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**BAR-HOPPING WITH
PADMA LAKSHMI**

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Padma Lakshmi looks out over Manhattan from the rooftop of the new Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC. Dress, Costello Tagliapietra. Necklace, cuff; both Padma

Raising + the Roof

Padma Lakshmi has always had a thing for **New York**'s skyline. Now, with new additions like **Le Bain** at The Standard, **Plunge Rooftop Bar + Lounge** at Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC and The Surrey hotel's **Private Roof Garden**, she explains why Manhattan's rooftops are the hottest place to party. By **Anisha Lakshani**. Photographs by **Diego Uchitel**. Styling by **Cristina Ehrlich**



The sun fades, the stars come out. New York's unending babble continues at street-level. As you rise up the heights of the city's glass and steel towers, the din dies down. Padma Lakshmi, the super-sexy model-turned-entrepreneur appears, ready to take us on a tour of the city's hottest rooftop bars. She knows the city's nightlife scene like a fashionista knows the insides of her wardrobe. The company she keeps is the likes of actor David Spade, ex-husband and author Salman Rushdie and IMG Chairman Teddy Frostmann. So, if Padma knows anything, it's how to let her hair down and do it in style. Here's her rooftop tour of Manhattan—the coolest bars, chicest lounges and most exclusive spaces a New Yorker can inhabit.



"The Boom Boom Room is where I meet friends if I want an elegant setting to sip some champagne and sit by the fire"
—Padma Lakshmi

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRIA PATINO/CORBIS

The Standard, New York, with The High Line park running underneath it
Opposite: **Padma Lakshmi at The Surrey hotel's Bar Pleiades.** Dress, **Chanel.** Earrings, metal cuff; both **Padma**

“Food, friends, a special place—
they shouldn’t be rushed”

—Padma Lakshmi



Padma reclines at **The Surrey's Private Roof Garden**. Graphic dress, **Missoni**. Earrings, metal cuff; both **Padma**. Suede shoes, **Prada**. Opposite: **The bar dominates the Plunge Rooftop Bar + Lounge at the Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC**



PLUNGE ROOFTOP BAR + LOUNGE AT GANSEVOORT PARK AVENUE NYC

The rooftop bar at the first Hotel Gansevoort turned the Meatpacking District from a nighttime no-go area to a shopping mall of revelry, where new bars, lounges and restaurants were springing up almost weekly amidst downtown staples like Pastis, Spice Market and Soho House. But if you think you’ve been there and done that, you might be surprised by the newest Gansevoort addition: Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC.

The Plunge Rooftop Bar + Lounge is Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC’s homage to the steel and structure of New York City architecture. The centerpiece here is a 40ft, glass-enclosed indoor and outdoor plunge pool. Only available to hotel guests during the day, the pool opens up to the public in the evenings. A dip on a moonlit night with the Empire State Building peering down on you will render the cocktails unnecessary... almost. Their Mango-Lime Rickeys and Grapefruit Cosmos are to thirst for.

The bar serves finger-sized bites—the mini-burgers with cheese and truffle oil are a hit—and at night the music beats eclectic, from Brazilian to New Age to pop. No wonder Justin Timberlake celebrated here after the Cinema Society preview of *The Social Network* by chilling at the pool with buddies Lance Bass and Timbaland.

On her bar-hopping tour with *Condé Nast Traveller*, Padma stands, surveying the scene beneath her. The sun glows pink, catching the shoulders of her jacket and the roof of a striking building none of us had noticed before. Padma remarks, “I love finding beauty in the non-traditional. I like to look down at my feet and see below them. I love seeing the rooftops of these buildings stretch endlessly. It’s inspiring.” Now, standing beneath a setting sun, we toast the city and the night as they stretch out before us.

420 Park Avenue South (+1 212 317 2900; www.gansevoortpark.com)

LE BAIN AT THE STANDARD, NEW YORK

The iconic Top of the Standard bar put the boom boom back in New York City nightlife when it opened in late 2009, and enjoyed an uncontested reign over velvet ropes around town... until now.

Welcome to Le Bain, the newest and most fabulous nightspot in the Meatpacking District’s The Standard, New York hotel. The name is an irreverent French kiss to the golden splendour of its 18th floor neighbour, the Boom Boom Room. But Le Bain itself is modern: black walls and black furniture surround a ‘pool’ (an oversized hot-tub beneath a glittering disco ball) while a vending machine dispenses bathing suits, in case you’re not up for going au naturel. Upstairs on the roof, synthetic grass and white wicker furniture offer a cheeky, kitsch contrast to the spectacular Manhattan views.

