



You don't have to leave London for relaxing water views, but riverside homes come with one catch

A lake, loch or estuary view can add over 70 per cent to the asking price - and these are the best properties on the market now

By Zoe Dare Hall
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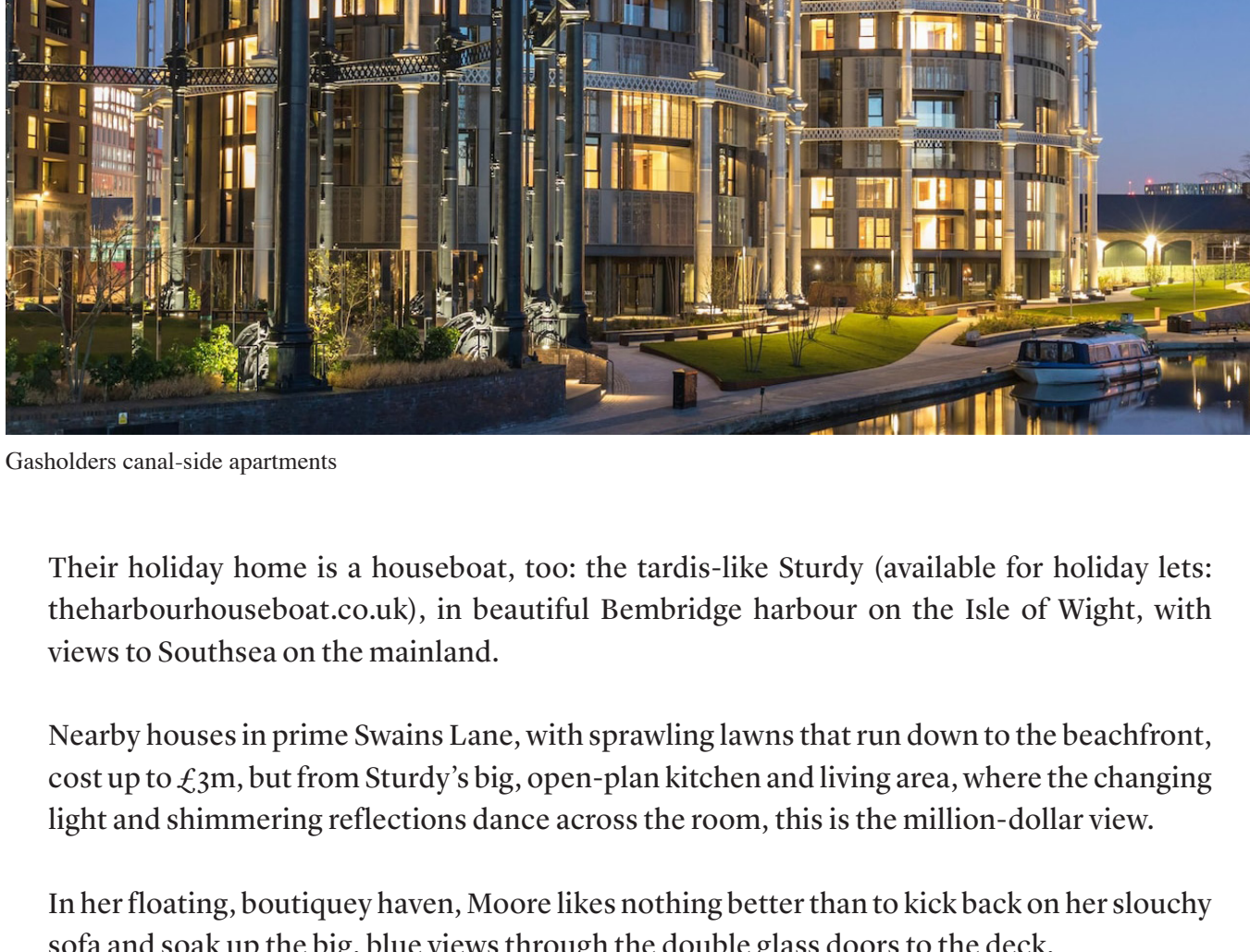
We've all been longing for greenery in lockdown, but bluary is what we're really willing to pay through the nose for. Waterfront properties in the UK now command a 49 per cent premium on average, according to Knight Frank.

