





Going virtual

With physical viewings halted due to social distancing, agents are getting creative

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Whether its **governments using mobile phone technology** to gauge whether their populations are abiding by social distancing rules or economists tracking **real time data** to ascertain the impact of Covid-19 on the global economy, we are all relying more heavily on technology during these unprecedented times.

The real estate industry is no different.

Social distancing rules in large parts of the US and Europe have meant a halt to all property viewings. In response, agents and brokers are getting creative when it comes to communicating with clients by entering the virtual world.

Until now, virtual tours or viewings have primarily been the preserve of two groups. Firstly, international buyers who have used the technology as a simple screening process to whittle down a property list, ensuring they make efficient use of their time, in what is often a weekend trip to the location of choice. And secondly, luxury home owners, who have used

As my colleague [Tom Bill highlights](#), Knight Frank's UK teams are taking advantage of technology to work through the current period of tight restrictions. From videos to live broadcasts and from 3D cameras to drone films, agents are discovering that the technology is noticeably more sophisticated than it was just a few years ago.

But, perhaps not surprisingly, it is China where virtual viewings have really taken off. In China, over 1.24 million virtual viewings were made between 1 February and 9 of February, when Covid-19 was rising at its fastest rate, with viewings up almost 60% year-on-year according to online housing platform Beike.

Knight Frank's [Alex Koch de Gooreynd](#) has noticed more requests for property videos in recent weeks. According to Koch de Gooreynd, "Senior executives who are used to criss-crossing the globe find themselves in uncharted territory with time on their hands and a number are using it to undertake some of the due diligence needed in relation to their second home purchase."

For one prospective buyer looking at [a chalet in Verbier](#), the travel ban put paid to his plans for a second visit before the season's end. Instead, however, our partner on the ground, Annabelle Common from Naef Prestige Knight Frank, managed to deliver a drone video within three days for the client, to enable him to view the property whilst in lockdown in Milan. The drone video goes one-step further than Google Maps, allowing the buyer to gauge the approach to the property and the proximity to the piste.

"In those markets where second homes are rented throughout the high season and access can be challenging for prospective buyers, whether that's a villa on the Algarve or a ski chalet in Verbier, sellers are increasingly likely to see the benefits of a video or a virtual viewing," adds Koch de Gooreynd.

One example of a [virtual tour](#)

Super-prime developers are also recognising the value of an online visual tour as a means of reaching a diverse mix of potential buyers spread across the world at a time when social distancing rules apply.

“The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria has worldwide name recognition, and even before the official launch of sales, we had several international buyers purchase sight-unseen. We were contacted directly by an interested buyer living in Australia who had fond memories of his stays at Waldorf Astoria New York.

Dan adds: “We were able to show him the development and identify a residence for him completely virtually, relying on a live video tour of the residential gallery with the sales team, combined with digital marketing materials. He signed a contract to purchase a residence in mid-March.”

Dan continues: “We fully appreciate the social and health imperative for people to stay home at this time, and we encourage interested buyers to remain at home while we virtually bring the sales presentation to them. Technology provides a window to connect with our interested buyers across the globe, which we can execute seamlessly.”

For more information on [The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria New York](#) please contact [Claire Locke](#)

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