



what's available in...
Umbria

We look at the property market in this ever-popular and charming region



WORDS: STEFANIA RUSSO

SOME UMBRIANS claim it is no coincidence the name of this beautiful region is similar to *ombra*, the Italian for shadow, as they feel it has for too long been overshadowed by its famous neighbour, Tuscany. Yet those fortunate enough to have been here will tell you that while it may not have Tuscany's hordes of tourists, it is all the more enchanting for it.

Not for nothing does spectacular, mountainous Umbria proudly call itself 'the green heart of Italy', 'green' after its several national parks and its lush valleys through which the River Tiber flows to the sea, and 'heart' as it is right in the middle of Italy.

It's a heart that's beating as far as property values are concerned. A Perugia airport extension last year gave Umbria its first international airport, meaning better transport links and

adding further impetus to real estate prices that have risen by around 10 per cent a year since the early '90s.

CLIMATE

The Umbrian weather is influenced heavily by the fact that it is landlocked, with the Apennine mountains on its eastern border. July and August are the hottest months, with typical maximum temperatures of around 29°C and 30°C and 10 hours a day of bright sunshine. However, not benefiting from the mild winters of coastal Italy, December to February can see temperatures drop to freezing and snow in mountainous areas.

This is a region so scenic and unspoilt that it is really made to be viewed on foot. St Francis of Assisi famously did it in 1206, when he walked from Assisi to Gubbio, 25 miles to the north. Many present-day visitors also explore it via its numerous hiking trails, one of the most well-trodden being a two-day walk that recreates St Francis's epic journey. But for those who would prefer a more relaxing way of taking in the sights, Umbria's beauty can be appreciated just as thoroughly by car.

This is a region of picturesque hilltop towns rather than sprawling cities. As good a place as any to start is Perugia, its capital and right in the middle of Umbria. It is as large as the region's towns come, yet is home to just 149,000 people.

ATTRACTIONS OF THE CAPITAL

Among its spectacular attractions are the Temple of Sant'Angelo, a 1500-year-old round

church made in part from Roman ruins and San Pietro, a medieval church whose walls are adorned in paintings and frescos. There is also a series of escalators leading up a steep hill that pass through an old Etruscan fort.

Perugia is also famous for its summer jazz festival, at which Eric Clapton played last year. As well as sweet music there are also sweet attractions, as it hosts a Eurochocolate Festival. For something more highbrow – and less fattening – try the National Gallery home to some fabulous Renaissance art.

About an hour's drive away, to the north-west, lies Tuoro sul Trasimeno, overlooking Lake Trasimeno. It was founded on the site of a battle in 217BC between Hannibal and the Romans. As well as the tranquil lake views worth seeing here are the 12th-century San Salvatore church and the Castle of Mont Gualandro. Leaving Tuoro and working your way clockwise around Umbria, you come to Gubbio, some 40 miles away. It boasts an impressive 1st-century BC Roman amphitheatre and is one of the country's best preserved medieval towns.

FESTIVALS FOR ALL

A few miles south is Gualdo Tadino, known for its ceramics. Notable attractions here include the 12th-century Rocca Flea military fort, visible from miles around. But if you are here in the last week of September, catch the colourful three-day *I Giochi delle Porte* festival a medieval games tournament.

Assisi requires a brief detour but is worth it. Perugia may be Umbria's capital but this town is its artistic and spiritual heart. You can't miss the huge church commemorating St Francis and comprising two basilicas. The complex – on which construction began in 1228 – is one of Italy's most visited religious sites, so don't come here expecting solitude.

The next stop-off on the journey south should be Spoleto, which has a still-used Roman theatre and a splendid 12th-century cathedral. Every summer, Spoleto is taken over by the two-week *Festival Dei Due Mondi* – festival of two worlds, an international musical event.



Finally, the journey westwards brings to Todi, which boasts an imposing cathedral and medieval central square, and Orvieto, known for its 13th-century cathedral and fine wines.

THE PROPERTY MARKET

Prices in Tuoro are affected by the vicinity of Tuscany five miles away and expect to pay around €500,000 for a three-bedroom villa. But there are bargains to be had – a two-bedroom terraced or semi-detached property for

€150,000 and apartments in a complex with a lake view for €95,000.

Property is more affordable further away from the Tuscan border. In the centre of Gubbio

€130,000 will get you a 50sq. m. one-bedroom townhouse or apartment, while a three or four-bedroom villa on the outskirts will get you back €300,000.

Budget €150,000 for a two-bedroom villa in Gualdo Tadino, while a similar property in Todi can come with a €250,000 tag.

As ever, buying a rundown property requiring restoration is often a cheaper option. In Todi a 300sq. m. house might cost €150,000, a third of Tuscan prices.



PROPERTIES FOR SALE

Casa della Pieve and Osteria – Tuoro sul Trasimeno

With direct access to Lake Trasimeno, surrounded by rural landscape, new apartments are available in two restored country houses. The apartments have been renovated by maintaining the buildings' original features such as beamed ceilings.

Price: Euro 115,000 (approx. £77,000)



Villa Grazia – Gubbio

Two-storey detached villa of 2,050 sq.ft. Four bedrooms, two bathrooms, study room, kitchen with dining table and spacious living room. Beautifully decorated, all bedrooms have wooden floors and beamed ceilings. Surrounded by 2.7 acres of land.

Price: Euro 300,000 (approx. £200,000)



Villa Panorama – Gualdo Tadino

In the hills of Gualdo Tadino, a two-storey villa of 3,300 sq.ft with panoramic view. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms, lounge, kitchen and store room. Surrounded by 21,500 sq.ft of garden. Two garages.

Price: Euro 205,000 (approx. £137,000)



Casale Luca – Todi

Beautifully restored country house in the Mount Paglia's Park. The villa is 3,000 sq.ft and comprises three bedrooms, three bathrooms, kitchen, study and living room with fireplace. Surrounded by 40,000 sq.ft of garden with swimming pool.

Price: Euro 700,000 (approx. £470,000)

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