

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

35+ YEARS of FRENCH PROPERTY ADVICE

ISSUE 397
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

CAMERAS ROLL!
Discover cinematic househunting locations in southern France

CREATURE COMFORTS
Our life in France with animals

BUMPER EXHIBITION ISSUE!
More pages & properties

LOTS OF PROMISE!

Why Lot and Lot-et-Garonne have so much to offer property buyers

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- Property buying overview
- Visas for remote working
- Tax on French income
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The Tarn department is the first place in France to become an 'International Green Destination'

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There can be tax advantages of establishing a 'usufruit' in your French will

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After three months' living in France you can apply to join the French healthcare system.

As we move into 2026, I'd like to wish all our readers a Happy New Year – and if your New Year's resolution is to buy a French property, *bonne chance*! By reading *French Property News* you've already got off to a great start, with access to all the experts helping you to choose where to buy, what to buy and how to buy it. Why not go one step closer and meet some of those experts face to face without even leaving the UK! The French Property Exhibition in London in January brings together estate agents, visa and relocation specialists, legal, financial and tax advisers, removals companies, architects and more, while the in-depth seminars provide a deep dive into buying property or moving to France. See page 23 for more information. As this is the exhibition special issue, we've added an extra 16 pages, including exhibitor top tips and lots more properties to browse in our showcase section (from page 126). I hope to see you at the exhibition, please do come and say hello or *bonjour* to me and the rest of the *FPN* and *FrenchEntrée* team. *Bonne année!*

Karen



EDITOR'S PICK

An organic vineyard and home in Hautes-Pyrénées

Ever fancied running your own vineyard? At the foot of the Pyrénées, where the Bigorre, Béarn and Gers areas converge, this 23-hectare wine estate offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to own a vineyard steeped in history and natural beauty. The property includes a house with good roof requiring renovation to provide accommodation, tasting room, office, storage *chai* with temperature-controlled steel vats, bottling plant and barn for materials and supplies. For sale at €985,000 ([lebonheur.immo](#)).



We hope to see you at the French Property Exhibition in London in January - see page 23 for details

Contributing this issue...

See
ALL THESE
EXPERTS AT THE
French Property
Exhibition



Page 94

Debbie Nye

With 30+ years' experience in France, Debbie is a relocation adviser at FrenchEntrée and runs a personal tax consultancy, Fiscalibur, in the Alps.



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Dan Newton

CEO and founder of Agence Newton, which overs 19 departments in France, Dan lives in Brittany and has worked in French real estate since 1986.



Page 24

Sophie Folley

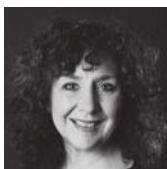
Director of Sophie Folley Immobilier, with 20 years experience of assisting international clients in finding their dream homes in southwest France.



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Fabien Pelissier

Fabien is the founder of Fab Expat, providing administration and insurance solutions for English-speaking clientele in France.



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Pauline Bruneau

Pauline is the managing director of Coldwell Banker estate agency on the Atlantic coast, covering Charente-Maritime, Charente and Vendée.



Page 97

Tracy Leonetti

An experienced relocation expert with over 30 years of living and working in France, Tracy is the founder of LBS specialising in French administration.



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Tom Easdown

Tom is a French architect and managing director of French Plans, an English-speaking architecture and planning consultancy in France



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Mar Bonnin-Palmer

Head of partnerships at Moneycorp, Mar has been in foreign exchange for over 15 years helping clients with their currency needs abroad

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

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EXCLUSIVE
Rare Gem

Lot €372,341
Ref: A41496 - Charming stone village house with cellar, set in 2 acres.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: C Climate class: C



Lake Geneva

Haute-Savoie €1,298,000
Ref: A41477 - 4-bedroom villa with pool, 2 min walk to the lake.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: D Climate class: A



A True Classic

Creuse €280,000
Ref: A35016 - 5-bedroom home with open-plan living spaces, in Aubusson.

7% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: E Climate class: D



EXCLUSIVE
The Good Life

Manche €193,950
Ref: A37729 - 4-bedroom home with outbuildings, 2 acres and paddock.

8% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: G Climate class: C



EXCLUSIVE
Not to be missed!