A lake, loch or estuary view tops the league, adding 70-to-72 per cent to the asking price. Coastal and harbour views notch up 62 per cent and 60 per cent premiums, and an inland river view will bump up the asking price by 20 per cent.

It's all to do with the irresistible, cathartic pull of "blue space" – those big water views that are simply good for the soul. They make us feel more peaceful, relaxed and sociable, and – if you're the sort to hop on a paddleboard or willingly swim in cold water – they can make us fitter too. Plus a waterfront home comes with the comfort that it's unlikely that anyone will build in front of you and ruin your outlook.

"I've just got a new canoe that I take around the island, chatting to neighbours as they have drinks on their terraces," says Georgina Moore, a publishing director who's rarely without a water view.

Home is Tagg's Island on the Thames, where she, her husband and two children, age 11 and 10, live on a spacious houseboat (definitely more house than boat; it doesn't go anywhere) with paddle boards and kayaks on their bedroom balconies, ready to take to the water at any moment.



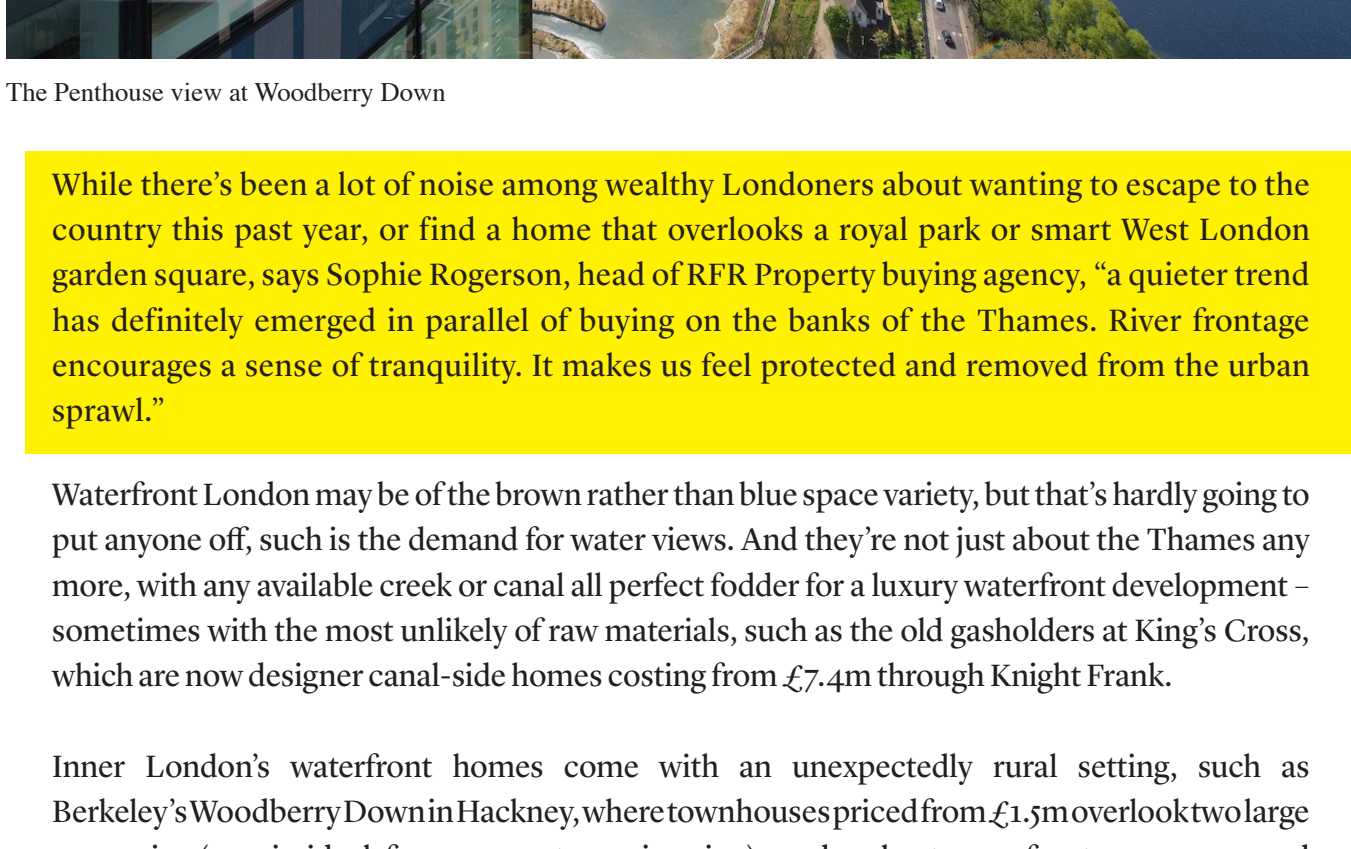
Gasholders canal-side apartments

Their holiday home is a houseboat, too: the tardis-like Sturdy (available for holiday lets: theharbourhouseboat.co.uk), in beautiful Bembridge harbour on the Isle of Wight, with views to Southsea on the mainland.

Nearby houses in prime Swains Lane, with sprawling lawns that run down to the beachfront, cost up to £3m, but from Sturdy's big, open-plan kitchen and living area, where the changing light and shimmering reflections dance across the room, this is the million-dollar view.

In her floating, boutiquey haven, Moore likes nothing better than to kick back on her slouchy sofa and soak up the big, blue views through the double glass doors to the deck.

"Sometimes I get up at 6am to work while I watch the sun rise and the activity begin on the harbour – the jet skis, the fishing boats, and people walking their dogs along the beach," says Moore. "There's a great feeling of privacy and space. The view and skies are ever-changing throughout the day and year."

