

David Hampshire

# The Best of LONDON

Capital of Cool

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David Hampshire



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## **IMPORTANT**

Before visiting anywhere without unrestricted access it's advisable to check the opening times, which are liable to change without notice.

# Readers' Guide

- ◆ **Contact details:** These include the address, telephone number and website. You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google and other map sites or, if you're driving, enter the postcode into your satnav.
- ◆ **Opening hours (where applicable):** These can change at short notice, therefore you should confirm by telephone or check the website before travelling, particularly over Christmas/New Year and on bank holidays, when many venues are closed. Many venues open daily, while some open only on weekdays, at weekends or on just a few days a week (and may have limited business or visiting hours). Some venues are only open by appointment or tickets must be purchased in advance.
- ◆ **Transport:** The nearest tube or rail station is listed, although in some cases it may involve a lengthy walk. You can also travel to most venues by bus and to some by river ferry. Venues outside central London are usually best reached by car, although parking can be difficult or impossible in some areas. Most venues don't provide parking, particularly in central London, and even parking nearby can be a problem (and very expensive). If you need to travel by car, check the local parking facilities beforehand (or take a taxi).
- ◆ **Prices:** Prices are liable to change and are intended only as a guide. Many venues – such as museums, galleries, parks, gardens and places of worship – offer free entry. We have provided a price guide for cafés, restaurants and hotels.

## Disabled Access

Many historic public and private buildings don't provide wheelchair access or provide wheelchair access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues, although users may need assistance. Most museums, galleries and public buildings have a WC, although it may not be wheelchair accessible. Contact venues directly if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website ([disabledgo.com](http://disabledgo.com)) provides more in-depth access information for some destinations.

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# Introduction

There are great world cities – from classical capitals to modern metropolises – and then there's London. One of the oldest settlements in the Western world, its history stretches back to the Bronze Age, through Roman rule and the Norman Conquest, the machinations of the Middle Ages and the inventiveness of the Industrial Revolution, through to the Swinging Sixties and the new Millennium. London is the yardstick by which other cities are measured. It has the most astonishing ability to reinvent itself, always staying one step ahead of the pack, a magnet for creatives – be they writers or artists, designers or thinkers – and a melting pot of cultures from around the globe. New York may be hip, Paris may be chic, but London is surely the Capital of Cool.



The largest city in Europe, Greater London covers over 610mi<sup>2</sup> (1,580km<sup>2</sup>) with a population of 8.6 million. It's Britain's seat of government, the home of the Royal Family, the UK's commercial, cultural and sporting centre, Europe's leading financial market, the 'capital' of the English-speaking world; and a world leader in architecture, art, fashion, food, music, publishing, film and television.



London is also Europe's most culturally diverse city and one of the most cosmopolitan in the world; one in three Londoners (some 3 million people) were born outside the UK, hailing from all corners of the globe, particularly Europe and the Commonwealth countries of Africa, Asia and the West Indies. To add to this cultural potpourri, a phenomenal

20 million tourists swell London's population each year.

In creating this book we decided that the best way to illustrate London's cool credentials was to illustrate the very best that the city has to offer across a wide range of interests. So we've bar-hopped and dined, shopped and supped, boogied and bartered, and even gone for the burn in order to sample the city's best attractions. These include the coolest cocktail bars, smartest hotels, cosiest cafes and most atmospheric pubs, as well as restaurants that truly celebrate food and shops that redefine the art of retail therapy. Add to these the most exclusive members' clubs, hi-tech temples to fitness



and celebrity hotspots, and you have an idea of where we're going. And to take in some of London's more traditional pleasures we've included magnificent



museums and awesome art galleries, breathtaking buildings, glorious churches and a swathe of tranquil green spaces that make London one of the greenest capitals in the world.

Some names are instantly recognisable – from the British Museum to the Shard – while others may surprise, and all are among the very best that London offers – and are therefore, by definition, among the very best in the world. We trust that you'll enjoy exploring them and that you'll agree that London – at its best – is truly unbeatable.

**Welcome to the Big Smoke!**

*David Hampshire*  
April 2017



# 1. Bars

**L**ondon has always been a great place to let your hair down and has a dynamic bar scene that will satisfy the most discerning drinker. It's one of the most exciting cities in the world in which to eat, drink and be merry – in 2016, London had no fewer than eight of the world's 50 best bars according to Drinks International ([www.worlds50bestbars.com](http://www.worlds50bestbars.com)), tipping New York into second place.

