

HOLIDAY TRAVEL



From left: Yu Restaurant in Beijing; Ultraviolet Shanghai; 42Play. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

SHAPING THE TASTE OF THE NATION

China's gourmards and gourmets can revel in the epicurean delights offered by these metropolitan purveyors of fine fare

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Restaurants have long not just settled for pushing the envelope of foodie's palates, and many have developed their own eccentricities to tickle the customer's visual and auditory senses. So, one might as well get more bang for the buck by visiting some of those innovative restaurants.

42Play

The place sits in the center of the CBD area in the capital and integrates live performance, catering and parties. One can get access to original stage shows of different genres, including sketches, stand-ups and improv comedies, while sipping wine with friends. Performers all have years of show experience and deliver delightful and unforgettable shows. Film salons and interactive workshops are hosted to help urban residents make friends and bond. As for food, 42Play boasts special recipes that pay attention to nutrition and are diverse enough to satisfy different tastes. Be sure to try its Thai curry chicken with pickled bamboo shoots, the pork chop hamburger with American blueberry and the beef cheeseburger. For wine lovers, 42Play has a wide collection. One can opt for its special cocktails or craft beers. Don't miss the desserts and the coffee if you still have room.

The Beijing Parade

The restaurant offers Peking Opera and a good view of Chang'an Avenue. One can take in the modern metropolis vibe of Beijing and the historical elements from the Minguo period (1912-49). The Peking Opera performance is staged on a central platform every night and takes guests back to the old times, while savoring the delicate food. The roast duck, hand-chopped bean curd, fried hairtail, pot noodles and home-cooked radish are all worth trying. The Beijing Parade has also developed 36 types of banquets, each representing different stages of life, such as birthdays and weddings. Lighting is also used to create a sense of occasion, and a photographer will take pictures of the guests.

Blue Note Beijing

The restaurant covers an area of 3,000 square meters and offers live music performances, gourmet food and wine. The Blue Note Jazz Club came from New York and then made its way to Japan and Italy. The Beijing facility insists on food without borders, with a focus on continental recipes. The menu varies with seasons to give diners fresh ingredients. Traditional



cooking methods are mixed with a modern approach to optimize taste and visual experiences.

Kievruus Restaurant

This Ukrainian restaurant sits in Beijing's Haidian district and is an ideal window for one to get an insight into Ukrainian culture. Elements from Ukraine are seen everywhere in the restaurant, from decorations, dish styles and performances at the restaurant. All the food is prepared by

Ukrainian chefs and the liquors are from Ukraine. The songs and TV episodes shown are Ukrainian. And live performances are available throughout. Guests can opt for a set meal for two or four, which basically cover all the classics.

Yu Restaurant in Beijing

You feel like you have entered a world of *sakura*. *Sakura* trees sway in front of Japanese style houses on either side of the tables and line the



Clockwise from above left: *Carabineros de huelva*, a main dish by Ultraviolet Shanghai; crunchy fierce salad by Ultraviolet Shanghai; Cracking Drummer, a dessert by Blue Note Beijing.

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shores of the lakes and the sides of mountains at the front of the room. The tables are covered in fluttering *sakura* petals. The restaurant plays with the light and imagery in such a way that the floor seemingly rises to change the view, which some may find a little dizzying if they are standing up. For the whole meal, diners are immersed in an environment created by light and shadow at the Beijing restaurant. The restaurant is decorated with different kinds of imagery and light, some of which can be controlled by the diners by using motion or sound. The two-story restaurant has four sections — the upper floor is for Japanese barbecue, and the lower floor comprises a room for *teppanyaki*, a lounge bar and a dining room for creative *kaiseki*. Each section has its own special effects. The background of the *teppanyaki* room is a collection of interactive cityscapes and scenic spots from around the world. For instance, if the screen

shows the image of a beach, when diners talk or clap, the louder the sound, the larger the waves. The images on the background of the bar section are more abstract and change following the hand movements of guests. The food at the restaurant features fresh ingredients from around the world and is prepared using traditional Japanese cooking methods.

Trojan Fairy Beijing

Based on the story of Troy, the Trojan Fairy restaurant aims to turn diners into ancient Greek warriors.

The eating area is all dark. Before the dinner, shiny items are stored in lockers, and diners enter into the room in single file with their hands on the shoulders of the person ahead as they are guided by a waiter who wears night-vision devices.

From sitting down, to how to use knives and forks to eat in the dark, all the instructions come from the waiter.

One purpose of the restaurant is

to let people cherish their vision by experiencing losing it for a meal. Dozens of blind people have worked here as pianists or waiters. But for them, being outside or inside the restaurant makes no difference.

The food in the dark zone is set meal from Western cuisine and there is also a bright zone serving Japanese cuisine.

The Train Inn Shanghai

Huochezhan, or the Train Inn, is a space with railway carriages that combines a cafe, bar, restaurant and hotel in Shanghai — so diners can sit and relive the history of the last century.

A steam locomotive made in Tangshan, Hebei province in 1972, and three soft-sleeper compartments made in Germany in the 1960s, a dining lounge carriage plus a hard-sleeper compartment made in China in 1970 — all the train carriages are green. They were gradually replaced by China's high-speed trains in white.