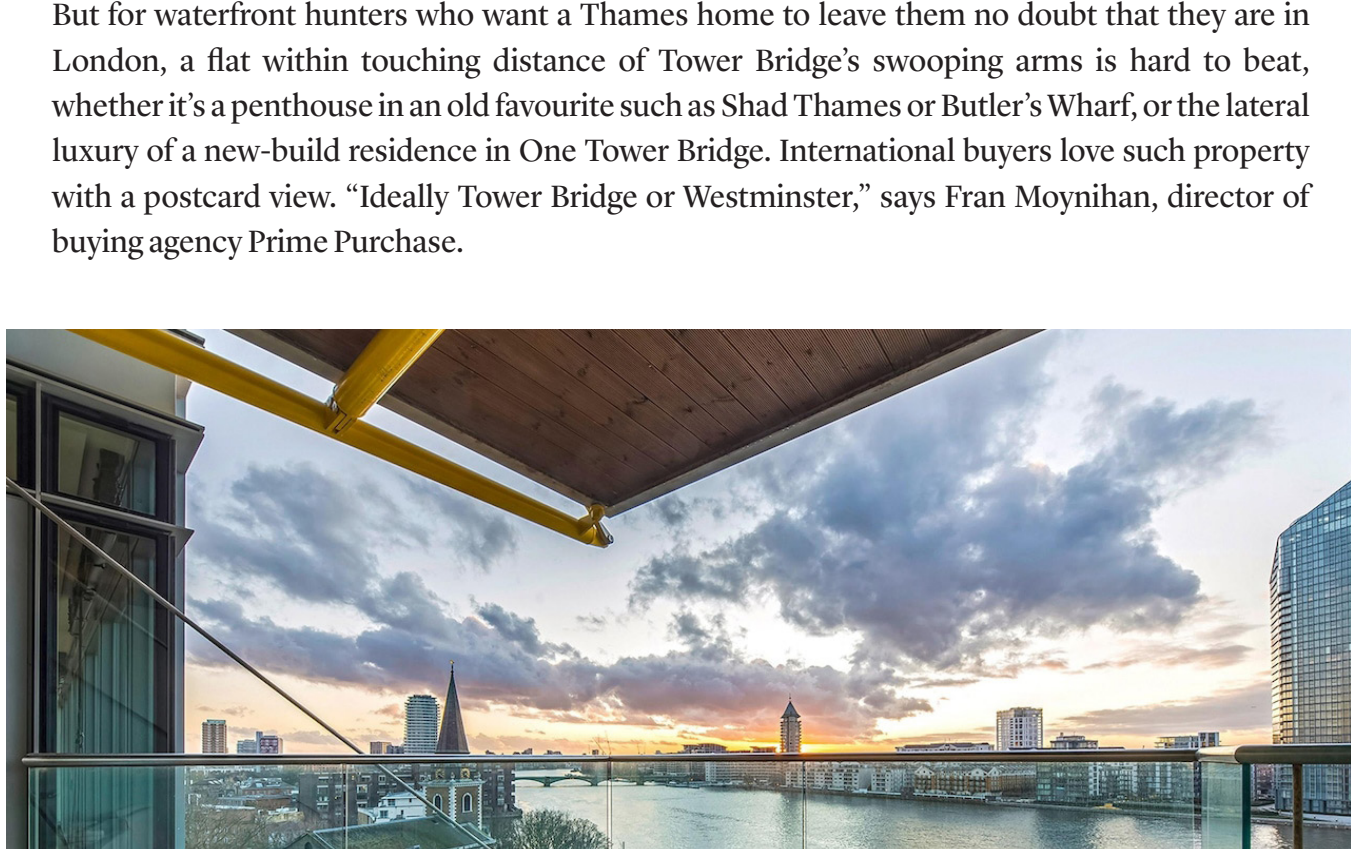


The Penthouse view at Woodberry Down

While there's been a lot of noise among wealthy Londoners about wanting to escape to the country this past year, or find a home that overlooks a royal park or smart West London garden square, says Sophie Rogerson, head of RFR Property buying agency, "a quieter trend has definitely emerged in parallel of buying on the banks of the Thames. River frontage encourages a sense of tranquility. It makes us feel protected and removed from the urban sprawl."

Waterfront London may be of the brown rather than blue space variety, but that's hardly going to put anyone off, such is the demand for water views. And they're not just about the Thames any more, with any available creek or canal all perfect fodder for a luxury waterfront development – sometimes with the most unlikely of raw materials, such as the old gasholders at King's Cross, which are now designer canal-side homes costing from £7.4m through Knight Frank.

