

PRESS RELEASE

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FROM RUINS TO RICHES: A HELPING HAND TO PURCHASE AND RESTORE A RARE PIECE OF UMBRIA

Ever dreamt of owning an idyllic home in the green heart of Italy? It's time to invest in Umbria – where you will find some of the best Italian cuisine, traditional villages, historic architecture and unspoilt countryside at the foot of the Apennines. And as laws here have put a halt to any new-builds littering its rolling green hills, it's a sure investment in an exclusive area that will never be invaded by squalls of second-home owners. House prices here are sky-rocketing and finding a property in this hotspot is, understandably, becoming more and more difficult. But experts John and Liliana Tunstill are on hand to help you snap up one of the properties still up for grabs.

House hunting trips with the experts

Whilst neighbouring Tuscany's property market is rapidly expanding with new-builds, most of the places you will find for sale in Umbria are traditional countryside homes in ruins, left by families that have fled for the cities. And whilst buying a half-derelict house overseas might seem like a daunting proposition, with the help of experts John and Liliana Tunstill, it needn't be. Having quit London to live in the blissful folds of La Dolce Vita, John and Liliana have spent the last twenty-three years making a living out of restoring old properties in Umbria and finding them new owners.

"I do it because I enjoy it, but it also earns me a living", says John of his bold career move. "We have sourced, restored and sold over 250 properties in the area. And we restore them according to the original style and in keeping with the surroundings. We have reliable local plumbers, carpenters, electricians and builders at our fingertips so we can guarantee absolute quality and avoid the sort of property nightmares you hear about when people buy properties abroad these days," he enthused. "People can come to us at any stage of the property search, and we will take them by the hand and lead them through the process step by step".

Both John and Liliana possessed strong entrepreneurial backgrounds, and met in London when John had his own successful Toy Soldier store, and Liliana had opened a luxury sandwich shop. Having accumulated experience in the hospitality and interiors business in her home of Uruguay, Liliana's interior decorating skills, combined with John's ambition and property knowledge, made the couple a dream team in the Umbrian property market.

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The Restoration of a 12th Century Monastery

It was just three years ago that the Tunstill's were brave enough to take on their biggest challenge, when they bought a completely dilapidated monastery in the hills of Umbria. Even through their expert eyes the building was considered a complete 'wreck', literally half-buried under mud. When it had been in use as a monastery, a landslide had left half of the building submerged, and instead of digging it out, the resident monks proceeded to build another level on top of the previous one. (Now, from the inside, the second roof-level makes a quirky feature in some of the rooms.) Many a concerned friend asked, "do you really think this will work", as the determined John and Liliana started digging and set about their dream of turning the former monastery into a luxury B&B.

And just two years later the doors opened and their dream was realised. Now at La Preghiera you can enjoy a traditional slice of Umbria in a restored 12th Century monastery oozing with style, comfort and period character. It's original features have been fused with creature comforts, modern amenities and stylish décor, to create five-star country house accommodation. One recent guest said: "You've created a magnificent work of art here. You can't tell the monastery from the home, the guest from the family... you've restored life to this beautiful place."

As well as using the monastery and the villa in its grounds as luxury accommodation, it is also the ideal place for property hunters to base themselves and be introduced to Umbria and its surroundings. Whilst departing their expert property knowledge and helping you to find your own dream home, John and Liliana invite you to stay at La Preghiera in order to experience the Umbrian lifestyle first-hand before diving straight in to buying your own property

Buying a piece of La Preghiera

Now that properties are being snapped up in Umbria, the Tunstill's have devised another ingenious route into buying a fantastic property without having to take the plunge of the entire investment. La Preghiera and the Villa Moscatelli will be split into 100 shares for co-ownership, so you can buy a share of your own holiday home, and at the same time secure a sure investment with absolutely no hassles. At a cost of 80,000€ per year per share you will effectively own 1/100th part of the property and its net profits for that year.

Hence you could have exclusive use of the entire property for one half-week per year from just one share (this increases in multiples of the number of shares you own). Or, if you don't wish to use all the rooms, you can take just one room for nearly six weeks of the year, or two rooms for just under three weeks (per share). Basically the period, length and amount of occupation is currently by individual choice and share holding. The more shares you own the greater amount of space and or time you occupy. It's a simple concept that leaves you with your own luxury monastery for a designated number of days per year, an income from it profits and a stake in your dream property.

Accommodation: La Preghiera is in the village of Calzolaro. There are 9 double rooms in the monastery and 3 double rooms in the Villa Moscatelli. Sleeps up to 24 in total (29 with extra beds in some rooms). Includes one bedroom and bathroom accessible for wheelchair users, plus two bed bedrooms for people with mobility difficulties.

How much if I want to stay there and check it out? Rooms cost from €150 per night. Optional four course dinner €50. For details of property consultations with John, see www.propertiesumbria.com.

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How do I get there? Fly to Perugia, Ancona, Bologna or Rome. Ryanair offer great deals to Perugia, Ancona and Bologna (Forli). Transfer time to La Preghiera from Perugia is half an hour, and from the other airports 2-3 hours. You can hire a car or be picked up by your hosts.

Website: www.lapreghiera.uniquehomestays.com; www.propertiesumbria.com

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Notes to editors:

- La Preghiera is a member of Unique Home Stays (www.uniquehomestays.com). We have properties in the UK, USA, Spain, South Africa, Portugal, New Zealand, Italy, India, Greece, Germany and France.
- Please contact Unique Home Stays in the event of featuring La Preghiera. Any feature written as a result of this PR should include a mention of Unique Home Stays and our website (www.uniquehomestays.com).
- A selection of high-resolution images is available.
- We can organize press trips for select journalists and we work alongside a handful of professional journalists who can provide bespoke write-ups if required.
- Launched in 2001, Unique Home Stays offers the crème de la crème of privately hosted accommodation that offers a unique alternative to run-of-the mill hotels. Having travelled the world, MD Sarah Stanley knew what she expected from top quality accommodation: Intimate and luxury hospitality, pristine homes oozing with character, excellent regional cuisine and comfortable bedrooms with all the trimmings. Today Unique Home Stays offers superior accommodation in over 100 homes scattered over 14 different countries. The properties include castles, priories, rectories, windmills, water mills, townhouses, coastal homes and even a house in the sea.