



ADDRESS BOOK

12 Essential Cocktail Bars To Visit In London

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[Viajante 87](#) interior design by Hamilford Design - View article page 10

In the depths of winter, there's nothing quite like curling up with a dirty martini at one of the best cocktail bars in London. Fortunately, the capital has more than delivered in terms of buzzy openings of late. For cocktails with a twist, sample Mexican-Japanese aperitifs at [Viajante 87](#), Korean “tea”-tails at [Exmouth Market's Be-oom](#), or spiced Indian tipples at [Bandra Bhaj](#). Meanwhile, the [American Bar](#) at [The Savoy](#) is the place to go for expertly executed classics, while [The Painter's Room](#) at Claridge's, the hotel's nod to “artistic haunts” on the continent, will make Wes Anderson fans swoon. Below, all of the best cocktail bars in London to while away a night in now.



1/12



Three Sheets

The cocktail menu at neighbourhood bar [Three Sheets](#) changes weekly, but is always divided by strength. Look to the One Sheet column for refreshments like a Grape Soda, a delicate blend of pisco, grape leaves and jasmine, while the Two Sheets column ups the stakes on the ABV front (see the Picante, a blend of tequila, fresh pineapple, and ancho), and Three Sheets is best tackled on a Saturday night, when you've got all of Sunday to nurse a low-grade hangover courtesy of a beetroot-infused Earth Martini. If you developed a taste for playing bartender at home during the pandemic, you can also find bottled Three Sheets cocktails via the excellent Highbury grocer [Top Cuvée](#), including their French 75 and a failsafe Old Fashioned.

Our recommended tippie: Try founder Max and Noel Vennings's twist on the classic Cosmopolitan, with fermented cranberry juice punching up the [Sex and the City](#) favourite.

E8



Instagram: @bandrabhai

Bandra Bhai

Accessed via a concealed staircase at the back of [Pali Hill](#) restaurant, [Bandra Bhai](#) takes its aesthetic cues from the smugglers dens of '70s India, complete with a taxidermied peacock. The vibe inside is distinctly Dishoom, and intended to call to mind Bandra, a one-time fishing village just outside Bombay. (As the menu tells you, India's relatively closed economy up until the '90s created a thriving black market for "malt whisky, gold watches and Japanese televisions".) There are truly excellent bar snacks – from roasted masala nuts to grilled lamb cutlets – and playful, conversation-starting drinks. Take the Jungle Love, with fresh mint, rose liquor and cassia bark, or the Smokey Joe, flavoured with apricot liqueur and lapsang souchong.

Our recommended tippie: You cannot go wrong with Disco Inferno, a refreshing hit of cardamom-infused vodka, mango, chilli and lime.

WTW



James McDonald



Lyanness

Set on the South Bank in the former Dandelyan site, Ryan Chetiyawardana's Lyanness boasts the same playful flair that made Mr Lyan one of the city's best-loved mixologists when he first started out. The menu takes seven "protagonist" ingredients as its starting point, including Peach Emoji – made with roasted peach stones and lacto-fermented fruit; Golden Levain, a syrup inspired by the yeast found in everything from champagne to sourdough; and Vegan Honey, which is reverse-engineered from enzymes. Even if the cocktails weren't so excellent, though, it would be worth going for the Thames views from the surrounding Sea Containers hotel alone.

Our recommended tippie: Anything based around Chetiyawardana's moreish "purple" pineapple.

SET



Instagram: @martinezbardon



Martinez

One for serious mixology connoisseurs, the Martinez is a members cocktail lounge hidden away on Soho's Greek Street which opened in the summer of 2021. Its admirable goal: to honour forgotten tipples that paved the way for modern cocktails. (Tellingly, it's named after the Martinez, a dangerous concoction of gin, maraschino liqueur, orange bitters, and dry and sweet vermouth first created in the 1860s.) There are "post-prohibition" cocktails on the menu, too, of course, and the bar staff is happy to take off-the-menu requests, but why go off-piste when there are Tommy's Margaritas and Breakfast Martinis to be had?

Our recommended tippie: The Martinez is available three ways – try the original 1860s offering with Old Duff Genever. It's important to respect history, after all.

WID



5/12



Tayēr + Elementary

After leaving behind The Artesian (where he effectively brought about a mixology renaissance in London), Alex Kratena joined forces with Norwegian bartender Monica Berg to launch Tayēr + Elementary in Shoreditch. As the name implies, this is really two bars in one. The first is Elementary, a walk-ins-only all-day space where top-notch pre-bottled cocktails can be enjoyed in minimalist Scandi-inspired surroundings. The menu changes every day, but the first-rate Deep Fry Chicken is always available (and a frozen Sex on the Beach is generally being churned in a slushie machine). Tayēr, on the other hand, feels a bit like being in a chemistry lab – albeit a welcoming one – with staff dispensing heady, nameless concoctions made using the in-house liqueur range, Muyu. Not an experience to be missed.

