

New destinations

Trading places

New ground is being broken all over the world—Carla Passino casts an inquisitive eye over the freshest desirable destinations, places that have come on in leaps and bounds and are ripe for property investment



Horses and people will be at home in this Calgary property

Calgary

NOW that Vancouver's showing signs of cooling down, another Canadian city looks set to take over: Calgary. Like Vancouver, Calgary has a cosmopolitan atmosphere and a spectacular setting. It sits at the confluence of two rivers—the Bow and the Elbow—where the Rockies meet the Canadian Prairies, and it is as close to the majestic slopes of Lake Louise and the Columbia Icefields (a spectacular relic of the last Ice Age) as it is to the whimsical outcrops of the Badlands. The local economy, which boomed until 2014, is beginning to rebound after a tough couple of years. Among the engines of growth is culture. As well as the Alberta College of Art and Design, the city has a wealth of museums and galleries.

Kim Whyte of RE/MAX Realty Professionals' Parai Whyte, says: 'New, affluent, suburban neighbourhoods are buzzing with restaurants, cafes, bars, spas and shops.' A former Vancouver resident, she thinks Calgary isn't yet on a par with its western counterpart, but this hardly detracts from its charm: 'Calgary's friendly, affluent, always changing, safe—and a great place to call home.'

Norris Coulee Trail CAD\$1.896 million (£1.15 million)

Horses would love this four-bedroom property (above) that's minutes from Calgary—it has a luxurious, custom-built barn with two boxes, tack, feed and wash rooms, rubber floors and even a chandelier. The accommodation for humans is just as lavish, with a grand staircase, vaulted ceilings and a games room with wet bar. Through Christie's International's affiliate The Alberta Collection (00 1 403 606 7514; www.christiesrealestate.com)

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The new Italy Croatia



The new Barcelona Lisbon



The new Costa Rica Nicaragua



The new Vancouver Calgary



Room with a view at Villa Noche

↑ Nicaragua

AFTER a troubled past, Nicaragua is drawing attention—and with good reason. The largest country in Central America, it is as fiercely beautiful as it is unspoilt. The turquoise Caribbean coastline, sheltered behind coral reefs, is hardly developed, despite palm-studded Little Corn Island regularly appearing high in the rankings of the best Caribbean beaches.

Sandwiched between the two coasts are long, lush stretches of tropical rainforest, highlands and plains flecked with coffee estates and towering volcanoes. If you're brave, you can surf on the ash on the very active volcano Cerro Negro. Should this not suffice, Nicaragua has two more cards to play in the game of Central American one-upmanship with Costa Rica: the pretty towns of Granada and León.

Both Granada and the Pacific shore around San Juan del Sur are among the areas that have recently caught the eye of international buyers, particularly those from Canada, Britain and Ireland. 'Word is getting out,' states Richard Puntis of Sotheby's International.

San Juan del Sur \$1.495 million (£1.188 million)

Few houses can top Villa Noche for scenery. On the cliffs of Pacific Marlin, this modern four-bedroom property enjoys ocean views from every room. The best place to soak up the panorama is the free-form infinity pool with swim-up bar and spa bath. Through Nicaragua Sotheby's International (00 505 8770 0778; www.nicaraguasir.com)



Belas Clube de Campo offers excellent leisure facilities

↑ Lisbon

LISBON is poised to steal Barcelona's crown as the Iberian peninsula's most dynamic city, thanks to a combination of innovation, coastal appeal and thriving culture. Like Barcelona, it combines fascinating architecture with easy access to miles of golden beaches. 'Very few major cities benefit from urban-, beach- and hillside-living opportunities within less than 30 minutes' range of excellent communications,' notes Bruno Martins of Belas Clube de Campo. This new buzz—coupled with Portugal's highly effective programmes to entice foreign investment—is attracting growing numbers of international buyers, who are looking for a good investment in a mature market.

'Many come to live here with their families,' explains Sr Martins. 'Many come to retire. Others spend some months here. They find high-quality construction and a lower price than the rest of the world.'

Above all, however, Lisbon offers a quiet and secure life in a country where everything works and where visitors are welcomed as if they were Portuguese citizens. They do not feel like foreigners. They feel at home.'

Belas Clube de Campo €900,000 (£768,040)

In lush parkland 20 minutes from central Lisbon, Belas Clube de Campo is a low-density community of family homes, town houses and apartments, with access to sporting and leisure amenities, including a championship golf course. This three-bedroom town house, part of Belas's new release, features contemporary architecture, a lovely garden and a private pool (00 351 219 626 616; www.realestate.belasclubedecampo.pt)



Villa Olivia looks across vineyards

↑ Croatia

ELENA CVJETKOVIC of Savills is a little hesitant to call her native Croatia the new Italy—Croatia is unique. That said, a shared past, a sea in common and similar weather ensure some parts of the country are comparable to its Eastern neighbour.

The most obvious of these is Istria, the large Adriatic peninsula that was once part of the Venetian Republic. 'It has a beautiful, long coastline dotted with fjords (page 36) and, inland, it's peppered with hilltop towns and vineyards that recall Tuscany,' says Miss Cvjetkovic. For example, there is the village of Motovun, a jumble of cobble streets sheltered behind thick medieval walls, and the hilltop town of Grožnjan, as famous for its delicious white truffle. Further south, elegant Pula harks back to Roman times, with many beguiling ruins.

Perhaps the most 'Italian' is Dubrovnik, which draws a comparison with Venice as they have the same brand of magical, almost profigate beauty.

However, as in Italy, many choose to settle in villages rather than in cities. 'Dubrovnik has a sequence of beautiful little villages and islands that are private yet just 20–30 minutes away from the city centre. They are in high demand.'

Vizinada €595,000 (£510,094)

On the south side of Istria's Mirna Valley, Villa Olivia enjoys views across vineyards and olive groves towards the sea. Designed by an award-winning Croatian architect, this three-bedroom stone house comes with a feature fireplace in the living room, barbecue terraces and an outdoor pool. Through Savills (020–7016 3740; www.savills.com)



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Casal São Pedro

This perfectly unique quinta seeks tenants who wish to be near Sintra, Cascais and the Lisbon airport. The lovely, traditional, 4-bedroom house features an expansive and most charmed garden as well as staff and an attentive English manager. An ideal place to experience privacy, convenience, service and beauty - the very best of Portugal, as our reviews attest.

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Chateau de la Trouquette
"Make your dream of living in a French Chateau a reality" €595,000

This historic property is ready to have its restoration completed. A magnificent period chateau built in pale stone and set on a superb secluded site, with origins in the 16C and many fine Renaissance features. Architect drawings exist to complete the interior fitting out with an ambitious extension project to create 3 grand reception rooms and 5 bedroom-bathroom suites. With over 6 hectares of terrain and located on a private hill top, it's set in a beautiful location with distant views of the Pyrenees.

For more information and beautiful images, please visit www.trouquette.com or email info@trouquette.com