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2012 Multimillion Dollar Homes with Big Surprises



When the housing market started hitting the skids in 2008, mega-mansions and the very high end properties seemed to hold their own. Sometime a little over a year ago, we watched as mansion after mansion started appearing at hugely discounted rates, and when the flood hit, we wondered if it would ever end. There were so many, after a while they all started looking alike and we were no longer left in awe but were experiencing slight pangs of boredom.

All of a sudden spring of 2012 arrived and houses were selling, the great Florida oceanfront condos were disappearing, mega mansions were selling, and homes taken off the market were put back on . . . at a higher price. At TopTenRealEstateDeals.com we were all eyes and ears. Agents were so busy they were never in the office and always seemed to be with clients. Sales were happening at a rate not experienced since 2007!

Another change was also making itself apparent: The mansions with the real excitement were just starting to hit the market. It was enough to make our heads spin and our pulses race.



After an in-depth look at today's exciting mega offerings, the researchers at TopTenRealEstateDeals.com have rounded up the cream of the crop of these imaginative super homes guaranteed to thrill and amaze.

How would you like to live on a sandy beach and lie in bed under an open roof to count falling stars before falling to sleep.

It makes counting sheep passe! Or you live in New York, are always in a hurry with no patience for running up and down the stairs. So take the slide!

You could be a history buff with paneling from King James II's hunting lodge, circa 1650 or have a speakeasy hidden behind shelves of library books. Or for nature lovers, what about living inside your own jungle?



Prepare to be awed while we welcome you to tour some of the most spectacular homes today and discover the remarkable surprises they hold within their walls. It's time to see American ingenuity in action!

1. The Penthouse Slide!



Bed(s): 4 | Bath(s): 4 | Square Footage: 2,400 | Price: \$3,990,000

Get tired of dragging yourself up and down the stairs to the second floor? What about carrying that huge armful of laundry down the stairs to the first floor laundry, tempting fate for a head over heels tumble? Here's a glamour penthouse that is guaranteed to change your attitude. Walk up - slide down! Wheeee! Laundry? Just throw it down the slide and follow it down. Just be sure to keep the upstairs landing nice and neat since every guest who walks through the door won't be able to resist.

Rarely does so much glamour come with so much fun, not to mention the conversation piece of the century. Formerly owned by 27-year-old pro poker player Phil Galfond, who moved to Canada when the U.S. Feds cracked down on Internet gambling, it's said that he installed the helical slide so he could quickly get back to his computer during game breaks. In fact, Phil purchased the upstairs apartment and the downstairs unit and combined them into a duplex, adding a snappy Italian-made "Rintal" stair to ascend in style. The slide is housed in an 18' tall glassed-in atrium with glass railings.

With over 2,400sf, the penthouse is accessed via a private keyed elevator and also includes a media-game room, home office, a private roof deck and two large glass walled terraces. Floors are white maple hardwood and the kitchen is resplendent with Leibherr, Bosch and stone countertops. Located in the East Village, amenities include a common area landscaped roof terrace with black marble bar and pool and private cabanas, a 24-hour doorman and concierge. There is also a BBQ grill area, a fitness center and courtyard garden.

2. Beach House with Retracting Roof!



Bed(s): 4 | Bath(s): 5 | Square Footage: 2,550 | Price: \$6,499,000

Starry nights, the full moon . . . ET? Yes, just by looking at the ceiling in your own beach house . . . As if looking out to see the beach wasn't enough! At first stunned by the 3-story glass entry foyer, looking skyward is an architectural marvel of design with its retractable glass ceiling crown - just a taste of what is yet to come.

Opulence abounds in every square inch of this home that opens from every level with floor to ceiling retractable glass walls for views across sandy beach to the Pacific's horizon. True California beach living has been achieved with indoor-outdoor living where the sounds of the surf, ocean breezes and starry nights become as much a part of one's day as waking up in the morning. When it's time for total privacy, however, with the touch of a button, glass walls close and another button brings down window coverings.

The tastefully designed living room will delight family and guests alike with its fireplace and spectacular glass walled Jacuzzi, an elegant and unexpected feature geared to please. The kitchen is pure gourmet with a wall overlooking the beach, elegant dining area and exquisite materials such as the opalescent glass bar top. High-end appliances will make regular mealtime a pleasure and entertaining exciting for both guests and cook. Creature comforts are enhanced by Smart Home technology as it caters to every electronic desire including an indoor/outdoor surveillance system, one-touch fireplace, and automatic lighting, audio/visual and window coverings. Most homes today have a media room, but unlike all the rest, this home has three home theaters featuring surround sound and 50 inch plasma screens. An expansive master suite on the oceanfront features its own private balcony and a luxurious bathroom with a steam shower and spa tub. Star gaze as you soak away your troubles and luxuriate in this unbelievable contemporary-design where the roof retracts at the touch of a button exposing the vast night sky.

