BUYING IN ITALY

Your definitive guide to purchasing property in Italy – helping you ensure your property purchase is a total success!

ITALY BUYING GUIDE

Helping you build a life overseas

italybuyingguide.com

About this guide

We have thoroughly researched the Italian property buying process and through the course of this guide, we share our findings, including anything you need to know to ensure your property purchase is happy and successful! We hope that by the time you reach the last page, you have a well-rounded perspective on how to buy a property in Italy.

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Speak to the experts – contact our Resource Centre

Whether you've got questions about the process, or just want to talk to someone in the know, Italy Buying Guide's Resource Centre is on hand to help – just get in touch!

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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Italy Buying Guide. Here at The Overseas Guides Company (OGC), we truly believe that buying a home in Italy, or any other exciting overseas destination, is a wonderful idea.

The reasons that numerous would-be expats search for new homes in Italy are obvious: there are the beautiful hills and lakes, the ancient architectural marvels, the fantastic climate and of course the laid-back Mediterranean lifestyle. When you also consider that in some parts you can buy a detached villa, complete with swimming pool, for the same price as a flat in many parts of the UK, buying an Italian home becomes even more appealing.

Of course, there are a number of pitfalls you could fall into when buying in Italy, but the good news is that these can be easily avoided by treading each step towards completing your purchase with caution – from the planning, visiting and financing of your property, through to completion and ownership. If just one of these steps is not managed or researched carefully, problems can arise, typically leading to stress and financial loss!

No doubt you'll have read stories about British people who have run into difficulties when buying property abroad. Many of those problems facing buyers are by-products of the recent financial downturn, and they highlight why it is so important to safeguard your interests when purchasing somewhere you're not overly familiar with. Too many unsuspecting people have entered into purchase agreements blindly, signing contracts they didn't understand, not bothering to pay for legal protection or getting drawn into finance agreements that were too good to be true.

When times get tough, it's these people who have suffered the most. Make sure you're not one of them – this guide should help you to do that.

So why this guide? OGC was set up after one of the company's directors suffered an unfortunate personal experience related to an overseas property purchase. We realised that her traumatic episode could have been avoided if real, truthful and educational information had been available from the outset. With the creation of the OGC, we aimed to produce no-frills guides that recommend services and help buyers through the entire property buying process.

We hope the Italy Buying Guide makes your buying experience a safe and satisfying one. **Remember to visit our website at italybuyingguide.com**, packed full of even more information about buying property in Italy, weekly articles and a regularly updated blog written by our resident British writer there. Meanwhile, sign up to receive our weekly e-newsletter, and if you want to speak to someone about buying in Italy or moving there, **call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.**

Enjoy the guide.

Getting started

That first thought

Achieving the dream of buying property or living in Italy is possible for anyone. Like any big project, it just takes a vision and a succession of small steps that take you closer and closer to your goal. People who have successfully made the move to Italy didn't wake up one day and think, "It's official, I'm moving overseas today!" Instead, they started with a daydream – excitement at the idea of an apartment overlooking the Mediterranean or a villa with a sun-soaked terrace on which to relax and enjoy one of the local wines. From this initial daydream, tiny steps can be taken, and with each one your vision will become more and more achievable.

Why not make this the year that you start taking action? You have a choice – you can focus on continuing your life in the UK as it is, or you can focus on how great it will be to have your own place in Italy, somewhere you can enjoy regular holidays and hopefully use to generate a bit of rental income, or somewhere to move to permanently and enjoy a completely new lifestyle.

But first, you need to do your homework...

Some great first steps:

- Search the Internet
- Go to a property exhibition
- Find out about property finance for Italy
- Book a visit
- Buy a guide book
- Create a journal with your wish list

Can you actually buy property in Italy?

Nationals from European Union (EU) countries, including the UK, can buy property and live freely in Italy relatively easy. If however, your nationality falls outside the EU, while you may be able to buy property in Italy, there might be restrictions on the length of time you can spend in the country each year, and your employment options are likely to be restricted.

You can find all the information relevant to you by visiting the Italian Embassy website or through a variety of other websites. Specialist emigration organisations may offer a free consultation to educate you on your options. There are also many reputable estate agents (or developers) and legal firms that specialise in foreign property buyers in Italy, and those will be able to help you understand local procedures and laws. We can recommend the right experts to help you on your way.

Visit italybuyingguide.com or call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549 to be put in touch with one of our trusted partners, who can help advise you on the next steps.

The first step – find out what you want

Once you have decided that you are making the move to Italy, the first thing you need to do is start thinking about why you want to go and what your plans are to get there. Some readers choose to document their journey in a journal from beginning to end.

We would advise that you start thinking about the kind of property you want and where you want it to be:

- Are you dreaming of a cottage in the country or an apartment in a bustling city?
- How many bedrooms or bathrooms do you need?
- Are you determined to have a terrace, a garden and/or a swimming pool?
- Are you thinking about a holiday home that you rent out for part of the year?

Of course, all your thoughts and dreams may change, but outlining an initial plan will certainly help in the long run!

From here you can start thinking about your budget – get an idea at the outset about how much you can afford and how you will fund your property.

The more time you spend thinking about what you want, why you want it and when you want to achieve it by, the easier it will be to actually set your objective. There are so many reasons why people choose to move to Italy – identifying your wishes and goals as much as you can before you begin your process will help to ensure you achieve your dreams!

Gather the necessary information

Spend some time researching information on buying in Italy – both positive and negative! Read newspapers and magazines – look online at expat groups or forums and find out what everyone's talking about! Visit overseas property exhibitions for first-hand information and make copious notes on everything and anything. If you have any questions that you can't find an answer to, write them down so you can return to them later.

