-cheek take on that dying breed: the British “chippie.” While the most authentic way to eat fish and chips in London is probably waiting for a night bus on Tottenham Court Road, this place is a lot more promising, and undoubtedly more attractive to the Sloane clientele spilling over from neighboring Tom's Kitchen. The interior is a whimsical mix of a zhooshed-up fast-food joint and ferry, with a huge LED price board and portholes adorning the walls. On a more serious note, and in line with today's ecological conscience, all the fish on offer here are line-caught and sustainable. There's a great variety to choose from, including sea bass, ray, and monkfish, as well as the more standard cod, and as you'd expect, everything's delicious. The chips should definitely hit the spot—as long as you're not expecting crispy little French fries—and should you be willing

to try a classic chip shop staple, the mushy peas come highly recommended. *Mon–Wed noon–11pm, Thu–Sat noon–11:30pm, Sun noon–10:30pm.* £ ☏ 1A Cale St. (Sloane Sq.), 020.7351.1806, tomsplace.org.uk

Vanilla • Fitzrovia • Modern European

This fabulous retro-chic basement members' bar and restaurant is the perfect backdrop for the area's fashion-savvy media crowd. In the bar, it's all white and futuristic, with patterned frosted mirrors and ice-curtain lights. The separate restaurant works a dramatic black-and-white theme with rococo patterned walls (and definitely no pink peppercorns). The eponymous ingredient is used to good effect in accomplished dishes such as sea bass with shaved artichoke hearts, edamame, Amaretto and vanilla sauce, and on the imaginative cocktail list. Go on Friday evening, when there's a happy, school's-out buzz. *Mon–Fri 9am–11:30pm, Sat 6–11:30pm.* ££ ☏ 131 Great Titchfield St. (Oxford Circus), 020.3008.7763, vanillalondon.co.uk

York and Albany • Primrose Hill • European

The latest addition to the Ramsay empire features not only the expected restaurant but also 10 beautifully decorated rooms, a sleek bar, and a charming little deli. With Angela Hartnett on board, it's guaranteed success on publicity alone, but the cuisine definitely delivers. The excellent ingredients and no-nonsense recipes make for wholesomely delicious dishes that borrow influences from all over Europe. We liked the autumnal feel of the menu when we visited, with its comforting root vegetables and tasty game. The clientele here isn't really a true representation of the area; the smart West London types would look quite out of place in Camden, but they blend in perfectly with the refined chic of the décor. *Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–11pm, Sun noon–4pm and 7–10pm.* £ ☏ 127–129 Parkway (Camden Town), 020.7388.3344, gordonramsay.com/yorkandalbany

Yum Cha • Primrose Hill • Chinese

Eating dim sum on a weekend morning, China's answer to brunch, also invariably involves drinking copious amounts of tea—hence the name Yum Cha, which means “drink tea.” Both activities are clearly popular with native Londoners and Chinese diners in this smart little restaurant, located a few miles away from Soho's Chinatown, but no less authentic for it. The à la carte menu makes its way around the classics of Southeast Asia, but it's the dim sum that puts Yum Cha on the map. Whether steamed or deep-fried, these little morsels are simultaneously light and sumptuous, our only complaint being that they are irresistibly moreish. *Sun–Thu noon–11pm, Fri–Sat noon–midnight.* £ ☏ 28 Chalk Farm Rd. (Chalk Farm), 020.7482.2228

Hot & Cool London Nightlife

Amuse Bouche • Soho • Champagne Bar

Sibling to its well-established twin in Parsons Green, this smart Champagne bar brings a splash of elegance to raucous Soho. The décor may well be quite plain, with rustic tables and white walls, but the drink menu is anything but. As far as the bottles go, the whole spectrum is covered, from Cristal and Krug to more

Unconditional • Covent Garden • Store

Homegrown label Unconditional, favored by savvy stars and Londoners alike, has finally gotten its own store. It's a stylishly quirky affair, with the label's own pieces and a handful of other designers from sibling store Concrete sharing the space with an apothecary-like collection of animal skulls and jackalopes (antlered rabbits!). Jewelry, accessories, and various other luxury knick-knacks are on offer here, but the main attraction is the label's sleek, innovative tailoring, gorgeous knits, and splashes of fresh color. *Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–7pm, Thu 11am–8pm, Sun 12:30–6:30pm.* 16 Monmouth St., W2 (Royal Oak), 020.7836.6931, unconditional.uk.com

Hip London Hotels

Andaz • The City • Trendy (267 rms)

