

Home offices, 24-hour gyms and at-home massages: 'life hacks' take off in the luxury property market



Leisure Lounge at Canaletto

By Zoe Dare Hall
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It's a mid-week evening at Canaletto, new residential towers changing the face and fortunes of Silicon Roundabout (fka Old Street), and City types, wealthy hipsters and downsizers who have swapped suburban mansions for urban pads, are visibly enjoying the marvels of life in a building that offers everything on tap.

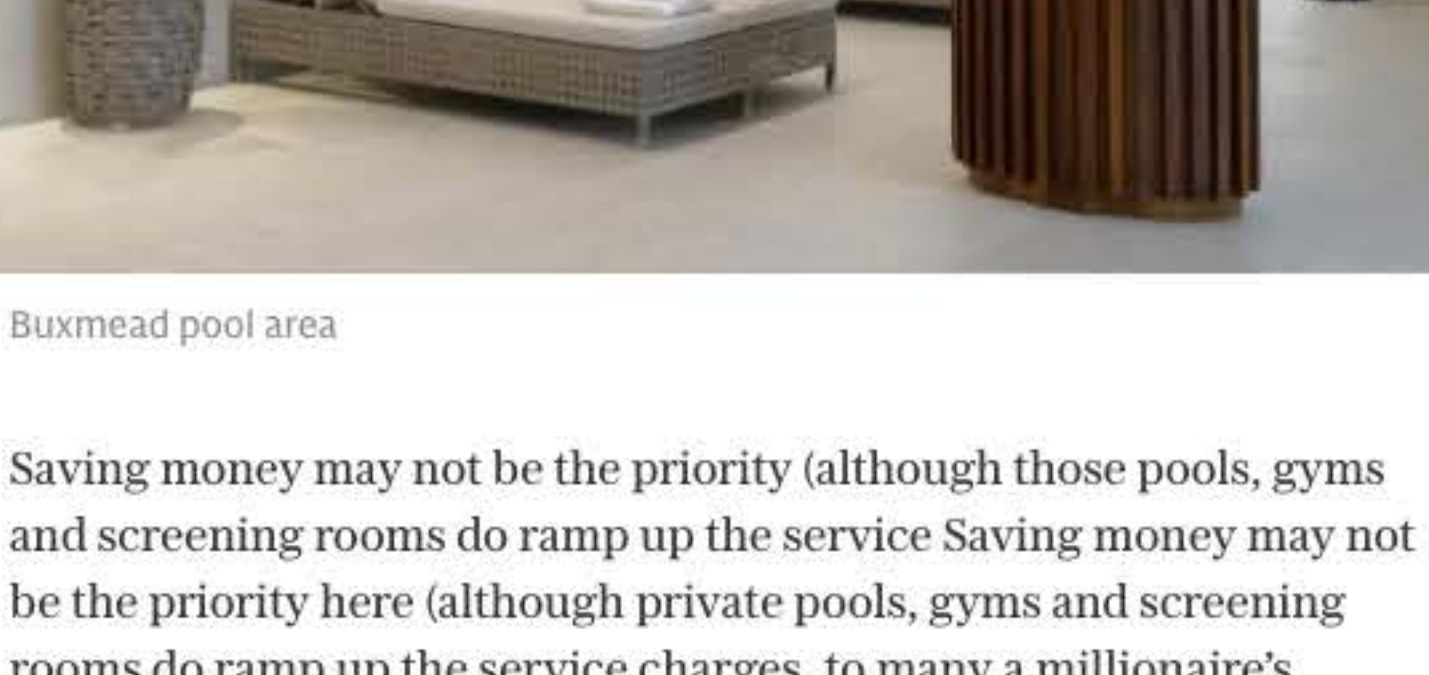
The bar is buzzing, one lady is leisurely gliding through the basement pool and a small party is heading to the screening room. There are also treatment rooms and a residents' lounge with a full size snooker table. An ever-increasing array of bars, restaurants and gyms are springing up all around Canaletto on City Road – but why bother, when you have it all at home?