Everything that you find can be added to your brief – this should then help you along the way, keeping you focussed throughout your journey and making sure you do not get pushed off course. Make sure your budget is also prominently included – you need to ensure you do not waver from the amount you can afford, and end up falling in love with a property that you cannot realistically pay for. You will also need to consider exchange rate fluctuations and the effects this will have on your purchase price.

What would make your perfect property?

About the property:

- What area/region are you looking at? For example Tuscany, Umbria or Puglia?
- Would you like to live in the countryside, in a hilltop village, town, city, or coastal resort?
- What type of property – a modern apartment, village house, villa or maybe a quirky character home, such as a trullo, or farmhouse with outbuildings?
- Do you want to be in a touristy or more residential area? Do you want to be amongst other expats, or somewhere more Italian?
- How big does the property need to be? How many bedrooms? How many bathrooms?
- Would you prefer an old house or something new? If old, are you happy to manage a serious renovation? Or perhaps a redecoration is more in line with your plans?
- Do you want a terrace, off-road parking, a garden, pool, or perhaps some land with olive trees or vines? If rural, have you thought about connections to utilities?
- What type of view, if any, would you prefer from the property?
- What else is needed to fulfil your property requirements?
- Will it be suitable for lettings, if you intend to rent it out?

About the location:

- How far away do you want to be from local bars, shops, restaurants, markets, beaches, or the marina?
- How close do you want to be to the airport?
- Are there adequate pharmacy and medical facilities in the area?
- Do you need to be close to schools or other local amenities?
- Will you need to use public transport? If so, are there adequate links available?

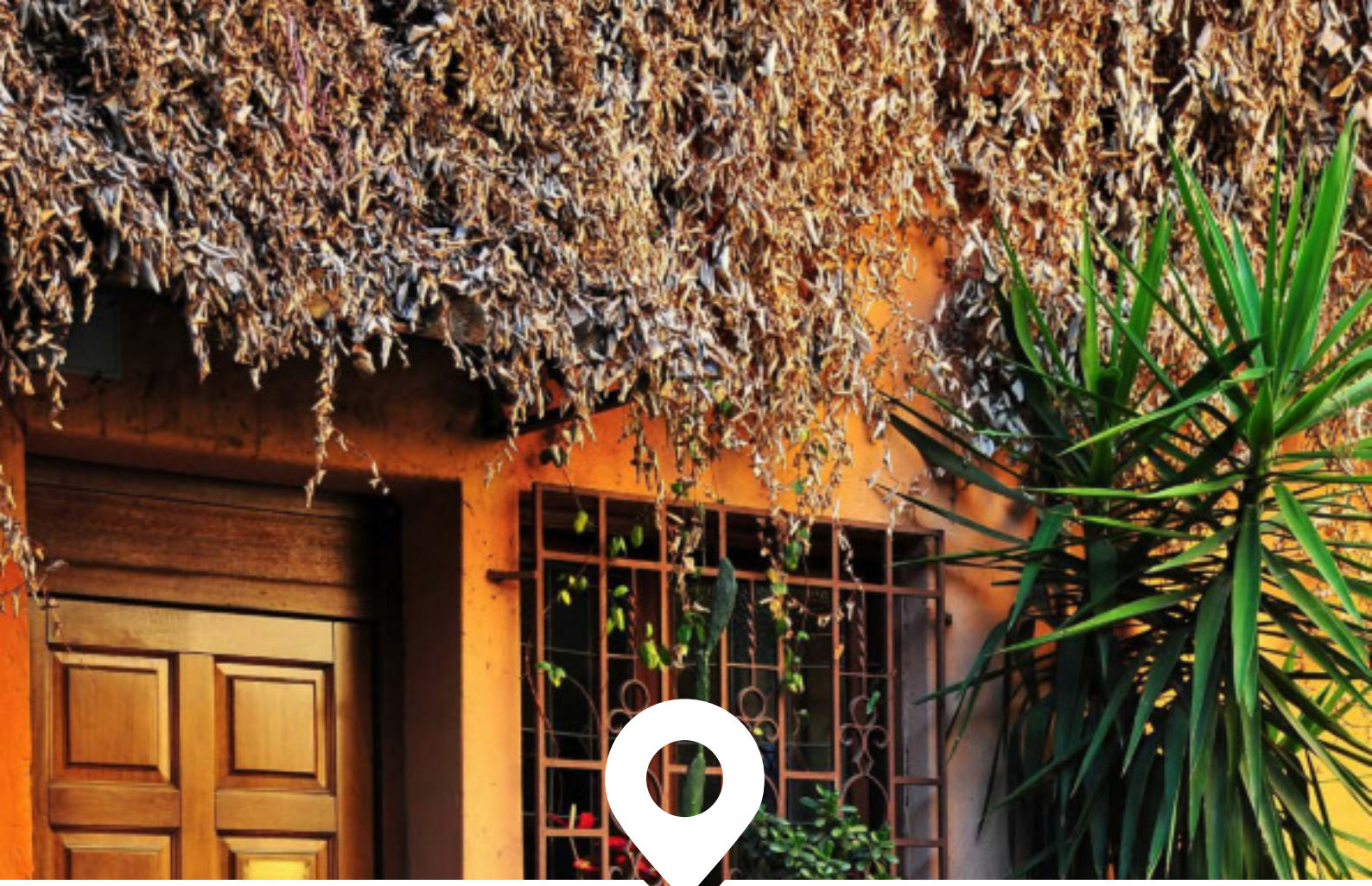
About your timings:

- When can you realistically think about viewing properties?
- When will you be in a financial position to purchase and what will your budget be?
- When would you like to be handed the keys to your new property?

Emigration Guide

The *Emigration Guide* has checklists for everything from finance, health and medical to removals, changing addresses, and much more.

To find out more, call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.



