

PROPERTY HUNT

Italy

Bellagio on Lake Como

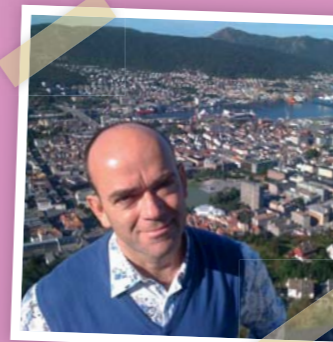
"I want a convenient holiday pad in Italy"

Jeremy Nye has always fancied a second home abroad so when recently he received a redundancy payout he knew immediately how he wanted to spend it! Here we assist him in finding his ideal Italian property

WORDS CHRISTOPHER NYE PICTURES THINKSTOCK



Turn over to see the four exciting properties we found for Jeremy



THE BRIEF

WHO

Jeremy Nye (48), lives in North London, close to Arsenal's stadium. He has two children, Zebedee and Clement, and works in TV.

WHAT HE WANTS

Jeremy wants a holiday apartment where he can relax for long weekends or holidays, have friends along to visit and maybe rent out. It needs to be low-maintenance, spacious, with a minimum of two bedrooms and a living/dining area, possibly open-plan. Jeremy has two boys at primary school, so it needs to be reasonably childproof and not too high rise, with plenty of room to play, including a terrace, balcony or garden. He is interested to know what his legal responsibilities, tax and so on will be as a homeowner in Italy. Jeremy's budget is £150,000.

WHERE

Jeremy loves Italy – the Renaissance art, food, shops and café culture, but isn't a great fan of the beach. The property needs to be within a two-hour budget flight of London airports, so it will have to be northern or central Italy. He wants to be able to enjoy the apartment all year – not just in summer – so it cannot be a purely seasonal area. Being in a town with good airport links would avoid having to rent a car on every trip, but this isn't a deal breaker. A city-centre apartment certainly has attractions, or perhaps a small house/apartment in an attractive Italian town. Out in the sticks would only appeal if the property is absolutely stunning, or at the heart of a lively hamlet. Jeremy has always loved Tuscany, but is open to suggestions and would like us to investigate properties in the Italian Lakes area.

REASON FOR BUYING

Jeremy is a TV executive recently made redundant after a long career with the BBC. Fortunately, he walked straight into a job with a rival network, so he is able to use his redundancy money, plus some savings, for pure pleasure!

THE EXPERTS

To help Jeremy buy safely, here are some words of advice from Amanda Lamb and two other experts who know a thing or two about buying homes in Italy



LINDA TRAVELLA
PROPERTY
AGENT

Linda Travella runs property agency Casa Travella (www.casatravella.co.uk)

The two great advantages of northern Italy and Tuscany are accessibility and low risk. From London airports Jeremy will have a choice of dozens of low budget flights each week, and even if capital growth isn't his first concern, these areas are highly unlikely to see long-term price falls. Although still a buyers' market, he should be able to get 10 per cent off asking prices, but not much more, and British buyers have been losing good property by trying to negotiate too hard and for too long. This is a global market place and we get people buying from Canada, Russia, the USA, as well as the usual European countries, so you can't hang about. Property in beautiful towns like Siena, Como or Lucca is really outside Jeremy's budget, certainly if he wants outside space, but you have a great transport infrastructure here and even small villages tend to have a shop and bar, maybe a restaurant. If Jeremy chooses the Lakes area then skiing becomes an option, with some great resorts just over the border in Switzerland.



