

Island life not so simple

The price of cachet

Buyers advised to weigh practicalities alongside the allure

Lou Carlozo

A You don't have to be Larry Ellison to own an island. You may not have the US\$500 million (Dh1.83 billion) it probably cost the Oracle chief executive, one of the world's richest men, to buy Hawaii's sixth-largest island, Lanai, recently.

But call a friendly island broker and you'll find that around the globe, there are hundreds of rocky, sandy, grassy or coral islands on sale at any time. They can be everything from idyllic to uninhabitable, within spitting distance of a major city or many hundreds of miles from anything, with their own airport or inaccessible by anything but a canoe.

Farhad Vladi has sold more than 2,000 islands in 22 countries since 1972, when he got his start. His company, Vladi Private Islands, has sold islands to Johnny Depp, Diana Ross and Tony Curtis (who loved it so much, he bought two).

Prices typically start at \$500,000 for an island of almost 1 hectare, says Chris Krolow, the chief executive of Private Islands Online, who says he has seen an increase of between 10 per cent and 15 per cent a year since 2005 in the number of islands advertised, with inquiries growing by a steady 5 per cent. The vast majority of islands for sale are priced between \$1m and \$2m. But he warns that the final bill could vary wildly.

"A lot of islands look great, but they are great for the birds, and you can't build anything on them," Mr Krolow says. "One client just spent \$300,000 on a barge, just so he could get equipment over to his island."

As much as you're king or queen of your own fiefdom, you also get to rule over mosquito abatement and waste removal – often without electricity, purified water or a nearby medical facility. And islanders who build too close to the shore could scramble to keep their dream homes intact when sea levels rise.

But that's not scaring away people such as Angela Proffitt, a wedding and events planner based in Nashville, Tennessee. She's been looking for more than a year for an island to host destination weddings. And she thinks she's found it: Eratap Island, a 5.6 ha site also known as Castaway Island, in Vanuatu, an archipelago of about 83 islands in the south-western Pa-



The Krotteroy island in Norway is one of thousands of islands sold by Farhad Vladi. AFP

cific, east of Australia. The asking price: A\$1.25m, or Dh4.7m.

"It's looking really good at first glance; it's in the shape of a guitar and I'm from Music City," Ms Proffitt says. "And there's another private island nearby that's already serviced by a boat."

Still, buyer-beware scenarios unique to island-buying abound. Here are a few tips for would-be Ellisons itching to buy their own islands:

- Try before you buy. Rent the place first. "Get your feet wet and take a look at what it's like," Mr Krolow says.
- Know the difference between "freehold" and "leasehold". Depending on the nation you're dealing with, ownership laws will differ. Freehold means you own it forever, whereas leasehold means you own the right to lease the property from the state.
- Don't assume that you can build whatever you want on your island.

Islanders who build too close to the shore could scramble to keep their dream homes intact when sea levels rise

Those who sell islands know the allure of making people think they'll be buying their own country. But let's say you want to build a runway there for your private plane. Not so fast. You'll need permits just as you would to extend a porch back on the mainland.

- Think of political stability. Mr Krolow and others stress that miles of white sandy beaches don't mean a thing if your neighbours are pirates or militias. The global recession has knocked island prices down in line with property elsewhere, he adds, so don't sacrifice safety for saving a few dollars.
- Find a good caretaker. Mr Krolow suggests that if you buy an island and don't expect to live there year-round, get a local caretaker. Expect to pay in the \$50,000 range annually, although Mr Krolow stresses that those costs will depend on the local economy and where you buy.

★ Reuters

destination

Tastes of Toulouse pave path to nirvana

Gastronomic delights abound in ancient and modern city

David Black

A If you are on a diet, don't go to Toulouse. Unless, of course, you subscribe to Oscar Wilde's antidote to temptation: give in to it. It is all about food here. Yes, sprawling aerospace manufacturing complexes abound: Airbus, the Galileo satellite navigation system and the Toulouse Space Centre, Europe's largest.

But let us stick with the food: sauces, so rich in cream your spoon stands up, and cheeses that run like syrup. Begin your ascent to trencherman's nirvana at the Toulousy-Les Jardins de l'Opéra, 1 place du Capitole.

The entrance to the city's best restaurant is in the 18th-century Florentine courtyard of the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra. The dining area is a series of salons, looking over a winter garden and a reflecting pool. Try the ravioli stuffed with foie gras of duckling and served with essence of truffles.

Or the Chez Michel Sarraan, 21 boulevard Armand Duportal; it's



Capitole Square is all about food. Jean-Pierre Lescourret / Lonely Planet Images

regarded as the most stylish restaurant in Toulouse. Its patrons include French prime ministers and film stars. Start with a warm soup of foie gras and oysters, then move on to a poached sea bass served with a creamy polenta and lobster sauce.