Our recommended tipple: If you go to Tayēr + Elementary, you are obligated to begin your night with its One-Sip Martini – a tiny glass of vodka, fino sherry, and Vermouth di Torino with a Gorgonzola-stuffed olive.

EC1V





Swift

Swift's flagship Soho site is divided into "upstairs" and "downstairs" bars, each with its own personality. Above ground at the former, visitors can linger over heady aperitivi at the start of the night (try the Augusta Spritz, which is spiked with absinthe) while nibbling on classic bar snacks such as nocellara olives and spiced nuts. The basement, on the other hand, has a speakeasy vibe and a kitschy cocktail list that demonstrates husband-and-wife founders Bobby Hiddleston and Mia Johansson's real flair for mixology, honed during a stint at Dead Rabbit in Manhattan. Among the more eyebrow-raising (yet delicious) concoctions on the menu: the vodka-based Red Studio, with strawberries, English tea and cream, and the sake-infused North Star, garnished with cantaloupe and lime sherbet.

Our recommended tippie: Swift's specialty Irish coffee, made with a Colombian roast from Send Coffee, the finest Irish whisky, freshly whipped cream and a grating of nutmeg.

W1D



The American Bar at The Savoy

There are hotel bars, and then there's the American Bar at the Savoy, frequented by everyone from Ernest Hemingway to Marilyn Monroe through the years. Founded in 1893, it served "American-style" tipples to its well-heeled guests long before Sidecars and Manhattans became de rigueur in Britain. (At one point, it became known as the 49th state due to the sheer volume of Americans who would glide through its doors in search of a stiff drink.) Throughout the '20s, famed barman Harry Craddock – who fled the US at the beginning of Prohibition – developed the likes of the White Lady behind its Art-Deco bar, later writing the seminal *Savoy Cocktail Book* (1930), which remains in print 93 years later. More than a century on from its opening, the dimly-lit space is still one of the best places in London for a leisurely cocktail before heading to a West End production.

Our recommended tippie: One of Craddock's inimitable dry martinis, which are half gin, half French vermouth, with a dash of orange bitters.

WC2R



8/12



Happiness Forgets & Ever After

Thanks to its countless pubs (and exorbitant rents), London has a limited number of good dive bars, but [Happiness Forgets](#) is definitely one of them (even if it is a bit more polished than most). Hidden in a Hoxton basement, it's the sort of place where you can give the mixologist a vague description of what you're in the mood for – however niche or weird – and he/she/they will whip you up a cocktail on the spot. (For what it's worth, you cannot go wrong with their classic Negroni.) If Happiness Forgets is overcrowded, or you're just in the mood for a bite, you can head upstairs to the team's newly opened venue Ever After, which dishes up small plates along with ice-cold martinis.

Our recommended tippie: Go when the sun is out and treat yourself to one of their boozy fruit “slushies”.



9/12



Be-oom

During the day, Be-oom functions as a tea shop and garden, sourcing leaves from farms in Korea's Hadong and Boseong regions along with beautifully designed homewares (good luck resisting their beautiful Ikebana vases once you're inside). At night, however, it offers a range of tea-based cocktails that are genuinely remarkable – think persimmon tea spiked with cognac – along with a range of *anjoo*, or evening snacks, such as seaweed crisps with kimchi mayonnaise.

Our recommended tippie: For those who prefer vino to cocktails, the pairings of natural wine and Korean tea are a treat.

