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DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

top picks

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DRINKING

'Drinking is the joy of the Rus. We cannot live without it.' With these words Vladimir of Kiev, father of the Russian state, is said to have rejected abstinent Islam on his people's behalf in the 10th century. And the grateful Russian people have confirmed old Vlad's assessment, as drinking remains an integral part of Russian culture and society.

SPECIALITIES

The word 'vodka' is the diminutive of *voda*, the Russian word for water, so it means something like 'a wee drop'. Russians sometimes drink vodka in moderation, but more often it's tipped down in swift shots, often followed by a pickle. Ruskyy Standard and Stolichnaya are two good brands of vodka that are commonly available. It's very rare to get bad vodka in a restaurant, so do not fear if you don't recognise the brand name, as there are many. In shops it's a different story, though: always buy vodka from a respectable-looking store (avoid street kiosks if possible) and always check for an unbroken seal.

Many visitors to Russia are surprised to learn that *pivo* (beer) is actually Russia's most popular alcoholic drink. The market leader is Baltika, a Scandinavian joint-venture with Russian management, based in St Petersburg. It makes no less than 12 excellent brews. No 3 and 7 are the most popular standard lagers, but there is also a wheat beer (No 8), dark beers (No 4 and 6) and a 'strong beer' (No 9), which at 8% proof is extremely popular. Tinkoff (p180) is a national chain of micro-breweries that has begun bottling its potent brews for retail sale. Other leading Russian beers are Bochkarev, Nevskoye, Stepan Razin and Tri Medvedi.

Russians drink *Sovietskoe shampanskoe* (sparkling wine) to toast special occasions and to sip during intermission at the theatre. It tends to be sickeningly sweet: look for the label that says *sukhoe* (dry).

Kvas is a mildly alcoholic fermented rye-bread water. Cool and refreshing, it is a popular summer drink that tastes something like ginger beer. In the olden days it was dispensed on the street from big wheeled tanks. Patrons

would bring their own bottles or plastic bags and fill up. The *kvas* truck is a rare sight these days, but this cool tasty treat is still available from Russian restaurants.

ETIQUETTE

Few traditions in Russia are as sacrosanct as the drinking of vodka, the national drink. Forget any foreign notions of drinking vodka mixed with tonic or orange juice – this is anathema to your average Russian. If you need something to wash it down, you can chase with a lemon or a pickle or, perhaps, a mixer in a separate glass.

Vodka is served chilled. One person makes a toast, then everyone clinks glasses and knocks it back. Women can usually get away with sipping, but men will be scoffed at if they don't drink up – at least the first round. Back in the day, vodka bottles rarely had resealable caps, which meant that once opened it must be finished. Times have changed, however; these days, finishing off the bottle is not technically necessary.

It is bad luck to place an empty bottle on the table – it must be placed on the floor. Most importantly of all, snack between shots; Russians swear that by doing this you'll *never* get drunk...

Many visitors are surprised by the ubiquity of drinking, meaning that people will crack open a beer anywhere. It is not illegal to drink in public places, so it's not unusual to see young people sipping beers on the sidewalk or in the park. It was only recently that consuming alcohol on the metro was prohibited.

WHERE TO DRINK

Back in the day, the equivalent of the local pub was a *ryumochnaya*, which comes from the word *ryumka* (shot). These were pretty grim places, serving up *sto grammov* (100 grams), but not much else. Most people preferred to drink at home, surrounded by friends and family.

In recent years, St Petersburg's drinking possibilities have expanded exponentially (although there are still a few old-school *ryumochnye* around town; see p180). Now, drink-

NA ZDOROVYE!

'To your health!' is what Russians say when they throw back a shot of vodka. But this pronouncement hardly suffices as a proper toast in a public forum or an intimate drinking session among friends. A proper toast requires thoughtfulness and sincerity.

A few themes prevail. The first toast of the night often acknowledges the generosity of the host, while the second usually recognises the beauty of the ladies present. In mixed company, you can't go wrong raising your glass to international friendship or world peace. But in all cases, the toast requires a personal anecdote or a profound insight, as well as a bit of rambling preamble to make it meaningful.

