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After nearly 6 months in his new 'Italian Job', Peter Bradburn reports from his new post in Italy, and on his change of lifestyle.

Georgio Armani all-weather gear?

As one of the most southern members of the European community, Italy has a certain style of doing things which sets it apart from many of its neighbours. This is evident as soon as you arrive at Milan's Linzte airport. Instead of the usual welcome sign above the main terminal building, there is a sign in ten feet high letters which spells out "Georgio Armani". There is no mistake. You're in the style capital of Europe.

The country has a wide diversity of cultural identities and regional differences, as contrasting as our own in the United Kingdom. Also similar is the north south divide only with the more affluent north of Milan and Rome dominating the rule of the country.

The sporting interests of the people centre, not surprisingly, on football, which is quoted as being the only thing on which the country is united. Cycling also raises a certain passion followed by food and wine as major leisure activities. Golf is low on the list of sporting priorities, at the present time at least.

The success of Costantino Rocca has done much to spur younger generations to join the sport but it is the demand of tourism which has created the need for more courses to be built over the last five years.

There are a number of clubs which date back to the turn of the century. Roma is the oldest established club - 1903, but there are only around 237 golf clubs nationwide.

The main golf organisation, the Italian Golf Federation was founded in the mid 1970s, and from small beginnings is expected to increase in popularity in the next century. The annual invasion of other Europeans will ensure interest from the hotel golf chains for years to come.

As one of the few "ex-pats" to work in the golf industry, it certainly has its pros and cons. The main influence on the management of a golf course is the lack of skilled staff within the country. In-house training is a big priority. In my experience employees remain loyal to their roots with the importance of their family and leisure pursuits dominating their lifestyle.

Outside influences effect the running of a golf course too. Even large multi-national companies - familiar to everyone in the UK are slightly diluted by the Italian style of how they operate. For example ordering and purchasing any products in August is a definite no-no. As I soon found out, Italy packs up and heads for the coast for the entire month. There are certain attributes you develop in time here - one is patience and the other is a sense of humour. It helps when all else fails.

The positive side to the situation comes in many forms. I'm fortunate to be working with an international staff which allows me to appreciate the continental view of the world. After a certain amount of time the Italian lifestyle does become appealing, but it does have an affect on the waistline.

So, what makes you give up the creature comforts of living in the UK, and pack up, have to deal with a new job, a foreign employer and a different language?

Frankly I haven't got to the bottom of that one and I may never understand why. But I do believe in the old adage "Travel Broadens the Mind".

In my own experience it is an indicator of how well our industry is fairing in reaching the aim of a respected profession. To be given the opportunity to go overseas benefits the host nation, especially one with an emerging golf industry, but it is also proof that our skills are a valuable commodity, which are sometimes taken for granted in the UK.

To any of those with a sense of adventure - from college graduate to seasoned greenkeeper take a look at what Europe and the rest of the world has to offer.

But don't think too heavily about the implications, or you may well talk yourself out of it.

Peter Bradburn
Arzaga GC, Italy

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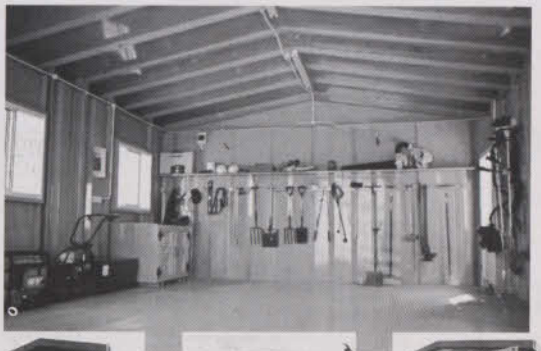

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