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## DRINKING

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Things have changed for London's drinkers so much in the past decade that the city has gone from being the pub and ale capital to becoming what the *Independent* calls 'the cocktail capital of the world'. And what with the smoking ban coming into effect in July 2007, the Big Smoke has lost its puff, leaving the air in pubs and bars surreally clear.

London's drinking culture has been changing rapidly in recent decades (alongside many other facets of London life), making way for a huge choice of sensational venues for all sorts of imbibing. There are cocktail bars, DJ bars, old pubs, wine bars – and many are a night out in their own right, rather than just a preclub warm-up venue.

Pubs are the heart of London's social existence and the great social leveller. Their history is often written on the walls and etched in the bloodshot faces of the regulars who prop the bars. Virtually every Londoner has a 'local' and looking for your own and sampling a range of boozers is one of the highlights of any visit to the capital.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of London's traditional boozers, known for their particular atmosphere of sticky carpets, prawn cocktails, crisps and juke-box music, have been converted into a range of different venues, from soulless bars to supermarkets and car parks. Avoid High-Street chain pubs and head to one of the bars recommended following.

Aside from the bars we recommend, it's a great idea to check out a few drinking strips yourself, such as Islington's Upper St or Essex Rd; Shoreditch's Old or High Sts; Soho's Dean St or Greek St; West London's Portobello Rd; the Cut on the South Bank; Clapham High St and Borough High St in South London; or Parkway and Camden High St in Camden Town.

We've provided information on many of our favourite drinking dens here, although there's no substitute for individual research – your liver's the only limit.

## Opening Hours

November 2005 saw new licensing laws granting pubs and bars, at the discretion of local authorities, to stay open past the traditional 11pm closing time gong. The new laws, which we warmly welcomed as long overdue, have made it somewhat easier to get a late drink in central areas, though closing times vary from place to place. Unless otherwise stated, all pubs and bars reviewed here close at 11pm from Monday to Saturday and at 10.30pm on Sunday.

## THE WEST END

You have to do a bit of planning before you head out in the West End: most Londoners find it difficult to beat the crowds, get a table without a struggle and drink in bars that aren't mobbed by weekend visitors. The truth is that the West End, though the first port of call for most visitors, is no longer a prime drinking area for discerning Londoners. Yet Soho is still a wonderful place for a night out – Friday and Saturday nights are buzzing with excitement and decadence, and there are people, booze and rickshaws in the streets till the early hours.

## SOHO & CHINATOWN

**FRENCH HOUSE** Map p68 Bar  
 % 7437 2799; 49 Dean St W1;  $\bar{h}$  Leicester Sq  
 French House is Soho's legendary boho boozers (with a good restaurant downstairs) with a history to match: this was the meeting place of the Free French Forces during WWII, and De Gaulle is said to have drunk here often, while Dylan Thomas, Peter O'Toole and Francis Bacon all frequently ended up on the wooden floors. Come here to sip on Ricard, French wine or Kronenbourg and check out the quirky locals.

**GARLIC & SHOTS** Map p68 Bar  
 % 7734 9505; 14 Frith St W1;  $\bar{h}$  to midnight Mon-Wed, to 1am Thu-Sat, to 11.30pm Sun;  $\bar{t}$  Tottenham Court Rd  
 A fantastic place if you like your make-up pale, your hair raven black and your drinks laced with garlic, though it's equally fun for anyone who wants to have a drink while checking out London's Goth crowd. It's never too crowded here and you can get a seat at the cosy back garden on summer days or head down to the slightly scary bar where monster masks watch as you order.

**TWO FLOORS** Map p68 Bar  
 % 7439 1007; 3 Kingly St W1;  $\bar{h}$  to midnight Fri & Sat, closed Sun;  $\bar{t}$  Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus  
 It's amazing that Two Floors has managed to keep its relaxed atmosphere when so many bars in Soho have been mobbed by drunken weekenders, but it might have to do with the fact that it's hard to notice from the outside, and this low profile has helped maintain its cool personality. The punters are young, cool and bohemian, the bar staff equally so, and the music is usually über-now. The distressed décor is leather sofas and country-diner tables and chairs.

**MILK & HONEY** Map p68 Cocktail Bar  
 % 7292 9949, 0700 655 469; www.mlkhny.com; 61 Poland St W1;  $\bar{t}$  Leicester Sq or Tottenham Court Rd  
 Milk & Honey's number one 'House Rule' reads: 'No name-dropping, no star fucking', so prepare for a tight-lipped, but glamorous clientele at London's most renowned cocktail bar. It's a members' club that lets nonmembers in on week nights (though it's preferred if the plebeians stick to the beginning of the week), and you have to phone in advance to reserve your own private booth for a two-hour slot. Once you're there, you have to ring the bell and whisper your name into the buzzer, the speakeasy way. This practice is heavenly if you like privacy and great drinks, and hellish if you prefer a more down-to-earth atmosphere. It's worth sampling the vast and exquisite cocktail list.

**PLAYER** Map p68 Cocktail Bar  
 % 7494 9125; www.thplyr.com; 8 Broadwick St W1;  $\bar{h}$  to midnight Mon-Wed, to 1am Thu-Sat, closed Sun;  $\bar{t}$  Oxford Circus  
 Player was one of London's top cocktail bars during the 1990s, when Dick Bradsell, the Lenin of London's cocktail revolution, started mixing his substantial and stylish drinks behind the basement bar. He has since moved on, and although the bar still serves great drinks, the clientele is a lot less suave than when the bar was at its best. A cooler Soho crowd heads down after 9pm, when you too should descend and sample the cocktail list. Unfortunately, only members are admitted after 11pm.

**COACH & HORSES** Map p68 Pub  
 % 7437 5920; 29 Greek St W1;  $\bar{t}$  Leicester Sq  
 Famous as the place where *Spectator* columnist Jeffrey Bernard drank himself

to death, this small, busy and thankfully unreconstructed boozers retains an old Soho bohemian atmosphere with a regular clientele of soaks, writers, hacks, tourists and those too pissed to lift their heads off the counter. Pretension will be prosecuted.

**SUN & 13 CANTONS** Map p68 Pub  
 % 7734 0934; 21 Great Pulteney St W1;  $\bar{t}$  Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus  
 Certainly Soho's oddest-named pub, the Sun is a music-industry mainstay and a great place for young hopefuls to network. Everyone from the Chemical Brothers (first London gig) to Underworld (global smash hit written here) has links to this place, and there are still regular DJ nights downstairs. A far better reason to visit is the historic décor and relaxed drinking vibe upstairs.

## COVENT GARDEN & LEICESTER SQUARE

**FREUD** Map pp72-3 Bar, Café  
 % 7240 9933; 198 Shaftesbury Ave WC2;  $\bar{h}$  to 1am Thu, to 2am Fri, to 1am Sat;  $\bar{t}$  Covent Garden  
 Make this the first stop on your crawl because there's no way you'll make it down the stairs (not much more than a ladder) after a few bevies. It's a small basement bar-café-gallery with the sort of beige walls that could look just plain dirty, but there are purposefully arty pictures to head off scruffiness. The décor and punters are suitably scruffy and arty, and the cocktails are fat and fancy, but beer is sadly only by the bottle.

**CROSS KEYS** Map pp72-3 Pub  
 % 7836 5185; 31 Endell St WC2;  $\bar{t}$  Covent Garden  
 Covered in ivy and frequented by loyal locals who come here for pints of Young's and spicy fry-ups, the Cross Keys is Covent Garden's tourist-free, local pub. Eccentric landlord Brian shows off his pop purchases as bar decorations (such as his £500 Elvis Presley napkin); brass pots, kettles and diving gear hang off the ceiling; and the punters range from bar props and fruit machine devotees to Covent Garden professionals, all of whom spill onto the pavement and outside tables on summer days.

**LAMB & FLAG** Map pp72-3 Pub  
 % 7497 9504; 33 Rose St WC2;  $\bar{t}$  Covent Garden  
 Good pubs can be hard to come by in over-touristy Covent Garden, but the Lamb &

Flag makes up for any character or soul lost in the area – the interior is more than 350 years old, with creaky wooden floors and winding stairs, there's live jazz on Sunday afternoons and come sunshine or summer evenings, it's a miracle if you can approach the bar for all the people crowding outside. Its setting is equally charming: the main entrance is on top of a tiny cobbled street, but you can also reach it from the backstreet donkey path that'll make you think of Victorian England.

**SALISBURY** *Map pp72–3* **Pub**  
% 7836 5863; 90 St Martin's Lane WC2; h to midnight Fri & Sat; t Leicester Sq  
Facing off the superchic St Martin's Lane Hotel, the Salisbury offers everything its opposite number doesn't: warmth, centuries of history, and a glorious, traditionally British pub interior. The Salisbury is packed in the evenings by pre- and post-theatre drinkers, and while it can be a little touristy, it's still a true London gem.

**HOLBORN & THE STRAND**  
**GORDON'S WINE BAR** *Map pp72–3* **Bar**  
% 7930 1408; www.gordonswinebar.com; 47 Villiers St WC2; t Embankment or Charing Cross  
We shouldn't really include Gordon's here – it's already too crowded as soon as the office hours are over – but it's simply too good to leave out. It's cavernous and dark, and the French and New World wines are heady and reasonably priced; there's also bread, cheese and olives to pick on.

**POLSKI BAR** *Map pp72–3* **Bar**  
% 7831 9679; 11 Little Turnstile WC1; h closed Sun; t Holborn  
Formerly known as Na Zdorowie ('cheers' in Polish), Polski Bar changed its name probably as a result of no-one being able to pronounce it before or after many-a-flavoured vodka shot, but the spirit (no pun intended) has remained: around 60 different types of vodka, from coffee to fruity to wheat flavoured, there's even kosher vodka, or simple old Polish *slivowica* (liquor). There's great Polish food here, too.

**AKA** *Map pp72–3* **DJ Bar**  
% 7836 0110; www.akalondon.com; 18 West Central St W1; h to 3am Tue-Fri, to 7am Sat, to 4am Sun; t Tottenham Court Rd

Sitting on a dark backstreet like all good secrets, the AKA bar is one of the West End's best DJ bars. A great sound system is exercised by many of London's up-and-coming and already established DJs, and the young, good-looking clientele is propelled by precision-made cocktails late into the night.

**PRINCESS LOUISE** *Map pp72–3* **Pub**  
% 7405 8816; 208 High Holborn WC1; t Holborn  
We might have used the word gem before, but we take all of the other instances back. This late-19th-century Victorian pub is spectacularly decorated with a riot of fine tiles, etched mirrors, plasterwork and a stunning central horseshoe bar. It was closed for refurbishment at the time of writing, but was expected to reopen in December 2007.

**SEVEN STARS** *Map pp72–3* **Pub**  
% 7242 8521; 53-54 Carey St WC2; t Holborn or Temple  
Even though it's packed with lawyers in the after-office booze rush hour, the tiny Seven Stars is still a relative secret to many Londoners. Sitting behind the Royal Courts of Justice and originally a sailors' hangout, this is a place overflowing with character, great food, beer and wine. The eccentric landlord and chef, Roxy Beaujolais, a former TV chef and raconteur, lets her cat, Tom Paine, roam around the pub and snooze on the window sills; the bar staff are friendly and the game dishes ravishing.

**BLOOMSBURY**  
**KING'S BAR** *Map pp92–3* **Bar**  
% 7837 6470; Hotel Russell, Russell Sq WC1; t Russell Sq  
Nestled behind the awesome Victorian Gothic façade of the Hotel Russell, the King's Bar is an oasis of booze in a neighbourhood sorely lacking in decent bars. The grand Edwardian décor, huge leather armchairs and table service make the prices worthwhile. There's a great selection of cocktails and wines, and you're always guaranteed a seat.

**LAMB** *Map pp92–3* **Pub**  
% 7405 0713; 94 Lamb's Conduit St WC1; h to midnight Mon-Sat, to 10.30pm Sun; t Russell Sq

The Lamb's central mahogany bar with beautiful Victorian dividers has been its *pièce de résistance* since 1729, when the screens used to hide the music stars from the punters' curious gaze. Just like three centuries ago, the pub is still wildly popular, so come early to bag a booth. There's a decent selection of Young's bitters and a genial atmosphere perfect for unwinding.

**LORD JOHN RUSSELL** *Map pp92–3* **Pub**  
% 7388 0500; 91 Marchmont St WC1; t Russell Sq  
If you're pining for your student days or just want a cheap pint, head down to the Lord John Russell. Here you can blend in with the under- and postgrads who are escaping the local halls of residence. It's a traditional one-room bar where chatting is the norm, and the relaxed atmosphere is perfect for getting away from noisy Central London bars.

**MUSEUM TAVERN** *Map pp92–3* **Pub**  
% 7242 8987; 49 Great Russell St WC1; t Tottenham Court Rd  
This is where Karl Marx used to retire for a well-earned pint after a hard day's inventing communism in the British Museum Reading Room, and where George Orwell boozed after his literary musings. A lovely traditional pub set around a long bar, it has friendly staff and is popular with academics and students alike, and while tourists check-in for the atmosphere, the place retains its loyal regulars.

**PERSEVERANCE** *Map pp92–3* **Pub**  
% 7405 8278; 63 Lamb's Conduit St WC1; t Holborn or Russell Sq  
Perseverance is a charming Victorian boozier downstairs with a very pleasant upstairs dining room. It's always busy with office workers during the week, but it also does a brisk trade with locals over the weekend, when you can be guaranteed a seat.

**QUEEN'S LARDER** *Map pp92–3* **Pub**  
% 7837 5627; 1 Queen Sq WC1; t Russell Sq  
In a lovely square southeast of Russell Sq, this pub is so called because Queen Charlotte, wife of 'Mad' King George III, rented part of the pub's cellar to store special foods for him while he was being treated nearby. There are benches outside for fair-weather fans and a good dining room upstairs.

**FITZROVIA**  
**BRADLEY'S SPANISH BAR** *Map p68* **Bar**  
% 7636 0359; 42-44 Hanway St W1; t Tottenham Court Rd  
Hanway St is home to several tapas-and-flamenco bars and speakeasy Spanish bars that open till dawn and serve beer from crates. Bradley's is vaguely Spanish in décor, though it's really Spanish in its choice of booze: San Miguel, Cruzcampo and some decent wines. The punters are squeezed under low ceilings in the nooks of the basement, while a vintage vinyl jukebox plays out rock tunes of your choice.

**MAYFAIR**  
**SALT WHISKY BAR** *Map p100* **Bar**  
% 7402 1155; www.saltbar.com; 82 Seymour St W1; h to 1am Mon-Sat, to 12.30am Sun; t Marble Arch  
Two hundred whiskies and bourbons, lots of salt, and a sleek, dark wood interior make this friendly bar and comfortable lounge a fab place for drinking. Staff are knowledgeable and keen to share their tips with customers.

**GUINEA** *Map p100* **Pub**  
% 7409 1728; 30 Bruton PI W1; t Green Park or Bond St  
Top-quality Young's beers, famous autographs on the toilet walls and the whiff of money define this quiet and out-of-the-way pub in London's most exclusive neighbourhood of Mayfair. There are very few places to sit, though, and it sometimes feels little more than a waiting room for the rear restaurant (renowned for its pies).

**MARYLEBONE**  
**MOOSE BAR** *Map p100* **Bar, DJ Bar**  
% 7224 3452; 31 Duke St W1; h to 2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; t Bond St  
We bet you never thought you'd find a Canadian Rockies sky lodge in the middle of the West End? Well, the Moose Bar is just that. It's a wood-lined space on two floors, with a simple ground-floor bar and a downstairs lounge/DJ 'n' dance space that has antlers for lampshades and cowhide on the seating. The cocktails are reasonable (£6.50 to £8.50), you can have a bite (of pies and nibbles) to eat and there's dancing until late on weekend nights.

## THE CITY

So close and yet so far... While the famous 'Square Mile' is surrounded by neighbourhoods offering some of the hippest and most stylish drinking venues in London, for the most part the City does traditional pubs. And because they cater to bankers, dealers and other suits, it's usually a Monday to Friday after-work deal here and best avoided at the weekend. In fact, it can be difficult to find any boozers open here on Saturday and Sunday.

