



## Spotlight on Belgravia

Belgravia has everything to attract the super-rich: a superb central location, elegant architecture, designer shops, charming secret lanes, green spaces and plenty of character.

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## Spotlight on Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury

Anthea Masey sees a promising future for an elegant Georgian enclave-turned-media mecca

A home in Fitzrovia or its close neighbour, Bloomsbury, is the nearest a Londoner can really get to living in a European city. Here you can work, shop and eat within a few streets of where you live — which is not how it happens in the rest of the capital, where commuting to work is the normal way of life.

Fitzrovia in central London is the area north of Oxford Street, south of Euston Road, west of Portland Place and east of Gower Street, but excluding Bedford Square which locals say is in Bloomsbury. With the exception of Tottenham Court Road and imposing Fitzroy Square, Fitzrovia is a warren of small and charming streets with quirky, privately owned shops jostling up against bigger names.

It is home to the UK's advertising industry and film, post production and internet companies. As Simon Hedley, of estate agent Druce says, it is becoming increasingly residential as former drab office buildings are transformed into mixed-use living and workplace developments.

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Fitzroy Square, designed by John Adam, is one of the grandest parts of Fitzrovia

Bloomsbury, Fitzrovia's eastern neighbour, is located south of Euston Road, north of Theobalds Road and west of Gray's Inn Road. Bloomsbury is dominated by some fine Georgian and early Victorian terraces arranged around garden squares, most of which are open to the public. The British Museum and London University, especially UCL (now one of the world's top colleges), occupy many buildings.



The BT Tower is a familiar landmark

Properties: large Georgian houses and mansion flats between Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street. There are flats in converted houses, above shops and in red-brick tenement blocks close to Russell Square.

**Best roads:** in Fitzrovia, it's the listed John Adam-designed Fitzroy Square, and in Bloomsbury, it is John Street and Doughty Street.

**The area attracts:** all sorts, from investors, to out-of-town families wanting a pied-à-terre, to wealthy media types moving from Soho, to families investing for children at university. In Bloomsbury there are judges, QCs and barristers based in the High Court and Gray's Inn. Both areas attract artists, actors and writers — Ian McEwan lives in Fitzroy Square, Guy Ritchie has bought there, while actress Gillian Anderson is a local resident.

The south-eastern corner of Bloomsbury around Great Ormond Street Hospital has pretty Georgian houses and a more intimate feel. The recent makeover of brutalist Sixties Brunswick Centre near Russell Square has given Bloomsbury a lively new high street with smart new shops and restaurants.

The universities inject an arty and bohemian feel into both these neighbourhoods. In the interwar years artists William Coldstream and Victor Pasmore congregated in the Fitzroy Tavern; while the writer Virginia Woolf, her artist sister Vanessa Bell, and the economist John Maynard Keynes and various other writers and artists lived and met in Bloomsbury and passed into history as the Bloomsbury set.

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### Getting around

**Properties:** large Georgian houses and mansion flats between Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street. There are flats in converted houses, above shops and in red-brick tenement blocks close to Russell Square.

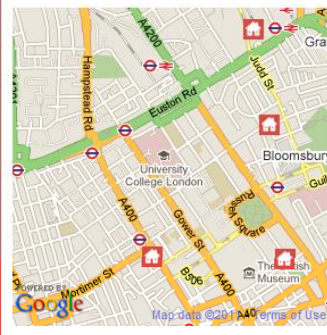
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**Staying power:** many residents wouldn't live anywhere else. However, a lot of people are forced out of the area by the high cost of houses which can make it difficult to trade up from a flat.

**Postcodes:** Fitzrovia is in W1, which covers most of the West End including Oxford Street, Soho, Marylebone, Mayfair and St James's. Bloomsbury is in WC1 which also covers Covent Garden, Charing Cross and Finsbury.

**Up and coming:** there are no pockets which are undervalued. However, with price per square foot ranging from between £800 and £1,300, Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury are still significantly cheaper than nearby Mayfair or even Marylebone.

