

Own a Slice of Italy

Why English buyers are flocking to Lucchesia

Owning a home in England has become increasingly difficult. Skyrocketing prices, chronic shortages, and long-term renting mean that even modest home ownership is often out of reach. Semi-detached homes in commuter towns can approach £1 million, while city penthouses climb to £10–15 million. Empty homes exist – around 5 or 6% of properties – but they are scattered, often unsuitable, or in the wrong locations, leaving most buyers with few realistic options.

By contrast, the area around Lucca offers a very different picture. Italy, and the area around Lucca in particular, has thousands of empty or underused properties, from farmhouses and villas to village homes. Some need renovation, but they provide families with a real chance to own property. For roughly the same money as a modest English semi-detached, a buyer can secure a spacious villa or farmhouse, often with gardens, land, and views of the Tuscan countryside. Even smaller village homes offer charm and comfort far beyond what an equivalent investment in England would buy.

English buyers are drawn not only by Tuscany's beauty and lifestyle but by the practical reality of home ownership. Many purchase holiday homes, but the deeper motivation is clear: a chance to own a property that would be nearly impossible to buy in England. Most of Italy reflects this pattern. Industrialization occurred later here – only after World War II – so towns and villages retain many empty homes, while England, industrialized since Victorian times, has long faced urban population pressure. Combined with lower immigration in rural Italy, this leaves housing more accessible and affordable for foreign buyers.

The Lucca area is especially attractive for its infrastructure and lifestyle. Pisa Airport offers cheap flights across Europe, and the surrounding landscapes are astonishingly diverse: you could sail along the coast, bathe in the sea, hike in the mountains, visit a

world-heritage town or even ski – all in a single day. Cultural life is lively, with music, festivals, and excellent schools, while healthcare is high quality, with well-regarded hospitals and clinics. Jobs exist for those willing to teach English, manage properties, offer trades or labour skills, or use personal talents such as handicrafts, writing, sports training, or guiding visitors. Small businesses serving locals and foreigners are also a possibility.

Property prices make the appeal obvious. A semi-detached house in England might cost £900,000 to £1,000,000, whereas in Lucca a renovated villa or farmhouse can be purchased for £250,000 to £400,000. Smaller townhouses or village homes are often available for £150,000 to £300,000, while even a large apartment or villa costs far less than equivalent housing in England. For many English buyers, this combination of affordability, lifestyle, and opportunities to work makes Lucca uniquely appealing.

In short, Lucca and much of Italy offer stability, predictability, and opportunity that many find increasingly lacking in England, particularly after a decade of political and economic upheaval. Property is more accessible, the environment is settled, and the lifestyle is diverse. English families looking for a realistic path to home ownership, space, and a balanced life increasingly see Italy – and the Lucca area in particular – not just as a holiday destination but as a practical solution to one of England's most pressing problems. For anyone seeking further proof of the trends and opportunities described here, it is enough to consult any issue of *Grapevine*, where the appeal of Tuscany and Lucca is consistently highlighted!

– by Francis Pettitt

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