

# TIMES 2

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See you on the yacht

Welcome to the pandemic  
spending spree



Plus

Planes, trains and automobiles: what's the safest way to travel this summer?



# What's on the super-rich shopping list

**Nick Candy's flat is for sale for £175m. It's a good time — the wealthy are ready to splurge, says John Arlidge**

When lockdown struck last year, Nick Candy did what a shiny, rich property developer should. He chartered a private jet to the Bahamas to lounge out the crisis. Now he's back in London and it's almost as if the past 12 months never happened.

He has just listed his penthouse in his One Hyde Park development in Knightsbridge for sale for £175 million. Candy offered the home after a "huge surge" in demand for London's super-prime properties. The duplex has five bedrooms, a champagne room, a wine room for 750 bottles, a private spa and gym, a media room, a cocktail bar and two wraparound terraces with views over Hyde Park. If Candy gets his cash, it will be the most expensive and expensive flat sold in London.

Breaking real estate records might be the last thing you would expect to happen after a big economic crisis, but pandemics have a strange effect on everyone, including the super-rich. While many people are rethinking their priorities, selling up in cities and downshifting to the "countryside", many wealthy types are seizing the opportunity to get back in the global game of one-upmanship.

Some largesse has been epic even by the standards of the razzle-dazzle classes. After buying the most expensive house in California for a record \$165 million last year, Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man, has added the house next door, taking the value of his total property portfolio across the world to almost \$500 million. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain dropped £120 million on Glympton Park estate in Oxfordshire, which includes the 18th-century Glympton House, as well as 39 cottages, a Norman church, a pub and 167 acres of parkland.

The Nigerian billionaire oil magnate Femi Otedola has bought his three daughters custom-made Ferraris worth £170,000 each. Kim Kardashian is the proud owner of 14 new Friesian horses at £500,000 each. Fashion retailers report soaring sales of super-high-end "investment pieces" — £7,000 Tom Ford suits, £5,000 Loro Piana cashmere sweaters and Brunello Cucinelli casual wear.

Why are the rich splurging? Partly because they can. Many are wealthier than they were before lockdown because they have not spent as much and stock markets have boomed in anticipation of a "roaring Twenties" of record consumer spending. *Forbes*



magazine's annual billionaires list, released this month, found that the total wealth of the world's richest increased by more than \$5.1 trillion (£3.64 trillion) during the pandemic.

Its new list includes 2,755 billionaires — 660 more than last year and a new record. "After sitting tight for a year, many wealthy people are keen to get out and swing the bat again," says Charles McDowell, one of London's leading property agents who specialises in selling to the super-rich and is closing a £25 million deal on a home in Mayfair.

They not only have the means, they also, in many cases, have the motive.

## “The ultimate private family getaway is a superyacht

Covid has reminded many of what Jamie Edmiston, the chief executive of the leading superyacht broker, Edmiston, calls "the fragility of life, no matter who you are". More and more of his clients "who used to say, 'I'll charter a boat next year or buy one in two years' time" are now saying, "Who knows what will happen over the next year, so let's get on and do it now." The super-rich jokingly call this kind of spending "a reality cheque".

What are those lucky enough to be able to splurge splurging on? Travel is their top priority. The London office of the global on-demand jet-charter platform Victor reports that bookings are up by 280 per cent year-on-year. In the US demand is "back to 2019 levels thanks to strong demand for domestic routes", says the company's managing director, Toby Edwards. Qatar Airways Executive's G650ER,

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which seats up to 13 passengers and costs £10,000 per hour, is the most sought-after jet. From Europe, it is being chartered to whatever "green light" countries emerge. The Maldives, the Seychelles and the Caribbean are very popular, Edwards says.

Private jet package holidays — yes, they really are a "thing" for those who don't mind holidaying with lots of people from Texas — are booming. TCS World Travel, which operates two-to-three-week-long "round the world" tours on its bespoke private jets in partnership with Four Seasons hotels, reports that "both of the TCS Around the World departures in fall/winter 2021 have sold out". The company recently announced new tours for 2022, which include expert guides for each destination and a doctor, for up to £120,000 a guest.

