



New Princeton Business Allows Residents to Buy Villa From Home

Wednesday January 7, 2004

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"We can bring Italy to you, or we can take you to Italy." That's the motto of Tuscan Hills, LLC, which opened recently on the corner of Nassau and Harrison Streets.

The interior design showroom and real estate office took over the former home of Crossroads Realty in October, and opened its newly painted and decorated space, which resembles a Tuscan villa, in early December.

The building, painted in warm, rich colors and decorated with antique Italian furniture and glass and ceramic pieces, conjures images of fine Italian wine being poured into a glass, or a soft breeze blowing over golden, sandy beaches.

Hand-blown glass and crystal, handpainted ceramics, handmade linens, and antique furniture are displayed for sale, to take home or custom order. Some of the product lines include Busatti, Venini, Paganelli, and Arnolfo di Cambio, all directly imported from Italy.

However, the beauty and atmosphere of Tuscan Hills, LLC is not what makes it unique to Princeton, or anywhere, for that matter. This new business venture offers something that is hard to find almost anywhere in the country, said Greg Evans, the owner. Along with selling direct-import items from Italy, the staff help customers find, purchase, renovate, and rent out or buy a villa in Italy.

"There are very few, if any, companies in the United States that can offer that whole compliment of services," said Mr. Evans.

The store's owner first came up with the idea of restoring and renting villas while renting a villa with his wife in 2000. Soon after he decided to begin exploring the idea of purchasing his own farmhouse on foreign land.

Mr. Evans began the search for his villa, and the architects that would help him restore the farmhouse about a year later. His wife Sue, who has experience in interior design, took an interest in the home's decor, and has helped decorate the interior of buildings in both Italy and the U.S.

After making connections with family-owned businesses in Italy to help renovate his farmhouse in Peccioli, Mr. Evans found himself in the position of helping others do just as he had done. Through a network in both London and Italy, along with a vast amount of information on the Internet, Mr. Evans was able to start a business in Princeton that helps those from all over the U.S. find a home in Italy.

"I've been through it, I've done the whole thing, I've made the right connections and relationships, and I can attest that you can do it from your own home," said Mr. Evans.

Helping Mr. Evans with the legwork for this business are Kristin Rubia and Wendy Paladini. Ms. Rubia and Mr. Evans met through mutual friends. Ms. Rubia is Italian and a first-generation American. She speaks Italian, and has many family members and a home in the European country. She has helped Mr. Evans jump-start the project through her public relations and advertising experience, along with her knowledge of Italy.

"I'm really excited to be part of this, especially since I get to exercise my passions," said Ms. Rubia. "We're like our own little family here."

Ms. Paladini first became acquainted with Mr. Evans while trying to sell him Italian imported ceramic pieces from an Internet company.

"He didn't want my ceramics, but he did want me to work for him," said Ms. Paladini with a smile.

The Princeton resident, who is married to an Italian and has lived in Italy, heads the store's showroom, and the pieces that are imported from Italy.

The first obstacle Mr. Evans ran into when starting his business was a law that has existed in both Tuscany and Umbria since 1995, stating that no new construction is allowed outside of city limits, where he was looking to build homes.

While this law has enabled Italy to keep its land rich and preserved, it causes those interested in property outside of the city to be faced with two options: to buy a home already in good condition, or to fix up one that needs complete renovation. Using the creative skills of both his wife, colleagues, and contracted workers in Italy, Mr. Evans was able to establish a system of renovating older farmhouses into beautiful homes.

"Since 1995, the property value of homes [in Italy] has quadrupled," he said.

Mr. Evans said that his business partner in Italy has connections to find properties that are not yet on the open market, helping keep the cost down when purchasing a property.

"In Italy, that's the way you want to buy, because once its on the open market, the price goes up significantly as speculators buy those properties," he said.

One of the main focuses of Tuscan Hills, LLC, is to make the process of acquiring a home in Italy as simple as possible for the interested buyer, said Mr. Evans. The company will even help the buyer make a profit on the villa, by helping him or her find renters and take care of the home's upkeep while the owners are away.

The experience should be exciting, but without any of the hassle and headache that one usually associates with restoring a home, said the owner.

"The days are gone when you have to move to Italy and deal with local contractors and a language barrier [to purchase a villa]," said Mr. Evans. "Now you can do it from Princeton."

According to Ms. Rubia, interest in the villas is coming from all over the country, as far as California.

"We are pleased to have found this location for the new business, and to bring the best of Italy to Princeton," said Mr. Evans.

Tuscan Hills, LLC is located at 342 Nassau Street in Princeton. For more information, visit www.Tuscan-Hills.com, or call (609) 921-9015.



Own Your Own Villa: La Torre di Larniano is one villa that Tuscan Hills, LLC rents out to its customers. The former farmhouse, which accommodates 15 people, is located just outside San Gimignano in Tuscany. Eight bedrooms, seven bathrooms, and a private pool compliment the 600-acre estate, which dates back 800 years to when Italians used it as a Medieval defense.