### VERTIGO 42 Map p110 Cocktail Bar

% 7877 7842; [www.vertigo42.co.uk](http://www.vertigo42.co.uk); Tower 42, 25 Old Broad St EC2; h closed Sat & Sun; t Bank or Liverpool St  
The stratospheric views from this 42nd-storey champagne bar are matched by the stratospheric prices – the cheapest bottle of champers is £44 – and for security reasons you must book ahead and go through airportlike security checks. Seats are arranged around the glass-walled circular space, where you quaff champagne while taking in an unforgettable 360-degree view; evenings are the better time to visit, when you can watch the lights come on across London. The crowd, not surprisingly, is as rarefied as the view.

### BLACK FRIAR Map p110 Pub

% 7236 5474; 174 Queen Victoria St EC4; h to 11.30pm Thu & Fri; t Blackfriars  
It may look like Friar Tuck just stepped out of this 'olde pubbe' just north of Blackfriars tube station, but the interior is actually an Arts and Crafts makeover dating back to 1905. Not surprisingly, the Black Friar is the preserve of City suits during the week, but they disappear at the weekend, leaving it to the rest of us. There's a good selection of ales and bitters here.

### COUNTING HOUSE Map p110 Pub

% 7283 7123; 50 Cornhill EC3; h closed Sat & Sun; t Bank or Monument  
They say that old banks – with their counters and basement vaults – make perfect homes for pubs and this award-winner certainly looks and feels most comfortable in the former headquarters of NatWest. Even though the central hall and island bar are mammoth, the Counting House can feel like Clapham Junction in the early evening.

### JAMAICA WINE HOUSE Map p110 Pub

% 7929 6972; 12 St Michael's Alley EC3; h closed Sat & Sun; t Bank  
Not a wine bar at all but a historic Victorian pub, the 'Jam Pot' stands on the site of what was the first coffee house in London (1652); such places were often just fronts for brothels. At the end of a narrow alley, this is a difficult place to find.

### YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE Map p110 Pub

% 7353 6170; Wine Office Ct, 145 Fleet St EC4; h to 2.30pm Sun; t Blackfriars  
The entrance to this historic pub is via a picturesque alley just down from [Dr Johnson's House \(p114\)](#); he drank here as did Thackeray, Dickens and the visiting Mark Twain). Cross the threshold and you'll find yourself in a wood-panelled interior (the oldest bit dates from just after the Great Fire of 1666) with sawdust on the floor; it's divided up into various bars and three restaurants.

### EL VINO Map p110 Wine Bar

% 7353 6786; [www.elvino.co.uk](http://www.elvino.co.uk); 47 Fleet St EC4; h closed Sat & Sun; t Blackfriars or Temple  
A venerable institution that plays host to barristers, solicitors and other legal types from the Royal Courts of Justice across the way, this wine bar (one of five in a small chain) has one of the better wine lists in the City and prices at the attached shops are reasonable. El Vino 'appeared' as the wine bar Pomeroy's in the TV series *Rumpole of the Bailey*.

## THE SOUTH BANK

The South Bank may have changed rather dramatically in the past few years, however, the majority of the drinking establishments in the South Bank are good, down-to-earth boozers, which just happen to have been here for hundreds of years and are now patronised by a younger, trendier set.

## WATERLOO

### BALTIC Map p126 Bar

% 7928 1111; [www.balticrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.balticrestaurant.co.uk); 74 Blackfriars Rd SE1; h from noon Mon-Sat; t Southwark  
This very stylish bar at the front of an Eastern European restaurant specialises – not surprisingly – in vodkas; some four dozen of them are at hand for your perusal and

enjoyment. The airy, high-ceilinged dining room, with a glass roof and lovely amber wall, is just behind should you need some blotter.

### LAUGHING GRAVY Map p126 Bar

% 7721 7055; [www.thelaughinggravy.com](http://www.thelaughinggravy.com); 154 Blackfriars Rd; h noon-11pm Mon-Fri, 7-11pm Sat; t Southwark  
This casual bar and restaurant has a delightfully shambolic, almost louche atmosphere. With vintage ad posters, paintings, potted plants and piano, it resembles a bohemian late-1940s living room. The small bar is well stocked with 'laughing gravy' (whisky).

### KING'S ARMS Map p126 Pub

% 7207 0784; 25 Roupell St SE1; h to midnight Thu & Fri; t Waterloo or Southwark  
A well-kept secret on the corner of a terraced Waterloo backstreet, the award-winning King's Arms is a delightful boozery full of character. The large traditional bar area serving up a good selection of ales and bitters gives way to a fantastically odd conservatory bedecked with junk store eclectica of local interest. It's a relaxed and friendly place; you'll find few better south of the river.

## BANKSIDE & SOUTHWARK

### BAR BLUE Map p126 Cocktail Bar

% 7940 8333; [www.vinopolis.com](http://www.vinopolis.com); 1 Bank End SE1; h 9am-11pm; t London Bridge  
This stylish bar attached to [Vinopolis \(p131\)](#) and close to the Thames has floor-to-ceiling windows and a colour scheme supposedly derived from a bottle of Bombay Sapphire Gin. The stools, the bar, the ceiling – everything but the nearby river – are bluer than blue. It's a great place for a cocktail before or after a performance at nearby Shakespeare's Globe.

### ANCHOR BANKSIDE Map p126 Pub

% 7407 1577; 34 Park St SE1; t London Bridge  
This riverside pub dating back to 1775 (but rebuilt after a fire destroyed it a century later) has superb views across the Thames from its terrace and is the most central (and most popular) riverside pub in London. Samuel Johnson (1709–84), whose brewer friend owned the joint, wrote part of his

dictionary here. Even better than the terrace is the small seating just off the 1st floor.

## BOROUGH & BERMONDSEY

### GEORGE INN Map p126 Pub

% 7407 2056; Talbot Yard, 77 Borough High St SE1; h to midnight Fri & Sat; t Borough  
The George is a rare bird indeed – a National Trust pub. It's London's last surviving galleried coaching inn, dates from 1677 and is mentioned in Dickens' *Little Dorrit*. It is on the site of the Tabard Inn (thus the Talbot Yard address), where the pilgrims in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* gathered before setting out (well lubricated, no doubt).

### MARKET PORTER Map p126 Pub

% 7407 2495; 9 Stoney St SE1; h 6.30-8.30am & 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun; t London Bridge  
This pub opens early on weekdays for the traders at Borough's wholesale market. It's good during normal opening hours, too, for its convivial atmosphere and excellent selection of real ales and bitters. This is the stuff of great pubs, and it's well worth making a detour or stopping by for a quick 'un while perusing the stalls of Borough Market at the weekend.

### MAYFLOWER Map p180 Pub

% 7237 4088; 117 Rotherhithe St SE16; t Rotherhithe  
East of Bermondsey in Rotherhithe, this 15th-century pub, originally called the Shippe, is named after the vessel that took the pilgrims to America in 1620. The ship set sail from Rotherhithe, and the captain supposedly charted out its course here while supping schooners. There's seating on a small back terrace, from which you can view the Thames.

### ROYAL OAK Map p126 Pub

% 7357 7173; 44 Tabard St SE1; h from 6pm Sat, noon-11pm Sun; t Borough  
This authentic Victorian place owned by a small independent brewery in Sussex is tucked away down a side street and is a mecca for serious beer lovers. The literati might find their way here too; it's just a hop, skip and a handful of rice from the Church of St George the Martyr where Little Dorrit (aka Amy) got married in Dickens' eponymous novel.



**SPICE ISLAND** Map p180 **Pub**  
 % 7394 7108; 163 Rotherhithe St SE16; **h** to midnight Fri & Sat; **t** Rotherhithe  
 What this enormous place lacks in history it surely makes up for with views. Just opposite the flagship **YHA hostel** (p360) in Rotherhithe, it has a large bar on the ground floor, a restaurant above and a large heated terrace overlooking the river.

**WINE WHARF** Map p126 **Wine Bar**  
 % 7940 8335; [www.winewharf.co.uk](http://www.winewharf.co.uk); Stoney St SE1; **h** closed Sun; **t** London Bridge  
 Located in a smart warehouse space close to the culinary joys of Borough Market, this wine bar's selection will delight oenophiles as well as people just coming along for a drink. The range is truly enormous, and the staff is more than happy to advise, offering you the chance to taste before buying.

## HYDE PARK TO CHELSEA

This is where high style and traditional pubs meet and coexist in surprising harmony. You can choose between the sultry lights of expensive cocktail bars, frequented by the deep-pocketed Knightsbridge and Chelsea dwellers, or join the area's ale lovers in some of the most beautiful of London's old pubs.

**WINDOWS OF THE WORLD BAR**  
Map pp138-9 **Cocktail Bar, Bar**  
 % 7493 8000; Hilton Hotel, 28th fl, Park Lane W1; **h** to 2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; **t** Hyde Park Corner

This swish bar is a popular place for observing London from a great height: the 28th floor of the Hilton Hotel. You might think it resembles something out of Miami Vice, with its '80s-style armchairs, suave and extortionately priced (£20) cocktails and live entertainer who pretends to be playing his guitar (he has a prerecorded track, really). The views of the city are breathtaking, particularly at dusk. Nonhotel guests arriving after 11pm will have to pay a £7.50 cover charge.

**COOPERS ARMS** Map pp138-9 **Pub**  
 % 7376 3120; 87 Flood St SW3; **t** Sloane Sq or South Kensington  
 A classic Chelsea pub just off King's Rd, stuffed with taxidermists' delights such as a moose head and a stuffed pig's face,

among other stiff critters, and railway advertising cartoons. Newspapers abound near the bright and sunny bar, and the clientele is mixed and jolly.

**NAG'S HEAD** Map pp138-9 **Pub**  
 % 7235 1135; 53 Kinnerton St SW1; **t** Hyde Park Corner  
 Located in a serene mews not far from bustling Knightsbridge, this gorgeously genteel early-19th-century drinking den has eccentric décor, a sunken bar and no mobile phones. A dreamy delight; don't bother if you're not pure of pub heart.

**STAR TAVERN** Map pp138-9 **Pub**  
 % 7235 3019; 6 Belgrave Mews West SW1; **t** Knightsbridge or Sloane Sq  
 This cheery place is best known for West End glamour and East End skulduggery; it's where Christine Keeler and John Profumo rendezvoused for the scandalous Profumo affair and where the Great Train Robbers are said to have planned their audacious crime. These days it's just a lovely boozier with reliable Fuller's beers.

## CLERKENWELL, SHOREDITCH & SPITALFIELDS

If you want hipness that hurts, this is where you'll find it. The streets of Hoxton and Shoreditch are swamped with groovers who live fashion and (usually) study art, sporting wild hairdos, tight jeans and plenty of attitude. Bars are either cool and tattered or glamorous and decadent, and you've got to keep your ear to the ground for what's on each week – there's always an exhibition opening you might crash or a music night showing new talent. In any case, walking up Old St on a weekend night is infectiously lively and a perfect chance to see cosmopolitan London. Though Clerkenwell is a little more down to earth and calm, it still has some excellent bars.

**CLERKENWELL CHARTERHOUSE BAR** Map p150 **DJ Bar**  
 % 7608 0858; [www.charterhousebar.co.uk](http://www.charterhousebar.co.uk); 38 Charterhouse St EC1; **h** to midnight Wed & Sun, to 1am Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **t** Barbican or Farringdon

Charterhouse Bar is most people's pit stop before going on to **Fabric** (p300), so expect loud and relentless music on weekends, with a good preclub atmosphere. For those preferring something quieter, pop by for brunch – the food is great – and enjoy the wedge-shaped structure, a traditional Clerkenwell warehouse design. DJs are on every evening and entry is free at all times.

**JERUSALEM TAVERN** Map p150 **Pub**  
 % 7490 4281; 55 Britton St EC1; **t** Farringdon  
 This has to be London's most beautiful pub. Well, actually, it was one of the first London coffee houses (founded in 1703), with the 18th-century décor of occasional tile mosaics still visible. It's teeny, so come early and get a seat. There's good lunch food and, this being the only London outlet of St Peter's Brewery (based in North Suffolk), it has a brilliant range of drinks: organic bitters; cream stouts; wheat and; mmm, fruit beers, many of which are dispensed in green, apothecary-like bottles.

**SLAUGHTERED LAMB** Map p150 **Pub**  
 % 7253 1516; 34-35 Great Sutton St EC1; **h** noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-1am Fri & Sat; **t** Farringdon  
 A great Clerkenwell local, which although it opened only in 2004, feels like an old favourite already. It is spacious, with flea-market furniture, large windows, wooden floors and loud wallpaper, and the bar is lit by granny-style lamps. The beer on offer is good and the food is old England (fish and chips, fish fingers, sausage and mash etc). The black wall-papered downstairs room hosts regular live music and open mic nights.

**YE OLDE MITRE** Map p150 **Pub**  
 % 7405 4751; 1 Ely Ct EC1; **t** Chancery Lane or Farringdon  
 A delightfully cosy historic pub, tucked away in a backstreet off Hatton Garden, Ye Olde Mitre was built for the servants of Ely Palace. There's still a memento of Elizabeth I – the stump of a cherry tree around which she once danced. There's no music, so the rooms only echo to the sound of amiable chitchat.

**SHOREDITCH BAR KICK** Map p150 **Bar**  
 % 7739 8700; 127 Shoreditch High St E1; **t** Old St  
 A much larger sister venue to Clerkenwell's Café Kick, this place has a slightly edgier

Shoreditch vibe. This time, too, there's some floor space left over after four footy tables were installed, so there are leather sofas and simple tables and chairs.

**FOUNDRY** Map p150 **Bar**  
 % 7739 6900; [www.foundry.tv](http://www.foundry.tv); 84-86 Great Eastern St EC2; **t** Old St  
 Everything about the Foundry is truly bonkers. Let's start with the look: it's 'decorated' with genuinely shabby (not chic) furniture that clutters the space, the bar is made out of a plank of wood and propped by a yellowing old man, and the floor is icky. There's usually a nutter poet reading their verse on the makeshift stage, or a piano rendition of vintage David Bowie that'll stay with you for a long time, while downstairs is a live gig venue. It's so bonkers we love it. The Foundry rules.

**BEDROOM BAR** Map p150 **DJ Bar**  
 % 7613 5637; 62 Rivington St EC2; **h** 7pm-midnight Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; admission after 10.30pm Fri & Sat £3; **t** Old St  
 A great place for a cheap postpub night of dancing, Bedroom Bar has good cocktails, banquettes to lounge on, and enough floor space for dancing to the DJ's tunes.

**CARGO** Map p150 **DJ Bar**  
 % 7749 7840; [www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com); 83 Rivington St EC2; **h** to 1am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat, to midnight Sun; **t** Old St or Liverpool St  
 Cargo is really one of a kind on London's club scene. It doesn't go for the obvious, but chooses international music, live bands and brilliant DJs, all of which you can enjoy while eating great 'street food' and sipping cocktails or massive bottles of beer. It's the sort of place where you can feel cosy or go crazy, and a club that comes closest to feeling like your 'local'. There are dishevelled sofas to chill out on, and a courtyard with a hammock, a Mexican canteen and a great dance floor. See also p300.

**DRAGON BAR** Map p150 **DJ Bar**  
 % 7490 7110; 5 Leonard St N1; **h** to 11pm Sun & Mon, to midnight Tue & Wed, to 1am Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **t** Old St  
 Dragon's been supercool since it opened in the mid-1990s, and it's maintained its style thanks to the fact that it's easy to miss: the name is hardly visible and only embossed on an entrance stair. Inside it's all exposed

brick, Chinese lanterns, velvet curtains and one of those illuminated waterfall pictures you buy on Brick Lane – it's ironic, of course.

### DREAMBAGSJAGUARSHOES

Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7729 5830; 34-36 Kingsland Rd E2; h to midnight; t Old St

The bar's name is a lazy leftover from the names of the two shop spaces the bar now occupies, and this nonchalance is a typical example of the we-couldn't-care-less Shoreditch chic. Inside, the small space is filled with sofas and Formica-topped tables, the walls are covered in drawings and graffiti, a DJ plays in the corner, lads wear the nu rave look and the gals are sleek-looking.