Hérault €385,000
Ref: A40609 - Fabulous 4-bedroom villa with pool, garage and large garden.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: D Climate class: A



Exceptional Value

Haute-Garonne €390,000
Ref: A33917 - Renovated 7-bed farmhouse with pool, gîte and outbuildings.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: C Climate class: C



Natural Beauty

Corrèze €204,120
Ref: A41564 - 3-bedroom large chalet with outbuildings and 6,9 acres.

8% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: E Climate class: B



EXCLUSIVE
Gîte Potential

Charente €413,400
Ref: A37700 - Character 6-bedroom home with converted barn, and pond.

6% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: G Climate class: C



EXCLUSIVE
Village Life

Charente €299,600
Ref: A37115 - Beautiful 3-bedroom home with pool and two garages.

7% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: E Climate class: E



Business Potential

Haute-Vienne €1,199,000
Ref: A40240 - 10-bedroom château with function room, pool, spa, tennis court.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: D Climate class: C



30 min to Paris

Val-d'Oise €1,100,000
Ref: A40327 - Charming 317 m² farmhouse with guest house and pool.

Agency fees to be paid by the seller.
Energy class: C Climate class: A



EXCLUSIVE
Ready to move into

Morbihan €219,350
Ref: A36663 - Lovely 3/4 bedroom home with several outbuildings.

7% agency fees included paid by the buyer.
Energy class: D Climate class: B

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Sophie Lebarcq - Leggett Agent

30
YEARS
of French
property
advice

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

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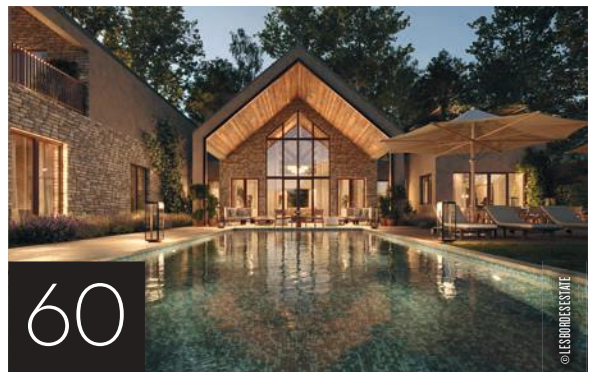
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Castillon-la-Bataille



ON the cover

A charming stone manoir and gîtes in Lot-et-Garonne – see page 32

GO ONLINE TO READ MORE ABOUT FRENCH PROPERTY AND LIVING IN FRANCE, PLUS BROWSE THOUSANDS OF PROPERTIES FOR SALE



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francepropertyshop.com



completefrance.com



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Tête à tête

This month's pick of letters and social media



Karen's Friday bargain:

"I have a fond spot for barn conversions and this is a lovely one, for sale at just €85,500 in Haute-Vienne. It has a spacious open-plan kitchen, dining and living area with exposed stone walls, four bedrooms and a sunny garden."

Karen Tait, FPN Editor

Gary Michael Boichat:

Stunning!

James Morrison:

Yes please.

Kellie Marquet:

This is lovely!



Step into history with this €107,525 15th-century priory in Charente, a remarkable restoration project for those who dream of reviving a period property.

Brad Quarless:

Well priced for what work is needed. Start at the top and work your way down.

Wayne Santorini:

You'll need at least 500k to do it justice, but for long-term ownership, well worth it.

JJ Barns:

Pop a few rugs down and it's ready to move into!

GET IN TOUCH!

Tell us what you love about France and what owning a French property means to you, on our social media or email: karen.tait@francemedia.com

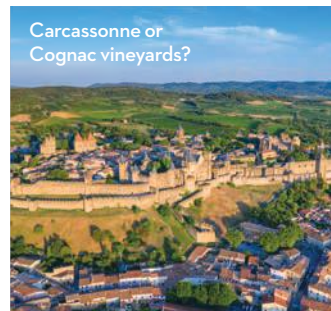
WHERE SHOULD WE BUY?