In Russia, drinking vodka is a celebration of life in all its complexity – the triumph, the tragedy and the triviality. A toast is a vocalisation of that celebration, so say it like you mean it. And drink it in the same way – *zalpom* – bottoms up!

ers can take their pick from wine bars, whisky bars, Irish pubs, sports bars, microbreweries and more. In summer months, there is also an assortment of *letny sady* (summer gardens) scattered around town.

PRACTICALITIES

Opening Hours

Most Russians prefer to drink with meals, so almost all bars and pubs double as restaurants. As such, they generally have the same opening hours as eating venues (from 11am or noon to 11pm or midnight). Popular drinking spots are more likely to stay open later – usually until 2am – though the kitchen may close. Some hot spots stay open for drinking until 5am or 6am.

How Much?

Prices for alcohol vary widely depending on where you are drinking. Expect to pay anywhere from R60 to R150 for a pint of beer, and between R50 and R200 for 50g of vodka. Don't forget a 10% tip for the bartender.

BARS & PUBS

You'll get the chance to drink almost anywhere you look – from the café at the theatre to the kiosk in the park. Almost all restaurants and cafés offer alcoholic beverages on their menus. We have listed some of the city's choice drinking venues below, but you will likely find your own favourite, especially if you explore the streets of the Historic Heart, Liteyny, Smolny, Vladimirskaaya and Vosstaniya. The city's official tourist information site (www.visit-petersburg.ru) has an online drinking guide. You might also consider joining the highly recommended Friday-night pub crawl offered by Peter's Walking Tours (p247).

BRIDGE LOUNGE Map pp114–15

☎ 910 0000; www.bridgelounge.ru; Zayachy Island; ☏ noon-last customer; 📍 Gorkovskaya This swank spot is part restaurant, part lounge and 100% upper-class. Set within the western bastion of the Peter & Paul Fortress, this see-and-be-seen spot boasts an atmospheric location and awesome vista. Its white tent-roof interior is gorgeous, with plush pillows and drapes adorning the otherwise sparse space. Face control ensures that the clientele looks as good as their surroundings.

CITY BAR Map p84

☎ 448 5837; www.citybar.ru; Furshtatskaya ul 20; ☏ 11am–2am; 📍 Chernyshevskaya; 📶 wi-fi A sort of St Petersburg celebrity, co-owner Aileen has presided over this popular place since 1996. It's busy every night of the week with expats and travellers and locals who enjoy their company. They come for free wi-fi access, outrageously good food (especially breakfast and burgers) and live entertainment. Music, poetry readings and stand-up comedy are all on the agenda, depending on the day. Also available: English-language books and DVDs from the lending library.

CYNIC Map p97

Tsnyik; ☎ 312 9526; www.cinic.spb.ru; per Antonenko 4; ☏ 1pm–3am Sun–Thu, 1pm–7am Fri & Sat; 📍 Sennaya Pl/Sadovaya; 📶 wi-fi Calling itself a 'trash-café-club', Cynic holds a very special place in the hearts of the St Petersburg underground. Rumour has it that this divey place is struggling for survival, but the student-slacker crowd has not abandoned its no-frills cellar bar. Arty types still come to nurse cheap beers and indulge in the famously delicious *grenki*

EAT & DRINK, DRINK & EAT

Want some more places to drink? Check out the following eating venues, which draw a frothy beer or mix a strong cocktail in addition to serving food:

- **NEP** (p163)
- **Fidelio Café** (p164)
- **Fat Frier** (p164 or p168)
- **Onegin** (p164)
- **Korovabar** (p165)
- **Face Café** (p166)
- **Zoom Café** (p166)
- **Black Cat, White Cat** (p168)
- **Imbir** (p170)
- **Crocodile** (p171 or p172)
- **Fasol** (p171)
- **The Idiot** (p172)
- **Russky Kitsch** (p173)
- **Biergarten** (p174)
- **Aquarel** (p174)
- **Les Amis de Jean-Jacques** (p175)
- **Aiva** (p176)

(black bread fried in garlic). Literature fans of the male persuasion can peruse Pushkin in the toilet.

