

# JOIN *the* CLUB

**No longer just a place to network and wind down, today's private members' clubs offer coworking zones and high-level fitness services alongside restaurants, bars, and nightlife**

Words **BETHAN RYDER**

In the decade or so before the turn of the millennium, when hedonism ruled in cities such as New York and London, a wave of members' clubs opened, where the lucky few could drink and dine away from the hordes. These exclusive new haunts were the antithesis of the gentlemen's clubs of yore, bastions of establishment such as New York's Metropolitan Club or the Royal Automobile Club in London. Many, such as The Groucho, Met Bar, and Soho House in the British capital, opened to cater to a younger clientele working in the creative industries of film, fashion, TV, media, and advertising. And where London led, other metropolises followed.

Becoming a member was simple: be nominated by a couple of existing members, pay the annual fee, and you were in. There were daytime meetings, but this club culture was more about drinking cosmopolitans and sea breezes into the early hours. Dining was an option, too, and there might be a DJ with late-night dancing. But joining these clubs was about rubbing shoulders with fellow "movers and shakers," where you could guarantee space on a sofa and the mixologist (it was the '90s) really did know your name.

How times have changed. In this digital, on-demand age—where the lines between work and play continue to blur—the members' club has evolved, becoming a segregated and heavily specialized phenomenon. Call it the atomization of socializing, but technological advancements have in many ways intensified the cash-rich, time-poor dichotomy. A club today needs to be beneficial to your life in every respect and not simply a "home away from home" for drinking and dining where you catch up with friends. Judging by the recently opened Conduit in London, which aims to foster social change, and the forthcoming Well, a modern wellness club in Manhattan, it seems that whether you are looking for serious networking, self-improvement, or want to change the world, there is a beautifully appointed club waiting to welcome you. Here are six you might want to consider.

## The AllBright London, UK

If the private members' club has its origins in 18th-century gentlemen's clubs (see page 56), reflecting a world where men ruled public life, then The AllBright is a sign of how far things have come. Established in London's Fitzrovia in 2018 by Debbie Woskow and Anna Jones, the clue to the membership is in the name, which pays homage to the famous quote by former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: "There's a special place in hell reserved for women who don't help each other." Aiming to create "opportunities for women to thrive and flourish," The AllBright has clearly been successful. A second outpost has just opened in a five-story Mayfair townhouse, which promises "contemporary and feminine, but not pretty" interiors, according to its designer Suzy Hoodless, who is known for high-end residential projects that combine a confident use of color and pattern.

"The most important thing was flexibility," says Hoodless. "The club needed to be able to host coworking, socializing, talks, and events, but also accommodate fitness services." She's wrapped the interiors in tinted mirror paneling and glossy paint, combined with brass light fixtures, tropical wallpapers, upholstery inspired by Savile Row tailoring, and furniture by Eames, Thonet, Gubi, and Another Country. Guests will find all the usual club facilities, but The AllBright twist is the second-floor wellness zone with fitness studio, beauty, and hair salon. Because, frankly, it's hard to rule the world without a decent blow dry. » [allbrightcollective.com](http://allbrightcollective.com)

DEBBIE WOSKOW AND ANNA JONES PHOTOGRAPHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR CHRISTIE'S INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE MAGAZINE BY MICHAEL CLEMENTS



Women only: AllBright founders Debbie Woskow (main picture, left) and Anna Jones (right); the bar (below) and monochrome styling (bottom left) at the original Fitzrovia club; the roof terrace at the new AllBright Mayfair (bottom right).



**Yellowstone Club**  
Montana, USA

Taking the members-only concept to extreme altitudes in more ways than one is Montana's Yellowstone Club, a private residential community, ski, and golf club spanning 24 square miles (62 sq km) in the spectacular Rocky Mountains. Established in 1997, Yellowstone is tailored to those movie stars, tech billionaires, and hedge-fund moguls who find Aspen just a little too busy and yearn for their own private slice of wilderness and action-packed, Big Sky living. Perhaps with a side order of a private jet or yacht charter—something membership can also secure via Yellowstone's partnerships. So how do you share a chair lift with the likes of Bill Gates, Justin Timberlake, and Jessica Biel? You need to spend between \$3m and \$25m on a property (homes range from chalet-style condos with ski-in,

ski-out access to individual ranches and mansions), in addition to the \$400,000-plus joining fee.

