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# A Place in the Sun



BULGARIA • CYPRUS • FRANCE • GREECE • ITALY • PORTUGAL • SPAIN • TURKEY • AFRICA • DUBAI • CARIBBEAN • USA

# TOP 20

**OUR READERS DECIDE**

**The UK's favourite  
overseas property  
destinations...**

**PLUS  
CELEBRITY  
HOTSPOTS AND  
PREDICTIONS  
FOR 2007**

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IT'S YOUR

# TOP 20

We decided it was high time to draw up the definitive list of where you, our readers, want to buy a place in the sun. We interviewed all and sundry at the recent *A Place in the Sun Live* exhibitions and here are the results...

**S**o you want to buy a property abroad? No problem! What's not so simple is deciding where you want to buy in the first place - and that's exactly what the *A Place in the Sun* team set out to answer when we surveyed readers and exhibition-goers to establish what really are the 20 most popular places to buy.

The results, as you are about to discover, make very interesting reading indeed, with a combination of old favourites sat alongside some exciting (and significantly farther-flung) newcomers - all of which would seem to confirm that while some destinations are here to stay, there is also a handful of emerging markets that are coming to the fore.

The benefit of conducting this survey is two-fold. Firstly, if you are one of the hundreds of Brits who have only just started investigating your buying options, then here is a ready-made shortlist of the places you should be considering first of all. At the same time it gives us the ideal opportunity to help you along the way with some useful information.

To make sure you've got a head start, we've been busy compiling a guide to each of the 20 countries on the shortlist, with our thoughts on what makes them special and the type of buyer that they should appeal to, as well as the areas within each country to set your sights on - or avoid - in 2007.

To help you to learn from others who have already taken the plunge, we've tracked down various holiday-home owners, investors and ex-pats to get their thoughts on the pros and cons of each country. And we've taking a star-studded look at the actors, pop stars and other celebrities who have helped stir up interest in foreign markets, from Elton John to George Clooney.

Last but not least, we've got an impressive selection of properties that are currently up for sale, more of which can be found at the back of the magazine.

As always, research is king, so sit back, relax and prepare to be taken on a whirlwind tour around 20 of the best places to buy - as chosen by you!



The Watsons

"We moved to **Spain** three years ago and decided to buy two villas!"  
**TO FIND OUT HOW THEY DID IT, TURN TO PAGE 124**

16 Canada

10 USA

13 Caribbean



Richard Stokes

"I bought a flat in **Cape Verde** and it's already worth 30 per cent more!"  
**TO FIND OUT HOW HE DID IT TURN TO PAGE 84**

**"BRITISH BUYERS STILL LOVE SPAIN, FRANCE AND CYPRUS, BUT COUNTRIES SUCH AS BULGARIA AND TURKEY NOW RIVAL THEM AS POPULAR PLACES TO BUY IN THE SUN"**





REST OF THE BEST

And the runners up are...

As with any survey, there are those that never make the final shortlist, but knowing the identity of the 'nearly-made-its' can be equally interesting.

Logging just behind Australia (number 20) is neighbouring New Zealand at number 23, while the emerging property markets of Hungary, Brazil, Goa (India) and Estonia all narrowly missed out, suggesting that they could be good

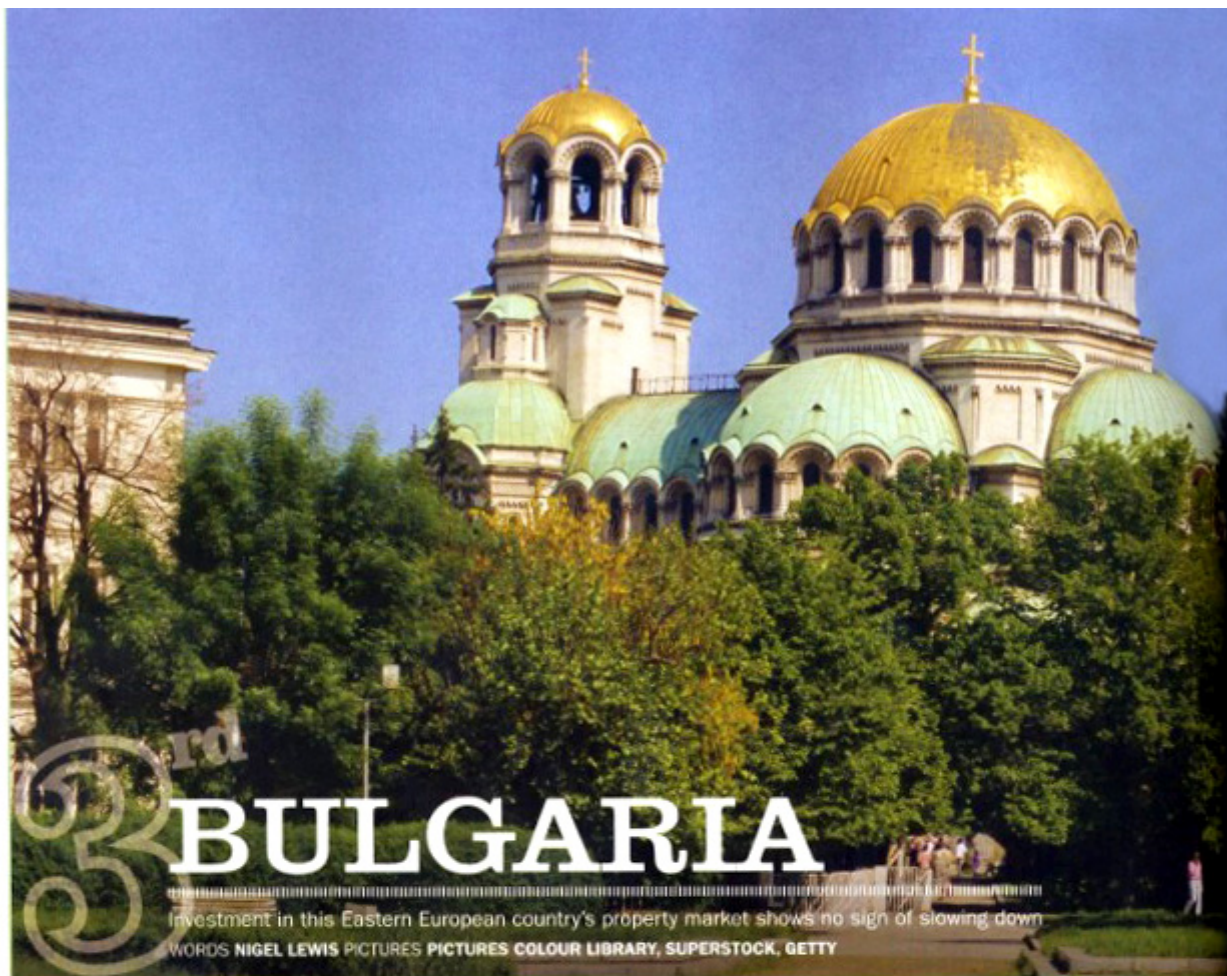
places to watch in 2007.

