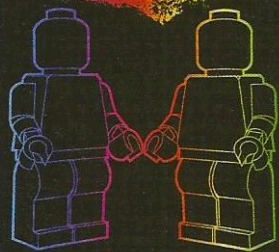


Jing京pride



Jing Pride Highlights

Straight or super crooked, celebrate everything you are proud of this week in the capital with Jing Pride. Events kick off July 23. Details: www.jingpride.com

→ Opening Party

Saturday, July 23 ROOM-Beijing at the Yintai Center hosts the grand opening party with DJs Chozie, M and Saul mixing hot electronic tunes to raise funds for the Ping An Children's Charity. Details: www.jingpride.com

→ Mesh Mixer

Thursday, July 28 there will be a two-for-one drink special applicable to anyone wearing pink. Free entry for everyone. Find it: Opposite House Hotel, 11 Sanlitun Beilu, Tel: 139-1050-0094

→ Alfa Speedo Night

Friday, July 29 Alfa hosts a Speedo and beachwear party. ¥30 entry fee and two-for-one drink specials all night. Funds go to the LGBT Center to raise awareness.

Find it: 6 Xingfu Yicun, Tel: 6413-0086, 138-1070-8638

→ Closing Party

Jing Pride's closing event takes place at a secret date and location, which will be revealed at the other events this week. The party includes DJs Mo, Dongjung, Juliana and M.

Contact: Mo Li, Tel: 158-1148-7710

→ After-Party

Just when you thought it was over, Jing Pride continues at Tun Bar on Saturday, July 30 at 10pm. The ¥50 entry fee will be donated to the LGBT Center to promote awareness. Find it: Sanlitun South St, 4 Gongti Beilu, Tel: 138-1040-1995



Destination is one of Beijing's top gay bars



Stepping Out

A review of the top **gay and lesbian bars** in the capital

▶ July 23-July 30 is Jing Pride, Beijing's prime opportunity to celebrate diversity, especially its gay-versity. It's not a massive scene. And it certainly isn't easy to find gay bars in Beijing unless you have a friend in the know. But trust us, Beijing's LGBT nightlife scene goes way beyond Destination.

In case you live under a rock, **Destination** is Beijing's most popular gay club. The concrete and metal décor give the place a cool vibe while the establishment's size and perennial popularity keep it full of new faces. Destination has multiple rooms for a maze of new interaction. Its impressive and spacious dance floor comes complete with stage, poles, lasers and a fog machine. Cocktails range from ¥30-60, while beers sell for ¥30. Entry can cost up to ¥80, but includes one free drink.

SoBear is Beijing's premier underground gay bar—literally. Although its location in the basement of the Shangdu SOHO West Tower makes it tricky to find, SoBear's friendly atmosphere, staff and amazing, acrobatic pole dance performances reward the determined searcher. Don't be put off by this bar's name—the mostly local crowd are not all bears, and from appearances alone you would be hard-pressed to tell what kind of bar SoBear is (rainbow flags aside). It might not have a true dance floor, but a talented DJ lays down all your favorite gay-club tracks.

The **Vinyl Cafe** in Gulou offers a quiet and fun place to hang out by day, and a chill place (Queen soundtrack on repeat notwithstanding) to relax at night. Plus, all coffee is ¥25 and it attracts a fun crowd of alternatives and innocent tourists who don't realize it's a gay bar.

The Crystal Club hosts the **Lala Salon**, a lesbian support group that meets every Saturday for counseling and awareness. The bar has the perfect seating and vibe for the weekly events, and the community is strong, close-knit one. Other lesbian bars include **Honey Bar** and **Half Dozen Bar** near Gongti and Houhai, respectively.

Despite the relative openness of the community, several closures have plagued the gay scene of late. The Half Bar and Stallion have both closed their doors; the latter was open less than a month.

There are, however, a few gay-friendly bars that draw a good mixed crowd. **Alfa** gets points for their weekly Friday night buy-one-get-one-free drink special from 9:30pm-midnight. A cool hangout spot with more than a smattering of foreigners, Alfa boasts a dance floor complete with an elevated stage and second-floor balcony.

Likewise, **Mesh** is a gay-friendly venue that attracts a well-dressed crowd of drinkers every Thursday night thanks to the gay night they used to host. The night's no longer officially gay, but that doesn't stop the old crowd from showing up.

Beijing's gay community is growing. "The scene has changed a lot in the last five years," says Fan Pop of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Center. "LGBTs themselves have better self-identity now, and more and more LGBT people come to hang out," he says. Welcome to Gay-Jing. ■ **Dan Towne & Lauren Johnson**

"LGBTs themselves have better self-identity now"



Went to learn more about the LGBT beat? Check out the LGBT listings and Jing Pride events at www.cityweekend.com.cn