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GREAT PLACE TO MEET

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# Kwilu Bar, Kinshasa

By Katrina Manson



**Where:** Gombe

**WiFi:** Yes

**Plug sockets:** Yes

**Price of an espresso:** \$3

**Open:** Sun-Thurs, 5pm-2am; Fri -Sat, 5pm-4am

**Privacy points:** 1/5

Named after the sugar cane plantation that produces Kwilu Bar's trademark rum, this late-night haunt attracts a mixture of bankers, businessmen, music-makers, posers and charity workers.

The venue is the latest hotspot on the block in Gombe, the upscale neighbourhood of the metropolis of 12m people. It might not offer privacy, but then Kinshasa is a city whose inhabitants live to be seen and demand to be feted.

Trademark cocktails fall in line with this aspirational ethos: one rustled up by enthusiastic manager Brams is named "Boss des Boss" (boss of the bosses); black-windowed 4x4s line up outside. And just as Democratic Republic of Congo's capital bestrides an eclectic mix of mayhem, privilege and poverty, so too does Kwilu.

The open-air haunt is surrounded by the collapsing corrugated zinc roofs of shoddy buildings that make their home in the neighbourhood. Sugar cane and palms grow in the corners, shisha pipes are for hire and low lights nestle amid wood-decking speckled with the odd table and low-slung chair.

Less showy and less stiff than upmarket alternatives, choose your local liquor from cubbyholes illuminated in sultry red under a traditional straw-thatched bar and join in. It is busiest and loudest on a Friday night, but it's decent tête-à-tête territory during weekdays.

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