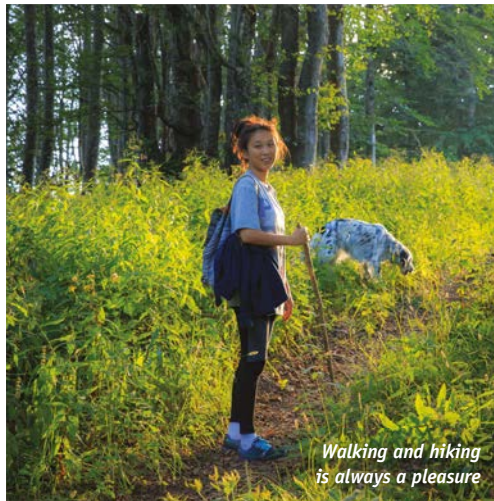




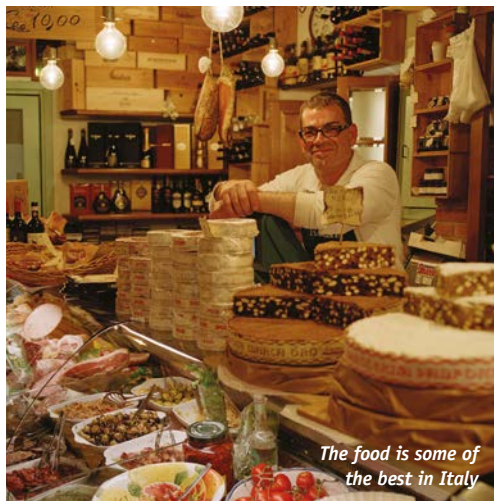
Arezzo's delightful Piazza Grande dates back well in to the early Middle Ages, though the architecture we see here today is mostly 16th-century

Living in *Tuscany*

Famed for its gorgeous landscapes, perfect little cities and stunning art treasures, Tuscany has long been loved by international homebuyers. Its property market is as interesting as ever right now, says **Fleur Kinson**



Walking and hiking is always a pleasure



The food is some of the best in Italy



And there are plenty of unspoilt seascapes

Tuscany. The word instantly conjures up visions of an ideal Italy. Renaissance cathedrals rising over the terracotta rooftops of jewel-like cities. Honey-coloured farmhouses gazing out onto vineyard-striped hills. White sand beaches licked by the turquoise Med. All these visions are a reality, although of course they're not the whole picture of this large central Italian region. There are also the lesser-known delights of leafy mountains dotted with castles, and wild windswept stretches of deserted coast. Less delightfully, there are thick scrums of tourists to contend with in some places, and, almost unbelievably, there are one or two unlovely towns. Tuscany packs in an astonishing range and variety. If there's one thing this place never is, though, it's boring.

THE MARKET

Tuscany's manifold rural and urban delights have long made it Italy's most coveted region. There was a time when it held the dubious accolade of having the world's most expensive rural property, and when so many British homebuyers had succumbed to the beauty of the Chianti Hills between Florence and Siena that the area was

dubbed 'Chiantishire'. Today, foreign buyers in Tuscany hail from a great many different countries, and while there are still some eye-wateringly expensive stretches of countryside, there is no shortage of more affordable areas. As a very rough guide to the region's prices, you might get

AT A GLANCE...

► THE REGION

When we think of Tuscany we think of verdant rolling hills dotted with centuries-old farmhouses radiating late afternoon sunshine – winding roads lined with tall cypress trees standing like sentries. But while this stereotypical ideal does exist here, there is much more to Tuscany than this, and whether you are looking for a rural retreat, a hilltop bolthole or an urban pied-à-terre there is plenty of variety on offer.

► THE CLIMATE

Generally mild, especially by the coast, yet really rather cold inland in the winter, and of course at higher altitudes. Relatively little rain, and most of that falling in the winter months.

