

# MANSION

## AUSTRALIA



Rooms with a view — the beautiful Lake Como, to the north of Milan in Italy, a region famous for its restaurants, bars and walks

# Wherever you hang your hat

Our love affair with overseas property shows no signs of cooling

LISA ALLEN

Never mind the plunging dollar. Australians continue to buy property overseas — whether it's a one-bedroom apartment fronting Lake Orta, north of Milan, a castle in Tuscany or, closer to home, a million-dollar mansion in Bali.

"Work has not let up," says Melbourne-based international lawyer and notary Michael Bula, a specialist in helping Australians buy offshore real estate.

Bula, who speaks French and Italian, says Europe is the most popular place to purchase, with clients attracted to Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. While some spend as little as €15,000 (\$23,400) to gain a foothold in rural Normandy, others put together syndicates to purchase multi-million-euro castles in Poland or Hungary.

Melbourne stay-at-home mum Liza Davidson has just paid €15,000 for a sight-unseen two-room townhouse in the lower Normandy village of St Georges Le Gaultier.

"I have been dreaming for some time but was thinking of something larger and grander," the Dandenong Ranges-based Davidson says. "I am not financial — if I can do it, anyone can."

Davidson has sent in painters and decorators to freshen things up. She says the floor tiles are 200 years old. "I will rent it out, but I can afford to keep it vacant."

Melbourne healthcare consultants Kate and Richard Russell won't be drawn on the price they paid for a one-bedroom apartment in a 400-year-old village at Lake Orta, near Milan.

The Brighton-based couple had been looking for several years and were attracted to Lake Orta because of its magnificent restaurants, bars and beautiful walks.

"It's great for swimming in summer in the lake and you can also travel to Milan in an hour," says Kate Russell.

But photographer John Anthony, who has lived in France for 23 years, is thinking of selling because he is retiring and returning to Melbourne.

"Rather than a holiday house

**'My wife and I enjoy the French style of life'**

JOHN ANTHONY  
PHOTOGRAPHER

in Portsea we decided to buy a holiday house in France. My wife and I enjoy the French style of life," Anthony says.

The villa is located in the classified hillside village of La Teulière and includes a barn dating to the 1700s. The property rents out for \$1150 a week and the asking price is \$350,000.

In Bali, Elite Havens director Matthew Georgeson says, the average Australian pays about \$1 million for a holiday home, and favourite locations are Seminyak, Canggu and the Bukit Peninsula.

"I have seen a strong bounce back from interested Australians looking for top-shelf beachfront and clifftop properties," he says.

Georgeson is selling Villa Hansa, about 10 minutes by car from renowned surfing spot Echo

Beach and about 20 minutes from trendy Seminyak. The asking price for the property, which has four bathrooms, all with ensuites, is \$US2.5m (\$3.5m). A further three bedrooms are spaced throughout the estate.

New Zealand is also attractive for Australians because it has no land tax or stamp duty. Nick Horton, director of Luxury Real Estate, says direct night flights to the South Island ski destination of Queenstown are boosting sales.

Horton is fielding interest from Australian buyers, particularly those looking to pay between \$NZ1m (\$940,00) and \$NZ2m.

In Queenstown, \$NZ1m buys an apartment or rental house, but a rural estate such as 93 Slope Hill Road, Dalefield, Queenstown has an asking price of \$NZ3.995m.



**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**  
Adelaide. 8 Victoria Avenue, Unley Park. \$4.2m+  
This beautiful bluestone return-veranda villa has been in the same family for 45 years. David Hickinbotham's parents bought the six-bedroom home in 1971 and he remembers many happy times there. The formal living room has a bay window and the formal dining room opens on to a veranda. There is a pool and large games room. The home sits on 3365sqm of manicured gardens with a terrace.

AGENTS: Ken Jacobs, Christie's International and Charles Booth, Bernard H Booth.



**NSW**  
Sydney. 3 Vineyard Way, Breakfast Point. \$3m+  
This Torrens title home is a short stroll to the river and local parks. John Joyce bought the two-storey home 18 months ago. Downstairs is the open-plan living space, with two lounge areas and a gourmet kitchen. Light and green space are provided with a covered entertaining terrace and internal courtyard. Upstairs are three bedrooms, the master opening on to a private balcony.

AGENTS: Susan King, McGrath, Concord.

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emilymay.prestige@gmail.com



**QUEENSLAND**  
Brisbane. 25 Bunratty Street, The Gap. \$2.5m+  
Andrew Pranoto designed his beautiful four-bedroom home 25 years ago, inspired by the views of the city. There is an oriental-style entrance with an alfresco area under a pitched roof. "In the Colonial era, a lot of the rubber plantations in Malaysia had an area where you could sit and enjoy the weather and watch the storms roll by," he says. "I wanted something similar." The gardens have a pool and a self-contained guesthouse.

AGENT: Josephine Johnston-Rowell, Johnston Dixon, Milton.



**VICTORIA**  
Melbourne. 8 Fashoda Way, Hawthorn. \$1.75m+  
John and Maria Blackney's first child was a week old when they purchased this Victorian home. Thirteen years later they have a family of five and a beautifully renovated three-bedroom property. The Blackneys built a rear extension to house a light-filled family room and kitchen and added another floor for two more bedrooms and a teenager's retreat. They are selling to take on another renovator's dream.

AGENT: Tim Picken, Kay & Burton, Hawthorn. Auction June 18.



**VICTORIA**  
North-east. Day Dawn, 37 Stackey Gully Road, Bright. \$1.49m  
Jim and Marilyn Chipperfield had always admired Day Dawn, set on 1.2ha overlooking Bright and the often snow-capped Mount Bogong. Twelve years ago they bought the four-bedroom architect-designed home. It has a striking stone fireplace in the lounge room, 5m ceilings and walls of glass to capture the morning sun. There is a wrap-around patio and in ground pool.

AGENT: Gerard Gray, Dickens Real Estate, Bright.