

A Place in the Sun

MAKING THE MOST OF OVERSEAS PROPERTY

ISSUE



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BEST GOLF RESORTS
FOR NON-GOLFERS

Sixty per cent of people who buy on golf resorts don't actually play golf, so what do they – and golf widows – spend their time doing? We ask golf course expert **Peter Swain** to pick the best resorts for non-putters

1 With two world-class courses, PGA Catalunya is 15 minutes from Girona airport in north-east Spain. The beaches of the Costa Brava, skiing in the Pyrenees, and the superb art galleries and eateries of Barcelona are all less than an hour away. The new La Selva apartments are priced from €255,000 (£214,500); www.pgacatalunya.com

2 Tiger Woods' last Major win was the US Open at Torrey Pines in San Diego, southern California. As well as spectacular golf, the area has fabulous sailing and surfing, a great zoo, and a vibrant nightlife in the city's Gaslamp Quarter. Condos start at about \$225,000 (£145,000); www.homesalessandiego.com

3 Madeira is as well known for its gorgeous flora, the hilly Levada walks, old-school charm and marlin fishing as for the golf. It's now drawing a younger crowd, with chic spa hotels and adventure breaks. High above Funchal Bay, next to the heavily wooded 18 holes at Palheiro, houses and apartments (*below*) start at €295,000 (£248,200) through www.palheiroestate.com

4 Castelfalfi is a stunning medieval borgo (hilltop village) in Tuscany, an easy drive from Florence, Siena and Pisa – so, historical and gastronomic heaven. Travel giant TUI has created 27 holes of golf, revived the vineyards and olive groves, and is refurbishing 40 period apartments, starting at €230,000 (£193,500); www.castelfalfi.it



5 Orlando is one of the most visited destinations on the planet. Many theme parks, shopping and the great winter weather complement 100 or so golf courses, including five at Disney World, and the Arnold Palmer-designed masterpiece, Bay Hill. Off-resort, good two-bed condos at ChampionsGate start at about \$125,000 (£80,600); www.coldwellbankerfeltrim.com

6 Arcos Gardens near Jerez in south-west Spain appeals to the likes of ex-Ryder Cup captain Bernard Gallacher. The fabled Pueblos Blancos start just above the estate, and sherry is produced nearby. In Jerez, the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art is one of many attractions. Townhouses start at €301,000 (£253,100) through www.bartonwyatt.co.uk

7 Casa de Campo in the Dominican Republic has 13 tennis courts, an equestrian centre, polo fields, fully equipped 314-slip marina, a pristine private beach, ritzy hotel and many restaurants, as well as three exquisite Pete Dye golf courses. Close to Romana Airport, apartments start at about \$390,000 (£251,600); www.costasur.com.do

8 The Estonian Golf and Country Club is off our usual radar, but is rather special. Built through virgin forest on the Baltic coast, the clubhouse doubles as an archaeological museum; nearby Tallinn is a historical gem with friendly and inexpensive hospitality. Plots start at €100,000 (£84,100), finished houses from €400,000 (£336,200); www.golfvillas.ee/en

9 The Ca'Amata course and development at Castelfranco, near Treviso, is only 26 miles north of Venice, so non-golfers can explore the astonishing cultural, artistic and culinary heritage – not to mention the shopping – of La Serenissima. Skiing at Asiago is just 24 miles away. Villas start at €250,000 (£210,200); www.caamata.it

10 In the central Algarve, Vale do Lobo has a 14-court tennis centre to go with two excellent golf courses. Shopping and 15 restaurants in the central Praça, plus the Royal Spa, two kilometres of beach and great children's clubs make this a very family-friendly resort. Apartments start at €685,000 (£575,800); www.valedolobo.com



Below: Palheiro, Madeira.



AFFORDABLE TUSCANY

Bestselling books and celebrity residents have fuelled property prices in the hotspots of Tuscany. But the market has now corrected itself - and affordable projects are springing up, so the Tuscan dream may not be out of reach

WORDS LIZ ROWLINSON

With rolling hills topped with Cypress trees, medieval borgos and sprinkled with ancient stone farmhouses, Tuscany has long been a dream for second-home owners.

