

Home INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL



Your spot in the sun

The sharing economy – think Airbnb, Netjets and Lime bikes – was initially pushed by millennials and Gen Z out of financial necessity and as part of a drive for sustainability but it has now become part of everyday life for us all. It makes sense. Whether it's a weekend pad or a set of wheels, why shell out top dollar for something you'll only use for a few hours or days at a time?

That's the principle behind a range of new holiday home co-ownership programmes. Share a property – or several – and cut the costs of ownership and maintenance while still getting to enjoy your usual annual holiday. It makes financial and practical sense, according to Mélie Dunod, the co-founder and chief executive of the co-ownership company August.

"Our research shows that the average holiday home is used just 35 days every year, which means you are paying 100 per cent for a place that you visit just 10 per cent of the time," Dunod says. "Then add the full costs and hassle of managing gardens, swimming pools and regular house maintenance, plus concerns about security when the property is empty. Our clients know that we take care of all those points and guarantee that they turn up to find their property in top condition so

Forget the faff of time-share – co-ownership is the smart way to invest in a holiday home. Cathy Hawker reports

they can start their holiday immediately."

Dunod and her business partner, Nicolai Watzenig, founded August in 2019 and have 80 homes under their management, grouped into 20 "collections" of four or five homes. The co-owners – there are more than 500 – can stay for 8 to 12 weeks a year at properties in their chosen collection, such as the Pied à Terre collection, with two-bedroom apartments in Paris, London, Cannes, Rome and Barcelona, and the Signature collection (the most popular), featuring three and four-bedroom villas in Mallorca, Tuscany, the French Alps, the south of France and the Cotswolds.

Prices range from €405,000 (about £350,000) to buy in the Pied à Terre group up to €1.8 million for the Prime set (four homes valued at an average of €5.5 million each in Tuscany, the south of France, the French Alps and Mallorca), with 16 to 21 owners sharing each collection. Annual maintenance charges range from €12,500 to €43,000, large figures but substantially lower than the cost of full ownership, according to August.

"We carefully match owners within each collection, mixing families with couples, and owners from the US with European ones so that people have different priorities on the weeks they want," Dunod says. After contemplating investing in a second home in the UK or Europe, Michele and David Coleman, a couple from Buckinghamshire, bought into the first August Signature collection in November 2021.

"We came across co-ownership by coincidence after our son Alex holidayed with a friend in their co-ownership property, bought through Danish company

21-5," Michele says. "Having researched it, our main concerns were over the ability to exit via a share sale in the event it did not work for us and, as buyers into the first collection, the leap of faith over the location and the quality of the property August would buy on our behalf."

Reassured on both issues, the recently retired Colemans have now completed more than 30 trips in the past three years, holidaying often with their two adult children and wider family and friends. They say their experience with co-ownership has been "exemplary".

"The variety of properties is particularly attractive to us and our most recent visits have confirmed that the properties are maintained to a high standard. As frequent users, we find the maintenance charges reasonable, transparent and certainly cost-effective compared with the alternative of owning your own property," Michele says.

For those scarred by tales of the time-share industry, modern co-ownership offers so much more. So says Nikolaus Thomale, the founder and managing director of the Berlin-based

co-ownership company MYNE. "Our buyers are equity shareholders participating in potential appreciation of the property, true co-owners and never tied to specific weeks every year."

Thomale founded MYNE in 2021. It launched in the UK in May and has properties in 25 locations across nine European countries. Unlike August, owners share only one property, with prices from £195,000 for an eighth share – which gets you 6.5 weeks a year – and annual charges of about £4,000. A quarter of owners invest in more than one property, "building their own collection within MYNE", Thomale adds.

As well as queries on resales, common concerns among would-be investors focus on securing their preferred dates and how to personalise the property.

"The number one question we are asked is around availability. Will everyone want the same weeks?" Thomale says. As with August, MYNE solves this by carefully pairing people with different usage requirements – families with children at school are matched with those not tied to school holidays, for example.



"Every property has personal storage space to keep bikes, sports equipment, books and photographs that our staff can put out before owners arrive," he adds.

On the question of selling, Dunod says that August has had many resales since 2019, all for more than the original purchase price and with more than half of sellers choosing to upgrade to a more expensive collection.

MYNE has a waiting list on many properties, Thomale says, and the average time taken to sell a share is between two weeks and two months. "Typically, faster than selling an entire property in most areas," he claims.

Co-ownership is an inevitable extension of the sharing economy, according to Thomale, a 38-year-old millennial. "There's a greater openness for sharing in general – cars, bikes, co-working spaces. Co-ownership is not new but what makes it

so much more accessible and hassle-free is modern technology.

"Time-share was cumbersome and inflexible to manage. Technology has brought operating costs down and made it easy for clients to participate in co-ownership schemes. And co-ownership allows people to have a holiday home at a much younger age too. In Germany

the average second homeowner is 55 but the average age for MYNE clients is 45."

For Dunod the advantages extend further. "Our holiday homes are occupied for 90 per cent of the year, a real benefit to the local economy," she says. "We employ local craftsmen, have a laser-sharp focus on quality design and authentic style and create

exceptional homes for exceptional holidays. We're building a community of like-minded owners."

For anyone considering co-ownership, Michele Coleman has her own advice: "View it as a longer-term investment, be clear on what multiple homeownership provides, namely not just a summer venue, and be flexible on timing wherever possible."

Co-ownership companies to consider

AUGUST
Prices from €405,000 for 6-8 weeks a year in a collection of four or five homes. Annual charges from €12,500. augustcollections.com

MYNE
Shares in one European property start from £195,000 for an eighth share, 6.5 weeks annually. Annual charges average £4,000. myne-homes.com


LAZAZU
Co-ownership from one eighth to half of one "unique character home" valued at a minimum of €1 million in France or Spain. Each eighth

share gives 45 days of use or partial renting out a year. Prices from €150,000, with maintenance and full management costs from €375 a month. lazazu.com

THE HIDEAWAYS CLUB
A pioneer in co-ownership (founded in 2007), this club offers from 2 to 12 weeks in 45 luxurious homes worldwide with a further 17,000-plus villas available through reciprocal partners. Prices range from £66,000 to £198,000 with a one-off "placement fee" from £10,000 and annual costs from £8,000. Its City Collection offers 12 to 24

nights a year from £33,000 with annual costs from £5,700. thehideawaysclub.com

21-5
Founded in 2008 by a Danish couple, 21-5 claims to be Europe's largest co-ownership company, purchasing more than 300 properties and serving more than 1,400 owners. It groups 21 owners with five European properties, allowing about 12 weeks annually with prices from €300,000 and average annual maintenance and operating charges of €12,000-€15,000. 21-5.com



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