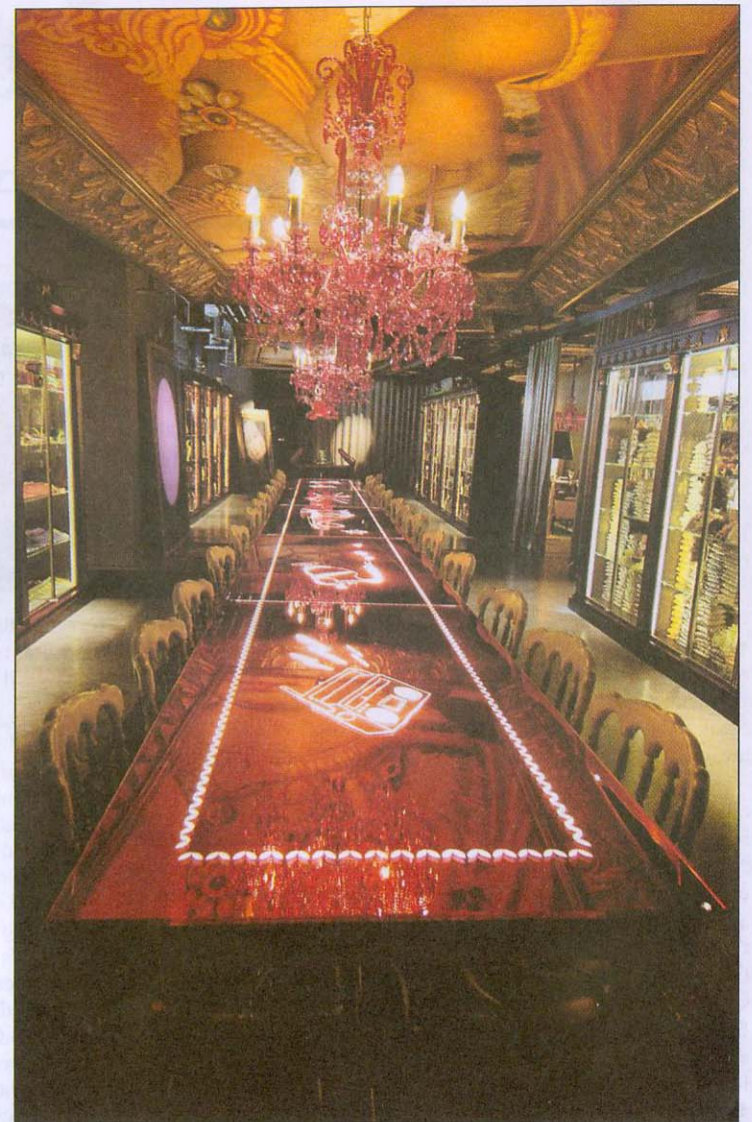


D4 STYLETRAVEL



Top left: LAN club's private room. Top: LAN offers interesting options, such as long tables that can sit 20 and an open kitchen also with tables. Above: Bar at LAN club.

A fresh look at an old city

Jonathan L. Hasson

THE sultry Shanghai summertime can become addictive, so I recently lept at the chance to see what's happening in the capital to the north.

True to expectation, there is more going on than just pre-Olympic preparatory building. Indeed the range of new spots for elegant and interesting relaxation has increased beyond what my business-tripping friends had led me to believe. So, armed with a thirst for exploration I flew to Beijing for the weekend.

First, I elected to stay at the Hotel Cote Cour SL (www.hotelcotecoursl.com), one of the newest boutique hotels in Beijing. The Forbidden City *hutong* had been renovated as a cultured concoction of modern Asia — something not replicable in Shanghai. More importantly to me, the atmosphere was subdued

and quiet, with a staff well-trained in the provision of luxury: service focused in a refined yet warm manner. The complementary breakfast was served in their lounge, a bright and comfortable space, complete with traditional brick floors and Tibet carpets.

On Saturday afternoon I headed out to the 798 Dashanzi art district. This is Beijing's equivalent to Moganshan Road, though those in the arts world even in Shanghai will concede it is much larger and more diverse than our Suzhou Creek friend.

It is also more developed in terms of snacking and relaxing; many more charming coffee houses and the like to cool your heels after a long day of art browsing.

By late afternoon it was time for some TLC; so I treated myself to a visit to the Zen Spa (www.zenspa.com).

The one-hour treatment I selected was expertly delivered, and I liked the Beijing feel of the place.

Though it felt old inside, the whole building was actually a replicated hutong house.

Being secure within the four walls of the courtyard is terribly relaxing; I would say there is something holistically pleasing about these *fengshui* structures.

Saturday dinner was yet another courtyard/*hutong* experience, this time at Source, a Sichuan restaurant. The uniqueness of the place is its intimate feel, exemplified by its prix fixe dining style. Its small size made it the perfect place for gazing into the eyes of my lovely companion, while dining on delicately flavored Sichuan delights.

We left dinner and headed for drinks at LAN. This is another Philippe Starck creation, so will feel somewhat similar if you've been to Volar. However, the interior — which offers such interesting options as long tables that can sit 20 and an open kitchen also with tables — is made on a massive scale to impress even the most jaded of globetrotters.

For the last stop in my holiday I planned my Sunday lunch at one of the most interestingly themed places around, Green T Living (www.green-t-house.com.cn/living.html). The building is about 40 minutes away from downtown, and this gives you time to mentally prepare for its quiet nature. Everything is white and open. As the name suggests, anything you might order has something to do with tea. The food was excellent, only excelled by the original lounge music. As the "living" branch of The Green T in downtown Beijing, the owners are planning to add a spa and tea house soon.

The weekend left me with a most positive impression of China's Olympic city, a place I plan to visit again very soon.



Green T Living

A culinary extravaganza tour in Shanghai... a bicycle ride in the former French Concession... a hot springs bath in your private luxurious 360-square-meter villa in Nanjing... a chic afternoon tea in a glamorous Shanghai 1930's hotel lobby?... a stay in a refined traditional, Oriental Beijing courtyard style property... and much more.

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