GIANDOMENICO
DE TULLIO
ITALIAN LAWYER

Giandomenico de Tullio is an English-speaking Italian lawyer who runs De Tullio Law Firm in southern Italy (www.detulliolawfirm.com)

After purchasing an Italian property, as a new buyer Jeremy should, firstly, notify the purchase to the local authorities within 48 hours of signing the final deed of sale. Secondly, he must subscribe the contracts for the utilities such as gas, water, electricity and telephone. New buyers become responsible for several taxes, specifically ICI which is the municipal tax affecting all property-owners in Italy, and TIA, a local tax for the management of rubbish collection. Plus personal income taxation if the Italian property is producing some income (e.g. rental income). It is strongly advisable to draw up an Italian will – with the support of an Italian solicitor – because Italian inheritance laws differ substantially from the British. Without a professionally drafted will your Italian assets will follow the Italian laws of succession, regulated from the Italian civil code, and assets may not be assigned to the intended heirs in accordance with your wishes.



AMANDA LAMB
OVERSEAS
PROPERTY EXPERT

Amanda is presenter of Channel 4's hit TV series *A Place in the Sun*

Italy has been so careful to avoid the kind of overdevelopment that you see in parts of Spain that these areas are truly beautiful and unspoilt. On the other hand, a Spanish resort apartment might be half the price. However, you don't need to convince me of the attractions of an Italian bolt-hole – after filming in southern Italy I bought one! Northern Italy is a bit more expensive again, but has clear advantages in terms of rentability as well as travelling time. Either the Lakes or Tuscany are really sophisticated options – the former for the beauty of Lake Como, Lake Maggiore etc, and the designer shopping and opera in Milan, the latter for the Renaissance art and the lovely countryside. But Jeremy has two young children; so perhaps he could do with some child-friendly options such as Gardaland, one of Europe's biggest theme parks, on the eastern side of Lake Garda. Another northern Italy option is Liguria, the stretch of north-western coast that runs into France. Maybe bypass Portofino, where Wayne and Colleen got married (it's a bit pricey!) and try Imperia.

FAST FACTS

NORTHERN ITALY

THE PLACE

At its top end Italy spreads out to a plain that stretches some 250 miles from Turin in the west to Venice in the east, with Milan in the middle. Just north of Milan, at the foothills of the Alps, are Lake Como, Maggiore and Garda. To the south of the plain are the Appenine Mountains and over these are the valleys of Tuscany, home to Brits' beloved "Chiantishire".

WHERE TO GO

The mountains meet the Lakes in jaw-droppingly gorgeous villages, such as Bellagio or Cernobbio. They start quite Alpine in the north, getting less rugged further south. All have been well protected, and have good infrastructures and year-round communities. In Tuscany, famous cities like Florence, Siena, Lucca and Pisa are always wonderful to visit. For a holiday home,

a nearby village is often a better choice – maybe Vinci or Caprese Michelangelo, the birthplaces of Tuscany's most famous sons.

CLIMATE

Northern Italy gets intensely hot in summer, with average highs of 30°C. The Lakes are slightly cooler, indeed somewhat chilly in winter compared to Tuscany which rarely gets frosts, but suffers heavy rain in late autumn. For both areas, spring and early autumn are the most user-friendly periods.

GETTING THERE

For the Lakes, Milan has two main airports; Malpensa and Bergamo. The usual airport for Tuscany is Pisa, on the west coast, with the extra option of Florence, Forlì and Perugia, most of which have regular budget flights from the UK all year.



PROPERTY 1

Riverside apartment
€150,000 (£132,740)

Where: Bagni di Lucca, Tuscany

Property details

- Four bedrooms
- One bathroom
- 140 square metres
- Garden and terrace
- Overlooking River Lima

For more details:

Villatua: 0039 0583 513 722; www.villatua.com

When you first fling open the shutters to the hubbub of an Italian town and a Tuscan river below, you'll feel like Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room With A View*, opening the window to a new life. This apartment has high ceilings, large windows and original features, including art deco wrought-iron balconies. Some of that needs updating. With four bedrooms and a garden, there is ample space for the children to play and although there is only one family bathroom, most of the large bedrooms have sinks in them. Bagni di Lucca was one of Europe's most popular spa towns in the 19th Century, and this apartment is a ten-minute walk from the thermal baths, but within metres of local shops and restaurants.

