

VAR CAPITAL

London, Paris, Venice, Barcelona, Tokyo and Dubai: Art Galleries, Restaurants and Bars

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London

Restaurants:

▪ Fine / elaborate dining

Ikoyi (St James')

- European fine dining restaurant incorporating Nigerian ingredients and flavours. The dishes are refined and compositionally interesting. The most exciting fine dining restaurant in London right now.
- <https://ikoyilondon.com/>
- 020 3583 4660

The Ritz (Green Park)

- In my view, the best classical French cooking in London
- Grand room
- <https://www.theritzlondon.com/dine-with-us/the-ritz-restaurant/>
- 020 7300 2370

Core by Clare Smyth (Notting Hill)

- Two-star Michelin, quality modern fine cooking in an informal, yet elegant room
- Clare Smyth formerly headed the three Michelin starred Royal Hospital Road restaurant
- <https://www.corebyclaresmyth.com/>
- 020 3937 5086

Bibendum (South Kensington)

- Two Michelin starred, modern French restaurant. Do order the glorious rabbit and langoustine dish.
- <http://bibendum.co.uk/>
- 020 7581 5817

Le Comptoir Robuchon

- Part of the restaurant group originally founded by the legendary French chef, Joel Robuchon (his Paris 3* restaurant Jamin was considered by some to be the best restaurant in the world in the 80s and 90s)
- Accomplished French cooking in a stylish room
- The cooking is not perhaps at the same level as the restaurants listed above but the room is elegant and relaxed
- <https://www.robuchonlondon.co.uk/>
- 020 8076 0570

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▪ Italian

River Café (Hammersmith)

- Simple but very good Italian cooking
- <http://rivercafe.co.uk/>
- 020 7386 4200

Chucs (Mayfair)

- Simple Italian cooking served in a stylish room in Mayfair
- <https://www.chucs.com/dine-at-chucs/>
- 020 3763 2013

Zafferano (Knightsbridge)

- Upscale Italian. Accomplished and tasty fare.
- <https://zafferanorestaurant.com/>
- 020 7235 5800

▪ Chinese

Imperial Treasure (St James')

- Refined Chinese fare (quality cooking and ingredient quality). The best dim sum in London.
- <http://www.imperialtreasure.com/uk/restaurant/finechinese>
- 020 3011 1328

Hakkasan (Mayfair)

- Cool, sleek space. Excellent, refined Chinese cooking.
- <http://hakkasan.com/locations/hakkasan-mayfair/>
- 020 7907 1888

Hutong (London Bridge)

- Specialises in very good Szechuan cooking (bold and spicy regional Chinese cooking). Situated at height in the Shard building, so wonderful views of London.
- www.hutong.co.uk/
- 020 3011 1257

▪ Indian

Amaya (Knightsbridge)

- Indian 'tapas' in a fun space. Excellent spicing.
- <http://www.amaya.biz/>
- 020 7823 1166

Jamavar (Mayfair)

- Upscale, traditional Indian, where the cooking is of high quality.
- <https://www.jamavarrestaurants.com/>
- 020 7499 1800

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▪ Brasserie / others

Bao (Soho)

- Famed for pillow soft Taiwanese rolls, filled with unctuous fillings
- No reservations available, queue system operates
- <https://baolondon.com/>

Kiln (Soho)

- Rustic Thai restaurant. The flavours are bold yet defined.
- <https://www.kilnsoho.com/>

Art

Please see below for a list of private galleries in London that I usually visit whenever they have an exhibition on. These galleries usually put on compelling exhibitions of modern and contemporary artists.

- Ordovas: <https://www.ordovasart.com/>
- Gagosian: <https://www.gagosian.com>
- White Cube: <http://whitecube.com>
- David Zwirner: <https://www.davidzwirner.com/>
- Bastian Gallery: <https://www.bastian-gallery.com/en/>
- Thaddaeus Ropac: <https://ropac.net/>
- Hauser & Wirth: <https://www.hauserwirth.com/>
- Levy Gorvy: <https://www.levygorvy.com/>
- Skarstedt: <http://www.skarstedt.com/>
- Pace: <http://www.pacegallery.com/>
- Marian Goodman: <http://www.mariangoodman.com>
- Almine Rech: <https://www.alminerech.com/>
- Victoria Miro: <https://www.victoria-miro.com/>
- Timothy Taylor: <http://www.timothytaylor.com>
- Ben Brown: <http://www.benbrownfinearts.com>
- Sadie Coles: <http://www.sadiecoles.com/>
- Alison Jacques: <http://www.alisonjacquesgallery.com/>
- Annely Juda: <http://www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk/>
- Cristea Roberts: <https://cristearoberts.com/>
- Bernard Jacobsen: <https://www.jacobsongallery.com/>

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Paris

Restaurants

- 3* Dining

L'Ambroisie

- The best haute French cuisine I have ever enjoyed. Simple compositions, glorious ingredients, perfect execution. Sumptuously elegant room on the stylish Place des Vosges.