After a year at home, back-to-nature and extreme travel experiences are highly prized, says Fiona Noble of Quintessentially, the luxury lifestyle management company. Her members are opting for a Titanic Wreckage Dive expedition in Canada (£30,000) and Hudson Canyon expedition dives "exploring the Grand Canyon of the ocean" (£36,000). Closer to home, a road trip around the Scottish Highlands in an Aston Martin, experiencing James Bond drives, whisky tastings, salmon fishing and deer stalking, is a sell-out at £15,000.

The ultimate private family getaway is a superyacht because, Edmiston says, "it gives you the ability to travel in a bio-secure environment where all staff are confirmed virus-free". Bookings are back to pre-pandemic levels and prices are higher "because there is so much demand, there's none of the normal discounting".

Croatia, which is deemed to be safe by many superyachts, is a popular destination. Beyoncé and Jay-Z recently chartered a \$2 million-a-week superyacht to take them along the Dalmatian coast. Edmiston says that

The interior of the flat Nick Candy is selling and, right, Candy with his wife Holly Valance. Right, from top: Kim Kardashian and one of her horses; an Edmiston yacht; Jay-Z and Beyoncé

Greece and the Caribbean remain popular and he hopes that the two biggest and most lucrative European destinations, France and Italy, will open up soon.

"Not much makes my jaw drop any more," Edmiston says, but even he was surprised when a client booked a superyacht for 18 weeks. Edmiston won't say what the bill was, but the client would be unlikely to get much change from £10 million, making the trip perhaps the most expensive holiday yet.

It's not just charters that are becoming more popular. "The last 12 months have been some of the busiest periods ever for yacht sales," Edmiston says.

"Transactions in the 50-metre-plus, £20 million-plus market are up 25 to 30 per cent. Nearly all of the big shipyards have got all of their construction slots filled for the next three years."

As those bidding to buy in One Hyde Park know, you can't travel for ever. You do need a — trophy — home. Demand for high-end homes in London, New York and Paris is rising as travel restrictions ease. UK arrivals who have two negative PCR tests after landing now only have to quarantine for five days. The estate agent Savills says that in London sales of £5 million and above are back to 2016 levels.

Jeremy Gee, the managing director of Beauchamp Estates, reports a growing number of

"country house in London" sales in heath and parkland suburbs, notably Hampstead, Highgate, St John's Wood, Richmond, Wimbledon and Chiswick. Glentree estate agency in north London says that in one road, Compton Avenue in Highgate, four properties have been sold in six months with prices up to £11 million.

The scramble for good country homes that began a year ago remains frenzied. "Londoners are buying in and around the south of England, New Yorkers in the Hamptons and Parisians in the south of France," says Hugo Thistlethwaite, Savills' head of global residential operations. "We are seeing a blurring of boundaries between second homes and holiday homes."

Whether in a new home or existing one, the desire of the super-rich to "freshen up the place" extends to rather more than a new sofa. Sales of antiques and mid-century modern furniture at Christie's and Sotheby's are setting records.

Art sales, which were down by 22 per cent in 2020, are getting back to pre-lockdown levels, says Dr Clare McAndrew, the founder of the art research and consulting firm Arts Economics. A study of 2,500 high-net-worth collectors in ten different markets that she conducted with the Swiss bank UBS reveals that "purchasing for these collectors is becoming as strong as it was in 2019".

Most of the big galleries have vastly improved online sales technology, which has helped to double web sales in the past year. The rise of NFT digital art is also boosting the markets — Bleep (Mike Winkelmann, a graphic designer) sold a digital print to a Singapore-based investor for \$69.3 million in March.

One unusual new market that is booming among the wealthy thanks to lockdown is "Covid passports". Not the vaccination variety that many of us will download to our mobile phones to enable us finally to get away this summer, but new national identity documents. These can be "bought" through Citizen by Investment programmes. Invest a certain amount in a home or business in a country, ranging from £100,000 in the Caribbean to many millions in Europe, and you can "earn" a new passport.

Dr Christian Kalin, who runs the London-based Henley & Partners, which styles itself as a "residence and citizenship advisory firm", reports that demand is up by 50 per cent year-on-year — although travel restrictions mean it remains hard for applicants to get to their new homelands to make investments. He explains: "People think, 'Look, this pandemic could come back. We need the guarantee that, if it does, we can go to a safe place and that we will be admitted.'" During lockdown, borders were not closed to returning nationals. It's "the ultimate travel" insurance, Kalin half-jokes. With the ultimate price tag.

