

HOUSE FACT FILE



THE PROPERTY

Detached villa set high in the hills overlooking Cannes, France

BUILT 1977

BEDROOMS

Six (all with en-suite bathrooms)

PURCHASE PRICE

€3.5m in 2002 (£2,370,000)

AMOUNT SPENT ON RENOVATIONS

€200,000 (£136,000)

NOW WORTH €4.5m (£3,050,000)

PRICE FOR A SIMILAR PROPERTY

€4.5m (£3,050,000)



Duncan and his *Dragons' Den* colleagues

Luxurious French Villa

Duncan Bannatyne, from BBC Two's *Dragons' Den*, found the perfect retreat in the South of France



Who lives here? 'I'm Duncan Bannatyne, and I spend as much free time here as possible with my six children and my fiancée Joanne.'

What prompted you to buy a second home?

'My work occupies a lot of my time, and presenting TV programmes such as BBC Two's *Dragons' Den* and BBC One's *Mind Your Own Business* have further added to my workload. I thoroughly enjoy what I do but spending quality time with family and friends is hugely important to me. I thought that a property abroad would be an ideal place to relax.'

Why did you choose France? 'When we first visited the South of France five years ago on a

caravan holiday, we had a wonderful time. The following year we came back again and rented a villa in Cannes for a month. We really got to know the Côte D'Azur and I decided to buy a villa in the area, first and foremost as a place to unwind – but wearing my *Dragons' Den* hat, I knew it would also be a good investment.'

How did you find the villa? 'We gave the local estate agent quite a difficult brief. Our priorities were sea views, a minimum of five bedrooms, plus a good-sized pool. We also needed the pool to be clearly visible from each of the main living rooms and bedrooms – with young children, you can't be ►



We found time to have a break for lunch



Finalising the details of the shoot



Time to relax after a hard day's work



‘We’ve tried to get the right balance of style, comfort and practicality’



The large, cream sofas and wooden Indonesian tables were bought locally and complement the polished marble flooring and white walls



too careful. French estate agents, who generally charge around six per cent, will drive you to see numerous properties until you find what you're after, and the good thing is that they're able to show you homes that are on other agents' books.' **First impressions?** 'We must have looked at over 100 properties, but the moment we viewed this villa we knew it was perfect in every way. It fulfilled all our requirements and had a lovely feel. Being high up in the hills, the views over Cannes are spectacular – better than we could have hoped for. And the fact that every single room benefits from the amazing views is a further bonus. The house was

built in the 1970s by a German – who named the villa after his wife, Andrea – and we're only the second owners. It had been very well maintained and although I knew we would want to do some work, particularly to the kitchen, it was pretty much ready to live in. In France, if you like a home, you offer the full asking price. The whole concept in the UK of negotiating and haggling over the price just doesn't work here. Once your offer is made, matters are then handed over to the Notaire, a Government official who works on behalf of both the buyer and seller. He's responsible for checking out all legalities, paying the estate agent and for

collecting taxes on the sale of the home. The whole process went very smoothly and we had the keys within six weeks.' **What work have you had done on the property?** 'We did some minor things like removing trees to improve the views and fitting a wooden floor in the dining area. But the biggest job was the kitchen. We relocated the utility room to create more space, totally redesigned the layout, fitted new units and added doors to the garden. We now have a kitchen that is very user-friendly and easily accessible for anyone wandering in and out from the pool. French tradesmen, known as artisans, are very skilful and we were



