



# Le Marche Living

**Dawn Cavanagh-Hobbs**, founder and director of fractional ownership company Appassionata, is in love with interior design. We asked her about Italian home décor trends, and how to get the look in your own home

**A**ppassionata offers people the chance to buy a five-week share in a luxury property in Le Marche which is fully maintained throughout the year. Dawn Cavanagh-Hobbs not only finds and organises the restoration of the properties, she is also very hands-on with the sourcing of their furnishings.

*Once your properties are restored, how involved do you personally get with the interior design?*

I am totally involved from the minute we purchase a property. I can see the finished house before we've even started the restoration! I guess I work backwards! I also work very closely with our engineer on all our properties. We often have a 'discussion' about me wanting to remove a wall or enlarge a window! I am on the road searching for those special pieces of marble and the perfect sofa before we have even finalised the electrical and heating plans.

*The houses look like they have vintage pieces of furniture. Do you have favourite places to buy these?*

I love designing individual pieces, and we are blessed to have so many artisans in the area who can create wonderful, unique pieces in their workshops. I also spend months driving around looking for that perfect lamp or table. I visit the antiques market every third weekend in Ascoli Piceno; the market is on throughout the year and I love an excuse to visit this special town. During the summer we have an antiques market in Fermo every Thursday and a wonderful three-day antiques fair, L'Antico e le Palme, in San

Benedetto in June and August. I regularly stop off at a great second-hand shop in Grottammare. It's one of those places, if you hit it right, you can find a real bargain. I have also bought some great pieces from Italian Ebay, especially Murano chandeliers, which I have rather a passion for!

*Do you have special items you are always on the lookout for?*

Chairs and tables with elegantly carved legs and interesting detail. I often buy these and they have been heavily stained, shiny dark brown! I love using various shades of chalk paint and gold leaf to transform them into more elegant pieces of furniture. I also enjoy rummaging around reclamation yards, and over the years I have bought some wonderful Liberty floor tiles and old doors.

*What are prices like in Le Marche for second hand items?*

There are definitely bargains to be found and my husband always tells people I am a very tough negotiator! I found some great bargains on Ebay a few years ago, but the delivery costs are very expensive now. You have to be prepared to put the time in searching online or driving around to find that perfect piece.

*Is there as much of a trend for upcycling old pieces as there is in the UK?*

Not really, which is great for me! Many of the younger generation prefer their homes and furniture modern. The local Italians love what I do with the antique furniture but have never thought about doing it themselves.

*Are there a lot of TV programmes and magazines on antiques and crafts, as there are in the UK?*

I have certainly seen an increase in the selection of home magazines over the last few years. My favourites are *Quin* and *Casa Chic*. I rip out the pages I like and put them in my ever-expanding files, each with its own section of bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, etc. There are very few television programmes in Italian, but I do keep up with trends in the UK.

*How can readers get the look at home? Are there any key items or styles that they can introduce to get that Le Marche feel in their home?*

Be confident and don't be afraid of colour. So many people play it safe, with shades of white and cream, but adding some splashes of colour can really energise a room. Natural chalk paint on the walls, Italian tiles on the floor and some marble in the kitchen can give you a subtle Italian feeling. I prefer to have tiled floors throughout – they are much more hygienic and easier to keep clean. In the winter I throw a few rugs on the floors to give a warm, cosy feel. Add to that a couple of Venetian mirrors to the walls, a Murano chandelier, and you have the look. ■

## FIND OUT MORE

► For more of Dawn's interior design advice, [www.italytravelandlife.com](http://www.italytravelandlife.com)

For information on Fractional Ownership in Le Marche, [www.appassionata.com](http://www.appassionata.com)