

## ANDREA WATSON considers the benefits of investing in Italy's emerging buy-to-let market

ITALIAN property has so far appeared immune from the problems of the credit crunch and mortgage famine.

Many areas are still reporting stronger than average capital appreciation on properties. The Italian property index showed average capital growth stood at nine per cent in 2007. Italy attracts more than 40 million tourists every year, many of them independent travellers looking to rent a villa or apartment in one of its many famous cities or country regions.

As the country has not succumbed to the lure of rampant overbuilding that has spoiled some parts of the Mediterranean, there is a shortage of high-quality accommodation to rent. However, it is vital to choose the right location if you are a buy-to-let investor.

The best yields are to be had from apartments in the major tourist destinations - Florence, Rome and Venice. The average weekly rental for Florence is £860 a week and for Rome around £600.

Tuscany and Umbria also have strong demand from people looking for traditional farmhouse lets but these areas have a shorter season.



POTENTIAL: Casa Travella's flat in Dorsoduro, Venice in need of renovation and (right) a view over the city's rooftops. Left: Paul McDonnell who bought an apartment in Liguria

Venice, a place where you can truly leave the 21st century (and particularly the car) behind, has the longest rental season. The only months that the city is not packed with tourists from all over the world are January and February. No surprise then that apartments in Venice sleeping four can command up to £1,000 a week in high season.

But first, take a reality check. Properties in Venice do not, it must be said, come cheap. You will pay upwards of €300,000 for a two-bedroom property which requires restoration.

Linda Travella, of Casa Travella, who has recently finished filming with Amanda Lamb for the new series of *A Place In The Sun*, said:

"In Venice a property to restore can be a good option but be aware that it will take longer than normal to obtain permissions as buildings are mostly listed. As a company we have some very good architects and surveyors to project manage restoration and refurbishment but I always advise clients to make personal regular trips to see how work is progressing."

Trying to find a three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment in the centre of Venice is almost impossible, however, Casa Travella is offering a property in Dorsoduro, Santa Croce which is only a 10-minute walk from the central Piazzale Roma.

The flat is on the first floor and has a view of the canal. Internal work that needs completing includes the installation of a

restored and comprises living room with exposed beams and a fireplace, kitchenette, bathroom, bedroom and master bedroom with direct access to a roof terrace with breathtaking views across the magical city. The asking price is €830,000.

Calabria is now regarded as a strong emerging property market with high anticipated rental yields in key holiday locations where domestic demand is complemented by overseas visitors.

Liguria is noted for a longer-than-average letting season due to the mild winters it enjoys.

Paul McDonnell bought a two-bedroom converted apartment in Liguria, just one hour from Nice, through Casa Travella in 2002. In the first year he enjoyed a rental income of £6,625, since when returns have been rising steadily with 2006 proving an exceptional year when he took more than £15,000 in rents. The property itself

has averaged a capital growth of above 10 per cent per annum.

Mr McDonnell said: "I chose Italy not only because it is easily accessible but because of the wonderful food and culture. There is also a shortage of high-quality rental properties in the area."

Casa Travella is now reselling the property which sits on a hill overlooking the sea in the village of Poggi. At the foot of the hill is an old fishing village and the beaches are just over one mile away.

The property, set on three levels, includes a workshop with car parking space and pool with terrace. The asking price is €365,000 and the villa is one hour from Nice and Genoa airports with around 20 flights a day from the UK.

### INFORMATION:

Casa Travella:  
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kitchen and two bathrooms. When finished the property will have three bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, living room and two storage areas on the ground floor. The property has the rare advantage of a shared garden, courtyard and roof terrace and is on the market for €336,000.

Another property currently being marketed by Casa Travella in Venice is a luxury top-floor, two-level apartment with a spectacular roof terrace located in the St Mark's area close to the Grande Canal.

The apartment has been recently