DIE KNEIPE Map pp108–9

Grad Petrov; ☎ 326 0137; www.die-kneipe.ru; **Universitetskaya nab 5**; ☎ noon-last customer; **M Vasileostrovskaya**

Fresh-brewed lager, Weiss, pilsner, Dunkel and Hefe-Weiss – it's reason enough to stop by this newish microbrewery on Vasilevsky Island. The incredible happy-hour specials (from 4pm until 9pm) are added incentive. To top it off, the outdoor tables offer amazing views of St Isaac's Cathedral and the Admiralty across the Neva River.

DUNES Map pp68–9

Dyuni; ☎ 7-901-303 7122; www.summerkiosk.spb.ru; **Konyushennaya pl 2**; ☎ 11am-1am **Mar-Sep**; **M Nevsky Pr**

Feel like lounging on the beach with a fruity cocktail, catching some rays or playing some badminton? Then visit Dunes, St Petersburg's first beach bar, complete with sand, hammocks and beach chairs. That this outdoor café is located in a crumbling courtyard (with no sea in sight) only adds to the charm. The place is hard to find: go through the unmarked archway off Konyushennaya pl and proceed to the second courtyard.

PIVNAYA 0.5 Map p92

☎ 315 1038; www.piv05.ru; **Zagorodny pr 44/2**; ☎ 11am-2am; **M Vladimirskaya**

With Soviet films playing on the big screen, this classic place recalls the days when the local *pivnaya* (beer bar) was the only choice for a brew. This particular *pivnaya* has gone upscale. The retro-chic atmosphere is heavy on the chic, however, with its dark wood and copper décor, sumptuous leather furniture and electronica music.

PROBKA Map p84

☎ 273 4904; www.probka.org; **ul Belinskogo 5**; ☎ 1pm-1am; **M Gostiny Dvor**

Romantic and sophisticated, serving wines from around the world...what more do you want from your wine bar? Tile floors and terracotta walls recall an Italian *enoteca*, with its shelves stocked with wine bottles and liqueurs. Several wines are available by the glass or half-bottle, and there is a menu of light snacks, salads and pastas.

RYUMOCHNAYA Map p84

4-ya Sovetskaya ul 10; ☎ 7am-11pm; **M Pl Vosstaniya**

This is a hold-over from the days when a drinking establishment needed no special name. The *ryumochnaya* was the generic place where comrades stopped on their way to or from work to toss back a shot or two before continuing on their way. It's hard to say how long this particular *ryumochnaya* has been around, but you can be sure that if you order *sto grammov* (100 grams), they will know what you are talking about.

SHAMROCK Map p102

☎ 318 4625; www.shamrock.spb.ru; **ul Dekabristov 27**; ☎ 9am-2am; **M Sadovaya**

It may seem odd to pop in for a pint after watching ballerinas dance across *Swan Lake*, but that is what many theatre-goers do. This friendly Irish-owned pub opposite the Mariinsky Theatre attracts a steady stream of foreigners and locals. Not all of them are coming from the theatre: some make a special trip to feast on shepherd's pie, drink Guinness and enjoy the *craic*.

TINKOFF Map pp68–9

☎ 718 5566; www.tinkoff.ru; **Kazanskaya ul 7**; ☎ noon-2am; **M Nevsky Pr**

Set inside a gigantic contemporary brewery, Tinkoff is a great place to sample one

of eight freshly brewed beers and enjoy live entertainment. There's stand-up comedy at 10pm Thursday nights, and live music or DJs from 9pm Friday through Sunday. And if you get hungry, you're in luck (see p166 for a restaurant review).

TRIBUNAL BAR Map pp68–9

☎ 314 2423; **Karavannaya ul 26**; ☎ 9am-6am; **M Gostiny Dvor**

This used to be a kind of legendary place, famous for the debauchery and decadence that would set in as soon as the crowd had enough to drink. It's now in a new location. And while ads promise that 'the legend continues', the debauchery feels a little over-programmed. Nonetheless, scantily clad women dancing on the bar are practically guaranteed.