JEREMY LIKES:

- This is great; you're getting twice as much space as the other three apartments, plus a covered balcony. We could have people to stay.
- I love original features and anything art deco.
- It's in the heart of a historic town, yet within a bus ride of Pisa airport.
- Overlooking water is exciting – we'd prefer a lake but a river is still better than houses.

JEREMY DISLIKES:

- The only worry is how much renovation/decoration is needed – there's nothing more scary for a parent than a rickety balcony!

PROPERTY 2

Lake views
€169,000 (£149,560)

Where: Montemezzo, Lake Como

Property details

- Two bedrooms
- 95 square metres
- Communal pool
- Central heating, double glazing
- Views of lake and pool

For more details:

Casa Travella: 01322 660988; www.casatravella.com

A spacious two-bedroom apartment occupying the upper floor of a small complex in Montemezzo, at the northern end of Lake Como, just a few miles from the Swiss border (and within an hour's drive of the ski resorts in winter). From one balcony it has views over Lake Como, and from the other a view of the communal pool. This is a handy, low-maintenance option for anyone with children; there's even a private underground parking space saving the hassle of loading kids into a baking hot car every time they go out. The village is a short drive away, and this end of Lake Como is more mountainous, but easy to get around on the many ferry services that cruise the lake. It will have excellent rental potential, at prices from between €400 and €900 per week.

JEREMY LIKES:

- It's a good option for a simple, lettable, easy to manage holiday home.
- For a modern place it looks quite attractive too, and I do like the idea of a balcony for summer, yet heating for winter.
- We hadn't really considered skiing, but why not?

JEREMY DISLIKES:

- It doesn't seem like part of an Italian community.
- I can see that if you love hiking in the mountains this would be a great option – but I can't see me getting my children up a mountain just yet.
- Costs add up when you need to hire a car on every visit.

PROPERTY 3

Town centre apartment
€180,000 (£159,290)

Where: Sansepolcro, near Arezzo, Tuscany

Property details

- Two bedrooms, two bathrooms
- Third bedroom possible
- Terracotta tiles, wooden beams
- Spacious living area
- 10-square-metre terrace overlooking the town

For more details:

Tuscany Real Estate: www.tuscanyrealestate.co.uk

Sansepolcro is an industrial town but don't let that put you off – it has an attractive, old centre and was the birthplace of Renaissance artist Piera della Francesca and has many of his 15th-Century works in the museum. Michelangelo grew up nearby and thanked the clear Tuscan air for his talent. This apartment has one glorious bedroom with a wonderful view and amazing natural light, plus a large attic that just requires some decoration to turn it into a large second bedroom. Alternatively it could be converted to two bedrooms, or a spacious children's bedroom and playroom. Sansepolcro is in eastern Tuscany, far enough from Florence and Siena to avoid the crowds, yet less than 10 kilometres from Anghiari and 38 kilometres from Arezzo.

JEREMY LIKES:

- This is just the kind of property I wanted – spacious, classic, right in amongst the buzz of a Tuscan town.
- There's no pool or garden but presumably most local Italian families don't have one either, so there must be local leisure amenities.
- I really like the old ceramic floor tiles and the wooden beams.
- There would be no problem renting it out when we're not there.

JEREMY DISLIKES:

- It's a pity it is quite so far from the more famous tourist areas.
- I expect we'd need a car for the drive from the airport.

PROPERTY 4

Lakeside perfection
€140,000 (£123,890)

Where: Tremezzo, Lake Como

Property details

- Two bedrooms, one bathroom
- Corner-fitted kitchen
- Loft area
- Central location in village
- One of the most popular villages on Lake Como

For more details:

Casa Travella: 01322 660988; www.casatravella.com

Shelley said of Lake Como, "This lake exceeds anything I ever beheld in beauty", and Tremezzo is one of its highlights, filled with sumptuous 18th-Century villas, lakeside hotels, restaurants and parks. A good boat service takes pressure off the roads, and Jeremy will have no problem relying on public transport here, including good bus and trains to Milan and the airports. Unlike seaside resorts, Tremezzo stays open during the winter, with the nearby town of Como a delight at any time of year and ski resorts less than an hour away. George Clooney's home is nearby, but rumours that David Beckham was buying it from him remain unconfirmed. This apartment is at the heart of the village, reached by its own set of steps in a cool courtyard. The lake is a few steps away.