A fertile landscape steeped in vines and olives, it offers a vision of a *bella vita* that has been fuelled by a combination of bestselling books, hit films and celebrity residents.

Prices rocketed to almost unrealistic levels in the so-called "Golden Triangle" around Siena during the boom years and the typical price for a high-quality farmhouse hit around £2 million.

However prices have since adjusted, other more affordable "satellite" areas have become popular and there has been a growth in reasonably priced turnkey apartments that has meant Tuscany has got cheaper.

Plus the appetite for *Toscana* hasn't waned - despite the economic and political tumult engulfing Italy of late.

"Tuscany is where people want to be (along with the Italian lakes) and now is really the time to buy there as the weakened euro means you get more for your money," says Linda Travella of Casa Travella (www.casatravella.co.uk).

"Central/northern Tuscany - so-called Chiantishire - became so overpriced, yet now there's now more choice there and with properties coming to market with realistic

pricing from the word go, some are offering great value."

She says there is now a large choice of options if you have £500,000 to spend - and indeed still options if you've only got £100k.

As one of many examples she picks out is a three-bed detached villa 3km from the attractive Etruscan town of Volterra that offers 120m² of living space, with a loft area ripe for conversion, on 1.5 acres of land, for £294k.

Another is an old stone traditional four-bedroom, 200m² home one kilometre from Volterra, for £500,000. With separate guest quarters there's plenty of room, plus half an acre of olives and vines.

The key to Tuscany is access, she says, especially if you have rentals in mind. Ideally you need to be within 60-90 minutes of Pisa airport (like both of the above).

"You can get cheaper properties in southern Tuscany but there you're a two-hour drive from Rome airport - and the closer part (near the Lazio border) is ludicrously priced due to Italian demand for beachfront there."

Northern Tuscany offers some opportunities, though, with the Garfagnana valley - which runs up from Lucca into the mountains - one to watch, according to agents.

Whilst Casa Travella have a little two-bedroom apartment in Bagno di Lucca for €60,000 (£50k), or three-bed detached houses for €300,000 (£252k), Casa & Country has a

four-bedroom farmhouse for €450k (£377k).

"Two areas on the up in the north-west corner of Tuscany are Garfagnana and also the Lunigiana," says Gemma Bruce of Casa & Country (www.ccitalianproperty.com).

"They aren't as sought-after or known about so your money goes further, yet they still offer attractive tone houses, ancient villages steeped in culture and unspoilt countryside."

Whilst Ms Bruce's bread and butter is still £1.5m five-bedroom farmhouses with plenty of land in the key areas around Siena/Florence, she suggests that anyone with smaller budgets really ought to look at apartments in completed borgo (rural estate) renovations - for £200k-400k.

"There are a handful of them that are nearly sold out so the developer is keen to shift the final units at good prices," she says.

"They are ideal hassle-free, lock-up and leave properties to use 2-3 weeks a year, then rent out for the rest of the year," she adds.

"Just don't go for one that's unfinished as you never know if the unbuilt pool or final landscaping might get done in the current climate."

One example she cites enjoys distant views of the famous walled hilltop town of San Gimignano; the two bed, two bath 100m² apartment is on a small managed estate with a shared pool for €370,000 (£310k).

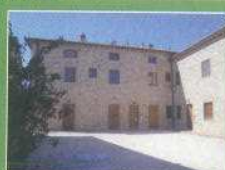
Various other examples on the market are the Castelfalfi estate, south-west of Florence, with properties from €230k (£193k through Knight Frank, www.knightfrank.com); and Savills have two-bedroom apartments at Borgo Sant'Anastasio near San Gimignano from €458,000 (£384k, see www.savills.co.uk). There are more below.

The Tuscan dream may not be quite as unattainable as you think. ☀

FOR SALE: TUSCANY FOR 500K OR LESS



Where: Siena
Price: €210,000 (£176k)
New borgo style development of 15 units sharing tennis court and a pool
chestertonhumberts.com



Where: Saline di Volterra
Price: €275,000 (£230k)
Choice of two two-bed apartments in small development with pool. One at €320,000 (£268k)
www.casatravella.co.uk



Where: Volterra
Price: €225,000 (£189k)
Two bed, two bath apartment within a farmhouse also handy for San Gimignano.
www.ccitalianproperty.com