CAFÉS

St Petersburg temperatures occasionally call for a warming drink, so it's nice to know you're never far from a fresh-brewed cup o' joe. Indeed, who can be surprised about the blossoming of a café culture in this city of artists, intellectuals and philosophers? A few of the Russian chains have followed their Western counterparts and opened up outlets on every corner. Rest assured, you will never be far from a Coffee House (Kofe Khaus), Ideal Cup (Idealnaya Chashka) or Shokoladnitsa. But the independent cafés listed here earn higher marks for atmosphere and artistry. They're recommended for coffee, tea and perhaps something to sate your sweet tooth. Many cafés have full menus, and these are reviewed in the Eating chapter (p160).

BLACK & WHITE Map pp108–9

☎ 323 3881; www.blackwhite.ru; **6-ya liniya i 7-ya liniya 25**; ☎ 8.30am-1am; **M Vasileostrovskaya**
So perhaps the black and white décor is a little predictable, but the location on Vasilevsky's Island main strip is unbeatable.

top picks

GAY ST PETE

- **Sinners** (p183)
- **Cabaret** (p182)
- **3L** (p182)
- **Central Station** (p182)

The sidewalk seating offers a perfect place to sip your joe and watch the world go by. Also serving breakfast and business lunch.

CAFÉ RICO Map p92

☎ 764 7214; **Nevsky pr 77/1**; ☎ 9am-10pm; **M Pl Vosstaniya**

Evoking Columbia, or maybe Brazil, the décor of this long-standing favourite raises expectations about the quality of the coffee. And Café Rico does not disappoint, serving roasts from around the world, as well as coffee cocktails and irresistible sweets. The entrance is actually from Pushkinskaya ul.

COFFEE BREAK Map pp68–9

☎ 314 6729; **nab kanala Griboedova**; ☎ 7.30am-11pm; **M Nevsky Pr**

Not just a café, but also an art gallery. Infused with the sounds of chill-out music and the aromas of fresh-brewed java, this modern space is a delightful place to get your daily dose and admire the local artwork. The choice of coffees, teas and other drinks is impressive.

OUNCE Map p92

Untsiya; ☎ 315 5786; **Nevsky pr 63**; ☎ 10am-10pm; **M Mayakovskaya**

Hiding behind the tea shop, a chic salon overlooks a quiet courtyard. Twinkling lights and comfy couches make for a sublime setting to sip your tea. Sample from hundreds of varieties of black, green and herbal.

STRAY DOG CAFÉ Map pp68–9

☎ 315 7764; **pl Iskusstv 5**; ☎ 11.30am-midnight; **M Nevsky Pr**

Back in the day, this underground café was the gathering place for poets and playwrights ('the day' meaning 1912 and 'poets and playwrights' meaning the likes of Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam and Vladimir Mayakovsky). These days, the crowd isn't so bohemian, but the café still hosts occasional poetry readings and acoustic music performances. Prominently placed on pl Iskusstv (Arts Sq), it's a convenient and cosy place to stop for a drink before or after the theatre.

ZERNO ISTINY Map p92

☎ 712 5319; www.zerno-istiny.ru; **Zagorodny pr 20**; ☎ 24hr; **M Vladimirskaia**; **M**

While the décor is nothing special, this cosy café has friendly service, decent coffee

and – bonus – free internet access. Bring your own computer or borrow one from the bar. Thirty minutes free with the purchase of a cup of coffee.

CLUBBING

Dance and music clubs might open at 10pm or 11pm, but they don't get hopping until after midnight. On weekends, all St Petersburg clubs stay open until the very early hours (usually 6am or 7am). Most operate every night of the week, although some are open only on weekends (specified in the listings). Check the *St Petersburg Times* for updates. Also, look out for posters around town advertising club events and one-off parties with famous DJs or good local groups playing. Many of the city's clubs charge an admission fee of R100 to R400. Nearly all clubs serve food, although be aware that a 'crazy menu' is not for ordering food but for choosing women (and sometimes men).

