

the italian

JULY/AUGUST 2008 £3.9

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magazine

Seductive Siena

Lose yourself in the Gothic splendour of this Tuscan jewel

INSIDER'S ROME

Discover the hidden secrets of the Eternal City

Lawrence of ITALIA

D.H. Lawrence's love of Italy, from where he wrote his most famous works

WIN!
A gorgeous villa break for four in Puglia



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Italy has historic buildings in abundance, but just because a home might be hundreds of years old on the exterior, that doesn't mean they don't offer every mod-con on the inside. For buildings of culture and character with modern comforts and convenience, look no further...

The new RENAISSANCE

Italy is undergoing a 21st-century property 'Renaissance', with a huge choice of older-style homes that have been lovingly and painstakingly renovated to offer everything today's buyer is looking for.

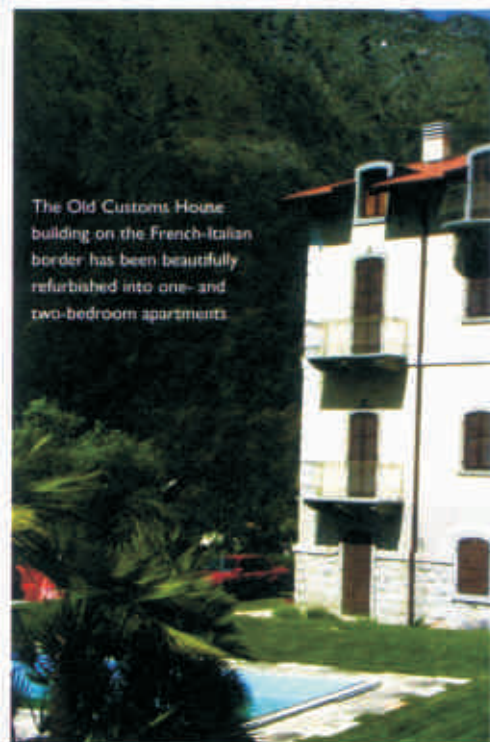
There are fascinating, ancient buildings that have been cleverly brought into the 21st century and presented to the buying public ready for occupation – many are often with furniture included, sometimes locally sourced to give continuity of rustic charm. Others are derelict, needing love, time, energy and a certain amount of money, but offering unique locations often with spectacular views.

Italy offers everything from beach resorts to cultural sites, skiing in the mountains to the famous and glamorous Italian lakes. In addition, there are areas of unspoilt undulating countryside – think Tuscany

– to exciting cities such as Milan and Rome. There is the exquisite Amalfi Coast and, of course, Liguria, beautiful in itself but also the neighbour of the French Riviera.

History gives Italy its culture and style, but for the modern-day visitor and those looking to buy property there, Italy has so much more. It has 5,310 miles of shoreline; it is an international playground; it has beautiful scenery and is world-renowned for its wines.

Before you set off to buy a home in Italy you need to decide – what exactly are you looking for? Maybe you want something that has the ambience of this remarkable cultural country? Or perhaps an older property to lovingly restore, or maybe find one that has already been renovated by an expert? Whatever you are looking for, Italy has it – and in abundance!



The Old Customs House building on the French-Italian border has been beautifully refurbished into one- and two-bedroom apartments.

HISTORIC HOMES FROM £100,000

One of the joys of Italy is its diversity, and what is good to know is that you don't have to be mega rich to enjoy it.

If you take time to search out smaller companies, you can find some unusual and exceptional niche properties.

For an excellent bargain you may wish to consider apartments from just £103,480. These are located in northwest Italy, close to the border with the French Riviera. The one- and two-bedroom apartments have been created within the beautifully restored Old Customs House, near the village of Airole. Just 20 miles east of Monte Carlo and 35 miles from Nice airport, these homes provide a quiet hillside location, close to the glitz and glamour of the coastal resorts; the properties are being marketed by Riviera Homes.

In Abruzzo there is a meticulous restoration of antique buildings in the historic centre of Santo Stefano di Sessanio. Lovingly restored, the homes also have the most advanced state-of-the-art technology. Recipient of a Gold Award for 'Best Renovation', these exceptional properties are for lovers of everything Italian. Luca Catalano, Executive Director of Realitalia says, "As an Italian, I love my country and the many historical buildings that have shaped the appearance of villages yet sadly have suffered from neglect. My joy is bringing back to life something that a craftsman created many years ago". Prices start from around £242,000.

THE GLAMOUR OF THE LAKES

The lakes are stunning. If you haven't taken the time to visit them you are truly missing out on something exceptional.

Each of the lakes is distinctly different



This prestigious detached villa, on the shores of Lake Como at Briennio, sits in just over half an acre of planted park.



and has its own persona. Lake Como is breathtaking, with mountains rising steeply from the lake. The western shores tend to be the most expensive and sought after.

Lake Maggiore has more tourist hotels along the shoreline, and places such as Stresa are perennial favourites. There is also a good train service to Milan.

Lake Garda is almost like a sea, as at certain points you cannot see the other side. The land at the southern end is flatter and has a Mediterranean appeal. It is busier and more commercialised. The land opening up has brought in more families to this part of the lakeside. Sirmione is the best-known resort, with its busy town centre and handsome ancient buildings. Busy with tourists during the summer months, it nevertheless has a wide appeal with plenty of pretty squares, buildings in fabulous rainbow colours, cafés, restaurants and boutiques.

On Lake Garda, waterfront properties have a high premium – between 30% and 40% – but affordable properties are available, with studio apartments from around £113,000 and two bedrooms from around £198,000, according to Linda Travella of Casa Travella.

TUSCANY: THE ITALIAN DREAM

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, Tuscany radically renewed the culture and art of the time and left its mark on Europe. From the magical city of Florence there began an era of great works of architecture, sculpture and paintings – immediately Leonardo da Vinci springs to mind. As well as Florence and its famous bridge, with dozens of tiny shops cheek by jowl, there is also Siena with its Piazza del Campo, the theatre each summer for its famous Palio.

The availability of unusual properties in this much-loved region is enormous: all seem to have a history, a view, an architectural charm, a warm and welcoming ambience.

Take, for instance, Villa Admiral. This was originally built by Giulio Medici, First Admiral of the Medicean Fleet, and still boasts the Medici coat of arms over the main entrance. This is an outstanding example of Tuscan Renaissance style. The property has 20 rooms in its 23,680 square feet, and is on the market through Precious Villas for £5 million.

CITIES FOR ROMANTICS

If you are looking to buy in cities for investment then you need to fully understand the many differences. Rome is more a holiday market. Milan is a holiday market but can often rent to business people. You need to be careful with long-term rentals and get a proper contract drawn up.

You have to have a sensible budget when buying in a city: there is always a demand so prices reflect this. If you want a good capital

growth and rental return seek the advice of a specialist who can guide you.

THE CREME DE LA CREME OF ITALIAN CHARM

Lastly, if you are looking for the crème de la crème, Italy has some of the best! Whether you want acres of vineyards, lakes and mountains or glamorous beach resorts, Italy can supply in abundance! **TIM**

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