

RISING TO THE TOP

BY RICHARD WARREN

*Property is all about location,
location, location—but it's also about
elevation, elevation, elevation*

As more and more people want to live in city centres in sprawling metropolises, the world is experiencing a skyscraper-building boom. Among these new residential towers, the penthouse is the most sought-after type of apartment.

Often designed by top international style leaders such as Tara Bernerd, penthouses embody the heights of luxury living. They have the best views, the most privacy and the most natural light. Traditionally the largest apartments in the building, they're becoming bigger and more luxurious. Usually the last apartments to be offered for sale at a new development—when construction is completed so a buyer can see, feel and touch these homes first-hand—they generally command the highest prices.

In the newest penthouses, sophisticated, modern building techniques mean you can have large and open-plan living spaces. And, unless you decide to splash out on a duplex or triplex, they have no stairs—lateral living has become an overriding aspiration for homebuyers in luxury housing markets the world over. In modern-day apartment schemes, penthouse owners usually benefit from communal facilities such as spas, swimming pools, fitness centres and restaurants.

Just as The Drifters sang in their 1968 hit *Up on the Roof*, the top of the building is the place to go when you want to leave your cares behind. Metaphorically and literally above the madding crowd milling about in the streets below, you can gaze out of floor-to-ceiling windows across the rooftops to the wide blue yonder in awe at the magnificence of it all—and your own good fortune.



165 CHARLES STREET, NEW YORK

Tall, slender, silvery towers are being slotted in between century-old stone edifices in Manhattan, as New York's most salubrious borough undergoes an urban renaissance. Arguably the penthouse that has set the standard for others being built today is the Richard Meier-designed four-bedroom duplex atop 165 Charles Street. This West Village skyscraper won the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects' Housing Design Award in 2005. On the market for the first time since its construction, the 4,500-square-foot penthouse is distinguished by its great room, which is made to feel more spacious by seven-metre-high ceilings and light coming in through floor-to-ceiling windows, while its French doors open out onto an 1,800-square-foot roof terrace with extensive views of the city and the Hudson River below. A frosted staircase leads to the skylight-lit second floor. Christie's International Real Estate is marketing the home for US\$40 million.



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From top: This 4,500sqft Manhattan penthouse boasts a great room with seven-metre-high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows; the 1,800sqft roof terrace; a light-filled bedroom has extensive views of the city



