

# the 5 best... LOCAL BARS

Maverick mixologists and decadent drinking dens, Craig Butcher gets lured into the hottest local bars...

## 1 LOST SOCIETY, SW8

Up there with the best bars in London, this is a venue usually only attended in your dreams. A warren of different rooms, all with an intimate retro-aristocratic feel straddling Asian lacquer luxury and country-house rustique, there's a thriving upstairs restaurant, three different bars (one in the outside patio garden) and booth seating. This remarkable venue is equally ideal for the weekend papers, a garden party or a blow-out Saturday on the tiles. The dancefloor rocks until 2am on weekends ably supported by a huge cocktail list expertly prepared by the uber-friendly bar staff while top notch gastropub food and imported craft beers complete the roll-call. *697 Wandsworth Rd, SW8 3JF; 020 7652 6526; www.lostsociety.co.uk*

## 2 THE LOFT, SW4

Industrial chic rules the day in this buzzing new-build bar and restaurant which has taken Clapham by storm. Retro leather seating, brickwork and exposed ducting lend the venue an urban edge while full-length windows expose the lesser mortals outside. Weeknights are best enjoyed with cocktail in hand from the inventive, expansive list – try the Vanilla Espresso or Jasmine and Elderflower Collins. Many liqueurs and infusions are home-made, the well-sourced wine list is reasonably priced while the restaurant offers gastro-pub food a cut above. Weekend DJs ramp things up with a 2am close on Fridays and Saturdays. *67 Clapham High Street, SW4 7TG; 020 7627 0792; www.theloftclapham.com*



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## 3 TOOTING TRAM AND SOCIAL, SW17

There's nowhere else quite like this former tram-shed tucked away behind Tooting Broadway. The huge conservatory-peaked ceiling and open space boasts retro-signage, shabby-chic leather chairs, sofas and canteen-style communal wood tables for a relaxed, local hangout feel. The mezzanine wrap-around makes an ideal private space (free to hire) while the rest of the venue hosts one-off gigs and DJs until 2am on weekends but this is, foremost, a bar. An excellent range of bottled craft beers, plenty on draught and most wines under £16 per bottle, with platters, burgers and a cheeseboard for the peckish. *46-48 Mitcham Road, SW17 9NA; 020 8767 0278; www.antic-ltd.com*

## 4 THE LOST ANGEL, SW11

Recently awarded Time Out's best new bar this year, The Lost Angel is a relaxed watering hole during the week (closed Mondays) offering well-kept real ales. It transmogrifies into the weekend as a late-night DJ bar (2am on Fridays and Saturdays) with an excellent range of cocktails and onwards into Sunday as a top hangout for a Sunday roast with friends. The witty décor offers something out of the ordinary – there's a BT phone box in the main room, dynamic large prints and wall tiles reminiscent of a classic boozier but the extraordinary food and drink speaks loudest. *339 Battersea Park Rd, SW11 4LS; 020 7622 2112; www.lostangel.co.uk*



## 5 THE CLARENCE, SW12

This funky up pub-come-bar features mismatched dining chairs, low-slung brown leather seating and high-chairs, brought together with broody wall tones and an eclectic range of prints. There's a central courtyard with comfortable seating for smokers, a large patio to the side and a foot-ball table to the rear. An upscale range of quality spirits includes clubber's favourite Ketel One vodka while craft beers, including their own brews, sit snugly alongside the well-chosen wine list from Bibendum. Late-night opening until 2am on Friday and Saturday, full table service

and light bar snacks fuel the weary. *90-92 Balham High Road, London, SW12 9AG; 020 8772 1155; www.capitalpubcompany.com*  
**Reviews by Craig Butcher**

*Main image, industrial cool at The Loft Bar in Clapham.*