

TURKEY WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS

Property on the attractive Bodrum peninsula has been enticingly cheap. Now there's something for the upmarket buyer too, writes **Jon Robins**

- [Jon Robins](#)
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The whitewashed sugar-cube apartments that increasingly dot the rocky outcrops of the hills overlooking the Aegean on the Bodrum peninsula are testament to Turkey's success in attracting foreign property buyers.

There are many good reasons to buy in Turkey - and an estimated 17,000 Brits already have - but the country's rather unimaginative approach to new builds suggests that an appreciation of contemporary architecture isn't likely to be one of them. Still, there's sunshine from April to mid-November, the breathtaking coastline and the East-meets-West cultural frisson, as well as the more obvious appeal of the lively resorts.

The cluttered hillside around the former fishing village of Yalikavak, half an hour from Bodrum airport, certainly has a certain charm to it. Strict planning laws on height (two storeys is the maximum) and density look set to save the area from the excesses of overdevelopment; sadly, those constraints seem to have convinced local architects that they didn't need to put much effort in.

However, the team behind Aegean Hills - a development of 34 two-storey villas just outside Yalikavak - make a winning virtue out of necessity. The impact of their stark cube units is cleverly softened by blending indoor and outdoor spaces with a balcony reached by floor-to-ceiling glass doors and a six metre by three metre terrace off the first-floor lounge.

Slatted panels provide much-needed shade for those outside spaces, as well as giving the properties a modernist twist accentuating the sharp minimalism of the design. Downstairs, the rather cosy proportions yield a total of three bedrooms plus a bathroom, and you can walk straight to your own private (albeit small) pool. If you want to do serious lengths, there's a large communal pool, plus tennis courts and other amenities at hand.

Detail is important at Aegean Hills: unsightly air conditioning units are cleverly tucked away so as not to upset those clean lines, and cars aren't allowed on the site: they remain hidden in an underground car park. This eye for neatness is reflected inside the apartments, from the Italian-designed kitchens with granite work surfaces down to the travertine mosaic tiles in the bathrooms.

braemoregemini, the Nottingham-based Anglo-Turkish partnership behind the development, won gold at the CNBC International Property Awards for 'best development in Turkey', as well as this year's Homes Overseas magazine award for best villa.

'I really like the modernity and the cleverness of the design,' says John Whitehead, director of a Nottingham restaurant group, who bought a villa off-plan with his business partner. There are only eight villas left in Aegean Hills, but proposals have been finalised for a second development called Aegean View, which will consist of 20 buildings divided into 38 two-bed apartments. Five have already been sold off-plan.

'I love the way they have incorporated both glass and space,' says Whitehead. 'When you're inside, you feel that you're almost outside. With any other design they would feel cramped, but the apartments actually feel spacious.'

Turkey's overseas property market is in its infancy and mortgages have only been available to prospective foreign buyers over the past two years (braemoregemini claims to be offering the country's first off-plan mortgage for its Aegean View properties). None the less, the country is being tipped as having great investment potential and some believe that it will follow a similar trajectory to the Spanish market in the Seventies. Property prices are reckoned to have risen by 15 to 20 per cent over the past 12 months. Aegean Flights has begun year-round departures to meet demand from property investors for as little as £39 (www.aegeanflights.com).

The Aegean Hills villas sell for between £160,000 and £185,000, reflecting their upmarket aspirations, and prices at Aegean View go from £110,000 to £120,000. By contrast, elsewhere on the peninsula you can pick up a three-bed flat for £65,000.

Some prospective buyers might regard Turkey as a step too far, with its frustrated desire to join the EU and the threat of terrorism (10 British tourists were injured in the Marmaris resort in 2006). But, as Whitehead notes: 'People buy in Morocco and that's an Islamic country. The roots of secularism are well ingrained in Turkish life.'

Many early-bird buyers who snapped up the Aegean Hills villas knew braemoregemini through its well-received work around Nottingham, notably the Park Rock development on Castle Boulevard, and the team is promising a high quality of finish in its Turkish apartments.

'The Nottingham connection felt right for me and made the whole deal more familiar,' says one local customer who has also bought property in Spain recently. 'I am looking at the purchase in terms of its capital growth potential over the next 10 years. You can get properties in Turkey for as cheap as £40,000, but the quality's just not there.'

The developers are anxious to sell a lifestyle along with the villas (their promotional material talks of Aegean Hills as an 'exclusive lifestyle development'). 'The profile of the clients is young professional families with or without kids who enjoy life to their fullest,' says Burak Ozkan, who, together with Alpcan Yazici, runs Gemini Properties, the Turkish end of braemoregemini.' The people we are aiming at are well-travelled, cultured people who eat well. The villas are designed in keeping with a kind of lifestyle that is about enjoying the outside life as much as inside.'

The developers offer a full property management service covering not only the communal areas and 24-hour security but also a 'concierge service', including welcome hampers. They will also arrange day trips and membership deals for the smart Xuma beach club.

For more information on Aegean Hills and Aegean View, see braemoregemini.com