Enjoy an evening BBQ beachside on the patio, torches lit, while you toast the sunset and the end of another glorious day.

3. Earthship with Waterfall & Jungle!



Bed(s): 3 | Bath(s): 2 | Square Footage: 5,400 | Price: \$1,500,000

Before you scoff once again at the Hippie Movement, and while you were out there practicing the Yuppies that is quickly bringing you to post-consumerism ruin, maybe it's time to be honest and say that maybe they had something after all! Whether it was the LSD or their innate ability to see the future, the ones who persevered have been creating and fine-tuning the earthship while the rest of us have been oblivious - until now. It's an idea for alternative living that has finally come into its own. No need to take a trip to the tropics or move to another country to save money when you can live in a sustainable tropical jungle inside your own home In New Mexico, USA!

Sunshine, orchids hanging from rocks, fruit trees and only the sound of a trickling waterfall in a home with no electric bill, organic vegetables and herbs at your fingertips and an endless supply of fresh fish at the drop of a hook. Your own Garden of Eden without the serpents! This elegant home is sure to excite the imagination of all who wish to regain

control of their lives and their pocketbooks without giving up the creature comforts we've come to enjoy.

Based on the belief that we're not free until we live free, Mike Reynolds, the Earthship Biotope architect of The Phoenix earthship, has described it this way: "There's nothing coming into this house, no power lines, no gas lines, no sewage lines coming out, no water lines coming in, no energy being used ... We're sitting on 6,000 gallons of water, growing food, sewage internalized, 70 degrees [or 21 degrees C] year-round ... What these kind of houses are doing is taking every aspect of your life and putting it into your own hands ... A family of four could totally survive here without having to go to the store."

New Mexico earthship includes interior waterfall in the living room and a jungle in which you can catch fresh fish for dinner.

4. Philadelphia Speakeasy & Hunting Lodge!



Bed(s): 8 | Bath(s): 9 | Square Footage: 11,000 | Price: \$4,750,000

Run your fingers over paneling over four centuries old. Imagine what these walls saw inside the King James II hunting lodge from whence they came? Move then from the 1650's to the early 1930's to find the secret bookcase that when pushed, swings open to the Speakeasy Bar, so cleverly and completely hidden from potential raids. Reading history is one thing, having the honor of touching the real thing is probably as close to a going-back-in-time experience as most will ever have. Touching brings to life stories with meanings never fully grasped from the written word. Copperwood Estate, the French Normanesque castle in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania holds this special magic as few others can.

Built in 1932, Prohibition had already been going strong for 12 years with no end in sight. For those who could afford it, building a Speakeasy into a home then was as prevalent as a room devoted to media viewing is today. Both represent the Then & Now home entertainment preferences of the time. Copperwood Estate was and is one of Chestnut Hill's grandest estates. Majestically sprawling its 11,000sf across more than 5 acres of lawns, evergreens and flowering trees with pool, tennis court and 3-bedroom guest cottage, it's a vision of stone walls and courtyards with towering chimneys with the acreage abutting Wissahickon Park, creating an estate cloaked in privacy.

Completely updated for today's lifestyle, some of the new features include a large new kitchen with dining and sitting room adjoined by butler's pantry, family room, billiards room, wet bar, and bowling alley for casual entertaining. There are also his-and-hers offices with a conference room. Large fireplaces are found in many of the estate's main rooms and bedrooms.

5. Miami Mansion with Moat!



Bed(s): 8 | Bath(s): 10 | Square Footage: 10,124 | Price: \$10,900,000

No, it's not a large swimming pool, it's a moat to thwart rampaging Crusaders. This amazing property is a dream come true for lovers of the Medieval; for those who are tired of glass and steel or those for whom a Tara-style plantation holds no interest.