### GEORGE & DRAGON

Map p150 DJ Bar, Pub  
% 7012 1100; 2 Hackney Rd E2; t Old St  
Once a scuzzy local pub, the George (as ye shall dub it if you value your Shoreditch High Street cred) was taken over and decorated with the owner's grandma's antiques (antlers, racoon tails, old clocks), cardboard cut-outs of Cher and fairy lights, turning this one-room pub into what has remained the epicentre of the Hoxton scene for a decade. It's one of the most exciting places to go out, though prepare to be sandwiched between jolly, dancing boys and girls when it gets busy. Some of the best DJ nights in London are on offer here, with cabaret performances taking place on window sills (Sunday cabaret is *trés* popular). It's total fun and mindless hedonism. Not a place for a quiet pint.

### MOTHER BAR

Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7739 5949; www.333mother.com; 333 Old St; h to midnight Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; t Old St  
Where can you go dancing till late on a Sunday night, you may wonder? Come to Mother. Still one of the best bars in town, it's above Shoreditch's original hipster club, 333. Though it's mobbed at weekends, don't be put off – there's a lounge, a dance floor and a fun, up-for-it crowd.

### OLD BLUE LAST

Map p150 DJ Bar, Pub  
% 7739 5793; 39 Great Eastern Rd, EC2; t Old St or Liverpool St  
You walk into this inconspicuous pub and expect to find old geezers sitting at the

bar, watching the snooker on the telly in the corner, but you find a massively trendy teenage-and-up crowd of Hoxtonites wearing hooded tops, fluorescent T-shirts and nylon caps. The seedy and trendy look is courtesy of *Vice* magazine – the hipster bible/global conglomerate and try-hard bad boy magazine – which owns the place. It hosts some of the best Shoreditch parties, has a rocking juke box and does a mean square pie to boot.

### BRICKLAYERS ARMS

Map p150 Pub  
% 7739 5245; 63 Charlotte Rd EC2; t Old St  
A determinedly down-to-earth stalwart of the Hoxton scene, the Bricklayers Arms attracts an unpretentious but cool-looking, generally mid-to-late-20s crowd. This essentially old-style pub is often seen as a solid place to start the evening, before heading off elsewhere.

## SPITALFIELDS

### LOUNGELOVER

Map p150 Cocktail Bar  
% 7012 1234; 1 Whitby St E1; h to midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, closed Sun; t /rail Liverpool St  
Evinced the junk-shop-rearranged-by-gay-stylist look, here chandeliers, antiques, street lanterns and comfy lounge chairs materialise just seconds away from the run-down streets outside. Coming here once is never enough, but prepare to cough up around £10 for a cocktail.

### 1001

Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7247 9679; www.cafe1001.co.uk; 91 Brick Lane E1; h to midnight Fri & Sat; t Aldgate East or Liverpool St  
'Laid-back' is an understatement here – 1001 is frequented by those who haven't yet been to bed after their night out or those who come here to snooze in the candlelit atmosphere at noon. Coffee and cocktails are prepared while DJs play excellent music, and seating is all comfy sofas and massive cushions. The crowded outside area dishes up burgers all day Sunday.

### T BAR

Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7729 2973; www.tbarlondon.com; 56 Shoreditch High St E1; h to 2am Thu-Sun; t Liverpool St  
A recent closure was a slap-on-the-wrist for wild and loose T Bar that tends to host all-day club events on Sunday and raucous

weekend nights. Now, with some bouncers brooding at the front door, it's still the same fun, with excellent DJs on Friday and Saturday. It's housed on the ground floor of the Tea Building, a creative hub for various hip companies cashing in on Shoreditch's aching coolness.

### VIBE BAR

Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7377 2899; Truman Brewery, 91-95 Brick Lane E1; t Old St or Aldgate East  
Once the epicentre of the Hoxton scene, the Vibe is part bar, part club and still attracts a regular crowd, although it's safe to say that its time has long passed. On quieter nights drinkers can still enjoy themselves in the spacious bar, which has scuffed leather sofas, arcade games and computer terminals.

### GOLDEN HART

Map p150 Pub  
% 7247 2158; 110 Commercial St E1; t Liverpool St  
It's an unsurprisingly trendy Hoxton crowd that mixes in the surprisingly untrendy interior of this brilliant Spitalfields boozier. As it's famously a hangout for the YBAs (Young British Artists), you may well catch Tracey Emin giving it some to her interlocutor over a pint and chips, although most agree that the person to come and see here is the charming (and, yes, possibly bonkers) landlady, Sandra, who ensures that the bullshit never outstrips the fun. Smashing.

## THE EAST END & DOCKLANDS

Once famous for gangster assassinations and Saturday night fights at drinking-up time, the pubs of the East End have come a long way in the past few years. There are still some fairly odious dives where only locals will feel comfortable, but the pubs listed following are just fine and welcome all. And some of the pubs in Hackney have become positively trendy.

## WHITECHAPEL

### BLIND BEGGAR

Map p156 Pub  
% 7247 6195; 337 Whitechapel Rd E1; t Whitechapel  
Notorious as the place where Ronnie Kray shot George Cornell in 1966 in a gang war over control of the East End's organised

crime, the Blind Beggar has had a makeover in recent years and looks like just about any other boozier along this stretch of the East End's main thoroughfare. But its historical associations (not to mention garden with benches) continues to draw visitors and locals alike.

## BETHNAL GREEN & HACKNEY

### BISTROTHERQUE

Map p156 Bar, DJ Bar  
% 8983 7900; www.bistrotheque.com; 23-27 Wadeston St E2; t Bethnal Green  
The lovely Bistrottheque offers three things: dining in its stylish white restaurant, where the food is very fine; partying and cabaret in the Cabaret Room; and drinking in the Napoleon Bar, a moody, slightly decadent room with dark walls and plush seating. The drinks are expertly mixed and the bar staff is always friendly. The whole building is a converted East End warehouse and the bar draws people from all over London to the depths of Bethnal Green, so good are its cocktails and parties. You might see the Puppini Sisters singing, the likes of Stephen Bayley giving talks and a bit of gay bingo (though not all on the same night).

### CAT & MUTTON

Map p156 Pub  
% 7254 5599; www.catandmutton.co.uk; 76 Broadway Market E8; h from 6pm Mon, from noon Tue-Sun; d London Fields, g 26, 48, 55, 106 or 253  
As if to seal the deal on East London's most up-and-coming eating and drinking strip, the once terrifyingly rowdy pub on the edge of London Fields (the 'Cat' is short for 'cattle' that grazed here before being slaughtered) has metamorphosed into an airy and well-run gastropub. It has mostly lagers on tap but offers a full wine list and modern European menu.

### DOVE FREEHOUSE

Map p156 Pub  
% 7275 7617; www.belgianbars.com; 24 Broadway Market; h from noon Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Fri & Sat; d London Fields, g 26, 48, 55, 106 or 253  
This pub attracts at any time with its rambling series of rooms and wide range of Belgian Trappist and wheat beers. But there's something about the dim back room, with its ethnic bohemian chic, that makes this pub a great place to hunker down against the chill. Of course, everyone feels the same way so don't count on solitude.

## MILE END & VICTORIA PARK

**ROYAL INN ON THE PARK** Map p156 Pub  
% 8985 3321; 111 Lauriston Rd E9; **h** from noon Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Sat; **t** Mile End then **g** 277

Only a fool would divulge the name of their much loved local and – whoops! – we think we just have. On the western edge of Victoria Park this excellent place, once a poster pub for Transport for London, has a half-dozen real ales and Czech lagers on tap, outside seating to the front and an enclosed terrace in back. It's always lively and attracts a mixed boho/louche Hackney crowd.

**ROYAL OAK** Map p156 Pub  
% 7729 2220; 73 Columbia Rd E2; **h** from 6pm Mon-Thu, noon-11pm Fri & Sun, noon-midnight Sat; **t** Bethnal Green, **d** Cambridge Heath, **g** 26, 48 or 55

This traditional boozier gone trendy gastro-pub has a good selection of bitter and a better-than-average wine list. It gets into its stride on Sunday when the Columbia Road Flower Market is on just outside the door.

## DOCKLANDS

**CAPTAIN KIDD** Map p156 Pub  
% 7480 5759; 108 Wapping High St E1; **t** Tower Hill then **g** 100

The Kidd, with its large windows, fine (but small) beer garden and mock scaffold recalling the hanging nearby of the eponymous pirate in 1701, is a favourite riverside pub in Wapping.

**DICKENS INN** Map p156 Pub  
% 7488 2208; St Katharine's Way E1; **t** Tower Hill, DLR Tower Gateway  
Popular with both City folk and tourists who have strayed too far east from the Tower, this flower-bedecked three-storey warehouse is always heaving. But what keeps us going back is the waterside location, the outside tables and the fact that the building dates from the 1790s and not the 1970s as everyone thinks (though it was moved here from elsewhere).

**GRAPES** Map p156 Pub  
% 7987 4396; 76 Narrow St E14; DLR Westferry  
One of Limehouse's renowned historic pubs – there's been a drinking house here

since 1583 – the Grapes is cosy and very narrow. Actually, it's absolutely tiny, especially the riverside terrace, which can only really comfortably fit about a half-dozen close friends. But it continues to radiate olde-worlde charm.

**PROSPECT OF WHITBY** Map p156 Pub  
% 7481 1095; 57 Wapping Wall E1; **t** Tower Hill then **g** 100

Once known as the Devil's Tavern, the Whitby in Wapping dates from 1520 and is one of London's oldest surviving drinking houses. It's firmly on the tourist trail now, but there's a terrace to the front and the side overlooking the Thames, a decent restaurant upstairs and open fires in winter. Check out the pewter bar – Samuel Pepys once sidled up to it.

## NORTH LONDON

Camden Town is one of North London's favoured areas, with more bars and pubs pumping music than you can manage to crawl between. The hills of Hampstead are a real treat for old-pub aficionados, while Muswell Hill and Crouch End will give you incoherent celebrities and North Londoners at play. Gentrified Stoke Newington and Dalston have some excellent pubs and interesting new bars thanks to their slightly boho and organicoholic residents.

## CAMDEN

**AT PROUD** Map p166 DJ Bar  
% 7482 3867; [www.atproud.net](http://www.atproud.net); The Gin House, Stables Market, Chalk Farm Rd NW1; **h** to 1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat; **t** Camden Town  
Opened in 2006 as part of Proud Gallery's space, At Proud is the summer venue London's been in need of for decades. It's a bit tricky to find, hidden among the nooks of Camden's old Stables Market, but once you step onto the sunny roof terrace overlooking the industrial but attractive skyline, you'll be charmed into submission. It's really a summer venue, though it's open in winter too, with live bands playing most nights (when there's a cover charge of around £5), a crowd of socialites and beautiful people, and, most importantly, an excellent atmosphere.

**BAR VINYL** Map p168 DJ Bar  
% 7681 7898; 6 Inverness St NW1; **t** Camden Town  
Bar Vinyl is the epicentre for Camden's young and urban crowd, with cool kids

behind the decks, a record shop downstairs and graffiti whirling along narrow walls. It's superfriendly at the same time, though, and everyone's here to relax, enjoy some music and gobble a pizza, rather than pose. Weekends are packed and buzzing, mid-week nights are quieter, and the music is always good.

**BARTOK** Map p166 DJ Bar  
% 7916 0595; [www.bartokbar.com](http://www.bartokbar.com); 78-79 Chalk Farm Rd NW1; **h** to 3am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat; **t** Chalk Farm or Camden Town  
Here's a true oasis: an elegant classical-music lounge-bar in the midst of grungy Camden. And not only is it an original find in Camden, Bartok is pretty unusual in the whole of London. Named after the Hungarian composer and pianist, Bartok specialises in classical concertos, live jazz or brilliant DJ sets blending jazz, classical, electro and world music. There are fantastic cocktails (try the Espresso Martinis), low sofas and intimate lighting, with fun until the wee hours.

**CROWN & GOOSE** Map p168 Pub  
% 7485 8008; 100 Arlington Rd NW1; **h** to 1am Mon-Thu & Sun, to 2am Fri & Sat; **t** Camden Town  
One of our favourite London pubs, this square room has a central wooden bar between British-racing-green walls studded with gilt-framed mirrors and illuminated by big, shuttered windows. More importantly, it combines a good-looking crowd, easy conviviality, top tucker and good, inexpensive beer.

**EDINBORO CASTLE** Map p168 Pub  
% 7255 9651; 57 Mornington Tce NW1; **t** Camden Town  
This beautifully attired, relaxed and welcoming pub has more of a Primrose Hill atmosphere than that of a Camden boozier. It boasts a full menu, gorgeous furniture designed for slumping, and a huge outdoor seating area that is perfect for summer evenings.

**QUEEN'S** Map p166 Pub  
% 7586 0408; 49 Regent's Park Rd NW1; **h** to midnight Fri & Sat; **t** Camden Town or Chalk Farm  
While the ghost of actress, royal 'friend' and former next-door neighbour Lillie Langtry is said to reside in the cellar of this spirited joint, the pub proper is haunted by contem-

porary beauties such as Jude Law and the other fashionistas of Primrose Hill. The food and drinks won't disappoint, and there's plenty to look at among the clientele.

## KING'S CROSS

**BIG CHILL HOUSE** Map p150 DJ Bar  
% 7427 2540; [www.bigchill.net](http://www.bigchill.net); 257-259 Pentonville Rd N1; **t** King's Cross St Pancras  
Want to celebrate the spirit of the Big Chill festival all year round? Well, head out to King's Cross and party at this huge bar, where the owners' idea is to give Londoners a place to feel free and festive by naming parts of the 'House' after the eponymous festival's different musical areas and hosting lots of live and exciting music nights. Sister to the popular **Big Chill bar** (% 7392 9180; Dray Walk E1; **t** Liverpool St) off Brick Lane.

**RUBY LOUNGE** Map p168 DJ Bar  
% 7837 9558; [www.ruby.uk.com](http://www.ruby.uk.com); 33 Caledonian Rd N1; **h** to midnight Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; **t** King's Cross St Pancras  
King's Cross is being groomed slowly, so what was once an area frequented only by hardened clubbers (or prostitutes and junkies) is now turning into a three-Starbucks-per-square-metre neighbourhood. But Ruby Lounge was around when the going was tough and it's here to stay. It's a great place, with a warm interior, excellent DJs and an up-for-it preclubbing crowd.

## HAMPSTEAD & HIGHGATE

**BOOGALOO** Map p166 Bar  
% 8340 2928; [www.theboogaloo.org](http://www.theboogaloo.org); 312 Archway Rd N6; **h** to midnight Thu, to 1.30am Fri & Sat; **t** Highgate  
'London's Number 1 Jukebox' is how Boogaloo flaunts itself and how it's been described in the local media, thanks to its celebrity-musician-fiddled-with jukebox playlists, featuring the favourite 10 songs of the likes of Nick Cave, Sinead O'Connor, Howie B and Bobbie Gillespie, to name but a random few. There's plenty to boogie to with the regular live music that's on every night of the week. If you're into music in a big way, it's worth going out to Archway.

**HOLLYBUSH** Map p166 Pub  
% 7435 2892; 22 Holly Mount NW3; **t** Hampstead  
A beautiful pub that makes you envy the privileged residents of Hampstead,



Hollybush has an antique Victorian interior, a lovely secluded hilltop location, open fires in winter and a knack for making you stay longer than you had intended at any time of the year. Set above Heath St, it's reached via the Holly Bush Steps.

### SPANIARD'S INN Map p166 Pub

☎ 8731 6571; Spaniards Rd NW3; ☊ Hampstead then ☉ 21

This marvellous tavern dates from 1585 and has more character than a West End musical. Famously, it was highwayman Dick Turpin's hangout between his robbing escapades, but it's also served as a watering hole for more savoury characters, such as Dickens, Shelley, Keats and Byron. Perhaps we owe English language's greatest works of literature and poetry to this pub's ale? There's a big, blissful garden, and the food ain't half bad.

