





around asia

SHANGHAI THANG

TEXT BY AMY FABRIS-SHI PHOTOS BY DANIEL LESER

Shanghai is partying like it did in its 1930s heyday when it was revered as one of the most luxe – and louche – cities in the world. **Amy Fabris-Shi** investigates.

On a hot Saturday evening in July, the grand opening night of Lan Club Shanghai drew a host of celebrities, socialites and CEOs. The backstreets of the Bund leading to the neo-classical edifice were closed as black limousines pulled up to the red carpet. Inside, the new China elite dressed in latest couture, mingled through the four-storey uber-club; the latest venue in Chinese power-femme Zhang Lan's South Beauty empire. They dined on an extravagant multi-course menu by Michelin-starred Belgian chef Yves Maigne (the caviar starter alone was valued at USD 300 per head), before retiring to the downstairs nightclub and the gold, library-themed cognac lounge where fat Havana cigars were lit, vodka cocktails sipped and small-talk made about Porsche ownership and impending holidays in Ibiza, until the early hours of the morning.

Another weekend, another flashy event in this attention-loving metropolis. Shanghai is partying like it did in its 1930s heyday when it was revered as one of the most luxe – and louche – cities in the world. And as the city continues to sprout ever taller skytowers, mid-air Maglev trains, trendy urban renewals and more ultra luxurious hotels, restaurants, spas and cocktail lounges, one gets the feeling the fun has only just begun.

SLEEP

This September, Shanghai's hotel scene hits new heights as the **Park Hyatt** (+86 21 6888 1234) claims the crown of world's tallest hotel from its sister property Grand Hyatt right next door. Stretching across the 79th-93rd floors of the new **Shanghai World Financial Centre** in Pudong, the 174-room property boasts an aerial tai chi courtyard and vertiginous dining, entertainment and meeting venues across the top three floors. The 101-storey Japanese-designed skytower, that has been dubbed the bottle-opener, boasts (for the moment) the world's highest flat rooftop. Those looking to climb even closer to the heavens can brave the terrifying glass-bottomed observation corridor, 474 metres above ground.

Another new Hyatt that deserves a mention is **Hyatt on the Bund** (+86 21 6393 1234), located in the upcoming North Bund development by the new cruiseship terminal. Smacking of contemporary design flair and latest mod-cons, the hotel's 631 rooms across two towers have each been angled to take full advantage of the hotel's most outstanding asset – its gaping views straight down the Huangpu River. Our favourite is the circular Bund Suite, complete with a telescope to enjoy the 180-degree views. **A Yuan Spa** occupies 3,000sqm across the entire lower level and the two-storey **Vue** bar comes with a rooftop Jacuzzi.

The city's swelling ranks of boutique hotels provide funky alternatives to the five-stars. **Mansion Hotel** (+86 21 6393 1234) occupies a French Concession villa built in 1932 for Shanghai mob boss Huang Jinrong (at the height of the gangster era, it is believed that up to 40 per cent of worldwide opium passed through this building).

Opening spread: Shanghai's dominating skyline. This page, clockwise from top left: The city's highrises encroach upon older, smaller residences; A poster celebrates the Shanghai of yesteryear. Bottom of the opposite page: Snapshots of JIA, one of Shanghai's most exciting boutique hotels.