► THE CULTURE

In terms of post-medieval Western European culture, Florence is unrivalled. But there's also Siena, Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia and more.



MONTECATINI VAL DI CECINA

ITALIA!
DREAM HOME
Thriving
agriturismo
business

Type of property **Detached villa**

Number of bedrooms **6**

Price **€595,000**

Location **Montecatini Val di Cecina**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com

Six-bedroom detached villa with swimming pool in almost an acre of land, currently divided into 3 apartments (2 on the ground floor and 1 on the first floor) and used as an *agriturismo*. The villa is located 12km from Montecatini Val di Cecina, on the road to the sea (20 minutes) and less than 1 hour from Pisa airport. About 230 sqm of accommodation with 45 sqm of covered porticos and a terrace of some 29 sqm. Covered area for 6 vehicles and a separate covered area for a further 2 vehicles.

Energy Classification – “G” 350 kWh/sqm pa. Ref 4980



SAN GEMIGNANO, BAGNI DI LUCCA

Type of property **Detached house**

Number of bedrooms **2**

Price **€160,000**

Location **San Gemignano, Bagni di Lucca**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com

Two-bedroom house in $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of land in the hamlet of San Gemignano, 6km from Bagni di Lucca and 1km from a shop. About 110 sqm of accommodation on one floor. Large patio at the front which leads to the entrance hallway, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, 2 double bedrooms and bathroom. A door to the side of the property leads to a second patio area. The property has had permission to be extended on that side to add a 3rd bedroom and en-suite bathroom and it is possible that this permission could be renewed if desired.

Energy Classification – “G”. Ref 5110



The Chianti Hills, quintessential Tuscany, and very expensive



Fresh fruit and vegetables in abundance

a village home in the far north or far south for between €50,000 and €150,000, a rural house or urban apartment in central Tuscany from €200,000 upwards, and a barn conversion or farmhouse in the centre of the region for between €500,000 and €1,500,000.

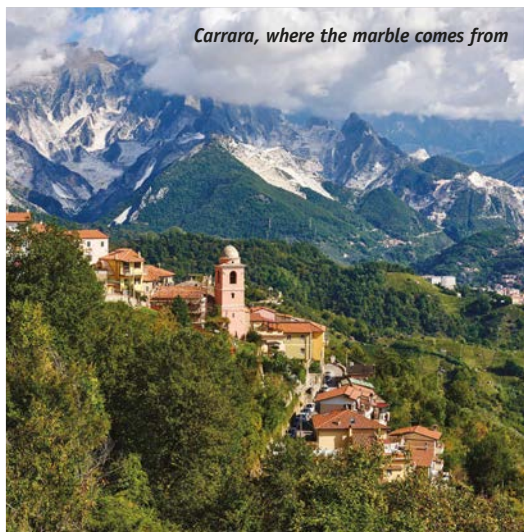
Tuscany's perennial appeal gives the region an exceptionally robust property market. Whatever the ups and downs of the world economy, there are always buyers who want a home here. Tuscany makes an excellent investment for this reason, and also for the fact that the region is unlikely ever to become spoilt or overdeveloped. There are sensible legal limits and protections on all building, ensuring that the look and appeal of Tuscany endures. Any home you buy in this region is likely to have a strong re-sale value and, of course, to offer very good holiday rental prospects if you choose to hire it out.

How does the market look right now? Has the recent pandemic changed things much? Jeremy Onslow-Macaulay of the estate agency Casa and Country says, “I can sum up the current state of the market in one word: booming! We deal predominantly with properties in the Tuscan countryside and the demand is definitely outstripping supply at the moment. Covid has made many people realise that they can work from anywhere, so I can't see this market trend changing any time soon. Tuscany offers an impressive number of international schools, so

Lavender fields at Romena Castle, just outside Pratovecchio



TUSCANY REGIONAL GUIDE



Carrara, where the marble comes from

INTRODUCTION

Tuscany remains the most popular of Italian regions and is loved by tourists and would-be property buyers for many reasons, not least because of its beautiful countryside and cities laden with Renaissance treasures and historic monuments. But while property prices remain high, the allure does not wane, and enthusiastic Italophiles still flock to the idyllic region. The good news is that appealing properties can still be found in abundance and, as Tuscany is a pretty large region, the patient and persistent will find some hidden nuggets that don't have

to cost an arm and a leg. Here we highlight the main areas, and some more off-the-beaten-track locations.