3L Map p84 Lesbian

Tri El; ☎ 710 2016; www.triel.spb.ru; 5-ya Sovetskaya ul 45; cover R0-150; 🕒 5pm-midnight Tue, 10pm-6am Wed-Sun; 📺 PI Vosstaniya Russia's first (and only?) lesbian club opened in 2002 and is still a fun, laidback place with dancing, live music at 7pm Thursday and billiards. The multicoloured paint job and oddly shaped apertures give the interior a dreamy, almost space-age atmosphere. But the crowd is pretty down-to-earth and very diverse (aside from being mostly women, of course). Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday are women-only.

BEAT STREET

If you are up for a night of bar-hopping, you can't do better than **Dumskaya ul** (Map pp68–9; Dumskaya ul 9; cover R100-300; 🕒 8pm-6am; 📺 Gostiny Dvor), where four of St Petersburg's hottest spots for drinking and music are crammed into a crumbling, classical façade. A couple of these places are (or were) owned by Anton Belyankin and Andrei Gradovich – two members of the local ska band Dva Samolyota – which pretty much guarantees great music and a cool vibe.

Sadly, rumours are running rampant that Dumskaya ul is slated as the city's next big renovation project. So this strip of deliciously divey clubs is not long for this world, or at least not this location. So come now, while you still can. Look for a casual crowd, cheap drinks and a good time:

Datscha Shabby chic décor, cheap drinks and a strict 'no house or techno' policy.

Fidel (www.barfidel.ru) This funky place is a sort of musical and alcoholic tribute to the ruler who 'outlived six presidents of America and six leaders of the Soviet Union and Russia'.

Belgrad (<http://belgrad-club.livejournal.com>) *Bel-yankin* and *Grad-ovich*. Get it? This is your best bet for live music. DJs start playing at 10pm while bands start at midnight.

Second Floor You guessed it: there's more fun upstairs.

CABARET Map pp146–7 Gay

Kabare; ☎ 575 4512; www.cabarespb.ru; nab kanala Obvodnogo 181; men/women R200/400; 📺 Baltiyskaya

Now in a new location near Baltic Station, this cabaret and karaoke club has a fun, friendly vibe, open to anyone who is entertained by a little gender-bending. The highlight of the night is the 2am drag show, which is among the best in the city if you enjoy seeing men dressed as ageing Soviet pop stars.

CENTRAL STATION Map pp68–9 Gay

☎ 312 3600; www.centralstation.ru; ul Lomonosova 1/28; admission before midnight free, after midnight R100-300; 🕒 6pm-6am; 📺 Gostiny Dvor Right behind Sinners, this newer, flashier gay club is huge, featuring countless bars and dance floors, in addition to the café and souvenir shop (in case you have such a good time that you need to have a pair of Central Station boxer shorts). There seems to be something special going on every night, including guest DJs, dance contests and many, many men. Thursday is student night; Saturday is a weekly 'pop' party.

HAVANA CLUB Map p97 Latin

☎ 259 1155; Moskovsky pr 21; cover R100-250; 🕒 noon-6am; 📺 Tekhnologicheskyy Institut Enduringly popular, Havana is the only club that plays a consistent mix of salsa, merengue and Latin-infused jazz. There is usually live music on at least one of the three dance floors. So put your dancing shoes on (no trainers allowed!) and let

loose your inner Ricky Ricardo. Wednesday night is free for 'real Latinos' so make sure you bring your passport if you hail from a Spanish-speaking country.

ISLAND Map pp108–9 Dance

Ostrov; ☎ 328 4857; nab Leytenanta Shmidta 37; cover R300-400; 🕒 10pm-6am Fri & Sat; 📺 Vasileostrovskaya The Island club is on a rather hard-to-reach embankment location on Vasilevsky Island. It is professionally run and aimed at a well-off, fashionable crowd without being pointlessly elitist. There are some superb shows on the revolving dance floors. Music is mainly pop and techno, although big-name DJs occasionally visit.