Money matters

Working out your finances

Buying a property is a huge decision in itself – buying a property in Italy is an enormous lifestyle choice and a considerable financial commitment. Your finances need to be the very first step on your journey – you need to work out exactly how much you can afford, and how you are going to afford it – savings, the sale of a UK property, a mortgage, etc. You will also need to consider the additional costs of buying in Italy, and if there are any other fees that will arise on top of the actual purchase price.

Knowing how much you can afford from the outset will ensure you don't end up disappointed by properties you can't afford!

The key financial points to consider are:

- How much money you have available to purchase a property
- Whether you are going to buy with a mortgage, and if so, how much deposit you will need, and how you will make the monthly repayments
- If you need to re-mortgage your UK home to release equity
- The additional costs on top of buying the property (taxes and fees etc.)
- Your maximum purchase price (including taxes and fees)
- The cost of maintaining and living in your property
- The effects of currency exchange rates on the cost of your property and ongoing payments

What other costs are involved in buying an Italian property?

The additional costs involved in purchasing a property in Italy will vary depending on whether you are buying a re-sale property or a new-build, and whether the property will be your primary residence or a holiday home.

For a resale property, you will need to pay Registry Tax on the 'cadastral' value – the municipal 'rateable' value, which is typically significantly less than the actual purchase price. The cadastral value will usually be 30-50% lower than the purchase price; your estate agent should know this figure, but it's a good idea to double check this with your lawyer.

If you are buying your home in Italy as your primary residence, your Registry Tax will be 2% of your cadastral value. If your property will be a holiday home, you will pay 9% of the cadastral value as Registry Tax.

Notary fees must always be paid, and these will be around €2,000- €4,000 depending on the property price. Your independent lawyer will generally charge 1% of the selling price of the property for their services, at a minimum of €2,000 + VAT (22%). The estate agent's fees are also calculated on the actual property price; the actual percentage will vary depending on the agent, but generally this will be around 3%.

There is no Registry Tax on the purchase of new-build properties, but VAT must be paid instead; this is levied at 4% of the purchase price for a primary residence, and 10% for a holiday home. It is also worth noting that agricultural land will also mean a higher rate of tax.

You will also need to think about surveyor/ architect (known as a 'geometra') fees and utilities suppliers – especially if you are buying a country property without water or anything else connected. We recommend speaking to your agent or lawyer to get a clear idea of all necessary additional costs before you make an offer.

There is also the annual Municipal Tax (IUC) to be taken into account. This consists of three separate taxes:

- **IMU:** this tax is paid on the possession of real estate assets. Owners are exempt from paying this on their 'primary residence', unless the property has been classified as luxury. IMU is paid in two equal amounts annually, the first on the 16th June and the second on the 16th December.
- **TASI:** this is similar to Council Tax in the UK, and finances the services provided by local administration. All property owners will have to pay this tax, although in some areas a certain percentage is paid by any tenants. This must also be paid by two payments in June and December. Reductions may be available, depending on circumstance – for example, if the property is a holiday home.
- **TARI:** this tax is to fund waste management and must be paid by the person living in a property. Reductions may be available, depending on circumstances. The number of payments and deadlines will be decided by each individual municipality.

What is the biggest financial mistake made by those buying property in Italy?

The biggest financial mistake made by those buying property in Italy is failing to understand the effects of fluctuating exchange rates on the final purchase prices. Once you have made an offer on a property in euros, you have essentially agreed to purchase a property without knowing the final price in pounds – and the exchange rate when you transfer your pounds into euros will have a dramatic impact on this price. Despite the amount of money that can be saved on the cost of a house price during this process, this transfer is one of the most overlooked items of the whole process.

The currency market is 'live' and fluctuates by the second, meaning the price you receive in the morning is likely to be different in the afternoon – and over the course of days, weeks, and months these fluctuations can be dramatic. The best way to combat this is by setting an exchange rate today for purchase later using a specialist product called a Forward Contract – a solution that not a lot of people know is possible!

"Don't lose money sending funds abroad – we didn't!"

Duncan and Karen Veal purchased their home in Italy successfully thanks to Italy Buying Guide and our trusted partners, Smart Currency Exchange, in March 2014.

"On the large transfers, such as the €100,000 we transferred to buy our Italian property, the better exchange rates from Smart Currency Exchange really do make a difference," said Karen. "The savings were enough to cover our geometra fees, or the cost of a new bathroom. We've made a series of transfers to Italy since, as we've needed to send funds to pay for renovation costs and each time we've been very impressed."

We recommend speaking to a currency specialist as early in the process as possible.

Top tips for saving and buying in Italy

Many people are unaware of the importance of currency fluctuations on their property purchases, or on any international payments when buying property in Italy. Here some top tips for saving money and buying in Italy:

1. Understand the consequences of currency fluctuations

A couple set their heart on a €250,000 property in Italy. When they first viewed, the available exchange rate was £1/€1.1807. If bought immediately, it would cost £211,738. Unfortunately, as so often happens, their plans were delayed. When they were next looking at exchange rates, they were at £1/€1.1624. This meant the house had gone up to £215,072. They decided to wait, hoping the rates might move in their favour, but unfortunately they went the other way, ending up at £1/€1.1290, taking the property out of budget.

2. Avoid unnecessary risks – use a tool called a Forward Contract to set the property price at a favourable rate

Not many people know about Forward Contracts and how they can help you avoid losing money when purchasing property overseas. They essentially lock in exchange rates at the point that you commit to buying, so when the time comes to transfer the final balance to buy the property, the currency rate remains the same, regardless of the market.

3. Act Fast!

If you know you will be transferring money abroad in the near future, it pays to sign up for an account and get access to expert guidance and the currently available rates as soon as possible.

4. Know your budget before you travel

It's so easy to get carried away viewing overseas properties, but a clear budget from the outset ensures you get the most from your viewing trips and don't waste time looking at properties out of your price range. It also helps when looking at exchange rates and deciding the right time to purchase.