Pierre Gagnaire

- Avant-garde, but not by technique (this is not molecular gastronomy). Rather, he conjures compositions of vast numbers of flavours and textures, which somehow come together harmoniously. Remarkable. But please note this is not an 'accessible' restaurant for all palates.

L'Arpege

- Modern French, with an emphasis on vegetable dishes. Rather unsurprisingly the ingredient quality of those vegetables is remarkable.

- Other dining

Carré des Feuillants

- Stylish room near Vendome. 1*. The lunch deal is an absolute steal.
- For French fine dining, the fare is relatively 'rustic,' but the dishes have wonderful flavour and cooking.

Jin

- 1* Sushi restaurant in the 1st. Chef is from Sapporo, Japan. Rice has a wonderful texture and the restaurant sources great fish / shellfish.
- From my experience, the second-best sushi restaurant in Europe, after Araki.

Café / scene

Café de Flore

- Charming café in Saint Germain.

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Ralphs

- Part of Ralph Lauren. Stylish, 'sceney' place. Good burger.

Pierre Herme

- The legendary pastry chef. Go to the 72 rue Bonaparte store (one of the few where they have patisserie). Order the rose and lychee croissant; a fine thing and only 2 EUR!

Hotel bars

Le Bristol Terrace

- Lovely in the summer. Stylish crowd.

Bar at George V

- 'Clubby' feel, with wooden panels. Elegant. Must explain to them how to make a martini (otherwise they shake it!)

Hotel Costes

- Not a sedate hotel bar. Sexy and buzzy.

Vendome bar and Hemmingway bar at the Ritz

- The Vendome is elegant and stylish, and the Hemmingway has a lot of character. Both serve accomplished martinis :)

Clubs

Castel

- Stylish place to party. Even more so given Montana's closure.

Silencio

- Not as cool a crowd as Castel, but cool venue (by David Lynch).

BC

- Post party place (not earlier than 3am).

Art

(Beyond the obvious - Louvre, Pompidou, d'Orsay etc.)

Picasso Museum

- Recently re-opened. Tells the full story of Picasso – a journey through his invention of visual language. Not a brief affair.

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l'Orangerie

- Monet's water lilies in their full glory, plus a small collection of impressionist / post-impressionist painting. Not taxing from a time perspective.

Rodin museum

- Charming museum (inside and outside). Wonderful collection of the C19th sculptor.

Jacquemart-André

- Good collection in a lovely ex private residence (think of the Courtauld).

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Venice

Restaurants

Le Calandre

- 3* Michelin restaurant, in a town near Venice
- Cooking is modern Italian, but not avant-garde
- Their liquorice and saffron risotto is perhaps the greatest risotto on Earth; technically perfect and compositionally the flavours work

Antiche Carampane

- Rustic restaurant, serving simple, deep flavoured fare, with a specialty in seafood
- Rustic, loud and 'buzzy'

Da Ivo

- 'Faux' rustic
- Apparently, the fare is just ok, but the restaurant is considered one of the most stylish to dine in Venice

Bars

Bar Terrazza Danieli

- Rooftop terrace of the Danieli Hotel
- Stylish crowd

Bar Longhi

- Elegant hotel bar at the Gritti Palace hotel

Belmond Hotel Cipriani

- There are a few public spaces at the hotel
- The Cipriani is where George Clooney stays in Venice
- The crowd is stylish

B Bar at the Bauer Hotel

- This can get 'buzzy' post dinner

Art

Gallerie dell'Accademia

- Gallery of old master paintings with a focus on Venetian artists, such as Veronese, Giorgione and Titian
- A couple of highlight pieces:

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- The Feast in the House of Levi by Veronese, a banquet scene, replete with Veronese's remarkable storytelling, 'conjuring' of texture and rich colouring
- Old Woman by Giorgione, a psychologically penetrating portrait of ageing
- The Tempest by Giorgione, a 'mystical,' 'poetic' landscape

Peggy Guggenheim

- Modern (early C20th and post war) art collection of the renowned collector Peggy Guggenheim
- Highlights:
 - There is a room with a few Braque and Picasso cubist pieces, where they 'shattered' the pictorial plane and created a new visual language for the C20th
 - There are a couple of Pollock paintings. Peggy Guggenheim was one of his earlier patrons and if I recall, there is at least one his 'raw,' 'expressive' abstract expressionist canvasses.

Sights

(beyond the obvious such as Grand Canal, St Mark's Square etc.)