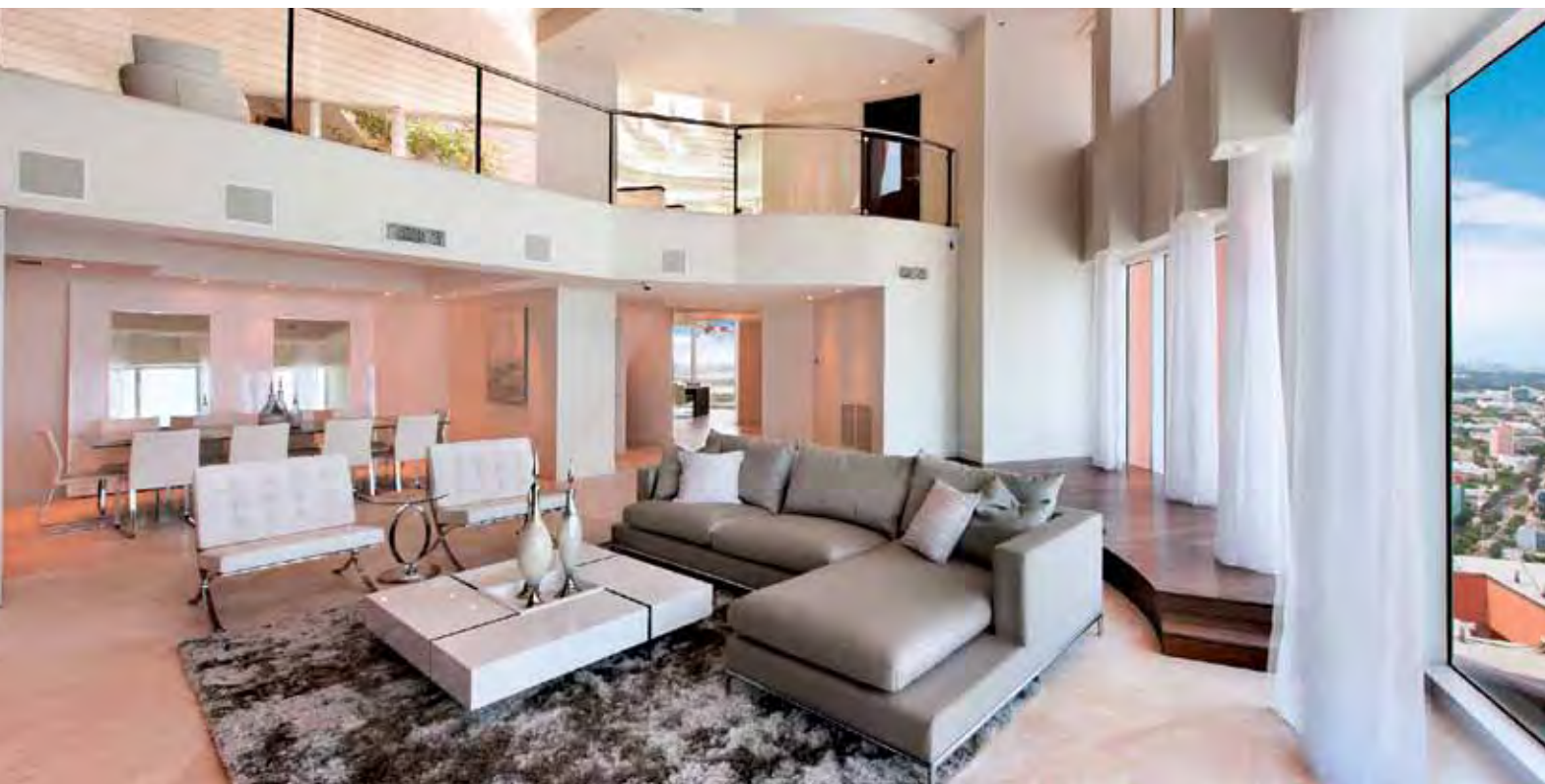
BÉZIER, LONDON

More than 200 new residential skyscrapers will punctuate London's skyline before the end of this decade as the city embraces vertical living. An appreciation for the advantages of apartments among the many Asian, North American and European homebuyers arriving in the British capital has caught on with Londoners, who have traditionally favoured houses. Result: some stunning new high-rises topped by prized penthouses are appearing in the city centre.

Penthouse 127, a three-bedroom duplex that sits atop the 47-metre-high Bézier tower in Shoreditch, central London, provides the occupant with 360-degree views of surrounding districts from its 1,370-square-foot wrap-around roof terrace. On sale for £4.75 million through developer Tudorvale Properties, the bespoke furnished home has 2,640 square feet of living space. Fittingly for an apartment located in the heart of London's Tech City, Europe's biggest technology cluster, it's kitted out with iPad-controlled systems for audio, lighting, curtains, heating and cooling.

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From top: Penthouse 127 is a three-bedroom duplex in central London with 360-degree views; sunbathe in style on the 1,370sqft wrap-around roof terrace; lounge in the open-style living room and dining room, which includes a full bar



PORTOFINO TOWER, MIAMI

Once synonymous with the US housing market slump, Miami now symbolises the country's economic resurgence. Taking the place of ramshackle street shacks are designer towers shaped by acclaimed international architects such as Zaha Hadid and Piero Lissoni. Their appearance on the skyline reflects how the city has transformed itself into an international design hub that hosts world-leading events such as Art Basel in Miami Beach.

Miami's downtown district has sea on two sides, so many penthouses are likely to provide occupants with ocean views. The four-bedroom penthouse at Portofino Tower on South Pointe Drive has 360-degree views of the ocean, South Beach and the Miami skyline visible through its floor-to-ceiling windows and from its rooftop pool deck. The 6,000-square-foot property is on sale through One Sotheby's Realty for US\$14.9 million.

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From top: The 6,000sqft, four-bedroom penthouse at Portofino Tower in Miami features a spacious living room; sunbathe and relax in the courtyard; soak in blue skies and views of the ocean, or swim a few lengths in the rooftop pool



EMIRATES CROWN, DUBAI

Dubai's rapid growth from a quiet trading port to an international oil and manufacturing centre over the past four decades shows few signs of slowing, and this is reflected in the number of towers being built there. It is home to the 829-metre-high Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, as well as around 500 other towering skyscrapers.

Existing apartment blocks include Emirates Crown, a 295-metre-high tower overlooking Dubai Marina, one of the emirate's most

desirable addresses. Atop the 64-storey tower is a refurbished five-bedroom penthouse with views of the marina, Palm Jumeirah and the Persian Gulf. Filled with artwork and bespoke furnishings, the interior-designed home features suede walls in the cinema "snug" and TV lounge, and polished plaster walls in the double reception room and formal dining room. The master bedroom has a walk-in wardrobe and a bathroom with onyx walls. Knight Frank is marketing the home for US\$9.25 million.

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Clockwise from top: The penthouse atop the 64-storey Emirates Crown is the epitome of understated luxury, with a sprawling living room; an elegant den for meetings and quiet moments of reflection; and a 10-seat dining room that's perfect for entertaining



NEO BANKSIDE, LONDON

London’s South Bank has become the city’s latest high-rise hotspot where existing tower blocks are being extended upwards and new skyscrapers are being built around them, most notably The Shard, which at 309 metres high is the tallest building in the European Union. Less than a mile away is Neo Bankside, a multi-award-winning residential development conceived by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners, next to the Tate Modern art gallery. Here, a number of penthouses have been interior-designed by leading studios, including a 10th-floor duplex on offer for £8.75 million through Knight Frank.

Making use of the penthouse’s high ceilings and spacious 3,500-square-foot interiors, design firm Waldo Works has created “the ultimate country house in the sky” that features an expansive, galleried reception room and two winter gardens. The four-bedroom home boasts views of St Paul’s Cathedral on the opposite side of the Thames through its floor-to-ceiling windows.



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Clockwise from top: The 10th-floor duplex at Neo Bankside has angular walls and was conceived by Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners; the “country house in the sky” features hardwood floors and loads of natural light; welcome your guests in style in the resplendent reception room



PLACE VAUBAN, PARIS

Not everywhere is experiencing a skyscraper-building boom. It’s been 42 years since a tall building was erected in Paris—that was the 59-storey Montparnasse Tower, which was so despised by Parisians that all future skyscraper construction projects were banned. Not much has changed in the present as public opinion is against plans to build a 42-storey glass triangular structure designed by architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, the creators of the “Bird’s Nest” stadium in Beijing.

The City of Lights is famous for its artists’ garrets, of course, but it also has rooftop homes that are a little more luxurious. For example, the top-floor apartment in an eight-storey 1930s block in Place Vauban has views of the Dôme des Invalides and the rest of Paris from its living room and 540-square-foot terrace. The 1,500-square-foot apartment has two bedrooms, two lounges and one dining room, and is on the market through Savills for €4.14 million.

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From top: The top-floor apartment has views of the Dôme des Invalides from the living room; the outdoor dining terrace; the apartment sits atop this eight-storey 1930s block in Place Vauban