From opulent West End hotel bars to trendy South Bank speakeasies, Camden's cool indie destinations to super-hip hang outs in Shoreditch, London's bar scene offers a wealth of choice. They include designer cocktail lounges and champagne bars, glamorous piano bars, rooftop bars with panoramic views and edgy bohemian basement bars inspired by America's prohibition era, where fashionable Londoners gather in clandestine subterranean drinking dens, secreted behind unmarked doors and unassuming entrances. Along with cocktails – from classic to cutting edge – most bars offer tasty snacks or even full-blown gourmet meals, great music (DJs and live), cabaret and burlesque evenings; some even offer cocktail masterclasses so you can learn how to mix your own.

Whatever your budget or taste, our selection of the city's coolest and trendiest bars – and top-flight mixologists – will ensure that you're supping in some of the coolest places on the planet.

## 69 Colebrooke Row

**T**hough named after its address – and also known by its tongue-in-cheek nickname of the ‘Bar with No Name’ – 69 has impressive cocktail credentials, including being consistently rated one of the world’s best bars by Drinks International. It’s a sister venue of the Zetter Townhouse (see page 123), and the man who mixes the cocktails here is the dapper, award-winning Tony Conigliaro. Opened in mid-2009, this renowned bar occupies a small intimate venue tucked away behind an anonymous exterior. Both cosy and elegant, the décor takes second billing to the drinks, which are the stars of the show.

The cocktail list is concise but well conceived and the drinks are clever combinations which leave you wanting



more. Most house cocktails are priced at £10.50 and served by smartly turned-out staff who know their stuff and are big on old-school charm. Another nice touch is the hand-written bills. You can also drink wine or beer, but why on earth would you in this cocktail connoisseurs’ Mecca?

If you want to learn more about what makes the perfect cocktail, there are regular

masterclasses, some hosted by Tony, costing £40 a head (see website for details).

**69 Colebrooke Row,  
N1 8AA (07540-528593;  
www.69colebrookerow.  
com; Angel tube; Sun-  
Wed 5pm-midnight,  
Thu 5pm-1am, Fri-Sat  
5pm-2am).**



## The American Bar

The American Bar on the Savoy Hotel's first floor evokes the roaring '20s, the so-called golden era of cocktails. It's an impressive venue – ranked 2nd in the world's 50 best bars 2016 by Drinks International – with understated Art Deco styling, elegant curves and Terry O'Neill photographic portraits on the walls, while a tuxedoed pianist plays American jazz to add to the ambience.

*The Savoy Cocktail Book*, published by Savoy barman Harry Craddock in the '30s, remains the cocktail mixologist's bible, and the position of head bartender here remains one of the hospitality world's most prestigious appointments. The Savoy is also home to the equally glamorous Beaufort Bar.

**American Bar, Savoy Hotel, 100 Strand, WC2R 0EU (020-7836 4343; [www.fairmont.com/savoy-london/dining/americanbar](http://www.fairmont.com/savoy-london/dining/americanbar); Charing Cross tube rail; Mon-Sat 11.30am-midnight, Sun noon-midnight).**



## Aqua Spirit

Part of a bar and restaurant complex (serving Japanese and Spanish cuisine) at the top of what used to be Dickens and Jones store, Aqua Spirit is a glamorous cocktail bar with a wonderful roof terrace, making it one of London's most desirable places to enjoy a drink on a warm summer evening.

The inside space is chic and sleek with a round bar offering a choice of some 30 cocktails, while the terrace has a wooden floor, comfortable chairs and panoramic views. Bookings aren't accepted for the terrace, so arrive early if you want a seat. Views vary depending on where you sit, and may include the BT Tower, Liberty department store and the London Eye.

**Aqua Spirit, 240 Regent St, W1B 3BR, entrance 30 Argyll St (020-7478 0545; <http://aquaspirit.co.uk>; Oxford Circus tube; Mon-Sat noon-1am, Sun noon-10.30pm).**



## The Artesian Bar

**R**ated the world's best bar for four consecutive years (from 2012-2015) by Drinks International, the Artesian is one of London's most sumptuous watering holes – a triumph of classic-meets-contemporary design – in one of the city's grandest five star hotels. Recently updated by the noted David Collins Studio, it blends Victorian opulence – marble bar, embroidered napkins and mirrors – with modern magnificence: purple, leather-effect upholstery, ornate wood panelling and an extravagant 'Chinese Chippendale' centrepiece, as the pagoda-like back bar is called.



Rum is a speciality here, with around 50 on offer, which the Artesian claims is



London's largest selection, plus an extensive champagne list. There's an excellent selection of inventive cocktails – as you'd expect from a former winner of Tales of the Cocktail's 'World's Best Cocktail Menu'

(<https://talesofthecocktail.com>) – and the Artesian also prides itself on its gourmet bar food and faultless yet friendly service that makes everyone feel special.