ECIR

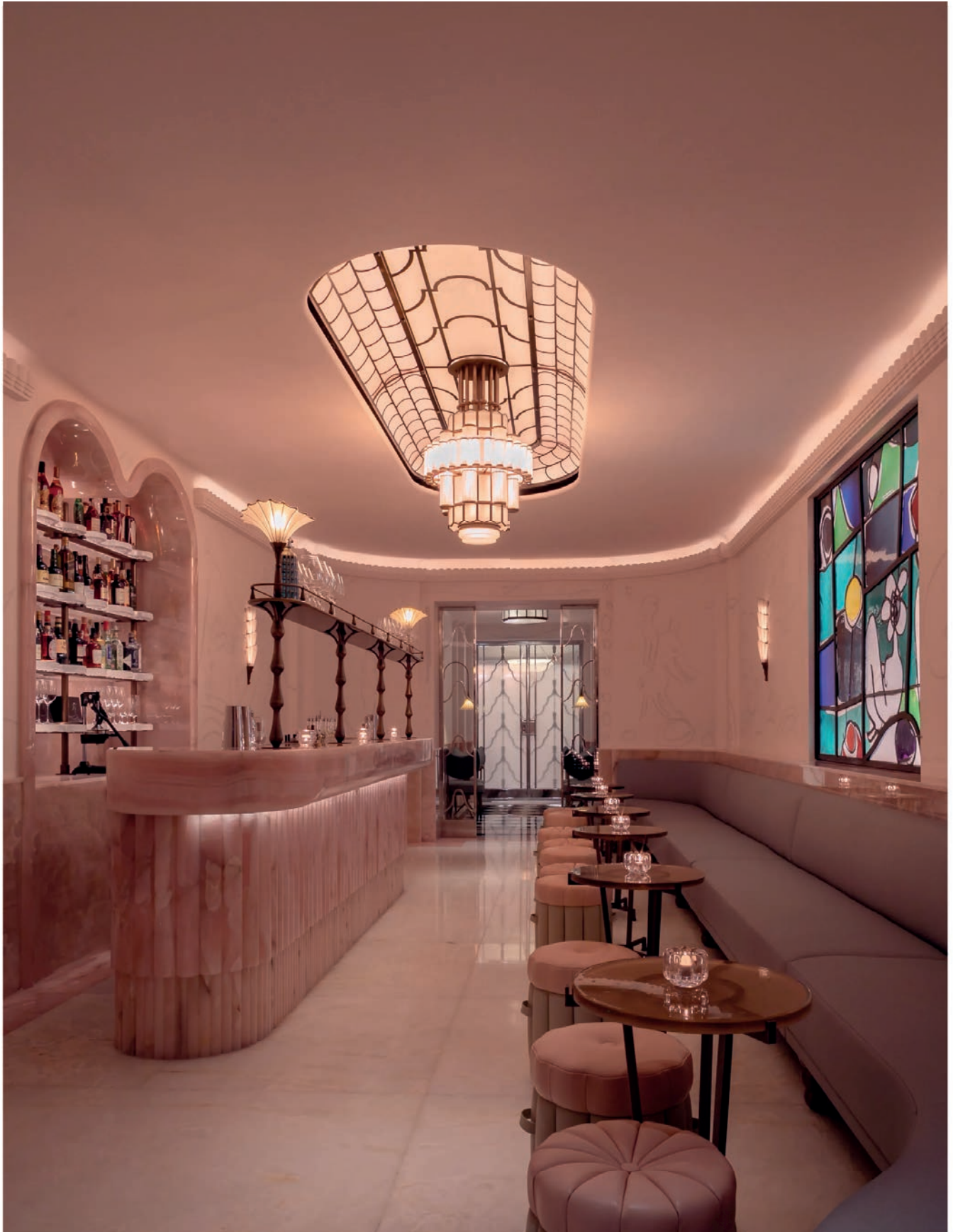


Bar Termini

If you're a cocktail traditionalist, then [Bar Termini](#) is for you. Named after Rome's largest train station (and inspired by the city's 1950s *bar* culture), it offers the best of both worlds: espresso in the morning, and Negronis in the evening. All of the classics are represented on its wonderfully short menu (you would be hard pressed to find a better Bellini in London), but there are always a few twists to consider as well. See their Elegante, which marries Sicilian granita with vodka and blossom "aroma", or the Death in Venice, a combination of Campari, grapefruit bitters and Prosecco.

Our recommended tippie: The Spritz Termini, spiked with homemade rhubarb cordial.

WTD





The Painter's Room at Claridge's

It's exceptionally difficult to top [The Fumoir](#) at Claridge's when it comes to nightcaps; nursing one of its signature Juleps surrounded by William Klein portraits is a near-perfect way to spend an evening. That said, it's worth tearing yourself away to experience the hotel's latest opening, [The Painter's Room](#), which nods to artists' haunts across France and Italy. London-based artist Annie Morris – whose bright *Egg* sculptures can be found in Louis Vuitton's flagship Parisian store – has decorated the walls with stained glass murals, while the cocktails nod to the greatest artists of the 20th-century. There's even a Van Gogh-inspired Saint Remy, flavoured with almond blossom.

Our recommended tipple: The Almost a Bellini, with notes of Pineau alongside the peach.

WTK



Viajante 87



Viajante 87

One of the hottest new openings in the capital? This Mexican-Japanese gem, hidden underneath bustling Notting Hill Gate, which comes from the team behind the nearby fusion restaurant Los Mochis. With moody lighting, plush banquettes and artwork courtesy of the Mexico City-born Oms Rocha, the intimate space exudes understated glamour, while its dedicated mixology lab whips up innovative cocktails. Try the Frida, a heady concoction of champagne, tequila, citrus sherbet, chamomile-oregano syrup, rosemary bitters and plum liqueur, or the signature Viajante Martini, made with tequila reposado, bell peppers, fermented mead and green tea sherry. Stay late and you could very well be rewarded with an electrifying DJ set (the bar has a 2am licence), where you can dance into the night fuelled by moreish bar snacks like sashimi and an irresistible wagyu sando.

Our recommended tipple: The Smoked Earth, a mixture of mezcal, jalapeño, sansho berry pepper, wasabi distillate, fleur de sel and – wait for it – lacto-fermented kitchen veggies such as carrots, red cabbage, beetroot and purple corn.

W11