Games room at Canaletto

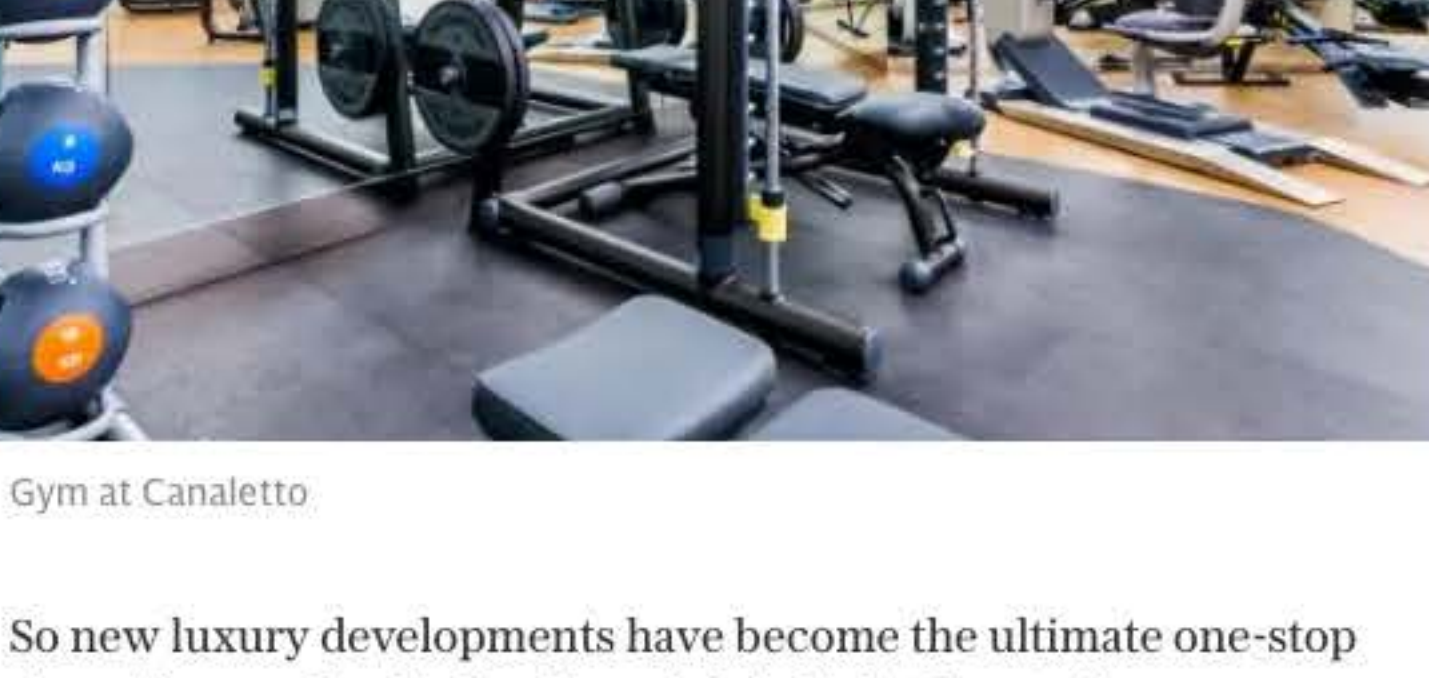
In this era of life hacks – a concept that began as IT speak a decade ago but has now infiltrated all areas, referring to tips and tricks for saving time/money and making life easier - London's high-end new developments are going far beyond simply offering concierge services to life hack at a luxury level.

"It's all about effortless living – the lock up and leave lifestyle that removes the fuss from every day life," says Anil Varma from Harrison Varma, top-end developers who go to extraordinary lengths at Buxmead in Hampstead to simplify and pre-empt every detail of the lives of their wealthy buyers.



Buxmead pool area

Saving money may not be the priority (although those pools, gyms and screening rooms do ramp up the service charges, to many a millionaire's disgruntlement), but saving time is imperative. If you're working 18-hour days in the City before stumbling back to your Aldgate pad, or frequently flying around the world between multiple homes, there aren't enough hours in the day to work out the vagaries of public transport or supermarket opening hours, let alone find a gym that's open all night.