The dress code is smart-casual and the location, opposite Broadcasting House, means you might see or hear the odd familiar face or voice. It isn't a cheap date, but neither is it ruinously expensive considering it's one of the world's best bars.

**Artesian, Langham Hotel, 1C Portland Pl, Regent St, W1B 1JA (020-7636 1000; [www.artesian-bar.co.uk](http://www.artesian-bar.co.uk); Oxford Circus tube; Mon-Sat 11am-2am, Sun 11am-midnight).**

## Bar Termini

One of the city's smallest bars, bar Termini is cocktail alchemist Tony Conigliaro's (of 69 Colebrooke Row fame) and coffee maestro Marco Arrigo's homage to Rome's Termini train station. The bar's favourite tipples include the Spritz Termini (a turbo-charged Aperol Spritz with gin, rhubarb cordial and a champagne-pickled almond), the Marsala Martini (gin, dry vermouth, Marsala Dolce, dry vermouth and almond bitters) and a selection of superb negronis.



There are also bar snacks.

The tiny bar seats just 25, although you can stand (Italian-style) if you order a single 'espresso al bar'. Bookings (after 5pm) are limited to just 60 minutes – so you don't miss your train!

**Bar Termini, 7 Old Compton Street, W1D 5JE (07860-945018; [www.bar-termini.com](http://www.bar-termini.com); Leicester Sq tube; Mon-Thu 10am-11.30pm, Fri-Sat 10am-1am, Sun 11am-10.30pm).**

## Beach Blanket Babylon



Spread over three floors of a former Victorian warehouse, Beach Blanket Babylon in Shoreditch is a bar-cum-gallery that 'encapsulates the bohemian decadence of Cool Britannia'. The décor is a blend of boho chic and French country château, with gilded wallpaper, over-the-top furniture and glitzy ornaments.

The cocktail lounge can accommodate 300 and the restaurant seats another 150, and there's also a large gallery space for exhibitions and special events. The basement cocktail lounge (there are two) is exotically decked out with patterned flock wallpaper and 18th-century and Art Deco decoration, so dress accordingly.

**Beach Blanket Babylon, 19-23 Bethnal Green Rd, E1 6LA (020-7749 3540; [www.beachblanket.co.uk](http://www.beachblanket.co.uk); Shoreditch High St rail; Mon-Thu 5pm-midnight, Fri-Sat noon-1am, Sun noon-midnight).**

## The Booking Office

This hotel bar (and restaurant) has the distinct advantage of being housed in one of London's architectural highlights, St Pancras Station, where the former grand station café is now the Booking Office bar in the five-star St Pancras Renaissance London Hotel (formerly the Midland Grand Hotel, opened in 1873).

The bar echoes the building's cathedral-like Victorian splendour, with plenty of seating from which to admire the original arched windows, ribbed vaulting and intricate, decorative brickwork. Drinks are served from a 95ft long bar, where the speciality is (not

surprisingly) cocktails. The Renaissance is also home to the equally impressive Gilbert Scott bar.

**Booking Office Bar, St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, NW1 2AR (020-7841 3566; [www.stpancraslondon.com/en/restaurant-bars/booking-office](http://www.stpancraslondon.com/en/restaurant-bars/booking-office); King's Cross tube/rail; Mon-Wed 6.30am-1am, Thu-Sat 6.30am-late, Sun 6.30am-midnight).**



## Callooh Callay

Set on a cobbled side street and loosely Lewis Carroll-themed – named after an expression in his nonsense poem *Jabberwocky* – award-winning Callooh Callay in hipster Shoreditch is one of the world's best cocktail bars, designed with imagination and flair. The venue is split into three areas – the Bar, the Lounge and the Upstairs Bar – and you enter through a 'wardrobe' (shouldn't that be a looking glass?) to get to the main bar area, which has a long counter and low purple seating.

Cocktails are the drink of choice here and there's an interesting range to choose from, as well as imaginative bar snacks. There are DJs at weekends and cocktail masterclasses, too.

**Callooh Callay, 65 Rivington St, EC2A 3AY (020-7739 4781; [www.calloohcallaybar.com](http://www.calloohcallaybar.com); Old St tube/rail; daily 6pm-1am).**



## The Connaught Bar

**T**he more famous of this landmark Mayfair hotel's two bars (the other is the Coburg), the Connaught was ranked 4th in the world's 50 best bars in 2016. It's a dramatic Art Deco drinking den (designed by David Collins) in leather, marble and metal, using a palette of lilac and pink, pistachio and silver.



Cosy and understated, with subtle lighting and excellent service, cocktails are the speciality here – it's particularly noted for its perfect martinis, which are gently stirred, never shaken (sorry Mr Bond). The exceptional (if expensive) bar effortlessly manages to combine 21st-century style with considerable Old World charm, the kind of place where you're made to feel special by the friendly professional staff.