### WRESTLERS Map p166 Pub

☎ 8340 4397; 98 North Hill Rd N6; ☊ Highgate Another great, great local where the ambience, beer, food and décor just combine to make you happy to be alive, although when the very friendly Irish governor gets chatting you can begin to have second thoughts.

## ISLINGTON

### ELBOW ROOM Map p168 Bar

☎ 7278 3244; 89-91 Chapel Market N1; ☊ Angel Don't be fooled by the row upon row of pool tables, this place is packed on the weekends with punters just as interested in the cocktails, beer, bar food and DJs. It's relaxed, unposey and reckoned by many to be a top place to meet members of the opposite sex. Entry on Saturday costs about £5.

### SALMON & COMPASS Map p168 Bar

☎ 7837 3891; www.salmonandcompass.com; 58 Penton St N1; ☊ to 2am Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat; ☊ Highbury & Islington

It's all about music here, be it in DJ or live set form, with young and trendy Islingtonites crowding in over the weekend. There are large sofas for sitting, but it's mainly standing, drinking and dancing that take place, illuminated by fairy lights and a couple of sky lights during the day, when the bar serves Thai food. Monthly comedy nights are held here, too.

### EMBASSY Map p168 DJ Bar

☎ 7359 7882; 119 Essex Rd N1; ☊ to 1am Fri & Sat; ☊ Angel

It's been around for years, but Embassy's reputation and appeal just keeps rising, so get there early on weekends and mingle with the cool music and media crowd and enjoy the good DJs. The darkened windows and black walls make it look secretive, but inside everyone's relaxing on the ubiquitous comfy sofas on the ground and basement floors. There's a cover charge (£3) on weekends.

### MEDICINE BAR Map p168 DJ Bar

☎ 7704 9536; 181 Upper St N1; ☊ to midnight Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat; ☊ Highbury & Islington

Still one of the coolest bars along Upper St, the Medicine Bar attracts 30-something clubbers and drinkers, as well as a younger crowd. One reason you'd come to this converted dark-red pub, with low sofas and dim lighting, is its music, ranging from jazzy funk to hip-hop; another attraction is minor celebrity spotting – you might catch sight of your fave DJ, model or TV star (if you can see through the crowds, that is).

### ELK IN THE WOODS Map p168 Pub

☎ 7226 3535; 39 Camden Passage N1; ☊ Angel A wonderful take on a stylish countryside hunters' pub, this is by far the coolest bar in Islington and equally notable for its food. With its large, rough oak-wood tables, old mirrors, stuffed deer head and wonderfully friendly staff, this is a spot to savour.

## STOKE NEWINGTON

### FOX REFORMED Bar

☎ 7254 5975; 176 Stoke Newington Church St N16; ☊ Stoke Newington, ☉ 73

Stoke Newington's firm favourite for more than two decades, the Fox has all the qualities of a good local: a friendly landlord, loyal regulars, good food, wine and beer, and a cosy back garden. Its quiet atmosphere and chess and backgammon boards for entertainment on relaxing afternoons always bring new converts to its charms.

### JAZZ BAR DALSTON Cocktail Bar

☎ 7254 9728; 4 Bradbury St N16; ☊ to 1am Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, to midnight Sun; ☊ Dalston Kingsland

Jazz Bar is Dalston's most excellent and unexpected find, hidden just off the chaos of

Dalston Junction. Housed within glass walls, it's not really a jazz bar but a cocktail place where the neighbourhood's hip and friendly inhabitants congregate at the weekends to party on to hip-hop, R&B and reggae.

### AULD SHILLELAGH Pub

☎ 7249 5951; 105 Stoke Newington Church St N16; ☉ 73

The Auld Shillelagh is one of the best Irish pubs in London and full of old-style liver pounders. It's many things to many people: a theatre and a cosy room, centre stage and a sanctuary, a debating chamber and a place for silent contemplation. The staff are sharp, the Guinness is good, and the live entertainment is frequent and varied.

### BIRDCAGE Pub, DJ Bar

☎ 7249 5951; 58 Stamford Hill N16; ☊ Stoke Newington

Once Stoke Newington's roughest and least inviting pub, the Birdcage has been refurbished with distressed sofas and gentle wall colours, inviting Stoke's more 'respectable' young population with a local gastropub-cum-DJ bar. Chairs no longer fly out of the windows at closing time – now the DJ sends out soothing tunes to a trendy and boozy audience most nights of the week, and there's DJ music even during Sunday lunch.

## WEST LONDON

While Old St appeals to artists and fashionable youths, West London's Portobello Rd draws a very mixed crowd of rich kids (or 'trustafarians') and a keepin'-it-real crowd. There are illegal drinking dens right next to superexclusive cocktail bars, and if you stream along the side street, you'll discover more fun hangouts. The bars and pubs of the more down-to-earth areas of West London are restful, many with excellent river views. Shepherd's Bush is good, and Earl's Court attracts travellers, especially from Australia and South Africa. Maida Vale and St John's Wood have some London classics.

## ST JOHN'S WOOD & MAIDA VALE

### PRINCE ALFRED Map p175 Pub

☎ 7286 3287; 5a Formosa St W9; ☊ Warwick Ave Pubs don't really come much better than this charming place. Originally designed in

Victorian times to separate the classes and sexes, the semicircular bar is divided into five gorgeous booths, each with its own little door. Thankfully, nowadays everyone's allowed to sit where they please, and the pub is always busy with adoring locals. The Formosa Dining Room is an excellent place to eat, and the chef has an unbeatable reputation.

### WARRINGTON HOTEL Map p175 Pub

☎ 7266 3134; 93 Warrington Cres W9; ☊ Warwick Ave or Maida Vale

This former hotel and brothel is now an ornate Art Nouveau pub with heaps of character and an atmosphere that's so laid-back it's virtually horizontal. The huge saloon bar, dominated by a marble-topped hemispherical counter with a carved mahogany base, is a fabulous place to sample a range of real ales. There's outdoor seating and a good Thai restaurant upstairs.

## NOTTING HILL & WESTBOURNE GROVE

### CASTLE Map p175 Bar

☎ 7221 7103; 225 Portobello Rd W11; ☊ to midnight daily; ☊ Ladbroke Gve

The Castle gets lively on Saturday, when the market crowds pour in to rest their feet on the comfortable armchairs and sofas and enjoy the odd décor of industrial meets Moorish charm. There's Leffe and delicious strawberry beer, and the place is mainly populated by a crowd of local characters who keep the place buzzing all day long. There's a full menu and live jazz on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

### TWELFTH HOUSE Map p175 Bar, Café

☎ 7272 9629; www.twelfth-house.co.uk; 35 Pembridge Rd W11; ☊ Notting Hill Gate

This is a lovely Notting Hill coffee house with a kooky astrological edge. The bar is dominated by an amazing astrological clock and the owner, Priscilla, is an astrologer who comes in three times a week (phone to find out when) and works out your chart or reads your 'tarot card of the day' on request (for a £5 charge). If she's not in, the waitress can provide you with a card detailing the characteristics of your star sign.



**LONSDALE** *Map p175* Cocktail Bar  
 % 7727 4080; [www.thelonsdale.co.uk](http://www.thelonsdale.co.uk); 48 Lonsdale Rd W11; **h** to midnight Mon-Sat, to 11.30pm Sun; **t** Notting Hill Gate or Westbourne Park  
 The once super-slick Lonsdale, with its bumpy space-age walls suffused in purple light, is looking a bit worn out nowadays and the crowd is not as groomed as it once was. The exceptional cocktails are what people come for, although there are also beers and wines.

**EARL OF LONSDALE** *Map p175* Pub  
 % 7727 6335; 277-281 Portobello Rd W11; **t** Notting Hill Gate or Westbourne Park  
 We love this place. Especially when we've been schlepping around the market all morning and we need a nice cold drink. Despite the fact that it's bang in the middle of the market, the Earl is peaceful during the day, with a mixture of old biddies and young hipsters who seem to cobahit happily as they munch the so-so fish and chips and burgers and sit in the private booths surrounding the bar. There are Samuel Smith ales, and a fantastic back saloon with huge leather armchairs to sink into.

**WESTBOURNE** *Map p175* Pub  
 % 7221 1332; 101 Westbourne Park Villas W2; **t** Royal Oak or Westbourne Park  
 The Westbourne has a largish outdoor area, although inside it's more cramped and there is a little more attitude. As you'd expect, the crowd is beautiful and trust-fund fuelled.

**WINDSOR CASTLE** *Map p177* Pub  
 % 7243 9551; 114 Campden Hill Rd W8; **t** Notting Hill Gate  
 A wonderful, relatively out-of-the-way tavern between Notting Hill and Kensington High St, this place has history, warmth and charm on tap. It's worth the search for the roaring winter fireplace, great beer garden, historic interior and friendly regulars.

**EARL'S COURT**  
**PRINCE OF TECK** *Map p177* Pub  
 % 7373 3107; 161 Earl's Court Rd SW5; **h** to midnight Fri & Sat; **t** Earl's Court  
 This Earl's Court mainstay is nearly always packed with travellers and is festooned with Australian (well, stuffed kangaroos, anyway). It's large and comfortable, and

has big screens on both floors. This is the default pub for young Aussies and Kiwis in the neighbourhood.

## SHEPHERD'S BUSH & HAMMERSMITH

**DOVE** *Map p205* Pub  
 % 8748 5405; 19 Upper Mall W6; **t** Hammersmith or Ravenscourt Park  
 A 17th-century coffee house-cum-pub, the Dove has many claims to fame, namely that it was in the *Guinness Book of Records* in 1989 for having the smallest bar in England. It was Graham Greene's local and Hemingway drank here too: William Morris lived next door. There are good river views from the charming dark-wood interior, but if the sun is shining fight for a place on the terrace.

**OLD SHIP** *Map p205* Pub  
 % 8748 2593; 25 Upper Mall W6; **t** Hammersmith  
 This restful towpath pub is the prime stop-off for families and couples on their walks by the Thames. It looks south across the lazy bend of the river towards Putney, and it's popular during the rest of the week, especially on spring and summer days, thanks to its outdoor dining area, terrace and 1st-floor balcony.

## GREENWICH & SOUTHEAST LONDON

If you're looking for pubs of the old school, this part of London can oblige – and will throw in some wonderful views to boot. We'd steer clear of the new bars in the area looking to accommodate recent arrivals – stick to traditional boozers and you can't go wrong. Though of course there are always one or two exceptions.

**GREENWICH**  
**NORTH POLE** *Map p180* Bar  
 % 8853 3020; [www.northpolegreenwich.com](http://www.northpolegreenwich.com); 131 Greenwich High Rd SE10; **h** noon-midnight Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun; DLR, **d** Greenwich  
 Still going strong after almost a decade, this quirky Greenwich bar-restaurant-club on three levels attracts a crowd with partying in mind. Upstairs is the Piano restaurant,

downstairs a club called South Pole. On the ground level it's more relaxed, with the DJ playing R&B and low sofas for chatting etc.

**CUTTY SARK TAVERN** *Map p180* Pub  
 % 8858 3146; 4-7 Ballast Quay SE10; DLR Cutty Sark, **d** Greenwich  
 Housed in a delightful Georgian building directly on the Thames, the Cutty Sark is one of the few independent pubs left in Greenwich. There are a half-dozen ales on tap and a wonderful sitting-out area along the river just opposite. Count on about a 15-minute walk from the DLR station.

**TRAFALGAR TAVERN** *Map p180* Pub  
 % 8858 2437; 6 Park Row SE10; **h** noon-1pm Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun; DLR Cutty Sark, **d** Greenwich  
 This cavernous pub with big windows looking onto the Thames and the O2 (the erstwhile Millennium Dome) is steeped in history and you can see some of it illustrated in the plethora of prints on the walls. Dickens apparently knocked back a few here – the Trafalgar is mentioned in *Our Mutual Friend* – and prime ministers Gladstone and Disraeli used to dine on the pub's celebrated whitebait when the start of the season here was so keenly anticipated that Parliament would suspend sitting for a day.

## SOUTH LONDON

Brixton pub regulars turn up their noses at all the pretentious posing that goes on in many of London's neighbourhoods *du jour*, but nearby Battersea and Clapham have a stylish bar or two and there's even a decent riverside pub in Wandsworth. Brixton remains one of the most vibrant and exciting places to go out drinking in South London, though.

**BRIXTON**  
**BABALOU** *Map p200* Bar  
 % 7738 3366; [www.babalou.net](http://www.babalou.net); St Matthew's Church, Brixton Hill SW2; **h** 7pm-2am Wed & Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat; **t** Brixton  
 The Bug Bar in the crypt of a Methodist church has metamorphosed into a bar-lounge-club called Babalou with fabulous cocktails and parties. The neogothic architecture stays but there are now North African touches and discreet little 'snugs' (OK, booths) done up in red velvet.

**DOGSTAR** *Map p200* Bar  
 % 7733 7515; 389 Coldharbour Lane SW9; **h** 4pm-2am Mon-Fri, noon-4am Sat, 11am-2am Sun; **t** Brixton  
 Downstairs this long-running local institution has a cavernous DJ bar, always mobbed with a young South London crowd. The main bar is as casual as you'd expect from a converted pub – comfortable sofas, big wooden tables – so dressing to kill is not imperative.

**PLAN B** *Map p200* Bar  
 % 7733 0926; [www.plan-brixton.co.uk](http://www.plan-brixton.co.uk); 418 Brixton Rd SW9; **h** 6pm-late Tue & Wed, 5pm-3am Thu, 5pm-5am Fri, 7pm-5am Sat, 7pm-3am Sun; **t** Brixton  
 It doesn't have to be plan B – it could be an evening's plan A if you're looking for a friendly, low-key DJ bar any night from Thursday to Sunday. Even on Tuesday and Wednesday nights the decent cocktails are enough to woo you to this large room, decorated in an urban minimalist style – all concrete, exposed brick and benches with frosted-glass side panels.

**WHITE HORSE** *Map p200* Bar  
 % 8678 6666; [www.whitethorsebrixton.com](http://www.whitethorsebrixton.com); 94 Brixton Hill SW2; **h** 5pm-1am Mon-Thu, 2pm-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat, noon-1am Sun; **t** Brixton  
 This mixed bag of a pub-bar-club might appear to house some people for the entire weekend. It consists of just one big room decorated with modern art against the long bar, but it's lots of fun. We usually play pool here.

**BRIXTON BAR & GRILL** *Map p200* Cocktail Bar  
 % 7737 6777; [www.bbag.me.uk](http://www.bbag.me.uk); 15 Atlantic Rd SW9; **h** 4.30pm-midnight Tue & Wed, to 1am Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, to 11pm Sun; **t** Brixton  
 This stylish bar under the railway arches is a superb choice for 'slinky' (their word) cocktails and listening to live music. It also has an interesting menu of small and large 'plates' as well as tapas.

**BATTERSEA & WANDSWORTH**  
**DUSK** *Map p200* Bar  
 % 7662 2112; [www.duskbar.co.uk](http://www.duskbar.co.uk); 339 Battersea Park Rd SW11; **h** 6pm-12.30am Mon-Wed, to 1.30am Thu-Sat; **d** Battersea Park  
 This rather remote stretch of Battersea Park Rd seems a truly unusual location for

## BEER: THE NATIONAL TIPPLE

In a public house it is possible to order a glass of wine or even a simple cocktail. But the *raison d'être* of a 'pub' is first and foremost to serve beer – be it lager, ale or stout in a glass or a bottle. On draught it is served by the pint (570mL) or half-pint (285mL). The percentage of alcohol (minimum: 2%) can reach a lurching and staggering 8%.

Most beers are made from malted barley and flavoured with hops. The term lager refers to the amber-coloured bottom-fermented beverage found the world over. In general lagers are highly carbonated, of medium hop flavour and drunk cool or cold. In London, the best known home brews are Tennent's and Carling, but there's nothing special about either of them.