Mai Pexton, of estate agent Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward, says houses currently in commercial use which are being sold for residential conversion offer great potential.

**What's new:** the former Middlesex Hospital site is the neighbourhood's gaping wound. The site, which until the credit crunch was to be developed by the Candy brothers, has recently been sold to insurance company Aviva and Exemplar Properties — there is talk that Google could take the commercial element in any future development. Local landlord Derwent has grand plans for Whitfield Street where it owns a large number of properties.

Fitzrovia Apartments in Bolsover Street is the redevelopment of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital; there are a total of 71 flats, four penthouses and a new outpatient department for the hospital. Phase 2, which will be complete in 2012, is now being sold off-plan at prices which range from £695,000 for a garden flat to £2.15 million for a fifth-floor flat with three bedrooms and a terrace.

**Schools:** Fitzrovia's primary school is All Souls CoE in Foley Street, while Bloomsbury has both Argyle in Tonbridge Street, and St George the Martyr CoE in John's Mews. All three have a high intake of children with English as a second language, but all are judged "good", by government education watchdog, Ofsted. Top local girls' comprehensive St Marylebone is nearby, and there are top girls' private schools, too.



The Brunswick Centre offers high street retail therapy

**Shops and restaurants:** Tottenham Court Road is a centre of homeware and furniture shopping with seriously large and exciting Heal's and Habitat stores. The regenerated Brunswick Centre has a big Waitrose, while in and around nearby Lambs Conduit Street there is Rugby Estate with its concentration of individual shops. These include Persephone Books, which publishes out-of-print authors; architect Ben Pentreath who sells classical furniture, crafty homeware, jewellery and accessories; Darkroom with an individual selection of women's, men's and interior accessories, and Folk with two shops selling men's and women's fashion.

Cigala is a popular Spanish restaurant, while Charlotte Street, running parallel to Tottenham Court Road, is a buzzy dining destination with the likes of Michelin-starred Pied à Terre; charcuterie specialist Salt Yard, and the long-standing Spaghetti House with its trademark red canopies. Alan Yau's Hakkasan Chinese restaurant is in Hanway Place.

**Open spaces:** most of Bloomsbury's garden squares are open to the public and the local council has renovated a number of them. Coram's Fields is a children's playground with an animal farm where adults are only admitted if they are accompanied by a child. Regent's Park is a short walk away.

**Leisure and the arts:** The Oasis on Endell Street in Covent Garden is the nearest council-owned swimming pool. It has an indoor pool and an all-year-round outdoor heated pool. The Renoir cinema in the Brunswick Centre shows art films and there is an Odeon multiplex on Tottenham Court Road. The West End theatres are a walk or bus ride away.

**Transport:** Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury are in Zone 1 (annual Zone 1 travel card is £1,032). Tottenham Court Road, Goodge Street and Warren Street are on the Northern line; Great Portland Street and Euston Square are on the Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines; Russell Square is on the Piccadilly line and Regent's Park is on the Bakerloo line.

**Council:** Fitzrovia is divided between Westminster (Conservative controlled) and Camden (Labour controlled); Bloomsbury is in Camden. Band D council tax for the 2010/11 year is £687.62 in Westminster and £1,332.35 in Camden, with up to £170.73 extra in Fitzroy, Gordon and Mecklenburgh Squares.

#### Buying

One-bedroom flat: £355,000  
Two-bedroom flat: £552,000  
Three-bedroom flat: £570,000  
Four-bedroom house: £1.15 million  
Five-bedroom plus house: £3.2 million

#### Renting (per week)

One-bedroom flat: £350 to £375  
Two-bedroom flat: £450 to £500  
Three-bedroom flat: £650 to £700  
Four-bedroom house: £1,000 to £1,500  
Five-bedroom plus house: £1,500 to £2,500  
Source: LDG

**Photographs:** Barry Phillips



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A café brings some light relief from the surrounding traffic in Russell Square