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WITH
ETERNAL
CHARM

THIS year, Italy celebrates 150 years since its reunification, but a century and a half is but a heartbeat in the history of its capital, Rome. The Eternal City holds endless fascination, from the remains of the 1st-century BC Forum to the Zaha Hadid-designed Maxxi Museum of

Rome has fashion, food, religion, politics and 80 per cent of the world's key archaeological sites. Buy a home there and you'll never be bored, says **Cathy Hawker**

21st-century arts, winner of the Royal Institute of British Architects' prestigious Stirling Prize last year.

Eighty per cent of the world's key archaeological sites are found around Rome, but there's more to the city than its history, says Cristina Casacci, of Knight Frank. She adds: "When the British think of Italy they think of Tuscany. But Rome is the centre of everything. Rome is fashion, religion, food and politics."

IN THE HEART OF ROME

House prices in the historic Centro Storico are the highest of any Italian city averaging £900 to £1,200 a sq ft. The closer you are to any of the main landmarks – the Trevi Fountain or the Colosseum for example – the steeper the price. The most expensive property on Knight Frank's books in central Rome is a £7.7 million 4,300sq ft apartment in the Piazza di Spagna with a terrace overlooking the flower-strewn Spanish Steps.

A few steps from the Piazza Navona, where racing chariots have been replaced by throngs of tourists drinking prosecco in the cafés, a 1,080sq ft two-

£515,460: a five-bedroom house, 30 minutes drive north of Rome. Through Knight Frank (020 7629 8171)



£7.7 million: buys an apartment in the Piazza di Spagna with a terrace overlooking the famous Spanish Steps. Call Knight Frank (020 7629 8171)



£730,240: a two-bedroom apartment close to Piazza del Popolo and the Tiber on the second floor of a classic period building. Call Casa Travella (01322 660988)

bedroom flat, in need of modernisation but with bags of potential, is for sale at £1.16 million, also through Knight Frank. The third-floor flat, in a 16th-century building, has no lift but is in a prime location opposite small antique shops and has been a secure lock-and-leave home for its current owners.

Nearby, closer to the Tiber and among the palazzos on the grand Via dei Banchi Nuovi, Casa Travella has a 740sq ft second-floor apartment with a terrace, in a classic building, for £730,240.

AWAY FROM THE CENTRE

Just outside the centre, Gemma Bruce of GK Italian Property tips Flaminio, where Maxxi is located, and also hilltop Monteverde Vecchio which has good connections to the city's heart.

"Many sellers are unwilling to accept less than they would have received four years ago, even though prices have fallen by 20 per cent," explains Bruce. "So owners often let their property rather than sell it for a price they don't like."

A fourth-floor renovated one-bedroom apartment in Flaminio, 20 minutes from Piazza del Popolo is £532,640. The 860sq ft apartment has high ceilings and parquet flooring, typical Roman features in early 20th-century buildings.

"The Centro Storico is noisy," says Casacci. "The traffic is terrible in Rome and parking is difficult so foreigners like affluent Parioli Pinciano, a residential

area north-west of the centre with early 1900 buildings and quiet streets."

Expect to pay from £429,500 for a compact 540sq ft flat in this hilly part of Rome, close to the green haven of Villa Borghese. A top-floor apartment with three bedrooms and terraces overlooking pino maritimo trees – the umbrella pines symbolic of Rome – is £3.43 million through Knight Frank.

LAKES AND PLAYGROUNDS

Many areas on the outskirts have poor connections to the centre and driving in Rome requires nerves of steel. In Salario close to Villa Ada, Rome's largest park with lakes and playgrounds, a comfortable two-bedroom apartment costs from £429,500. The centre is a 10-minute taxi ride away and the metro is being extended to within a mile in the next two years. Knight Frank has a three-bedroom, top-floor apartment here, with parking, for £704,470.

CONTACTS AND FACTFILE

- **Knight Frank** 020 7629 8171; knightfrank.com.
- **GK Italian Property** 020 7993 2967; gkitalianproperty.com.
- **Casa Travella** 01322 660988; casatravella.co.uk.
- Allow seven to 13 per cent for buying costs in Rome.
- **BA** flies from Heathrow and Gatwick to Rome; **easyJet** from Gatwick to Fiumicino; and **Ryanair** from Gatwick and Stansted to Rome Ciampino.



£1.16 million: in 16th-century Via di Santa Maria Dell'Anima, a two-bedroom flat. Through Knight Frank (as before)

VIVA VILLAGE LIFE

I have a tremendous love for Rome and our four children have grown up viewing this as their extended home'

CHRIS Larkman and his wife Clare Gummert have a picture of Arco degli Acetari, a medieval courtyard in Rome, in their Wimbledon home. Ten years ago when Chris went house hunting in Rome, Clare told him she only wanted a place if it was in that courtyard.

The first flat he viewed was right there and he bought it by releasing equity in their home, paying a remarkable £72,000. Renovations of the one-bedroom basement cost a further £13,000. "Our open-plan apartment is in the heart of the Centro Storico next to the Campo dei Fiori market," says Chris, a social worker. "Rome is very touristy but this is a true village."

"If there is a gap we get a cheap flight and go for a few days. I have a great love for Rome and our four children have grown up viewing this as their extended home. We just feel massively lucky."

The property sleeps up to six and is run as a business through their website aplaceinrome.com. It rents well from £290 for two nights and gives the couple the chance to visit several times each year.

■ Visit aplaceinrome.com, or call 020 8543 2283.



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