As if the Great Eastern has really had a chance to lose its lead in the fashion stakes in the six years since Terence Conran redid it, new owners Hyatt have already given it a serious makeover and reopened it as Andaz. While the location alone, a stone's throw from edgy and happening Hoxton, makes this one of the hippest hotels in the city, the minimal yet luxurious design oozes style without the need to shout it. Where Conran's designs erred on the extravagant, the new look has an unfussy elegance and an eco-conscious attitude that's thoroughly modern. The original hotel was built by the same architects who built the Houses of Parliament and dates from 1884, but the rooms' cons are all mod here: WiFi, in-room movies, fantastically stocked minibars, and local phone calls all come standard. It includes a gym, no fewer than five restaurants, four bars, and an original Victorian Masonic lodge, which is available for private hire. Be sure to ask for a room facing out on the fifth and sixth floors, which have giant round porthole windows overlooking The City. The in-house guest relations teams are incredibly savvy and more than happy to help you with anything you need—from restaurant reservations to theatre tickets to booking your flight home. £££ 40 Liverpool St., (Liverpool St.), 020.7961.1234, london.liverpoolstreet.andaz.com

Hip London Restaurants

Bincho Yakitori • South Bank • Japanese

Japanese street food gets a slick makeover at this fun and buzzing place in cool Oxo Tower. A mixed bag of local young designers and ties-off business—people grazes on miniature skewers of eel, pork belly, or chicken liver with sake or Japanese beers. The surroundings are clean-cut, modern canteen-style: sleek wooden tables with equally sleek wooden chairs and white everywhere else. Grab a counter seat and watch the chefs bustle about, or head for a window table for views of St. Paul's across the Thames (but on Friday and Saturday evenings, only if you've booked). *Mon–Fri noon–3:30pm and 5:30–11pm, Sat noon–11:30pm, Sun noon–11pm.* £ ☏ 2nd floor, Oxo Tower Wharf, Barge House St. (Blackfriars), 020-7803-0858, bincho.co.uk

the window displays, making a trip here worthwhile even if you're not intending to splash out. *Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun noon–6pm. 4–5 Old Bond St. (Green Park), 020.7355.0088, alexandermcqueen.com*

Daylesford Organic • Pimlico • Shop

The trendy London outpost of Lady Daylesford's award-winning organic farm shop and cafe in the Cotswolds is a delight to browse, with three floors of delicious foodie treats, much of it from their own farm. Perhaps of more use to the hotel-dwelling visitor, however, is the cafe, which is never busier than on Saturday mornings when a small but perfectly formed farmers' market occupies the tiny square opposite. If you've been lucky enough to get a table on the terrace out front, it's the perfect spot for organic eggs Benedict and watching the sleek and toney shoppers. *Mon–Sat 8am–8pm, Sun 11am–5pm. 44b Pimlico Rd. (Sloane Sq.), 020.7881.8060, daylesfordorganic.com*

Georgina Goodman • Mayfair • Store

Rising star of the London fashion scene, the Manolo Blahnik–lauded shoe designer has opened her own boutique on prestigious Bond Street. The funky little boutique, adorned in gold furnishings and Georgina's signature painted stripes, showcases her gorgeous footwear, as well as a few accessories. The look is at once sophisticated and edgy, with fruity colors, metallics, and appliqué details transforming flats and killer heels alike into serious fashion statements. One pair will not suffice. *Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–7pm, Thu 11am–8pm, Sun 12:30–6:30pm. 44 Old Bond St. (Green Park), 020.7493.7673, georginagoodman.com*

Glow Urban Spa • Knightsbridge • Spa

This intimate boutique day spa is already a hit with the well-groomed Knightsbridge ladies and men, thanks to the quality of its treatments and its chic and calming ambience. Inside the pale interior—all white, pale dove, and powder blue, with discreet Asian touches such as small statues of Buddha—super-professional therapists are on hand to pamper customers with superb manicures and pedicures, acupuncture, and exclusive treatments such as the Get Glowing Facial, designed for them by La Prairie. Other brands include Hema (Liv Tyler's favorite), the new Hungarian brand Omorovicza and Abahna, as well as Dermalogica. *Mon–Fri 9:30am–8pm, Sat 9:30am–6pm. Sun by arrangement. £££ 8 Motcomb St. (Knightsbridge), 020.7752.0652, glowurbanspa.co.uk*

The Organic Pharmacy • Kensington • Spa/Shop

Just stepping into this sweet-scented chemical-free zone is enough to lower your stress levels several notches. Lining the pale walls are enticing bottles of the spa's own-label organic creams, potions, and serums, loved by everyone from Madonna and Kylie to Gwyneth and Reese. Snap up a pot of heavenly Double Rose Rejuvenating Cream at the very least, then head for the basement. Why? That's where you'll find two compact treatment rooms with a short but well-chosen list of therapies. Opt for the wonderfully restorative Japanese Detox Foot Massage, the perfect pick-me-up after a hard day or a long-haul flight. *Mon–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun noon–6pm. 169 Kensington High St. (High St. Kensington), 020.7376.9200, theorganicpharmacy.com*

everyday fizz. The ever-popular Bellini rubs shoulders with more innovative creations, such as a Champagne mojito or an elderflower sling. Expect a 30-something after-work bunch from 7–9pm during the week and a lively crowd making the most of the weekend DJs. *Mon–Thu noon–midnight (last orders 11:30pm), Fri noon–12:30am (last orders midnight), Sat 4pm–12:30am (last orders midnight). ☒ 21–22 Poland St. (Oxford Circus), 020.7287.1661, abcb.co.uk*