We have decided this is the year we buy a property in France after years of holidays and dreaming. The only problem is, we can't agree on the location... My husband loves the south of France and has landed on the area around Carcassonne or maybe Béziers (Aude or Hérault). But I adore the Charente and Charente-Maritime and want to look on the coast near La Rochelle or inland around the Cognac vineyards. Neither us want to give in but we do realise we'll have to compromise, maybe even choose a completely new

area. We're at a stalemate at the moment though and don't know how to proceed. So I was wondering if any readers have any advice and can help us out of our predicament? We would like a mix of countryside and coast, and a sunny climate.

Name withheld

Carcassonne or Cognac vineyards?



WIN!
The author of the star letter receives a year's subscription to FPN

ON INSTAGRAM

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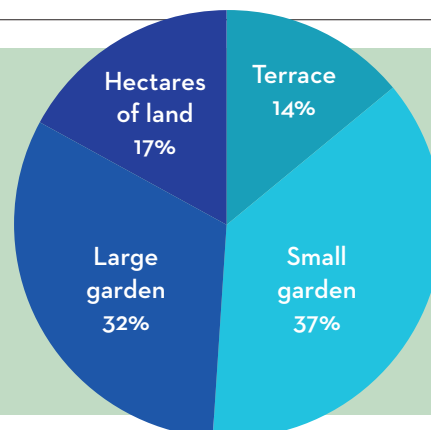
"Framed by rolling vineyards and olive groves, this €1.195m estate in Gard offers two independent residences - perfect for family, guests or income - with refined interiors, Provençal charm and views of Mont Ventoux"



WE ASKED YOU...

"What type of outdoor space would you like at your French home?"

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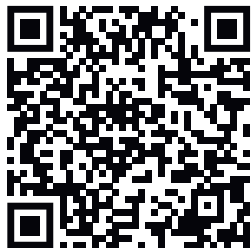
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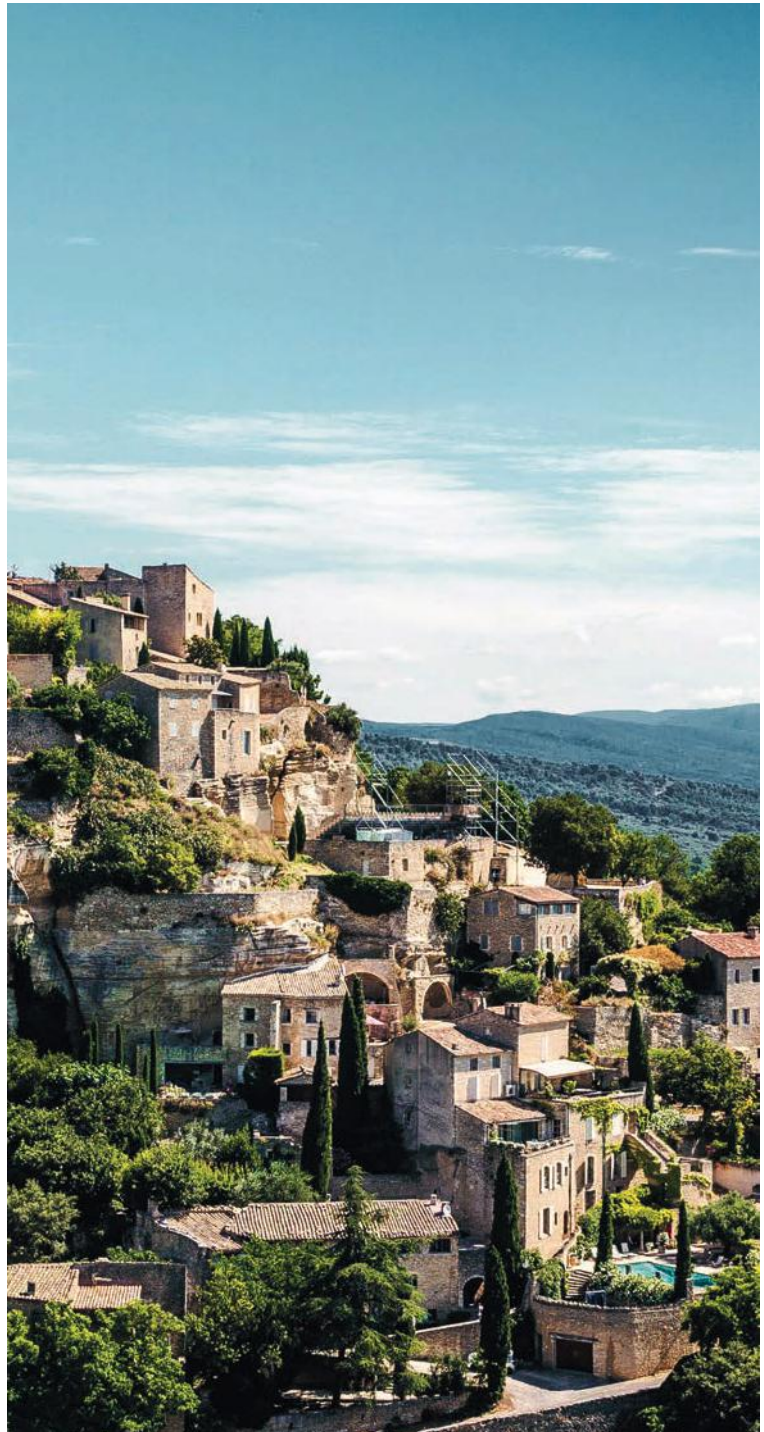
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AU COURANT

