

HOMEFINDER ABROAD

With increasing interest in the Turkish property scene, **Jane Hardy** discovers that circumstances are now becoming more conducive to the investor

Time to sample Turkish delights

When you're considering buying a property in a country which you know little about, it makes sense to call in the experts. Turkey is an emerging second home market that looks tempting — think of all those Turkish delight headlines — and offers some very reasonably priced properties with all the boxes ticked: pool and/or sea views, white sandy beaches, contemporary kitchens and bathrooms.

But although it is on the brink of EU membership, it's still halfway between Europe and Asia, with influences from both continents and countries as various as Armenia, Bulgaria and Iraq on its borders.

It has a different, Muslim culture, and shouldn't simply be regarded as the next Spain, even though investors who have made their money on the Costas are now buying up swathes of Turkish land in the hope of repeating their trick in this latter-day sliver of the Ottoman empire.

Dominic Whiting, editor of *Buying in Turkey - A Complete Property Buyer's Guide to Turkey* (Apogee Publishing) and director of a new property finding service, liked the place so much he settled there. He is resident for "most of the year" in Turkey and lives in Izmir on the Aegean coast while renting a villa in Dalyan for weekends and holidays. Dominic says he didn't actively choose to move over.

"I didn't decide, it was really fate". But as Dominic (34) says, his career path led him inexorably to the country. "I worked for several UK publishers, wrote the *Footprints Handbook on Turkey*, then the *Time Out Istanbul* guide which took 18 months to research". He also turned out the *Dorling Kindersley EyeWitness* on the country, so was becoming something of a Turkey expert.

His CV includes a degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, with a thesis written on Turkey, so fate was clearly given a helping hand.



Turkish options: it's always best to consult the experts before taking the plunge

company in London in 2003 and edited *Travel Turkey*, a magazine on tourism which in turn led to the first property guide to the country.

"There was such a lot of interest on the property side, we were bombarded with questions, that we got the idea of the *Buying in Turkey* title which is updated annually."

His property consultation service started up in June, and Dominic and his team have already advised 140 clients. It's a free service, and Dominic works with developers and agents to provide a range of expertise.

"We get the details of what people want, whether a holiday or retirement home or investment, the price range, then pass on their details to reputable agents."

There have been changes in the Turkish market, he notes,

with people now buying into it for reasons other than price alone. "Price was definitely the driver at the start, and a lot of people who had missed the boat in Spain found similar Turkish properties for an affordable price, with apartments at under £50,000 and villas for £80,000."

But now Dominic says that there are other factors influencing this booming market. "The government's reforms on land ownership, and the introduction of mortgages for the first time, for example, are helping the property market.

There is also a new airport at Dalaman which means the infrastructure is improving. So people are now getting affordable property but can say — "my flat is next to a golf course."

According to Dominic Whiting, you shouldn't select the cheapest option, but invest as

much as you reasonably can. "Don't go for the apartment under £30,000, it's a false economy. The important thing is to look for a quality development, with high quality building and design."

Surveys don't exist in Turkey so it is a question of looking at details and spec yourself, and choosing a developer with a good track record. "Ask them if they can introduce you to people who have bought in their other developments."

Russell Robinson, 36, who owns Belfast design company KER Graphics Ltd, has just bought a villa in Dalaman and is in the first stages of his love affair with Turkey. He started looking a couple of years ago.

"I'd made quite a bit of money on my property in east Belfast, and took a couple of trips to Turkey, then I started looking at apartments." But to get his eye in, he first took a tour of the Olivium

villas near Gojek, and was captivated.

"I didn't even ask the price as I thought they were too expensive, but they were more attractive than anything else I saw." And for £115,000 (including furniture and fittings) he is now the proud owner of one, with views of mountains and forest "and nobody overlooking you". The company he dealt with has been outstandingly helpful, even ferrying him on shopping trips to furnish the place. It will be used for family holidays, and is partly an investment.

But Russell will be enjoying the place too, in the hot Turkish summers. "Fortunately, there is air con throughout."

■ For more information, go to www.buyingguides.info.

For the property wizard service covering Turkey tel 0845 351 3551 or visit www.buying.co.uk

IN BRIEF

Caribbean on the cheap

Atlas International have recently announced their newest venture in Belize, in the heart of the Caribbean. What makes this development special is the affordable price tag. Villas being built in Belize City, Ambergris Caye, Orange Walk Town, San Ignacio and Cockscomb Basin — even the names sound pretty — cost from £72,000. This buys you a two-bedroom villa in East Bay with one bathroom, crisp white exterior and vibrant yellow shutters. The living, dining and kitchen areas are light and airy, with plenty of windows and open floor space, and the dining room has a garden entrance, providing more access to the sunlight and sea breezes. The island has exotic animals, Mayan ruins, waterfalls to enjoy and a tropical climate with a mean temperature of 72 degrees. There are also lots of fiestas and festivals to enjoy during the year, plus you can take part in a long list of water sports if you're so inclined, including waterskiing, surfing, diving on the second longest barrier reef in the world. More info from www.atlasinternational

More Turkish insight

The O'Hare brothers, who run Sturgen Properties Limited, are bringing off something of a coup next month. To launch the second phase of their Turkish Dilek Springs development, they've invited the mayor of Kusadasi, where the housing is situated, to meet up with the mayor of Belfast Councillor Jim Rodgers. Martin O'Hare: "It's fantastic that he has agreed to fly over and on October 22, both mayors will be present at the launch event in Belfast. We're very excited about the new villas which are high spec with marble flooring, contemporary kitchens and bathrooms." The advantages of dealing with Sean and Martin O'Hare include tapping into their proven expertise in the Turkish market. Sean first investigated the second home market a few years ago, and owns a house himself in the Kusadasi area.

For more information, contact 028 9024 4955, www.ohares.com.