5. Know the choices available – like pre-funding an account for the purchase

Speed and timing are often critical factors in securing an overseas property for the right price. This is where another very useful tool comes in – the ability to pre-fund a client account. This can help eliminate further difficulties when you are in a different country, such as limitations on how much money can be transferred each day, language barriers, and so on...

A Currency Specialist's Guide to Buying Overseas Property

David Comber, Smart Currency Exchange's Senior Trader, shares his top tips for a successful property purchase. **To get this report call Smart Currency Exchange on 080 8163 0102 or visit smartcurrencyexchange.com/tradersguide**

How can you finance a property in Italy?

There are many ways that you can pay for your Italian property. In addition to paying by cash, there are a number of loan options that can be considered. It's a good idea to think about this before you start to look for a property or select an estate agent. If you are planning to buy with a mortgage, it is wise to have this agreed in principle before you begin.

When buying property with an Italian mortgage, your options will be significantly lower as a non-resident than if buying in the UK. We would recommend speaking to an expert before you make your final decision. Mortgage offers will change on a continuous basis, so we would advise speaking to an overseas mortgage broker to discuss current offers. You will usually need to provide a deposit of around 40% as a non-Italian national, although 30% may be available with tighter conditions. To receive an Italian mortgage, you will need to provide proof of income and identity, as well as details of your financial accounts, to prove that you can make the monthly repayments.

How much does it cost to maintain a property and lifestyle in Italy – and how do I maintain it?

There are a variety of costs associated with maintaining a property in Italy. Don't make the mistake of thinking that taxes, cost of goods and rates will be significantly cheaper than in the UK when, in some cases they can be higher. When calculating the monthly/yearly cost of owning a property, you will need to think about local property and council taxes, community fees (if applicable), utilities, insurance, TV/cable/satellite, internet connection, maintenance, car/transport costs, health/medical fees and the cost of food.

One of the ways that you can cover part or all of your running costs is by renting your property out as a holiday home.

Don't get carried away though – this is not a get-rich-quick option and most home-owners in Italy that take this option do well to cover their mortgage repayments and running costs (such as taxation), with perhaps a little cash left over to put towards their own holidays.

Why is careful financial and tax planning so important?

Before you move to Italy, it is really important to carefully consider how buying a property here will affect your worldwide estate – will your pension/s or anything else be affected, and will you be able to ensure that you are earning the maximum amount of income or interest – even when you leave the UK?

As a priority, we recommend seeking professional financial planning advice as soon as you can in this process. There are a number of important areas that must be considered:

- You must notify HMRC about your departure from the UK – this is a formality but may also result in a tax rebate
- There will be tax implications if you are moving to Italy and leaving a property in the UK
- There are UK state pension benefits to continuing National Insurance Contributions when you move abroad
- You will need to review any UK life assurance or savings before leaving the UK
- You will usually be unable to contribute to an ISA as a non-resident of the UK
- You will only be entitled to pay a limited amount for a limited period into existing UK pensions and still receive tax relief as a non-resident of the UK
- It's a good idea to take advice about accumulated pension rights in the UK

- It could be an option to move cash deposits offshore, instead of keeping large cash balances in the UK
- You will need to start thinking about the implications of the Statutory Residence Test if you are intending to split your time equally between Italy and the UK
- You may need to complete a UK tax return, even after leaving the UK, and there are now significant penalties for late submission
- It's a good idea to seek guidance about inheritance laws and taxation, as those will differ in Italy compared to the UK

It is also really important to think about the effects the fluctuating exchange rates could have on your regular overseas transfers, especially if you are relying on these to fund your life. As previously discussed, you can set the exchange rate for up to a year to ensure that all payments are the same.

You may also benefit from moving your pension to a Self-Invested Personal Pension (SIPP) or Qualified Recognised Overseas Pension Scheme (QROPS). You will need to meet certain criteria to qualify (you need to be living or going to live abroad, and you must remain living abroad), but you could have greater control over your pension and reduce your tax bill. It takes up to ten years for many of these schemes to show real benefit, so it's really important to consider your options now.

To be put in touch with an authorised tax, financial, or mortgage advisor, whatever your needs, call the Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549 or email info@italybuyingguide.com

How can you ensure income in Italy?

Many Brits who move to Italy use their new property to fund their new life there. There are no restrictions for UK citizens who want to work or set up their own business in Italy, providing all local regulations are complied with. One of the most popular ways to do this is by turning your property into a holiday let when you are not using it, or even into a B&B.

Setting up your own company is also an option – and there are a number of ways you can do this, although it is by no means risk-free! If you have the right experience, you may be able to buy a franchise, an existing company or start from scratch. If you do decide to follow this option, it's a good idea to remember that tax and employment regulations may not be in your favour in Italy, and of course you will also need to combat the language barrier!

The logistics involved in setting up your own business will be so important – ensure you conduct adequate research. Who will your competition be? Who is your target audience? How seasonal will your business be? How many hours will you need to work – would you actually have any time to enjoy your new surroundings? Answering these questions truthfully will ensure you have a better idea about your new life.

Of course, you can also set up a business online – there are numerous skills that can be utilised in this way, allowing you to work on projects at home, potentially being able to pick what you work on and how often.

Whatever you decide to do to fund your life in Italy, it is of paramount importance that you research the local job market and the unemployment figures in your area of interest. It's also really important that you sort out your income streams and tax affairs before you move.

Our Resource Centre can put you in touch with our recommended authorised financial advisory firm who can help you on every step of this process. Call the team on 020 7808 0549.

Finding & purchasing Italian property

Step 1:
Create a Brief

Once you have spent this time working out what you are looking for and exactly how you are going to afford your property, you will be able to put together a brief that will help you (and your estate agent) find exactly you what you want, in the location you want it and at the price you want it for.

