

MEET THE READERS



Name: Jan and Greg Bartel
Age: 42 and 41
Where: London to Liguria
Occupation: Computer programmers
Contact: www.colletta.it

WHY BUY IN... LIGURIA

● Liguria boasts magnificent mountainous countryside and a glamorous coastline



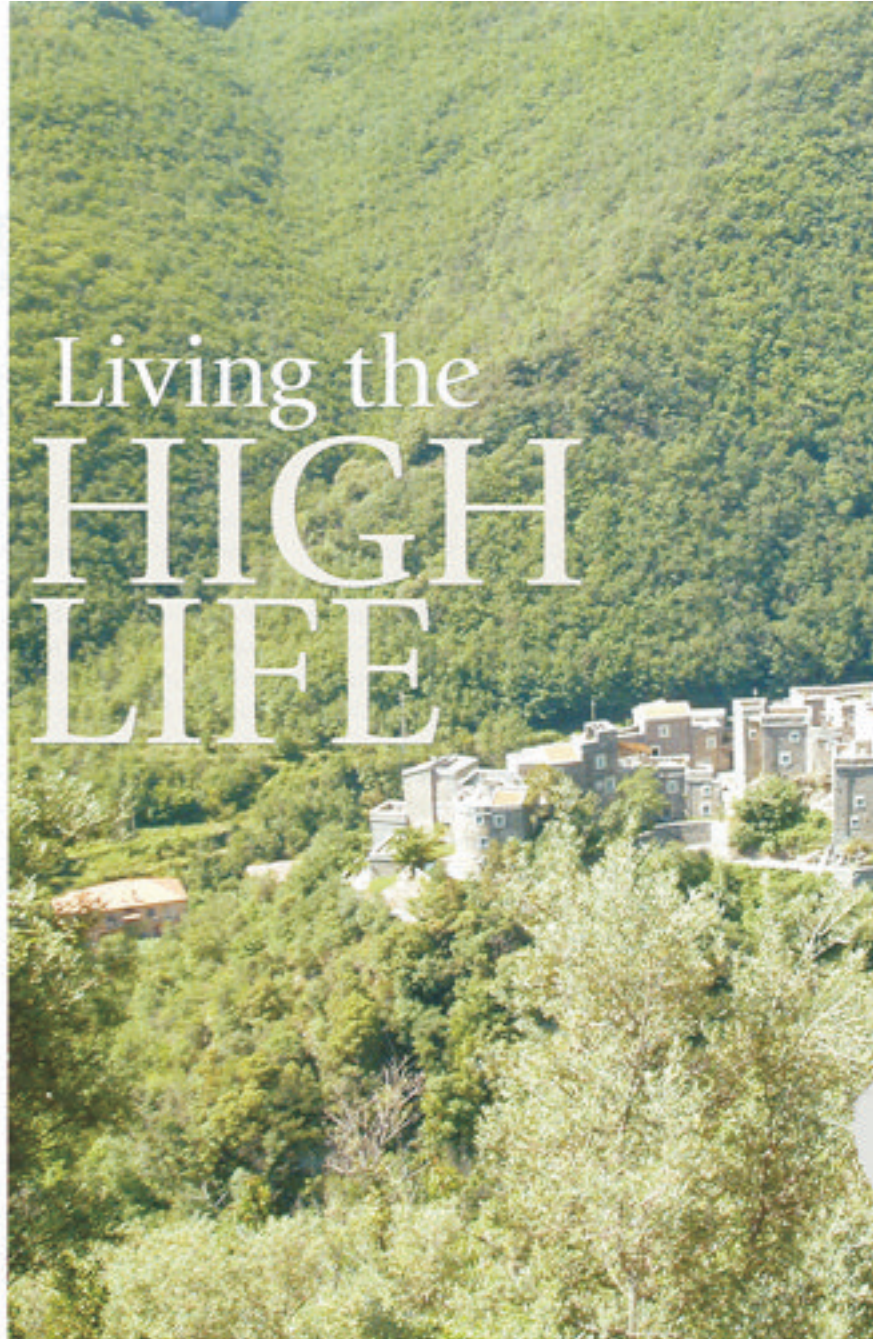
● The region is extremely easy to reach from the UK, with both Nice and Genoa airports within easy reach

● Much of the region is still relatively undiscovered and

does not experience the overcrowding you might find in Tuscany or Umbria

Do you have a story to tell?

