

LONDONERS have a love affair with New York; there's even a name – "NYlons" – for those who split their time between the two places. Yet despite the cities having a strong cultural and commercial affinity, relatively few Londoners buy property in the Big Apple. Is the time right for a jet-to-let investment?

Manhattan – the obvious place to buy – has staged a spectacular comeback since the dark days of 9/11 and the 2008 credit crunch. As in London, the property market has been boosted by the resurgent banking sector and a dynamic local economy. Wealthy foreign buyers have a big presence because of New York's so-called "safe haven" status and there is a direct link between the exchange rate and demand for luxury apartments.

While prestigious Upper East Side and Upper West Side, facing Central Park, are the Belgravia and Mayfair of New York, developers are also creating cheaper homes in Midtown and Downtown areas, including the Wall Street financial district, Manhattan's fastest-growing residential neighbourhood. Meanwhile, gentrification is taking hold in areas such as Tribeca, where you get a true sense of Manhattan's street-level urban experience, albeit at lower prices than London equivalents – Shoreditch and Clerkenwell.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR GLAMOROUS PADS

New York is vying with London to take pole position as a place for the rich to live. And to thrust them up the ladder there is a fresh crop of glamorous new skyscrapers to add to New York's famous skyline.

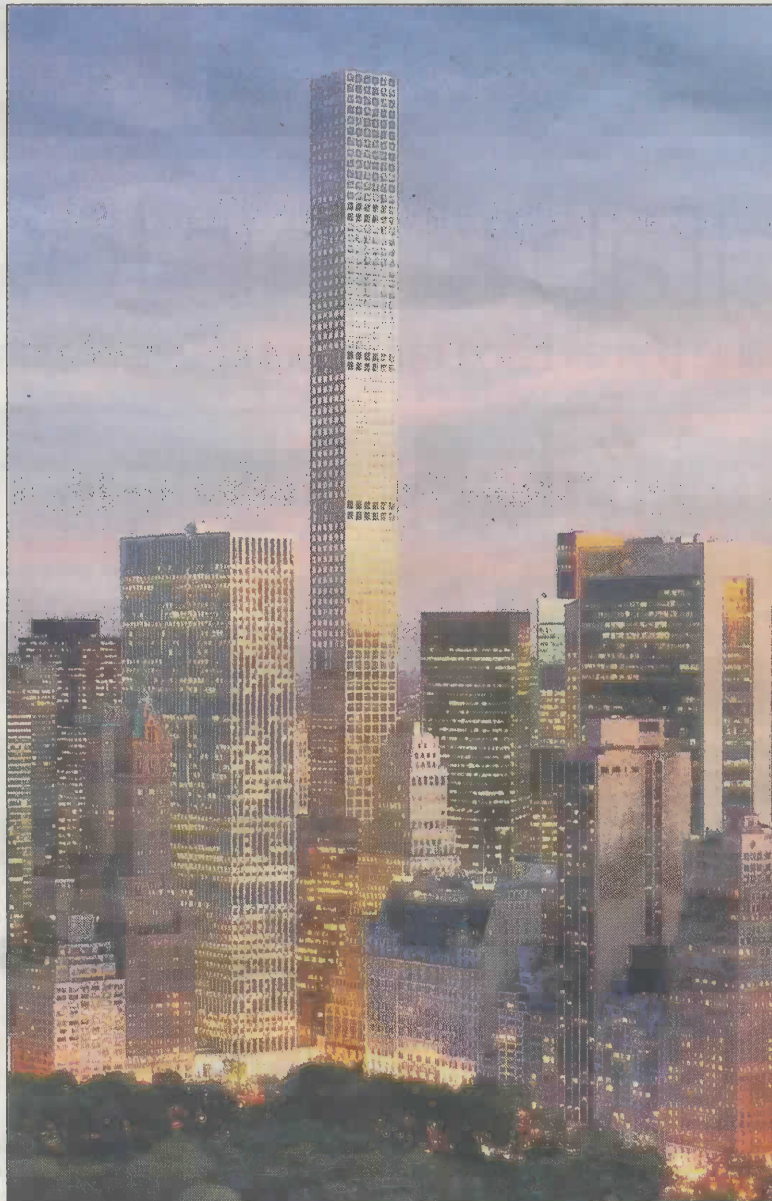
When complete in 2015, 432 Park Avenue will be the tallest residential tower in the western hemisphere – a 96-storey, 1,396ft-high monolith (about a third higher than the Shard) with 115 apartments priced from £4.5 million.

