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BAFTA GUIDE



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1 The Palomar in Soho is production designer David Gropman's top London pick. 2 A black truffle-artichoke dish from Helene Darroze at The Connaught, one of the hotspots Gropman toured with producer John Wells. 3 Granger & Co., where Gropman flew in for a meal while filming George Clooney's *Catch-22*. 4 Gropman used the kitchen in *The Roux* at the Langham in *Burnt*. 5 Herdwick lamb at Marcus at The Berkeley.

'It's All Very Chummy': London's Best Eats, Stays and Plays

David Gropman, production designer for Ang Lee and Lasse Hallstrom, details his favorite gastropubs and exotic cuisine for adventurous visitors: 'Don't become addicted to bacon fat on white bread' As told to Richard C. Morais



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Production designer **David Gropman** has worked on 40 movies and been nominated for two Oscars (2012's *Life of Pi*, 1999's *The Cider House Rules*). The self-effacing L.A. native also was BAFTA-nominated for his art direction on *Life of Pi*. "David is special," director **Ang Lee** tells THR. "We always talk first about the story and the drama — the design comes later as a matter of fact." Gropman also has made seven films with **Lasse Hallstrom**, including *Cider House*. "Everything David does is in good taste," says the director of his favorite production designer, adding, "Nothing he does is ever vulgar." Gropman's taste also informs his pick of projects — from **Denzel Washington's** *Fences* to **George Clooney** and **Grant Heslov's** upcoming *Catch-22* series for Hulu — and his guide to the best of London during the BAFTAs.

My message to Hollywood talent or studio executives heading to London's BAFTA awards is simple: BAFTA might be the best of the awards circuit. The English are great hosts and take incredibly good care of me and my wife, **Karen**, from our stays at **The Dorchester** on Hyde Park (during the awards, our stays were funded by the studios; from \$530) to the BAFTA-booked Mercedes-Benz cars that efficiently take us to the awards and the many parties. The awards themselves are fantastic: It's all very chummy. They also make nice gift bags, with

David Gropman and his wife, Karen.



items like Hackett London wallets and champagne. I still tote one around. It's a great canvas bag.

For the trip in which we shot most of Lasse Hallstrom's *Chocolat*, I stayed in Holland Park and often ate at **The Ladbroke Arms** around the corner, a charming gastropub I still visit. Order the mackerel pate and the venison with cabbage (about \$45). I later came across another fantastic gastropub in Notting Hill called **The Cow**, and in Bath I discovered the ploughman's lunch, one of my favorite meals. Found in every pub, it's a simple but tasty platter of local cheeses, paté, pickled onions and baguette.

It was on that extended *Chocolat* stay in the late 1990s that I fell in love with the Notting Hill/Holland Park neighborhood, and I almost always stay there now, in apartments booked through

OneFineStay or other such upmarket Airbnb outfits.

Here's my tip about shooting at Shepperton Studios and Ealing Studios (which is really fun, as you walk from stage to stage and see different people you know from the industry): Don't become addicted, as I did, to the bacon fat on white bread sandwich from Shepperton's canteen. It's called "back bacon," and it will come back to bite you. So delicious.

Other than the usual suspects, my favorite must-see is the lesser-known **Sir John Soane's Museum**, the home and library of the Victorian architect. What an interesting character he was, and the museum is filled with an amazing collection of paintings

and artifacts, including *A Rake's Progress* by **William Hogarth**.

I really got into London's Michelin-starred food scene while working on **John Wells' *Burnt*** (2015). John is such an avid researcher and wants to get everything just right, which is why we toured a lot of London's two- and three-star restaurants. Among others, we ate at **Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester**, **Helene Darroze at The Connaught**, **The Ledbury** in Notting Hill and **Marcus at The Berkeley**. That minimalist

restaurant's executive chef, **Marcus Wareing**, also was a *Burnt* consultant.

But my favorite three-star establishment was **Restaurant Gordon Ramsay** on Royal Hospital Road. The setting is beautiful,

so small and intimate, and the service exceptional. Try the seasonal menu: Right now, they are serving pressed foie gras and Cornish turbot (about \$160). The first time, no one knew why we were there, but because we ate late, the restaurant was emptying out. The maitre d' came over to the table and said, "Would you like to see the kitchen?" Uh ... yes! It was a special occasion.