If you want your relocation story to appear in these pages, write to *The Italian Magazine*, Merricks Media, 3-4 Riverside Court, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3DZ or email fred.dutton@merricksmedia.co.uk



Living the HIGH LIFE

Chrissy Williams speaks to a couple who have traded life in London for a unique village high in the beautiful Ligurian hills

Greg and Jan, both computer programmers by trade, have the luxury of being able to do their jobs wherever they want. The Australian-born couple moved to the UK seven years ago, and then decided to buy property in Italy after stumbling across the picturesque town of Colletta – a dramatic village set high in the Ligurian mountains.

They now consider themselves to be truly integrated into village life, participating in a number of projects that help to preserve the heritage of the local area. Jan spoke to *The Italian*

Magazine about their experiences of moving out of a bustling city and into to the mountains.

THE ITALIAN MAGAZINE: What first attracted you to life in Italy?

JAN BARTEL: We had made a couple of holiday trips to Italy in the past and always enjoyed ourselves very much. We find Italians to be very friendly people, with outstanding food and the best coffee in the world.

We discovered Colletta by accident on an internet search engine whilst looking for somewhere to stay in Europe with



internet facilities, so that we could have a working holiday. We saw a couple of pictures of Colletta perched like some fabulous castle and were totally smitten with the idea of a medieval village that had broadband internet.

The reality was even better than the pictures and we were thoroughly hooked after our first coffee in the sunshine in the piazzetta, watching the eagles soar over the valley. Within just a few days, we were on smiling and waving basis with just about everybody in the village. By the end of the first week we were making enquiries about apartments available to buy.

TIM: How did you go about finding your home? Was it a long search?

JB: We asked around and were directed to Luca Catalano from ReallInvest who is the estate agent

associated with the village. He showed us a couple of available apartments and we instantly saw one that was right for us. We did try and be dispassionate and look for other properties in the area to gauge the market, but there was just no escaping that Colletta is truly unique.

TIM: Did you have to do any work on your home?

JB: The whole village had been abandoned in the 1950s and the weeds and creepers had taken over. The renowned Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo was engaged to restore it, but at the same time bring it into the modern world by installing high speed internet, making it the first telecommuting village in Italy. When we purchased our apartment, the majority of the village was finished, but each apartment

is only completed internally upon purchase. The restoration development company for the village, Colletta SRL, did all the work to bring the apartment to completion.

TIM: What have been the main challenges in keeping your work in the UK and your home in Italy?

JB: It's really been pretty smooth. For the past couple of years we have been doing less on-site work and more internet-based work. Our clients often find us over the internet and are happy for development to take place remotely. We have also managed »

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Clockwise from left: The village of Colletta; the Barlet's home enjoys fantastic views; the village's ancient buildings have been carefully restored



“THERE IS JUST NO ESCAPING THAT COLLETTA IS TRULY UNIQUE”

to incorporate the village into our work, as we wrote the website for the village (www.colletta.it) and software to manage the rental of the apartments from the website.

TIM: Have you been able to pick up the language easily?

JB: Neither of us spoke any Italian before our first visit to the village. We took a three-week introductory class before coming to live in the village in 2004, and since then we've had a further smattering of lessons. We've picked up enough to be able to make friends with Italian-only speakers now. At first, when we went to dinner parties, most of what was happening went straight over our heads, but now we can participate in conversations and be understood. TV is still a bit too hard for us though. Luckily, the SKY satellite TV service here broadcasts in English,

TIM: Have you found it easy to make friends and integrate into Italian life?

JB: Being in Colletta, you've almost got a ready-made social life with the various owners, their friends and renters coming to stay. Every weekend there is somebody new coming or going and another excuse to have drinks or dinner together. We've made friends with a number of the Italian owners in the village and people from the surrounding area too. We have been very touched by how warmly people have welcomed us into their homes. They have also been unfailingly encouraging in our attempts to communicate in butchered Italian.

One feature of life in the hinterlands is that every village, no matter how small, has at least one celebration a year, usually a feast associated with

the local produce. Here we have a big party to mark the completion of the restoration work on the village with a barbecue, live music and dancing, as well as our own olive festival, where everybody gets together for a weekend of olive picking, dining and socializing.

TIM: What have been the reactions of family and friends to your move?

JB: It's easy to stay in touch. The village is wired for high-speed internet access, so we can easily email our friends and family. We also use the Skype internet telephone service too, which means we can make calls to Australia and the UK for a fraction of the cost of a fixed line or mobile. Everyone that we know is very happy about our move, it's a great excuse for them to come to Italy! Greg's family have visited us every year and always bring some of their friends along. **TIM**

Clockwise from top left: Colletta's atmospheric alleys; before and after the restoration; attention to detail in the village; ol' fresco dining