

MIX

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Royal India
Experience
South Africa
Luxury
Incentives

IN TUNE

MUSIC SETS
THE RIGHT TONE
FOR BUSINESS
FUNCTIONS



CSR and Green
initiatives
Staging and
production
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Extreme team
building

SHANGHAI SURPRISE

With a dash of creativity, any space in the city can be converted into a swanky venue, writes *Amy Fabris-Shi*

Recent years have seen Shanghai become a premier destination for hosting major events, both for local companies and multinationals. Aside from being one of the most dynamic cities on the planet, its diverse influences and progressive development provide great scope for spectacle – and the soaring skyline makes for a rousing backdrop.

Since hosting the 2010 World Expo, Shanghai's capacity for hosting large-scale exhibitions and events has been greatly improved, with state-of-the-art venues like the **Mercedes Benz Arena** becoming standouts for bigger groups. But it's the more atmospheric setups and unique activities that are currently impressing event-goers.

From riverfront warehouses to restored heritage neighbourhoods and a secret one-table restaurant serving up truly avant-garde dining, there are plenty of intriguing venues available for event organisers to satisfy clients' ever-increasing demands for personalisation and that wow factor.

Showpiece events

"Shanghai offers a [diverse] perspective you could never find in the West," says Frida Giannini, creative director of Gucci, during her recent visit to Shanghai for Gucci's first fashion show in China.

The two-day Gucci event incorporated a handful of venues in the **Rockbund precinct**, an area of inspiring contrasts. This historic neighbourhood at the head of the Bund – currently being revitalised by David Chipperfield Architects – features almost a dozen early 20th century mansions sporting dramatic art-deco and Renaissance façades, and adjoins the **No.1 Wai Tan Yuan garden compound** that dates back to 1849 and was once home to the British Consulate.





Gucci – which flew in Hilary Swank and Bryan Ferry for the event – held an intimate Champagne brunch at No.1 Wai Tan Yuan, now stunningly restored and is now used as a state guesthouse and exclusive party venue set amid sweeping gardens. The fashion house erected an outdoor runway tent, and the post-catwalk party was held in the Rockbund’s 1929 **National Industrial Bank building**, whose interior – still under renovation – was transformed into an Italy-meets-Shanghai Gucci Club over three floors plus the rooftop terrace.

Porsche concluded its six-month nationwide party circuit last November with a Shanghai gala event at **Bund 22** for 600 Porsche owners and VIPs. A stage and cocktail area was set up in a vacant restaurant space where guests were entertained by pop star Alex To, plus a custom-choreographed performance by local dance ensemble Jazz du Funk. The party then shifted upstairs to **Zeal Club**, whose expansive river-facing terrace allowed guests to enjoy the branded LED light show that illuminated the Pudong skyline.

“Parties by the Huangpu River taking in Shanghai’s dramatic skyline are guaranteed to leave a long-lasting impression,” says Stephane deMontgros, co-founder of Riviera Events. “We have been collaborating with different piers along the river to set up weather-proof transparent tents and bring in five-star hotel catering.”

Wharf 1846, a row of regenerated 1930s warehouses with unobstructed river frontages, is another in-demand venue. Occupying the entire fourth floor of one building, **Sigma Film Club** was set up as a private club by Shanghai Huafu Cinema Investment & Management Co. “But we’ve had a great deal of interest in this venue for events – we host events here approximately 15 days of every month,” says banquet & event director Leean Tang.

Opposite page and below: Paul Pairet of Ultraviolet Shanghai and Chinese Opera meets hip hop at an event organised by Riviera Events





A graffiti artist during a Riviera Events party

The club offers over 2,000 sqm of cool contemporary space decorated with grey-brick walls, floor-to-ceiling windows and artfully placed antiques. Highlights include a 32-seat 3D cinema and a 91-metre-long wooden terrace that juts over the river with a stage, barbecue and outdoor movie screen.

Rooftops and pools

Shanghai's hotel scene has barely drawn breath since the influx of rooms ahead of the 2010 World Expo. Indeed, the city currently leads the Asia-Pacific region for the most hotel rooms under construction, at a staggering 10,582. The fierce competition among five-star hotels and other offsite event venues has seen newer hotels push the creative envelope in terms of event venues and differentiated offerings.

"Venues in hotels, such as rooftops and pool areas, that we were not allowed to work with previously have become available in the last six months for parties," says deMontgros. Known for its "pool party" social events since 2005, Riviera Events has launched weekday corporate pool parties, ideal for hot Shanghai summers. "They are great occasions for teams to relax and mingle together," deMontgros adds.

The upcoming **WH Ming Shanghai** – the first hotel by the Shanghainese female entrepreneur behind the Xiao Nan Guo restaurant group – goes even further in terms of diversified corporate entertainment offerings. As well as the largest pillarless ballroom in Puxi, two wedding chapels and lakeside event spaces, the 166-room hotel will feature a 5,000 sqm Chinese bathhouse-style spa and leisure centre set up for Asian-style corporate relaxation.

Customised fun

With showpiece events happening in the city on a weekly basis, it takes a lot to wow Shanghai partygoers. "Clients are becoming more sophisticated – and consequently very demanding. They've seen it all before, so customisation is key," says David Ong, general manager Greater China of Off-Site Connections.

