



Clockwise from main: View of Borgo di Vagli, Tuscany; one of the apartments; the swimming pool; a comfy living room

# The Italian job

The restoration of a medieval hamlet in Italy's most fashionable region has UK property buyers lining up, writes **Laura Henderson**

Endorsement from a best-selling author can't be a bad thing. No less an authority on la bella vita than Frances Mayes, of *Under the Tuscan Sun* fame, has given an enthusiastic thumbs up to the restoration of a 14th-century hamlet in deepest Tuscany.

She's talking from experience. Italian architect Fulvio Di Rosa, the man responsible for renovating her secluded 13th-century writing retreat Casa Fonte delle Foglie, has been working his magic once again, only this time on a dilapidated hill-top hamlet. Hidden away in deep forest some 20 minutes from the Etruscan town of Cortona, Borgo di Vagli has been painstakingly restored into a community of homey one-bed and spacious two-bed cottages for sale on a fractional ownership basis. "Owning a holiday home outright in Tuscany can be an expensive business, and those who manage to find their dream home invariably find they can't use it enough to justify the investment, which is why fractional ownership offers a sensible solution," says the project's sales director Lee Cogher. "Owners can enjoy the benefits of a second home, but without the huge sums associated with year-round upkeep, insurance and maintenance."

Residents at Vagli enjoy, in perpetuity, a one or two-bedroom home based on a 1/10th share basis, prices starting from £37,000 (£55,000) for a one-bed up to £63,000 (£92,500) for a two-bedroom property. Access is very flexible, owners are allowed 21 days' advance reservation on their property for the following year and after all that has been booked there are further opportunities to book avail-

able space for stays when the property is empty, at no further cost.

Owners will also be able to book other flats of the same size if their own is not available, so for your initial payment, you should have plenty of time abroad. Annual management fees of £800 for a one-bedroom property and £1,000 for a two-bedroom, cover maintenance, refurbishment, utility costs, taxes and upkeep of communal areas, with housekeeping charged as per owner usage.

Growing in popularity with younger investors, fractionals, unlike timeshare, confer a deeded interest in a property and an investment component whereby the owner benefits from long-term capital growth, but as the term implies, at a significantly reduced outlay. In the case of Vagli, properties come fully furnished with administration and maintenance provided by a professional management team and associated running costs shared equally by the owners.

Ten years in the making, Vagli's transformation has been overseen by Di Rosa, from the mundane task of tracking down original deeds to more pleasurable pursuits such as hand-selecting upholstery fabrics: "Previous residents abandoned the hamlet during the Second World War and moved to areas where there was electricity and running water, so we were pretty much starting from scratch," he says. Cottage plots retain their original "random" layout, which original families added to as and when more living accommodation was required. "The tiered housing is one of the fundamental charms of the place," he adds. The outlook is another; cottages sporting panoramic views



of the surrounding Niccone Valley, while native almond, cherry and fig trees provide welcome shade from the midday sun. "Most visitors make for Perugia airport which is just 45 minutes drive," he adds. "Others head to Florence, which is an hour and a half away for a little sightseeing, before heading here for some R and R."

Property interiors also reflect Vagli's rustic past, multiple layers of plaster-tinted yellow, salmon and blue, flagstones and hand-laid terracotta tiles, while old beam and stone ceilings have been carefully repaired using salvaged materials. Residences come fully furnished, with a mix of modern Italian upholstery, pitch-perfect country antiques and fittings sourced locally, including carved stone

sinks, copper cooking utensils and hand-painted cabinets. Modern conveniences haven't been overlooked either, with high-speed internet access and flat screen satellite television in every home. Sealing the on-site luxuries is a concierge service arranging tours to local wineries, golf courses and nearby towns, two ultra-glam swimming pools, and a trattoria with an exhaustive wine cellar. Bob Wheatley, from Cumbria, who bought a two-bedroom fractional last October, says: "If you like to do your own thing away from the crowds and your criteria is part investment part pleasure - it ticks all the boxes. And Dina (the resident chef) cooks the best Tuscan dishes."

● [www.horgodiyagli.com](http://www.horgodiyagli.com)

