



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 Mattagne (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.





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.