Gym at Canaletto

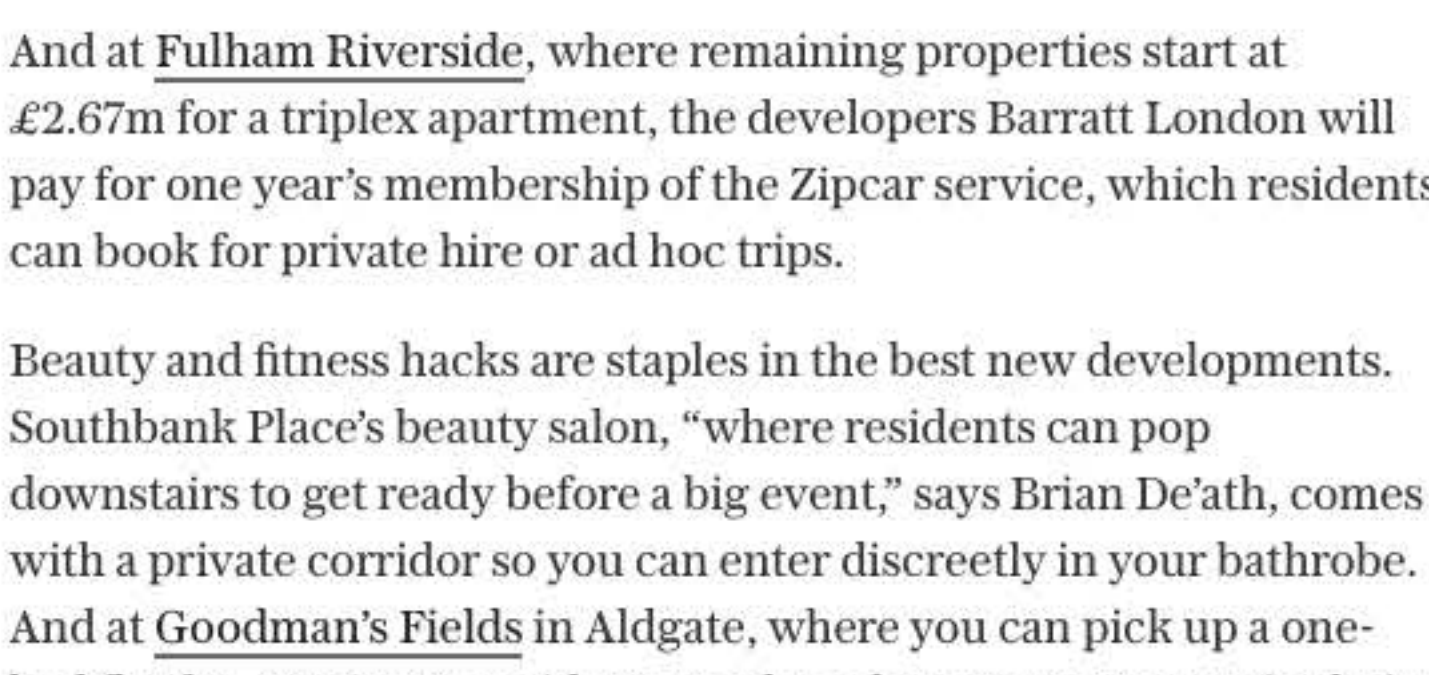
So new luxury developments have become the ultimate one-stop shops for people who live by a global clock. Nine to five means nothing; if you're in London doing business with LA, then a 10pm phone call is nothing unusual, followed by a late night swim – all within metres of your living room. That's on offer at Kingwood in Knightsbridge, where properties start at £21m and the underground gym offers round-the-clock personal training and treatments.

"High net worth individuals are life hack reliant," comments Selena Quick of the property consultancy PAD. "We're a switched-on culture and it has become the norm for an exec to finish in the office at 3pm, pick up the children from school, entertain in the evening, return to talk to another territory and attend to the gym at 5am."

Transport links are a big one for luxury London developments. Many – including Centre Point in Tottenham Court Road, where one-bed flats start at £1.9m – make a big play of their proximity to a Crossrail station, which will whiz residents to Heathrow in half an hour or so.

Southbank Place, where apartments start at £1.05m, has an alternative transport hack; it comes with a direct entrance into Waterloo station. "Our buyers will have everything at their fingertips, which is an incredible selling point in an age where time is everything," comments Brian De'ath, head of sales for Southbank Place.

Hampstead Manor, will offer a town car service to ferry residents to and from the two local tube stations - a big hit with buyers so far, says its developer Mount Anvil's sales director, Jon Hall. "Many of our residents are frequent taxi users, so we are offering convenience and efficiency with a touch of luxury, and a viable alternative to Uber."



