



From £750,000: Thirty Casson Square, Southbank Place. Ken Livingstone's old office is part of the marketing suite

This could be the perfect day out

A recipe for success: treat your family to the city's top sights this Easter while you enjoy the best show homes in London, says **David Spittles**

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THE slowdown in house prices means it will be a buyers' market this Easter. Developers, tempting us with an Easter parade of show homes, will be open to serious offers. With such a wide selection of schemes to view, why not combine hard-headed house hunting with a spot of sightseeing and retail therapy?

SOUTHWARK SHREK'S ADVENTURE AND THE LONDON EYE
With its "string of pearls" of riverside attractions, Southwark is a good place to start. Head for County Hall, where the office of former mayor Ken Livingstone is part of a marketing suite for **Thirty Casson Square** at the Southbank Place development, named after Sir Hugh Casson, the late director of architecture for the 1951 Festival of Britain. Prices from £750,000. This high-brow cultural quarter now includes family attractions such as Shrek's Adventure and the London Eye.

BOROUGH MARKET THE SHARD AND THE OLD VIC
Stroll past Tate Modern towards Borough Market to find a show home centre for three 323 schemes by developer Crest. These include **Valentine Place** – 42 flats and new houses near the Old Vic theatre, from £735,000, and **Snowfields Yard**, 26 flats in the shadow of The Shard, from £765,000.

THE CITY SHAKESPEAREAN HISTORY TOUR
Cross London Bridge into the City to visit **The Stage**, a 412 home development on land where Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Henry V were first performed. Archaeological remains of the original stage will be encased in glass as part of a new heritage centre that includes a 200-seat market amphitheatre. Show flats designed by award-winning Nicola Fontanelli have been created in refurbished railway arches on the 1.2-acre site. From £695,000.

FINSBURY PARK SAIL, CYCLE AND GET THE INTERIOR DESIGN VIBE
Builders are pushing the boundaries of design and architecture, some collaborating with luxury brands, others focusing on high street chains and specialist local shops to offer flats where first-time buyers can afford to "get the look". Furnishing store Heal's has designed Scandi style show homes at **Woodberry Down**, Finsbury Park, where new flats, from £465,000, overlook a reservoir with a busy sailing club and a nature trail. Call 020 8805 9598.



Live by the water: marvel at new-look Southwark riverside from the London Eye when you call in to see flats at Southbank Place luxury development



From £675,000: above and above right, homes at Keybridge Lofts, Vauxhall, the UK's tallest residential brick tower at 57 stories



From £695,000: The Stage in EC2, right, with 412 new homes and a heritage centre on the site where Romeo and Juliet was first performed



Worth a look – and at a price to suit you

Our selection of hot new offers, starting below £500k

PICK OF THE SHOW HOMES UNDER £500,000

St John's Way is a new 528-home neighbourhood opposite Clapham Junction train station where Peabody, the developer, is creating a new route through to Wandsworth Common. Art and architecture come together with relief sculptures depicting the history of the area embedded into the brick facades. Call 020 7758 8431.

UNDER £750,000

Islington Square, on the site of the former Royal Mail depot, is a new quarter for fashionable Upper Street. It has a grand double-arched entrance and listed Edwardian warehouses. A new shopping arcade and civic square are being created as well as 263 homes plus an acre of green rooftop space. Call 020 7723 9733.

UNDER £1 MILLION

Beach Sunridge Park in the Bromley suburbs by a leafy road running alongside a golf course leading to a listed Nash mansion. New homes are being built in the grounds of the 275-acre estate – flats, plus three-storey townhouses that have an open-plan kitchen and family room opening on to a rear garden, and a first-floor lounge with sun terrace. Call 020 8333 9163.

UNDER £1.5 MILLION

The Villas is a scheme of eight freehold houses at a former builder's yard off Harrow Road in north-west London. The bespoke entrance gates made of polished brass herald the high-quality architecture of handsome Danish brick frontages with floor-to-ceiling glass and designer interiors, in a landscaped courtyard. Aimed at design-conscious urbanites, the three-bedroom houses have underfloor and solar heating plus a clean-air ventilation system and a basement with an "engine room" that usefully doubles as a utility area.

Each house is called for CCTV and entertainment systems, and has a terrace and private parking. Call Arim Chase on 020 7724 4724.

UNDER £2 MILLION

190 Strand is the first purpose-built housing scheme in this part of central London for more than 100 years. GRD Architects took their cue from the many classical buildings that surround the site and came up with a facade of Portland Stone and – manual roofs with decorative metalwork filigree panels, tying in



From £610,000: apartments at former optical works Camden Courtyards, left, in St Pancras Way, close to Camden Town



Less than £1.5 million: The Villas, eight handsome houses off Harrow Road, north-west London

with the Beaux Arts and Victorian English Baroque buildings in Aldwych and Kingsway. A ground-floor colonnade with shops runs towards Temple Gardens next to the river. The apartments' interior design is inspired by the grand Savoy hotel nearby – bold and classic, with coffered ceilings, bespoke joinery and extravagant finishes of marble and polished nickel. As well as underground parking and a grand staffed entrance lobby, there are basement storage rooms – these are big, walk-in spaces – plus a package of amenities from spa to private cinema and virtual golf. Call 020 3051 0022.

INTERIOR DESIGN: A SIGN OF THE TIMES



From £725,000: Conran-designed apartments at Blake Tower, Barbican

DEVELOPERS are bringing in interior architects at an early stage to devise floor plan and storage solutions. One result is "Manhattan-style" homes, where you sleep straight into the main living space. Sprinkler systems cut the need for fire doors.

In high rise flats with floor-to-ceiling windows, such a floorplan accentuates the sense of space and light, and the views. See the impact at **Keybridge Lofts**, Vauxhall, the UK's tallest brick tower. From £475,000. Call 020 2205 4197.

At **Artisan**, Fitzrovia, developer Bukleize opts for a "mix-and-match" layout, using sliding walls and screens to provide flexible space. A curving oak-and-glass staircase is a standout feature. From £1 million. Call CBRE on 020 7420 3050.

Being interior is making way for comfort, using glass, stone, stainless steel, leather, laminates, wood and

concrete. At **Blake Tower**, Barbican, Conran-designed flats have a concrete feature wall and Sidley-style brass and terrazzo fittings and fixtures. Sliding "jockey" doors, ball cupboards and window bench seats in bedrooms make the most of space. Prices from £725,000. Call Retrofit on 020 3238 3718.

Other developers are taking inspiration from context and character of the location. At **Camden Courtyards**, a former optical works in St Pancras Way, 164 new homes are being built. Clad in patterned brick and with a striking rusty Corten steel two-storey roof extension, the architecture picks up on the site's industrial heritage.

The innovative S-shaped building allows for two tranquil internal courtyards and communal roof terraces. Prices from £610,000. Call Barratt on 0844 2250332.

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