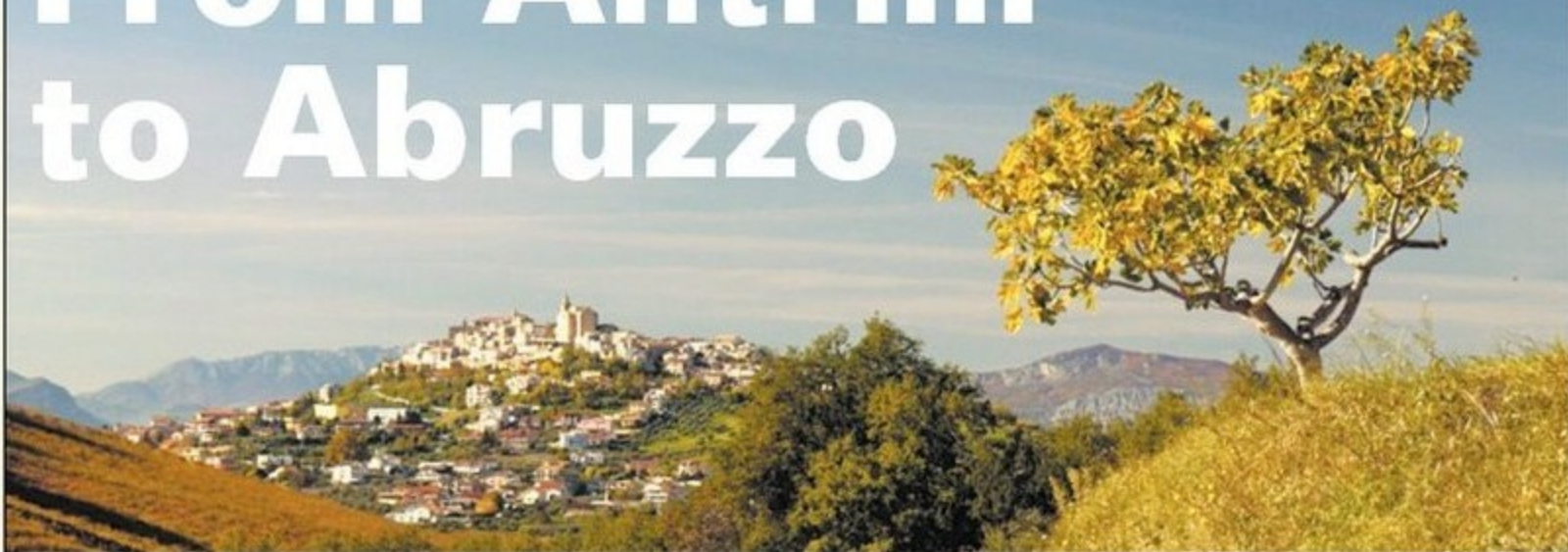


# From Antrim to Abruzzo



FROM an early age, Co Antrim woman Frankie Maguire (40) knew she wanted to live in Italy. After a spell at university in the south of the country and a few years living in Puglia, she has now settled in Abruzzo, in central Italy, where she and husband Joe Iannelli own and run Villa Leonardo Holiday Apartments on the edge of the beautiful Majella National Park. It's a dream lifestyle and a location that they want to share.

When Frankie and Joe set out to develop their house to include luxury holiday apartments they were adamant they wanted to combine the best age-old Italian traditions with the latest technology, sensitive to the area and the environment. So, with sunshine all year round, hot water is produced via solar panels, while in winter Villa Leonardo is heated using a hi-tech biomass boiler.

"We live in an area full of olive trees and we pick olives and produce our own delicious oil for cooking. The next logical step was to use what's left – the olive by-product – to heat our house," Frankie, from Randalstown, explains.

"The great thing is nothing gets wasted and it works."

Guests remain cosy and warm because of the heat radiated from the pellet fuel which is made from the dried crushed remains of the olive pit called 'sansa' or 'nocciolino'.

Continuing on the sustainability theme, Frankie and Joe are working hard to ensure that they enjoy fresh, organic produce picked every day straight from their large kitchen garden.

Delighted to be able to offer food that is fresh and local, Joe says: "I love watching our guests faces as they tuck into home-grown melon and tasty salads of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers grown on our land. It's very satisfying."

Frankie says: "Add a bottle of the fantastic locally produced wine on a sunny lunchtime or a warm evening and you have a healthy and very enjoyable Italian meal."

The couple recently developed Villa Leonardo further by creating a secluded courtyard with a pool and barbecue area, with fabulous views of the nearby Appenine mountains. They also have plans to grow even more fruit and vegetables.

"Maybe I am making up for lost time," Frankie reflects. "When I was



a kid I always wanted to join my older brother during potato-picking season but wasn't allowed to. These days I get a kick from

being halfway up a tree picking olives, then seeing the oil pressed at the local mill and taking our very own oil home, which then lasts us all year." Frankie graduated in 1995 from the University of Ulster. Her love of Italy started on a family holiday to visit her uncle's family in Florence.

Joe, who grew up in London but is Italian by birth, remembers summers in Italy "following my grandad around his land in Puglia and sharing his lunch of bread and tomatoes picked straight from the vine. I've never forgotten that taste and I want others to experience it too."

He has done all the renovation work on Villa Leonardo himself.

Villa Leonardo Holiday Apartments are located in Bucchianico, in an area that offers a huge variety of attractions. The apartments are available to rent year round.

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