In addition to helping estate agents in their search, the brief will keep you focused. The Italian property purchase process can be lengthy, making it easy to get pushed off course and end up ultimately getting something not quite what you wanted, in an area not quite where you wanted and for a price much more than you expected.

To create a brief, go back to the 'Getting started' section and, taking account of everything you now know, update your answers to the perfect property questions. You'll also need to outline a budget and indicate how you're going to pay for the property (cash, or a combination of cash and mortgage) and timescales of when you'd like to buy.

Estate Agents

If you would like help finding the right estate agent in Italy, **call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.**

Step 2:
Find the right Estate Agent

We would recommend researching estate agents as soon as you know what you are looking for, so that you can select the right agent for you prior to your viewing trip. Your estate agent is one of the most important ingredients to successfully finding a property in Italy. You need one that is reliable and helpful, legally registered, and most importantly, is ready to meet your needs.

The most important characteristics of an estate agent:

- **Operates legally and ethically**
  We recommend that you ensure that any agent you choose belongs to a professional association, such as FIAIP, NAIM, SNPI or UNPI. We would also suggest ensuring a personal recommendation by someone you know (although the latter in itself is no firm guarantee of good practice). Always ask for the agency's registration number.
- **Is proactive and offers a good service**
  You need any agency that calls you when they say they will, and solves any issue you have quickly. We would recommend testing your choices before you trip – send them a note and see how long it takes for them to reply and if they are enthusiastic.
- **Has experience in working with UK buyers and has longevity**
  Your agent should know the area, understand the market and know how to make things happen.
- **Offers fantastic after-care services**
  Your agent should stick around after the contract has been signed. They should be able to help you open a bank account, find a builder, school, doctor etc. You can usually find out more about this by reviewing past-buyer feedback.

Step 3:
The Viewing Trip

Your viewing trip is your opportunity to explore your chosen area of Italy without having the pressure to buy. You can take some time to get to know the area, speak to locals and check out the amenities.

It's a good idea to take a viewing trip during the off-season, so you can get more of a feel of living there. This will also be a slow time for estate agents, which could mean you get more attention, and may have greater negotiation power. Make sure you research your dates carefully, though – you don't want to visit over a public holiday when everything is closed!

You could choose to rent a property while you are there; you will get a better idea of what it is like to live there than if you stay in a hotel. You will need to go out and buy groceries, enabling you to assess the accessibility of amenities as well as the cost of items.

There are no rules on how to use your viewing trip – some prospective buyers chose to spend their first trip at a leisurely pace, exploring the area, and making notes, but not actually viewing a property. You can then fine-tune your criteria for a second trip to view property.

Step 4:
Making offers

Once you've made a viewing trip or two, narrowed down your property search to a handful of properties and know how you are going to pay for it, it's time to start making offers. Your estate agent should be able to give you guidelines for what an acceptable offer is.

The personal situation of the vendor may dictate their flexibility on price. Given the large number of foreign homeowners in Italy, if you're buying in a popular expat area, Tuscany for example, the chances are that the property you are buying is being sold by a fellow Brit.

Viewing Trips

Read our detailed report on how to get the most out of your viewing trip.

To request your free copy of our free Viewing Trip guide, just call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.

Case study: a buyer's story

In November 2011, British couple Michael and Caroline Di-Lella from the West Country bought their new home in Italy. The Di-Lellas got the keys for their property in Tuscany at the end of November, after moving to the region in September, when Michael, a process improvement technician, secured a job there.

When researching the property market there, the couple read the Overseas Guides Company's Italy Buying Guide, which helped them to save money when they came to transfer the €180,000 needed to pay for their new home in Italy.

"Whilst researching property I found a link to the free Italy Property Buying Guide," said Michael. "I downloaded the guide, and when reading it, discovered the option of using Smart Currency Exchange to transfer money to Italy. I read other people's testimonies and was impressed with the comments. I opened an account only about a week before I needed it – it was so easy and quick."