But if it's not about the food for you, what can distract you? Well, for a start, Toulouse is a city of exceptional beauty, with an exciting, dynamic history.

Situated in the shadow of the Pyrénées, on the crossroads be-

tween the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, there has been a settlement here since the 8th-century BC. Known in France as *la ville rose* – the pink city, because of the colour of its medieval brick – its prosperity has been unbroken since Roman times.

From its renaissance mansions to its rococo squares and warren-like streets, there is much to draw one's eyes away from the groaning restaurant tables.

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information security

Planning a recovery from data doomsday

A Yasser Zeineldin, the chief executive of eHosting Data-Fort in Dubai Internet City, helps companies to cope with disasters – natural or man-made. He talks about the data problems that firms can face and how they can be remedied.

Q What does eHosting Data-Fort do in terms of disaster recovery?

a In case of disruptive scenarios such as corruption of data files and power cuts, or more severe situations such as earthquake, fire or civil unrest, companies need to have their data and IT services [protected]. Organisations want to have good customer experience, and for that [too] they need to have disaster-recovery services. They can do this through [remote] disaster-recovery sites at Dubai Internet City and Dubai Outsourcing Zone, through us. We provide hardware and data-replication services. Data [can then be stored] on a remote server. We provide software for that as well as maintenance. We also provide business continuity planning.

How much has the Arab Spring affected your business?

From January 2011, a number of organisations said due to riots and roadblocks they want to have an alternative and they looked at Dubai. The UAE and Dubai are politically stable and an economic haven. Also, access through roads and airports is good here. [Quite a few] companies have established

such sites in Dubai since January last year. Companies from the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Azerbaijan and South Asia have established disaster-recovery sites here. We had 28 per cent growth in customers and 30 per cent increase in operating profits last year compared to 2010.

How much does it cost for a company to establish disaster-recovery services?

An organisation does not have to put in a lot of capital upfront. When it comes to size in terms of capacity, it does not have to be as large as the main site, as it can be slightly slower, or ... back up only critical services. It can cost as low as Dh10,000 [US\$2,722] a month for a company of 100 people. A disaster-recovery plan and cost of ongoing maintenance is 4 to 7 per cent of the IT budget.

How much of the business is generated by the UAE Government?

The UAE Government has been focused on e-services for long. So the necessity to have a disaster-recovery service and backup plan becomes imperative. Dubai e-Gov and Emirates e-Gov all have disaster-recovery plans and are working with us.

As computer viruses, such as Flame, become more sophisticated, how secure is data on a remote site?

We have 24/7 monitoring to detect potential hacking activities. But security is a matter of how much money you put in it.

★ Sananda Sahoo



Yasser Zeineldin says it is necessary for the UAE Government to have a disaster-recovery service and backup plan. Christopher Pike / The National

Top 5 things you didn't know about Toulouse

- 1** Pierre de Fermat, famous for contributing to the development of calculus, attended Toulouse University in the 1620s
- 2** One of the last battles of the Napoleonic Wars was fought around the city in 1814
- 3** Toulouse is France's fourth-largest city after Paris, Marseille and Lyon
- 4** Le Château d'Eau gallery, a 19th-century water tower, was converted to a gallery in 1974
- 5** Toulouse University, founded in 1229, is one of Europe's oldest

Far more than food on offer

Can I watch sport?

Stade Toulousain, the city's rugby union club competes in the Top 14 competition and has won the Heineken Cup four times since 1996.

Anything else?

The city also has a Ligue 1 football team, Toulouse FC.

What about music?

In June there is the Río Loco world music festival, followed by Tangopostale, an Argentinean tango festival, in July. There are the Toulouse d'été concerts from July to August followed by Piano at the Jacobins in September and the Toulouse jazz festival in October.

You mentioned the sights?

The city's main square is the

Place du Capitole, built in the late 18th century. It is a sprawling space dominated by Le Capitole itself, home to the city council and the main theatre and opera house. And don't miss the 18th-century botanical gardens, the Jardin des Plantes, or the Pont Neuf, completed in the 1620s to span the River Garonne.

What about shopping?

The main shopping street in Toulouse is rue Saint Rome. You can find chic boutiques and exclusive labels on rue de la Pomme, while more alternative fashion is on offer on the rue du Taur. Place du Capitole has open-air markets, while the covered Victor Hugo Market offers delicacies such as confit de canard and hundreds of delicious local cheeses.

★ David Black

Perhaps, posterity will thank me for having shown it that the ancients did not know everything

Pierre de Fermat, 1601 to 1665, mathematician who attended the University of Toulouse