

Heads the Algarve, tails the Algarve

Having returned home to Ireland, the attractions of the Algarve were too strong and Anne D'Avilez has come back here for good to work in property sales

As an Irishwoman I have been married to a wonderful Portuguese man for 16 years. Our separate professional careers meant we travelled the world, visiting the Algarve for unforgettable summer holidays. Almost inevitable we came to settle with our daughter in a place that offered a great outdoor life and an opportunity for her to get to know the Portuguese side of her family.

Purchasing a luxury apartment in a hotel marina complex was not how I had visualised family life here. It was hectic during the summer season but when the shutters came down in winter it was more like a ghost town with rough seas.

I missed my beautiful, contemporary, ceiling-to-floor glass home set in leafy woods in Ireland. I used to stand on my wooden deck back home and embrace the sound of the wind in the trees. I had travelled extensively and never really felt all that attached to my native land, but I loved the ultra-modern home we had created there.



Now, on dreary winter days in the 'sunny Algarve' I pressed my face against the sliding doors of our slightly sterile, porcelain-floored apartment and tried to convince myself, 'okay, summer will come back soon'.

But before summer came, my husband who had become absorbed in development projects in the Cape Verde islands as well as the Algarve, had left. At a time like this you can either jump up and down and scream, cry yourself to sleep, think of hiring a hit man, become a very good private eye, lie down and die or get up and survive, change career and reinvent yourself. And ...I decided to do the lot.

I suppose in hindsight, my husband could see many opportunities in front of him and work became a priority. All I could see was a lot of rocks and plenty of sand. His vision was far-seeing; mine was limited in many ways. He could see possibilities in open spaces for the future whilst I liked to see a finished product in front of my eyes that I



► could touch right now. That is why he is a great developer and I am successful in sales.

But before I chose to kick back into life with full force, I took out the beautiful Irish thoroughbred horse, Kiki, that had come with me from Ireland and was in livery in Belmonte Stables in Portimão. Kiki became my therapy and together we discovered the countryside. Hell, we might as well get to know this place now that I'm here! And what better way than on horseback? I would drop my daughter off at school and head in a different direction every day.

My trainer, Alex, advised me on various routes to take around the area of Odiáxere and together Kiki and I trekked the red clay hills in the early mornings. It was breathtaking. This was when my love affair with the Algarve really began.

We crossed through many orange and lemon groves, met many local people, some in need of dental work, but all with open happy faces that showed how content they were with the very simple things in life. We negotiated many steep hilly paths and I observed some pretty unusual homes nestled away in the valleys. I began to appreciate the beauty of the countryside.

I started to run on the long beaches at Praia da Rocha and Alvor close by my home at the Marina da Portimão. Where else could I have

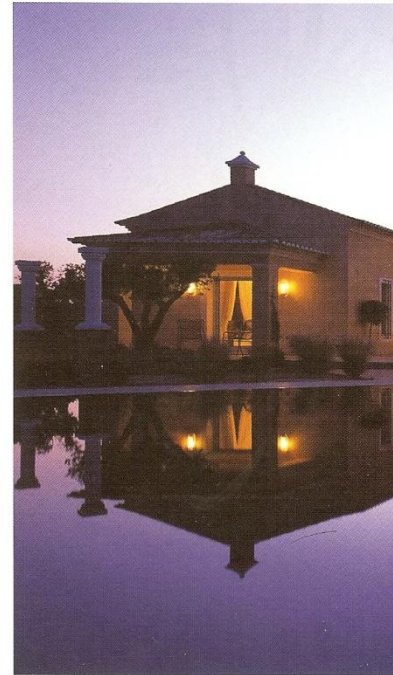
such freedom and undiluted fresh air? I slowly came back to life and knew that this place had something special.

The Algarve has unspoilt, old-world charm interwoven with a newly emerging modern lifestyle. They work very well side by side. Sometimes you even see homes with preserved old stone walls surrounded by clear, well-cut lines of steel and glass that all compliment each other to make an architect's dream come true.

I decided to return to Ireland for a period to sort out my life, but first I chose a new career. On leaving Portugal, I took with me one daughter, one horse, four suit cases and a determination to tell the Irish about the undiscovered beauty and wonderful things that were happening in the Algarve. I knew I could sell it.

After researching various estate agents I approached one that sold higher-end properties, Exclusive Algarve Villas. They dealt with elegant homes in unusual developments (a couple pictured in these pages) and I liked their ethos of taking care of clients from arrival to departure at Faro airport.

They had one particular development coming on their books that had special appeal: the Longevity Wellness Resort set in the hills of Monchique. This would be the first such resort in



the Algarve and I wanted to promote it. When I saw the plans I knew it would be an easy sell. Anything associated with escapism, and wellness in today's stressful environment is a sure bet.

Although I had never sold a property before, I had been in sales, marketing, and public relations for more than 20 years. I trained in international etiquette and company protocol in the White House School of Protocol in Washington and was given a special communications award for personally liaising on behalf of President Bush Sr during his official visit to London in 1988.

Within a short period, Exclusive Algarve Villas and I had joined forces and I spent some months in Ireland building up contacts, setting up presentations and getting unusual properties into the press. I found an increasing level of interest. This was due among other things to a more varied quality product with value for investment.

While still interested in golf related resorts, the Irish market is also now very open to investment proposals in other types of development such as spa and wellness related facilities. The



second-home scenario is very strong and there is a move to Portugal from previously popular destinations in other countries that have become over-commercialised and over-crowded.

The Algarve's strict laws on planning appeal to the Irish. It means people don't end up living in a concrete jungle and that the beauty of the region will be maintained.

The decision to return was easy. I missed the climate, the lifestyle, the healthy diet of grilled fish and salads, the fantastic school available to our daughter at Porches and the general feeling of freedom.

The ability to be on the rough western coastline at Aljezur or the long sandy beaches on our doorstep, or to travel inland a short distance to the magical expanse of the Alentejo, all combine to make living in the Algarve unique.

I also missed my husband very much as we had always shared a common bond in business and had been great friends in the past. During my time in Ireland we began to rediscover that bond by phone, email, and occasional meetings.

While living in the Algarve I will continue to look after the Irish market and visit Ireland regularly to develop and maintain clients. Because of the competitiveness in the market today it is not enough to do as all the others do. Attending trade shows, reacting to enquiries and 'waiting for the client to arrive through your door' is just not good enough.

In my way of doing things you generate your own business and you target your market. In other words, I find the buyers in Ireland, meet them face to face and convince them to come and see for themselves.

You just cannot lose. There is no selling. It is simply communicating about something special that is waiting to be discovered. The Algarve now has a property to match every lifestyle, taste and budget.

The grass may be greener in Ireland, but the Algarve will win you over even if you spin a coin. Both sides will say go.

On a very personal note, I am a great believer in fighting for something if your gut

instinct tells you it is right for you. Whether it is a property, a horse or the love of your life, you should fight for it if you think that it should be in your life.

Who knows what the future may bring. I am not in property development, I am in sales and therefore I can only see what I want in front of my eyes. If it is tangible I will buy into it. And so I am buying into my life in the Algarve with my family. My gut instinct tells me this is a good bet.

The future looks good and when I do see that house that I want, I will know it. Then, one of those days in the future, I will find the right Lusitano.

No matter what you are looking for in life, listen to your instinct and you will find it. I can take you to the most wonderful homes, but only you can feel if it is right for you.

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