Keeping you up to date with the French property market, news, travel and events

FIRST FOR FRANCE: GREEN LABEL FOR TARN

The Tarn is the first French department to obtain the international Green Destinations label. The Silver label was officially awarded at the International Green Destinations Congress, held for the first time in France, in Montpellier, in the presence of 400 international experts.

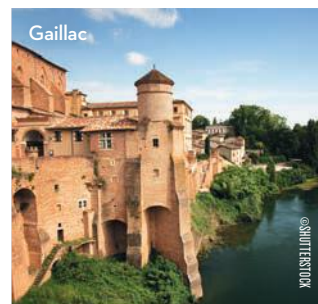
The Tarn joins a global network of 160 certified destinations around the world, ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow's tourism.

The label recognises the joint efforts of tourist offices, local authorities and other professionals, said Didier Houlès, President of Tarn Attractivité. "It confirms the region's commitment to preserving its natural and cultural heritage in a concerted and shared manner, while enhancing its attractiveness."

That appeal has not gone unnoticed by British househunters, who appreciate the unspoilt rural splendour. The Tarn valley is a mecca for lovers of the Great Outdoors, with some 3,500km of hiking and cycling trails weaving their way through the department.

While there are no major cities, the Tarn is no rural backwater. The main town Albi, on the banks of the River Tarn, is famous for its soaring brick-built cathedral, its ancient bridge (the oldest in France dating back to 1040) and Toulouse Lautrec museum as well as its many charming cafés, restaurants and shops.

The 'Golden Triangle' - set between Albi, Gaillac (another charming town on the Tarn river and in the heart of vineyards) and the hilltop *Plus Beaux Village* of Cordes-sur-Ciel



- is particularly sought-after by property buyers.

The average house price in the Tarn is €1,515/m², which compares favourably with the wider Occitanie region at €1,993/m² - Tarn is one of 13 departments in the region.

Prices are highest in and around Albi (€1,714/m² rising to €2,194/m² in Puygouzon to the south of the departmental capital) and Gaillac (€1,814/m²), as well as neighbouring towns to the west of the department approaching Toulouse (L'Isle-

sur-Tarn €1,724/m², Rabastens €2,044/m² and St-Sulpice-la-Point €2,467/m²).

For more affordable homes, head for more rural areas; the southern Tarn in particular has attractive towns with well-priced property including Castres (€1,433/m²), Puylaurens (€1,390/m²), Mazamet (€1,050/m²) and Fontrieu (€1,022/m²).

The southeast of the department contains part of the Haut-Languedoc Regional Natural Park, offering tranquil and scenic househunting territory, while the northeast, bordering Aveyron, also offers great value for those seeking rural homes.

