

How the super-rich are going to extraordinary lengths to keep fit at home



The 35-metre high sky pool at Embassy Gardens overlooks the new US Embassy

18 APRIL 2019 • 1:44PM

The wellness revolution is turning droves of ordinary people into part-time athletes. You know the sort: permanently in training for marathons, triathlons and Iron Man competitions, and whose bucket list (which might well be the very thing that finishes them off) includes running for six days straight across the Sahara in the Marathon des Sables.

This passion for ultra-fitness is having “a huge impact” on what high-net worth types are looking for in their homes, according to Penny Mosgrove, founder of the buying agency Quintessentially Estates.

Where a decade ago, an in-basement night club “was worthy of serious bragging rights”, she says, now specialist exercise facilities such as ice baths and hypoxic chambers, to simulate training at altitude, are the most envy-inducing features in super prime homes.

Hypoxic chambers are typically housed in a small, glass-fronted room containing an exercise bike or treadmill, or in a tent positioned near the master bedroom. “For those preparing for a climbing expedition or a race incorporating high terrain, training in a low-oxygen environment gives them a serious advantage,” says Mosgrove.



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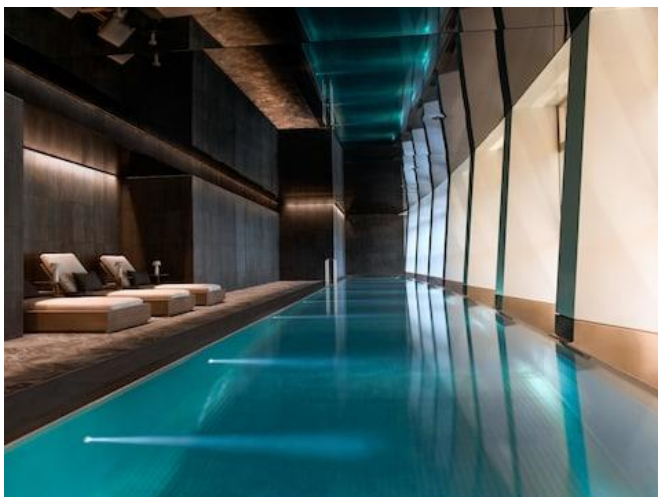
Buyers are used to having such equipment in their exclusive gyms such as Equinox or Third Space; the latter's latest branch in the City has a hypoxic chamber and quartz lamps to purify the air. "Buyers now want this kind of technology to complement their workouts at home, too," says Mosgrove.

Forget the Waitrose effect – where homes near a branch of the supermarket sell for a premium. Now it's all about the Equinox effect. "Being near a boutique gym now commands the highest premium," says Mosgrove.

Buyers at 10 Park Drive in Canary Wharf won't have far to travel. They will have access to a first in London - an 8,000 sq ft residents-only area in the huge new Third Space gym. Opening in Wood Wharf in 2021, it includes a private training facility, concierge and hydrotherapy pool.

Over at Dickens Yard in Ealing, where remaining flats cost from £1.495m, live DJs will spice up your workout at the 17,000 sq ft Gymbox that opens this month, and there's already a trendy Triyoga on site, offering 120 classes a week.

Those aiming to recreate the experience at home will need to hang around the changing rooms of these gyms, or after the warm-down of the top trainers' classes to catch the whisperings of the names of the suppliers of these niche pieces of fitness equipment.