The dining lounge carriage has the same decoration as in the old days, with simple chairs and tables. One carriage is decorated in keeping with the style of the Orient Express, representing European tastes of the 1930s.

The food combines many Chinese cuisines such as Shanghai and Cantonese, besides showing off the creativity of the chefs.

Shrimp in three ways is the restaurant's signature dish — the head is made with tomato sauce, the body is fried in dough and the tail is deep-fried.

Ultraviolet Shanghai

It has a single table of 10 seats only and a 20-course avant-garde set menu every night. All the guests sit together. And the experience begins. Food leads. Dinner unfolds as a sensory play choreographed by chef Pairet and the Ultraviolet team. The new three-star Michelin restaurant, Ultraviolet is an experimental restaurant in Shanghai. Billed as the first multi-sensory restaurant in the world, Ultraviolet uses sight, sound and smell to enhance the food through a controlled and tailored atmosphere.

The dining room of Ultraviolet is ascetic with no decor, no artifacts, no paintings, and no views. It is a purpose-built room specifically equipped with multi-sensory high-end technology such as dry scent projectors, stage and UV lighting, 360-degree wall projection. Each course of the menu is dressed up by lights, sounds, music, and enhanced with its own tailored atmosphere to provide context for the dish's taste. Ultraviolet incorporates technology traditionally used in unrelated fields to drive and control the "psycho taste" and enhance the perception of food.

Chinese tourism sparks Alipay boom in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN — Since its launch in Brunei at the end of May this year, the number of businesses accepting Alipay payment from Chinese visitors is on the rise.

Alipay is the world's largest mobile payment platform and primarily used by Chinese people as their paperless payment culture in China and abroad.

Through a partnership with Alipay, BEEP Digital Solutions Sdn Bhd, a local Bruneian fintech start-up, can offer local Brunei-based merchants the ability to undertake transactions with Chinese customers using their Alipay Mobile Wallet.

There are now more than 50 merchants in the country equipped to accept Alipay. Mulia Hotel, one of the oldest hotels in the sultanate, became the first hotel in Brunei to install Ali-

pay Payment System in August.

According to the hotel, the decision to install Alipay was due to strong demands from their Chinese guests.

Industry sources indicated that more hotels in the country are expected to join Alipay, primarily due to increasing Chinese tourists.

The director of operation of Mulia Hotel, Mohd Iswandi who is also the newly-elected president of the Brunei Association of Hotels, told Xinhua that from last year's in-house classification report, Mulia Hotel received around 8,000 guests from China, and this year between January to July, the hotel has already received 14,867 guests from China, a big jump of more than 50 percent.

"Most tourists, checking in to our

hotel from China, will ask for Alipay and that time the hotel staff had no idea what is Alipay. I myself have no idea either," Mohd Iswandi explained.

"So, when we had our meeting with the Brunei Tourism Board, the Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, Dato Ali asked us to engage with the Alipay team in Brunei. Upon finding out, we engaged with BEEP Digital Solutions, and now we become the first hotel to install the payment system," he added.

"According to the Brunei Tourism Board, there were 60,000 Chinese arrivals to Brunei last year. We only accommodated 8,000 of them. This year may reach 80,000 tourists from China. We already received more than 14,000 from January to July.

Thus, the number is increasing," Mohd Iswandi said.

"This month, a direct Beijing-Bandar Seri Begawan flight has been launched. From October to December 2019, there are four weekly flights from Beijing to Bandar Seri Begawan, and starting January 2020, there will be daily flight."

"We are preparing for the influx. In 2018, the Chinese are fast becoming international travelers and they spent hundreds of billions of dollars on holiday travel overseas. Cashless payment is already a culture in China, and Alipay is at the forefront. Thus facilitating our honored guests with their preferred payment system such as Alipay is only logical," he further explained.

Denny Muslim, director and chief strategy and product officer at BEEP

Digital Solutions said Alipay remains as one of the preferred payment methods for the Chinese outbound tourist with about 99 percent outbound Chinese travelers are Alipay users according to statistics in 2018.

Since launching its mobile payment acceptance solution to market at the end of May, BEEP Digital Solutions has already activated about 50 merchants, mostly in tourists hotspots such as the airport and downtown areas, which are already facing Chinese visitors such as the SBC Duty Free Shop at the airport, Hua Ho Supermarket and Department Store in One City Mall, SKH Supermarket in Annajat Complex and Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf in One City Mall.

"In Brunei, there is a need to further facilitate local spending by the Chinese with Chinese tourists already topping the tourist arrivals into Brunei. Beyond being just a

payment facilitator, Alipay is ideally positioned as a marketing platform, being able to reach out and engage its users through digital channels more effectively driving more traffic to the merchants' storefront and allowing them to realize better revenue opportunities," Denny said.

"With Mulia Hotel now on board as Chinese-tourists-friendly hotel having its commercial establishments being able to accept Alipay Mobile Payments, it is hoped that other hotels in the country would also follow suit to serve their Chinese customers better. With an increasing base of merchants already taking up the payment solution, BEEP Digital Solutions is also working with local stakeholders such as Brunei Tourism Board and the Brunei Association of Hotels to further capitalize on the China opportunity."

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