On the market

FIND YOUR OWN PLACE IN TARN ON
FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM & FRENCHENTREE.COM



€120,000, Salles: Two-bedroom village house with a cosy outdoor terrace; a short drive from Monesties and Cordes-sur-Ciel, with Albi only 25 minutes away



€349,000, Réalmont: Restored five-bedroom farmhouse with swimming pool, outbuildings and 1.5ha of land bordered by a stream; 25km from Albi



€695,000, Cordes-sur-Ciel: Country estate with main residence, guest house, barn and swimming pool on over 4ha of land

CYBER-FUNDED PROPERTIES

It is now possible to buy French property using cryptocurrency. The first such deal between two French residents was conducted via independent bank Delubac & Cie, which is licensed as a digital asset service provider. *Le Figaro* reported that transactions are legally structured, converting crypto like Bitcoin or Ethereum to euros via approved intermediaries before finalising the sale. This first contract, transacted in October, demonstrated that crypto-funded real estate transactions, while rare, can be securely completed within established legal frameworks.



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ENGLISHMAN WINS PRESTIGIOUS FRENCH ARCHITECTURE AWARD

The French association *Maison Paysannes de France* (the UK's equivalent of the National Trust) invited the 11 winners of this year's *Concours Architecture & Patrimoine Prix René Fontaine* to Paris to receive their diploma and prize. All of the winners were French nationals, except one.

This is the 40th year that the MPF has asked a jury to select, from the whole of France, projects that best exemplify the *raison d'être* of the association: to promote the restoration and preservation of rural buildings that have history and character and to encourage the employment of traditional craftsman, techniques and materials that allow these buildings to survive.

This year the jury consisted of 15 rural heritage property professionals - architects, craftsmen, producers of traditional materials and representatives from the *Ministère de la Culture*.

Ron Alldrige (a former BBC Radio producer in London)



The winners of the prestigious architecture prize - Ron is on the back row, fifth from right



The property as Ron bought it, and lovingly renovated, left

was the privileged Englishman to be among the chosen winners. He is the owner of *La Maison du Faiencier* in the village of Varages (Provence). The property was built in 1609 and was the residence of some of the leaders of the pottery industry who, in the distant past, helped make the village rich and famous.

However, after years of neglect and misuse, only six of the 18 rooms in the house were habitable when Ron bought it 23 years ago. It has taken this long to restore the property to its former glory and add a contemporary level of comfort. Now, the house again stands proud overlooking the main village square.

WHAT'S ON IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026



24-25 JANUARY NOVOTEL LONDON WEST FRENCH PROPERTY EXHIBITION

Back in London for 2026, the highly popular exhibition brings together a whole host of French property professionals, from estate agents to relocation experts, and lawyers to financial advisors - and the *FPN* team! The free-to-enter exhibition also includes a two-day seminar programme. frenchpropertyexhibition.com



7 JANUARY-4 FEBRUARY ACROSS FRANCE LES SOLDES

The winter sales in France are something of an annual event, typically running from the second Wednesday in January for four weeks. As French shops are only allowed to hold sales twice a year, it's a not-to-be-missed opportunity to bag a bargain, especially on larger, more costly items for your French home. Or just treat yourself!



25-31 JANUARY ALBI, TARN, OCCITAINE ALBI JAZZ FESTIVAL

Warm up the winter with a week of jazz music and other events. More than a festival, Albi Jazz is an immersion in jazz, where artists and audiences meet in a festive atmosphere, creating a musical journey that crosses styles. Expect key artists from the French and international scene along with fresh new talent. albi-tourisme.fr



12-15 JANUARY & 9-12 MARCH VAL D'ISÈRE, ALPS CLASSICAVAL

The 32nd edition of this classical music event in the heart of the mountains brings together musicians from all over the world in a historic venue, the Baroque church of Val d'Isère - one of the Alps' premier ski resorts - for a unique experience over two separate weekends in January and March. festival-classicaval.com

HEALTHCARE: CONTRIBUTIONS COMING FOR USA RETIREES?

French lawmakers have voted in favour of imposing a ‘minimum contribution’ tax on foreign retirees who live in France and benefit from the country’s universal healthcare system after only three months of residency. The amendment, proposed by centre-right MP François Gernigon, passed in principle with 176 votes in favour and 79 against during social security budget discussions.

The move aims to address the €23bn deficit in France’s social security system and promote fairness, as American retirees currently receive healthcare coverage without contributing financially. *Le Monde* reported that the government plans to revise bilateral agreements with G20 countries to secure reciprocal arrangements for healthcare contributions.

