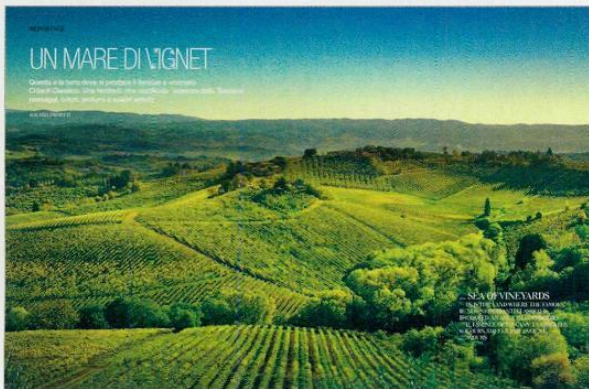


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English text

Rob Landeweerd and Jeroen Macco have travelled extensively around Italy since the 1990s and thanks to a close friend, they had the pleasure of visiting Città della Pieve in the Umbrian hills sparking off the desire to have their own 'casale'. In 2007, they decided to repatriate from Holland to Italy leaving their careers in executive search and banking behind after they bought a building project in the beautiful Umbria. Rob and Jeroen consulted local property agents and visited many houses in the area before choosing to buy a plot of land up in Piegara near Lake Trasimeno and build their dream home. Within a year the whole project was finished and with Christmas 2007 they moved into the new house. The combination of project management experience and designing their dream home with their love for Italy led to their company Special Umbria being born. Rob and Jeroen started off managing and renovating and building cli-ents' second homes in Umbria, which led to renting out exclusive villas and apartments and subsequently started acting as property finders. In 2018 they worked on the 35th project. Right now finding the most special places in Umbria to restore or to build new projects on is their main activity as the request for such projects from foreign clients increased a lot the last two years. They work from their office located next to their 3-bedroom casale. This office is the original 16th century farm house for which their new home was the inspiration. Their gorgeous house sits in the hills near Città della Pieve and is surrounded by 3500 sqm of gardens with a swimming pool, vegetable garden, around 50 olive trees and fruit trees with breathtaking views of the Umbrian countryside. Special Umbria has around 100 properties on its books for exclusive rentals and sales.

most popular, best-known wines in the world is produced. The English were the first to discover it, naming the area Chiantishire. It is still an important destination for international tourism, welcoming Americans and Northern Europeans in particular, though its reputation also attracts Asians and Australians. Those who come here are looking for Tuscany at its most authentic, which is perfectly encapsulated by Chianti. Greve is the gateway to Chianti. The lively town is famous for its unusual square, where the local market has been held since medieval times. The Antica Macelleria Falorni, much more than just a butcher's shop, is well worth a visit. From here, passing through Panzano, a typical Tuscan village, you come to Castellina. Just the experience of following the picturesque road, which leads up to this corner of heaven, almost hidden in the hills of Chianti, justifies the trip. Walking through the town, you can admire the beautiful noble buildings that belonged to important Siense and Florentine families, while the Via delle Volte walkway that crosses the town offers a breath-taking panorama of the surrounding countryside. Radda, which is protected by ancient walls, retains its original medieval appearance characterized by narrow streets and classic tower buildings. The Castello di Volpaia, an ancient fortified village, is located near Radda. Another notable Chianti village is Gaiole, nestled in a charming landscape containing sites such as the Castello di Vertine, Castello di Meleto, Pieve di Spaltenna and Castello di Brolio, now charming residences. Gaiole is also associated with the "Eroica", a cycling event created in 1997. Vintage bicycles ride on dirt roads past villages and vineyards, experiencing total immersion in the wonders of Chianti. You cannot make the trip without a tour of the Chianti wineries.



REPORTAGE
A SEA OF VINEYARDS

This is the land where the famous, renowned Chianti Classico is produced. An area that embodies the essence of Tuscany: landscapes, colours, smells and ancient flavours

continues from page 118

Chianti is above all a landscape: green hills outlined by endless rows of vineyards and olive groves... Behind every curve and corner, you can admire unexpected views and glimpses of villas and farmhouses. This is Chianti Classico, the ancient region that extends for 70,000 hectares between Florence and Siena. It is where one of the

REAL ESTATE MARKET
A GOOD TIME FOR BARGAINS IN CHIANTI

You can buy properties for half of the price that they were ten years ago. The best places to invest to provide an income and to experience the Tuscan countryside

continues from page 128

The feeling in recent months, between the end of 2017 and the start of 2018, is that the property market is recovering in the Chianti Classico production areas. The 40-50% fall in prices in the wake of 2008 now seems behind us. "Italy is once again a good place to invest in and there is now increased interest from foreign investors, especially British, Americans and Germans", Bill Thomson, of the