NORTH OF LUCCA

1 Liguria borders the head of this part of Tuscany while Emilia-Romagna sits at its back. The two dominant areas are the coast and the mountains, the **Apuan Alps** and the **Apennines**. If you want to explore the seaside resorts, you should pay a visit to **Forte dei Marmi**, with its imposing fortress, and **Viareggio**, the heart of the northern Tuscan Riviera. Move

inland to **Abetone**, north of Pistoia, for good skiing. Two important valleys cut a swathe through the area's mighty chestnut forests, the **Garfagnana**, north of Lucca, and the **Mugello**, above Florence. Marble is still quarried at **Massa** and **Carrara**, near the coast, and is the same stone that was used by the maestro Michelangelo for his sculptures all those centuries ago. Further south is **Lucca**, a treasure trove of monuments such as the 16th-century ramparts and remnants of the Romans in the Via Fillungo and the Old Forum. Travel east to **Montecatini** and its thermal waters, and to medieval **Pistoia**, which is lush with attractive flower and tree nurseries.

FLORENCE

② What more can be said about **Florence**, birthplace of the Renaissance and regional capital of Tuscany? Magnificent, peerless, breathtaking would be just a few words you could use of this city laden with art treasures and cultural monuments. In the 18th and 19th centuries the city was awash with Italophiles indulging in the 'Grand Tour', and the influx has never abated. As a result, the city can become very crowded, but the Florentine hills are close by, where merchants in medieval times used to retire to in the heat of the summer. Humidity can be high in the summer, and fog dense in the winter, as the **Arno River** runs through the city's centre, and the mountains are close by, so winter, early spring and late autumn are some of the best times of the year to visit and pay homage to the many delights on display.

AREZZO AND THE EAST

③ In the densely wooded northeast above **Arezzo**, the scenic Casentino Valley continues up to **Poppi** and **Bibbiena**. The countryside is dotted with medieval fortifications and

three religious sites of note: **Vallombrosa**, **Camaldoli** and **La Verna**. At Arezzo, visitors can enjoy the memorable yearly procession and 'Joust of the Saracens', and the monthly antiques fair. On the Umbrian border is **Sansepolcro**, home of Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca. Off the culture trail, the busy roads of the **Arno Valley** will take you to a host of designer outlets for a big shopping experience. Further south, **Cortona** enjoys tourists at its annual summer Tuscan Sun Festival, while atmospheric **Chiusi**, amid more gentle rolling countryside, offers its Etruscan past as a cultural draw.

PISA AND THE WEST

④ Tuscany's long western coastline stretches from **Pisa**, with its naval history, Romanesque architecture and iconic monuments, to the other side of the stunning **Parco Naturale della Maremma** in the south. Along the coast in between are numerous picturesque fishing villages such as **San Vincenzo** and the more upmarket **Castiglione della Pescaia**, with its medieval fortress and views of the idyllic isle of **Elba**. There are less fragrant watering holes too, but these are more than overshadowed by the other sights of the area, which offer much contrast. The area is steeped in Etruscan lore – for example at **Roselle**, north of **Grosseto**. This ancient site went through unhappy times when it sank to become a malarial swamp overrun by cattle rustlers. But after the swamp was drained in the 1930s, the perimeter wall was revealed, and other special ruins, so better times and prosperity returned to the area. A little further north is **Bolgheri**, a pretty village that is approached through a five-kilometre avenue of 200-year-old cypresses; and the 'Super Tuscan' wine Sassicaia is made here. A great draw of Tuscany, and this area in particular, is the native vegetation – Mediterranean scrub



and roads lined with elegant umbrella pines that are endlessly appealing to visitors. Move a little inland and you'll find **Volterra** and **Massa Marittima**, both with great architectural gems to enjoy. And don't forget the famous Leaning Tower, a landmark of Pisa that is known around the world.

