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Home

GOING PLACES CANARY WHARF

The buzz around this once dull financial hub is right on the money, says **Hugh Graham**



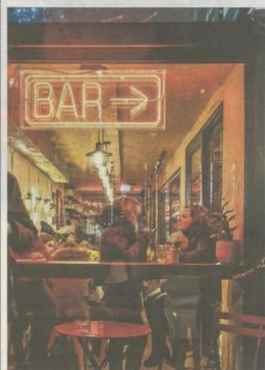
Block party
Canary Wharf,
seen from
Greenwich

Why it's hot Canary Wharf has long been derided as a soulless American-style office district of skyscrapers and suits, with no street life (the shops are underground) and tumbleweed blowing across the pavements after hours. But things have changed. On weekends, this part of town is now bustling with shoppers, diners and drinkers who like being by the river, away from the choking fumes of Oxford Street and rowdy teenagers at Westfield Stratford City, which has the busiest branch of Waitrose in Britain.

It's still chainy, but shops are opening at street level and the names are hotting up: there's an Everyman cinema, a Franco Manca pizza place, Breakfast Club, an Ole & Steen bakery, Polo Ralph Lauren, the ethical eatery Farmstand and, on the waterfront, upmarket restaurants such as Gaucha and Royal China. As in Notting Hill, there's a "healthy banker" vibe, with a different juice bar for every day of the week (CPress, Crush and Pure among them), deluxe gyms (Third Space, Virgin Active) and hip workout spaces (Psyche, Studio Lagree, Sweat). Canary Wharf even has eco-credentials: the estate has vowed to be plastic-free by June. Its streets are immaculate, Singapore-style, with no chewing gum or litter on the pavements.

There's also green space, sort of. In Canada Square Park, big screens show sporting events in the summer; Jubilee Park hosts art festivals; and the Roof Garden, atop the new Crossrail station, is an urban oasis. The waterfront promenade at West India Quay, lined with Georgian warehouses and restaurant terraces, is a thing of beauty. Tranquil riverfront paths for jogging and cycling stretch for miles round the Isle of Dogs. They feel a long way from London, as do the Mudchute city farm and the Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre.

Canary Wharf might even become a tiny bit cool. Wood Wharf, the next phase under construction on a patch of 23 undeveloped acres, is aiming to go the full Shoreditch, with independent shops (above ground), low-rise warehouse-style buildings, a trendy NoCo hotel, an outpost of the Arts Club and some downright edgy architecture (Herzog & de Meuron's One



WOOD WHARF

The statement building at the new Wood Wharf development, One Park Drive is a cylindrical 58-storey skyscraper by the Swiss starchitects Herzog & de Meuron. The Jenga-like facade is the result of recessed balconies, a comforting feature if you have vertigo. It should be ready in 2020. 020 7001 3800, knightfrank.co.uk



VOCAL LOCAL

Stephanie Rampton brought up three children in Somerset, but when they flew the nest, she and her husband, Geoff, a management consultant, flew to London. Initially they landed in Wapping, but

they have just bought a three-bedroom flat in Wood Wharf and will move in next year. "Canary Wharf used to be a ghost town at the weekend, but now it's vibrant and busy," Stephanie says. "We like the constantly evolving architecture, it's exciting. It's clean and organised — I'm impressed with the way it is run. My mum is in a wheelchair, and everything here is so accessible." "We'll be on the eighth floor of One Park Drive. I like living in a block, it feels so secure. We do have two dogs, but Wood Wharf will have gardens. And I love being by the river. It sort of feels like living in New York."



ISLE OF DOGS

Burrells Wharf Square is a warehouse conversion just off the Thames Path, with a pool, a gym and a concierge. A one-bedroom 538 sq ft flat is on the market; there's a £3,700-a-year service charge. Canada Square is a five-minute ride from nearby Mudchute DLR — or you could walk in half an hour. 020 7537 9859, alexnell.com

Park Drive). Wood Wharf will also have the first homes built on the actual Canary Wharf estate — 3,000 of them.

Why it's not Most of the shops are still underground: great when it's raining, not so much on a lovely day. Period buildings are in short supply; Pevsner devotees will never learn to love tower-block canyons.

Education, education, education The Isle of Dogs has one primary judged outstanding by Ofsted — Canary Wharf College, part of an academy trust that includes an unrated secondary — and five good primaries. There is one good secondary (George Green's School) and a Montessori school. There are two outstanding primaries near Westferry, Cyril Jackson and Mayflower.

Get connected When (if?) Crossrail opens next year, Liverpool Street will be six minutes away, Heathrow 39. The Jubilee line takes you to Westminster in 11 minutes, and it's 11 minutes on the DLR to Bank and London City airport (from Poplar). Broadband speeds vary wildly in E14: parts of Millwall, on the Isle of Dogs, have average speeds below the government minimum of 10Mbps, but Limehouse was crowned the street with the fastest broadband in London in 2018 (43Mbps).

Air quality Near the busy Marsh Wall roundabout, levels of nitrogen dioxide breach the required 40ug/m3 limit, says Friends of the Earth. The Canary Wharf estate says levels are lower than in the City or Westminster. Go south on the Isle of Dogs and it's cleaner, in the low 30s.

Be seen in The Gun is an old-school grade II listed pub on the river, with views from the dining room and terrace. The Space, an indie theatre in a converted church on the Isle of Dogs, has a rustic cafe, the Hubhub Bar & Kitchen. Wharf Kitchen is a new indoor street-food market with healthy vendors such as Paleo Supply and the "raw bowl" outfit Ahi Poke. At Boisdale, a glitzy Scottish supper club, jazz and soul legends perform on stage while you eat steak. The Virgin Active has a river-view pool where Daniel Craig was put through his paces as James Bond in Skyfall. Head to Studio Lagree for "the hottest workout from Hollywood", or the towpath on a sunny weekend if you want to show off all that hard work in Lycra.

Buy in Pan Peninsula, Dollar Bay and No 1 West India Quay are a few of the big-name residential skyscrapers; one-bedders in Pan Peninsula start at £445,000. New luxury towers include Warden, One Park Drive and Landmark Pinnacle, which has an indoor garden square and a 75th-floor roof terrace (one-bedders from £425,000). For a peaceful river setting on the Isle of Dogs, Burrells Wharf Square has flats in old warehouses from £300,000. There are pockets of period terraces on the Isle of Dogs, where three-bedders start at £700,000 — try Coldharbour or Westferry Road. For families, it's mostly 1990s terraces on the Isle of Dogs; from £650,000 for a four-bedroom house.

Why we love it Fresh and clean, futuristic and convenient — yet the river paths feel a world away from London.

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