While the amendment initially targeted US citizens with long-stay visas equivalent to residence permits (VLS-TS), the scope was limited to G20 nationals, despite a push by the far-right to include all foreign nationals.

A report by *Le Figaro* noted that an amendment excluded ‘citizens of countries covered by bilateral health or social



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security agreements’ (for example, S1 UK beneficiaries). At the time of writing, the measure still needs to undergo further legislative steps, including review and voting in the Senate, which could introduce further modifications.

The proposed measure highlights tensions around national solidarity and equitable funding of France’s acclaimed healthcare system, emphasising that those benefiting should also contribute.

AIRBNB EFFECT IN THE ALPS



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French ski resorts are experiencing a shift toward a ‘culture of second homes’, largely driven by the rise of platforms like Airbnb, according to a report by *Le Monde*. In the early 2000s, property owners in mountain areas were reluctant to rent out their holiday homes, but that mindset has changed significantly due to financial pressures. Homeowners finding that they could no longer afford to keep properties idle gradually turned to short-term rentals as a lucrative income source, the report said.

Airbnb and similar platforms have made renting easier and more profitable, leading many owners to view their ski chalets and

apartments more as income-generating assets rather than retreats for personal use. Concierge services have also emerged to support property management, freeing owners from day-to-day rental concerns.

Nowadays, short-term rentals dominate these resorts, with many owners prioritising rental income over traditional long-term residency. This cultural change has altered the market dynamics, with more properties marketed specifically for tourists, particularly through platforms like Airbnb. The trend is reshaping local economies but also raises concerns about housing availability and affordability for permanent residents, as with many other tourist areas.

TRAVEL NEWS

■ The long-delayed EES (exit and entry system) was finally launched on 12 October 2025, although it will be progressively rolled out over a period of six months (during which time passport stamping will also continue), so you should check whether it is in place at any airports or ports you will travel through (including France). The system digitally records the entries and exits of non-EU nationals travelling to the EU for short stays, via biometric data such as fingerprints and facial images, alongside other travel information. For more information, visit: gov.uk/guidance/eu-entryexit-system

■ Ryanair plans to reduce flights to France due to what it has described as ‘unviable’ tax increases introduced last year. “We are still working on our summer schedule. But unfortunately, there will be a reduction in the number of routes we offer in France,” Ryanair’s chief commercial officer Jason McGuinness told French news platform *Challenges*.

■ Virgin Trains has moved a step closer to challenging Eurostar on the London-Paris rail line after UK regulators approved their request to use the Temple Mills depot (the only UK site that can accommodate trains used for cross-Channel services).

■ Eurostar is introducing 30 double-decker trains, although it has not yet been confirmed which routes they will be used on.

■ The European parliament has adopted a new law making EU-issued driving licences valid for just 15 years. Drivers will have to undergo a medical test before renewing.

■ easyJet has resumed flights between Toulouse and London Gatwick, as part of a winter schedule which sees 17 new services to and from French airports. It has also launched a twice-weekly service between Paris-CDG and Aberdeen.

BOOST OR BUST?

A reduction in VAT to 5.5% for the installation of photovoltaic panels (compared to 10-20% previously) with an installed capacity of less than or equal to 9kW peak, aims to promote the use of renewable energy. This measure was decided by former Prime Minister François Bayrou before his departure, to compensate for the reduction in direct subsidies for the installation of this equipment in private homes and to offset in part the reduced photovoltaic energy targets, especially in the 'small photovoltaic' sector installed on rooftops, which had raised concern from energy watchdog France Renouvelables.



FOOD LABELLING CHANGES

France's National Assembly has voted to make Nutri-Score labelling compulsory on packaged foods, a move intended to support public health by helping consumers make more informed choices about what they eat.

Nutri-Score is a color-coded label ranging from 'A' (healthiest) to 'E' (least healthy), designed to summarise the nutritional quality of foods based on factors such as fat, sugar, and salt content. The adopted measure, which had so far been applied on a voluntary basis, targets large food manufacturers who have so far often avoided Nutri-Score labelling, despite its growing popularity with the public.

Household names such as Coca-Cola and Ferrero were cited in parliamentary debate as examples of major companies whose products lack Nutri-Score indicators, even though these products are not known for their nutritional quality, as reported by *Le Figaro*.