**The Connaught Bar, The Connaught, Carlos Pl, W1K 2AL (020-7314 3419; [www.the-connaught.co.uk/mayfair-bars/connaught-bar](http://www.the-connaught.co.uk/mayfair-bars/connaught-bar); Bond St tube; Mon-Sat 4pm-1am, Sun 4pm-midnight).**

## The Crazy Bear

**I**t's evident that lots of money has been lavished on the sumptuous, dimly-lit Crazy Bear cocktail bar in Fitzrovia, which sits beneath a restaurant serving modern Chinese, Japanese and Thai cuisine. The bar is most definitely plush – even the loos are extravagantly done, replete with crystal and mirrors aplenty – but it isn't just about show.

The friendly bar staff mix a superb cocktail, albeit a pricey one. It's popular and usually busy – a lot of diners from the excellent upstairs restaurant begin and end their evenings in the bar – so book if you wish to ensure somewhere to sit. You can also order dim sum and sushi in the bar.

**The Crazy Bear, 26-28 Whitfield St, W1T 2RG (020-7631 0088; [www.crazybeargroup.co.uk/fitzrovia/bar](http://www.crazybeargroup.co.uk/fitzrovia/bar); Goodge St tube; Tue-Wed noon-midnight, Thu-Sat noon-1am, Sun midday-midnight, Mon closed).**



## The Dandelyan Bar

It's unusual to find a swanky cocktail bar south of the river, but the Dandelyan Bar at the Mondrian Hotel (see page 116) is highly rated (3rd in the world's 50 best bars 2016 by Drinks International) and visually exciting, with startling candy purple leather banquettes, velvet armchairs, green marble bar, parquet flooring and panoramic Thames' views.

Created by award-winning mixologist Ryan Chetiyawardana, Dandelyan serves both refined interpretations of the classics and delectable innovative creations – such as the Concrete Sazerac (cognac, fermented Peychaud's bitters and absinthe, filtered through concrete) – taking inspiration from British and international botanicals.

**Dandelyan Bar, Mondrian Hotel, 20 Upper Ground, SE1 9PD (020-3747 1000; [www.morganshotelgroup.com/mondrian/mondrian-london/eat-drink/Dandelyan](http://www.morganshotelgroup.com/mondrian/mondrian-london/eat-drink/Dandelyan)); Southwark tube; Mon-Wed 4pm-1am, Thu 4pm-2am, Fri-Sat noon-2am, Sun noon-12.30am).**



## Discount Suit Company

A cool, clandestine, subterranean bar in Shoreditch with a great vibe, the Discount Suit Company – occupying a former tailor's stockroom from which it takes its name – is a laid-back, informal drinking den. The 'décor' is candlelight and exposed brickwork, Victorian floorboards and (very) low ceiling beams – duck unless you're under 5ft tall.

DSC focuses on classic recipes and a changing menu of bargain signature cocktails such as Dark Cloud (rye whiskey, Chamberyzette, chocolate tea syrup and lemon) and Herbal Habit (Cocchi Americano, green Chartreuse, Benedictine, lime and mint). There are also tasty Neal's Yard cheese boards and cool sounds (a DJ visits some days).



**Discount Suit Company, 29A Wentworth St, E1 7TB (020-7247 8755; [www.discountsuitcompany.co.uk](http://www.discountsuitcompany.co.uk)); Aldgate/Liverpool St tube; Mon-Thu 5pm-midnight, Fri-Sat 2pm-1am, Sun 5-11pm).**

## The Experimental Cocktail Club

**T**his London outpost of Paris' Experimental Cocktail Club is a buzzing two-floor, speakeasy-style bar secreted behind a battered black door in Chinatown. Opulent and cosy, the cool bar features exposed brick, subtle lighting, mirrored walls and some great sounds. Cocktails are, of course, the thing to drink here (there's also a good wine list), covering the classics as well as more off-the-wall mixes – appropriate given the venue's name – which are invariably brilliantly creative, served by friendly, knowledgeable staff (and in glasses, not test tubes!). Good bar snacks, too.

You can reserve a table by email ([reservation@chinatownecc.com](mailto:reservation@chinatownecc.com)), although half the seats are reserved for walk-ins.

**The Experimental Cocktail Club, 13A Gerrard St, W1D 5PS (020-7434 3559; [www.chinatownecc.com](http://www.chinatownecc.com)); Leicester Sq tube; Mon-Sat 6pm-3am, Sun 6pm-midnight).**



## The Gibson

**P**aying homage to a cocktail (gin and vermouth garnished with a pickled onion) created in the 1900s, the Gibson is an Edwardian time machine. The lovechild of two of the city's most respected bartenders, Marian Beke (ex-Nightjar) and Rusty Cerven (ex-Connaught), the intimate '20s-themed cocktail bar near Old St (opened in 2015) is highly rated, serving killer cocktails.

