

THE ITALIAN JOB



KAREN BUCCERI WENT ON HOLIDAY TO ROME AND ENDED UP FINDING A NEW LIFE. BUT THE ENTREPRENEUR IN HER MEANT SHE QUICKLY SAW A GAP IN THE MARKET FOR OFFERING UK CONSUMERS QUALITY ITALIAN FURNITURE. NOW RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS FROM ROME, SHE EXPLAINED HER JOURNEY TO WYN JENKINS

"I have always been motivated and I have always had ambition. I figure that you are only on this planet once so you may as well go for gold. I have always had that in me, so running a business and having that sort of responsibility was always a natural path. I never wanted the 9am to 5pm – I always wanted more than that."

So says Karen Bucceri, the Swansea-born and bred girl who is now making waves in the UK interior design world from her base – and what is now home – Rome, Italy. Her company, Trendy Products, specialises in importing high quality interior design products from a variety of European countries (but mainly Italy at the moment) to a discerning and growing client base in the UK.

Her ambition has taken her a long way in life in more ways than one. But she started on her journey in business at the relatively tender age of 19. After training as a hairdresser and working in the old David Evans department store in Swansea, she took the plunge and went it alone.

Rendezvous, a hair salon in Sketty, was born staffed by five of her former colleagues from David Evans. Rendezvous Boutique, a fashion store, followed shortly afterwards.

"But I still had itchy feet," she says. "I asked a friend in the travel business where I could take a break that was completely different and he recommended Rome. I fell in love with the place immediately. I was meant to be gone six months and, well, I never came back. I sold my businesses in Sketty and focused on creating a new life out here."

That was in 1994. She initially landed herself a job once again cutting hair in the Hassler Hotel in the centre of Rome. After suggesting that, given their international clientele, they should have an English speaking hairdresser, she talked herself into a job and, initially, slightly more than she bargained for. "They happened to be filming the movie Cliffhanger starring Sylvester Stallone in town and I ended up doing the hair and nails of the cast and crew," Karen says.

She then started networking and meeting the international community in Rome. This opened many doors and she ended up going freelance. Once she had mastered the tough task of navigating the city, she became a high society hairdresser within the city cutting the hair of the great and good including the wives of many of the city's international ambassadors and doing the models' hair at fashion shoots. "I was really lucky to meet the right people," she says. "But I was also pushy. I gave business cards to everyone."

Two years into what was becoming a very, very long holiday, she had taught herself Italian and had met the person who would eventually become her husband. She was also growing tired of hairdressing and believed she had spotted a business opportunity in her other passion in life: interior design.

The process of completely renovating what was to become her family home confirmed what she had suspected for some time: that Italian