METRO Map pp146–7 Dance

☎ 776 0210; www.metroclub.ru; 174 Ligovsky pr; cover before 11pm R180-240, after 11pm R240-360; 🕒 10pm-6am; 📺 Ligovsky Pr St Petersburg's most popular spot for teenagers, Metro is a giant venue with three dance floors, featuring Russian and European music downstairs, techno and house on the 2nd floor and the poppiest pop on the top floor. At 2am four nights a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday), male and female dancers clad in leather (at least at the beginning) put on an erotic show. Student nights – Monday and Wednesday – are packed.

MOD Map pp68–9 Live Music & Dance

☎ 881 8371; Konyushennaya pl 2; cover Fri & Sat R150-200; 🕒 6pm-6am; 📺 Nevsky Pr A popular spot for students and other indie types who appreciate the fun and friendly atmosphere, the groovy mix of music (live and spun) and the added entertainment. *Novus*, anyone? (It's like billiards, but not.) If you don't find something you like, head next door to the new (and promising) Achtung Baby.

REVOLUTION Map pp68–9 Dance

☎ 571 2391; www.revolutionclub.ru; Sadovaya ul 28; men/women R300/150; 🕒 10pm-6am; 📺 Gostiny Dvor There's no better place to watch the sunrise than from the top floor of Revolution. The glass-enclosed 'winter garden' is higher than most other buildings in the vicinity, giving a wonderful 360-degree view of the surrounding city. And if you are here at

sunrise, it means you have been dancing all night – easy to do with DJs spinning tunes on two dance floors.

SINNERS Map pp68–9 Gay

Greshniki; ☎ 570 4291; www.greshniki.ru; nab kanala Griboedova 28/1; cover men R0-150, women R300-500; 🕒 10pm-6am; 📺 Gostiny Dvor; 📺 Sinners is St Petersburg's gay mainstay – sleazy but fun – featuring male striptease, drag shows and an intriguing on-stage shower show. The décor is leather and chains, evoking a dark dungeon. Three floors include a mirrored dance floor, a balcony overlooking it and a chill-out lounge. The club functions on a card system – you pay for everything when you leave.

TUNNEL CLUB Map pp114–15 Dance

☎ 233 4015; www.tunnelclub.ru; cover R100-230; cnr Zverinskaya ul & Lybansky per; 🕒 midnight-6am Thu-Sat; 📺 Sportivnaya Back in the 1990s, Tunnel pioneered techno music in this bastion of old-school rock-and-roll. Closed for several years, the military-themed club reopened in the bomb shelter where it was first born. The setting is spooky but somehow appropriate for the electronica that goes down here.

LIVE MUSIC

St Petersburg is widely considered Russia's best music city – the best place to hear great music, and the best place to be a musician. For local insight, read the interview on p46. Otherwise, check out the many music clubs around the city. Vosstaniya seems to be a centre for contemporary music, but there are venues all around town, and even in the outskirts.

ART-VOKZAL Map pp146–7

☎ 495 9004; www.artvokzal.ru; nab kanala Obvodnogo 138; cover R250-400; 🕒 11am-6am; 📺 Baltiyskaya

This innovative new club has retained much of the structure of the factory that formerly occupied this space, so the atmosphere is industrial, gritty and modern. It's a no-frills space for cutting-edge performance art and music. In some cases, 'cutting-edge' might mean adult puppet theatre, in other cases, it could be experimental jazz music: so check the programme before you commit.

CHE

Map p92

☎ 277 7600; www.cafedubche.ru; Poltavskaya ul 3; ☎ 24hr; 📍 PI Vosstaniya

Coffee lounge by day; jam-packed bar by night. This is where you'll find the smart set, slumped in comfy sofas and listening to live music. Art 'happenings' are diverse, ranging from world music to jiving jazz to DJ spins. The food is also excellent (see p170).