While the Gibson (cocktail) is the star – in various guises – there's a wealth of original creations on offer on the ever-evolving menu, all theatrically presented with flamboyant garnishes (pickles are a popular theme) that will leave your taste buds tingling and yearning for more. There's also live music.

**The Gibson, 44 Old Street, EC1V 9AQ (020-7608 2774; [www.thegibsonbar.london](http://www.thegibsonbar.london)); Old St tube; Mon-Thu 5pm-1am, Fri-Sat 5pm-2am, closed Sun).**



## Happiness Forgets

One of London's, and the world's, coolest bars, Happiness Forgets – the name is taken from Burt Bacharach's song, *Loneliness Remembers what Happiness Forgets* – was opened in 2010 by Ali Burgess and is still very much an 'in' place. Indeed, it was ranked 10th in the world's 50 best bars 2016 by Drinks International.



It's a tiny, dimly-lit basement bar, with hints of the speakeasy about it, lit by the warm glow from '50s lamps and candles, while dark walls and wooden floorboards add to the subterranean atmosphere. It's relaxed and friendly with a nicely mixed crowd, including both local creatives and business suits, but somehow avoids being yet another den of Shoreditch

pretentiousness. The drinks are predictably great with a good choice of beer and wine, but cocktails are the house speciality; we recommend the Perfect Storm (dark rum, honey, lemon, freshly squeezed ginger juice and plum brandy). The website sums HF up nicely: 'High end cocktails, low rent basement,' along with 'Great cocktails, no wallies'.

Bookings can be made by email ([reservations@happinessforgets.com](mailto:reservations@happinessforgets.com)) for parties of two to six. Now with a little sister, Original Sin, in Stoke Newington.

**Happiness Forgets, 8-9 Hoxton Sq, N1 6NU (020-7613 0325; [www.happinessforgets.com](http://www.happinessforgets.com); Old St tube/rail; daily 5-11pm).**



## Hawksmoor Spitalfields Bar



The original of a small chain of steakhouse-bars located just down the road from Nicholas Hawksmoor's elegant Christ Church, Spitalfields – hence the name. The cellar bar boasts stunning décor, including a copper bar and wall panels, and turquoise Victorian glazed bricks.

In endeavouring to create London's best cocktail bars, Hawksmoor have 'scoured their library of long out-of-print cocktail books to resurrect some great long-lost classics' and their skilled bartenders have also worked their magic to invent a few of their own to add to the extensive list. There's a great bar menu, too (try the shortrib nuggets or lobster roll).

**Hawksmoor Spitalfields Bar, 157B Commercial St, E1 6BJ (020-7426 4856; [www.thehawksmoor.com/spitalfieldsbar](http://www.thehawksmoor.com/spitalfieldsbar); Shoreditch High St rail; Mon-Thu 5.30-11pm, Fri 5.30pm-1am, Sat noon-1am, closed Sun).**

## The Lobby Bar

Situated in the part of London where the City meets the West End, the beautiful Lobby Bar at trendy One Aldwych hotel attracts both financial and creative types. It was named one of the top five hotel bars in the world by the *Sunday Telegraph* and is a place to take somebody you want to impress: an ultra-stylish bar with pillars, ceiling-high windows, striking artwork, huge flower displays and a polished limestone floor.

There's a wide choice of drinks, with well-made cocktails and an extensive choice of champagne, wine and beer, as well as an interesting bar menu, including sharing platters – something for everyone.

**The Lobby Bar, One Aldwych, WC2B 4BZ (020-7300 1070; [www.onealdwych.com/food-drink/the-lobby-bar](http://www.onealdwych.com/food-drink/the-lobby-bar); Covent Gdn tube; Mon-Fri 8am-midnight, Sat 9am-midnight, Sun 9am-10.30pm).**



## Mark's Bar

**P**art of the stable of entrepreneurial chef Mark Hix (his restaurant HIX Soho is on the ground floor), Mark's Bar in Brewer St is a stylish, speakeasy-like basement venue. A long zinc bar, tin ceiling and Chesterfield sofas make for a dramatic room with a lovely atmosphere.

Some thought has gone into the drinks menu, which includes an impressive cocktail list (many based on true-Brit recipes from years gone by) and a well-chosen selection of wine, champagne and beer. The licence dictates that drinkers must order food, which is no hardship as there are great bar snacks and you can also choose from the restaurant menu.