SOUTH OF SIENA

⑤ Historic **Siena** is one of Tuscany's, and Italy's, biggest attractions, with its cuisine, museums and medieval architecture. It is a town passionately attached to its identity and has its own unique traditions, such as the biannual Palio horse race. To the south of the city, the three important zones are the Val d'Orcia, Monte Amiata and the 'deep south'. Move a little closer to the Lazio border and you will find villages like **Pitigliano**, **Sovana** and **Saturnia** nestling amid the wooded hills, while the mountain pastures of **Monte Amiata** are alive with flowers in spring. Winter skiing around **Piancastagnaio** and **Arcidosso** is very good, and **Castel del Piano**, **Abbadia San Salvatore** and **Santa Fiora** all offer historic medieval centres to enjoy. Travel south towards the **Val d'Orcia** and vineyards, olive groves, woodland and lush fields create a mesmerising patchwork, while delightful villages in the area include **Montepulciano** and **Montalcino**.



MARLIANA, MONTECATINI TERME

Type of property **Detached stone house**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€380,000**

Location **Marliana, Montecatini Terme**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com

Three-bedroom detached stone house with swimming pool and garden on the outskirts of the village of Marliana with all amenities, 10km north of Montecatini Terme, 1 hour from Pisa airport and 75 minutes to Florence. The house, which dates back 250 years but has been completely renovated, provides about 100 sqm of accommodation over two floors. The property is being sold fully furnished with the exclusion of certain items which are listed, but even those can be available under separate negotiation. Energy Classification – “G” 118.58 kWh/sqm. Ref 4997



CORTONA, AREZZO

Type of property **Country house**

Number of bedrooms **6**

Price **€1,200,000**

Location **Cortona**

Contact **Fine Tuscany ☎ +39 331 567 3190**

info@finetuscany.com www.finetuscany.com

In a peaceful and panoramic setting on 9,000 sqm of land, this 450 sqm country house with swimming pool has 6 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms and beautifully landscaped gardens. Ideal as a main family residence or as a spacious and welcoming holiday home. The house has been completely renovated and the owners have spared no expense to obtain a modern home with a rustic, traditional Tuscan feel. There is the possibility to purchase a lovely guest cottage together with the whole property. In a prestigious area of Tuscany, 40 minutes from Sant'Egidio Perugia airport. Ref TIARH242

ITALIA!
DREAM HOME
Spacious and peaceful rural property

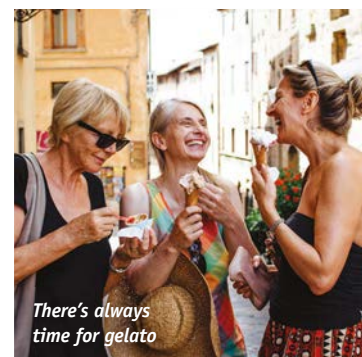


Lucca's cathedral is dedicated to St Martin of Tours

we're also seeing many young families keen on relocating.” Anna Riviuccio of Tuscany Inside concurs. She says, “The property market has been very good over the last two years despite the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. We've sold lots of homes.”

RURAL DELIGHTS

Most buyers in Tuscany want a home in its countryside. The posters and postcards focus on the heavenly rural landscapes of Tuscany's centre, but there are other rustic areas on the region's fringes that you should know about too. Tuscany is a large place (it's about the size of Wales) and it has a wide variety of landscapes.



