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Bespoke home scents, listening rooms and filmic views... how luxury developers are offering multi-sensory living



The Chapel, The Berkeley Group's remarkable church conversion in Mill Hill

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The top tier of London's latest developments have become multi-sensory experiences. These are places that don't just look good; they also smell, feel and – in some cases – sound amazing too. Here's a look at some of the most memorable in 2017.

Sight

The views from many of the latest central London developments are often so show-stopping, they grab your gaze the moment you enter and never let it go. Sometimes you forget to even look at the flat's interiors at all.

The very best take in a roll call of London's best landmarks, such as the penthouses at Goodman's Fields in the City, where the final phase, Cassia House, launches this week, with one-beds from £1.04m.



Show apartment at Queen's Wharf, Fabrica & Mount Anvil

Famous bridges are always a sure bet for filmic views too, including the £2.5m show flat at Queen's Wharf, where Hammersmith Bridge looks close enough to touch. Combining all of that are The Corniche (prices start at £3.6m) and The Dumont (prices from £665,000), two St James developments on Albert Embankment, which have Big Ben as their local timepiece and river vistas that span a succession of bridges.

In the new 31-storey Dollar Bay, it's hard to know whether to fixate on Daniel Hopwood's decadent interiors or the vistas of London at night as you bubble away in the Jacuzzi in the quadruple penthouse. Its name may sound like it's straight out of Miami, but this is South Dock (in Canary Wharf), not South Beach, and there are numerous money shots for the multi-millionaire who buys this £3.2m bachelor pad.

None, however, quite beats the scenes from the double-height, glass-walled room that is devoted to the Jacuzzi. It's set up some steps just off the dining area – perfect for when dinner parties get either dull or fruity.

If anything can distract from what lies outside, it's the lighting installations in top end properties. In the £21m triplex apartment at Kingwood in Knightsbridge's Hans Place, a vast, shimmering modern chandelier cascades down the property's three storeys.



Skyline view from Goodman's Fields in the City

Similarly unforgettable in the £7m penthouse at The Hempel Collection - British Land's reworking of Anoushka Hempel's legendary 1990s hotel in Bayswater - is a £30,000 light sculpture called Flight by Haberdashery. Illuminated from above, its 500 individually-hung bone china leaves give the impression of a migrating flock of birds - and can be best appreciated from the mezzanine level that doubles up as a gallery space in these lateral apartments.

In one of the penthouses at Neo Bankside, next to the Tate Modern, lighting designer Sharon Marston has ensured that it doesn't matter what the owners dish up because every guest's gaze will similarly be pinned to the ceiling, where Marston has suspended hundreds of red leaves on fibre-optic strands in a one-off coral and silver chandelier above the dining table.



Sharon Marsden chandelier at Neo Bankside

Smell

We spend more on candles than anywhere else in Europe – and smell has become a major selling point in new schemes, with many developers commissioning bespoke scents for residents.

Among them are Buxmead in Hampstead, where remaining apartments cost £6.9m-£15m. The communal areas are infused with bespoke scents by Alexandra Soveral, including a particularly seductive patchouli and aged Vetiver in the screening room.

Alternatively, you could get yourself a super-sized bottle of Culti Milano (£550 at Harrods), the Italian brand that invented the reed diffuser. Mighty 4,300ml bottles – that’s the equivalent of six bottles of wine – infuse the gargantuan spaces (think 90ft long living room and 45ft high ceilings) at The Chapel, The Berkeley Group’s remarkable church conversion in Mill Hill, on sale fully-furnished and dressed by Alexander James Interiors for £6m.



The Chapel, The Berkeley's Group's church development

Sound

It's surely only a matter of time before developers start commissioning soundtracks for their properties in the way they do bespoke scents. Until then, it's left to the luxury brands to provide aural temptation.

The £11.995m penthouse – now sold – at Chelsea Island comes with Bang & Olufsen BeoLab 90 Ultimate Loudspeakers, which start at around £67,000. Merlin Dormer of Heaton & Partners buying agency, who has seen a number of new homes with this latest B&O bling, describes it as “the most amazing piece of sound engineering” he has ever seen.

Real music purists (or simply billionaires in search of another trophy room) are building their own acoustic sanctuaries in the form of “listening rooms”. In one £80m London mansion, the technology looks surprisingly mid-century, but the specially-made speakers alone cost £1m.

Otherwise, if you want to evoke a sense of luxury through sound, get yourself a Steinway. And if – like many of the wealthy sorts who buy Steinways, you can't actually play the piano – get yourself a self-playing one, controllable by iPad.

In a new £23m development in St John's Wood, Iggi Interior Design have used a Lalique Steinway Heliconia Spirio (£186,000) as the centrepiece.



The white Lalique Steinway in St John's Wood apartment by Iggi Interior Design CREDIT: ALEXANDER JAMES

Sometimes, though, nothing can beat the sound of silence - as any parent knows. So does the odd developer. At Holland Park Villas in Kensington, where apartments cost from £2m-£16m, they've recruited a crèche company to keep the kids entertained with films and craft sessions on Saturday morning, while Circus West at Battersea Power Station has a weekend swimming club for kids and Lillie Square in Earls Court includes a children's TV/play room as part of its clubhouse. All so that the adults get to sleep, work out or drink in peace.

Touch

Luxury properties have become truly tactile experiences these days – one that goes far beyond the artily-ruffled throws on the bed to entire rooms whose every feature calls out to be stroked.

The ultimate tactile property this year was probably The Brummell penthouse at Beau House in Jermyn Street, a three-storey apartment with bespoke interiors by Oliver Burns. Now sold, it was on the market for offers in excess of £15m. The inspiration comes from Beau Brummell, the Victorian arbiter of gentlemen's fashion, and from the street's tailoring heritage – and great as it looked, it also demanded to be touched, from the silky bedroom walls, exquisitely handcrafted joinery, sumptuous rugs to the Aiveen Daly dining chairs, high-gloss tables, leather-lined display cabinets and the backlit onyx bar on the rooftop terrace.

Taste

Edible interiors are possibly a little way off, but taste as a suggestion of the lifestyle you could enjoy is catered to in abundance in posh properties.

There are all the appropriate props – the bottle of Moët by the bath, a gin bar on the terrace, the must-have cookbooks in the kitchen and niche bottles of olive oil.



The pantry in a show flat at The Nova Building in Victoria which has been designed with Britishness as its theme

The £3.7m show flat at The Nova Building in Victoria, has been designed by Amos & Amos with “Britishness” as its theme, including one room dedicated to a trendy, modern pantry, stocked entirely with products from the cool, new purveyors at Nova Food. From here, you can watch the shenanigans of the rich and famous in the gardens of The Goring hotel across the road.

At Lillie Square in Earl’s Court, buy a flat from £775,000 and you get discounts in London’s only Michelin-starred pub, The Harwood Arms, just down the road.

And at The Chilterns in Marylebone, where just one £5.4m apartment remains, you can eye up your neighbour’s wine collection in the basement bodega – where residents can buy storage space for 336 bottles for £25,000. Reassuringly, among all the boxes of premier cru Puligny-Montagny pushed to the front, there was sign of refreshing disregard for wine snobbery – a bottle of £10 Marks & Spencer prosecco.