



Above: Jim and Fiona's kitchen with the original beams still visible. Right: Their elegantly decorated bathroom. Below: Fiona and Rosie.

In the short space of two years, [www.rent-a-villa-in-tuscany.com](http://www.rent-a-villa-in-tuscany.com) has grown into one of the most popular villa rental sites on the Internet. From its modest beginnings, the site now promotes a wide range of properties for all tastes and budgets including restored farmhouses, luxury villas, country golf clubs and medieval castles.

Not so long ago, Fiona was invited to top Italian designer Salvatore Ferragamo's villa to discuss details of how he could rent properties on his estate to tourists through their website.

"The business is really taking off and we are constantly receiving calls from property owners, all desperate to get onto the site," said Jim. "Our future looks really exciting. We have almost finished building the site and are now finalising ideas for a second website. We get daily calls from beekeepers, gardeners, carpenters, fashion designers, chemists, pizza makers and wine-makers, who are all desperate to get their properties promoted on the site.

### Home from home

"Every now and then, sitting in the shade of an olive grove while sipping a glass of Chianti one of us will say, 'can you remember how this actually started?' So much has happened in the last couple of years. Yes, it has been hard work but we have managed to turn the impossible into the possible. Without doubt it has been one of the most satisfying times of our lives. Instead of looking back with regrets about our knitwear studio, we are busy planning our future."

They say they miss the odd thing about life in the UK – the sense of humour, Indian food, the Sunday papers, live music and, of

course, friends and family, but they clearly have no regrets about their new life in Tuscany. They have made plenty of friends and their five-year-old daughter, Rosie, loves Tuscany and her parents can't think of anywhere they would rather have her grow up.

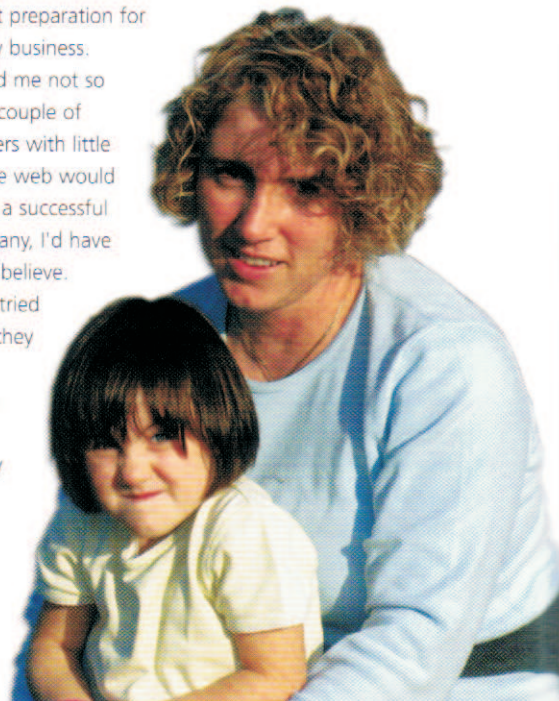
### No going back

"This is one of the safest, friendliest places we've ever lived. We are out in the countryside and in the summer we can go to the beach and in winter, the ski slopes are close by. Rosie is bi-lingual, in fact her accent is better than ours! We speak English at home and, in summer, friends and relatives visit, so she gets plenty of practice speaking English. She goes to the local nursery school so all her friends are Italian.

"In a strange way, all our previous experiences in the knitwear industry, both good and bad, were actually excellent preparation for running our new business.

"If you had told me not so long ago that a couple of knitwear designers with little experience of the web would now be running a successful villa rental company, I'd have found it hard to believe.

And if you then tried to convince me they run it from a poolside looking over the Tuscan hills, I'd probably think the sun had gone to your head." ■



## Do you have a story to tell?

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