Ale is a top-fermented beer whose flavours can run the gamut from subtle to robust; proponents of 'real ale' (ie beer made according to traditional recipes and methods) use the language of oenologists to describe them. Ales can be very slightly gassy or completely still, have a strong hop flavour and are drunk at slightly above room temperature (seldom colder). Real ale is sometimes pulled from barrels. Among the multitude of ales on offer in London pubs, London Pride, Courage Best, Burton Ale, Adnam's, Theakston (in particular Old Peculiar) and Old Speckled Hen are among the best. If in doubt, just ask for 'a bitter' and you'll be served the house ale. Stout, the best known of which is Irish Guinness, is a slightly sweet, dark beer whose distinct flavour comes from malt that is roasted before fermentation.

this glamorous, recently refurbished (and award-winning) bar but it's worth the trek. Staff make killer cocktails and there's a DJ (and sometimes live music) at the weekend.

**SHIP** Map p198 Pub  
% 8870 9667; [www.theship.co.uk](http://www.theship.co.uk); 41 Jew's Row SW18; **h** to midnight daily; **d** Wandsworth Town  
Though the Ship is right by the Thames, the views aren't really spectacular along this stretch of the river – unless you're partial to retail parks and workaday bridges (which the owners freely admit). Still, the outside area is large, the barbecues in fine weather a real treat and the conservatory bar fun in any weather.

**CLAPHAM**  
**SO.UK** Map p200 Bar  
% 7622 4004; [www.soukclapham.co.uk](http://www.soukclapham.co.uk); 165 Clapham High St SW4; **h** 5pm-2am Mon-Wed, to 3am Thu-Sat, to 1am Sun; **t** Clapham Common  
So.uk is a stylish Moroccan-themed bar that's light and airy and serves unusual cocktails (Twisted Mojito, anyone?) and shooters. It's extremely popular, with the chance to spot a few well-known faces among the Clapham professionals on the pull.

**WHITE HOUSE** Map p200 Cocktail Bar  
% 7498 3388; [www.thewhitehouselondon.co.uk](http://www.thewhitehouselondon.co.uk); 65 Clapham Park Rd SW4; **h** 5.30pm-5am Tue, Wed & Fri, 6.30pm-5am Sat, 5pm-2am Sun; **t** Clapham Common  
Attracting Clapham's beautiful people with its stylish low-lit interior – all tan sofas, small square tables, expansive bar and pol-

ished wooden floors – this recently renovated chic bar on three floors also boasts a decent restaurant serving dim sum and a fantastic roof terrace in summer.

**PRINCE OF WALES** Map p200 Pub  
% 7622 3530; 38 Old Town SW4; **h** 5-11pm Mon-Wed, 5pm-midnight Thu, 5pm-1am Fri, 1pm-1am Sat, 1-11pm Sun; **t** Clapham Common  
While pubs that hang eclectic kitsch from their ceilings in a bid to seem quirky can be tedious, the Prince of Wales is still a very pleasant Clapham hangout, and its décor, unlike that of most pubs of the genre, is genuinely collected rather than supplied en masse. Real ales appear regularly.

**TIM BOBBIN** Map p200 Pub  
% 7738 8953; 1-3 Lillieshall Rd SW4; **h** to midnight Thu-Sat; **t** Clapham Common  
This charming boozier a short walk from Clapham Common is worth seeking out if you're trying to avoid Cla'am boys and girls on the piss. It's decorated with copies of its namesake caricaturist's rather rude 18th-century sketches, there are some decent ales on tap and there's a garden and brick conservatory with open kitchen in back.

## SOUTHWEST LONDON

Going out in Fulham is mainly about cheesy nights with lots of drinking, dancing on tables and generally behaving badly. Don't head to this part of town if you want a classy evening. Putney, Chiswick and Richmond offer an altogether more sedate and neighbourhood experience – so unlike the anonymous pubs

of central London, where the transience of both staff and punters is a major theme. Often centuries old, many of the best pubs in this area overlook the river and make a great place to stop for a drink at any time of day.

## FULHAM

**FIESTA HAVANA** Map p205 Bar  
% 7381 5005; [www.fiestahavana.com](http://www.fiestahavana.com); 490 Fulham Rd SW6; **h** 5pm-2am Mon-Sat, from 6pm Sun; **t** Fulham Broadway  
The epitome of a cheesy night out, you'll have to be up for it (in every sense) to enjoy yourself at Fiesta Havana, a neonlike turquoise-and-mustard 'little bit of Cuba' that you couldn't miss even if you did blink. The music (groovy Latin beats) is great, happens almost nightly and there are free dance classes at the beginning of the evening.

**TROUBADOUR** Map p177 Bar, Café  
% 7370 1434; [www.troubadour.co.uk](http://www.troubadour.co.uk); 265 Old Brompton Rd SW5; **h** 9am-midnight; **t** Earl's Court or West Brompton  
Bob Dylan and John Lennon have performed here and this friendly café-bar remains a wonderfully relaxed boho hangout decades later. There's still live music (folk, blues) most nights and a large, pleasant garden open in summer.

**ATLAS** Map p177 Pub  
% 7385 9129; [www.theatlaspub.co.uk](http://www.theatlaspub.co.uk); 16 Seagrave Rd SW6; **h** from noon Mon-Sat; **t** West Brompton  
This cosy Victorian-era pub attracts a younger local crowd with its real ales, excellent food and with a lovely side courtyard. The gastropub menu features essentially Mediterranean-inspired dishes.

**MITRE** Map p205 Pub  
% 7386 8877; [www.fulhammitre.com](http://www.fulhammitre.com); 81 Dawes Rd; **t** Fulham Broadway  
A beautiful, light-filled and airy pub with a large semicircular bar and walled courtyard at the back, the award-winning Mitre gets very crowded in the evenings and at the weekends, especially at lunch.

**WHITE HORSE** Map p205 Pub  
% 7736 2115; 1-3 Parson's Green; **h** to midnight Mon-Sat, to 11pm Sun; **t** Parson's Green  
Directly on Parson's Green, the White Horse is an inviting pub with a diverse clientele. Come here for the good hearty fare, barbe-

cues during summer, the warm and friendly atmosphere and – most important – the extensive range of beers (draught ales, Belgian Trappist beers). There's pleasant outside seating at the front.

## PUTNEY & BARNES

**COAT & BADGE** Map p205 Pub  
% 8788 4900; [www.geronimo-inns.co.uk](http://www.geronimo-inns.co.uk); 8 Lacy Rd SW15; **h** to midnight Fri & Sat; **t** Putney Bridge, **d** Putney  
The Coat & Badge has gone for a tried and tested lounge-room approach (large sofas, second-hand books on shelves, standard lamps, sport on the telly), which seems to please the local clientele. It has a short but excellent menu and a fantastic large terrace out the front.

**JOLLY GARDENERS** Map p205 Pub  
% 8780 8921; 61-63 Lacy Rd SW15; **t** Putney Bridge/**d** Putney  
Our favourite pub in Putney, the JG has been lovingly and eclectically kitted out; you'd never guess that Victorian oak cabinets went quite so well with Art Deco lamps. The pub plays host to amiable 30-somethings and boasts excellent wine and food menus. Its large terrace fronts a quiet road.

**YE WHITE HART** Map p64 Pub  
% 8876 5177; The Terrace SW13; **h** to midnight daily; **d** Barnes Bridge  
This riverside Young's pub in Barnes has a lovely terrace that is somewhat marred by the busy road outside. Housed in a one-time Masonic lodge, the place is huge but if you've been to a Young's pub before, you will know exactly what the interior looks like: swirly carpets, fruit machines and an old man supping a pint at the bar.

## CHISWICK

**BOLLO** Map p64 Pub  
% 8994 6037; 13-15 Bollo Lane W4; **h** from noon daily; **t** Chiswick Park  
Out of the way even by Chiswick's standards, this backstreet gastropub has been a huge success, run by local restaurateurs who redeveloped it from a simple local. It's best at the weekend when it is at its busiest, catering to a well-heeled, older crowd looking for a pub and dining room rolled into one.

**CITY BARGE** Map p64

Pub

☎ 8994 2148; 27 Strand on the Green W4;

† Gunnersbury

The Barge, perched dramatically close to – but not on – the Thames, has been operating as a pub since the Middle Ages (1484, to be exact). It is split into two bars (go for the downstairs one) and there is a small waterside terrace. Little known fact: a scene from the Beatles' film *Help!* was shot here.

**RICHMOND****CRICKETERS** Map p208

Pub

☎ 8940 4372; The Green TW9; h from noon daily;

†, ☐ Richmond

Facing Richmond Green from its southern side (where its very own team bats and bowls), the Cricketers is a friendly and comfortable, themed (guess what) pub with a decent selection of ales and a mixed clientele.

**DYSART ARMS** Map p208

Pub

☎ 8940 8005; www.thedysartarms.co.uk; 135 Petersham Rd TW10; † Richmond or ☐ Richmond then ☐ 65

This wonderful, almost churchlike place with stone walls and open fire is a great family pub facing Richmond Park's Petersham entrance. It succeeds on all fronts: families are made to feel welcome, the food is very good, and the large terrace is packed on a warm afternoon. Best of all there are musical evenings – jazz and classical – twice a week (usually Thursday and Saturday).

**WHITE CROSS** Map p208

Pub

8940 6844; Water Lane TW9; h to midnight Mon-Sat; † Richmond

The riverside location, good food and fine ales make this pub on the site of a former monastery a winner. There are entrances for low and high tides, but when the river is at its highest, Cholmondeley Walk running along the Thames floods and the pub is out of bounds to those not willing to paddle (wade).

**TWICKENHAM****BARMY ARMS** Map p64

Pub

☎ 8892 0863; The Embankment TW1;

☐ Twickenham

This is a popular Twickenham pub that gets packed to capacity on international match days; it claims to welcome *all* rugby fans. It's just by Eel Pie Island, a once-funky hippy hangout that still attracts the alternative crowd, despite its heyday having long passed. There's also decent pub food and a charming beer garden to recommend it.

**LONDON APPRENTICE** Map p64

Pub

☎ 8560 1915; 62 Church St TW7; ☐ Isleworth

If you're really into sunning along the Thames, you may want to venture north of Twickenham to Isleworth and this riverside pub dating back to the early 17th century. Henry VIII is believed to have dallied with wife-to-be No 5, Catherine Howard, at an earlier tavern on the site.

**WHITE SWAN** Map p64

Pub

☎ 8892 2166; Riverside TW1; ☐ Twickenham

This traditional pub in Twickenham overlooks a quiet stretch of the Thames from what must be one of the most English-looking streets in London. It boasts a fantastic riverside location, a great selection of beer and a loyal crowd of locals. Even if you are not in Twickenham, the White Swan is worth a detour.

**WIMBLEDON****FOX & GRAPES**

Pub

☎ 8946 5599; 9 Camp Rd SW19; h to midnight Fri & Sat; † Wimbledon

This very countrylike Wimbledon inn started serving pints in 1787 and is one of the most popular locals. The low-ceilinged bar is intimate and cosy, while the bigger bar (converted from the stables) has high beams and is loaded with atmosphere. Though it's practically inside Wimbledon Common, there's no outside seating.



**BLUELIST<sup>1</sup>** (blu,list) v.  
to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

## NIGHTLIFE

### top picks

- 333 (p298)
- Bethnal Green Working Men's Club (p299)
- End (p300)
- Egg (p300)
- Cargo (p300)
- Notting Hill Arts Club (p302)
- Koko (p301)
- Ministry of Sound (p302)
- Fabric (p300)

You could live in London for a hundred years and still not be able to 'do' all the nightlife. It's no wonder, then, that Londoners can get a bit overwhelmed with all that's on offer: clubs, live music, comedy, cabaret, and within all of those, hundreds of subsections catering to all kinds of tastes and preferences.

You'll probably come here knowing what you want to experience (it might be big clubs such as Fabric, or sweaty shoebox clubs with the latest DJ talent), but the one thing you should definitely do is branch out from your usual tastes and try something new. There are clubs across town (though East London is the top area for cutting-edge clubs), with House, electro, glam, indie or rave nights. Nu rave is the latest club fad to have gripped the capital, with youngsters mashing old hits and nu rave at warehouse parties, and the last few years have seen people going bananas for burlesque queens, who wave their nipple tassels in decadent clubs.

If clubbing is not your thing, try out the stand-up comedy scene and see if you can heckle without being singled out for the next joke (dangerous if you go for front-row seating).

London's live-music scene is still rocking, jazzing, folkling and booming, so you'll be able to hear as much established or up-and-coming artists as your ears desire. Prepare to cough up for the pleasure of seeing big bands live in mega venues, or revel in the pleasure of a tiny club in East London or Camden Town where you can witness a performance by the latest scandal-clad indie superstar.

## CLUBBING

When it comes to clubbing, London's where it's at, and anyone who can get here on a Friday or Saturday night, be it from zone 2, the suburbs or a Ryanair flight, wants a night in London's clubs. Whether you're a lover of thumping techno, rock, nu rave, Latin, ska, pop, country, grime, minimal electro, hip-hop, or 1950s lindy hopping, there's something going on every night. Thursdays are loved by those who want to have their fun before the office workers mob the streets on Fridays; Saturdays are the busiest and best if you're a serious clubber, and Sundays often have surprisingly good events across town.

### 93 FEET EAST Map p150

☎ 7247 3293; [www.93feeteast.co.uk](http://www.93feeteast.co.uk); 150 Brick Lane E2; h 5-11pm Mon-Thu, 5pm-1am Fri, noon-1am Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun; t Liverpool St or Aldgate East

Brick Lane's hotspot is immediately evident by the long queue outside. This great venue has a courtyard, three big rooms, an outdoor terrace that gets crowded on sunny afternoons, and it's packed with a cool East London crowd. There are some excellent nights, such as the superpopular 'rave, bling and trash scene' from Styleslut and Wasteclub on Friday. Relaxed Sunday afternoon rock and roll sessions have short film screenings, with girls on roller skates

selling popcorn. It's worth getting a ticket in advance through the website, to beat the queue.

### 333 Map p150

☎ 7739 5949; [www.333mother.com](http://www.333mother.com); 333 Old St EC1; h 10pm-5am Fri, 10pm-4am Sat & Sun; t Old St

Hoxton's true old-timer, 333's stripped-down manner doesn't bow down to Shoreditch's silly cool and pretence. The club keeps hosting great nights, remaining a favourite London club for more than a decade. Just off Hoxton Sq, it's simultaneously scruffy and innovative – it's been a key player on the electro-glam and indie rave scene, with the riotous monthly Troubled Minds night that mashes up

## SECRET TREASURES

You can find something happening in any part of town, but prepare to do a bit of research if you want to dig out really alternative nights. 'Hidden' warehouse parties are the new big thing, especially around the Dalston and Whitechapel areas. There, the return of rave, or the birth of the nu rave scene, is in full flow, with young things in tight jeans mixing grunge records with rave anthems and glo-sticks in abandoned warehouses. Want a clue for how to find a secret party? One word (or is it two?): MySpace.

## TIPS FOR CLUBBERS

- Most Londoners start their nights in a bar before moving on to clubs and gig venues, gravitating from Soho towards Shoreditch and Hoxton – the location of the majority of London's cutting-edge bars and clubs. Notting Hill also has some excellent clubs, while Brixton is top for hip-hop, R&B, reggae and grime venues.
- Clubbing can be an expensive pastime, but not always. Midweek prices are reasonable, and there are plenty of student nights or those oriented to a budget crowd. Search through the listing magazines during your visit. If you want to go to big clubs such as Fabric or Pacha, on a Saturday night (*the night for clubbing*), expect to pay up to £20 for the pleasure.
- Exclusivity is not such an issue as it is in, say, New York or Moscow – very few people are turned away from London clubs, but queuing in the cold while the gorgeous and connected jump out of cabs and straight into the warmth of the club can be a humiliating experience.
- As ever, get there early and try to get advance (or 'queue-jump') tickets for bigger events if you can't bear being left in door-whore limbo.
- Dress codes vary widely though you'll find that London's clubs are relaxed and you won't need to worry about being turned away from clubs for your appearance – it's more about whether you care to blend in with a particular venue's crowd. Generally, the 'posh' clubs will want a glam look – which can include trainers and jeans – and the more alternative venues will be full of skinny jeans worn hip-hop style (bums on display), mad haircuts and baggy shirts.
- Always check the weekly listings in *Time Out* or the *Evening Standard* – part of the charm of London's nightlife is that it's always changing and new venues and club nights sprout every week, so keep your eyes peeled!

grime, rave, dancehall, electro, indie, hip hop and hardcore.

