

The Last Word

DENNIS PHILLIPS, SOLICITOR AND PRINCIPAL OF PHILLIPS INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS, A UK BASED LAW FIRM SPECIALISING IN HELPING ENGLISH SPEAKING CLIENTS BUY PROPERTY OVERSEAS JOINS US AGAIN.



by Dennis Phillips

Prior to launching his own firm in January 2007, Dennis gained unrivalled first hand experience initially in the Spanish Department and later as Head of Emerging Markets at another prominent firm of international property specialists. Today, he talks about the current market trend for overseas developers, agents and other organisations to ‘package’ deals for the benefit of you, the consumer.

SO WHAT'S THIS 'PACKAGING' BUSINESS ALL ABOUT?

To give yourself the best possible chance of reaping the rewards of well selected overseas property, you'll usually need to have invested a considerable amount of time and effort. You'll need to have ‘done your homework’, be talking to the right people and asking the right questions.

WHY ARE YOU BUYING?

Which combination of lifestyle, investment or perhaps pure speculation is influencing your decision and which type of property best suits your needs? You've heard it's a good idea to instruct a lawyer before you go. Should it be a lawyer in the country you're buying in or a specialist nearer home? How can you be sure they are completely independent? There are often significant tax savings to be made by taking professional advice about whose name(s) your property will be held in. If you need to raise finance, how best to go about doing it?

How might currency fluctuations affect your budgeting and how do you guard against the risks? The need for carefully researching your agent or developer before choosing to deal with them is a key decision. Once you've found your property, is the price you're paying a fair one and how do you go about checking whether it is or not? Property ownership is often a long term commitment. Who will manage your property once you own it. Will you do it yourself or appoint someone else to do it for you?


These and a number of other key considerations all sound like a lot to consider. For quite a while though, leading developers and agents in overseas property have worked to make your purchasing experience a safe, hassle free and rewarding one. They've known it makes good commercial sense for them to be doing so. They can refer you quickly and easily to lawyers, currency specialists, finance brokers, tax advisers, management agents, valuers and other key service providers. In short, they'll have done a lot of the ‘legwork’ for you. That's what ‘packaging’ is all about. It's good practice but, unfortunately, not always common practice.

One important thing to bear in mind is, that if you're dealing with a specific developer or agent, they're only able to promote what's on their books. And, although they'll often have a good product, how do you know it's best for you and what comparables are on offer elsewhere?

Taking the ‘packaging’ concept one step further, there's a more recent trend for the best promoters

in the industry to pool their resources and form alliances or ‘information hubs’ of specialist advisers. The best of them will know a wide range of markets inside out and will have researched and established a panel of industry professionals to refer you to. In short, if you're talking to the best of us, you should have an unrivalled breadth and depth of expertise at your fingertips. And, if they're doing things properly it shouldn't cost you any more than you dealing ‘direct’ and should actually save you time and hassle.

All of this said, there's still no real substitute for investing your own time in thoroughly researching your chosen country and preferred location. But armed with easily accessible background information, you can ensure that you give yourself the best chance of purchasing safely.

You may already have made contact with reliable organisations who tick many of these boxes. If you haven't but you'd like to then feel free to contact us on a no obligation basis. We're only a phone call away and would be happy to point you in the right direction. 

• Phillips International Lawyers can be contacted on 020 7198 7907 or online at www.phillipsinternationallawyers.com.



Do your homework, talk to the right people and ask the right questions