Neroli House at Goodman's Fields, Berkeley Homes

And at Fulham Riverside, where remaining properties start at £2.67m for a triplex apartment, the developers Barratt London will pay for one year's membership of the Zipcar service, which residents can book for private hire or ad hoc trips.

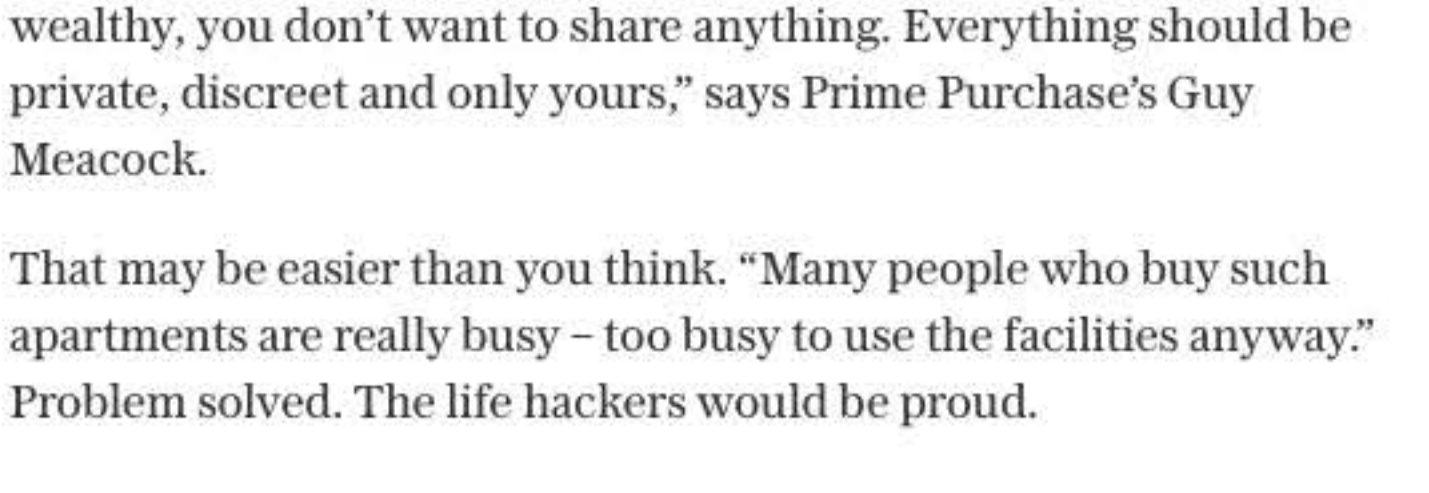
Beauty and fitness hacks are staples in the best new developments. Southbank Place's beauty salon, "where residents can pop downstairs to get ready before a big event," says Brian De'ath, comes with a private corridor so you can enter discreetly in your bathrobe. And at Goodman's Fields in Aldgate, where you can pick up a one-bed flat for £965,000, residents can have beauty treatments in their own apartment.

In-house exercise options these days also rival most fitness centres. Top-of-the-range gyms are to be expected, but panoramic yoga terraces are a new thing, including those at One Crown Place near Liverpool Street and Queen's Wharf in Hammersmith .



Kingwood in Knightsbridge

Working from home is something that can be done with exquisite ease and style too. Take your pick of home offices with views to ruin your deadlines, including at One Blackfriars, where many apartments – priced from £1.15m to £23m – come with a home office where you can gaze over your laptop at the Houses of Parliament and St Paul's Cathedral. There's also a huge, high tech business lounge on the tower's 32nd floor, with similarly distracting views, and you can carry on networking over a game of golf (simulated) or a wine tasting, all without leaving the building.



The executive lounge on the 32nd floor at One Blackfriars

Sometimes, however, even residents-only facilities aren't exclusive enough. "Take Chelsea Barracks, where a 3,000 sq ft spa is being created which will be available to all of the flats. If you are really wealthy, you don't want to share anything. Everything should be private, discreet and only yours," says Prime Purchase's Guy Meacock.

That may be easier than you think. "Many people who buy such apartments are really busy – too busy to use the facilities anyway." Problem solved. The life hackers would be proud.