### AQUARIUM Map p150

☎ 7253 3558; [www.clubaquarium.co.uk](http://www.clubaquarium.co.uk); 256-264 Old St EC1; h 10pm-3am Sat, 10pm-4am Sun; t Old St

The Saturday night hitch-up between '70s disco evening Carwash and this converted gym seems like an excellent match: clubbers dressed in sexy, retro gear – compulsory, but disco wigs not allowed – now mingle around the huge pool or in the trendy bar. Absolutely Sunday focuses on old-school House, garage and R&B. Trainers are not welcome here.

### BAR MUSIC HALL Map p150

☎ 0871 223 5736; [www.hellshoreditch.com](http://www.hellshoreditch.com); 134-146 Curtain Rd EC2; h 8pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 8pm-2am Fri & Sat; t Old St

This venue has had many incarnations, from a bar to club to cabaret spot, but Bar Music Hall seems to be making something that'll last. It's large and therefore rarely too crowded, and it hosts some of the hottest nights in Shoreditch. Wednesday's Slipped Disco is all underground acid and clipped electro, and Saturday night's Foreign is all the rage with drag queen DJ Jodie Harsh and fabulous Molaroid, art projections, techno, electro, rave, pop, ragga and anything in between. Oh, and it's free to get in.

### BAR RUMBA Map p68

☎ 7287 2715; [www.barrumba.co.uk](http://www.barrumba.co.uk); 36 Shaftesbury Ave W1; h 10.30pm-3am Mon & Wed, 8.30pm-3am Tue, Thu & Fri, 9pm-5am Sat, 8pm-1.30am Sun; t Piccadilly Circus

A small club just off Piccadilly with a loyal following and fab DJs, specialising in hip-hop, Latin and drum and bass. Head down here on Thursday for Movement, a drum and bass night with a star-studded DJ selection, or Get Down on Friday for a hip-hop party. There are also salsa and Latin urban dance parties on Tuesday.

### BETHNAL GREEN WORKING MEN'S CLUB Map p156

☎ 7739 2727; [www.workersplaytime.net](http://www.workersplaytime.net); 42-44 Pollard Row E2; h opening times vary; t Bethnal Green

This is a true rags-to-riches story: BGWMC was on the brink of bankruptcy, its working men about to become destitute and pintless, until a clever promoter spread the news of trashy burlesque nights taking place in the club's main hall – sticky carpets, shimmering stage set 'n' all – and (literally) overnight, half of London stormed the venue, making it one of the most successful and popular clubs in the capital. Whoopee, London's top burlesque bonanza people host regular nights, in addition to tassel-twirling contests, alternative Eurovision nights and many more sweet selections.

Check the website for what's on when you're around.

### CARGO Map p150

☎ 7739 3440; [www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com); 83 Rivington St EC2; 11 noon-1am Mon-Thu, noon-3am Fri, 6pm-3am Sat, noon-midnight Sun; † Old St or Liverpool St

Cargo rules as one of London's most eclectic and excellent clubs. It has three different spaces – a dance-floor room, bar and lounge, and a little diner – under brick railway arches. The music policy is innovative, with plenty of Latin House, nu-jazz, funk, groove and soul, DJs, global bands, up-and-coming bands, demos and rare grooves. Some of its nights have included the dark burlesque Torture Gardens annual party, African music festival, Balkan brass bands and Cuban ska. There's also an excellent bar (see p285).

### CHERRY JAM Map p175

☎ 7727 9950; 58 Porchester Rd W2; 11 6pm-late Mon-Sat, 4-11pm Sun; † Royal Oak  
Once a must-experience club, part owned by Ben Watt of the Notting Hill Arts Club and Everything But the Girl (who still sometimes DJs on Saturdays), Cherry Jam has lost the edge it had some years ago. It's still worth a peek, though, especially for the music and good, reasonably priced cocktails (£6.50). Friday and Saturday nights have electro and House DJs and the atmosphere is always good. Might need a shake-up or a face-lift soon, though.

### CROSS Map p168

☎ 7837 0828; [www.the-cross.co.uk](http://www.the-cross.co.uk); Goods Way Depot, York Way N1; 11 10.30pm-5am Fri & Sat, 10.30pm-4am Sun; † King's Cross St Pancras  
This is one of London's best venues, comprising several low brick rooms built under railway arches hidden in the wasteland off York Way. Sunday is run by Vertigo, a Continental-style clubbing operation, which brings over lots of Italian guest DJs. There's a great outdoor terrace for the summer months, too.

### DOGSTAR Map p200

☎ 7733 7515; 389 Coldharbour Lane SW9; 11 9pm-3am Fri & Sat; † Brixton  
You'll have to push your way through the huge downstairs bar (see p293) of this converted pub to get to the House-music

club upstairs, but that's what all the Brixton clubbers do.

### EGG Map p168

☎ 7428 7574; [www.egglondon.net](http://www.egglondon.net); 5-13 Vale Royal N1; 11 10pm-4am Fri, 10pm-5am Sat; † King's Cross St Pancras

Egg has the most superb layout with three exposed concrete rooms (across three floors), a garden and two gorgeous tropical roof terraces (relieving the edgy, exiled smokers). Some say it would fit perfectly in New York's meat-packing district thanks to its design, but it's ours and we're keeping it because it rocks. Located off York Way, the club hosts 'omnisexual' nights, with a mix of electro, minimal and House. At weekends, a free shuttle bus runs from outside American Carwash on York Way to the venue between 10pm and 2am every 30 minutes.

### END Map pp72-3

☎ 7419 9199; [www.endclub.com](http://www.endclub.com); 18 West Central St WC1; 11 10pm-3am Mon & Wed, 10pm-4am Thu, 10pm-5am Fri, 9.30pm-6am Sat; † Holborn  
The End is a glam club with minimalist industrial décor and a reputation for some of the city's best all-nighters. It's situated in a West End backstreet, close to its sister-bar AKA (p280). Friday and Saturday are devoted to guest DJs, Wednesday's Swerve with Fabio is mega-popular, and the rest of the week includes Sunday's alternating electro tech House Superfreq and glam Clandestino. What was once one of London's best club nights, Monday's disco/glam/punk/'80s electronica Trash, which featured live guests such as the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs; Bloc Party; or Scissor Sisters in between DJ sets, has now mutated into Durr, with Trash's Erol Alkan joined by Rory Phillips, The Lovely Jonjo and Matt Irvin behind the decks. They promise to keep those bands coming.

### FABRIC Map p150

☎ 7336 8898, 7490 0444; [www.fabriclondon.com](http://www.fabriclondon.com); 77a Charterhouse St EC1; 11 9.30pm-5am Fri & Sun, 10pm-7am Sat; † Farringdon

This most impressive of superclubs is still the first stop on the London club scene for many international clubbers, as the lengthy queues attest (worst from about 9pm to 11pm). A smoky warren of three floors, three bars, many walkways and unisex

toilets, it has a kidney-shaking 'sonic boom' dance floor. The crowd is hip and well dressed without overkill, and the music – mainly electro, house, drum and bass and breakbeat – is as superb as you'd expect from London's top-rated club. Superstar DJs often sell out Friday-night's Fabric Live when big names such as Goldie, DJ Diplo, Plump DJ or DJ Hype take over.

### FAVELA CHIC Map p150

☎ 7613 5228; [www.favelachic.com](http://www.favelachic.com); 91 Great Eastern St E1; 11 6pm-late Tue-Sun; † Old St  
Smaller sister of the original Paris club, this place profits from 'slum chic' just like the producers of Havaiana flip-flops did. It's a one-room bar-club with permanently long queues on Friday and Saturday and innovative music nights. The décor is very much about the vintage, distressed and flea-market pieces, though markedly self-consciously so, but if you can endure the long wait and get past the high'n'mighty door whores, you'll have a good night.

### FORUM Map p166

☎ 7284 1001; 9-17 Highgate Rd NW5; 11 10pm-3am Sat; † Kentish Town  
The supremely successful School Disco has moved north from its former Hammersmith Palais location and is now held every Saturday night, still attracting fetishists, cheeky schoolboys and girls, and the odd teacher. A uniform is compulsory or you'll be expelled – check the website ([www.school disco.com](http://www.school disco.com)) for details.

### FRIDGE Map p200

☎ 7326 5100; [www.fridgerocks.com](http://www.fridgerocks.com); 1 Town Hall Pde SW2; 11 9pm-2.30am Mon-Thu & Sun, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; † Brixton  
Poor old Fridge has hit hard times after years of being one of London's best and longest-running venues, with closing-down threats and suspicions for drug offences (hence the heavy searching at the door). Despite its problems, the Fridge is pulling through. This is an excellent bar and club venue that has a wide variety of club nights and live music, from African gospel and Cuban salsa to reggae and punk.

### HERBAL Map p150

☎ 7613 4462; 10-14 Kingsland Rd E2; 11 9pm-2am Wed, Thu & Sun, to 3am Fri, 10pm-3am Sat; † Old St

You'll recognise Herbal by all the plastic grass stapled to its front wall. Inside is a two-level bar-club. The laid-back, grown-up loft upstairs has a small dance floor, seating and a window overlooking Shoreditch. Downstairs is more minimalist and can get very sweaty. There's a mix of drum and bass, House, funk-house and hip hop, interspersed with live shows.

### KOKO Map p168

☎ 0870 432 5527; [www.koko.uk.com](http://www.koko.uk.com); 1a Camden High St NW1; 11 10pm-2.30am Tue, 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; † Mornington Cres  
Once the legendary Camden Palace where Charlie Chaplin, the Goon Show, the Sex Pistols and Madonna all played gigs in the past, Koko is keeping its reputation as one of London's better gig venues – Madonna played a Confessions on a Dance Floor gig here in 2006 and Prince gave a surprise gig in 2007. The theatre has a dance floor and decadent balconies, and attracts an indie crowd with Club NME on Friday. There are live bands almost every night of the week.

### MADAME JO JO'S Map p68

☎ 7734 2473; [www.madamejojoes.com](http://www.madamejojoes.com); 8 Brewer St W1; 11 10.30pm-3am Wed-Fri, from 9.30pm Thu, cabaret 7-10pm & club 10pm-3am Sat; † Leicester Sq or Piccadilly Circus  
The renowned subterranean cabaret bar and all its sleazy fun kitsch comes into its own with Lost & Found on Saturday, where R&B, ska, northern soul and rockabilly attract all sorts of dressed-up ladies and gents itching to party. Keb Darge's Deep Funk night on Friday is equally legendary, attracting a cool crew of breakers, jazz dancers and people just out to have a good time. Madame Jo Jo's loves burlesque nights too, so look out for weekly performances.

### MASS Map p200

☎ 7737 1016; [www.mass-club.com](http://www.mass-club.com); St Matthew's Church SW2; 11 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; † Brixton  
Mass is an appropriately named venue, situated in St Matthew's Church, with its vaulted ceilings, pews and frescoes. The most popular night here is Rodigan's Reggae, with legendary broadcaster David Rodigan and Papa Face joined by guest DJs every week. It's the hottest place to be in Brixton on a Wednesday night.



**MEAN FIDDLER** Map p68

☎ 7434 0403; [www.meanfiddler.com](http://www.meanfiddler.com); 165 Charing Cross Rd W1; h 10.30pm-4am Wed-Sat; t Tottenham Court Rd

The little sister to the *Astoria* (p307), the Mean Fiddler (still known to many as the LA2) is a great venue over two floors, one overlooking the other through thick glass. Downstairs there's a stage for live acts and dark nooks for all kind of rock-and-roll goings-on; traditional rock is played on Friday at Rock.

**MINISTRY OF SOUND** Map p198

☎ 7378 6528; [www.ministryofsound.com](http://www.ministryofsound.com); 103 Gaunt St SE1; h 10.30pm-6am Fri, midnight-9am Sat; t Elephant & Castle

This legendary club-cum-enormous global brand suffered from a loss of 'edge' among clubbers in the early naughties, but with the club pumping in top DJs, the Ministry is rejoining the top club ranks. Recommended Friday's Ministry Presents... is all drum and bass, garage, funky House, hip-hop and R&B, across the four areas – Box, Bar, Baby Box and Lounge – with top DJs and live acts performing, while Saturday Sessions gives the *crème de la crème* of House, electro and techno DJs.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD** Map p175

☎ 7524 7979; [www.myspace.com/neighbourhoodclub](http://www.myspace.com/neighbourhoodclub); 2 Acklam Rd W10; h 6pm-late Thu-Sun; t Ladbroke Grove

*Cherry Jam* (p300) and *Notting Hill Arts Club* (below) supremo Ben Watt's (other) excellent venue, Neighbourhood has a capacity of 500 and a mixed programme from author readings to House, electro and R&B nights, and there's even an occasional burlesque bonanza; so check what's on when you're around.

**NOTTING HILL ARTS CLUB** Map p175

☎ 7460 4459; [www.nottinghillartsclub.com](http://www.nottinghillartsclub.com); 21 Notting Hill Gate W11; h 6pm-1am Tue-Sat, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat, 4-11pm Sun; t Notting Hill Gate London simply wouldn't be what it is without places like NHAC. There's a night for everyone in this small basement club, from knitting societies, to country folk, House nights and Eastern European punk. The famous Thursday night monthly Yo-Yo night, where singer Lily Allen and producer Mark Ronson met, is one of the best nights for R&B, '80s boogies, hip-hop, ragga and diverse live sets; the bimonthly Sunday Radio

Gagarin features 'experiments in Sunday Socialism', Monday has Dive Dive Dive with bass-driven electro and Wednesday is über-popular Death Disco – a rock-and-roll, indie and punk evening from Creation Records founder Alan McGee, which has attracted celeb DJs such as Courtney Love – is still going strong.

**PACHA** Map pp138-9

☎ 7833 3139; [www.pachalondon.com](http://www.pachalondon.com); Terminus Pl SW1; h 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; t Victoria, d Victoria

The London outpost of the seminal 'Ay-beefa' club is one of London's most sumptuous venues, eschewing the 'industrial' look that dominates London clubland for the oak-wood panelling, upholstered booths and stunning stained-glass ceiling of a 1920s gentlemen's club. Friday is filled with gorgeous people who come for Funky4Love's glam funky House, and Saturday nights alternate the very popular bimonthly Kinky Malinki, Defected and Gate 21. The crowd is glitzy and showy, so dress up sexy to fit in.

**PLASTIC PEOPLE** Map p150

☎ 7739 6471; [www.plasticpeople.co.uk](http://www.plasticpeople.co.uk); 147-149 Curtain Rd EC2; h 10pm-2am Thu, 10pm-3am Fri & Sat; t Old St

This is a tiny club with just a dance floor and bar and a booming sound system that experts say easily kicks the butt of bigger clubs. It's also a venue that features the most progressive club nights, without fear of introducing new or controversial music. Head here on Friday for And Did We Mention Our Disco with Rory Phillips (of ex-Trash, current Durrr DJ), Saturday for Balance with a healthy mix of Latin, jazz, hip-hop, House and techno. Ben Watt hosts occasional Sunday nights at Buzzin' Fly, while once a month Thursday's Forward has filthy grime sounds ripping the dance floor. Highly recommended.

**SCALA** Map p150

☎ 7833 2022; 275 Pentonville Rd N1; h 10pm-5am Fri & Sat; t King's Cross

On Friday this multilevel former cinema hosts Popstarz, a laid-back gay/mixed pot-pourri of indie, alternative and kitsch. On Saturday it's UK garage night Cookies and Cream. The venue is expansive but excellent, with a glass bar at its centre overlooking the stage but insulated from the noise.