Today, the outlook is made yet more breathtaking by Padma Lakshmi, who approaches with a languid grace and a sweep of jet-black hair. “I love it up here,” she says. “But not just because it’s traditionally beautiful. The Boom Boom Room is where I meet friends if I want an elegant setting to sip some champagne and sit by the fire. Le Bain is edgier. The black walls and glass windows reveal the skeleton of the building. I’ve always had a proclivity for the industrial. I find it beautiful.” Padma is not alone—other fans of this watering hole include James Franco, Susan Sarandon, Chloë Sevigny and Waris Ahluwalia. Le Bain also caters to a refreshing mix of downtown hipsters and post-midnight revellers, drawn to the way Le Bain strips away pretension (you can order chips with your beer, or a Raspberry Collins with a few slices of fresh watermelon to beat the heat).

As we peer down at the toy-town pedestrians on the pavement below, Padma laughingly exclaims, “This place is so deliciously *Mad Men* meets *The Jetsons*!” All we see is the siren, the skyscrapers, and the endless city sky.

848 Washington Street (+1 212 645 4646; www.standardhotels.com)

NYC's top new nightlife spots

LAVO New York City

New from the team behind LAVO Las Vegas, this restaurant on 58th Street features a southern Italian bistro and state-of-the-art nightclub. Each element of the space—from the hand-carved wooden doors to the vintage light fixtures—converges to create a 'vibe dining' experience. (+1 212 750 5588; www.lavony.com)

Avenue

A new hospitality concept from nightlife gurus Noah Tepperberg and Jason Strauss, Avenue is located in Manhattan's trendy Chelsea neighbourhood. It is a 3,100sq ft, tri-level lounge with a full kitchen serving gourmet 'cocktail cuisine', speciality drinks and an extensive wine and champagne menu. (+1 212 337 0054; www.avenue-newyork.com)

The Ainsworth

Voted the No 1 sports bar in Manhattan by Zagat, this rustic glam Chelsea lounge has 40 flatscreen TVs, and a menu (miso duck spring rolls, bite-size waffle pancakes) that keeps winning no matter what team you bet on. Its cuisine is a fusion of classic American favourites with exotic herbs, spices and other ingredients. (+1 212 741 0645; www.ainsworthnyc.com)

The Darby

10ak and Butter's Scott Sartiano and Richie Akiva bring back the old-fashioned supper club with this latest addition to the Meatpacking District. Nightly live entertainment and a nostalgic nod to the Prohibition-era make The Darby the modern day *El Morocco* for the Mad Men enthusiast who enjoys dressing for dinner. (+1 212 242 4411; www.thedarbynyc.com)

The Private Roof Club and Garden

Imagine a European country club 16 floors above the ground, add a dash of urban design and a few art pieces by Andy Warhol and Damien Hirst, and you have yourself a space as exclusive as it gets. This bar can be as intimate as your personal living room or as boisterous as a London gentleman's club. (+1 212 920 3300; www.gramercyparkhotel.com)

Midtown Manhattan's glittering towers of glass and steel

PHOTOGRAPH: JON ARNOLD/AAA/CONRIS



THE PRIVATE ROOF GARDEN AT THE SURREY

The recently renovated The Surrey hotel, with its Private Roof Garden, is bringing sexy back to the Upper East Side. The garden is open only to guests and special invitees and is a chic alternative for anyone seeking a downtown vibe amidst uptown elegance.

It's no surprise, then, that The Surrey's Private Roof Garden is a favourite haunt of *Top Chef* host Padma Lakshmi. "Food, friends, a special place—they shouldn't be rushed," Padma muses as we find ourselves in the middle of what looks like an English summer garden.

It's the sort of place you can see yourself sipping a cocktail—a mix of Patrón, lime, soda and orange bitters called 76th Street is their signature drink—and enjoying a night with a few good friends. (Jennifer Lopez, Richard Branson and Vince Vaughn have all done so.) Passing the Bar Pleiades on our way to the roof, we took a quick peek in through the doors.

"A good rooftop bar always needs an enticing rain date venue," she grins. "I come here a lot. I live nearby and the food is just..." she closes her eyes, "it's so good." And no better place to enjoy it than on the rooftop.

20 East 76th Street (+1 212 288 3700; www.thesurrey.com)

For behind-the-scenes images from our shoot with Padma Lakshmi and an exclusive Q&A, www.cntraveller.in

For more information, see Directory on page xx

Padma Lakshmi at Plunge Rooftop Bar + Lounge at the Gansevoort Park Avenue NYC. Coat, dress, belt; all Hermès. Necklace, Padma. Make-up Kristofer Buckle at The Wall Group Hair Michael Duenas Assisted by Annabelle Harron Coordination Tia Paranjape