

Bright spots after dark

Get your New Year off to a sparkling start with our pick of some of the best evenings out in the capital.

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SEARCYS ST PANCRAS GRAND

London's most spectacular train station, St Pancras International, is more than just a transport hub; it's a landmark, a meeting point and a prime spot for a bit of indulgence. Come dusk, head up to the Eurostar terminal, where, stretching beneath the famous clock and vast ceiling of the terminal is Searcys St Pancras Grand. The restaurant has a sleek 1920s vibe, but the star of the show is the grand Champagne bar, dotted with Art Deco lights. As Europe's longest Champagne bar at 98 metres, it's one of the best spots in town for a little people-watching, offering front-seat views of the Eurostar trains rolling in and out of the capital. Take a seat in one of the heated booths at Searcys's flagship venue, and you'll be whisked away to a bygone era of elegance and hospitality — plush leather seats, bespoke blankets to keep your knees warm and grand brass fittings with a 'Press for Champagne' button conveniently at fingertip's reach. Not sure what to order? Take a glass of the house fizz: light, frothy and deliciously easy to drink.



Paired with morsels from the bar's 'Best of British' and 'Vive La France!' menus (with the likes of British crab cakes vying for attention with an all-French cheeseboard), it's the perfect way to make the most of this iconic venue. But before you go, be sure to catch a glimpse of the restaurant's mammoth Melchizedek — 40 bottles' worth of champers; yours for a cool £9,000.

During February, the glamour of the Oscars comes to St Pancras for a series of events inspired by Hollywood. Sip classic cocktails and paired *cuvées* as part of the Searcys Silver Screen season. searcys.co.uk

MUSEUM & FESTIVAL LATES

London comes alive after dark in some unlikely corners. Every Friday, the National Gallery opens till 22.00 with guided tours and special events in addition to its 2,300-plus collection of paintings. Arrive early for the candlelit lates at Sir John Soane's Museum on the first Tuesday of each month. The famed architect's former abode attracts queues after dark, when visitors can explore the large collection of art, furniture and antiquities, highlighted with atmospheric lighting. Kew Gardens offers an exotic evening for the senses on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout February. Its colourful Orchid Festival can be experienced with a heady mix of Indian music, food and drinks that promise to brighten even the darkest winter's evening. nationalgallery.org.uk soane.org kew.org



COCKTAILS AT THE BLOOMSBURY HOTEL



Make a reservation for this month's hottest cocktail party: the team behind Manhattan's award-winning Dead Rabbit bar is bringing its Cuban-inspired sensation, BlackTail, to London for four nights. The name is a throwback to the Prohibition-era planes that transported thirsty New Yorkers to free-flowing Cuba, and from 9-12 February the Bloomsbury Hotel's Club Bar will become 1920s Havana. Expect a selection of classic cocktails with a twist, including BlackTail's signature blend of rums (its interpretation of the iconic Cuban brands is still banned in the US). thebloomsburyclub.com

Afternoon tea

OBLIX

Discover a new perspective on winter's early sunsets from the 32nd floor of The Shard. Taking the idea of high tea to a whole new level, Oblix serves a London-themed selection of sandwiches and baked goods, including the delightful 'Southwark' pastry — a chocolate stout and pear choux bun named after the restaurant's location. Savour a glass of Billecart-Salmon Champagne or two while watching the capital transition from day to night, with views of the river and a host of iconic buildings. The London Afternoon Tea is available weekdays from midday to 15.30. oblixrestaurant.com