EXPERIMENTAL SOUND GALLERY

(GEZ-21) Map p92

☎ 764 5258; www.tac.spb.ru; Ligovsky pr 53, 3rd fl; cover R100-150; ☎ concerts from 9pm; 📍 PI Vosstaniya

You know that a place called 'experimental' is going to be out there, especially as it is part of the alternative art complex at Pushkinskaya 10 (p91). Music ranges from jazz to rock to undefinable, and there are also film screenings, readings and other expressions of creativity. The toilet contains quite an interesting gallery (of sorts).

FISH FABRIQUE

Map p92

☎ 164 4857; www.fishfabrique.spb.ru; Ligovsky pr 53, ground fl; ☎ 3pm-6am, concerts from 9pm Thu-Sun; 📍 PI Vosstaniya

You don't get any more scruffy than this museum of local boho life. Here, in the dark underbelly of Pushkinskaya 10 (p91), artists, musicians and wannabes of all ages meet to drink beer and listen to music. Playing table football is also something of a rite of passage for anyone wanting to join the local arts scene. DJs or bands play in the evenings, making this one of the best places to hear punk and other alternative music.

GRIBOEDOV

Map p92

☎ 764 4355; www.griboedovclub.ru; Voronezhskaya ul 2a; cover R200; ☎ noon-6am, concerts 10pm; 📍 Ligovsky Pr; 📶 wi-fi

Griboedov is hands-down the longest-standing and most respected music club in the city. Another club in a bomb shelter, this one was founded by the blokes from the local ska band Dva Samolyota. It's a low-key bar in the early evening, gradually morphing into a rowdy club later in the night. Excellent music acts run the gamut from ruskyy rock to reggae to electronica to trance. Upstairs, Griboedov Hill functions as a cool café by day with occasional concerts by night.

MAINA

Map p65

☎ 332 0044; www.maina.spb.ru; pr Engelsa 154; cover R100-200; ☎ concerts 9pm & 11pm; 📍 Pr Prosveshcheniya

Maina is out there, geographically speaking. But that does not seem to stop hordes of music-lovers from showing up, feasting on modern, fusion fare and jamming to trendy tunes. Local bands and DJs are on the programme, and the music runs the gamut, including some styles we've never heard of (intelligent lounge? femme-punk?). But it's a daring, innovative place, and the fact that it's out in the docklands makes it all the edgier.

MANHATTAN

Map p92

☎ 713 1945; www.manhattandub.ru; nab reki Fontanki 90; cover R0-200; ☎ 2pm-5am daily, concerts 8pm Wed-Sun; 📍 Vladimirskaaya; 📶

This 'art-club' features live music and artistic expositions, all in a spacious but run-down basement near the Fontanka River. The atmosphere is laidback and bohemian, although these arty types can get raucous late in the evening, depending on the music. There are often a couple of bands doing sets each evening.

ORLANDINA

Map pp114-15

☎ 234 8046; www.orlandina.ru; nab reki Karpovki 5/2; cover R120-300; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6am Sat, noon-11pm Sun; 📍 Petrogradskaya

Opened and owned by the small indie record label, Caravan records, this underground club is perhaps a venue to promote its bands. Nonetheless, it's a pretty slick spot, now in its second location, with a café, bar and music store downstairs, and a concert hall upstairs. The music runs the gamut, with punk, ska, reggae and everything in between.

THE OTHER SIDE

Map pp68-9

Drugaya Storona; ☎ 312 9554; www.theotherside.ru; Bolshaya Konyushennaya ul 1; ☎ noon-last customer, concerts 8pm Sun-Thu, 10pm or 11pm Fri & Sat; 📍 Nevsky Pr

What is not to love about this fun and funky 'refuge'? The food is incredibly diverse and uncommonly delicious (see p165 for a full review). And for that matter, so is the nightly entertainment, which ranges from acoustic to jazz to afro to ska, all in the course of a week.

