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OVERSEAS TURKEY

The Aegean's first resort

The glossy towns around Bodrum are a playground for big spenders. Now, mortgage laws are opening up the area to the rest of us. **Laura Latham** reports

Despite its fabulous Aegean coastline, wealth of cultural treasures, and welcoming locals, Turkey was, until a decade or so ago, seen as a poor relation to Greece and Spain. Its resorts, so its detractors said, were tiny and unsophisticated, with a cheap-and-cheerful way of doing things.

These days, however, Turkey isn't just a popular choice with the package-holiday set, but somewhere with a fast-developing property industry fuelled by overseas investors who love its beauty, laid-back lifestyle and still-reasonable prices. Though the days of finding property for under £10,000 are long gone, you can still pick up a new apartment in a small development for around £40,000; a two-bedroom house from under £100,000; or a traditional cottage for around £50,000.

This push from foreign investors is also bringing big changes to the Turkish economy. Historically, the country's high rate of inflation and complex banking system, coupled with cheap property, meant that mortgage products were virtually unknown. In addition, it was impossible for non-nationals to buy property using any kind of finance – it was strictly cash-only.

However, rising prices meant that the market was in danger of stalling, as fewer people were able to hand over such large amounts in one go. And so, towards the end of last year, a new mortgage law was implemented. This law has made it easier to borrow against a property in Turkey, and has finally opened up the mortgage market to UK lenders.

"It's very exciting," says Clair Walker of Turkish Homes, one of the first estate agencies to offer a mortgage in association with a UK financial-services provider. "Property used to be very cheap and people could buy with cash, but now it's more expensive, so mortgages will help the situation. They're a godsend."

Chief among the targeted destinations is the ancient maritime city of Bodrum, now a popular upmarket resort, and the surrounding Bodrum Peninsula. It's an attractive location, with sandy beaches, perfect harbours, dramatic hills and lots of once-tiny villages that are now seeing the bulk of new development. Although seafront towns such as Gumbet, Yalikavak and Turgutreis have grown a lot in recent years, there has been an attempt to keep holiday homes in smaller fishing villages more low key.



On target: mortgage providers have their eyes on Bodrum since new laws opened up the market to overseas investors



Buyers' guide

- You will be required to put down a 10 per cent deposit to secure a property while the necessary checks and searches are carried out, but if you pull out, you forfeit this money.
- Overseas investors aren't allowed to own property on land outside a town boundary or bordering areas owned by the military, but this doesn't stop agents from trying to sell it to them. Ensure that your legal team checks carefully the status of any property you'd like to buy.
- In Turkey, any unpaid debts of the

previous homeowner are settled on the property not the person. Your solicitor must ensure that title deeds are clean, or you'll be saddled with paying them off.

- UK citizens must be cleared by the military before buying property.

Turkish Homes 0845 3312644, www.turkish-homes.com, Dream Homes Worldwide 0800 0193 847, www.dreamhomesww.com, Regnum Ltd 020-7930 7550, www.regnumhomes.com, Connect Overseas 01708 443334, www.connectandprotect.co.uk



Dive in: Villas with private pools in Opus Village, Gümüşlük, from £132,500, Dream Homes Worldwide

"Bodrum ticks a lot of boxes with a lot of people," says Walker. "It's a very versatile place, relaxed, cosmopolitan yet bohemian."

Among the towns scattered along the coast, the most popular with non-Turkish buyers are the fishing villages and tiny bays of Gümüşlük, Gundogan, Tuzla and Gokoy, where prices of new property have remained affordable. In Gümüşlük, for example, Turk-

ish Homes has two-bedroom apartments with sea views from £60,000, and small but perfectly adequate two-bedroom, two-storey holiday villas for £45,000, while in Gulluk, a northerly resort surrounded by pine-clad hills, it offers a resale villa with three bedrooms, in need of some work, for £35,000.

For those with more to spend, there are plenty of larger, well-designed

properties. Three-bedroom villas in Dream Homes Worldwide's Opus Village, for example, are situated 800m from the beach, and start at £135,200. Family homes with fabulous sea views in Yalikavak are available from £110,000.

Turkish Homes will only offer mortgages on properties that have title deeds, so buying off-plan with a loan from that company is

out. In contrast, the financial-services company Connect Overseas is offering mortgages only to those buying off-plan. In addition, both mortgages are so far only available on property in the established markets of Istanbul and the coastal tourist areas.

Many investors go to Bodrum seeking a quieter lifestyle, but if all you want is sun and fun, there are new all-inclusive gated

developments that have many leisure facilities and cheap lock-and-leave properties. Dream Homes Worldwide has flats in Turquoise Resort, near Gümüşlük, from £62,500, while Regnum Ltd's Bargyllia Village has two-bedroom homes from £60,000. Both have private beaches and the amenities of a town.

It may not be authentic Turkish living, but it beats wintering in the UK.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



A RANCH-STYLE RETREAT FOR NATURE-LOVERS

For about the price of an average British flat, this classic Canadian ranch-style home on Salt Spring Island offers a chance to live among nature. The four-bedroom, two-storey house is part of a family-friendly cul-de-sac within walking distance of mountains and the beach. With 2,500 sq ft of living space, the house would be an

ideal rural retreat in summer or winter months. Built in the early Eighties, the property has been well maintained. Many of the rooms have laminated wooden floors and the cosy lounge features exposed brick walls, ceiling fans and a wood-burning stove.

The dining room has French doors opening out to an 80sq ft terrace that's

ideal for entertaining. The house has gardens to the front and rear, with lavender bushes and palms lining its entrance, and mature shrubs, which enjoy day-long sunshine thanks to the property's south-west-facing position. The house is surrounded by trees for privacy, but ocean views can be glimpsed through the branches. Known

as "the jewel of the Southern Gulf Islands", Salt Spring has lots of sheep and deer. Bears and cougars can be spotted swimming across from nearby Vancouver Island.

The ranch is for sale for CAD\$399,000 through Sotheby's Realty Canada: 001 514 287 7434 www.sothebysrealty.ca

by Ginetta Vedrickas