Upper-floor mega residences – entire-floor penthouses of more than 8,000square feet – cost at least as much as those at the Candy Brothers' record-breaking One Hyde Park (£6,000 a square foot), and the building is tipped to register New York City's first \$100 million (£64 million) sale.

The creative force behind the project is Uruguayan-born architect Rafael Vinoly, whose London projects include born-again Battersea Power Station and the "Walkie Talkie" office tower at 20 Fenchurch Street, now nearing

NYlons – New York-loving Londoners

New York is building the tallest residential tower in the western hemisphere. But with prices nearly half those in London, the city is already tempting UK buyers, says **David Spittles**



Height of style: (far left) 432 Park Avenue will be the tallest residential building in the western hemisphere

Tub with a view: (left) 432 Park Avenue's view will help you bathe in reflected glory



From £430,000: residents at plush 75 Wall Street can enjoy the sun deck and rental returns of six per cent

completion. His Park Avenue scheme is a thing of beauty and marks a departure from the self-consciously sculptural and dimly "iconic" tower designs that have spread across the planet in recent years.

The slender skyscraper is based on the simplest architectural form – a square. It has a grid of expansive triple-

glazed windows on each side, unblemished by balconies or terraces.

"It's like a Rubik's Cube – built of perfect squares: pure, simple and radical," said developer Harry Macklowe, 75, a New York legend who has survived a roller coaster career of highs and lows.

Unusually, the building does not incorporate a hotel, but it will have 30,000sq ft of amenities on the lower floors – restaurants, residents' club, outdoor gardens, spa, library, billiards room, screening room, performance venue, climate-controlled wine cellars, plus "in suite" catering, 24-hour concierge services and valet parking. Domestic staff and servants will have a separate entrance.

A SAFE HAVEN FROM THE UK'S TAX TURMOIL

Stephan Miles-Brown, head of residential development at property adviser Knight Frank, maintains that political uncertainty in the UK over higher tax rates, a mansion tax and a cap on bankers' bonuses is "spooking some".

While London remains a recipient of money flowing in from the eurozone and elsewhere, the largest flow of global wealth between regions in 2012 was from Europe to the US, with £960 million moving across the Atlantic.

But it is a big country and everything is relative. Aside from über addresses

such as 432 Park Avenue, New York is relatively good value in prime property terms. London has the third most expensive property in the world, at £2,540 a square foot on average in prime central areas, while Manhattan is rated eighth, at £1,300.

"The relationship between London and New York is one of peaceful co-existence rather than competition; Manhattan has more in common with London than cities in the rest of the US," said Carl Schmid, who cut his teeth as a London agent in the Nineties when the Clerkenwell and Shoreditch loft scene was taking off. He has since opened Fyfe McDade branches in Bloomsbury and Islington.

Schmid used to be content with trips across the Pond for shopping and to run the New York marathon. Now he helps sell Manhattan pads.

His company offers a "hand-holding" service, cherry-picking developments and putting buyers in touch with US lawyers and mortgage brokers. He claims to be able to negotiate price discounts of five to 10 per cent.

CHECK OUT CHELSEA FOR AN UP-AND-COMING AREA

Manhattan, like London, has districts called SoHo and Chelsea. Schmid likes the look of gentrifying West Chelsea, an old industrial quarter, with landmark heritage buildings. "It's good for

investment – central, popular with tenants and affordable compared with nearby neighbourhoods such as the Meatpacking District, and so has scope for capital growth."

Apartments at one earmarked scheme – 540 West 28th Street – are priced from £500,000.

Well-priced flats can also be found at The Sheffield on West 57th Street, Midtown, close to Fifth Avenue. This 58-storey skyscraper has 500 homes, a rooftop pool and is the only condo block in Manhattan with a private driveway. Prices from £450,000.

The Wall Street district, like the Square Mile in London, used to be a nine-to-five business quarter but is now a buzzing residential area. Before the World Trade Centre attacks in 2001, about 15,000 people lived in downtown New York. Now it's 50,000.

Eager developers have taken advantage of tax incentives to regenerate the area. Previously macho corporate headquarters belonging to giants such as Goldman Sachs and Citibank are now luxury condo blocks. More than 100 buildings have been converted.

One-bedroom apartments at 75 Wall Street cost from £430,000 and offer rental returns of about six per cent. Call 020 7837 2022 or visit fyfemcdade.com/international. For Park Avenue's giant tower, visit 432parkavenue.com or call +1 212 432 5657.



Street life: vibrant Times Square has plenty to offer Manhattan residents