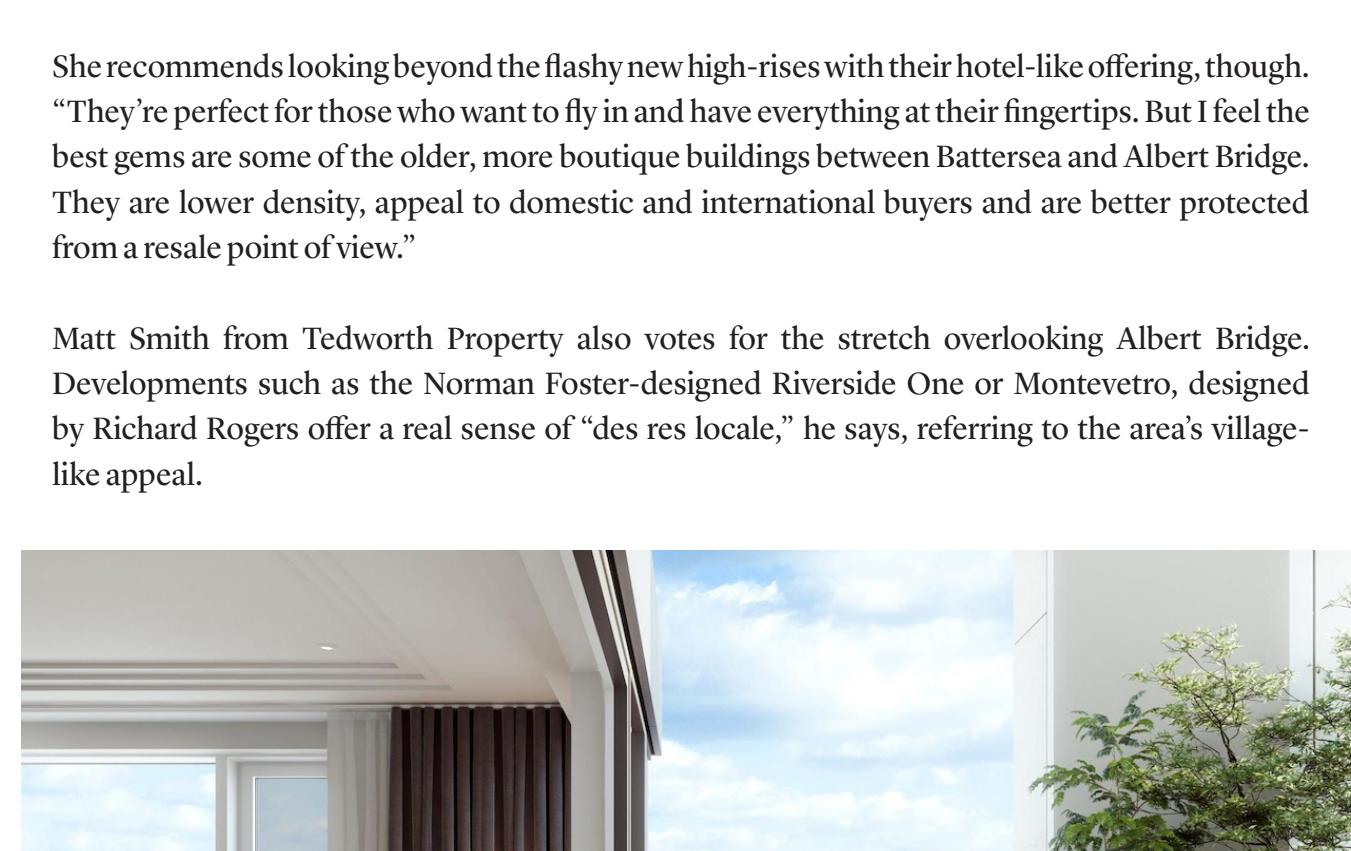
Inner London's waterfront homes come with an unexpectedly rural setting, such as Berkeley's Woodberry Down in Hackney, where townhouses priced from £1.5m overlook two large reservoirs (one is ideal for open-water swimming), and 11 hectares of nature reserve and wetlands.



The view from a two-bed flat in Butler's Wharf, £2.35m through Cluttons

For those who like their Thames-side home to feel rural, it has to be Richmond, where there's a new opportunity to dip a toe in the water – at the end of your lawn - at Richmond Riverside. The development's two five-bedroom houses cost from £4.75m and each comes with private river access and a boat mooring.

But for waterfront hunters who want a Thames home to leave them no doubt that they are in London, a flat within touching distance of Tower Bridge's swooping arms is hard to beat, whether it's a penthouse in an old favourite such as Shad Thames or Butler's Wharf, or the lateral luxury of a new-build residence in One Tower Bridge. International buyers love such property with a postcard view. "Ideally Tower Bridge or Westminster," says Fran Moynihan, director of buying agency Prime Purchase.



Montevetro properties in Battersea

Domestic buyers, she says, prefer Albert Bridge, "close to Battersea Park and Chelsea," and families love the Chiswick Mall stretch of the river, "taking in Hammersmith Bridge, with plenty of wildlife and Thames-side walks." She adds that a north-bank spot looking south is best for the light. "But often the view from the south side looking north is prettier. Living south also means you tend to get more value," says Moynihan.

She recommends looking beyond the flashy new high-rises with their hotel-like offering, though. "They're perfect for those who want to fly in and have everything at their fingertips. But I feel the best gems are some of the older, more boutique buildings between Battersea and Albert Bridge. They are lower density, appeal to domestic and international buyers and are better protected from a resale point of view."