Artesian • Marylebone • Hotel Bar

The Langham Hotel's beautifully revamped bar (which also doubles as its restaurant) has “date” written all over it. The David Collins–designed interior is the real draw here. The deeply glamorous setting creates a fabulous backdrop for a stylish night out. A surprisingly good but unobtrusive sound system plays acid jazz and deep house to an unpretentious and varied crowd of business folks, upscale tourists, and media types who work nearby. There isn't a bad drink to be had here, but the place is best known for its mind-blowing selection of rums. For a treat, try the sweet rum platter—a shot of vintage rum with a Ladurée macaroon, coconut ice cream, and a rum muffin. If you want to impress your date, this is the place to start your night. *Mon–Sat 7:30am–2am, Sun 7:30am–midnight. ☒ 1c Portland Pl. (Regent's Park), 020.7636.1000, artesian-bar.co.uk*

The Coburg Bar • Mayfair • Hotel Bar

While the Connaught's several bars have always been of the impeccable standard you'd expect from such a grand hotel, they weren't ever destinations in themselves. All that has changed with the beautifully refurbished Coburg bar, first in the line of transformations set to turn Carlos Place into a smart nightspot. With the building's refined country-house style, it simply wouldn't do to give the bar the usual Starck-esque makeover. Thankfully, a few subtle contemporary accents that befit the hotel's refined style have done the trick, such as the eye-catching cameo portraits by Julian Opie, and the fun wool fringing on the bar's original wing-back chairs. The cocktail list seems to echo this with modern concoctions next to all the classics. There's also an incredible wine list, an eclectic mix of specialty spirits, and even vintage Krug if the sky's the limit, all served up with faultless service by the charming bar staff. The middle-aged customers are well-heeled and discreet, but things liven up with a younger crowd as the night wears on. *Daily noon–1am. ☒ Carlos Pl. (Bond St.), 020.7499.7070, the-connaught.co.uk*

The Connaught Bar • Mayfair • Hotel Bar

Second phase in the rejuvenation of the Connaught Hotel is the transformation of its eponymous bar by designer David Collins. The end result is adventurously contemporary, with black leather and silver-leaf woodwork, while still preserving the classic elegance that is the signature of this stately address. Although the majority of the clientele are still the moneyed, mature lot you would expect, a racier breed of drinkers does seem to be catching on. The drink list seems to reflect this trend with cocktails receiving an innovative dash, such as the popular mint julep and its unusual herbal accent of Fernet Branca or the myriad flavored Connaught martinis, faultlessly made to order at your table. *Mon–Sat 4pm–1am. ☒ 16 Carlos Pl. (Bond St.), 020.7499.7070, the-connaught.co.uk*

The East Room • Hoxton • Lounge

Latest in the trend of members-only bars, the East Room comes from the people who gave us Milk and Honey and shares a similar concept to that employed there: While anyone lucky enough to find the easily missed entrance can drop in for lunch, it's strictly members only in the evening. For an annual fee you get unlimited access for you and up to four guests. This gives the *Sex and the City*-style bar and lounge a vaguely clandestine feel, and allows you to enjoy the innovative wine and cocktail list, assured that your conversation won't be interrupted by slurring strangers. Stylish tapas and bar snacks can be had any time, and a more elaborate sit-down dinner is available with a reservation. Midweek customers are generally besuited city types, while the weekend attracts smartly dressed, 30-something socialites. *Mon–Wed 11am–1am, Thu–Fri 11am–3am, Sat 7am–3am.* ☎ 2a Tabernacle St. (Old St.), 020.7374.9570, thstrm.com

The Island • Covent Garden • Nightclub

What used to be a rather grungy annex to the legendary Heaven club has metamorphosed into a swanky late-night bar and nightclub. Two levels accommodate a dance floor, two bars, and an overlooking VIP lounge, while the separate “Vault” offers a more secluded dance floor. The decor is a slightly quirky, but nonetheless stylish mix of brick and vinyl walls, lit in vibrant colors and illustrated with vegetal designs. Hedonistic club nights on Saturdays attract a young, edgy crowd that filters down from Soho for the electro and house beats, while Friday and Sunday nights tend to have a slightly older, more sophisticated following and a chilled-out soundtrack. *Fri–Sun 11am–6pm.* ☎ 180–182 Hungerford Ln. (Charing Cross), 020.7389.6622, theisland-london.com