Il Frari

- Imposing, high ceilinged church
- Has wonderful art, with the highlight being Titian's dramatic Assumption of the Virgin

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Barcelona

Restaurants

▪ Elaborate

Enigma / Tickets

- After El Bulli closed, the chef's brother opened a variety of restaurants in Barcelona
- Enigma is the most elaborate of the current venues. I have not been, but from what I hear it is 'theatrical' and avant-garde.
- Tickets is the more conventional restaurant in the complex, but is hardly traditional, instead offers inventive tapas
- <http://www.ticketsbar.es/ca>
- <http://www.enigmaconcept.es/>

Disfrutar

- Again I have not visited, however, amongst restaurant bloggers (that I trust) there is a lot of 'buzz' about this place
- Again modern / avant-garde and 'playful'
- This is the restaurant I would be most excited to visit next time I am in Barcelona
- <http://en.disfrutarbarcelona.com/>

ABAC

- 3* avant-garde cuisine in an elegant, somewhat 'monastic' room
- I have dined here and had a wonderful meal; inventive and accomplished cooking
- Please note some of the plates are perhaps 'challenging' to some palates
- <http://www.abacbarcelona.com/en/restaurant>

▪ Tapas

Paco Meralgo

- Tapas restaurant. Good simple fare.
- <http://www.restaurantpacomerlgo.com/home/>

Bars

Mandarin Oriental hotel bars

- The rooftop bar is my favourite space in the city. Stylish and comfortable. Elegant city vista.
- The other bar in the hotel, Banker's Bar is less memorable but also decent
- <https://www.mandarinoriental.com/barcelona/passeig-de-gracia/luxury-hotel>

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Dry Martini

- Traditional, classical bar in Barcelona. Famed for their martinis (they tend to be on the dry / stiff side, so you may want to request a slightly more 'wet' drink)
- <http://www.drymartiniorg.com/>

Art

Miro Foundation

- An extensive and high-quality collection of Joan Miro's work (I am not aware of a better collection of his work)
- Miro is one of the most prominent C20th modernist painters. Somewhat abstract, definitely surrealist, Miro paints what could be described as 'dreamscapes;' he conjures a unique visual language to define thoughts and dreams. At the Miro Museum one feels 'immersed' in his 'vision.'
- The venue housing the collection is a wonderful accompaniment to his work; white, harmonious and 'utopian.' It is located on a hill in Barcelona.
- If you have time for only one art museum in the city, I would choose here
- <https://www.fmirobcn.org/en/foundation/>

Picasso Museum

- This museum does not have the same 'breadth' of work as the Picasso Museum Paris
- It does not have a lot of Picasso's most 'known' work
- Rather, it has a good collection of very early work (which is interesting) and if I recall, there is quite a few examples of Picasso's re-working of the Velasquez (a C17th old master) masterpiece, the painting Las Meninas
- <http://www.museupicasso.bcn.cat/en/>

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Tokyo

Restaurants

▪ Sushi

Sushi Saito

- 3*, many say this is the best sushi restaurant in Tokyo
- I have tried to make a reservation on my previous 4 visits and have never been successful, but worth a try :)

Sawada

- This is another of the top sushi restaurants in Tokyo
- The best sushi I have ever had
- Excellent rice, textured yet light and well-seasoned. Glorious fish / shellfish.

Hashiguchi

- This is another of the top sushi restaurants in Tokyo
- My second favourite, after Sawada. Rice is also wonderfully textured, yet perhaps even more ethereally light.

▪ Tempura

Kondo

- 2* tempura
- Ethereally light batter, coating high quality ingredients
- Well priced

Nanachome Kyoboshi

- Difficult to imagine, but the tempura here is on another level to the excellent Kondo
- The batter is also wonderfully light but the ingredient quality (and perfect cooking of those ingredients) is utterly remarkable
- A higher price point than Kondo

▪ Kaiseki

RyuGin

- 3*
- Compared to other Kaiseki restaurants, the compositions are more elaborate / modern
- I have been 3 times and have always enjoyed glorious, deep flavoured, 'clean', harmonious dishes replete with insanely high quality ingredients

Ishikawa

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- 3*
- More traditional than RyuGin, in that the compositions are simpler
- High quality ingredients, wonderfully executed

▪ Pizza

The Japanese ethos of striving for perfection also applies to their pizza restaurants :) Two pizza restaurants that are as good as I have tried anywhere are [Pizza Studio Tamaki](#) and [Pizza on the 38th](#) (in the Mandarin Oriental)

▪ French

Tokyo is such a cultivated city ... one can enjoy great French fare there. I have tried the 3* [L'Osier](#) ... a stylish and dramatic room in the Shiseido building. They serve modern French (quite elaborate compositions) and I thought the meal I had was at the 3* level.

Bars

Star Bar Ginza and Bar High Five

- two Ginza bars where I have enjoyed martinis as good as anywhere

Hotel Bars

Both the [Mandarin Oriental](#) and the [Park Hyatt](#) have sleek, stylish bars with a good scene, as well as vistas of the city from height

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Dubai

Restaurants

La Serre

- Elegant and buzzy room
- They serve Mediterranean fare. The dishes are simple but refined.
- Vikash and I both enjoyed dining here and Vikash thought there were good options for vegetarians
- <https://www.laserre.com/>

Social by Heinz Beck

- Heinz Beck is a celebrated Italian chef (he has a 3 Michelin starred restaurant in Rome, La Pergola) and he opened this restaurant in Dubai
- His style of cooking is refined Italian
- The restaurant is in the Waldorf Astoria in the Palm
- <https://waldorfastoria3.hilton.com/en/hotels/uae/waldorf-astoria-dubai-palm-jumeirah-DXBPDWA/amenities/restaurants-social.html>

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