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WILL SELF LEADS FAMILY TO SAFETY AS £1M HOMES CRUMBLE

AUTHOR'S CHILDREN FLEE ROOF COLLAPSE


Kiran Randhawa, Michael Howie and Rob Parsons

THE writer Will Self told today how he led his children to safety after the roof of their home and three neighbouring £1 million Victorian townhouses came crashing down with a "tremendous roar".

He said: "It was like the front of my house fell off. I got the children out to the back of the property because it was all about to go. Once things had stopped falling off I got them out through the front door. Somebody could have been killed."

The Solicitor General Edward Garnier was among those evacuated after masonry, bricks and other debris fell into the properties and sent rubble flying onto the Stockwell street. MP Mr Garnier said his wife was inside at the time and feared a bomb had gone off.

Self was pictured outside with his Jack Russell Maglorian in the street. His wife, Guardian columnist Deborah Orr, tweeted: "Look what happened to my house while I was at the pub for 20 minutes. Our house and neighbouring houses are OVER. But no one was hurt". Building engineers were trying to find the cause of the

Continued on Page 5


Escape: Will Self stands outside his wrecked home in Stockwell, far left, with his Jack Russell Maglorian

Cameron: It's time to stop fudge over Greece

Joe Murphy
 Political Editor

DAVID CAMERON will tonight call on European leaders to stop "fudging" over the future of Greece.

In his bluntest message yet, the Prime Minister was to tell EU leaders at a crisis dinner in Brussels that a decision must be taken quickly on whether Greece stays in the euro or is allowed to crash out.

"We cannot afford to allow this issue to be endlessly fudged and put off," he was planning to tell MPs before leaving for the summit. "The Greek election should be a straightforward choice between staying in the eurozone, with all the responsibilities that entails, or taking a different path."

"The eurozone and Europe as a whole need to have contingency plans in place for both."

Mr Cameron's call came as the disastrous effects of the European uncertainty caused yet more bad news at home, with retail sales falling 1.1 per cent over the past year.

His deputy Nick Clegg used an interview with the Financial Times to declare that the Government will unlock "massive" spending this autumn on big infrastructure projects, including road, rail and energy schemes. It was seen as

Continued on Page 2

Big delays in 2012 ticket sale

THE biggest ticket sale in British history was under way today as half a million seats for eight Olympic events went up for grabs. But there was frustration for tens of thousands with complaints over lengthy waiting times on the website.

Heroin carries torch Page 3

As a new Virgin flight from Heathrow launches tomorrow **York Membery** revisits the cosmopolitan Canadian west-coast city

VANCOUVER RISING



West coast wonder: the skyline of downtown Vancouver, situated on the south-west corner of British Columbia, set against the mountainous backdrop

I WAS standing in the lobby of the swish Hotel Georgia when I bumped into Bruce Langeris, a leading Vancouver property developer who I'd met a few times over the years.

"Do you want to see a room with a view?" he asked teasingly. An hour later, we were standing in matching yellow hard hats in a half-finished apartment on the 48th storey of the adjacent landmark condominium tower that he's developing.

"Well?" he asked with a smile, as the downtown core, harbour, coastal mountains and Pacific stretched out far below.

"Wow!" I replied, the only possible response.

I must have visited Vancouver a dozen-odd times – but I'm far from alone in being fan.

The west-coast city is one of the most popular destinations with British visitors heading for Canada and North America – so it's no surprise that Virgin Atlantic are launching a new service there tomorrow.

So what's the attraction of this city of two million, an 11-hour flight away?

In short, Vancouver combines a laid-back west-coast Canadian vibe, with a cosmopolitan twist and an old-fashioned English courtesy (courtesy of the colonial connection). What's more, it boasts a stunning natural setting between the coastal mountains and the Pacific, on the edge of a vast natural wilderness. Oh, and a touch of Hollywood-style glamour too.

