



Portal to Italia



Italian property is perennially popular, but the high profile areas are quite expensive. Marche may be worth a closer look, writes **Diarmaid Condon** in Marche.

Earlier this year I was very privileged to be invited to view the lovely Marche region of Italy courtesy of the folks at Gate-Away.com. This pro-active Italy-centric property portal is the brain-child of three young Italian entrepreneurs; [Antonio Quondamatteo](#), [Annalisa Angellotti](#) and [Simone Rossi](#). All three worked with UK based Rightmove, so they are no strangers to the online property industry. They noted that there was a market opening as there was nothing properly representing the Italian market abroad. They subsequently made that brave decision and most difficult of transitions - taking the opportunity to fill the void.

The region is pronounced 'Mar-ke' apparently, rather than 'March' or 'Mar-chay'. This lack of pronunciation knowledge would be indicative of my overall prior knowledge of the area. I'd often seen the name, but

couldn't even find it on a map before this visit. Having experienced its vistas of wonderfully rolling hills and quintessentially Italian vineyards, I would have to say it was well worth the effort.

Firsly, getting there. It's not the easiest part of Italy to access from the UK or Ireland. Daily 2.5 hour Ryanair flights to Ancona from Stansted are the most straightforward option. There are also some Easy Jet options from UK Regional airports and less regular flights to Pescara from

Stansted. There are no direct flights from Ireland.

The lack of widespread accessibility could, somewhat counter-intuitively, be part of the attraction. The fact that you have to make a concerted effort to get there means that it is not an area crawling with tourists falling out of Irish/English pubs and craving early morning fry-ups all through the summer. In fact, finding such an establishment is something of a rarity (we did spot a large 'Guinness' sign in Ascoli Piceno, but

Let's Deal with the Seismic Issue



If you do choose to look at property in Marche, you'll quickly become aware of the potential for earthquakes. The Appenine mountain range marks where the African and Eurasian tectonic plates converge. These are slowly coming together which means that the central-southern part of the Italian peninsula, along this mountain ridge, is susceptible to seismic activity. It is no coincidence that Italy is home to all active volcanoes in Europe. It also makes for remarkably rolling and fertile land. This allied to a helpful

climate makes it an ideal place to grow grapes in particular. So it's not all bad.

A cluster of seismic events hit the Marche region in August and October 2016. Almost three years later you'll still notice some civic buildings being repaired following the tremors.

If you want to spend any time here, and quite a few other parts of Italy, you'll have to be prepared for the fact that seismic activity can be part and parcel of life. If you are buying a property here, it is important to check that it has been built, or renovated, to withstand seismic shock.



managed to avoid the premises).

Marche is almost directly north of Rome on the opposite coastline. It is set on a wonderful carpet of fertile rolling hills stretching from the Appenines north to the Adriatic Sea. This magnificent stretch of coastline is a bustling tourist attraction. Despite this it is, thankfully, very much an area steeped in Italian heritage and culture. You will find ancient town centres housing piazzas galore strewn with coffee shops, patisseries and restaurants. It exudes the 'Mediterranean lifestyle' we are so often told we should espouse to help us live to that magical 'ripe old age'.

Gate-Away.com, which covers the entire Italian peninsula, says that Lakeside properties around Lakes Garda and Como continue to be the most sought after properties. The most popular area in Italy by search volume is, unsurprisingly, Tuscany. Tuscan property, however, is not the most affordable. Other areas such as Apulia (the heel of Italy) and Lombardy (north on the Swiss border) also account for considerable traffic. UK property hunters account for 14.45% of traffic on

the portal, with Irish enquiries at just 1%.

The reason for bringing us to Marche on this trip was twofold. Firstly, Gate-Away.com is based in the beautiful old town of Ascoli Piceno. Secondly, it offers reasonably priced property in a relatively unknown part of the country, and they wished to present it to a wider audience. It must be said that this was done quite admirably. It is not uncommon to be buried in a blizzard of new-build off-plan developments on such trips. We saw the sum total of none on this particular foray. Our tour consisted of one-off regeneration and rebuild projects dotted around the re-

gion, which showed off Marche at its finest.

This lovely tour took in the coastal towns of Sirolo and Benedetto del Tronto. In between we visited the picture-book hilltop towns of Spinatoli and Ripatransone and the region's beautiful and ancient capital, Ascoli Piceno.

Like any other country that's not home, purchasing a property is a substantial investment and shouldn't be undertaken lightly. As a bare minimum it is necessary to have some knowledge about what the buying process entails. Gate-Away.com have put together a nice overview of the whole process as it applies to Italy if you visit the [Italy Guide](#) section. It covers all the areas you'll need to inform yourself of including legal, mortgaging and taxation issues. Admittedly, these are not always the most appealing aspects of buying a home abroad, but they are vital and you disregard them at your peril.



Ascoli Piceno
Beside the town is a fully renovated, 300 sq. m., 4-bed stone house on 10 hectares of hillside land. Price €399,000.

Seminario
17th century convent renovation. Prices from €280,000 for a 145 sq. m. 2-bedroom apartment.

ON THE MARKET



Offida
6-bedroom, 6-bathroom villa complete with 15m external swimming pool and a separate apartment for guests. Price reduced from over €900,000 to €695,000

All listings, and many others available at www.Gate-Away.com.