English text

international agency **Knight Frank** (www.chianti-estates.it), tells **Ville&Casali**. The Chianti region has historically always attracted the attention of foreigners attracted by its lifestyle, nature, landscape, art, food and wine, as well as by the distinctive architecture of its villages and houses. "The luxury property market in particular is experiencing an upturn, namely private individuals who purchase properties worth over 10 million euro, large hotel groups and investors who buy wineries to produce wine". This is an interesting trend, which reveals that the type of property that people are investing in has changed. Francesco La Cammore, provincial president of Fiaip Siena, also confirms that the luxury market has held up the best and is the market to which investors are returning. "This type of market," he explains, "is driven by business-oriented sales, namely the purchase of farms and hotels. This area attracts groups of companies, property funds and investors with previous experience in these sectors, such as Californians and other Americans, as well as Mexicans, who view farms in Tuscany as a showpiece". There is even more activity in the small-medium investment segment, centred around properties with a value of around 350,000 euro. Some buyers are looking for a second home for the weekend, easily reachable within a couple of hours by car. "The other segment, namely people looking to invest between 350,000 to 1 million euro," he adds, "is suffering the most, since it was especially impacted by market difficulties". "Today, we no longer pay attention to just the square metre – euro ratio: a property's value is determined by the feeling of wellbeing that you experience in that place". To prove his point, Francesco La Cammore tells **Ville&Casali** that some customers asked him if they could sleep a few nights in the house that they were interested in prior to purchase, in order to get a proper impression of it. "This is why the figure of the estate agent is increasingly evolving into a consultant who tries to understand buyers' needs, so much so that we talk about tailored real estate", he concludes. One of the most significant foreign capital investments in recent years has been in Borgo San Martino al Vento, owned by a group of Norwegians, who have undertaken a project to restore an abandoned farm. They have built 10 luxury tourist residences and are dedicated to olive oil and wine production. Michele Medori of the Chianti Property Group agency (www.chiantipropertygroup.com) talked to us about the local property business. Medori has worked for years in the area, especially through his renovation company, which is dedicated to restoring properties in keeping with the characteristics of the area. Indeed, his distinctive approach is easily recognisable in many farmhouses and hotels in the Chianti area. "The most popular properties," emphasizes Medori, "are farmhouses of around 500 sq m in the countryside with a pool. Prices vary from 1 to 3 million euro". "Here, restorations are carefully designed and carried out using all the area's typical materials, such as stone, handmade terracotta bricks and chestnut wood. However, new owners are also very attentive to innovation and request home automation to manage the lighting and heating". The result is an aesthetically striking combination of tradition and modernity. One of the Podere Le Caciaie agency's most interesting properties is a small tower on a hill. The property covers 700 sqm in total and comes with 1 hectare of land and a swimming pool. It is on the market for 2 million euro. Antonio Lapucci of the Immobiliare Chianti (www.immobiliarechianti.it) agency agrees that farm buildings in

the hills with a panoramic view are a popular choice. "People who come here", he comments, "are looking for views, vineyards and olive groves!". On average, the ideal property is priced at around 1 million euro. For this price, you can find a property of around 250-300 sq m and a piece of land. In this case, most buyers are Northern Europeans, including Belgians and Dutch. The agency is currently advertising a 230 sq m former mill with a panoramic view and swimming pool for 1.3 million. However, demands have changed over time. "Absolute silence and privacy are added benefits for a home, though not to the extent that it is isolated, which is a concept that has changed over the years. Consequently, one of the main factors is a countryside farmhouse's proximity to the city," explains Bill Thomson. "In the villages, there is a market for historic houses, however there is little interest in the few properties that are currently for sale. Those who choose this solution are looking for a property of 70-100 sq m, which must necessarily have an outdoor space and beautiful view. They are generally priced at around 250-300,000 euro". Meanwhile Paolo Saturnini of the Firenze Chianti Immobiliare (www.firenzechiantimmobiliare.it) agency recounts that he has recently concluded a sale with an American family: 160 sq m with an attic and roof terrace. It was bought for 400,000 euro. In terms of the district, there is no difference between Gaiole, Castellina, Radda and Greve. However, the presence of olive groves and vineyards impact the demand and price. These are the most sought-after areas and, contrary to what you might think, they are not so extensive when one considers that two thirds of the entire region is covered by forest. The most desirable spots are in valleys with views and exposure, such as La Volpaia, the so-called Conca D'Oro (Panzano) and Montefioralle (above Greve). One hectare of certified Chianti Classico vineyard can be worth as much as 150-200,000 euro. "Today, there has been a great recovery from a wine-making perspective," Lapucci tells **Ville&Casali**. People are looking for farmhouses with a small vineyard, up to 3-4 hectares, where they can start to successfully produce wine. However, you need at least 10 hectares to survive on the market," he concludes. Claudia Voss of Studio Montagliari Immobiliare (www.toscana.it) has also found that the market has been livelier for at least 18 months: property prices are adjusting and have approached their real value, thus attracting investors. "In some cases, prices fell by as much as 50%," she observes, adding "this is an excellent time to invest". In general, buyers who want to invest to acquire an income focus on two specific types of property: hotels or properties to turn into hospitality businesses and wineries. The agency's portfolio contains various solutions that meet these requirements: a village in Gaiole with 3 residential units and 2 pools, already used as a hotel, on the market for 1.65 million euro, and a small organic farm with 7-8 hectares of Chianti Classico vineyard for 3.95 million euro. "Today, the best place to invest is Montefioralle, a medieval village that has remained completely intact," estate agent Marinella Coppi (www.le-case.com) explains to **Ville&Casali**. "Many foreign investors have arrived here in the last 3-4 years," she recounts, "mostly Americans and British, who are restoring the village, the private homes and the surrounding countryside, overseeing a kind of internal and rural renovation process". "It is still a good market and it is the right time to invest, given that prices are currently low, but are about to rise". Marinella Coppi's advice is to invest now. "With 2 million euro, you can buy several real estate units, laying the foundations for the creation of a scattered hotel", she concludes.