

Wish you lived here?

Turin, Italy

This elegant city is a foodie heaven – and it's about to outshine its showy sister, Milan, thanks to Eurovision

Called “the city with the most beautiful natural location in the world” by the Swiss architect and urban planner Le Corbusier, Turin is the fourth largest city in Italy and the capital of the Piedmont region, which, as the name suggests, sits at the foot of mountains – the Alps.

Liguria on the coast is about an hour's drive away and Milan is just an hour by train, but this week all eyes will be on Turin as it hosts the Eurovision Song Contest, after the victory of the Italian rock band Måneskin in Rotterdam last year.

Officially founded 2,000 years ago, the city became the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. But it was at the end of the 19th century that Turin rose to become the powerhouse of the country's industrialisation and an important crossroads of European industry and trade.

The automobile sector, in particular, thrived and Turin is still known as “the car capital of Italy”, with giants such as Fiat (the acronym stands for Fabbrica Italiana Automobili di Torino; Automobiles Factory of Turin in English), Lancia, Alfa Romeo and Pininfarina based there.

Adam Smith, a former aerospace engineer, moved from Lancashire to Turin to work for BAE Systems in the early 2000s. “There are quite a lot of British expats here, mostly engineers who travel around,” he says. “There were 60 of us all from Britain with our families.”

In 2008 Smith, 47, and his Italian partner opened a cocktail bar. After

all Turin is, alongside Milan, the birthplace of the aperitivo, and Martini vermouth was created in the city in 1863. The bar was popular and, in 2019, the pair decided to open a British restaurant, Smith's British. “The only British restaurant in the whole of Italy, to my knowledge,” Smith says. “People were constantly telling me, ‘We love London, but the food is terrible.’ After hearing that a thousand times, I took on the challenge and thought, ‘OK, I'll show you.’”

The people who are most surprised, though, are the Brits themselves. “British people can't believe that there is a British restaurant here,” he says. Smith also gets anglophile Italians who are in love with our culture. The restaurant serves British stalwarts such as eggs benedict and fish and chips and high tea served in fine china.

After two decades Smith calls Turin home. “I enjoy the lifestyle,” he says. “You can live a comfortable life here. Piedmont is the head of the slow food movement. And the city is lovely; it's not rammed with tourists like Tuscany or the Amalfi Coast.”

It's also significantly cheaper than Milan or Florence. According to the property portal Immobiliare.it, prices per square metre in and around Turin are €1,879, which means you can snap up a two-bedroom, two-bathroom property for about €185,000 (or about £158,000). In comparison, prices in Milan are more than €5,000 per sq m on average.

Diletta Giorgolo, head of residential for Sotheby's International Realty in Italy, says that after the 2006 Winter Olympics the city changed for the better. “Not only the urban redevelopment, which has improved the architectural quality of many central areas,” she



explains, “but also the number of cultural events.”

Giorgolo says the residential areas that are most popular, other than the city centre, are Quadrilatero Romano, Crimea, Gran Madre, Crocetta and Cit Turin (little Turin, in Piedmontese dialect). Here, she says, you can get villas “with a private park”, potentially furnished “with fine parquet floors, fireplaces, and between four to six bedrooms with en suite bathrooms”.

She says flats here are larger than in other cities too — “between 180 and 250 sq m, with at least three bedrooms, often with a terrace and a garage”. A large two-bedroom flat on Via Santa Chiara, near the impressive Egyptian Museum, is for sale through Sotheby's for €640,000.

Smith owns a house with a garden about 30 minutes outside Turin and commutes to the centre every day. “As much as I love the city I need some fresh

Top: San Lorenzo church. Left: apartments in a newly restored palazzo on Lago di Viverone, an hour's drive from Turin, are on sale from €200,000 with The Viewing. Right: a five-bedroom villa in Turin is POA with Sotheby's International Realty

air,” he says, adding that the hills around the city are perfect for mountain biking.

“The countryside around Turin is so picturesque,” says Gemma Bruce, managing director of Casa & Country estate agency. “You have the mountains, the hills, the lakes, like Lago di Viverone, which is absolutely stunning, on a par with Lago Maggiore and more picturesque than Trasimeno in Umbria.” A series of apartments in a palazzo near Lago di Viverone are for sale via The Viewing from €200,000.

Piedmont is also great for skiing, with resorts of the calibre of Via Lattea, Sestriere and Montgenèvre near by. And the Aosta Valley — which includes Cervinia, Courmayeur, Gressoney and Champoluc — is a 90-minute drive.

Is there any downside to living there? “I miss the UK's musical scene,” Smith says. “Italian music hurts my ears.”

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