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Under the Tuscan sun

Some places just never go out of fashion, and Tuscany is the supreme example. Prices may be falling elsewhere but the appetite among the wealthy to own a small piece of Italy's most illustrious region remains unabated.



When the Colorado-based luxury developer Timbers Resorts was looking for a location for its first venture in Europe, Tuscany was the natural choice. "Tuscany has world appeal," says the company's representative, Marina Palmerio. "Our clients were incredibly excited about the opportunity to buy something in Tuscany, and we've had people buying here from all over the world – Argentina, the Philippines and Singapore as well as North America and Europe."

Castello di Casole offers a chance to get a real slice of Tuscan lifestyle. The 4,200 acre estate will eventually offer the chance to buy in 29 restored farmhouses or casali perched on its idyllic hillsides, either on a fractional or a freehold basis. Eleven properties have already been restored and more than €12 million of sales were notched up in the first half of 2009.

As well as enjoying a luxury property that has been restored in authentic Tuscan style, owners can get involved in the estate's wine-making, learn about Tuscan cuisine and enjoy the fruits of the estate from its extra virgin olive oil to a variety of game.

Work is also underway on the resort's hotel, which is being fashioned out of the estate's main villa and will open next August (2010) with 41 suites, as well as other facilities such as a spa and restaurants. The villa was the home of film director Luchino Visconti during the 1960s.

Buying into this doesn't come cheaply; a one-twelfth share in one of the casali starts at €290,000, while to buy a complete casale starts at €3.7m. [View property here.](#)

Castello di Casole is not the only new luxury development near Siena to choose from; Knight Frank is marketing the Palazzo dei Tufi, a former sanatorium that is being converted into 90 apartments of various sizes, all with panoramic views of Siena, and ranging in price from €400,000 to €1.9m. And there are more than 630 properties at over £1m in Tuscany listed on the Primelocation.com – evidence that in this part of the world, prices are holding up remarkably well.

Alexander Garrett is a freelance property writer who contributes regularly to The Observer and British Airways' Business Life.

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