JEREMY LIKES:

- Sold! I think this has everything, at just the right price.
- It's an ideal location for year-round holidays.
- The pictures of Tremezzo are very appealing indeed.
- There's something very appealing about that staircase and the little roof over the porch – it feels almost Shakespearean.
- I've already looked online and there seems plenty for children to do.

JEREMY DISLIKES:

- The price makes me wonder what we'll find inside. There's plenty left in the budget for a renovation, but how big is it?

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WHAT NEXT?

After listening to Jeremy's wish list we showed him four apartments in and around The Lakes and Tuscany. Let's find out what he's thinking now

Jeremy: Although I know Tuscany reasonably well, I don't know the Italian Lakes at all, and they've been a real revelation. I think that there's probably more to do up there, including sailing, climbing, skiing, motor-racing at Monza, football at Milan, the kind of things that will appeal to two growing lads over the next few years, so we'll focus on that area. Also Gardaland, is bound to be more popular than art in Tuscan churches! The access to the Lakes area is better too, as we can fly into several airports at Milan, whereas some of the properties in Tuscany are a long way from an airport.

Now I'll have to organise a couple of trips – both with and without the boys – to get the feel for the Lakes, to see what an £150,000 apartment looks like from the inside, and to see how much there is to do out of season. I also intend to take some Italian lessons, as at present I'd be struggling to ask for a coffee, let alone sort out tax, a will, and the various household duties that the lawyer has outlined. Thank you for the choice of property – it's all very exciting!

WE NEED YOU!

If you need some help finding your place in the sun, e-mail Richard Way at richard.way@aplaceinthesun.com, with details of where, your budget and the type of property you want. Please include a phone number and recent photo. Successful applicants will be contacted.

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THREE MORE TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENTS

Borgo a Mozzano, northern Tuscany

Price: €115,000 (£101,770)

Ground-floor, two-bedroom apartment in a quiet village above the town of Borgo a Mozzano, 50 kilometres from Pisa and 26 kilometres from Lucca. The apartment includes a sitting room with fireplace, and a kitchen/breakfast room. Some of the furniture will be included in the sale. There are double and single bedrooms, one bathroom, a 32 square-metre cellar with an impressive stone arch, and a good-sized garden that has mostly been laid to lawn. The bedroom and bathroom could do with some updating. This is a quiet but attractive village, with countryside views.

Villatua; 00 39 0583 513 722; www.villatua.com



Lake Como

Price: €150,000 (£133K)

A loft apartment in a villa located in Tremezzo. The apartment includes a living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom, all in a traditional North Italian style with tiled floors and green shutters. The apartment has views over trees and parks towards the village. Tremezzo is a popular holiday village where Winston Churchill used to come to paint the Lakes, though

another wartime leader fared less well – Mussolini and his mistress fled here in 1945 and were assassinated nearby. Just across Lake Como is one of the most attractive villages in Europe – Bellagio – which has a train service down to Como and onwards to Milan. Although at its best in the springtime, this is an area that never goes out of fashion.

Casa Travella; 01322 660988;

Florence

Price: €315,000 (£278,760)

Two-bedroom, 70-square-metre apartment in Florence, very close to the centre with its Uffizi Gallery, famous churches packed with Renaissance frescos, and the Arno River. The apartment is on the third floor, reached by lifts or stairs. There is an entrance hall, one bathroom, two bedrooms each with a terrace. The living room also opens onto an eight square-metre terrace. The floors are of wood and parquet and the property has recently been fitted with air-conditioning. At just five kilometres to the airport, you won't need a car for this property.

Tuscany Real Estate; www.tuscanyrealestate.co.uk



For more properties in Italy visit www.aplaceinthesun.com