The city has grown dramatically in recent years, thanks in part to it co-hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics (which has seen the city gain an excellent downtown rail link from the airport) – and an influx of Far Eastern (mainly Hong Kong Chinese) migrants, whose arrival has fuelled a real estate

boom that has seen a string of glittering downtown apartment blocks shoot up.

But so far at least, the building boom hasn't compromised the city's trump card: its proximity to the Great Outdoors.

The first thing that I do after checking in is to take a walk around picturesque English Bay, or hire a bike on Denman Street and cycle the sea wall that circles Stanley Park – one of the world's great urban parks.

Some visitors use Vancouver primarily as a springboard to explore the wilds of British Columbia, but in truth

you can get a flavour of the Great Outdoors on the city's doorstep – indeed, it's a mere bus ride away.

As soon as I'm over the jetlag, I head for Grouse Mountain on the North Shore to do the "Grouse Grind" – a pulse-quickening, thigh-straining hike up an impossibly steep, two-mile wooded hiking trail.

Last time around I did it in about 45 minutes and was feeling rather pleased with myself, until I bumped into a super-fit 60-year-old half-Aboriginal lady at the top who told me her time was five minutes faster. (Handily, there is a restaurant at the top of the moun-

tain, and a cable car down.) The city's increasing cosmopolitanism has impacted on the city in a positive way – not least in the multi-million pound refurbishment of the city's landmark 1920s-era Hotel Georgia (where everyone from the Queen to the Beatles has stayed), now restored to her former glory.

The new arrivals have helped give the city a sophistication it once lacked, and had a big impact on the culinary scene – much appreciated by the Hollywood stars regularly in town (the city has been dubbed 'Hollywood North' and is one of North America's biggest film and television production centres).

Twenty-first century Vancouver now lays claim to some of Canada's, if not North America's, finest restaurants.

On my first visit in the early Nineties I was offered salmon for lunch and dinner on the same day – and much as I love fish, you can have too much of a good thing. Nowadays you're spoilt for choice and can opt for sushi, Chinese, West Coast fusion – or salmon.

The latest must-visit restaurant is Hawksworth – founded by chef David Hawksworth, whose training as a chef included a stint in London.

Named 'Canada's Best New Restaurant' by Canada's Maclean's magazine last year, its pan-roasted Pacific sablefish is to die for – and if you're a late riser, I can recommend the brunch. The downtown eatery set within the Hotel Georgia is also a good place to star-spot – Robert Redford dined there last year while in town shooting his new movie, *The Company You Keep*.

For all the trendy restaurants, bars and fashion stores (such as

Roots, the iconic Canadian clothing chain) that dot the West End, don't miss out on some of the city's lesser-known gems off the beaten track.

My favourite drinking haunt is the Railway Club, which might be just a few blocks from the Hotel Georgia but doesn't really figure on the tourist map. A throwback in a way to the spit and sawdust Vancouver of the past, it's the perfect place to catch a live band – and perhaps see a star of tomorrow in the making.

"A few years back, a couple of young crooners regularly sang here," an expat newsman pal told me over a pint. "They were both nice fellas – but one of 'em (Michael Buble) went on to become a star – and the other just disappeared."

Funnily enough, on my last day in Vancouver, as I was (regrettably) preparing to fly home, I bumped into Bruce Langeris again.

"Hey, Bruce, any chance of a discount on one of those apartments?" I asked cheekily.

"I'll tell you what," he replied with a grin, "I'll throw in the view for free."



Coastal playground: (anticlockwise, from left) Hawksworth restaurant set within the historic Hotel Georgia; dockside dining; colourful Totem poles in Stanley Park, Vancouver



DETAILS VANCOUVER

Virgin Atlantic now flies from Heathrow to Vancouver, returns from £599, virgin-atlantic.com

The Rosewood Hotel Georgia, doubles from £244 room only, rosewoodhotels.com

■ hawksworthrestaurant.com
■ therailwayclub.com