There is a fitness center and numerous restaurants and bars, among them a lunch spot in a yurt, an American diner, and a Montana-inspired roadhouse. At the club's heart is the Warren Miller Lodge, which like much of the architecture is all very alpine, incorporating local stone and wood. Although some members are commissioning ultramodern glass-and-steel properties, most homes embody rustic chic, with timber and moss rock-clad exteriors and interiors of reclaimed oak, large hearths, exposed roof trusses, soaring ceilings, and acres of glazing to reveal the mountain scenery. It's very Ralph Lauren on skis, with layers of shearling, cow hides, Navajo textiles, and Christian Liaigre furniture. [yellowstoneclub.com](http://yellowstoneclub.com)



*Big Sky living:* At the heart of Montana's Yellowstone Club is the Warren Miller Lodge (left), the perfect place for après-ski and post-golf activities.



BRIDGEMAN

**History**  
**THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB**

The first private gentlemen's clubs originated in London, and St James's was the original "clubland." They took over the role played by 18th-century coffee houses, where aristocrats and men from the upper classes would meet to discuss politics and business. London's original gentlemen's clubs, among them Brooks's, Boodle's, and White's (pictured above in *A Rake's Progress* by William Hogarth), provided members with somewhere not just to socialize but to gamble—an activity still illegal outside of members-only establishments.

By the 1880s, London was thought to be home to around 400 clubs, their members often united by an interest in politics, literature, a particular sport, art, travel, or some other pursuit.

The club scene in the United States also developed during the 18th century, with most major cities having at least one traditional gentlemen's club. The oldest, the Schuylkill Fishing Company, in Andalusia, Pennsylvania, opened in 1732. Others of note include The Old Colony Club in Plymouth, Massachusetts (1769) and New York City's Yale Club (1897), the largest college clubhouse in the world.

Women began establishing clubs in London in the late 19th century, among them the Ladies' Institute, the Ladies' Athenaeum, and the University Women's Club, which is still in operation now.

From the 1970s, some single-sex clubs opened to men and women, heralding the members' clubs that we know today—places with food, drink, and a rarefied feel.



**Dumbo House**  
Brooklyn, New York, USA

It's hard to keep pace with the Soho House Group, as founder Nick Jones circumnavigates the globe, opening outposts from Amsterdam to Mumbai. His burgeoning empire of private members' clubs for creative professionals began in London's Soho in 1995 and now counts 23 houses (and some 70,000 members) worldwide. One of the newest is Dumbo House, the third New York club, which occupies the top two floors of Empire Stores, a brick storehouse that has become a mixed-use creative hub in this thriving hipster neighborhood. As with most of the houses, Jones is keen to reference the existing architecture and context: "I always try to take something from the outside and bring it inside so that there's a continuation," he says.

Dumbo House's interiors are inspired by the 1960s and '70s, when the area was first colonized by artists. Design director Linda Boronkay oversees the look of all the clubs and has become an expert at blending vintage pieces and custom-made furniture, as well as creating textiles or tiling that reference original

details. Amsterdam House, for example, is full of motifs that pay homage to the geometric patterns found in the extraordinary limestone and granite-clad Bungehuis building, which mixes architectural styles of Art Deco, Functionalist, and Amsterdam School, with a hint of Brutalism. The result is that every house easily slots into its host city, feeling part of the fabric and yet with its Cecconi's restaurants, rooftop pools, art collections, and Cowshed spas, also very much part of the bigger Soho House picture. » [dumbohouse.com](http://dumbohouse.com)



*Inspiring panorama:* Dumbo House has incredible views of New York's oldest suspension bridges—Manhattan and Brooklyn—best seen from the rooftop pool (top), while walls (left) are painted the same shade of the former—Manhattan Bridge blue.

**Annabel's**  
London, UK

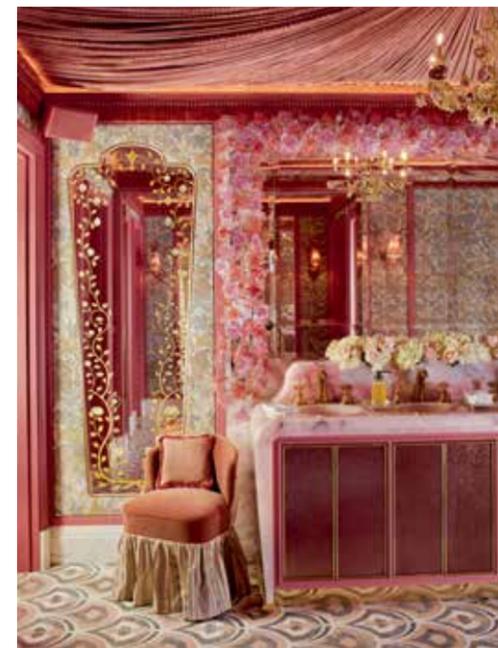
“We wanted the entire club to feel like a fantasy, dressed to impress as though it were hosting a fabulous house party,” says Martin Brudnizki, the interior architect charged by entrepreneur Richard Caring to create the new Annabel's, a maximalist, 21st-century-on-steroids version of the legendary Mayfair nightclub. Overlooking the plane trees of Berkeley Square, the new reincarnation occupies a stately four-story Georgian mansion and is just a stone's throw from Mark Birley's original subterranean *boîte*.