A surprise entry is Germany at number 29, beating the more obvious holiday-home destinations of Malta and Switzerland, which may be due to the fact that, post-world cup, Germany is being touted as a promising place to invest in property.

However, if you want an outside bet, how about a log home in Lapland, skiing in at number 30? You heard it here first!

- 21. HUNGARY
- 22. BRAZIL
- 23. NEW ZEALAND
- 24. POLAND
- 25. GOA
- 26. ESTONIA
- 27. ROMANIA
- 28. AUSTRIA
- 29. GERMANY
- 30. LAPLAND
- 31. MALTA
- 33. MAURITIUS
- 35. SLOVAKIA
- 36. SWITZERLAND

**Callout 3 (The Osbornes):** "We relocated to France to run a gite business - it's been a big success" TO READ HOW THEY MADE IT HAPPEN SEE PAGE 118



# BULGARIA

Investment in this Eastern European country's property market shows no sign of slowing down  
 WORDS NIGEL LEWIS PICTURES PICTURES COLOUR LIBRARY, SUPERSTOCK, GETTY



## £ CURRENCY

Lev; 1 Lev = £0.34, but most agents quote prices in euros as Bulgaria joins the EU in 2007.

## ✈ GETTING THERE

To date, no low-cost operators have managed to establish routes to Bulgaria, but British Airways flies there from Gatwick all year round (at £130 return). Other airlines, such as Hemus Air, offer flights from Heathrow. There are seasonal flights to Varna for Sunny Beach; in low season you must fly to Sofia and take a connecting flight.

## ☀ CLIMATE

The north is distinctly cooler, while the south verges on a Mediterranean climate. Summers are hot and dry; winters are mild but damp in the valleys, with plenty of snow in the mountains.

## 🍷 FOOD AND DRINK

Lots of salads, soups and yoghurt dishes. *Kavarma* is a popular meat and vegetable stew, while *Chushki burek* is fried peppers stuffed with egg and cheese. Bulgarian wines are cheap and surprisingly good.

**B**ulgaria's sudden rise - from a little-known ex-communist Baltic state to a major property market, and third in our Top 20 list - has been meteoric by even the keenest property speculator's standards.

Spain and France took decades to establish their credentials, whereas Bulgaria has taken just four years to achieve similar status. Swathes of the country are in the grip of a building frenzy - its two main beach resorts, Sunny Beach and Golden Sands, resemble mini-Costa del Sols; apartment blocks soar into

the sky and marinas are fast rising out of the Black Sea.

Its ski resorts are also enjoying expensive revamps, in particular Pamporovo and Borovets, which are striving to improve and extend their ski runs, modernise their lift systems and build more hotels. Then there are the

dozens of chalets and apartment blocks springing up to provide for the skiers.

The huge supply of property is conspiring to keep prices in Bulgaria low at the moment, and the spurts of equity gain that British buyers have come expect at home or on the Spanish coast

**“ BULGARIA'S SKI RESORTS ARE ENJOYING EXPENSIVE REVAMPS - ESPECIALLY POMPOROVO AND BOROVETS ”**

## OUR PLACE

### Mark and Wendy Davis:

If you need reassuring that Bulgarian property can rise in value, then 40-somethings Mark and Wendy Davis should help allay some of your fears.

The couple bought an off-plan, two-bedroom apartment in Bulgaria last summer through Bulgaria Revealed. It cost them just £54,000 and is now worth £72,800 – a massive £18,800 more than they paid for it!

The apartment is in the Ephrosina apartment complex being built within a Jack Nicklaus-designed PGA golf course and country club – the first of its kind in south-east Europe. It's in Dolnya Banya, not far from the thriving ski resort of Borovets.

The investment was Mark and Wendy's first foray into foreign property. They bought



it sight-unseen and plan to travel to Dolnya Banya to pick up the keys in July, when their apartment is due to be completed. "So far, there haven't been any problems to speak of," says Mark.



**Mark and Wendy Davis have bought a flat within the Ephrosina apartment complex (left)**