**BURLESQUE-TASTIC!**

After years of low-profile parties with high-glitter gowns, the burlesque scene burst onto the mainstream, showering London with nipple-tassels, top hats, sexy lingerie and some of the most excellent parties in town. Young Londoners caught the dressing-up bug with such a frenzy that many poor grandmas' wardrobes were looted for frocks. Subsequently, the 'alternative' burlesque scene became overwhelmingly mainstream, and club night organisers, passionate about their dedication to dress up and take fun seriously, raised prices in many of the venues in order to ward off those who wouldn't buck up and dress up. So prepare to pay an average of £25 for some (but not all) of the city's best burlesque nights, and make sure you look like a million dollars. Best burlesque venues are *Bethal Green Working Men's Club* (p299), where you can find anything from male burlesque contests to girls on roller skates hosting tea parties, and *Volupte* (Map p110; ☎ 7831 1622; [www.volupte-lounge.com](http://www.volupte-lounge.com); 9 Norwich St EC4; t Chancery Lane), a tiny but elegant cabaret club with some excellent nights, such as Wednesday's Cabaret Salon and once-monthly Black Cotton Club.

Outstanding nights are: *Whoopee* ([www.thewhoopieclub.com](http://www.thewhoopieclub.com)), with nights that are always original (it's our favourite); *Lost Vagueness* ([www.lostvagueness.com](http://www.lostvagueness.com)) which, apart from great parties, also hosts a summer festival; and *Flash Monkey* ([www.theflashmonkey.biz](http://www.theflashmonkey.biz)), whose parties are always a sell-out. The long-running *Lady Luck night* ([www.myspace.com/theladyluckclub](http://www.myspace.com/theladyluckclub)) is the city's top for rockabilly and old jazz, while the old-timer, Rakehell's Revels, hosts 'secret' nights (just Google it) at various venues.

**TURNMILLS** Map p150

☎ 7250 3409; [www.turnmills.co.uk](http://www.turnmills.co.uk); 63 Clerkenwell Rd EC1; h 6pm-midnight Tue, 10.30pm-7.30am Fri, 9pm-5am Sat; t Farringdon

This cavernous long-running institution gets rammed on weekends when mini-festival Together kicks up a storm with its DJs, and all-weekend parties take over with big names and tonnes of good fun.

**COMEDY**

You might not think Londoners are a cheerful lot when they growl at you on the tube, but actually, they love a good chuckle. This is evident in the fact that despite the winter gloom and drizzly rain (or perhaps because of it), you can roll up at any one of the 20-plus major comedy clubs or countless other venues (including pubs) and warm your heart and exercise your lungs with laughter.

Most comedy acts gravitate around the Edinburgh Festival season, so spring and early summer see new acts being tried out on audiences, which means that this is the best time for comedy; August is the cruellest month for comedy in London, because everyone's shifted up north for the festival itself, and winter has the comedians doing the stuff that went down well at the festival. Check Edinburgh Festival's if.commedie awards for the new bright stars.

Some of the world's most famous comedians hail from, or made their names in, London. To whet your appetite a quick roll call from recent decades might include Peter Sellers, Peter Cook, Spike Milligan, Dudley

Moore, Tommy Cooper, Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders, Ruby Wax, Lenny Henry, Ben Elton, Alexei Sayle, Harry Enfield, Victoria Wood, Julian Clary, Rowan Atkinson, Reeves & Mortimer, Eddie Izzard, Jo Brand, Sacha Baron Cohen (aka Ali G and Borat), Ricky Gervais, Matt Lucas and David Walliams.

Recent years have unearthed Russell Brand, one of the UK's most loved and prolific comedians, and rising stars such as young but sharp Josie Long, Paul Sinha, Tiernan Douieb and Russell Howard. It's hard to name all the excellent comedians on this jolly circuit, but do look out for the fantastic London-based American comedian Rich Hall; Geordie sonic-waffler Ross Noble; musician, poet and Luton-towner John Hegley; controversial and politically minded Mark Thomas; and dead-pan and dirty Jimmy Carr. Alan Carr, Omid Djalili, Gina Yashere, Lee Hurst, Simon Amstell, Jenny Eclair, Arthur Smith, Richard Herring, Bill Bailey, Daniel Kitson and Simon Munnery are all brilliant.

Many of London's established comedians get together to goof around at inventive comedian Robin Ince's legendary *Book Club night* ([www.myspace.com/bookclublive](http://www.myspace.com/bookclublive)) at Lowdown at the *Albany* (☎ 7387 5706; 240 Great Portland St W1; t Regent's Park); *Fat Tuesdays* is another popular night, held every other Tuesday at the *Salmon & Compass* (p290) in Islington, specialising in the surprise element of having a famous comedian turn up unannounced to try out new material; *Union Chapel* (p310) hosts a monthly *Live at the Chapel* (<http://liveatthechapel.co.uk>) with big names and live music at this wonderful venue.

**AMUSED MOOSE SOHO** *Map p68*  
% 7287 3727; [www.amusedmoose.com](http://www.amusedmoose.com); Moon-lighting, 17 Greek St W1; t Tottenham Court Rd  
One of the city's best clubs, Soho's Amused Moose is popular with audiences and comedians alike, perhaps helped along by the fact that heckling is 'unacceptable' and all of the acts are 'first date friendly' in that they're unlikely to humiliate the front row. At Camden's **Enterprise pub** (see the boxed text, p317) there's also Amused Moose Camden, with a similar crowd and policy. Check out its Absolute & Almost Beginners comedy course if you think you can cut it too.

**CHUCKLE CLUB** *Map pp72-3*  
% 7476 1672; [www.chuckleclub.com](http://www.chuckleclub.com); Three Tuns Bar, London School of Economics, Houghton St; admission from £10; h Sat; t Holborn or Temple  
The comedian's favourite, this club has a great atmosphere thanks to comedy stalwart, resident host and all-round lovely bloke Eugene Cheese, who begins every night with the Chuckle Club warm-up song.

**COMEDY CAFÉ** *Map p150*  
% 7739 5706; [www.comedycafe.co.uk](http://www.comedycafe.co.uk); 66-68 Rivington St EC2; admission free Wed, up to £14 Sat; h Wed-Sat; t Old St or Liverpool St  
A major venue, the Comedy Café is purpose-built for, well, comedy, hosting some good comedians. The meal-and-show deal will cost you around £20, though during summer months it offers a £5 ticket for the Friday show (no dinner). It can be a little too try-hard and wacky, but it's worth seeing the Wednesday-night try-out spots for some wincing entertainment.

**COMEDY CAMP** *Map p68*  
% 7483 2960; [www.comedycamp.co.uk](http://www.comedycamp.co.uk); 3-4 Archer St W1; admission £8-10; h 8.30pm Tue; t Piccadilly Circus  
This gay (but very straight-friendly) comedy club, hosted by Simon Happily, has become one of Soho's favourites. It's held in the basement area of one of Soho's more enjoyable gay bars, **Barcode** (p334). Comedy Camp features both up-and-coming queer comedy acts as well as more established gay and lesbian comics.

**COMEDY STORE** *Map p68*  
% 7344 4444; [www.thecomedystore.co.uk](http://www.thecomedystore.co.uk); Haymarket House, 1a Oxendon St SW1; admission from £13; h Tue-Sun; t Piccadilly Circus

This was one of the first (and is still one of the best) comedy clubs in London. It was established down the road in Soho in 1979, the year Margaret Thatcher came to power, which we're sure was no coincidence. Although it's a bit like conveyor-belt comedy, it gets some of the biggest names. Wednesday and Sunday night's Comedy Store Players is the most famous improv outfit in town with the wonderful Paul Merton and Josie Lawrence, and Thursday's, Friday's and Saturday's brilliant The Best in Stand Up features (you guessed it) the best on London's comedy circuit.

**DOWNSTAIRS AT THE KING'S HEAD**  
% 8340 1028; [www.downstairsatthekingshead.com](http://www.downstairsatthekingshead.com); 2 Crouch End Hill N8; adult/concession £7/4; h Sat & Sun; t Finsbury Park then G W7  
A club that hails from the 1980s, with success stories of starting Eddie Izzard and Mark Lamarr's careers in its busy, smoky and intimate room. It hosts newbies and biggies in equal proportions.

**HA BLOODY HA**  
% 8566 4067; [www.headlinerscomedy.com](http://www.headlinerscomedy.com); Ealing Studios, Ealing Green, St Mary's Rd W5; admission £10; h Fri & Sat; t Ealing Broadway  
This club is worth going to just to see the old Ealing Studios, where so many of London's best comedies, Ealing Comedies, were filmed. But the stand up is great here too with big names hosting Friday and Saturday night shows.

**HEADLINERS**  
% 8566 4067; [www.headlinerscomedy.com](http://www.headlinerscomedy.com); George IV, 185 Chiswick High Rd W4; admission £5-10; h Fri & Sat; t Turnham Green  
The first purpose-built venue in West London, and younger sibling to Ha Bloody Ha (above), Headliners is comfortable and has a traditional shape in that the compere introduces the act and scarpers, try-outs open the night, and the best is saved until last.

**JONGLEURS** *Map p168*  
% 0870 787 0707; [www.jongleurs.com](http://www.jongleurs.com); Dingwalls, 11 East Yard, Camden Lock NW1; admission from £16; h Fri & Sat; t Camden Town  
This is something like a Starbucks-size international chain, that serves comedy instead of coffee. There's eating, drinking and laughing (probably all at the same,

choke-risk time). Friday and Saturday nights normally feature one big-name comedian and a couple of guys on unicycles (or thereabouts) and the shows are so popular, you usually have to book in advance. There are other venues in **Battersea** (*Map p200*) and **Bow** (*Map p156*).

**LEE HURST'S BACKYARD COMEDY CLUB** *Map p156*  
% 7739 3122; [www.backyardcomedyclub.moonfruit.com](http://www.backyardcomedyclub.moonfruit.com); 231-237 Cambridge Heath Rd E2; admission £10-15, concession £2-5; h Fri & Sat; t Bethnal Green  
Reputed to be the place the comedians most love to play, you can expect excellent shows and a chuckling, chortling, guffawing and shrieking atmosphere. It's established and maintained by Lee Hurst, himself a successful comedian and dedicated promoter of the venue's name.

**UP THE CREEK** *Map p180*  
% 8858 4581; [www.up-the-creek.com](http://www.up-the-creek.com); 302 Creek Rd SE10; admission £10-14; h Fri & Sat; t Greenwich, DLR Cutty Sark  
Bizarrely enough, the hecklers can be funnier than the acts at this great club. Up the Creek was established and is still living in the spirit of the sorely missed (and indeed legendary) Malcolm Hardee, who died in 2005. Hardee, who was the patron sinner of British comedy, famously stole Freddie

Mercury's 40th birthday cake and donated it to his local old folks home. Mischief, rowdiness and excellent comedy are the norm.

**JAZZ CLUBS**  
London's jazz scene was always hot and smoky (though with the smoking ban, it's just hot now). Great jazz names play regularly on the circuit, and particularly good times of the year for jazz are: November, when the 10-day **London Jazz Festival** ([www.serious.org.uk](http://www.serious.org.uk)) takes place in venues across central London; July, with a week of **Jazz on the Streets** ([www.jazzonthestreets.co.uk](http://www.jazzonthestreets.co.uk)) mainly gravitating around Soho, while **Ealing Jazz Festival** ([www.ealing.gov.uk](http://www.ealing.gov.uk)) goes in Walpole Park over five evenings; and September's the month for **Riverfront Jazz Festival** ([www.riverfrontjazz.co.uk](http://www.riverfrontjazz.co.uk)) in Greenwich with gigs over the whole month.

**100 CLUB** *Map p68*  
% 7636 0933; [www.the100club.co.uk](http://www.the100club.co.uk); 100 Oxford St W1; t Tottenham Court Rd or Oxford Circus  
This legendary London venue has always concentrated on jazz, but it's spreading its wings also to swing and rock nowadays. It once showcased Chris Barber, BB King and the Stones and was at the centre of the punk revolution as well as the '90s indie scene. There are lunchtime jazz sessions from 11.30am to 2.30pm once a month (£5).

### JAZZ JAMS *Gabriel Gatehouse*

London probably has the most vibrant jazz scene anywhere in the world outside the US, and if you want to hear it at its rawest and most spontaneous, head for one of the capital's many jam sessions, where up-and-coming young players cut their teeth and vie with the more established musicians. Obviously the quality of the playing varies from session to session, but while you may have to sit through a few dud numbers, you will almost certainly stumble across an unexpected gem or two and get a taste of where the new generation is heading. In addition, it's usually free.

Jams are where musicians go to show their peers what they can do, and the atmosphere, while friendly, can get quite competitive. If you're a rhythm-section player and want to sit in, you can usually turn up empty handed. If you're a horn player travelling without your instrument, your best bet is to bring your own mouthpiece, scan the crowd for a friendly face, and ask nicely.

Sunday is the most popular day for jams, but you can find somewhere to play any night of the week – if you know where to look; check the weekly *Time Out* listings. On Thursday nights, head to **Charlie Wright's International Bar** (*Map p150*; % 7490 8345; 45 Pitfield St N1; t Old St) in Shoreditch – catch the gig which goes on until around 11pm, after which you can join in. Rising stars of the jazz scene go to saxophonist Tim Whitehead's jam at the **606 Club** (p306) – usually on the third Thursday of each month but call the venue for dates – worth a visit even if you don't feel like sitting in. Finally, if you've got the energy, try **Uncle Sam's Bar** (*Map p168*; % 7275 0105; 438 Kingsland Rd E8; t Liverpool St, then G 243) on a Sunday night. London's jazz-playing hardcore head here, after they've finished their own gigs, to unwind with a few drinks and try out new ideas. Things don't get going until midnight and the playing carries on until at least 3am, sometimes later. Happy jamming!

## 606 CLUB Map p205

☎ 7352 5953; 90 Lots Rd SW10; 卩 Fulham Broadway or Earl's Court

A lovely, but slightly out-of-the-way basement jazz club and restaurant that gives centre stage to contemporary British-based jazz musicians nightly. The club frequently opens until 2am, although you have to dine at weekends to gain admission (booking is advised). There is no admission charge, but you'll be charged a music fee at the end of the evening on top of your food/drink bill (£8 during the week and £12 on weekends).

## BULL'S HEAD Off Map p205

☎ 8876 5241; [www.thebullshhead.com](http://www.thebullshhead.com); 373 Lonsdale Rd SW13; 卩 Barnes Bridge

This traditional pub dates from Tudor times and has hosted modern jazz concerts in its Jazz Room since 1959. It continues to offer some of the best British jazz nightly and at Sunday lunchtime.

## JAZZ CAFÉ Map p168

☎ 7916 6060; [www.meanfiddler.com](http://www.meanfiddler.com); 5 Parkway NW1; 卩 Camden Town

Though its name would have you think that jazz is this club's main staple, its real speciality is the crossover of jazz into the mainstream. It's a trendy industrial-style restaurant with jazz gigs around once a week, while the rest of the month is filled with Afro, funk, hip-hop, R&B and soul

## FOLK'N'ROLL

Folk music has become the new rock and roll over the past few years, swamping London with tonnes of new nights hosting anything from acid folk to old-school folk, alternative and psycho folk, and surprisingly, antfolk. If you're a fan of folk, you'll be licking your lips, with nights such as **In the Pines** ([www.inthepines.org](http://www.inthepines.org)) and **Tapestry** ([www.tapestryclub.co.uk](http://www.tapestryclub.co.uk)) where unheard or forgotten '70s records are salvaged from oblivion; for real folk go to **Cecil Sharp House** (Map p166; ☎ 7485 2206; [www.efds.org](http://www.efds.org); 2 Regent's Park Rd NW1; 卩 Camden Town), the headquarters of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, and *the* venue for English folk music (an acquired taste, it must be said), with ceilidhs, barn dances and all sorts of rural-style fun. The antfolk crowd gather at the Blang nights at the legendary **12 Bar Club** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 7240 2120; [www.12barclub.com](http://www.12barclub.com); 22-23 Denmark Pl WC2; 卩 Tottenham Court Rd).

styles with big-name acts and a faithful bohemian Camden crowd.

