



Building the Dream

As the winter mud begins to set in, **Jane Smith** and her husband Richard need to prepare their high-traffic outdoor areas for purpose...



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Today was Gravel Day! It was the 1st of November and finally the mud surrounding the house would be covered by some fine shingle – highly practical and not subject to drought problems in the hot summer. We would also sow a section of lawn, but not until the spring. Two huge lorries arrived, one for the front, one for the back and they tipped their loads. After the loads were dumped, we then raked and moved the gravel into the right areas and levelled the height. The transformation in improving the overall smartness of the house was immense.

Our sunken gas tank arrived the following day, necessary because the house is not linked to the main town gas supply. This is a common system for country houses. Looking like a small submersible it would quickly be buried in the soil by our ‘man with the digger’ with just the top showing for refilling. There are several suppliers of gas in Italy, all with different tariffs. The tanks are given free by the chosen company and you then have a minimum one-year contract with them. They monitor your consumption centrally and refill at the appropriate time. All remarkably simple.

Our artisan window and door maker, Simone, finished his work in three days; the giant front door was delivered along with the final four external doors, making us totally wind and water tight. Now we could fix our moving-in date. It was just as well that Simone was there on one particular day, as well as our railings man – this was the day our kitchen work top arrived.

We had chosen a semi-matt stone from Tuscany and we hadn't thought to ask how heavy it was, nor how many people we would need on hand to lift the main piece into position. The answer: 400 kilos and six burly men. The mini crane on the lorry lifted the stone to just outside the front door then the six guys man-handled it into place with (lightweight) me as Director of Operations. The main piece would never be moved again, that was for sure, but it certainly did look rather spectacular.

The Smurf arrived for the final touches with our five bathrooms; everything was connected, flushing and draining. I looked forward to my first bath in the new house!

The final two events were the delivery of our balcony railings, lifted into place by a small crane, and the purchase of some plants for my front-door pots.

Wow! Now it really looked like a home and we planned our moving-in date for the 10th November, just 11 months after we moved out. What a testament to our wonderful team. ‘Crack open the prosecco Richard. Now we can un-earth the Christmas decorations and plan a great celebration!’

