

FLY ME TO

INTERNATIONAL HOMES REVEALS A PLACE FREE FROM BRITISH LAGER LOUITS.

We all have our own personal idea of Shangri-la, and to most of us it is somewhere secluded. Our cities, where most of us spend a great deal of time, are becoming ever-increasingly crowded, stressful and expensive. Hence the torrential flood of buyers in far-flung latitudes, who are trying to take advantage of lower prices and fewer people before the rush starts.

But if you're a 'friend of the magazine' or have been taking a more general interest in what's going on in the property world, you may have noticed a mildly annoying trend. The rush seems to have started almost everywhere. As successive waves of invaders discover and annexe the Costas, the Algarve, Provence, Tuscany, the Cape, Newfoundland, New Zealand, property values rise and elbow-room becomes scarce. You either find yourself shelling out a fortune or setting up home in less salubrious neighbourhoods. While prices have yet to soar to the ridiculous rates of, say, London or New York, it does seem that everywhere else is catching up, as demand pushes up property value worldwide.

Worldwide, perhaps, solar-systemwide, no. Because, if you have the nerve to speculate, there are still great bargains to be had on the moon, Mars, and Venus with other planets due to come in line soon. 1 acre plots of moonscape are selling from about US\$20, with no neighbours to worry about yet. Surely this is one of the last remaining outposts of peace and quiet at a reasonable price. There are architecture forums available to plan your dream home, hell, there's even a registered stock exchange so you can invest your rhino in the advancement of space travel.

One drawback is that the budget airlines have yet to put moonbase on their flight schedules, but then they're cutting services to other popular destinations so you might not be that much worse off. Flight times are a drawback, so perhaps this is more suitable for the retiree rather than the weekend second-home commuter.

And the market is already maturing. As in any pioneering frontier of colonisation, there is competition to grab your hard-earned buck. Perhaps the first screwba...I mean speculator to offer customers a stake in the moon landscape was a chap in Nevada, who styles himself the President of the Galactic Government or, perhaps more alarmingly, the Head Cheese. It was him who we approached first on your behalf. With his own website, and a number of licensed associates scattered round the globe, he offers plots from an acre to country-sized, although the latter will set you back hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr David M. Hope, for it is he, warns us against impostors: he, and he alone, first laid claim to the moon in 1980, stating that the declaration of ownership was filed with the United Nations as well as the US and Russian governments to ensure that a legal basis for the ownership of the properties. Mr Hope claims:

"The Lunar Embassy...are THE ONLY COMPANY in the world to possess (sic) a legal basis and copyright for the sale of lunar, and other extraterrestrial property within the confines of our solar system. This is discussed in detail in our general FAQ on this website as well as our space law page (Warning...that one is heavy reading!)"

No doubt his prime competitor, The Lunar Republic, feels the warning about 'heavy reading' is intended to steer readers away from the legal nitty-gritty. He tells us



THE MOON

GERMAN TOWELS AND SNOOTY FRENCH WAITERS. READ ON FOR THE NEXT BIG THING.

that Hope forced a brow-beaten San Francisco clerk to accept the 'ownership' document and is quick to point out Hope's title deeds proudly bear the legend 'Novelty Item'.

So what's The Lunar Republic's bona fides? Well, their authorised sales agency The Lunar Registry, offers "actual land claims on the Moon in order to support privatised exploration, settlement and development of Luna. In accordance with the Lunar Settlement Initiative, at least 95% of all funds raised through these sales must go directly toward a mission that will return humans to the Moon."

And they seem to hang with some respectable organisations like the Institute of Space Law, whose statutes, it would appear, are not quite so ingenuous and loop-holey as you might be persuaded to think

So much for the agents – no great surprise that they're at each other's throats. 'Twas ever thus when undeveloped real estate is at stake. You pays yer money and you takes your choice and in the interests of balance we offer you contact details all round.

A word of caution. Plan your dream lunar home very carefully, because, despite the huge, albeit dirty, beach, you'll be spending a lot of time indoors – there's so little atmosphere outside. And a stick of moon rock beats anything available in Brighton or Blackpool, though perhaps less tasty. Just don't forget to pack a swanee whistle: otherwise, how are you going to negotiate with the indigenous tribes of Clangers, who may well have valid squatters' rights. ➤

Accommodation

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When do you foresee the hotel, up and running?

A lot depends on the development of new rocket launching techniques, but by 2050 it should be a realistic option. By that time, there will probably already be some primitive 'first generation' settlements on the moon.

How long would a stay last?

The lunar day (or night) lasts for 14 days. Most tourists would prefer to see either sunset or sunrise, and of course it will take some time to get adjusted to low gravity. I think a typical stay would last between one and two weeks.

How long would the flight be?

A shuttle takes you to the Moon in about two days.

What will the hotel be like, what will the guests do? Could they go on moonwalks?

Moonwalks would probably be very popular, but they require a space suit and can only be taken in organized tours, as they can be quite dangerous. Moon excursions in a vehicle are probably a bit more comfortable and may take you to some interesting scenery or perhaps even places of historical interest, such as the Apollo landing sites, where the footprints of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are still visible in the lunar dust as if they were made yesterday.

Finance

The Lunar Stock Exchange, LUNARX, presents a commercial profit-based marketplace for aerospace companies engaged in private space exploration. You can visit them at www.lunarx.com

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WIN YOUR OWN LAND ON THE MOON

If you've ever wanted to get away from it all ... to escape to a land of exquisite beauty unmatched anywhere in the Universe ... now is the time to enter The Lunar Getaway Sweepstakes!

Sponsored by *International Homes* and The Lunar Registry, your exclusive getaway destination on the Moon includes a magnificent ten-acre spread of property in the extraordinary Lunar Alps

The first-prize winner of our competition will receive all of the following:

- Registered deed and title to the property, with elegantly personalized documents printed on cotton parchment.
- A satellite photograph of the region from the Lunar Orbiter database, showing the exact location of your property tract.
- Detailed geographic information on the region your property is located in, with information on the prominent craters, mountains and other formations in the area – as well as lunar landing sites – to help you locate your property whether you are viewing it through a telescope or visiting in person.
- Honorary lifetime citizenship in the Lunar Republic, the leading advocacy group working toward the future exploration, settlement and development of the Moon.

- A copy of The Full Moon Atlas CD-ROM, featuring the most comprehensive interactive lunar photomaps available to the public, giving you a close-up view of the Moon in astonishing detail, plus *The Full Moon Dictionary*, a complete Crater Catalog, Lunar Exploration Timeline, Lunar Phase Calendar and Calculator, and many more fun and useful features.

In addition, ten second-prize winners will receive a complete ownership package for one acre of property in the Lunar Alps. Ten third-prize winners will receive a copy of The Full Moon Atlas CD-ROM.

Entry Details:

To enter, visit www.lunarregistry.com/win and fill in your details. The closing date for entry is December 31, 2003. Rules of the competition are on the website.