

## ENTERTAINMENT

# top picks

- **InterContinental Lobby Lounge** (p214)
- **Tastings** (see the boxed text on p211)
- **Drop** (p216)
- **Gecko Lounge** (p210)
- **Yumla** (p217)
- **Pawn** (p212)

Hong Kong knows to party hard and does so visibly and noisily. The clubbing and bar scenes are as busy as ever and the creative destruction being visited on some venues by the economic turmoil has cleared space for some exciting new bars and nightspots.

It may be less voluble but the arts scene is also healthier than ever. Beyond the neon of the bars of Wan Chai or Central the increasingly busy cultural calendar includes drama, Cantonese opera, dance and live music.

Most weeks, half a dozen local arts companies perform anything from Cantonese opera to English-language versions of Chekhov plays. Locally cultivated drama and dance are among the most enjoyable in Asia, and the schedule of foreign performances is often stellar.

## Nightlife Strips & Districts

If you want to cut down your options for a night out, narrow your search to Hong Kong Island's north shore along the area between Wan Chai in the east and Soho to the west.

This area has the lion's share of the territory's most popular pubs, bars and clubs, plus the cultural venues of Central and Wan Chai, so classical music concerts, theatre, opera and the like are within easy striking distance.

Much of Central's fun nightlife revolves around the now-legendary Lan Kwai Fong and the streets immediately above and to the west of it. During busy times it can be full to bursting. Lan Kwai Fong's clientele tends to be young, hip, cashed up and increasingly Chinese as well as expatriate. It's huge fun if you're in the mood for revelry, but it can be a bit of a circus and arguably the better bars these days are to be found elsewhere.

Geared more to dining than drinking, Soho is worth a look for more intimate venues; it's just a short journey away on foot or via the Central Escalator up the hill. The extent of the bar district is stretching ever further west towards Sheung Wan these days.

While Wan Chai remains a byword for sleaze (and a longstanding port of call for American sailors and GIs since the Vietnam War) it has cleaned its act up of late. Much of the western part of the district offers lively, respectable bars, although hostess bars still line Lockhart Rd. What might be dubbed old Wan Chai, further inland behind the tram tracks, is becoming another little epicentre of fine dining and sophisticated drinking (check out the [Pawn, p212](#)), making it an area well worth exploring.

Pickings get thinner the further east you go from here, but there are a few nightspots in Causeway Bay and Quarry Bay.

While Kowloon may play second fiddle to Hong Kong Island, if you head back from

the bustle of Nathan Rd there are some great little bar areas, not least the karaoke bar scene around Minden Rd and a more touristy, but no less buzzy, food-and-drink ghetto along Knutsford Terrace in the north of Tsim Sha Tsui.

## What's On

Several freebies offer up-to-date listings, including [HK Magazine](#) ([www.asia-city.com](http://www.asia-city.com)), a comprehensive entertainment magazine that also has articles on current trends and reviews of restaurants and bars. It appears on Friday and can be picked up at restaurants, bars, shops and hotels throughout the territory.

Also worth checking out is [bcmagazine](#) ([www.bc-magazine.net](http://www.bc-magazine.net)), a fortnightly guide to Hong Kong's entertainment and partying scene. One of the most useful features in this highly visual and glossy publication is its complete listing of bars and clubs. It is also free and can usually be found alongside copies of *HK Magazine*.

[Time Out](#) ([www.time-out.com.hk](http://www.time-out.com.hk)) magazine, meanwhile, offers more polished and extensive fortnightly coverage of the entertainment scene online and in print (HK\$18).

The [Hong Kong Arts Centre](#) ([www.hkac.org.hk](http://www.hkac.org.hk)) publishes *Artslink*, a monthly with listings of performances, exhibitions and art-house film screenings. Another invaluable source of information is the monthly [Artmap](#) ([www.artmap.com.hk](http://www.artmap.com.hk)), a map with listings that's available free at venues throughout the territory.

## Tickets & Reservations

Expect to pay around \$70 for a seat up the back for the Hong Kong Philharmonic and from about \$500 and up for a performance by big-name international acts or an international musical such as *Chicago*. Bookings for most cultural events can be made by telephone or the