

Get the modern rustic look in Umbria

Cathy Hawker suggests how you might be inspired by this stylishly renovated rental property

Rural Italy is not somewhere you expect to find contemporary interiors fizzing with primary colours but Il Granaio in deepest Umbria, half an hour south from Lake Trasimeno and within one hour of Perugia airport, proves it can work a treat.

There is little on the outside to predict what lies within. Il Granaio is a generously sized (100m²) two-bedroom home, one of four carved out of a sixteenth century farmhouse. The exterior, rather like the extraordinary views across to Montepulciano in Tuscany, is largely unchanged for centuries: rough Umbrian stone under terracotta roof tiles front on to a private garden shaded by olive trees. Beyond lies a recently added swimming pool, shared with the three other apartments in the farmhouse.

It is inside that is particularly eye-popping. Il Granaio was completely transformed by its Dutch owners Rob Landeweerd and Jeroen Macco in 2013 to create a light-flooded and functional holiday home that also manages to be wonderfully cosy. The open-plan living room and dining area lead to a patio covered by a simple porch and the small industrial-chic kitchen features open metal shelving above tiled work surfaces.

One double bedroom and bathroom are on the ground floor while up the exposed staircase under a high eaves-style ceiling, there is a master bedroom and en-suite bathroom.

The house avoids the problematic darkness suffered by many old stone farm buildings thanks to unusually high ceilings and generous windows. The thoughtful design throughout celebrates the beauty of traditional Umbrian style (wooden beams

and terracotta tiles on the ceilings and partially exposed stone on the door surrounds) complemented by the best of 21st century living (smoothly plastered walls painted calming off-white shades and efficient modern showers and basins set on simple, functional washstands).

Don't overlook costs for landscaping and irrigation which can add up quickly, says Rob. "Gardens cannot be watered from the mains here and if you need to dig a well that can add €5,000 to €10,000 to your budget."

Furnishing with style

Once the bones of the building were in place, Rob and Jeroen turned to the interiors. Il Granaio was always planned as a rental property that provided an income yet they did not stint on quality, believing that is the way to ensure guests look after the property

and makes them more likely to return. So they spent generously on mattresses (€500 minimum advises Rob) and also garden furniture. Elsewhere they shopped at high-street chains and specialist furnishing shops. Throws, cushions and essential kitchen kit came from IKEA, *made.com* and Zara Home with *lovetheesign.com* another favourite.

The vivid blue kitchen chairs and several lights came from *cultfurniture.com* while the vintage rugs that soften the pale cotta floors come from *carpetvista.com*.

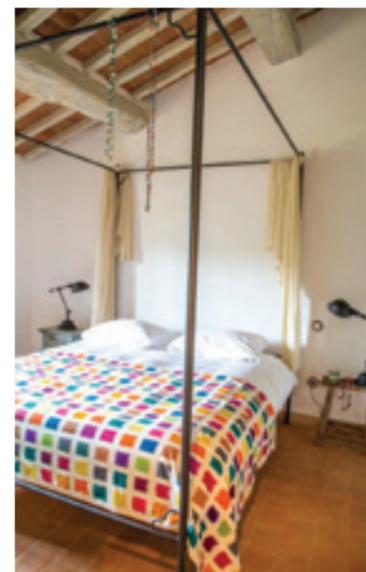
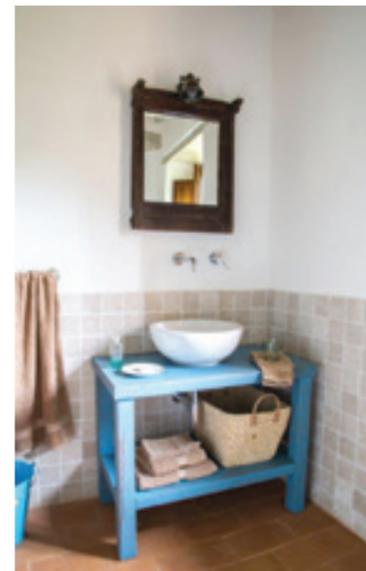
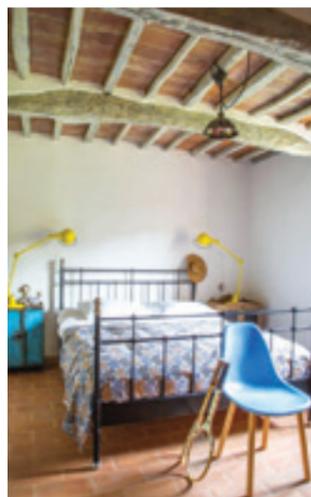
Local Italian shops and markets were plundered as well. Favourites include Coin Home, a department store found in larger Italian towns and the outlet stores nearby at Valdichiana *valdichianaoutlet.it*.

Il Granaio now rents for 12 and 16 weeks a year through Special Umbria (*specialumbria.com*) with a weekly rent of €800 to €1,250. ☺



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Why choose Umbria?

Umbria, the green-heart of Italy, is Tuscany on steroids. The mountains are bigger, the valleys deeper and the landscape less tamed but the essential ingredients of olive groves, vineyards and medieval hilltop villages are all in place. Why did Rob and Jeroen choose Umbria? "Twenty per cent of the Western World's cultural heritage is within a two-hour drive: Florence, Rome and Siena for example," says Rob. "There is the international jazz festival in Perugia, many thermal baths, Italy's fourth largest lake – Trasimeno – is within one hour and exceptional local produce includes white truffles from Fabro and wines such as Montepulciano and Brunello. Then there is hiking and biking in the Apennines and many natural parks."

Pure International (*pureintl.com*) sell property and plots across the Tuscan-Umbria border from Lake Trasimeno to Orvieto starting from €225,000 (£161k).

How much did it cost?

Cost of the property: €220,000 in 2013

Renovation costs

€5,000 for the bathrooms

€6,000 – a new kitchen

€20,000 to add the porch and large terrace

€5,000 – specialist plasterwork, crucial in old buildings

€25,000 – interior finish and furniture

Total: €281k (£202k)