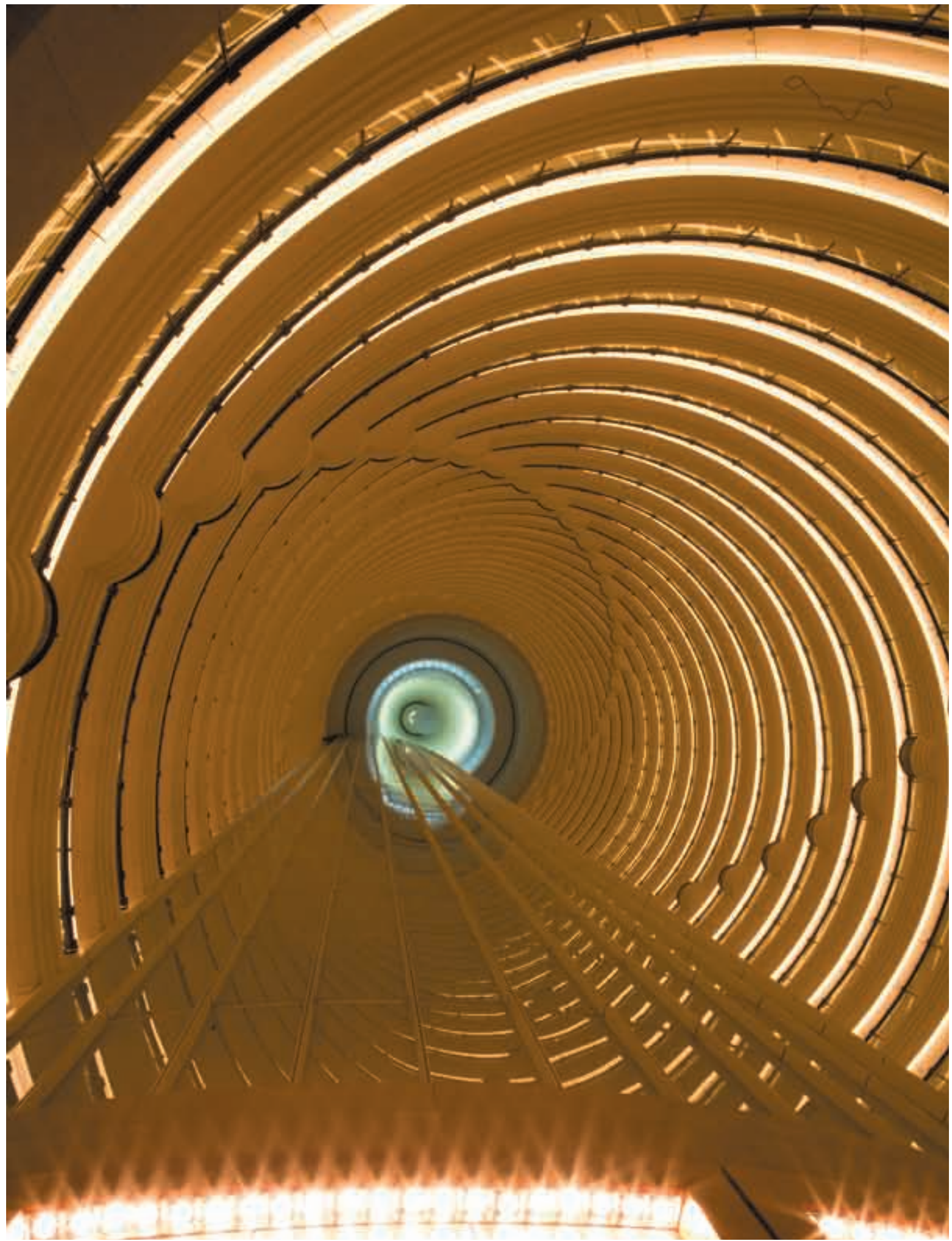


SHANGHAI ART DECO



尔冬强艺术中心
DOKE ERH ART CENTER







The 32-room hotel oozes old world opulence, with 15-foot ceilings, art deco chandeliers and chaise lounges. The historic ambience reaches its height in the hotel lobby, a living museum of memorabilia from the owner's private collection.

Also housed in a neoclassical heritage villa, but sporting a trendy contemporary vibe, **JIA Shanghai** (+86 21 6217 9000) sets a standard in terms of refined designer lodging. Just off the high-end drag of Nanjing Lu, JIA's 55 "quietly theatrical" guestrooms feature dark timber floors, Bisazza mosaic bathrooms and signature pieces by the likes of Knoll, Minotti and Hans Wegner. All rooms are kitted out with high-tech conveniences, a surround sound system and white marble kitchenettes. There's also a glam Italian restaurant Issimo and JIA's trademark residential lounge, where the jet set mingles over breakfast, afternoon cake and evening wines.