On Westbourne Grove in Notting Hill, we discovered

Granger & Co. by Australian chef **Bill Granger**. It's embarrassing to say how many times we ate there during the week, because it's not inexpensive, but of course nothing in London really is. They don't take reservations, but if you go there enough times, they take care of you. I love that. Around the block is a fantastic Mexican restaurant called **Taqueria** — more Mexican tacos than L.A. tacos — and try **Pizza East** if you have young children. Wow. Never had the pizza there, but the crispy pork belly is amazing.

But my all-time favorite London restaurant is **The Palomar** in Soho. It's hard to get a reservation, so we just show up at 5:30 p.m. when it opens and get a place at the bar. But that's where you want to eat anyway. Just watching the chefs is fantastic, and you can get excellent vodka martinis from the bartender while waiting for your food. Order the m'sabacha, a kind of hummus; the sea trout tartar; and the shakshukit, which is minced lamb and yogurt (\$18).

Last summer, when we were working on *Catch 22*, my wife and I flew to London just for a weekend. We stayed at the **Sanderson London Hotel** (from \$695 for a loft suite), which I also like because it's near the West End, and had dinner at Palomar. The next day we ate lunch at Granger & Co. and then flew back to Italy. That pretty much says it all. **VTRA**



Lee



Clooney

Style

Travel

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

So You Want to Buy in London ...

Check out the go-to brokers, most desirable neighborhoods and what \$10M will buy in the Big Smoke versus the City of Angels By **Natalie Jamieson**

First question for industry insiders looking longingly to London for a second home: How is the threat of Brexit affecting the market? **Saul Empson**, director at bespoke property buying agency Haringtons, says that "Brexit has had an enormous impact — things are on hold," with one of the effects being "to cut off the supply of good value property." Sellers are staying put or keeping empty houses in their portfolios, waiting to see how the market shakes out. "There's a huge amount of volatility — and opportunity" for intrepid buyers, says **Thea Carroll** of The Buying Solution agency. "Sterling just before Christmas had a 20-month low, so buying dollar to pound, you're looking up to a 20 percent to 30 percent discount on an already softened market."



Curtis



Winslet

THE BROKERS Carroll, who works with only six to eight clients at a time — "as we give such a high service to them" — has film directors and producers as word-of-mouth clients. Similarly discreet, Quintessentially Estates works "with many celebrities and actors to help them find their dream home in London," says CEO **Penny Mosgrove**. Both agencies also specialize in helping clients connect with concierge services.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS Unlike **Kanye**, buyers may need to choose between North or West: The most desirable options for film types are Hampstead to the north of the city center and Notting Hill to the west. Says Mosgrove of Notting Hill, which boasts Soho House and Electric Cinema, one of the U.K.'s oldest movie theaters: "It has a distinct charm with its bohemian spirit, its pastel-colored houses and Portobello Road market." The 1999 film named after the nabe, written by then-resident **Richard Curtis**, still has tourists visiting the famous blue door on Westbourne Park Road. "From a film industry perspective," says **Alistair Heather** of estate agents Strutt & Parker, "it is a hop, skip and jump over to Pinewood Studios." With Hampstead to the north, Carroll says one can get "double" for the money: "There's a lot of historic architecture and lovely, broad, lateral houses." Adds Mosgrove: "Hampstead is a similarly affluent, glamorous London village. At its heart is the famous Heath, the enormous park. The **Beckhams** sled here in the winter and **Jude Law** and **Kate Winslet** are frequently spotted with their families on the Heath."

U.K. vs. L.A.: What \$10M Gets You

With square footage at such a premium in London, Empson tells clients from Los Angeles that "never have you spent so much money to live in such discomfort." A comparison between similarly priced properties in the two cities:

CLARENDON ROAD, HOLLAND PARK: \$10.8M This semi-detached, five-bedroom, five-bathroom, 3,176-square-foot Victorian house is "picture postcard with a beautiful garden and on one of the best roads in Holland Park," says Heather.

9051 BRIARCREST LANE, BEVERLY HILLS: \$10.5M The four-bedroom, five-bathroom, five-fireplace estate comes with guest house, pool, tennis court, five-car garage and koi pond with waterfall. The 6,867-square-foot property sits, says listing agent, SFJ Group's **Sally Forster Jones**, "on over 1.2 acres surrounded by lush landscaping — it's a luxurious home with a truly tranquil feel."



LONDON
\$10.8 MILLION



BEVERLY HILLS
\$10.5 MILLION

The London property is Grade II listed, with "special architectural or historic interest," according to government branch Historic England. The L.A. residence is listed by Sally Forster Jones, who co-brokered the \$85 million deal on Aaron Spelling's Manor and says, "This private compound is moments from the best Beverly Hills has to offer."