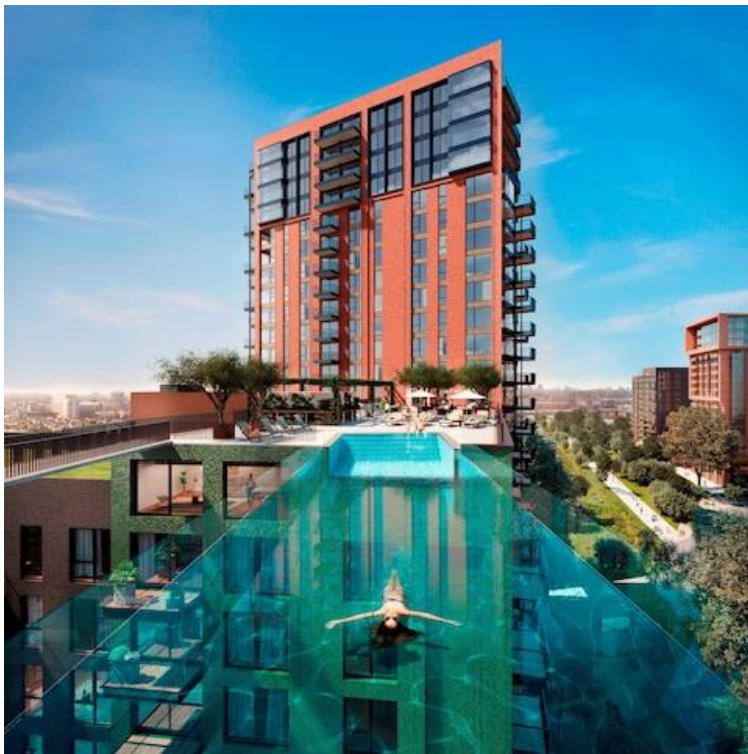
Centrepoint has just unveiled central London's first 30-metre long pool, designed by Conran + Partners

“It’s easier to get a table at Annabel’s than to get a mat at some of London’s exercise classes,” says Mosgrove. “Our concierge service increasingly helps our clients to gain access to A-list gyms.”

While women tend to favour using the facilities in their gyms so they can train alongside friends and use the spa, it’s middle-aged men who are most interested in buying into the full at-home fitness experience.

“Installing this level of equipment in a home requires a certain level of obsession, and the buyers most interested in doing this tend to be men at the top of competitive city careers,” says Mosgrove.

“They realise they’ve spent too much of their 20s and 30s in the office and now want life-changing experiences. You’ll see them cycling laps of Regent’s Park in their Rapha gear or running around Richmond Park wearing a massive backpack.”



The transparent 25-metre-long pool at Nine Elms will link two residential towers at the 10th floor

A beautifully-designed private pool – with hot tub, sauna, steam and spa rooms – is now a requisite in luxury developments in London. But Centrepoint, where residences start at £1.88m, has just taken gold by unveiling central London’s first 30-metre long pool.

The Conran + Partners-designed affair is suspended over Oxford Street, trumping the more usual 25m found in such super-prime schemes as Clarges Mayfair and 1 Grosvenor Square.

The spotlight is likely to shift to Nine Elms later this year, however, when the 35-metre high sky pool at Embassy Gardens opens. The transparent 25-metre-long pool will link two residential towers at the 10th floor, allowing swimmers to fast crawl their way between the two while gazing at the new US Embassy.

This may turn out to be more suited to Instagram posing than serious training, but the scheme’s developer, Ballymore, is targeting ultra-fitness devotees at its Royal Wharf development in London City Island.

The 'Train with an Olympian' programmes will include bodyweight classes designed by gold medal-winning gymnast Steve Frew and bespoke barre classes inspired by one of their future neighbours, the English National Ballet.

Residents can also have prepared meals delivered to their apartment courtesy of Fresh Fitness Foods, which will assess their health and help set their workout goals.



Ballymore is targeting ultra-fitness devotees at its Royal Wharf development

Few who have ventured along the South Bank lately can fail to have noticed the new, gleaming 50-storey One Blackfriars tower where one-bed flats start at £1m.

Its spa facilities are similarly eye-catching, including its snow cabin and ice fountain for an instant chill-down after a sauna, and a circulation-boosting Vichy shower, inspired by a 17th century French practice of shooting water from seven shower heads while you lie beneath on a shallow wet bed.

It's a defiantly 21st century approach, however, that is being taken in the new house touted as Beverly Hills' healthiest home, on sale for US\$24.5m. The 10,000 sq ft estate is the first standalone house in the US to be fitted with full Delos wellness technology, which includes energising lighting, air purification and comfort ergonomics - although about 50 new or retrofit Delos homes are now being built in the States, according to Aram Afshar, president of Quintessentially Estates LA.

The Beverly Hills house includes lighting timed to circadian rhythms, subtly changing hue throughout the day to mimic the movement of the sun. "These almost imperceptible changes of lighting are picked up by the circadian nerves in our eyes, which impact on the release of serotonin and energy levels," Afshar explains.

"The only way I can describe the feeling of the air quality in a Delos building is that one actively wants to take a deep breath - an unusual sensation for those used to living and working in the centre of a busy city."