**Mark's Bar, 66-70 Brewer St, W1F 9UP (020-7292 3518; [www.marksbar.co.uk](http://www.marksbar.co.uk); Piccadilly Circus tube; Mon-Sat noon-1am, Sun noon-midnight).**



## The Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town



**Y**et another modern-day speakeasy – possibly the best in town and certainly the best-named – the Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town is secreted beneath the Breakfast Club in Spitalfields. The entrance is via a Smeg fridge door and the amusing kitsch doesn't stop there, with 'No Heavy Petting' posters and cat bowls on the floor. (You exit via the bathrooms to ensure the bar remains a 'secret'.)

Inside there's a moodily-lit cocktail bar with exposed brickwork and wood, some great music and a wide choice of good-value creative cocktails, such as Ricky's Cucumber (Portobello Road gin, cucumber, lime, matcha powder, soda and sugar).

**Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town, 12-16 Artillery Ln, E1 7LS (020-7078 9639; [www.themayorofscaredycattown.com](http://www.themayorofscaredycattown.com); Liverpool St tube/rail; Mon-Tue 5pm-midnight, Wed-Thu 3.30pm-midnight, Fri 3pm-midnight, Sat noon-midnight, Sun noon-10.30pm).**

## Nightjar

The anonymous entrance to this stylish Shoreditch basement bar – rated number 19 in the world’s 50 best bars by Drinks International – sits incongruously between two cafeterias. Reminiscent of a ’20s speakeasy, Nightjar specialises in cocktails, cabaret and jazz, and has a debonair atmosphere, describing itself as ‘a hidden slice of old school glamour’. The interior is all dark wood, dim lighting and black leather booths – very much a place



for grown-ups. Cocktails are the thing here, both ancient and modern – some recipes date back to 1600 while others include unusual flavourings such as durian fruit, plankton, marigold, tobacco sugar, squid ink and bee pollen syrup – and very good they are,



for grown-ups.

Cocktails are the thing here, both ancient and modern – some recipes date back to 1600 while others include unusual



too. The cocktail menu (around 50) is split into Pre-Prohibition, Prohibition, Post-War (mostly tiki) and Signature drinks. Beer, spirits and wine are also available, while bar snacks include cheese, charcuterie and tapas.

Nightjar is, not surprisingly, very popular and has a no-standing policy, therefore booking is essential (well in advance for weekends). There’s vintage live music from the cocktail era (’20s-’40s) from around 9pm Tue-Sat. Entrance is free on Mondays and Tuesdays but there’s a door charge (£5-8) from Wednesday to Saturdays. Nightjar now has an equally impressive sister bar, the Oriole.

**Nightjar, 129 City Rd, EC1V 1JB (020-7253 4101; [www.barnightjar.com](http://www.barnightjar.com); Old St tube/rail; Sun-Wed 6pm-1am, Thu 6pm-2am, Fri-Sat 6pm-3am).**

## Purl

Located in the basement of a Georgian house in Marylebone, super-cool Purl – named for an old English drink of warm ale, gin, wormwood and spices – is a relaxed and unfussy place, with plenty of individual seating areas, leather furniture, brick walls and a low vaulted ceiling.



Beer and wine are available, but it's the well-made, inventive cocktails and the associated theatre of making and serving them that's the main draw. As the website states, Purl serves drinks 'that satisfy on a multi-sensory level, using aroma, fogs, airs, foam, food, bespoke service-wear and liquid nitrogen to bring the drink to life and transport the guest to another place or time'. Booking essential.

**Purl, 50-54 Blandford St, W1U 7HX (020-7935 0835, [www.purl-london.com](http://www.purl-london.com); Bond St tube; Mon-Thu 5-11.30pm, Fri-Sat 5pm-midnight, closed Sun).**

## Scarfes Bar

Named after the noted British satirical artist and cartoonist, Gerald Scarfe – whose work adorns the bar – the opulent and refined Scarfes Bar in the Rosewood Hotel is an atmospheric combination of drawing room, gentlemen's club and library, featuring a roaring fire (in winter), low-key lighting, a beautiful long bar, cosy velvet armchairs and shelves over-flowing with antique books.

The bar specialises in whiskies – including over 200 single malts – and sloe gin, plus a few craft beers, although it's the creative and expertly-made cocktails that draw the crowds. Live music and delicious Indian food and bar snacks from Palash Mitra add to its allure.

**Scarfes Bar, Rosewood Hotel, 252 High Holborn, WC1V 7EN (020-3747 8670; <http://scarfesbar.com>; Holborn tube; Mon-Sat noon-late, Sun 3pm-late).**



## Trailer Happiness

This Notting Hill basement bar describes itself as a 'lounge bar, den and kitchen' and a 'retro-sexy haven of cosmopolitan kitsch and faded trailer park glamour'. However, it doesn't take itself seriously – the décor is a mixture of palm trees, bright colours and '60s art – which is a healthy



change in this part of town. The nicely tacky interior aims for lo-fi glamour and there are DJs Thu-Sat, so it isn't a typical cocktail bar.

