

Homes *near* the HEATH

Just four miles from Trafalgar Square, Hampstead Heath and its surrounding areas offer superb properties in a glorious setting enabling residents to enjoy the very best of both worlds

THERE APPEAR TO BE SO many good reasons for living in the vicinity of Hampstead Heath that it's difficult to know where to begin. Marc Schneiderman, director of Arlington Residential, comments, "As a long-time resident of Hampstead Village I do feel well qualified to vouch for its merits. Hampstead Heath for one, which is the nearest piece of 'countryside' London has in terms of proximity to Central London. Different areas of the 800-acre heath offer different atmospheres and appeal.

"One of the principal attractions of living in Hampstead Village is the sense of community. Walking down Hampstead High Street, even from my house to Hampstead High Street, there will always be familiar faces and people I will stop and talk to. Villages tend to have a rich architectural history with Hampstead being no exception – architecture dates back to the reign of Queen Anne in the early 1700s. Current and past residents contribute significantly to creating a 'village' atmosphere. Hampstead in particular, has a long history of creative past residents particularly poets, artists, writers and musicians. This cultural and creative history still exists through its current residents. Blue plaques adorn many buildings adding to the area's rich cultural heritage.

"The tranquillity and green open spaces of Hampstead Garden Suburb are recognised by buyers and existing residents as assets that make the area unique to north west London. This is the closest rural location to central London that one can find with dozens of garden squares, communal gardens and green verges. The rural feel of the area is further enhanced with many of the houses facing, or within a few hundred yards of, 125 acres of former farmland known today as Hampstead Heath extension.

"Managed and fiercely protected by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, the area has maintained its authenticity and remains true to its original design. This is one of the reasons there is constant demand for properties with the Trust playing a pivotal role in alterations, planning consents and the retention of the

original façades. Additionally, the majority of houses have large gardens, often in excess of half an acre."

Properties also represent excellent value for money in comparison with other parts of London. Trevor Abrahamson, founder and MD of super-prime agency Glentree, advises, "Today you can buy a property in Kenwood, Hampstead, for 20% of what it would cost you in the 'golden triangle' of Belgravia, Knightsbridge and Mayfair. There are hundreds of acres of heathland on your doorstep, two golf courses within walking distance, access to the finest schools and hospitals, with the West End only being a 15-minute drive away and a private/public airport within half an hour.

"The properties themselves are surrounded by land which could be up to 11 acres and the area is surrounded by leafy flora that, effectively, renders the property a cross between a country estate and a town house. It ticks all the boxes for luxury, sophisticated family living and, thanks to Stamp Duty and the cheap Pound, these properties can be bought for an aggregate of 50% discount from values that would have been paid four to five years ago. It is a melting pot of eclectic cultures and is Britain at its best."

Guy Meacock, director of buying agency Prime Purchase, also points out that Hampstead is a heavily schools-driven market with a strong appeal to international buyers. "This is partly because of the American school but also because its houses tend to have larger footprints than those found in central London, which is why it appeals to a lot of Americans and Canadians. The property market has been very steady here for a while. It was badly hit when many Americans deserted London post-credit crunch but we are now seeing them return, for the currency play as well. It has offered value for quite some time.

"Central London is still do-able for commuters with a tube station on the Northern Line and Hampstead Heath mainline station. Hampstead gives you a bit of separation – if you are working in town, it can feel quite different, like countryside but in the city."



Heath End House, Hampstead Heath, NW3

Constructed circa 1778, this fine Grade II listed Georgian residence boasts an array of illustrious owners, including Dame Henrietta (founder of Hampstead Garden Suburb) and Canon Samuel Barnett (social reformer) between 1899-1913 as their country retreat. Novelist and playwright Sir Hall Caine made structural alterations to the property in 1923, followed by reconfiguration works in 1955 to a layout largely resembling the house as it stands today.

The accommodation is spectacular, some rooms take in a view of the lovely mature gardens, others have far reaching views from this elevated position abutting Hampstead Heath. The house offers seven bedrooms, although two are currently used as reception rooms, and four bathrooms. Its secluded setting provides privacy and tranquility, allowing places to unwind around the garden in either the summer house, studio or beside the pond.

£5.5m / €6m / \$6.65m

Hamptons International ▶ www.hamptons.co.uk