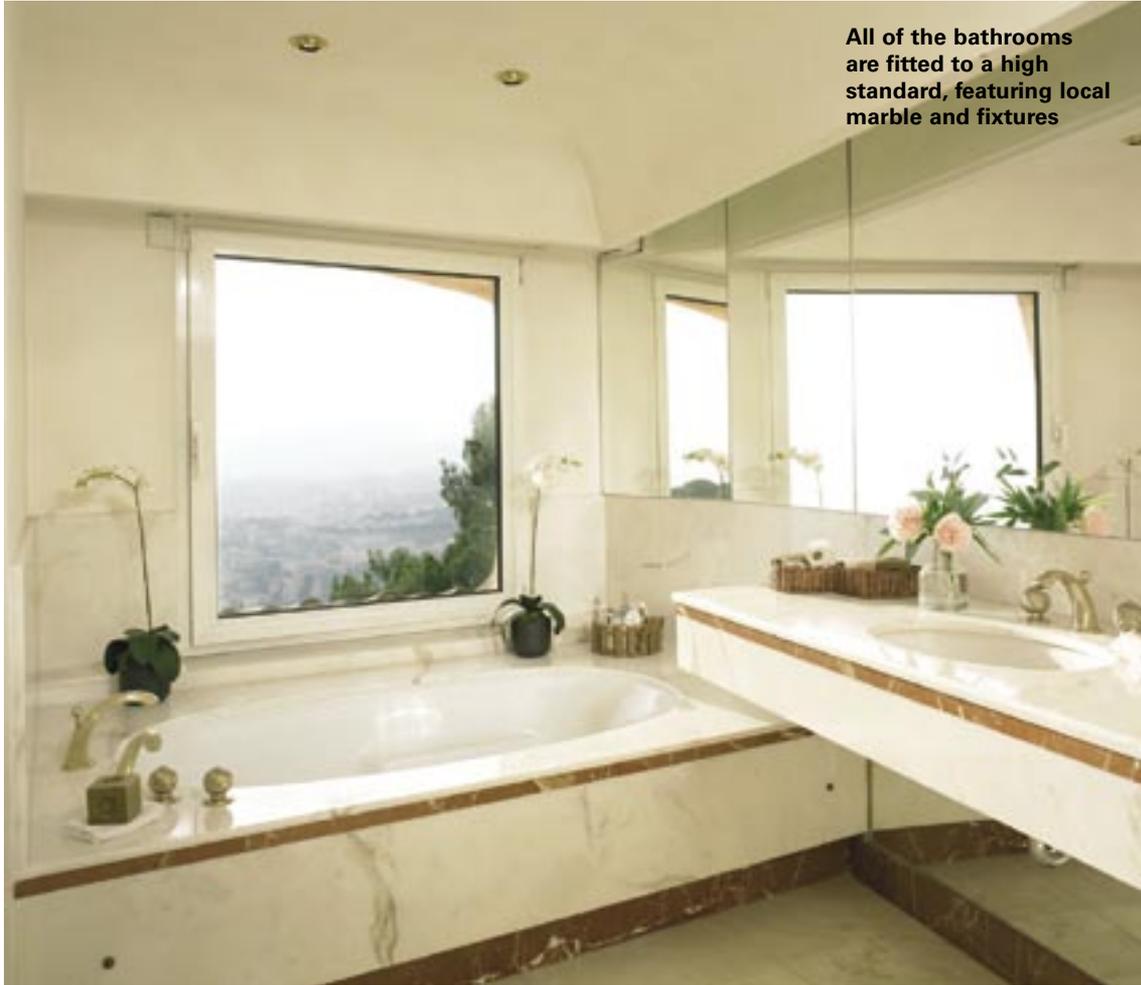
▲ A mahogany table combined with leather chairs is both stylish and practical. The striking chandelier was already in the villa and it creates the perfect focal point



The large pool, lots of balconies and plenty of space make this the perfect retreat for Duncan and his family



The units were hand-painted in a subtle, green-limed effect to keep the space light and airy



All of the bathrooms are fitted to a high standard, featuring local marble and fixtures



▲ This spacious balcony is yet another perfect area in which to relax and admire the view. The terracotta throw and cushion, from Laura Ashley, were chosen to match the existing carpet



The distinctive fireplace comes in handy during the cooler winter months

‘Owning a home abroad is all about being outside – especially with the amazing views’



able to track down good, local workers by word of mouth.'

How did you decide on the furnishings and decor? 'I would love to say that we carefully planned every room, but to be honest we just went to some local shops, bought what we needed and thankfully everything seemed to work well together. In fact, until we finalised the layout of the kitchen, we used garden furniture for the first year. When we got around to buying a proper dining table and chairs, we were very relaxed about the whole thing.'

How would you describe your style? 'In a hot Mediterranean climate, pale neutral colours seemed the obvious