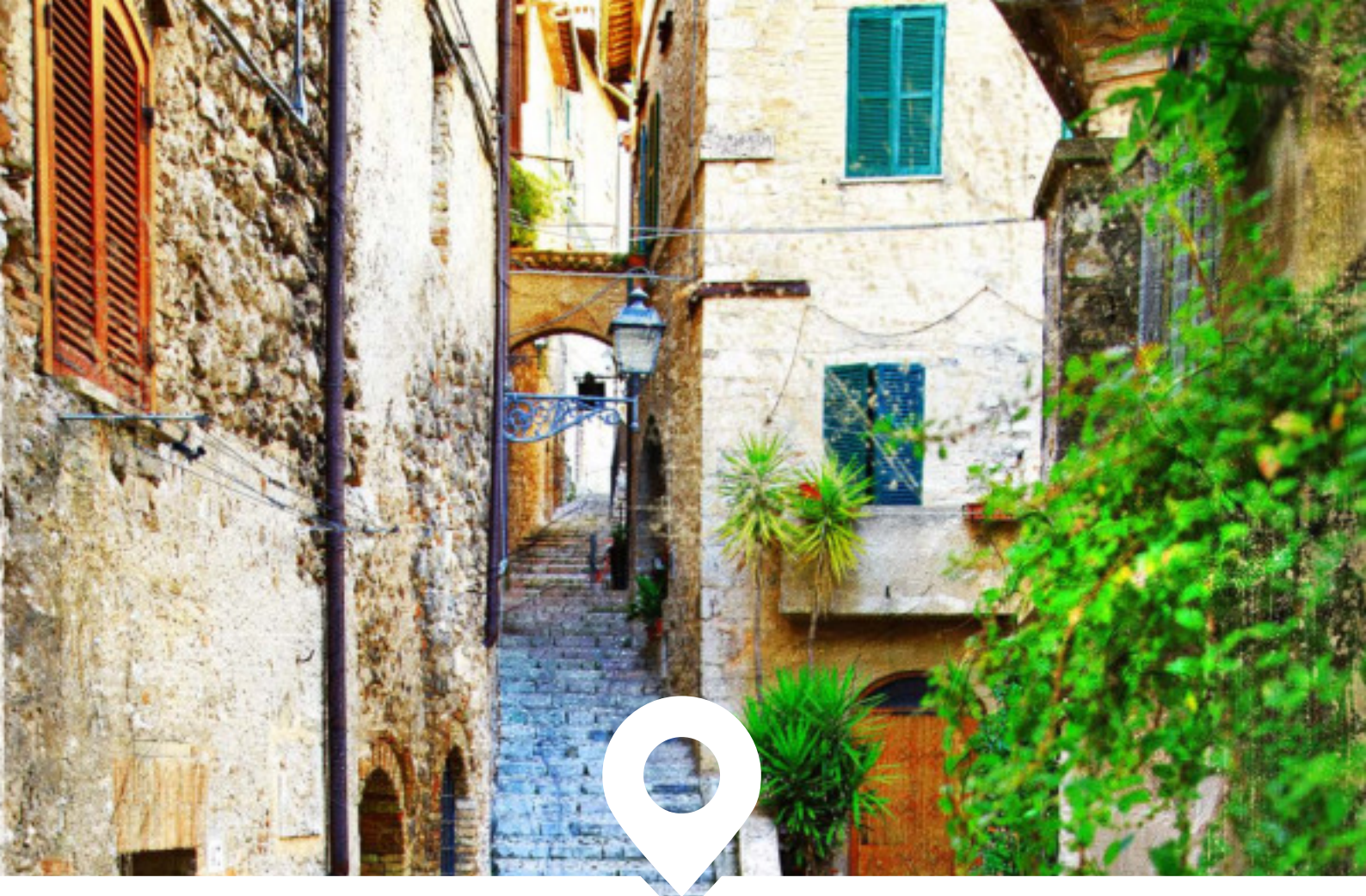
In all, Smart Currency Exchange exchanged around £177,000 into euros for the Di-Lellas, sending funds to their designated account in Italy. If the couple had used a high street bank to make the same transfers, they estimate it would have cost them approximately £6,000 more, due to banks' poor exchange rates.

Michael was especially impressed with Smart Currency Exchange's customer service. "We both thought the response to our requests was dealt with swiftly, and there was always a real person to speak to every time I called. I remember being at an early morning meeting here in Italy, with the notary, vendors and estate agent, and they couldn't believe that to authorise a money transfer I just picked up the phone and made a call to Smart Currency. In fact, they were gob-smacked! If and when the need arises, I won't hesitate to use Smart Currency again – we have already spread the word to friends and family."

Michael and Caroline, who have grown-up children in the UK, lived in a rented apartment in Venturina while they had their new home, which they found through a local agent, renovated and extended.

"Our home is in a small hamlet called Banditelle," enthuses Michael. "The property is on an ancient Roman road called Via Aurelia. We have a 1,000-square-metre garden which faces south-west, so we have a sunny garden all day long for Italian-style BBQs. The garden has a mature olive tree, which provides dappled shade for the patio area, and two large fig trees. The bottom of the garden looks out to open farmland and distant hills."

Inspired by the Di-Lellas' story? Smart Currency Exchange can guide you through the best rates and different currency products available to protect yourself from the effects of fluctuating exchange rates on the price of your property and any ongoing costs in Italy. Call the team on 0808 163 0102 or visit smartcurrencyexchange.com for more information.



Legal matters

Making sense of legalities

The purchase of your Italian property is probably one of the most significant you will ever make, so it's really important that you invest in the services of an independent, English-speaking solicitor. They will then oversee the whole process for you, advise you on tax and inheritance issues, and guide you through every detail of the transaction – ensuring you understand the contract and all supporting documentation.

The role of a notary

There will also be a notary involved in the process, and it is important to ensure that you don't get them confused with a solicitor. A notary is legally trained, but employed by the Italian government, so does not act for the buyer OR the vendor.

The notary will oversee and rubber-stamp the paperwork into the property transaction, making sure that all necessary taxes are paid, and register the property with the Italian Land Registry.

Your solicitor

Your solicitor will work on your behalf to ensure everything is exactly as you want it to be, and that you are protected from any charges left over from the previous owner.

A solicitor is not compulsory in the Italian property process, but we highly recommend using one to save you money and ensure peace of mind.

All paperwork can be checked and signed by the solicitor before you sign – they will conduct all relevant checks for you to ensure you are protected.

You may wish to have a survey carried out prior to buying; your solicitor can assist with this and review the sales agreement after if necessary.

Independent solicitor fees will vary but, as previously stated, will typically be 1-3% of the purchase price, depending on the property and legal firm.

Recommended law firm

For complete peace of mind when buying a property in Italy, it is advisable to employ the services of an independent solicitor/legal firm, who can also advise on ownership and inheritance issues.

To be contacted by a recommended law firm, call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.

Moving guide

Moving abroad

Once you have found a property, had an offer accepted, and signed the contract, the next thing you need to think about is how you are going to get everything you need over to Italy and into your new home. Your choice of removals company is so important – we recommend using a member of the British Association of Removers and the International Association of Movers, and ideally one that has been personally recommended to you.

Whilst making your choice, you will need to make sure that you check their insurance status, and how and when your possessions would be covered.

We recommend scoping out removals companies 3-6 months before you plan to move, so that time can be made for them to visit your home and survey your belongings, before they fit you into their schedule. They will come back to you with a quote and you should make sure that this includes professional packing of your goods, all fuel costs, any motorway tolls and ferry charges. It is a good idea to gather at least three quotes so that you can compare prices.

