

ITALIA STAMPA ESTERA

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I moved to Italy for a better

The scenery, food, prices and culture beat today's Britain – but other aspects proved too frustrating for
Annabel Fenwick Elliott

We've zig-zagged more than 15,000 miles across the globe, via Iceland and Mauritius, and thought our latest move – to Italy – would be where we'd find it.

I'm writing this from Umbria, a beautiful, undulating stretch of central Italy with much going for it. More than six million Britons visit this nation every year to be captivated by its sun-baked hills, quaint medieval villages, buxom tomatoes and cobalt coastline.

Many don't want to leave. As a result, it has long had a healthy British expatriate community – though since Brexit the online forums are full of frustrated UK citizens struggling to find ways to get a visa. Many, it seems, want a slice of *la dolce vita*.

I'm able to work remotely and am married to a German, whose job as a helicopter pilot means he can work from anywhere, so we had our pick across the Continent.

Our time in Iceland, which was beautiful but had a climate too extreme and a language too tricky (I can still barely pronounce "Hafravatnsvegur", the name of the road on which we lived), taught us that we really needed warmth. We considered Portugal, France and

Spain but opted for Italy, swayed by its unbeatable food and culture.

So, off we went – renting a small farmhouse with a few acres on the outskirts of a tiny Umbrian village bordering Tuscany. It was a bargain, costing just €750 (£660) a month. My husband, me (pregnant with our second child), our son (aged three) and our gaggle of animals (a dog, two cats and 10 chickens) have now been here for nearly six months, and in many ways it has been idyllic.

Every local I've encountered has been charming, spirited and welcoming. The local nursery is an eight-minute amble down the hill and costs nothing. The food is fresh and reliably divine. The weather has been perfect – hot but never humid in the summer, mild in spring and autumn.

The country's leader, Giorgia Meloni, has injected Italy with a shot of optimism and national pride. Most of the locals appear to approve of her – I've only heard hysterical American expats wail about her being a "fascist".

In short, Italy feels like the polar opposite of the UK, which was recently ranked – in the Global Mind Project's annual Mental State of the World



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