

MY LIFE IN THE LAKES AND MOUNTAINS

Bromley-based Gary Pennington owns a three-bedroom apartment on Lake Como. He enjoys frequent visits from autumn to spring, and lets the property to holidaymakers during the summer months. "Lake Como is beautiful in the summer," he says. "But for me the best time is when the snow is on the Alps behind the lake. The air is so clear and the views are fantastic. I'm quite keen on skiing, and there are good resorts about an hour from where I am."

It was skiing that led Gary to discover Lake Como in the first place. "One time when I was travelling up to an Italian ski resort we went past Lake Como and I asked our rep what it was. It looked stunning. I did some research on the area, found Linda Travella of Casa Travella, went for a look round the lake, and eventually chose my place. It's a new-build property with its own garden and access to a communal swimming pool with lovely views of the lake. It's about 100 metres from the water, but fairly high up, so you descend down steps. The village of Sala Comacina is a pleasant ten-minute stroll away. The apartment is nicely situated, so I have no shortage of rental clients in the summer. When I go in the winter, the ski resort of Aprica is about an hour's drive away, but I normally go to Madesimo, which is close to St. Moritz and the Swiss border."

What's the best thing about owning a home on Lake Como? "For me it's the short travelling time, the low cost of the flight and the peaceful solitude when I'm there," Gary says. "It's so relaxing being on the lake, and it just immediately takes away all the stresses of my normal life. I get one of those 'Ahhh!' moments as soon as I arrive. All worries drift away. I'm lucky that my total travelling time, door to door, is less than three hours."

Does Gary have any advice for others thinking of buying on Lake Como? "Take your time, and research the area thoroughly – that's really important. The towns and villages around the lake vary so much that you really need to consider them and decide which area suits you. The closer to the lake you are, the more expensive the properties. If you're prepared to be up in the mountains, you can get some good deals with wonderful lake views, but you might find it a little remote. Make sure you get a good agent. My agent Linda was bilingual and super-helpful, and sorted out all my legal matters too." See Gary's apartment at www.ownersdirect.co.uk/italy/it425.htm