Packing your possessions

Removal companies will charge you by the amount of possessions you need to ship, so it's a really good idea to think carefully about what you need to move. Anything you are not sure about, ask yourself if you are really going to use it in Italy. You may find there are items that you can replace easily when you arrive, so it's a good idea to research local shops and prices.

You need to allow for at least six weeks in transit, so it's really important to pack carefully and keep essential items separate! This includes things like house keys, car keys, passports and travel documents.

Your removals company should keep an inventory whilst they are packing your possessions, and they should also be able to offer you guidance on any regulations that will affect whether your items can enter Italy.

You will also need to:

- Drain all petrol and oil out of lawn-mowers and similar equipment before transportation, to ensure they comply with fire regulations
- Remove all batteries where relevant, as they can leak in transit and damage other items
- Clean and paint any garden tools and furniture – items with soil on them will usually be denied entry at customs

If you are not moving directly into your new home, you may need to discuss storage; it may be cheaper to store your goods in Italy rather than in the UK.

Recommended removals firm

When you move to Italy, you need to make sure that your possessions are in safe hands during transportation.

For assistance in finding a reliable removals firm that specialises in helping people moving to Italy, call our Resource Centre on 020 7898 0549.

Managing your property

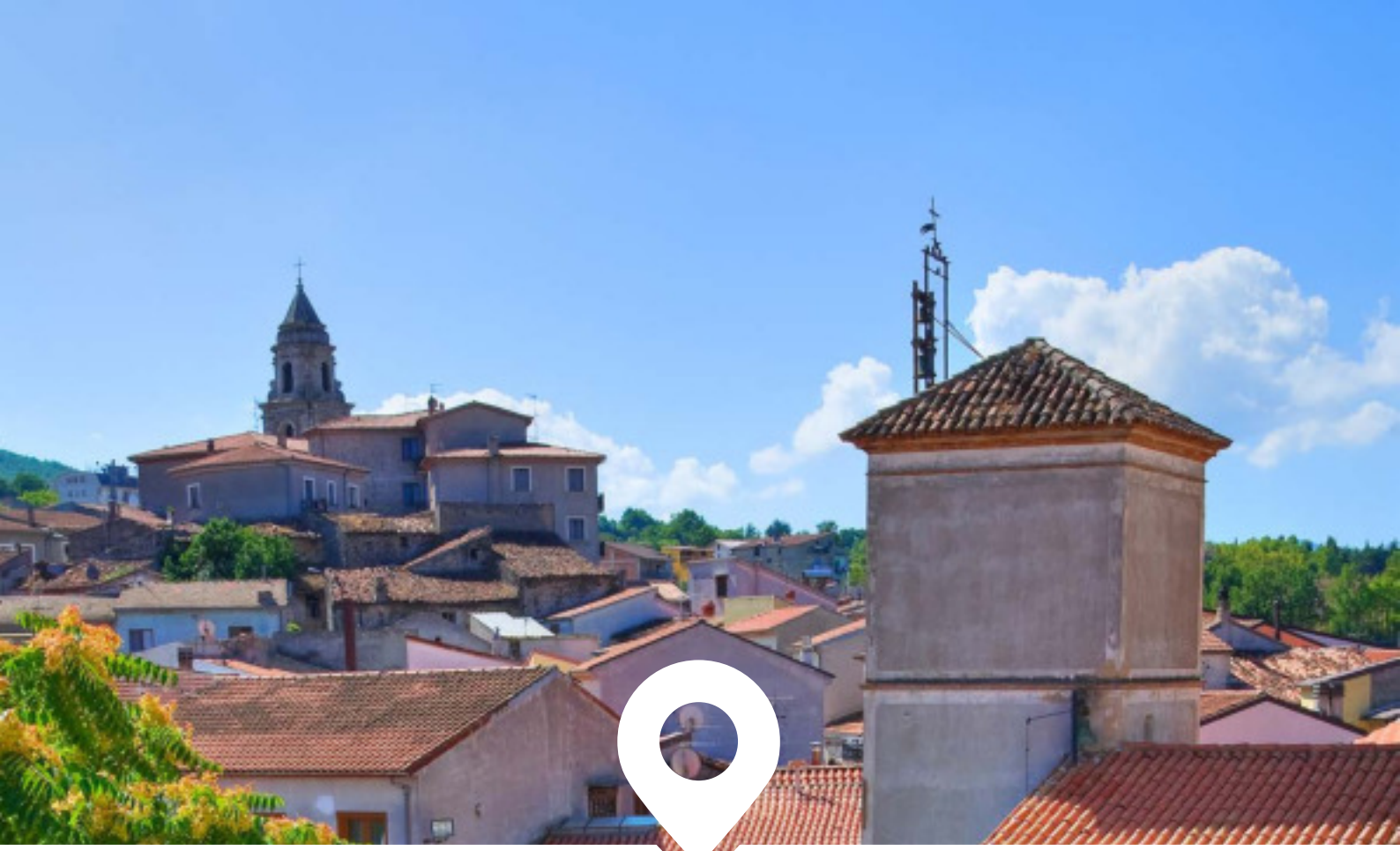
Property management

If you are buying an Italian property that you do not intend to live in full-time, it's a really good idea to hire a property management company – especially if you are planning on renting your property out.

A property management company will be able to carry out a number of different services on your behalf, depending on your needs – from simple key-holding to managing actual bookings. The first thing you will need to do is check any local regulations governing holiday lets.

As a guide, a management company's service could include the following:

- **Key-holding**
  This can be useful whether or not you rent out your property – for example if there was an emergency and someone needed to enter your property whilst you were away.
- **Bills and accounting**
  They will be able to deal with all ongoing bills, including utilities.
- **Changeovers and cleaning**
  This includes ensuring the house is ready for rental guests, meeting and greeting them and carrying out any inspections during changeovers.
- **Pool maintenance (if appropriate)**
  This should really be carried out on a weekly basis, and will include cleaning the filters, testing the water's chemical levels and cleaning the patio and patio furniture.
- **Garden maintenance**
  Lawns will need regular mowing, especially in summer, and borders and pathways will need weeding – this is really important for renting as this is the first thing that prospective tenants will see when they view your property.