Now open from 7am–4am, the club is designed to host members throughout the day. “The design had to move from morning to night seamlessly, able to offer breakfast through to cocktails and dancing in the evening,” explains Brudnizki, who took inspiration from gardens for the lavish, flora-and-fauna aesthetic.

Trims, tassels, fringes, candelabras, unicorns, exotic de Gournay murals, and swagged drapes abound. A pink paradise, the ladies' powder room is an Instagram hit, but Brudnizki's number-one spot is the Garden restaurant, a palm-fringed oasis complete with a retractable roof. [annabels.co.uk](http://annabels.co.uk)



**Another world:** The Garden Room, with murals by Gary Myatt (top); the Garden restaurant (above); the ladies' powder room (right).



PASCAL CHEVALIER

“The club has been designed to feel like your own home—so much attention has gone into every detail.”  
*Ross Beattie*



GETTY IMAGES

**Roppongi Hills Club**  
Tokyo, Japan

The Hyatt-managed Roppongi Hills Club occupies the entire 51st floor of the Mori Tower and offers its almost literally high-flying members a 360-degree panorama of Tokyo's glittering skyline. Notoriously exclusive—its smart casual dress code excludes shorts, sandals, T-shirts without a jacket, and for women, ripped “fashion jeans,” or camisole dresses—this is a fairly formal affair, as reflected in the membership, which includes political leaders from around the globe. There are seven restaurants and two bars, plus three banqueting halls and numerous private dining rooms, with the Fifty-One restaurant and bar at the club's heart. Interiors are clean and contemporary, with the main attraction being the wraparound city views. A hub of culinary excellence, members can enjoy some of the finest dishes: Amakawa specializes in Wagyu beef, while Fifty-One does a mean prime ribeye platter. Members also benefit from invitations to various events such as cooking classes, gourmet and wine dinners, wine clubs, seminars with business leaders, and exclusive access to art fairs and galleries. [roppongihillsclub.com](http://roppongihillsclub.com)

**Thirty Nine**  
Monte Carlo, Monaco

One for the body-beautiful, self-improvement fitness tribe, Thirty Nine is a private members' sports club on the Riviera founded by Scottish ex-rugby international and Monaco resident Ross Beattie. “Monaco is the center for global luxury and it resonates style and wonderment,” Beattie told the *Financial Times* ahead of the club's opening in fall 2016. “It's natural that large brands come to Monaco to be a part of the dream, but I wanted to do something different and create a luxury brand that was born here and could have the potential to take Monaco with it wherever it may go in the future.”

Thirty Nine occupies a 1960s property on Avenue Princess Grace. Interiors are upscale glam with noble materials of marble, soft leathers, rich woods, and bronze detailing, which generate a neutral palette of grays, taupes, and metallics. “The club has been designed to feel like an extension of your own home—so much attention has gone into every detail,” says Beattie, who

commissioned Morpheus London to execute his slick vision. Not just a gym, there is also a Pilates studio, altitude chamber, The Kitchen restaurant, members' lounge and terrace, hair salon, and Studio 39 spa with Biologique Recherche products. Members are encouraged to improve their lives here, with programs tailored to combine fitness training, diet, beauty, and wellness using high-tech equipment and expert guidance from world-class sports professionals and nutritionists. No surprise then that members have included runner Paula Radcliffe and tennis pro Novak Djokovic. ● [39montecarlo.com](http://39montecarlo.com)

*Bethan Ryder is editorial manager at Elle Decoration and has written four books about restaurant and bar design*



**Workout haven:** Sporting activities at Thirty Nine include yoga out on the water (above), while The Kitchen (top) and terrace (right) offer stylish options for dining and relaxing.



ANTON SMIT