Mahiki • Mayfair • Dance Club

This nightclub is super hot—Madonna and Prince Harry were photographed chatting away at this wildly popular tiki-inspired bar, which creates a festive atmosphere with bamboo décor and Hawaiian-print-clad waitresses. Though there is a small dance floor downstairs, most people simply dance around their tables to club classics. And when they're not strutting their stuff, they're imbibing the colorful and incredibly strong flaming cocktails—the piña colada in a pineapple is a must. You'll find lots of slender posh blond types and French bankers mingling here, except on Tuesdays, when the crowd is more rock 'n' roll. Arrive extra early—by 10 or 10:30pm—to avoid the crowds fighting to get through this coveted door. *Mon–Sat 5pm–3am.* ☎ 1 Dover St. (Green Park) 020.7493.9529, mahiki.com

Matter • Docklands • Nightclub

Cut from the same cloth as much-loved Fabric, this new venue housed in the O2 Arena, 2007's resurrection of the Millennium Dome, is London's biggest club to date. With a capacity of 2,600 and more high-tech equipment and facilities than you can shake a light stick at, it has rocked the capital's clubbing scene. As such, it's getting all the best names in dance music—Carl Cox, Mylo, and UNKLE, to name a few. The diverse, smiley crowd is evidence the music is hitting the right spots, which is literally what's happening: The club is equipped with a “BodyKinetic” dance floor that sends the music vibrating through your body. The sensation alone is worth coming here for. *Generally Fri–Sat 10pm–6am, but check website for details.* ☎ The O2 (North Greenwich), 020.7549.6686, matterlondon.com

Paper • Soho • Dance Club

Part of the club maze on the corner of Piccadilly, this slick and multifaceted arrival on the club scene is packed nightly with a youthful crowd in high heels and suits shimmying to house music. Try to come on a Saturday night to experience the scene at its most hedonistic. Most people have a pre-club cocktail at the darker, more relaxed Glass bar at the back before slinking downstairs to the high-energy club. To do the night in style, try the surprisingly tasty food in Paper's restaurant (which also makes it easier to get into the club later on). Its white interior is so Ibiza it will put you in suitably festive spirits before you take on the action on the dance floor. *Thu–Sat 10pm–3am.* ☎ 68 Regent St., W1 (Oxford Circus), 020.7439.7770, paperclublondon.com

Punk • Soho • Club

Punk offers an edgy alternative to central London clubs that almost ubiquitously play soul-infused house. This bar-club off Soho Square attracts very cool indie kids and rock celebs like Lily Allen, Kelly Osbourne, and Kate Moss. The music focuses on hot tracks from bands, random '80s tunes, and a touch of underground garage and grime. It may be edgy, but the interior still has a dose of glamour. The red basement is filled with mirrors, plush seats, and giant floral photographs. Thursday's Smash & Grab, when Queens of Noize are DJing, is the night to come. Skinny jeans and an up-for-it attitude are obligatory. *Mon–Thu 5pm–3:30am, Fri 5pm–4am, Sat 10pm–5am, Sun 11am–11:30pm.* ☎ 14 Soho St. (Tottenham Court Rd.), 020.7734.4004, fabbars.com

Shoreditch House • Hoxton • Members' Club

Yet another members-only venue from Nick Jones of Soho House fame, this so-called “house” has had a huge impact on this corner of Shoreditch. What used to be the playground of young Soho hipsters has gone distinctly upmarket since the influx of the house's moneyed media moguls. Rather like a luxury hotel without the rooms, this multistory club has several bars and restaurants, a gym, a spa, a bowling alley (!), and a fantastic heated rooftop swimming pool that is the talk of the town. The décor throughout makes you feel like you've been invited to a vast bachelor pad, with bare brick walls, leather couches, and dark wood floors. Unfortunately, you'll have to hope for an invite, as memberships are apparently sold out, although we suspect that exceptions may be made for a certain few. Start your night at the adjacent, and more accessible East Room, and hope you meet the right people. *Daily 7am–3am.* ☎ Ebor St. (Liverpool St.), 020.7739.5040, shoreditchhouse.com

Hot & Cool London Attractions

Alexander McQueen • Mayfair • Store

The flagship store of the British fashion scene's *enfant terrible* is a surprisingly sedate affair. Tucked in between the more straight-laced labels of Old Bond Street, the shop itself is a sleek, retro-futuristic space in cream and beige. The clothes therein, both women's and men's, are his unique blend of ultra-sharp tailoring, prints, and a touch of fantasy. While the haute couture items have haute prices, his diffusion line, McQ, is both affordable and wearable. Themes from his dramatic, and occasionally controversial, catwalk shows overflow into