A study in perfect symmetry, the property was designed and owned by master builder Charles Sieger. Looking like a string of diamonds, the property is entered through a long driveway that goes across a bridge and into a diamond shaped motor court accented by a fountain. The castle was built in 2007 and has 10,124sf of living space which contains 8 bedrooms, 10 baths and is 3-stories tall with an elevator. There is also a media room, recreation room, a civilized master bath with a bidet, formal rooms, eat-in kitchen with breakfast room and a loft. A separate guest house is on the grounds along with formal gardens, a koi pond, swimming pool and twin gazebos. The gardens are formal, symmetrical and quite calming, transporting one back to centuries past.

The only thing missing? Peacocks strutting on the grounds. You know you can't have a castle without peacocks. A project for the new owner. For the man who would be king, over 10,000 square feet of castle, Crusader security included.

6. 3D Theater & Underground Rifle Range!



Bed(s): 7 | Bath(s): 10 | Square Footage: 44,416 | Price: \$78,800,000

Not your everyday mega-mansion, this stately Padian home is sited on almost 8 acres in one of the most expensive zip codes in the country, Bradbury, California. It's the house that entertains you . . . and your any sized guest list. Sheathed in French limestone from walls to outdoor living spaces, and built with the most valuable materials brought in from around the world, this brand new elaborate compound wants for nothing. All you have to do is arrange for deliveries and you'll never have need to leave the estate; neither will you tire of seeing the same walls since it takes time to traverse 44,416sf of living space, not to mention experiencing the surprise amenities!

Grand rooms include vaulted 40' ceilings, 6 fireplaces, a chef's kitchen with pizza oven, a walk-in refrigerator and freezer and a walk-in butler's pantry. Included in the 7 bedrooms are two master suites and to truly get away from it all is an inspiring 2-story library that will make you forget about the computer and have you rereading the classics. For conventional recreation, invite your guests into the 15 person Jacuzzi and a swim in the raised infinity-edged pool, or a wine tasting in the 2,000 bottle cellar. But here comes the fun! For unconventional recreation, how about the 3D movie theatre, or fishing in the

temperature controlled trout pond with its 2-story waterfall. Not enough? How about a turn at the subterranean firing range? Another possibility is a serious poker game in the amazing poker lounge. Endless amazement, endless enjoyment and space enough to share with all your friends, family and business associates.

At the end of the day, nightcap in hand, it's a perfect time to gaze out over the city lights and the vast Pacific and contemplate how it feels to have achieved heaven on earth.

7. The Disco House!



Bath(s): | Square Footage: 16,000 | Price: \$8,900,000

Totally hip, totally new . . .and it made a local neon manufacturer a wealthy man! It's pure Hollywood - the Hollywood that we all expect with glitz, glamour, and contemporary style. No need to crane your neck for a view of the Hollywood sign since your own is spanned along the wall of the 40' pool, casting its red neon glow across the

nighttime patio. It's a home guaranteed to light up your life and thrill your guests, who will forever be fighting for invitations. This is the house where memories will be made that will last long into your old age when they really count... Here's where you can say you set the town on its ear when you tell your grandchildren tales of the glamour life. But wait! We're not there yet, so it's time to get started by owning the home that's the talk of the town.

If you're wondering how good taste and neon go together, this fabulous house with its own disco, is all glass perched over Lake Hollywood with spectacular city views. There are enough bedrooms and baths so when partying friends feel the need to crash rather than drive, you can still live totally undisturbed. Two of the many bedrooms are master suites and the main master has exceptional his-and-hers outfitted dressing rooms. There is also a movie theatre with a 160" screen, a fully equipped gym, pool table and ping pong. Travel between floors via the floating glass staircase or elevator with serious "wow" factor.

It's the entertainment that is the piece de resistance. Spanning 80' and opening to the pool deck and view of your own Hollywood sign, is a delightful Disco. It has all the trappings that make a party come alive with well designed lighting, lots of neon and of course, the bar and sound system. Cleverly conceived, guests can dance the night away or gather into cozy groups for more laid back conversation. Maybe it's time to make your own Hollywood history!

8. The Giant Guitar Entry Drive!



Bed(s): 15 | Bath(s): 22 | Square Footage: 50,000 | Price: \$13,900,000

Elvis would have loved a mansion with a landscaped, monster-sized guitar leading up to his front door, but since he's no longer around, all arguments to the contrary, maybe Garth or Kenny would be a perfect match. It was certainly built for guitar-loving royalty. The aerial view of the guitar entrance is stunning with perfect symmetry, leaving no doubt in one's mind as to what they're viewing. And if you're amazed by that, the view on Google Earth is even more impressive. You see the length of the neck and the tuners too! Even the sound hole is represented by a fountain appearing blue from the air. Did the landscape architect hover over in a helicopter to check on his work? You decide.

