

In the depths of the coronavirus pandemic last year Jon Nune and his wife, Annmarie, used the spare time to raffie a Tuscan villa they owned as a retail investment.

"We thought it might be a fun project during lockdown — it would give people something to dream about in such a dark time and also raise money for charity," says Jon, 46, who lives in Poole, Dorset.

It was also inspired by the comments left in the newsletter in the four-bedroom property — which is for many the quintessential Italian holiday home — within a stone's throw of the beautiful Renaissance walled city of Lucca.

"People said how much they wished they could afford to own such a villa themselves," says Jon, who had been working in telecoms in Dubai for ten years but is now renovating properties in Yorkshire and Surrey.

Yet knowing the number of dubious-sounding prize draws promoted online, he knew that they would have to do it the right way to ensure its success. "The key was to make it transparent and legally sound," Jon says. "Be upfront about the number of tickets you need to sell and exactly where the money will go. We priced tickets at £25 each — relatively high — to make it aspirational and to ensure entrants might have the finances needed for homeownership."

The local agent that sold them the property, Lucas in Tuscany, valued it at €400,000 (£340,000). The couple needed to generate £500,000 through the sale of the tickets, which would include a donation of £50,000 to the charity the Children's Society and cover the costs of organising the draw, including legal fees, transfer taxes and social media coverage to generate interest.

After launching on August 24, 2020, the tickets were sold by early January 2021. Entries came from 90 countries and the draw was picked up by local media in Saudi Arabia, Germany and Argentina, Jon says. "If we didn't sell enough tickets, 65 per cent of the revenue achieved would be given as a cash prize."

The draw was filmed and streamed live on YouTube at the office of LSL Solicitors, and the winner was Georgian-born Brida Day, 44, who had spent £25 on 16 tickets (the average purchase was 19 tickets per entrant), at the time she was living in Granney Park, New York. Included in her win were all the taxes for the transfer of the property.

"I was struggling to fit my Italian apartment during the pandemic, I had been living and working in NYC for 15 years and wanted to escape the corporate rat race," Day says from her temporary home in Wilmington, Delaware. "I gave up my job and stayed with family as I was homeless — I have never owned a home. Semi-jokingly, a friend sent me a link to the villa raffie with a text: 'Here's your next home'."

"I had spent most of my life fantasising about Italy: the art, architecture, the food, wine, the people, the language, the history, so I visualised myself at the property."

She is planning to fly out in September and start a new life there, using the rental income from the villa for her long-stay visa application (the villa lets for £2,000 a week in summer). "I plan to rent the villa during the first few months while I explore Italy," she says. "My husband and I had been in Italy about a decade, and Jon was approached by a family from Padua, in the Venetian region, to raise money for the charity *Braccio Di Ferro* — or *Braccio di Ferro* Foundation — founded by a family member who lost a child. They wanted to raffie the two-

Ladouce cheaper

Why buy a Tuscan holiday home when you can win one?
By Liz Rowlinson

Won in a prize draw

Tickets available

For sale

bedroom property in the seaside resort of Pizzo Calabro in Calabria, southern Italy, that they had been left by their grandparents, valued by a local agent at €250,000.

The 10,000 tickets at £25 each sold within three weeks in May, and the winners were Karen and Claude Belanger from Ottawa, Canada, who bought three tickets. "By 25 years we have bought tickets for a local raffie every year there is a large draw for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario where a local builder donates a new home and the proceeds benefit the

hospital," explains Karen, 59. "This draw had the same purpose, so we thought, 'Why not?' The couple, who have only been to Rome once, are scheduled to complete the handover in September. "We are going to visit as soon as we can, but we're not sure of our plans after that. Claude is retired and looking for new things to do."

Meanwhile, the Nunes are organising one more draw for their four-bedroom four-bathroom villa in Tuscany worth about €150,000 (£125,000) located in Cascadia, in the province of

Top: The Tuscan city of Lucca. Above left: Brida Day won a villa near Lucca. Above centre: Jon and Annmarie Nune's four-bedroom villa in Cascadia worth about €450,000

Above right: This villa in Fercoli was once a schoolhouse, on sale for €295,000 through Casa and Country

Pisa airport and within easy reach of the Italian Riviera. The couple have spent ten years renovating the 180 sq m property, which has a pool and original features including terracotta and marble floors and handmade chandelier windows and shutters. It sits in three acres of chestnut fields — with views towards the Garfagnana hills — and comes fully furnished. All local taxes and legal fees will be paid, plus the cost of flights. The ticket draw will be filmed live (without showing the winning number, to ratchet up the tension) and

Buyer beware

Thinking of entering a property prize draw? Jon Payne, a lawyer at LSL Solicitors, provides some tips.

■ **Is the draw legal?** All competitions of this type must be sanctioned by the Gambling Commission, have a clearly advertised free entry route, or pose a true question of skill. If a competition website looks badly written and poorly set out, the competition itself is likely to be suspect.

■ **Is an independent law firm overseeing?** If you have any concerns about legitimacy, this should be available to advise. A good indicator of the honesty and integrity of an organiser is to see what they hold entrants in a dedicated account.

■ **What happens if not enough tickets are sold?** Most commonly an alternative prize is offered, but details of this must be clearly set out next to the intended prize.

■ **Is the property legal?** Verification of title deeds abroad can be difficult, and it is best to employ a local lawyer has carried out checks for UK properties valued over £100,000. Land Registry search

Jon will travel to the home of the winner to tell them. Covid travel conditions permitting, the target is 20,000 ticket sales at £25 each and £25,000 will be split between the UK and Italian charities. "We were over for the last book but wanted to make a difference to people's lives," Jon says. "For Brida it's been a life-changing event and for the Belangers it means a new adventure." If you enter you will receive updates on Instagram (@winaholidayhome) or Facebook (facebook.com)