

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

With an empty nest, a Kiwi couple made a bold decision to fly the coop for a new life in the Italian countryside.

Story by Sarah Illingworth



Portofino village, Ligurian Coast

JUDY AND VINCE KING are proof it's never too late to live your dream. On Christmas Eve 2010, the couple said goodbye to their lives in Auckland and relocated to Northern Italy, where they currently work teaching English, to spend the rest of their time thoroughly enjoying everything the country has to offer.

The Kings, who are both 52, say they fell in love with Italy after visiting Judy's son Stefan at his new home there in 2006. They decided he was, "living an enviable lifestyle" and that there was nothing for it but to return and

experience it for themselves. "On that trip we celebrated Christmas in the traditional Italian way – a 12-course banquet – at the home of

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some friends of Stefan, then we all spent a few days driving down the tourist route of Italy

via Florence, Rome and Pompeii, and reached Sicily in time to celebrate New Year," recalls Judy.

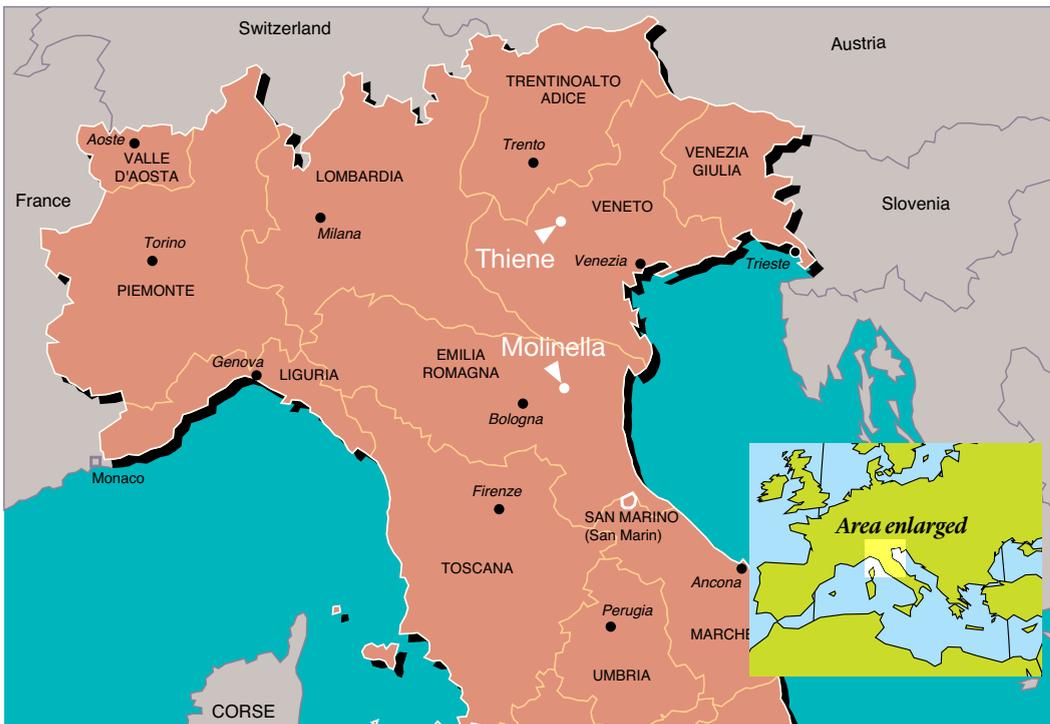
"We adored the cuisine, the scenery, the art and architecture and the history - but we were lucky enough to get a taste of real Italian life and were absolutely enchanted by the warm welcome from everyone we met and their relaxed lifestyle. No one is in any hurry; everyone has time to enjoy a coffee or a wine and a chat."

Stefan moved to Italy at 18, to pursue his own dream of becoming a world champion dancer. Ten years on, he's made incredible progress; along with partner Adriana Sigona, he belongs to Italy's renowned Team Diablo studio, and the pair came second, third and fifth in the last Italian, European and World Championships respectively. "He's now 28, fluent in Italian, and as well as competing he also teaches dancing and has made a TV series featuring dancing," his proud mother recounts. "After 10 years he not only loves Italy, but has an insider's knowledge of places off the beaten track, of hidden treasures, and of its peculiar customs and bureaucracy."

No small help to the Kings, considering that – although both are working teaching English – neither spoke more than "a smattering" of Italian when they arrived. "One of our favourite



Rush hour, Molinella



Northern Italy



Delicatessen, Milan

ways to learn Italian is to watch a fantastic cooking show which shows typical food from a different area each week,” laughs Judy, adding that “the food [here] is gorgeous, and everyone

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we meet is keen to create their own provincial speciality for us to sample.”

Before leaving Auckland, Judy had been working as an accountant at an advertising agency and Vince was an engineer. Both obtained their CELTA (certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages)

qualification in preparation for the move. Both are currently working in that field, having landed jobs at The London School in Thiene, a small town in Italy’s Veneto region.

Splitting their time between Thiene and Molinella, a rural town in the province of Emilia-Romagna, the Kings are also making the most of their proximity to the rest of Europe with regular trips beyond Italy’s borders. In August they even drove their trusty Polo all the way to Glasgow, via the Chunnel. “Our lives are definitely better. We enjoy stress-free jobs and we are surrounded by beautiful countryside and amazing pockets of history everywhere,” says Judy of how the move has affected their lives.

Of their intention to return to New Zealand, she’s in no doubt, though when asked, she’s suitably coy about when it will be. “Yes, of course! When we’ve finally had enough of la dolce vita. Which may be some time...”



**Bellagio, Lake Como
Fishing boat, Sicily**

