



Denise poses on the balcony of her beautiful new holiday home in Mijas on the Costa del Sol. "It's lovely to wake up and see the sea," she says

'I've fallen in love with the place; it feels like a home from home'



Denise Van Outen is a woman who doesn't do things by halves. In the past year, she has left behind the Kent countryside for her native Essex, purchased two properties – renovating both from top to bottom – and moved in with her boyfriend, all the while juggling a heavy workload of filming, writing and acting.

Earlier this year, the *Loose Women* panellist fulfilled a long-held dream and bought a holiday home, a pretty apartment in the Spanish Costa del Sol resort of Mijas.

And it's here, the mum of one tells **HELLO!** as she invites us in for an exclusive tour, that she plans to escape to regularly, both to indulge her love of golf and for relaxing weekends away with boyfriend Eddie Boxshall and her daughter Betsy, eight.

A long-time frequent visitor to Spain, Denise, 44, spent a year mulling over whether to buy a property there. "I've fallen in love with the place," she says of the country. "It kind of feels a bit like a home from home. For me it's an extension of my home in the UK. It's like an extra wing in the sunshine.

"I'm very lucky that I get to travel a lot because of my work. But I wanted to find somewhere where I could just jump on a plane and leave our things there so we don't have to travel with luggage.

"I took up golf three years ago and Eddie and I play and I knew I wanted somewhere near a golf course. Quite often in the winter months I can't play golf because of the weather but I could still get

on a plane and go to Spain and play. A few things were ticking all the boxes and I decided to go for it."

She started her search last September and soon found her new holiday home, which has two bedrooms, a bathroom and large kitchen, as well as reception areas and a terrace. The building also boasts a swimming pool, which Betsy loves. But there was one catch: it needed a lot of work as the previous owner hadn't decorated for 30 years.

But Denise, normally an arch organiser, was too busy to take charge, so she acted out of character and hired an interior design firm. "I knew I wouldn't have time to furnish the apartment. So I spoke to Luna Interiors, told them the kind of look that I liked, gave them a budget and said: 'Get on with it.'"

"I wanted something very clean and white and to be very contemporary but still feel homely," Denise says. "I wanted it to feel like a holiday home and to wake up in the morning and instantly want to jump out of bed. It's lovely to wake up and see the sea."

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

As a judge on *Ireland's Got Talent* as well as the *Dancing on Ice* tour, plus regularly guesting on *Loose Women*, among other projects – she was only able to pop back to Spain a couple of times to check on the apartment. Thankfully, her trust wasn't misplaced.

"I'd seen another apartment the same company had furnished and I was so impressed. For me it was the best way of doing it. When I arrived I ►

AT HER NEW HIDEAWAY IN SUNNY SPAIN WITH DAUGHTER BETSY

DENISE VAN OUTEN

ON LOVE, LONELINESS AND WHY SHE'S READY TO
TAKE THE NEXT STEP WITH BOYFRIEND EDDIE



Denise, 44, and her eight-year-old daughter Betsy relax in their new, completely redecorated Spanish home. "I wanted something clean and white and contemporary that would still feel homely," she says

'I'd have loved a house full of kids and chaos'

couldn't believe the attention to detail."

While her Spanish property was being worked on, Denise was renovating the Essex home she had recently bought with Eddie.

"There has been much change this year, it has been very hectic," she says.

"I kind of like it this way and it feels like the changes are good."

One big change has been moving out of her Kent farmhouse – a decision she says came out of a sense of loneliness.

"I enjoyed my time in the country and it was lovely when Betsy was little. There were farms and teas and all those lovely things you do with children. It felt idyllic but we were very remote. I started to feel a bit closed in and it was too far from London for Eddie to move in."

Her daughter helped cement her feelings. "One Saturday, Betsy said: 'There isn't much to do, is there?' She didn't want to go to this place or that as we'd done it the previous week. It was like she had outgrown it and needed stimulation."

"She wasn't very street savvy. Crossing a busy road was alien to her. That lifestyle suits a big family if you're all together and entertain each other but there was just the two of us. Betsy would go to bed and I'd be on my own. I couldn't go out because I couldn't leave her. I had beautiful land around me but I couldn't walk round it."

THE ONLY WAY IS ESSEX

So now she's back in Essex and much closer to her family and her ex-husband Lee Mead, Betsy's dad.

Denise says she'd have loved to have had more children. "If I had my way, or if it had worked out differently, I'd have loved a house full of kids and chaos but it didn't happen that way. That's what we're trying to create now with the new home as it's much closer to where we know a lot of people and we'll do a lot of entertaining."

As to whether she's ready to move in with Eddie, the answer is a resolute yes.

"I feel ready to have the company, it's nice. I started to feel really lonely in the country. The last year I lived there it crept up on me, which was bizarre as I'd always loved it. I thought, 'Oooh, I'm on my own again.' You want someone to watch TV and cook with. You don't always have to be talking, it's just knowing that the person is there. I never had that so I'm looking forward to it."

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Denise (above beside the pool with Betsy and right with beau Eddie Boxshall) celebrates her 44th birthday with a late lunch at nearby Olivia's restaurant (left), one of her favourite places. "Eddie wasn't with me as I wanted a girlie time with Betsy," Denise says. "Because I work so much, I wanted it to be just the two of us"



