

HOMEFRONT



Life on a riverboat increasingly appeals to people trying to find an alternative to the mainstream flats and houses of the London property market, says Jenny Knight

Who wouldn't love to live on the river, listening to the gentle lapping water, enjoying the camaraderie of fellow boaters and the fresh air?

Even better you can buy a boat for under £100,000 and there is no Stamp Duty to be paid.

London waterways have seen a 50 per cent increase in boat numbers over the past five years. Yet it is not all good news. Without permanent moorings a houseboat has to be moved every two weeks and although some boats look like a bargain compared with sky-high property prices, buyers usually need to pay cash.

Matthew Smith of Knight Frank Riverside, who is currently selling the crème de la crème of houseboats, the three to four bedroom II Nauti Buys, priced at £1,950,000 and moored at Riverside Quarter, says: "It is like a boutique hotel with the fun of living on the water."

"We don't sell many houseboats, only the best in class ones. Half

the value of a boat may be in the mooring because there are not so many in London. Most of the houseboats I have sold have been to people with a house outside London who use the houseboat as a pied a terre, or people who have done well out of property and buy one to enjoy as a folly. Living on the water and enjoying the community is something different, something fun."

While boats can be found for as little as £100,000 more spacious and luxurious models cost from upwards of £500,000.

For those who get a British Waterways licence and who have jobs where they don't have to be in the same office every day, a boat offers an enjoyable

roving life living for short periods in London's most exclusive areas – like the Regent's Canal – for a fraction of the cost of buying a flat in that location.

Although other costs include insurance, yearly maintenance, temporary mooring fees, drinking water and fuel.

"It is like a boutique hotel with the fun of living on the water"

Matthew Smith, Knight Frank Riverside



Built on Tudor foundations in 1699, Old Battersea House was originally surrounded by lavender fields and watercress beds sloping down to the Thames. It's one of London's grandest mansions. Until recently it was owned by Russian oligarch Sergei Pugachev, (known as Putin's banker).

The 10-bedroom, seven-bathroom, Grade II* listed property was best known as the London base of the super-rich Forbes family from 1971 to 2011. The house soon became a great attraction with lavish parties held for royalty and political heavyweights such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as well as for Hollywood stars such as Elizabeth Taylor. (She spent her honeymoon here with husband number 7 Larry Fortensky.)

The house is on the market for £12m.

Savills Battersea Park 020 3402 1900



GUIDE PRICE £2,750,000

Built by the current owners to very high specifications in 1965, Coombe Edge, situated in an overall plot size of approximately 0.35 acres is set within beautiful, tranquil surroundings around a privately owned lake in the heart of the exclusive Coombe Estate. Spacious formal reception rooms open onto the Spanish style arched covered terrace overlooking the large private south facing rear garden. Large Master bedroom, dressing room and en suite bathroom and four further bedrooms and two bathrooms to the first floor.

The Drive, Coombe Edge, Kingston-upon-Thames Coombe Residential 020 8947 9393

PRIME PROPERTY



THE WORD

Patrick Rampton, Director Rampton Baseley, takes a cold, hard look at today's market

We've just seen a superb early Spring market in Clapham and Wandsworth running through from the Feb half term to the Easter Hols. We just couldn't get enough quality mid-market family homes to sell.

We reckon that so much of last year's business didn't happen because of Brexit – in the first six months all but the brave were too nervous to do anything – then when we got "the wrong result" and everyone threw their hands in the air and fled for the hills (of Tuscany, Provence and Salcombe).

By the time they'd come back for the new school term in September things were still jittery with more houses for sale in Clapham and Wandsworth than I've ever seen.

The market needed to settle.

And settle it did over the Autumn and Winter. And by the new year if you priced something 7-10% less than you might have in the Autumn, and if it was a "best in show" house, you'd sell it.

The buyers started to come back. They started sniffing around again. They thought: "Sod this! Uncertainty is the new certainty, we get that now. But our lives must go on; we've put them on hold for long enough now. We've had the kid/got into the school/signed the divorce papers/got married/buried Aunt Ethel, and we need to move. The country's leaving Europe and there ain't sh#t we can do about it. So let's crack on and find a house!"

So, almost a year's pent up demand hit the market in mid-Feb and, like a swarm of greedy locusts, they devoured all the juiciest buds. Loads of sealed bids, lots of quality cash-rich buyers and even the return of gazumping! (remember that?).

However, the locusts are a property-savvy bunch and all the over-priced, mid-table, mediocrity stayed put (and is still put), and all the good and/or sensibly priced houses sold.

Wahey! We thought as we surfed this foaming wave of activity into the much

needed calms of the Easter hols, the good times are back! We knew it would be brief (because Brexit and it's negotiation ain't going to be fun or pretty), we just didn't realise quite how brief.

What seemed like endless, sunny Easter hols segued into (yet) another Spring Bank Holiday weekend, (which is always pretty grisly for us agents), and what do they go and do slap bang in the middle this finest Spring market I've seen since 2014? Call a general election.

They then start a full on Toddler Squabble with Brussels about the impending divorce and it's mechanics...

In my experience, elections ALWAYS cause anxiety and hesitancy no matter how supposedly certain the outcome, and you mix in with that a dawning realisation that Brexit is going

"In my experience, elections always cause anxiety and hesitancy..."

Patrick Rampton

to be protracted, unpleasant and messy, and you get quite a difficult market.

Surely if the past few years have taught us anything whatsoever, it is that we just don't know what we just don't know. No one really knows diddly about what's coming. And that includes all the "experts".

So, as an expert, my advice would be if you want to sell now, be totally sensible with price and really do scrub it up jolly well indeed. Oh and use an agent that truly knows what he's doing (that would be us then).

OUT OF TOWN BUY...



Guide Price £550,000

Apple Tree Cottage, in Grafton Underwood, Northamptonshire is a quite exceptional detached stone residence set in manicured lawns and landscaped gardens. It enjoys picturesque views of the village and stream, as well as adjoining open countryside. The interior is characterful with a high-specification. The bespoke kitchen flows into the formal dining/family room creating an impressive entertaining space. Upstairs, the palatial landing leads to four generous bedrooms.

Henderson Connellan 01536 417888

Milkwood Bar and Restaurant

214-216 Railton Rd, Herne Hill, London SE24 0JT
www.milkwoodhernehill.co.uk

Where? Located right opposite Herne Hill BR Station in Railton Road, a great people watching location.

What's it's like? A really friendly place, with a cinema which seats about 20 people in the basement and shows daily modern and classic films. At just £5 a month for you and a guest, it's a great deal.

And the food? The food is simple and classic. Try their cheeseburger – absolutely lovely. The menu is varied, offering the likes of corn-fed chicken and really yummy sea bass, avocado, chorizo and purple potato aioli. The bar area is nice and friendly as well and there is no pressure on time. You can stay for a drink and a chat or enjoy a really good leisurely meal.

BEST BITES



Wendy Peterman
Petermans