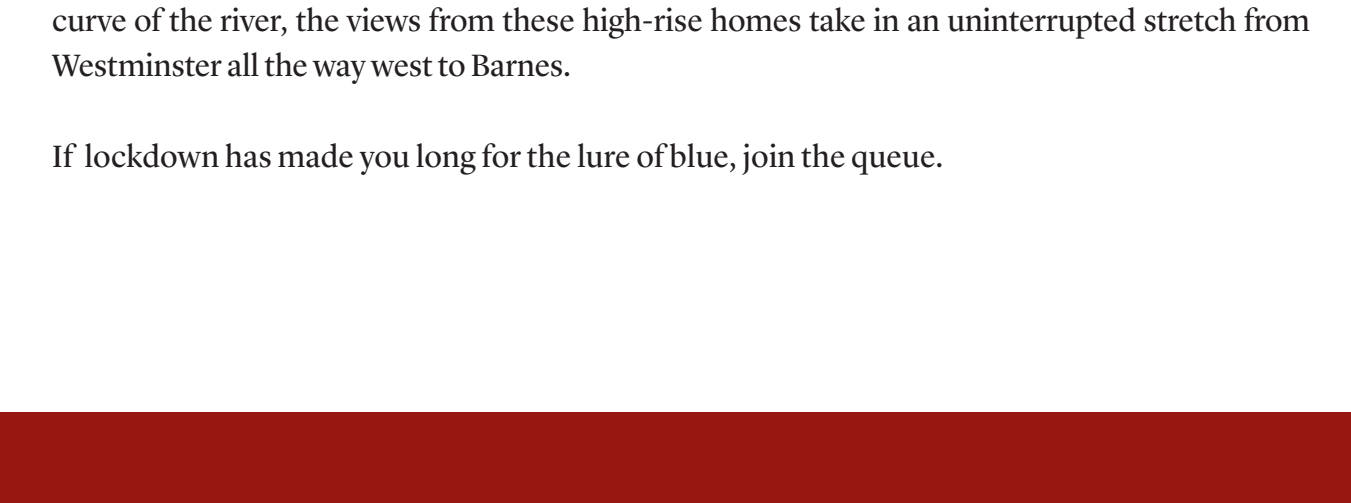
Matt Smith from Tedworth Property also votes for the stretch overlooking Albert Bridge. Developments such as the Norman Foster-designed Riverside One or Montevetro, designed by Richard Rogers offer a real sense of "des res locale," he says, referring to the area's village-like appeal.



The Penthouse terrace at Chelsea Creek

It's across the river in Chelsea, though, that a whole new area of prime waterfront property is emerging. At Chelsea Creek, developer St George has created London's first new man-made canal in 100 years, along with 1,239 new homes on the water. The development will also open up new waterside cycleways, pathways, a piazza and twice-weekly food market.

Properties at Chelsea Creek cost from £750,000-£4.9m and they're attracting a young audience. "Nearly 50 per cent of buyers in this part of the Chelsea/Fulham border are in their 20s or 30s and looking to upsize," says Tom Hawkins, partner at Knight Frank. "The pandemic has brought into focus the importance not just of outside space, but also proximity to water. The views and feeling of calm within the city is of paramount importance to our buyers."



The view from Chelsea Waterfront

And in nearby Chelsea Waterfront, a previously inaccessible part of the Thames has been reimagined by architect Sir Terry Farrell, to include a 100m-long mall in the converted, historic Lots Road power station and three new bridges across Chelsea Creek, with water gardens designed by Randle Siddeley Associates.

The best views come from the 37-storey Tower West, thinks Christopher Jones, partner at Knight Frank, which is marketing the apartments from £1.4m for two bedrooms. Set on a sweeping curve of the river, the views from these high-rise homes take in an uninterrupted stretch from Westminster all the way west to Barnes.

If lockdown has made you long for the lure of blue, join the queue.