The drinks are excellent, with classic and contemporary cocktails spread across three menus: House Favourites, Tiki Classics and Homage Drinks. It's a relaxed, affordable venue with a happy, friendly crowd, so it's hardly surprising that it's popular.

**Trailer Happiness, 177 Portobello Rd, W11 2DY (020-7041 9833; [www.trailerhappiness.com](http://www.trailerhappiness.com); Ladbroke Grove tube; Sun-Wed 5pm-midnight, Thu 5-12.30am, Fri-Sat 5pm-1am).**

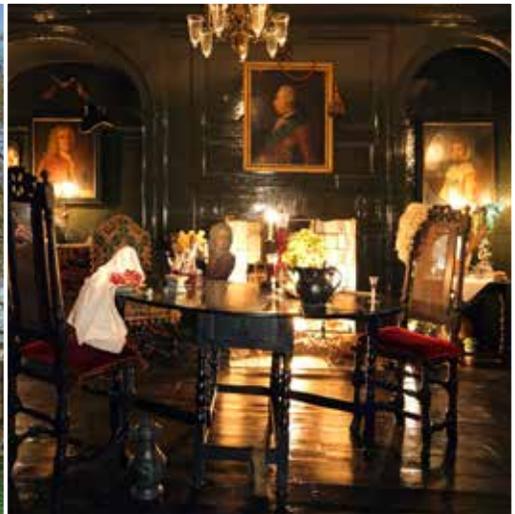
## The Worship Street Whistling Shop

The sister bar to Purl in Marylebone, the award-winning Worship Street Whistling Shop – historically a spirit shop, especially a secret and illicit one – has opted for all-out Victoriana; its décor has a distinctly Dickensian air with Chesterfield sofas, gas lamps and staff in period clothing.

Drinks at The Whistling Shop (like those at Purl) are a cunning blend of historic and modern. Its mixologists experiment with creating flavour combinations using a range of elements and equipment more at home in a chemistry lab (blame Heston Blumenthal!), allowing you to sample unusual cocktails alongside barrel-aged spirit infusions based on gin, rum and more unexpected ingredients.

**Worship Street Whistling Shop, 63 Worship St, EC2A 2DU (020-7247 0015; [www.whistlingshop.com](http://www.whistlingshop.com); Old St tube/rail; Mon-Tue 5pm-midnight, Wed-Thu 5pm-1am, Fri-Sat 5pm-2am, closed Sun).**





# 2.

## Buildings & Structures

London has one of the most recognisable skylines in the world. Its iconic buildings range from the venerable – the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and Tower Bridge – to the strikingly modern, such as 30 St Mary Axe (aka the Gherkin) and the Shard. The latter are the result of a boom in high-rise building since the '90s, which has taken London's previously relatively low-rise skyline – which was intentionally designed to protect the views of St Paul's Cathedral – to soaring new heights.

Unlike many cities, London isn't characterised by any particular architectural style. It has accumulated its buildings over a long period of time, although relatively few predate the Great Fire of 1666 (exceptions include the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey and Banqueting House), and many more were destroyed during the Second World War, which saw the loss of many historic churches. Among the great architects who have left their mark on the city are Sir Christopher Wren, Sir John Soane, John Nash, Sir Charles Barry and, more recently, Lord Norman Foster, Lord Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano.

In addition to the buildings and structures featured in this chapter, many more feature elsewhere in the book, including St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the Natural History Museum, the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel and the Tate Modern, to name just a few.

## Banqueting House

This noble structure is the only surviving part of the Palace of Whitehall. The palace was the main London residence of English monarchs from 1530 and grew to become the largest in Europe – larger even than the Vatican and Versailles – until



1698, when all except Inigo Jones' Banqueting House was destroyed by fire. The surviving building, which dates from 1622, is significant in the history of English architecture, being the first designed in the neo-classical style that would transform the country.

Its main attraction is its richly-painted ceiling, a masterpiece by the Antwerp-based artist and diplomat Peter Paul Rubens, commissioned by King Charles I who (ironically) was beheaded on a scaffold erected outside the hall in 1649.

**Banqueting House, Whitehall, SW1A 2ER (020-3166 6154/5; [www.hrp.org.uk/banquetinghouse](http://www.hrp.org.uk/banquetinghouse); Westminster/Embankment tube; daily 10am-5pm; adults £6.60, concessions £5.50, under-16s free).**

## Barbican Estate

A prominent example of British Brutalist concrete architecture, encompassing Europe's largest arts and conference venue, the Barbican Estate is a vast 40-acre development containing three residential tower blocks, built between 1965 and 1976 and designed by architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon. Designated a site of special architectural interest for its scale, cohesion and ambition, the design – a concrete ziggurat – is controversial and divides opinion: it was voted 'London's ugliest building' in an unofficial poll in 2003.