Eat

For high-brow dining that is sure to raise a few eyebrows, don't miss **Jade on 36** (+86 21 6882 8888). Shangri-La's signature restaurant features birds-eye views of the Bund and a swank design by Adam D Tihany (think giant snuff bottles and fuchsia-inlaid 'jade box bar') – but it's the French chemist-cum-chef Paul Pairet's molecular mastery that steals the show. Twelve tasting menus arouse the palate with courses like seared foie gras served with a lime-ginger meringue, and a lemon tart which involves a fresh lemon meticulously taken apart and recreated over a four-day process so that the entire fruit is edible.

Clockwise from opposite page: Looking up from the lobby of the Hyatt Pudong; Pudong architecture by night; The bedroom at JIA.

On the opposite riverbank, what was once a darkened row of banking headquarters is now a bastion of fine dining. While the area's nine-year-old gourmet pioneer **M on the Bund** (+86 21 6350 9988) continues to draw crowds with its hearty North African-meets-Mediterranean menu, stellar service and see-and-be-scene terrace, true foodies should head next door to **Three on the Bund**. The luxury lifestyle complex houses a trio of gourmet stars, each occupying entire floors with river views through classic arched window frames. On the fourth floor, Jean Georges Vongerichten's burnished copper and cobalt **Jean Georges** (+86 21 6321 7733) is the three Michelin-star chef's only signature restaurant outside New York. You can't go wrong on the much-lauded French-Asian menu, but be sure to save room for dessert – the Chocolate Tasting sampler includes a to-die-for salted caramel, milk chocolate and Sichuan pepper mille feuille, as well as the legendary molten chocolate cake.

Upstairs in a veritable quarry of white marble, Greek-Australian executive chef David Laris celebrates his version of haute contemporary fare with an Asian slant at **Laris** (+86 21 6321 9922). While at Three on the Bund's only Chinese restaurant, the art-deco styled **Whampoa Club** (+86 21 6321 3737), pre-eminent Asian chef Jereme Leung creates 'new Shanghai cuisine' using traditional techniques and eclectic ingredients. Drunken chicken with Shaoxing wine shaved ice in a martini glass, anyone?

Stepping away from the Bund, for its jaw-dropping, industrial-chic interior and nouvelle Japanese cuisine, book one of the mezzanine tables at **Shintori Null II** (+86 21 5404 5252). Or experience a taste of old Shanghai at the newly-opened **Fu 1088** (+86 21 5239 7878). At this a grand residence of yore, diners feast on traditionally executed Shanghainese classics, like slow-braised pork belly (*hongshao rou*) and silken tofu with hairy crab (*xiefen doufu*), in private dining rooms strung with lace curtains and deco chandeliers.

NIGHTLIFE

Shanghai has long been synonymous with designer bars and dens of iniquity. In its 1930's heyday, Jewish tycoon Sir Victor Sassoon used to throw legendary (read, kinky) costume parties at the decadent **Peace Hotel** on the Bund. A few doors down from the Peace Hotel (which is currently getting a much-needed makeover and will reopen in 2010), **Bund 18** is the venue du jour for similar designer debauchery – though these days it's more likely to be bikini parties on the terrace or Cyberjapan go-go dancers. Presumptuous (and promiscuous) party haunt **Bar Rouge** on the top floor features 33 red Venetian chandeliers, fire-juggling bartenders and a fabulous terrace. **Lounge 18** (+86 21 6323 8399), the new cocktail lounge downstairs, attracts a similar crowd in a more ambient mood.

Just down the road, M on the Bund's **Glamour Bar** (+86 21 6329 3753) is billed as the 'bar for grown-ups'. An oval chrome bar, classic cocktails and stunning Bund views through the original arched windows, anchors the much-loved haunt. As well as hordes of beautiful people and stiff martini action till late, Glamour Bar also plays host to a diverse collection of artists, panel discussions, music recitals and an annual writers' festival.