## PIZZA EXPRESS JAZZ CLUB Map p68

☎ 7439 8722; [www.pizzaexpress.co.uk/jazz.htm](http://www.pizzaexpress.co.uk/jazz.htm); 10 Dean St W1; 卩 Tottenham Court Rd

Believe it or not, this is one of the most consistently popular and excellent jazz venues in London. It's a bit of a strange arrangement, having a small basement venue beneath the main chain restaurant, but it seems to work well. Patrons listen attentively to modern jazz, and lots of big names perform here.

## RONNIE SCOTT'S Map p68

☎ 7439 0747; [www.ronniescotts.co.uk](http://www.ronniescotts.co.uk); 47 Frith St W1; 卩 Leicester Sq

Ronnie Scott originally opened his jazz club on Gerrard St in 1959 under a Chinese gambling den. The club moved to its current location six years later and became widely known as Britain's best jazz club. It was the only place the British public could listen to modern jazz – luminaries such as Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, plus Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan. Even rock bands such as The Who played here. Over the years the club has survived a roller coaster of uncertainty over its existence, overcame the death of its saxophonist owner in 1996 and continues to build upon its formidable reputation by hosting a range of big names and new talent. The atmosphere is excellent, but talking during music is a big no-no. Door staff can be terribly rude and the service slow, but that's how it's always been. Gigs usually last until 2am daily.

## VORTEX JAZZ CLUB Map p168

☎ 7254 4097; [www.vortexjazz.co.uk](http://www.vortexjazz.co.uk); 11 Gillet St N16; 卩 73

This was Stoke Newington's (and London's) favourite jazz place before relocating to the Dalston Culture House in 2005. Many feared the Vortex would never reopen, but all are celebrating its return to the live jazz scene. While the venue still feels a little new, the programme is as good as ever, with musicians from the UK, US and Europe.

## ROCK & POP

Everybody who likes pop knows Blur, Oasis, Suede, Pulp, Garbage, Elastic and Radiohead, and remembers the golden age of London's live music – the 1990s and Britpop – when the

## LOCAL VOICES: CARLOS HERRERA Interviewed by Steve Fallon

Carlos Herrera ([carlosherrera100@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:carlosherrera100@yahoo.co.uk)) is a trained musician from the Canary Islands who entertains Underground commuters with his acoustic guitar music. He lives in Camden Town.

**A trained musician? Why do you busk?** Busking is a beautiful thing. You can play as loud as you want and can see people's immediate reactions. It's ideal because music is all about sharing. It gives a chance to play in free time and not in a band or some other structured situation.

**Money for old rope?** I can make £35 to £50 on weekdays at a good station. It's an eight-hour job for me. I busk for four and practise for four. I've been at it for four years, since London Underground introduced the licensing system.

**Are things getting better down here? It doesn't always sound that way.** There's been a big improvement in the quality of the musicians since they started the auditioning process and most of the buskers here now are real musicians. Before that anyone could come and play. It didn't make much difference how good you were as long as you could get onto a pitch.

**Competitive, huh?** Well, now there's a one-year wait for approval. And no criminal record. We're allowed to book two pitches a day, each for two hours. It's like this: there are 36 pitches in zone 1 and only one phone line so some people use three phones to call at once.

**Is everyone going for the same spots?** I go for Bank. Other great ones are Tottenham Court Rd, Leicester Sq, Euston and Angel. But the best is Piccadilly Circus, especially from 4pm to 8pm. Four escalators all coming down to the pitch and they're full of tourists.

**Do Londoners dig deeply into their pockets?** The English are very generous. So are the Indians and the Americans, but they want to chat a lot. Asians take a lot of pictures but don't give. Spaniards? Forget it! They think I'm begging.

**You seem to do a lot of mornings. Why's that?** It's the best time of day for my type of music, finger-picking acoustic in the style of Leo Kottke, Michael Hedges and Tommy Emmanuel. On the other hand singing is an evening thing. Singers can make up to £100 on a Friday night if they sing familiar songs.

**To drunks, no doubt. Any problems with hecklers?** I've had very few bad experiences. Occasionally someone shouts out 'Get a job!' I'm used to it. Buskers are the lowest of the low so you've got to be careful, be polite.

**Perils of the job?** You can easily lose your mind in music. It's easy to become obsessive, practise too much, smoke too much dope. I need to relax at the end of the day. I'm an indoor kind of guy so I hang out in some of the cafés in Whitechapel.

British capital produced more cutting-edge bands than you could keep up with and play on your stereo. The 21st century, however, found the scene all washed up and London not so hip any more, and the lull lasted until the sun shone on the capital's music scene once again and London's bands were jamming the iPods of pop lovers worldwide. Suddenly there was Coldplay, the (now no more) Libertines, Babyshambles, Bloc Party and Razorlight; female singers such as Amy Winehouse and Lily Allen have been hogging the limelight recently. Madonna and Franz Ferdinand still live here, and the fact that rock and pop royalty have chosen to make London their home must mean that London is still the place to be for live music.

All major artists continue to consider London an essential place to tour, so prepare to find the biggies (from Bob Dylan to Björk) to the up-and-coming. The new band scene is particularly blossoming, and with MySpace it's easier than ever to keep up with your favourite unsigned band and alternative venue.

Together, these artists and bands keep London's wide range of rock and pop venues – from the aircraft hangar-sized Earl's Court Exhibition Centre (p308), Wembley Arena (p310) and the O2 (p309) to the tiny Borderline (p308) or Barfly (p308) – humming and full.

## ASTORIA Map p68

☎ 7434 9592; [www.meanfiddler.com](http://www.meanfiddler.com); 157 Charing Cross Rd WC2; 卩 Tottenham Court Rd

An extremely popular though not particularly salubrious venue, the Astoria's future may be cut short by plans to knock down the building as part of a programme to rejuvenate the area of Charing Cross Rd, to the general displeasure of Astoria's many fans. Still, until the final decision is reached, the venue is busy most nights of the week with indie, pop and rock acts before becoming a club later on in the evening. The adjacent **Mean Fiddler** (p302), at No 165 – a far more intimate venue that doesn't get used as much – is facing the same bleak future.



**BARFLY@THE MONARCH** Map p166

‰ 7691 4244, 7691 4245; [www.barflyclub.com](http://www.barflyclub.com); Monarch, 49 Chalk Farm Rd NW1; † Chalk Farm or Camden Town

Barfly, Charles Bukowski, lounge lizards – you get the picture. This typically grungy, indie-rock Camden venue is full of small-time artists looking for their big break. The focus is on rock from the US and UK, with alternative-music radio station Xfm hosting regular nights. There's a new sister venue, the **Fly** (36-38 New Oxford St WC1), with a similar set up.

**BORDERLINE** Map p68

‰ 7734 2095; [www.borderline.co.uk](http://www.borderline.co.uk); Orange Yard W1; † Tottenham Court Rd

Through the Tex-Mex entrance off Orange Yard and down into the basement, you'll find a packed, 275-capacity venue that really punches above its weight. Read the writing on the walls (literally, there's a gig list): Crowded House, REM, Blur, Counting Crows, PJ Harvey, Lenny Kravitz, Debbie Harry, plus many anonymous indie outfits, have all played here. The crowd's equally diverse but full of music journos and talent-spotting record-company A&Rs.

**BULL & GATE** Map p166

‰ 7485 5358; [www.bullandgate.co.uk](http://www.bullandgate.co.uk); 389 Kentish Town Rd NW5; † Kentish Town

The best place to see unsigned-but-promising talent, the legendary Bull & Gate's old-school, smoky music venue still pulls in the punters eager to see guitar bands that might just turn out to be the next big thing.

**CARGO** Map p150

‰ 7739 3440; [www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com); 83 Rivington St EC2; † Old St

Multitalented Cargo spices up its club nights (see p300) with performances from up-and-coming bands or visiting cult bands from overseas.

**CARLING ACADEMY BRIXTON** Map p200

‰ 7771 2000; [www.brixton-academy.co.uk](http://www.brixton-academy.co.uk); 211 Stockwell Rd SW9; † Brixton

It's hard to have a bad night at the Brixton Academy, even if you leave with your soles sticky with beer, as this cavernous former theatre (holding 5000) always thrums with bonhomie. There's a properly sloping floor

for good views, as well as plenty of bars. You can catch international acts of the ilk of Madonna (once), but more likely artists are Amy Winehouse, Basement Jaxx or DJ Shadow.

**CARLING ACADEMY ISLINGTON**

Map p168

‰ 7288 4400; [www.islington-academy.co.uk](http://www.islington-academy.co.uk); N1 Centre, 16 Parkfield St N1; † Angel

Many complain about Islington Academy's lack of atmosphere – it is, after all, set in a shopping centre – but all agree that the artists' line-up is pretty top class: Franz Ferdinand, Kings of Leon and even Tom Jones have played here. The acoustics are excellent and the discerning crowd is serious about their music. The adjacent Bar Academy hosts up-and-coming groups and can be a great place to see new talent.

**DUBLIN CASTLE** Map p168

‰ 7485 1773; 94 Parkway NW1; † Camden Town

A great place to catch indie bands trying their acts and hoping they'll make it as big as Madness (which launched its career here). It's also great for catching people like Blur and Amy Winehouse for an intimate gig.

**EARL'S COURT EXHIBITION CENTRE**

Map pp177

‰ 7385 1200, 0870 903 9033; Warwick Rd SW5; † Earl's Court

The kind of large, soulless venue that gave stadium rock its bad name, Earl's Court was where Justin Timberlake was famously photographed pawing Kylie Minogue's bum and where most of the gigs you'll see will be by massively expensive, high-flying stars, whose faces will be a dot in the distance and whose songs will echo in the sky. You'll see artists such as Kaiser Chiefs and U2 here.

**FORUM** Map p166

‰ 0870 534 4444; [www.meanfiddler.com](http://www.meanfiddler.com); 9-17 Highgate Rd NW5; † Kentish Town

You can find your way to the Forum – once the famous Town & Country Club – by the ticket touts that line the way from Kentish Town tube. It's a really popular venue for seeing new big bands, and the medium-sized hall, with stalls and a mezzanine, is spacious enough and perfectly intimate.

**GARAGE** Map p168

‰ 8963 0940; [www.meanfiddler.com](http://www.meanfiddler.com); 20-22 Highbury Cnr N5; † Highbury & Islington

This sweaty, indie-strong venue was closed for refurbishment at the time of research and should reopen by the time you read this – though the management was iffy when we inquired – so we don't know what wonders they will have installed to amp-up the space.

**LUMINAIRE** Map p64

‰ 7372 7123; [www.theluminaire.co.uk](http://www.theluminaire.co.uk); 311 High Rd NW6; † Kilburn

The Luminaire has been getting nothing but the best of grades since it opened in 2005. *Time Out* named it Music Venue of the Year in 2006, and *Music Week* gave it its British Venue of the Year award in 2007. It deserves everything it gets – small but not crowded, with a big emphasis on friendly service and silence while music is playing – but what's really impressive is the list of people who've played here: Babyshambles, Bat For Lashes, Colleen, Editors, Dirty Pretty Things, Hanne Hukkelberg and Mark Eitzel of American Music Club are just a few. Check its website for latest listings.

**O2** Map p180

‰ 0871 984 0002; [www.theo2.co.uk](http://www.theo2.co.uk); Peninsula Sq SE10; † North Greenwich

Formerly the doomed Millennium Dome, this pricey fiasco has now reinvented itself as one of the city's major concert venues, hosting all the biggies – the Rolling Stones, Prince, Elton John, Scissor Sisters and many others, inside the 20,000-capacity stadium. Ticket prices start at £23 onwards.

**RHYTHM FACTORY** Map p156

‰ 7247 9386; [www.rhythmfactory.co.uk](http://www.rhythmfactory.co.uk); 16-18 Whitechapel Rd E1; † to 3am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat; † Aldgate East

Perennially hip and popular, the Rhythm Factory is a relaxed and friendly coffee shop with a Thai lunch and dinner menu during the day, but come the evening it opens up the large back room, and tonnes of bands and DJs of all genres keep the up-for-it crowd happy until late.

**ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL** Map p126

‰ 7960 4242; [www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk); Belvedere Rd SE1; admission £6-60; † Waterloo

The Royal Festival Hall is one of the best places for catching world music artists. Some of its most popular programmes are the so-called 'Meltdowns' – basically a list of favourite music and musicians compiled by the likes of David Bowie and Jarvis Cocker. It reopened in Summer 2007 after two years of renovations. Allies and

**CHURCH VENUES**

Many churches host evening concerts or lunchtime recitals year-round or during the summer months. Sometimes they are free (with a suggested donation requested); at other times there is a charge. A few of the city's redundant churches now serve as concert halls.

**St James's Piccadilly** (Map p68); ‰ 7734 4511; 197 Piccadilly W1; admission £10-17; † Piccadilly Circus Concerts at 1.10pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; donation requested. Evening concerts at 7.30pm (days vary).

**St John's, Smith Square** (Map pp96-7); ‰ 7222 1061; Smith Sq SW1; admission £6; † Westminster or St James's Park Concerts at 1pm on Monday.

**St Martin-in-the-Fields** (Map pp72-3); ‰ 7839 8362; Trafalgar Sq WC2; lunchtime donation requested £3.50, evening tickets £7-18; † Charing Cross Concerts at 1.05pm on Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Evening concerts by candlelight from Thursday to Saturday at 7.30pm.

**St Paul's Cathedral** (Map p110); ‰ 7236 4128; New Change EC4; organ recitals £7; † St Paul's Organ recitals at 5pm on Sunday. Evensong at 5pm Monday to Saturday and at 3.15pm Sunday, special events permitting.

**Southwark Cathedral** (Map p126); ‰ 7367 6700; Montague Close SE1; † London Bridge Organ recitals at 1.10pm on Monday; other concerts at 1.10pm on Tuesday. Evensong at 5.30pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, at 4pm on Saturday and at 3pm on Sunday.

**Westminster Abbey** (Map pp96-7); ‰ 7222 5152; [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org); Dean's Yard SW1; tickets usually £6-18; † Westminster Free organ recitals at 5.45pm every Sunday. Evensong on weekdays at 5pm (excluding Wednesday) and at 3pm on Saturday and Sunday. Ring or check the website for details of the spring/summer organ festival sometime between May and August.

Morrison architects worked on the £91 million renovations by using the existing 1950s materials – concrete, leather and wood – to excellent effects.

### **SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE** Map pp177

☎ 7771 2000; [www.shepherds-bush-empire.co.uk](http://www.shepherds-bush-empire.co.uk); Shepherd's Bush Green W12; † Shepherd's Bush  
Excellent musicians perform in this lovely mid-sized venue, such as Björk, Coco Rosie or Antony and the Johnsons, and there's always something interesting going on. The floor doesn't slope, so if you're not so tall it's a little difficult to see from up the back in the stalls – it's worth paying for the balcony.

### **UNDERWORLD** Map p168

☎ 7482 1932; [www.theunderworldcamden.co.uk](http://www.theunderworldcamden.co.uk); 174 Camden High St NW1; † Camden Town  
Hear all ye metal heads out there! The Underworld awaits! Metallica, Black Sabbath, Sepultura and other skull-clad screamers have made their appearance either live or as a DJ's choice in this underground warren beneath the World's End pub. It's got plenty of nooks and crannies for ritual

head-banging, but it does also host some 'softer' musicians such as KT Tunstall and Radiohead.

### **UNION CHAPEL** Map p168

☎ 7226 1686; [www.unionchapel.org.uk](http://www.unionchapel.org.uk); Compton Tce N1; † Highbury & Islington  
One of London's most atmospheric and individual music venues, the Union Chapel is an old church that still holds services, and concerts – mainly acoustic – in between. It was here that Björk performed one of her most memorable concerts to a candlelit audience. The chapel hosts a monthly comedy night (see p303).

### **WEMBLEY ARENA** Map p64

☎ 0870 060 0870; [www.whatsonwembley.com](http://www.whatsonwembley.com); Empire Way, Wembley; † Wembley Park  
Some years and £30 million later, the Wembley Arena has been vastly improved, though its size will never make you feel 'at one' with the artist. It's the place to come and see big names such as Gwen Stefani, vintage artists such as Lionel Richie, or dance and scream to Girls Aloud. Tickets can be massively overpriced (up to £100 for really big names).

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