

Is it safe to buy property off-plan?

This depends on who you are dealing with since, in addition to the normal checks on the legal title to the property, the purchaser also needs to be certain about the building to be constructed. With any new building or building which has been subject to recent building work, planning and construction should be checked. As regards to the buildings themselves, there are good builders in Romania but there are also other builders who are less good. Romania has no general system equivalent to the NHBC scheme in the UK. Similarly, although it is less likely where property is being purchased off-plan, it is not uncommon for some people to do the building work themselves or to bring in labour working "on the black". It is therefore important to ensure that you are dealing with a reputable builder and to consider what contractual safeguards can be negotiated in the agreement for the purchase of the property. The services of architects, engineers and building supervisors ("sef de santier") should also be considered. Simply because a building has paperwork from the local authority certifying compliance with the regulations, do not count on the local authority being liable to you if it turns out that there was a mistake. A common alternative to buying off-plan is to buy, as Romanians say, on the red ("la rosu"). This involves purchasing the shell of a building which is then completed according to the wishes of the purchaser. An advantage of this is that it is easier to see how the building looks in relation to its neighbours and for the structure of the building above ground to be inspected.