

THE MODERN HOUSE



Newgate Street, London EC1
Sold

The Church Tower

Located in the heart of the City of London, Church Tower is an extraordinary home set within a Sir Christopher Wren-designed masterpiece. Arranged over some eight floors, this Grade I-listed, 150ft-high monument is a spectacular example of the English Baroque style. The main tower was built in 1687 as part of the rebuilding of the city after the great fire of 1666 to replace an earlier Medieval church on the same site; the steeple, made from Portland stone, was a later addition in 1704 attributed to Nicholas Hawksmoor – Wren's then understudy.

The tower is an exercise in ecclesiastical grandeur; a highly successful palimpsest, marrying the marks of centuries of use with a modern, domestic reincarnation care of architects Boyarsky Murphy, whose ingenious and precise insertions characterise every floor.

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The Building

The church was one of some 50 parish churches built as part of a decades-long campaign by Wren within the fire zone, the most important being the neighbouring St Paul's Cathedral, which the steeple of Church Tower overlooks. Originally one part of a greater building, the church itself was destroyed in the 1940 Blitz, with only the tower remaining. For more information on the building, please see the History section below.

The Tour

Reached from a footpath just off Newgate Street, the tower's exterior gives few clues that a 2,200 sq ft home lies within. Only new, double-height oak doors at its base hint at the interior architectural interventions. A simple, round-arched main entranceway and windows above are decorated with neoclassical pediments. Large carved pineapples – historically symbolising welcome – decorate the exterior, while a freestanding Ionic colonnade sits in the centre of the steeple, topped with stone finials.

Entry is to the dining room/entrance hall, formed from the church's original entrance vestibule. There is an elegant Greek-cross plan layout and a high domical vault, which looks directly out to the rose gardens beyond through a full-height glass aperture. From here, stairs with risers and treads of polished limestone, an inner balustrade of white plaster, and an outer balustrade of glass, curve upwards. The stairs are streamlined and clearly modern, yet utterly sympathetic to the building's original structure.

A custom-designed kitchen with granite worktops and concealed appliances has been inserted on a mezzanine level, between the winding stair and the outer walls. A breakfast bench sits in an arched niche overlooking the gardens below. Polished limestone runs underfoot on both these floors, with the remaining levels crafted using English oak.

The library lies on the floor above. This has tall, multi-paned windows in all four directions that draw light in from multiple aspects, and built-in oak cabinetry. Boyarsky Murphy built all of the joinery and furnishings on-site to a meticulous fit and finish, with space-saving measures and interventions characterising every room. The lift is positioned off-centre in the plan on this floor, connecting the library with the bedrooms, bathrooms and on the eighth floor, the living room. The original, if somewhat vertiginous, stone staircase remains enclosed to the left, connecting all of the floors.

The next three levels form a triplex; two bedrooms with mezzanine study areas look out through grand oculus windows and there are independent shower rooms, with a laundry area below. A generous bathroom and cedar-lined walk-in wardrobe occupy the next level, surmounted by the main bedroom; this has large windows housing restored external louvres in Portland stone for privacy.

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The eighth floor contains the living room – rising 49 ft high into the bell chamber – with visible notations left on the walls by previous inhabitants. The ascent continues up a final corkscrew staircase to an internal deck with a transparent glass floor set within a delicate steel frame, which is home to an oak-lined study. Paddle steps lead up to the exterior belvedere viewing deck, which offers axial views across the cityscape. St Pauls Cathedral is in immediate view, and on a fine day, you can see the distant Kentish Hills.

Outdoor Space

The tower looks directly out to the nave of the church's remains; a carapace surrounding a roofless void – now a beautiful rose garden managed and carefully maintained by the City of London Corporation as a public space. In 1989, the rose garden was established to reflect the floorplan of the original church, with box-edged beds representing the position of the pews and wooden towers covered in clematis representing the stone columns. The aisles, now terraces for quiet contemplation, are laid in original York stone.

The Area

Church Tower is wonderfully positioned and occupies an incredibly central location. The River Thames is a five-minute walk away, with the Millennium footbridge providing access to Tate Modern and the Southbank Centre. Smithfield Market, soon to house the new Museum of London, lies immediately to the rear; the Barbican Centre is also a short walk away, home to world-class concerts and exhibitions. Cheapside, One New Change and Paternoster Square all offer excellent shops and restaurants, while the surrounding historic side streets are home to several distinguished independent providers.

The Ned hotel and members club, the Soho House group's crowning glory and an Edward 'Ned' Lutyens masterpiece, is located nearby. It is home to several restaurants and bars, a spa and a barbershop, as well as one of the best private gyms and swimming pools in central London.

Transport links are excellent; St Pauls tube station (Central Line), and Mansion House (District and Circle Lines) are both moments away. The City Thameslink provides access to St Pancras International station and Gatwick Airport while Crossrail, due for completion in 2022 at nearby Farringdon, has trains reaching Heathrow Airport in under 30 minutes.

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.