Protecting your property & yourself

Enjoy the good times, but insure against the bad

There is no substitute for having your Italian property and all your possessions insured in the unlikely event that the worst happens – after all, natural disasters and accidents happen all over the world!

The cost of an insurance policy and all other requirements will differ depending on the insurer, and criteria may well be different in Italy than at home. We would recommend using a reputable international insurance company who can provide you with a policy that suits your needs, written in English.

You will need a different type of insurance entirely if you intend to let your Italian property out. If your new property is not going to be your primary residence, it may be wise to consider using a UK-based insurance company specialising in holiday homes. You will be able to pay for your policy in pounds, and they will often offer you high liability limits.

Know your healthcare options

As a final thought, you will also need to think about your healthcare needs in Italy. Right now, you probably know where your nearest hospital is, the name of your doctor, or the best time to make an appointment at your surgery, but once you're in Italy, you'll need to start from scratch – and this applies almost as much to second homeowners who spend long stints in Italy as it does to new permanent residents there. Things will not always operate the same way abroad as they do back home, which is why researching your options for healthcare should be a priority, and it's something you should think about sooner rather than later.

If spending time in Italy as a UK resident, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) card should cover your immediate healthcare needs. If relocating there permanently, depending on your status in your home country, you could be entitled to Italian state healthcare, for example, if you are a pensioner. Before you leave the UK, it is a really good idea to speak to the Department of Work and Pensions, who will be able to give you more information about your entitlements.

The Italian state healthcare system may not fulfil your requirements entirely or entitle you to everything you currently receive on the NHS. That's why many British expats or regular travellers choose to invest in private health insurance. Private healthcare providers will always be able to guarantee when you will be treated, where you will be treated (typically in private hospital facilities with en-suite rooms), who will be treating you (you can usually choose your consultants and specialists), and how you'll be treated (in some cases, using treatments and drugs that aren't available on the public healthcare scheme).

You might not think that private healthcare is an option for you when moving to Italy, or spending a lot of time there, but finding out the cost now could help you to budget for your new life. Put your mind at rest today and call 020 7898 0549 for a no-obligation quote from a leading healthcare provider.

Buying in Italy – property details sheet

Purchase details

Price of property: .....

Deposit: .....

Stage 1: .....

Stage 2: .....

Stage 3: .....

Stage 4: .....

Stage 5: .....

Est. Yearly Mortgage Costs: .....

Mortgage Options: .....

Mortgage Fixed/Variable: .....

Investment potential

Avg. capital growth in 5 years: .....

Forecasted Future Growth: .....

Rental Demand: .....

Avg. Rent for this Type of Property: .....

Estimated Rent Per Year: .....

Less Mortgage Per Year: .....

Net Gross Yield .....

Costs to purchase property

Cost to buy habitable property (in addition to price of property): .....

Solicitors: .....

Accountant: .....

Survey & Searches: .....

Stamp Duty & Taxes: .....

Building/Contents Insurance: .....

Life Assurance: .....

Finance/Mortgage fees: .....

Estate agents/Developer fees: .....

Refurbishment/Build costs: .....

Furniture Costs: .....

Other: .....

Total: .....

Total including price of property: .....

Costs to maintain property

Cost to Maintain the Property: .....

Electric/Water/Gas Rates: .....

Taxes: .....

Pool Cleaner: .....

House Cleaner: .....

TV/Cable/Satellite: .....

Internet Access: .....

Gardener: .....

Repairs & Maintenance: .....

Letting Agent: .....

Marketing Costs: .....

Servicing Costs: .....

Other: .....

Total (running costs): .....

Currency options

Current Exchange Rate for £1: .....

GBP Needed to Purchase Currency: .....

Past Market Trends: .....

Currency Strategy: .....

Call Smart Currency Exchange freephone on 080 8163 0102 to save money when buying abroad; and ensure that your budget doesn't fluctuate with currency movements.

Thank you for reading the Italy Buying Guide

We hope that some of the tips and information offered here will help you on your journey to buy or invest in a property in Italy. We also publish regular articles, blog updates from our resident writer, videos and much more on our website, **italybuyingguide.com.**

Here at the Italy Buying Guide we constantly write about the Italy and overseas property industries, and are always speaking to people buying overseas. We are continuously discussing key issues and considerations with property agents, developers, legal experts, and other contacts. All of this means that we have continuous access to a number of useful resources. As you can see from the previous pages, we can recommend a wide range of service providers operating in the Italian property market, including an estate agent, a mortgage broker, a currency transfer specialist, a law firm, a tax and financial advisory firm, rentals website and more. Please do take advantage of these contacts!

On a final note, a highly respected lawyer we recommended to our readers once said that there are three key things necessary for a successful overseas property purchase:

- **A good estate agent**
- **A good lawyer**
- **A good currency exchange specialist**

We couldn't agree more, although of course, the more experts you have on board, the better! Why make things difficult for yourself when you can benefit from using trusted experts?

If there is anything else that we can help you with, do pick up the phone to us on 020 7898 0549 – we'll try our best to point you in the right direction. The first thing you need to do is seriously research your options, ask lots of questions and try your best to find others that have gone before you, so that you can learn from their success (or not-so-successful!) stories.

If there is anything that you've learned during your property buying journey that you would like to share with others email us at **info@italybuyingguide.com.** We publish numerous stories and suggestions every month.

Best of luck with all your plans!

The Italy Buying Guide team

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Helping you build a life overseas

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