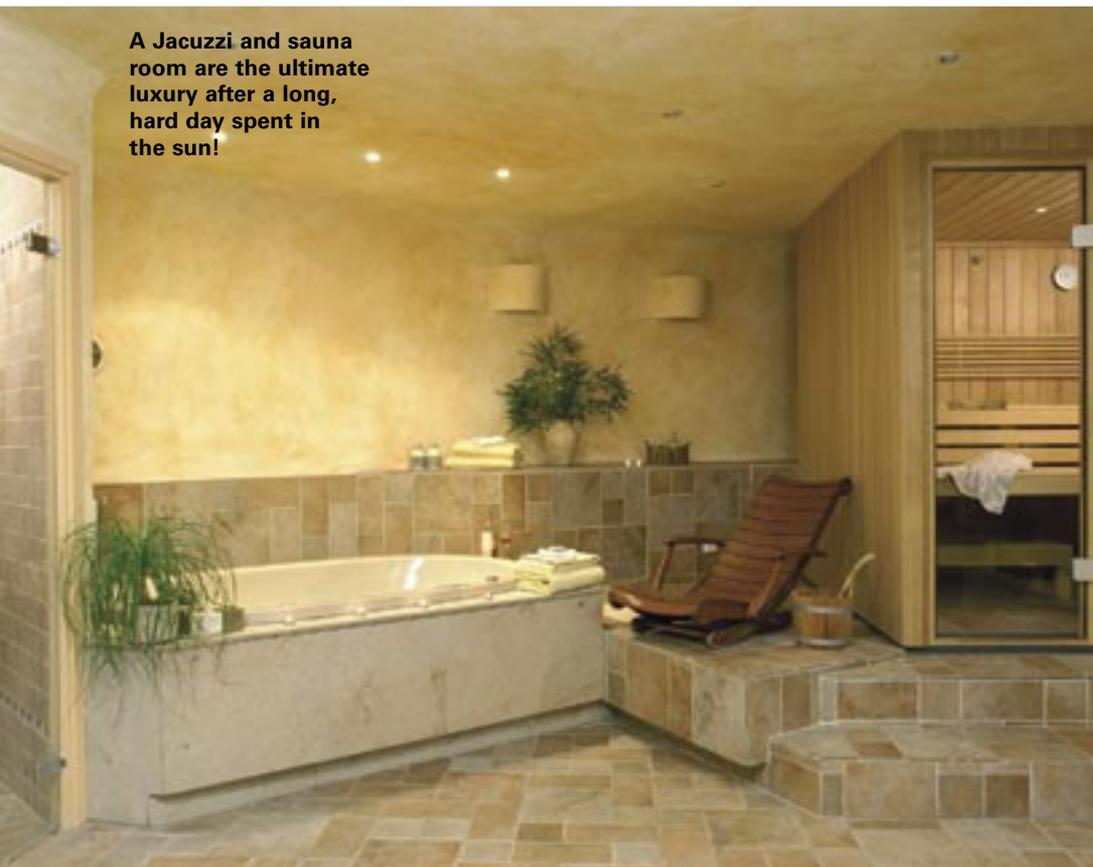
choice, especially with the cool marble flooring. There's always a steady stream of friends, family and children in the house – at times we've had more than 20 people staying here – so there seemed no point in making the interior 'show-home perfect'. I feel we have managed to get the right balance in terms of style, comfort and practicality.'

Do you get good use out of the villa?

'Apart from TV shows, where I work to strict filming schedules, my other business interests have now reached the point where I can delegate some of the day-to-day work. I do have an office in the villa but I prefer to work sitting in a quiet

part of the garden. It helps that flights from the UK to Nice are regular and reasonably priced, which enables me to be over here virtually every month, and in summer we spend six full weeks here with the children. Thankfully we genuinely get great use out of this home, and my golden rule is never to spend more than two hours per day taking calls and attending to business matters – after that it's family time. Mind you, I have to admit to having succumbed to the jet-set life on a few occasions. Having enjoyed a thoroughly good party one evening, the prospect of getting up at 6am to catch a flight just didn't appeal. So I cancelled our ►

A Jacuzzi and sauna room are the ultimate luxury after a long, hard day spent in the sun!



flights and booked a small jet to fly everyone home much later in the day. The children were over the moon at the prospect of another day in the pool and the adults were able to relax after a late night.'

Is living in Cannes very glamorous?

'During the film festival, there are plenty of famous faces around but, to be honest, we tend to avoid the town during the festival. We prefer it when things are a bit less hectic and like to go to fairly low-key restaurants where the children are welcome.

The standard of food everywhere is incredibly high and good value, too. I would say there is something for everyone here – fairgrounds, fireworks displays, markets and so on – but when the grown-ups feel like a more sophisticated night out, the choice of venues is endless'.

What's your next project? 'The pool. I would like to make it a bit bigger and upgrade the heating system so that we can use it for more of the year. I also want an outdoor changing room and bar area so everyone doesn't have to walk through the house whenever they want anything. Fortunately the garden is quite large, so there's plenty of space to work with.'

Who looks after the villa when you're not there? 'When we rented the villa a few years ago, I was really

impressed with a local couple who looked after everything. Luckily, when I asked if they could look after this villa they were more than happy to take it on. They cook lunches if we have people staying, and will even baby sit and drive us or our guests to the airport. It has worked out really well and saves us a lot of hassle.'

Favourite space? 'Owning a home abroad is all about being outside and I'd say we spend the vast majority of our time in the garden and around the pool enjoying the amazing views.'

What's the nicest thing anyone has said about your home? 'Several people have commented that it's a great party house, but the most important thing is that everyone who visits is relaxed and has a great time here.'

Any tips about living in France? 'I've found the locals to be extremely polite and helpful but I believe it helps if you make the effort pick up even a few words of the language. The moment I say *bonjour* with a broad Clydebank accent they smile at me and ask if I'd prefer them to speak English, but the fact that I pleased them by trying is what matters.'

**Watch the BBC series
The second series of *Dragons'
Den* is currently on BBC Two**

Feature Marie McMillen • Photographs Ashley Morrison