THE PLACE

Map pp146-7

☎ 252 4683; www.placedub.ru; ul Marshala Govorova 47; 📍 Baltiyskaya

This area around Baltiyskaya metro is up and coming: while it used to be considered the boonies, it now hosts some of the hippest and most happening venues for art and music. The Place is no exception. Music ranges from folk to funk, while readings, film screenings and art exhibitions are also in the works. The space itself is more upmarket than other such bohemian clubs. With balconies overlooking the stage and an inviting veranda, the Place may appeal to the artsy-fartsy type with upscale tastes.

RED CLUB

Map p92

☎ 717 0000; www.clubred.ru; Poltavskaya ul 7; cover R100-350; ☎ 6pm-6am, concerts from 8pm; 📍 PI Vosstaniya

At the end of an alley near the train tracks, this old warehouse is a great venue for all kinds of music – both local groups and lesser-known European bands. The place is pretty barren in terms of décor: the focus is clearly on the music. Concerts take place early in the evening, then the place turns into a dance club, playing R&B and house music until all hours.

ZOCOLO

Map p84

Tsokol; ☎ 274 9467; www.zocolo.ru; 3-ya Sovetskaya ul 2/3; cover R200-250; ☎ 7pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 7pm-6am Fri & Sat, concerts 8pm; 📍 PI Vosstaniya

The former St Petersburg musical institution Moloko was forced to move and, apparently, changed name as well. Now Zocolo, it still has a very positive vibe and a great line up of music: indie rock, pop rock, world music, folk, synth-goth-creation, funk-fusion-bossa, latin-hiphop-reggae and, even, 'if-Radiohead-played-punk'. This all goes down in the new urgently orange and green underground space near pl Vosstaniya.

JAZZ CLUBS

During the Soviet period, jazz music was a form of rebellion. Always valuing culture over politics (at least conservative politics), Petersburgers have a particular fondness for this elevated art form. Most of the city's jazz clubs are located in Smolny; besides the places listed here, you can often hear live jazz at Art-Vokzal (p183) and Che

(opposite). The annual festival, Jazz Spring, provides a great introduction to jazz in the city.

JAZZ PHILHARMONIC HALL

Map p92

☎ 764 8565; www.jazz-hall.spb.ru; Zagorodny pr 27; cover R100-200; ☎ concerts 7pm Wed-Sun, Ellington Hall concerts 8pm Tue, Fri & Sat; 📍 Vladimirskaaya

Founded by legendary jazz violinist and composer David Goloshchokin, this venue represents the more traditional side of jazz. Two resident bands perform straight jazz and Dixieland in the big hall, which seats up to 200 people. The smaller Ellington Hall is used for occasional acoustic performances. Foreign guests also appear doing mainstream and modern jazz. Drinks and light snacks available.

JFC JAZZ CLUB

Map p84

☎ 272 9850; www.jfc.sp.ru; Shpalernaya ul 33; cover R150-300; ☎ concerts 7pm; 📍 Chernyshevskaya

Very small and very New York, this cool club is the best place in the city to hear modern, innovative jazz music, as well as the occasional blues, bluegrass, funk, fusion and even folk. The space is tiny, so book a table if you want to sit down. Otherwise, you can always stand at the bar (which is less expensive). The menu is limited to drinks and snacks.

RED FOX JAZZ CAFÉ

Map p84

Krasnyi Lis; ☎ 275 4214; www.rfjc.ru; ul Mayakovskogo 50; cover R60-100; ☎ 10.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 2-11pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Chernyshevskaya

The newest addition to St Pete's jazz scene is the fun and friendly Red Fox Jazz Café, a subterranean space that showcases jazz in the old-fashioned sense: big band, bebop, ragtime and swing music. Sunday changes it up with a jam session, featuring anybody who wants to participate. The menu is extensive and affordable.

SUNDUK

Map p84

☎ 272 3100; www.cafesunduk.ru; Furshtatskaya 42; cover R100; ☎ 10am-last customer; 📍 Chernyshevskaya

This café promises 'art' and it delivers: live music fills up this tiny space every night from 8.30pm to 11pm. It's mostly blues and jazz, with the occasional chanteuse singing more poppy tunes. If this is not arty enough for you, check out the bathrooms. See p168 for a full restaurant review.

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