However, the bill includes an important exemption: certain traditional and regional 'produit du terroir' foods



bearing protected designations, like Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP), Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC), or Indication Géographique Protégée (IGP), will not be required to display Nutri-Score. This carve-out was introduced to avoid comparing artisanal or heritage products - often made with traditional recipes - to highly processed foods.

Advocacy groups have expressed mixed reactions,

with supporters celebrating increased transparency and critics warning that the exemptions may favor influential lobbies.

In order to be implemented, the bill must be adopted with the 2026 budget, according to the report.

However, Health Minister Stéphanie Rist warned that the measure would fall foul of EU regulations, which puts its future adoption into question.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **SAVE THE DATES!** Join us on 24-25 January 2026 for the French Property Exhibition at Novotel London West. Discuss your property plans with agents, legal and financial experts and other professionals, attend in-depth seminars - and meet the FPN team! We have also added a second event at the National Conference Centre Birmingham from 16-17 May 2026. Both events are free to enter. More details: frenchpropertyexhibition.com

■ The French parliament has unanimously repealed the 2025 VAT reform, which lowered exemption thresholds for *micro-entrepreneurs* (formerly

known as *auto-entrepreneurs*) from €37,500 to €25,000, sparing nearly 200,000 small businesses from new VAT obligations. The controversial reform was suspended after opposition for its potential to burden *micro-entrepreneurs*. The previous thresholds for 2025 have been restored, but the debate remains ongoing.

■ The Knight Frank Alpine Property Report 2026 shows that Europe's Alpine property market is continuing to outperform wider global luxury trends, with prime prices for Alpine homes rising 23% on average over the past five years. This has been fuelled by surging year-round demand,

the rise of remote working, and a growing appetite for mountain living - 73% of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) surveyed would now consider living full-time in the Alps.

■ From January 2026, most taxable gifts in France - such as money, jewellery, art and vehicles - must be declared through a new online portal, replacing paper forms and current online processes. There will be separate forms for gifts below and above €15,000.

■ New calculations for *taxe foncière* (property tax paid by all homeowners) that were expected to increase the bills of over seven million homes in

France have been postponed. The adjustments would have covered 'comfort' features added to properties such as connection to mains electricity, indoor toilets, heating systems etc. Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said the measure will be pushed back until next year (probably May/June) to enable improved calculation methods.

■ La Poste has joined a national drive to recycle old metal cookware, preventing pans with harmful non-stick coatings going to landfill, and recycling materials saving over 90% of CO₂. The scheme started in supermarkets in 2025 and now counts 1,700 collection points (945 from La Poste).

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EXCLUSIVE

TARN-ET-GARONNE €229,000 HAI
BVI77572 4-bed, 3-bath character home near Montaignu-de-Quercy
 Fees: 7% paid by the buyer Net price: €214,019



AUDE €250,000
BVI82559 Fabulous 17thC property with 6 bedrooms, garage and terrace
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

CHARENTE-MARITIME €349,800 HAI
BVI81714 4-bed, 3-bath longère in a hamlet new Jonzac. Barn and views
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €330,000



TARN-ET-GARONNE €399,000 HAI
BVI74886 Modernised 6-bed farmhouse with period features and pool
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €376,416



EXCLUSIVE

CHARENTE €398,000
BVI82648 A fantastic 2-house property, 30 mins from Angoulême
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

HAUTE-VIENNE €349,000 HAI
BVI83296 Pretty farmhouse with a guest house, pool and rural views
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €329,246



EXCLUSIVE

AUDE €290,000
BVI81956 5-bed open-plan hamlet home amongst the Minervois vines
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



VIENNE €88,000 HAI
BVI80740 Well-presented 4-bed, 2-bath village property with garage
 Fees: 10% paid by the buyer Net price: €80,000



savills

GIRONDE €682,500 HAI
BVI67637 6-bed manor house plus 1-bed guest annex and lovely pool
 Fees: 5% paid by the buyer Net price: €650,000



EXCLUSIVE

savills

LOT-ET-GARONNE €1,050,000
BVI79365 Stunning historic 4-bed, 4-bath home with pool and 3.2Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

savills

AUDE €2,950,000
BVI69571 Spectacular 19thC estate in 5.3Ha near the Canal du Midi
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

savills

DORDOGNE €575,000
BVI82018 Three, charming 2-bed houses with pool, south of Sarlat
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