A Shanghai gem recently moved to a heritage 'behind the Bund' locale, **House of Blues & Jazz** (+86 21 6323 2779) captures the essence of the Shanghai Jazz Age with 30s-inspired wood-pannelled interiors and a rotating roster of top international artists.

Steps away, Ming-dynasty meets pure whimsy

SHANGHAI PLAYLIST ★★★★★

SHANGHAI

ALICE BABS
SHANAXI AIR
SILK ROAD MUSIC

HONG KONG

SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS

SHANGHAI

ED HARCOURT
CHINESE BOX THEME
GRAEME REVELL

THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN CONCERTO

GANG CHEN, ZHANHAO HE
DRAGON SONGS (ALBUM)

LANG LANG

THE SHANGHAI RESTORATION PROJECT

SPECIAL EDITION
SHANGHAI'D IN LOVE
BAY CITY ROLLERS



at the new **Lan Club** (+86 21 6323 8029), which stretches across four levels encompassing Chinese and European restaurants, dessert and seafood bars, private dining rooms, lounges, and a DJ-fuelled bar framed with red and black Chinese lattice screens. Those in the know head for cigars and cognac in the gold-themed Library Bar, or retire to the armchairs in the fourth-floor conservatory, which has a glass roof and 'green wall' covered in 20 kinds of fresh foliage.

SHOP

Shanghai has no shortage of luxury malls. Side by side on Nanjing Xi Lu, **Plaza 66** and **Citic Square**, both feature multiple marble-clad levels with the gamut of international luxury brands represented. But with outrageously high tariffs on luxury goods in mainland China, even Celine Dion on a recent trip headed instead to check out the latest 'designer' collections in Shanghai's back alleys.

Much more luxe – and legal – are the exciting new-generation 'Made in China' brands being developed by resident international and local design talents.

Clockwise from above: East meets west on Talking Lane; The Pearl Tower rises out of Pudong; Cocktail night at Laris.



Taikang Lu's network of boutique and café-lined alleys is a particularly popular haunt for cutting-edge local design. Among the eclectic offerings, eco design collective **Nest** (+86 21 6473 6193), features

LONELY PLANET SHANGHAI CITY GUIDE (USD 19.99)

Shanghai, once an outpost of European sophistication, has glided effortlessly back to China's centre stage. Relive the past with a stroll along tree-lined avenues or a visit to a 10th-century monastery, or get with the hard-paced future in the city's fast-growing forest of skyscrapers. Written by China-based authors, this guide features all names and addresses in Chinese script and also has a special architecture section.

lifestyle + travel magazine has three copies to give away. For a chance to get one, email ravikarn@lifestyleandtravel.com. The first three emails with a full name, telephone number and address will receive a copy.



exclusive product lines by seven locally-based designers which demonstrate intelligent design and responsible manufacturing. From Asianera's fine bone china, to gorgeous organic cotton kimonos by Wobabybasics and hand-coiled bamboo tableware from bambu, this is fine gift territory.

Also at Taikang Lu, **Shokay** (+86 21 135 2456 1081) weaves style and social conscience in a range of beautiful yak down knits, as soft as the finest cashmere, using hand-combed fibres sourced from Tibetan herders and employing hand knitters from a nearby farming community. If all that is too soft and fluffy for you, **insh** (+86 21 6466 9581) showcases fashions by popular local designer Helen Lee, whose metallic T-shirts stating: 'I'd rather be crying in a BMW than laughing in a Santana', seems to sum up popular urban attitudes.

Elsewhere in the leafy streets of the former French Concession, **Madame Mao's Dowry** (+86 21 5403 3551) is a one-stop shop for China-chic mementos, while **Ba Yan Ka La** (+86 21 6126 7600) presents a unique skincare range championing pure ingredients and Chinese wisdom. Formulated by US dermatologists and Chinese herbalists, the product lines use all-natural, native ingredients – like Chinese mulberry, licorice, goji berry and lotus seed – along with pure water from the source of the Yellow River, high in the mountains of Qinghai province. /