There's always time for gelato

Tuscany's far north is a peaceful area of wooded mountains dotted with old villages and hilltop castles. The far south, meanwhile, is a spacious and mystical-feeling place of broad open hills and outcrops of volcanic rock. Both the far north and far south offer some of Tuscany's least expensive homes. The far north has proven popular with foreign buyers,

The immaculate resort town of Forte dei Marmi attracts the rich and famous





Isola Santa provided lodgings for travellers and pilgrims

who've been attracted to areas such as Garfagnana and Lunigiana by their low prices and easy access to Tuscan cities such as Pisa and Lucca. The far south remains less discovered, but it's an enchanting area with easy access to Umbria's beautiful little cities, Lake Bolsena and the coast.

Central Tuscany, of course, has been the inspiration for a million property fantasies. Italy's classic rural landscapes are here, especially in the areas immediately north and south of Siena, in the Chianti Hills and in the Val d'Orcia. These arrestingly beautiful places have Tuscany's highest-priced rural property. But if you've lost your heart to this

gilded stretch and your budget isn't huge, you might still manage to get a home here by opting for a small rural house or an apartment in a large farmhouse. If you're after a whole farmhouse in these parts, you might be interested in a tip from Jeremy Onslow-Macaulay of Casa and Country, who says, "East of Florence towards the Pontassieve and the Mugello Valley offers some of the 'least expensive' farmhouses that we know of. We have a five-bedroom one with a private pool and olive groves for €950,000."

SEA AND CITIES

Seaside-lovers often overlook Tuscany, as there are so many other fantastic coastal parts of Italy. But Tuscany's 150-mile coastline is worth knowing about, whether you're buying on the beach or aiming for a rural retreat a few miles inland. Tuscany's coast can be usefully divided into a northern and southern half, with the well-developed north being quite pricey for property. The wild and empty southern seaside, meanwhile, offers great bargains for the coastal homehunter. Tuscany has several gorgeous islands to consider too, such as Elba and Giglio, but do be aware that these can be expensive places for homes.

As you can probably guess, the three most popular Tuscan cities for visitors and homebuyers



Darren and Nikki on summer holiday

Image courtesy of Darren & Nikki Fontana

OUR LIFE IN TUSCANY

Darren and Nikki Fontana from Suffolk own a two-bedroom house in the far south of Tuscany. They spend Easter, Christmas and a month-long summer break there every year, and keep the place available for friends and holiday rental clients at all other times.

What drew them to Tuscany? "My grandfather was Italian," Darren explains, "and I've always had an interest in Italy. I studied Italian language and history at university, and that's how I met Nikki – she was on the same course. When she had a small inheritance in 2015, our first thought was to invest it in a house in Italy. We figured the money would appreciate better in a property than in a bank, plus we'd get to enjoy the house. We both loved Tuscany, but we knew that its most popular bits would be beyond our budget. We did lots of exploring and fell in love with southern Tuscany. It's very uncrowded, and very peaceful.

"Our house is near an amazing little town called Pitigliano, which is built on top of a vertical plume of volcanic rock. The whole area is full of interesting things like this. There are Etruscan tombs in the woods, old Roman roads in the fields, bubbling hot springs to bathe in, old towers to climb. It's a sleepy rural area, but there's so much to do and see. And when we want to cool down in the summer, we can choose between swimming in the sea or in Lake Bolsena just across the border in Lazio.

"The house was completely habitable when we bought it, which was good because neither of us wanted to spend time doing a restoration project. We upgraded the décor inside, modernised the electrics a bit, and created a garden and patio. There was an old olive grove on part of the land that came with the house. We're no horticulturalists, but we love looking after the trees and the local people have taught us how to press our own olive oil. We always have our neighbours round for a meal to celebrate the olive harvest.

"It's lovely being part of the local community. Italians are such friendly, welcoming people, and we've made lots of friends here. I'd recommend that anyone buying a house in Italy learns some Italian. But even if you can't speak the language, you'll still get embraced into the social life here – people are just so friendly. There are excellent estate agents out here who translate everything and guide you step-by-step through the Italian buying process. They're really helpful. If you want a house in Tuscany, you should definitely go for it!"





