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UPSIDE OF THE DARK SIDE

Rage into the early hours, or kick back with a hookah – Tsim Sha Tsui has a watering hole for every occasion



Go East

In Tsim Sha Tsui, where many bars open until 7am, it's best to start off slowly. Take a stroll along the harbour through the Avenue of the Stars to the redeveloped Tsim Sha Tsui East promenade. Along the way stop at the casual Deck N Beer, and take note of the concrete steps along the waterfront; if you find yourself coming back this way in the wee hours, these are some of the best places to catch the sunrise over the city.

Purists may quibble that the promenade is technically not in TST, but crossing the water without checking out this newly bustling bar

street would be a seriously amateur move. Stop by Ra Restaurant and Lounge, an Egyptian restaurant and hookah joint where you can get massive pineapple mojitos served in beer steins. After Ra it's worth walking along the promenade and checking out the live bands and drink specials at the other bars along the water.

Deck N Beer, East Promenade, Salisbury Road, tel: 2723 9227

Ra Restaurant & Lounge, shop 1, Wing On Plaza, 62 Mody Road, tel: 2721 3600





SWILL TIME: Castro's (top); and fun and games at A's (above) in Ashley 23.

Old school

Although easily walkable, perhaps hop in a cab to Ashley Road, one of TST's original bar streets. Ashley Road is home to Castro's, one of my favourite bars. In Castro's, the drinks are strong, the music good, and the people-watching second to none. Also, the staff will treat you like family by your second visit.

Across from Castro's is the enduring Ned Kelly's Last Stand, one of the original Kowloon night spots, where you can still catch live Dixieland jazz every night of the week while you tuck into a steak and cold beer.

If you're looking for something with a more local flavour, Ashley 23, a tower with 15 floors of bars and restaurants is just down the street. Most of the bars are pretty much the same: good for a game of darts, some dice or a spot of karaoke with cheap buckets of beer. A's on the 14th floor is one of the best for its friendly staff and late hours, they routinely stay open until 4am.

Castro's, 16 Ashley Road, tel: 2957 8041
Ned Kelly's Last Stand, 11A Ashley Road, tel: 2376 0562
Ashley 23, 23-25 Ashley Road

EASTERN PROMISE: the jazz band at Ned Kelly's Last Stand (main image); Deck N Beer (left).



Hart of the matter

Hart Avenue and the adjoining streets make up TST's other pub district. The area boasts watering holes and restaurants for all sorts, but I prefer the little roadside hole-in-the-walls where the cheap booze flows freely and late.

The aptly named Road Side Bar is a great example of the type and has been a favourite since a bartender there, in a moment of tipsy generosity, gifted my friend a bottle of Jaegermeister.

The area is also home to Tequila Jack's, best known for their taco Tuesday specials when tacos are HK\$10 each.

Then there are The Hair of the Dog I and II. The second iteration is no-frills, but open until 8am and a favourite with hospitality workers.

Rumour has it that after 8am you can still get a beer passed to you through the street-side window.

If you're looking for something classier, on a nearby side street is Where Bar, a bar and lounge with a large outdoor terrace, good modern cocktails and hookahs.

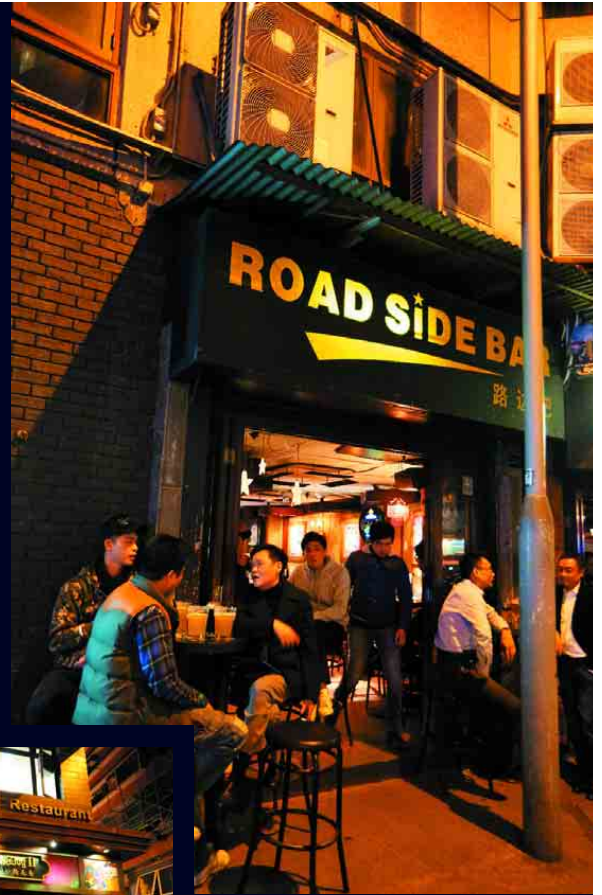
Road Side Bar, 33-35 Chatham Road South, tel: 2311 2821

Tequila Jack's, 33-35 Chatham Road South, tel: 3428 5133

The Hair of the Dog II, Windsor Mansion, 29-31 Chatham Road South, tel: 2723 7228

Where Bar, 4/F Century House, 3-4 Hanoi Road, tel: 2135 9999

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STREET LIFE: The Hair of the Dog II (left); Road Side Bar (above).



Chungking interlude

If you're still standing, now is a good time to remedy that. Much has been said about Chungking Mansions but less well known are the booze bargains to be found there. I believe Daniel Trading in Chungking is home to Hong Kong's cheapest drink: a Styrofoam cup filled to the brim with fiery Indian whisky for HK\$5. Yes, five. Go on the late side to improve your chances of catching an impromptu Bollywood dance party. Now would also be a good time to pick up some South Asian street food to line your stomach.

Chungking Mansions, 36-44 Nathan Road

CHEAP THRILLS: a HK\$5 whisky at Daniel Trading (left) in Chungking Mansions.

Go Knutsford!

Sometimes called the LKF of Kowloon, Knutsford Terrace is probably the most famous bar area in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Like LKF it can be an overpriced and soulless place, but it is also one of the few areas with proper alfresco dining in the city and bars such as All Night Long, which boasts live music and opens until 6am on weekends, offer guaranteed fun times. Knutsford is also home to Joes Billiards, a two-storey pool and darts pub and Assembly, the newest and most modern of the bars on the strip with high-end bar snacks and good cocktails.

Not on the terrace itself, but in the neighbourhood, is one of the best-kept secrets in Tsim Sha Tsui, Vibes; a rooftop bar and hookah place on top of The Mira hotel. With private cabanas and twinkling Christmas lights in the trees, Vibes wouldn't be out of place in

Miami and is a real refuge from the chaotic streets below.

Just up the street in The One mall, Woolloomooloo Prime gets my vote for the best bar with a view in the city. Less stuffy than its better-known competitors Eye Bar and Aqua, Woolloomooloo's terrace is a perfect place to enjoy a sundowner with views over Kowloon Park and the harbour.

Joe's Billiards & Bar, 11-12/F, 1 Knutsford Terrace, tel: 3188 1010

Assembly, G-1/F, Mira Cube, 6 Knutsford Terrace, tel: 2723 6588

All Night Long, 9 Knutsford Terrace, tel: 2367 9487

Vibes, 5/F The Mira Hong Kong, 118 Nathan Road, tel: 2315 5999

Woolloomooloo Prime, 21/F The One, 100 Nathan Road, tel: 2870 0087



IN AND OUT: Joe's Billiards & Bar (above); Vibes (below).

