

Perfect PARIS



Rose Fleury, 36, a full-time mum from London, bought a one-bedroom apartment in Paris with her friend (Angela Grosvenor, 45) for shopping trips and gourmet food breaks. It cost £142,000.

"I've always loved this city – my two-year-old daughter is even called Paris. It's special to me for many reasons: food, shops, beauty, history and romance as well as its people.

I decided to buy with my friend Angela, who adores Paris too, and the low price of property compared to London meant we could buy a pied-à-terre. We put in equal money – my share came from equity from my UK home and savings, – but a lack of knowledge of the local property market and schoolgirl French meant we were getting nowhere looking for our dream apartment.

Then I read an article in an English paper about a home finding service called London Paris Dream Home. We briefed them on what we wanted: a rentable, light and airy, one-bedroom apartment in the central Marais district for up to 200,000 euros (£137,800) and they put us in touch with an English-speaking solicitor. On our next trip to Paris we fell in love with a property they found

for us and five weeks later we were the proud owners!

In between visits we rent it out through an agency for 700 euros (£483) a week. The rate of occupancy has been great and covers our outgoings.

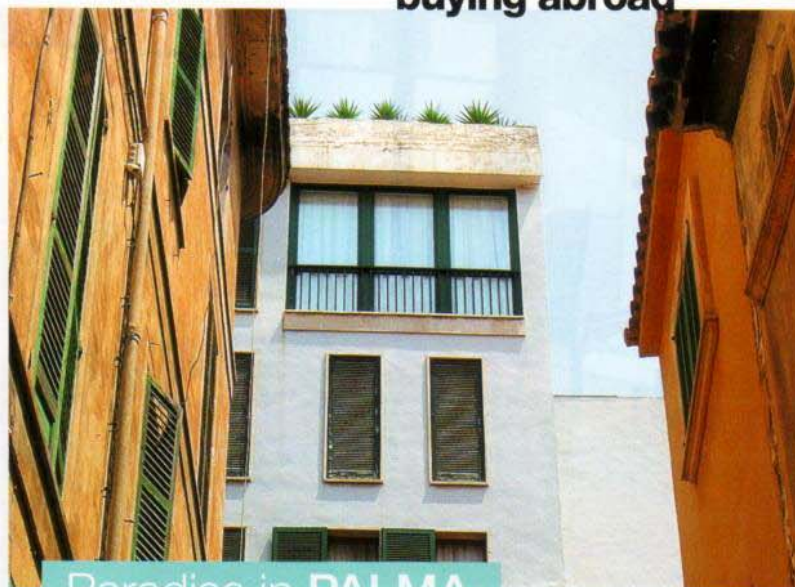
It's been a dream come true to buy my own apartment in a beautiful city that I love."

PROS: A gourmand's paradise, plus world-class shopping, art, architecture and museums for culture vultures.

CONS: Paris is an acquired taste, which requires learning the language and getting used to the infamously brusque manners. Also, the rainy Paris winters can be depressing.

GETTING THERE: Air France flies from £79 return; Eurostar from £60 return.

CONTACT: Rose and Angela's apartment is available to rent through www.homerentalconnections.com. Contact the London Paris Dream Homes property finding service on (020) 7820 1337 or visit www.parisdreamhome.com.



Paradise in PALMA



Debbie Vearnals, 39, who is a nurse, and David Haworth, 42, an engineer, from Stockport, Cheshire, wanted to combine sunshine, seaside and city life in one location. They got their wish with a lovely one-bedroom apartment costing £185,000, in the stunning Mallorcan capital.

"At first we thought about buying in a typical resort area, but changed our minds after holidaying in Palma 18 months ago. We loved discovering the old cafés and tapas bars, people watching, street theatre and the buzz of nightlife – you don't get that feel in a resort.

As we didn't know the agencies, the Palma housing market or how to buy, we used a property finder to unearth a pied-à-terre in the Old Town. The place we finally bought is a studio apartment with its own private roof terrace and a 360 degree view of the city and the Tramuntana Mountains in the distance. We had to act like lightning when we viewed it before someone else snapped it up as they don't often come up for sale.

In the last year the value has increased by an amazing 25 per cent. We haven't rented it out because we don't really want the hassle right now,

though we may do so in the future. We're simply enjoying having our own place in Palma. I have even been to sailing school in Puerto Andratx, so we'll be able to charter boats here and David is studying Spanish GCSE – we want to integrate fully into the Spanish way of life when we retire here, which hopefully will be soon!"

PROS: Palma has long been home to the rich and famous, boasting fabulous restaurants



and night clubs as well as an authentic slice of Spanish life in the Old Town.

CONS: It's a small island, so make sure you truly love it before you buy because a change of scenery means getting on a plane!

GETTING THERE: BA flies from £65 return; EasyJet from £35 return.

CONTACT: The Property Finders (Mallorca) on 00 349 712 33207 or visit www.thepropertyfinders.com. >>