Off-Site Connections often uses technology synchronised with more traditional performances, like

dance or Chinese drumming, to create a more powerful experience. "We really have to tailor the entertainment so that it's one-of-a-kind and inject elements of the event theme and messaging. It's a challenge – and more costly – but it also gives us a bigger platform to expand our creativity," says Ong. "Reinterpreting traditional Asian performances with a Western twist is popular right now – we recently paired traditional Chinese opera with modern hip hop," adds deMontgros of Riviera Events.

Food is another opportunity to engage and entertain – as well as feed – guests. Taking this to the extreme, in true Shanghai fashion, is a new restaurant conceived by Shanghai based French chef Paul Pairet. The chef behind popular corporate dining venue **Mr & Mrs Bund** at Bund 18 has branched out with **Ultraviolet**, which opened in May. The hottest table in Shanghai is literally a single table for 10 diners in a hidden location (diners get driven there in a minivan). Pairet presents a mind-bending 20-course set menu where each course is accompanied by an interplay of sensory components – from wall and table projections to dry scent diffusers and a DJ soundtrack.

Ultraviolet accepts private event bookings for up to 10 people per evening. "The good food and unique experience naturally brings people together," says Pairet. Although the dining experience itself is highly choreographed, Ultraviolet can also incorporate customised visuals and sounds in fun ways at the beginning and end of the dinner, for yet another truly unique event that you'll find only in Shanghai. ■

CASE STUDY



World of Bentley

hotel highlights

Shanghai Marriott Hotel City Centre

Opened in 2011 beside People's Square, the 720-room Shanghai Marriott Hotel City Centre offers 2,000 sqm of dedicated event space, including two pillar-free ballrooms and "green" events packages. www.shanghaimarriott.com

The Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, Pudong

Occupying the upper floors of a Cesar Pelli-designed skyscraper in Pudong, the 285-room Ritz-Carlton features a 1,135 sqm Grand Ballroom and Shanghai's highest alfresco restaurant and lounge, Flair. It also offers one of the city's premier offsite catering services. www.ritzcarlton.com

Twelve at Hengshan

Twelve at Hengshan, a member of Starwood's Luxury Collection, will open in Shanghai's former French Concession in September 2012. As well as more than

1,300 sqm of meeting space, the 171-room hotel offers atmospheric event settings such as a rooftop terrace, crystal foyer and inner courtyard.

www.luxurycollection.com/12hengshan

Andaz

Hyatt's first Andaz in Asia is located in the Xintiandi entertainment district. The design-led property has 307 guestrooms and 1,400 sqm of event space, including a 300-person ballroom and an outdoor terrace with a glass pavilion (opening end-2012).

<http://shanghai.andaz.hyatt.com>

Swatch Art Peace Hotel

The Swatch-branded "art residence" at the heart of the Bund waterfront features impressive event spaces, including a large exhibition gallery, alfresco rooftop terrace and heritage meeting rooms, along with pan-Asian restaurant Shook! and seven soon-to-open VIP suites.

www.swatchartpeacehotel.com



Paul Pairet's Ultraviolet Shanghai

THE PROFESSIONALS

- Riviera Events <http://rivieraevents.com>
- Off-Site Connections Event Solutions www.offsiteconnections.com
- Rockbund www.rockbund.com
- Zeal Club www.zeal-shanghai.com
- Sigma Film Club tel +86 21 6330 1555
- Ultraviolet www.uvbypp.cc

Event: "World of Bentley"

Venue: Sinan Mansions, Shanghai

Date: 28 October-4 November, 2011

Organiser: DVP China

British automaker Bentley Motors marked its first decade in China by staging the brand's largest showpiece event in Asia. Created by Shanghai-based event marketing agency DVP China, the eight-day showcase transformed Sinan Mansions – a historic neighbourhood converted into high-end shops and restaurants – into a fully branded "World of Bentley".

The client wanted to highlight the diverse heritage of the luxury British carmaker to Chinese consumers, incorporating a press preview evening, VIP gala opening for 300 and a week-long public display. "We chose Sinan Mansions as the ideal location

because the restored villas were built in the 1920s, around the same time that Bentley Motors was founded," says Paul Grootings. "The management was also very accommodating of our needs and even allowed us to restructure non-heritage parts of the buildings to allow access for the vehicles."

DVP China took over several event venues, shops and courtyards at Sinan Mansions to create pavilions and experiences reflecting different aspects of the brand. Guests entered the World of Bentley via a specially created tunnel in the shape of a classic Bentley headlamp. A 1920s heritage villa with colonnaded stone archways was the setting for the opening performance, which featured a high-tech multimedia and light show across the façade and a soprano performing a bilingual ballad specially composed for the event. Inside, the curated museum-style displays featured numerous vehicles and artefacts flown out from the Bentley headquarters in Crewe, England, including the world's oldest Bentley dating from 1919.

Other areas of Sinan Mansion were reserved for a Racing Pavilion showcasing the winning Bentley of the Le Mans 2003 race; a Pinnacle Pavilion with the original full-size clay model of the British Queen's royal Bentley; and a Mulliner Showroom featuring two customised models and a bespoke sales lounge.