CAMPIGLIA MARITTIMA, LIVORNO

Type of property **Farmhouse estate**

Number of bedrooms **13**

Price **€3,500,000**

Location **Campiglia Marittima, Livorno**

Contact **Fine Tuscany** ☎ +39 331 567 3190

info@finetuscany.com **www.finetuscany.com**

This large farmhouse estate, which has breathtaking views of the hills and the sea, includes a main villa, a smaller detached villa, 2 barn conversions, a swimming pool, gardens, olive groves, a vineyard, land, storage rooms and cellars with wine making, wine bottling and wine tasting/entertainment facilities. Currently this farm produces between 2,000 and 3,000 bottles of an exclusive, excellent red wine, 100-200 litres of extra-virgin olive oil and, with the help of a local beekeeper, organic honey. Near Campiglia Marittima, 10km from the sea, 90km from Pisa international airport. Ref PRLIF238



VOLTERRA, PISA

Type of property **Country manor**

Number of bedrooms **5-8**

Price **€3,500,000**

Location **Volterra**

Contact **Fine Tuscany** ☎ +39 331 567 3190

info@finetuscany.com **www.finetuscany.com**

This magnificent country estate just outside the walled mountain top town of Volterra includes the manor house, a large warehouse, a swimming pool and 98 hectares of surrounding private farmland. The current owner has renovated the manor house using only the high quality materials and has successfully managed to merge an authentic old-farmhouse style with modern interior design and technology. In an excellent location, the property stands 13km from Volterra city centre, 60km from Siena, 72km from Pisa airport and 80km from Florence. Ref A2PIH232

ITALIA!
DREAM HOME
Magnificent
Tuscan country
estate



Pisa, with its iconic leaning tower

are Florence, Siena and Pisa. None are cheap, but Florence is the highest-priced and you should expect to pay €200,000 and upward for a centrally-located apartment here. However, like all Tuscany's popular spots, Florence offers absolutely superb prospects to anyone hoping to offer holiday rentals. And like most city locations, rental clientele comes year-round, not just in the summer. Anyone looking to buy a home in a lower-priced Tuscan city should consider delightful, walled Lucca in the north, Arezzo and Cortona in the central east, and Volterra in the central west. All are highly appealing and well-kept places.

RESTORE TO ORDER

Many buyers' ultimate property fantasy is to buy a tumbledown old farmhouse and turn it into the home of their dreams – designing the layout of rooms, choosing lovely building materials, landscaping the grounds, et cetera. This fantasy has been made a reality in Tuscany so often now that there aren't a great many tumbledown properties left to restore. Most old rural homes on the market have already been loving fixed up by a previous owner. This is great news if you want to start using your rustic retreat immediately, but not so great if you want to bring an old building back to life yourself.

Jeremy Onslow-Macaulay of Casa and Country says, "While it's true that the majority of 'ruins' in prime locations have already been restored, it's still possible to find a hidden gem. I would say that the margins of profitability are still wide enough to justify the time and effort spent on restoring a property. A further reason would be to take advantage of one of the new government incentives to kickstart the building trade, which are available to those who decide to take primacy residency in Tuscany."

So restoring an old home is still a dream you can make reality in Tuscany if you do a careful property search. However, Anna Riviaccio of Inside Tuscany cautions against falling in love with a tumbledown house in too remote a location. "You can find some great bargains in very remote areas, at the ends of the world, but homes in these locations can be much harder to sell later on," she says. Anna also advises buyers to be aware that the cost of building materials has increased and she recommends getting a precise estimate for your full restoration project work before it starts. ■

USEFUL CONTACTS

www.casaandcountry.com
www.casatravella.com
www.finetuscany.com
www.tuscanyinside.it