

HOME FROM HOME – New lease of life

The Sun

6th May 2006

By Scott Hussey

It was one of life's James Bond moments.

Sun-bathing on the deck of a yacht, a glass of champers in hand, with bikini-clad girls beside me.

After cruising out, we bobbed around before taking a dip in the sea and then it was back to port for a lavish meal.

Fortunately, my 007 fantasy stopped there and no hired assassins tried to finish me off.

This was my first trip to the Spanish Costas and I had been expecting more egg and chips and a few pints of lager than bubbly and tapas.

But it wasn't just the restaurants and bars that surprised me – it was also how timeshares have changed.

Sleek

Hundreds of thousands of Scots have headed here to get their own home in the sun since the property boom started more than 20 years ago.

The very word 'timeshare' is enough to make you grab your wallet to safeguard it from unscrupulous salesmen determined to vacuum your cash out.

But the industry says the days of dodgy dealings are over and from what I saw they are right.

I headed to the Costa del Sol in Southern Spain, courtesy of one of the biggest operators in the area, Club La Costa.

My penthouse Santa Cruz Suite certainly hit the mark. There was a whirlpool bath, sleek furnishings, a flat screen telly, top-of-the-range kitchen and veranda overlooking the sea so I could relax in the evenings with a beer.

These were holiday homes aimed at people looking for a healthy return on their investment.

It's easy to see why the surrounding area has been dubbed the California of Europe.

Celebrities such as David and Victoria Beckham, film star Bruce Willis, ex-tennis champ Boris Becker and Princess Diana have all visited. There's lots of glamour, a sunny climate and some great golf courses – including the Valderrama course which hosted the 1997 Ryder Cup. The development I stayed on was in Mijas Costa, close to Marbella and the pretty port of Puerto Banus, and a short drive from Malaga airport.

The 27-acre complex is built on hills overlooking the sea and everything is on site, including shops, restaurants, eight huge swimming pool areas, cafes and a spa centre, all set in lush palm tree-lined gardens.

This isn't what most people think of when they think of timeshares and to get as far away as possible from the tarnished image the words 'holiday ownership' are used here instead.

Chairman and founder of Club La Costa Resorts & Hotels Roy Peires said: "Whether people are buying as an investment, a holiday home with excellent rental potential or a freehold property for their own exclusive use, buyers today have very high expectations. At Club La Costa we aim to ensure that every home we build meets, and hopefully exceeds, these requirements."

Bonus

Club La Costa has provided homes for more than 50,000 families since 1984. It is linked to the world's biggest timeshare company RCI, which has 3,900 locations around the world. This means you can build up points to use at other developments.

CLC Private Homes also offers a leaseback agreement where rental income pays your mortgage, sometimes supplying bonus cash. So when you are not using the apartment yourself you are leasing it back to the company.

The rental income is guaranteed for up to ten years at a rate of 4.5 per cent and buyers can enjoy up to four weeks per year at the resort for their own use.

To cope with demand there's a new batch of 37 luxury homes coming this year with Malibu Mansions. Again, they will all be top-spec with private Jacuzzis, hydro-massage baths and stylishly designed interiors. Buyers are being offered a full-service, hassle-free management and maintenance programme.

From what I saw, timeshares are enjoying a new lease of life.

LUXURY WON'T COSTA PACKET...enjoy a holiday ownership deal at splendid Santa Cruz Suites on the Costa del Sol, near Marbella

GO: Costa del Sol

SCOTTISH Sun World travelled with Club La Costa. Prices at Santa Cruz Suites start from £153,000 for a one-bedroom holiday home. Prices at Malibu Mansions are from £240,000. Call CLC Resort Homes on 020 8358 4113 or the Spanish office on 0034 952 669977. Visit www.clcresorthomes.com

Flyglobespan go from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Malaga. Prices start from £49.99 return, including taxes.



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