Don't let the one-of-a-kind guitar entrance fool you into thinking this is just one more ho-hum mega mansion built with superstar big bucks and no taste. Instead, it's as though Buckingham Palace was mysteriously transported to Birmingham, Alabama. There's a reason. The elaborate, artful details are the product of the International Fine Art Conservation Studios, Inc. (IFACS), which is also responsible for much of the opulence of the real Buckingham Palace!

Building materials exceed all expectations with antique light fixtures, marble, limestone, maple floors, slate roof, copper gutters and mahogany doors and windows. The quality of the artistically detailed ceilings and wall murals is a rare find. Also exceptional is the kitchen (culinary arts center) adorned with pheasants' tails and filled with exotic wood fluted columns, which would bring tears of joy to any chef, professional or otherwise. The sophisticated Crestron control system manages all electronics and the house also has a commercial elevator, large office and 25-seat movie theatre. Easily large enough to entertain all members of the Grand Ole Opry, a huge extended family for the holidays, or host a grand charity gala, visits to this home will not be soon forgotten.

Horse lovers will rejoice in the carpeted stable with automatic waterers and state-of-the-art facilities for horse maintenance and riding-training areas. This 27-acre estate will capture the hearts of everyone, both family and guests.

9. Arizona Fun House!



Bed(s): 5 | Bath(s): 6 | Square Footage: 10,501 | Price: \$5,699,000

Pleasant Valley is a major haven for many celebrities such as Joe Garagiola, Muhammad Ali and Alice Cooper. Erma Bombeck lived there until she died in 1996, and even Charles Boyer lived there. Now you might become Joe's or Muhammad's neighbor in this phenomenal Pleasant Valley fun house!

New to the market, the 10,501sf home is a private walled and gated paradise, built with pure pleasure in mind. Starting in the motor court is a 15-foot Cantera stone fountain beckoning you to see the luxuries that abound inside. All the accoutrements of the elegant lifestyle from design to woodwork and the best of finishes are spread out before you. Walls of disappearing glass in both the main house and guest house open to the amazing outdoor space with mountains beyond. The house is controlled by Crestron so you'll barely have to lift a finger. The kitchen has it all with Sub-Zero, Wolf and Miele, a zinc-topped island along with a complete outdoor kitchen with wood burning pizza oven.

The outdoors is stunning and designed for play. Lushly landscaped, there is a heated lazy river pool with a slide, waterfalls and two spas. To top that, there is a 5-hole professionally designed pitch-and-putt golf course. Visitors will enjoy the privacy and comfort of the guest house after a full day of backyard activity in the warm Arizona sunshine.

10. Esquire Apartment with Holograph Woman!



Bed(s): 3 | Bath(s): 4 | Square Footage: 7,000 | Price: \$19,000,000

In addition to postcard views that sweep from the Hudson River and the Statue of Liberty to Manhattan, this spectacular Brooklyn penthouse actually once had a ghost. When *Esquire* magazine opened the apartment last year as its “Bachelor Pad of the Year,” one of the home's only-in-

New York features was a hologram named Charlotte. According to the design team, Charlotte was a “life-sized digital ghost who is playful and witty, always making you guess where she is going to appear next. She can be seen swimming through the atrium, relaxing inside the bar, and walking within the walls of the lounge.” Although Charlotte has disappeared, there are still lots of happy surprises to be found in this 1915 landmark Clock Tower Building home.

Enter the “pad” and the first thing you'll see is the unbelievable 14' see-through glass clock windows that gave the building its name. There are four of these giant clocks, all electronically synchronized to show exactly the same time. Talk about a conversation piece! No need here for a tacky wall clock, or much chance that anyone will copy your unique style.

We picture the new owner as intelligent, world traveled, ahead of the pack, dresses impeccably and this amazing apartment reflects all those qualities. The stunning glass elevator takes you to the clean lines of the master suite which you will furnish in lush fabrics and art and upwards to a glass roof terrace with glowing floor tiles from the light below, with its 400sf glass enclosed space and another 400sf open terrace. The study provides the perfect setting for those conservation days when you work from home. The technology loft is capable of having your social media or computer desktop slanted across the ceiling that allows you to view in large scale, and room by room you will make unimaginable discoveries of quality, understated glamour and futuristic technology. A

perfect example of the recycling of a historic building into an internal work of contemporary art.