The Barbican Arts Centre (see page 153) stages a comprehensive range of art, music, theatre, dance, film and creative learning events. There's also a library, restaurants, gardens and a glorious conservatory.

**Barbican Centre, Silk St, EC2Y 8DS (020-7638 4141; [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk); Barbican tube; Mon-Sat 9am-11pm, Sun noon-11pm; free).**



## Buckingham Palace

The official London residence of British monarchs since 1837, Buckingham Palace stands in splendid isolation at the top of the Mall, one of the most iconic sights in the capital. Until fairly recently the only way to see inside was by invitation – to a banquet, investiture or one of the famous garden parties – but since 1993 the state rooms have been open to the public in summer when the Queen and her family decamp to Balmoral in Scotland. You can also visit the Queen’s Gallery and the Royal Mews year round.

The Palace was originally built as a townhouse for the Duke of Buckingham in 1705. It was purchased in 1761 by George III as a residence for his wife Queen Charlotte, but it was their son George IV who commissioned John Nash to transform it into a palace at huge expense. It became the principle royal residence in 1837 when



the young Queen Victoria moved in and was further extended during the 19th century. Today, the palace has 775 rooms, including 19 state rooms, 52 royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms.

**Buckingham Palace, SW1A 1AA (020-7766 7300; [www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/the-state-rooms-buckingham-palace](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/the-state-rooms-buckingham-palace); St James’s Pk tube; see website for visitor options, times and fees).**



## The Charterhouse (Sutton's Hospital)

Hidden away in the City is one of London's most beautiful and historic buildings, the Charterhouse, formally known as Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse. The site was once the location of London's largest plague pit, where around 50,000 victims of the Black Death were buried in 1348. It also housed a Carthusian monastery, founded in 1371 by Sir Walter de Manny and the Bishop of London, and dissolved by Henry VIII in 1537.

The Charterhouse was purchased in 1611 by Thomas Sutton (1532-1611), an Elizabethan merchant and adventurer, who endowed a hospital on the site. When Sutton died the greater part of his vast fortune was bequeathed to maintain a chapel, the hospital and school – the latter moved to Surrey in 1872. The hospital – or almshouse, which is still in operation – was



a home for gentlemen pensioners, housing up to 80 men (now 40), and the

school catered for 40 'poor' scholars.

Today, Charterhouse is part of the campus of Queen Mary, University of London, and lodgings are still provided for gentlemen who fall on hard times. Pre-booked tours (£10) of this medieval gem are organised on selected days.



**The Charterhouse,  
Sutton's Hospital,  
Charterhouse Sq, EC1M  
6AN (020-7253 9503;  
[www.thecharterhouse.org/tours](http://www.thecharterhouse.org/tours);  
Barbican  
tube; tours on selected  
days – see website for  
information).**



## Dennis Severs' House      Eltham Palace

One of London's most singular attractions, Dennis Severs' House has been designed to create an atmosphere redolent of the 18th century and paint a picture of what life was like then. It's the brainchild of an American artist, Dennis Severs, who purchased the house in the '70s when the old Huguenot district of Spitalfields was rundown and little valued.

Each of the ten rooms reflects a different era of the house's past, a snapshot of the life of the families who 'lived' here between 1724 and 1914. Dennis Severs died in 1999, but the house has been preserved and is open for tours. The candlelit night-time tours are the most atmospheric.

**Dennis Severs' House, 18 Folgate St, Spitalfields, E1 6BX (020-7247 4013; [www.dennissevershouse.co.uk](http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk); Liverpool St tube/rail; see website for visiting times and fees).**



Initially a moated manor house set in extensive parkland, Eltham Palace was given to Edward II in 1305 and was a royal residence from the 14th to 16th centuries – Henry VIII spent his childhood there.

The current building (now owned by English Heritage) dates from the '30s, when Sir Stephen and Lady Courtauld restored the Great Hall, which boasts England's third-largest hammer-beam roof, gave it a minstrels' gallery, and incorporated it into a sumptuous home with a striking interior in a variety of Art Deco styles. Among many notable features are Lady Courtauld's gold-plated mosaic bathroom and the stunning circular entrance hall, the work of the Swedish designer Rolf Engströmer.

**Eltham Palace, Court Yd, Eltham, SE9 5QE (020-8294 2548; [www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/eltham-palace-and-gardens](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/eltham-palace-and-gardens); Eltham or Mottingham rail; see website for visiting times and fees).**