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Three of the best

From city pied-à-terres to seaview boltholes and vineyard retreats, these apartments offer access to authentic French lifestyle plus great rental potential

CITY



€390,000

PERIOD FEATURES

This elegant two-bedroom apartment in the heart of Nantes gives you the best of city living at under an hour's drive from the popular resorts and beaches of the Atlantic coast. On the first and second floors of an historic 18th-century building, the apartment is close to shops, nightlife, restaurants, museums and other amenities yet in a peaceful neighbourhood. The buildings in this area are a reminder of the opulent life of shipowners



in the past, almost like a village, protected from the hustle and bustle of the city. The property is packed with beautiful period features including marble and stone fireplaces, parquet floors, high ceilings, tall windows and wrought-iron bannisters.

cabinetlenail.com

€262,500

COMMUNITY HOME

In a former priory set within a beautifully landscaped park with not one but two swimming pools is this furnished two-bedroom apartment with fully equipped kitchen, private terrace and parking. Just 2.5km from a lovely village with shops, cafés and restaurants, and a five-minute drive from Pézenas and 25 minutes from the coast, the property is ideal for holiday lets when not using it yourself. Part of a *co-propriété* comprising



12 residences, the apartment offers open-plan living spaces, beamed ceilings, practical tiled floors and spacious bedrooms. The priory is surrounded by scenic vineyards - perfect for wine lovers - and bordered by a stream.

realestateoccitanie.com

COUNTRY

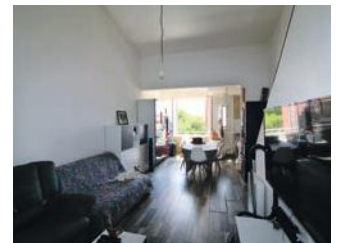


COAST

€126,000

SEA VIEWS

Whether you love sailing or just enjoy the marina vibes, this two-bedroom apartment (with secure parking) in Cap d'Agde on the Mediterranean coast would make a fantastic holiday home. It's perfectly positioned to enjoy everything this popular seaside resort has to offer, with family-friendly spots, naturist beaches and secluded coves, as well as sailing, fishing and watersports. Close to lively quayside restaurants and shops and Agde's charming old town,



the apartment is also ideally placed to explore the rest of the region, from historic cities like Montellier, Béziers, Narbonne, Carcassonne and Sète to the Unesco-listed Canal du Midi, Languedoc vineyards and vast Étang de Thau lagoon.

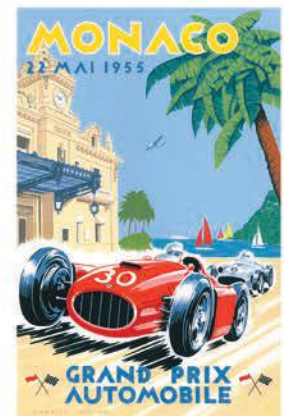
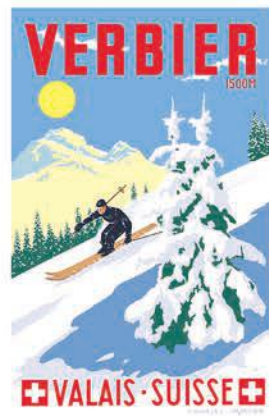
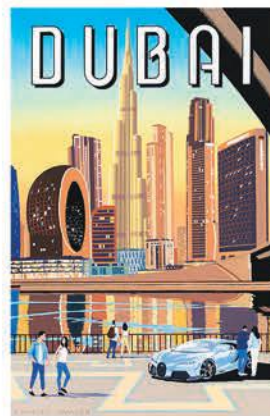
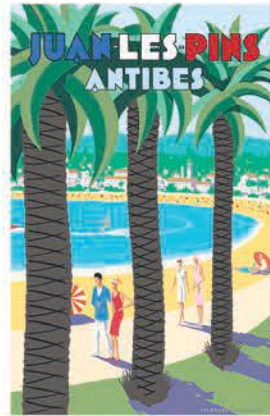
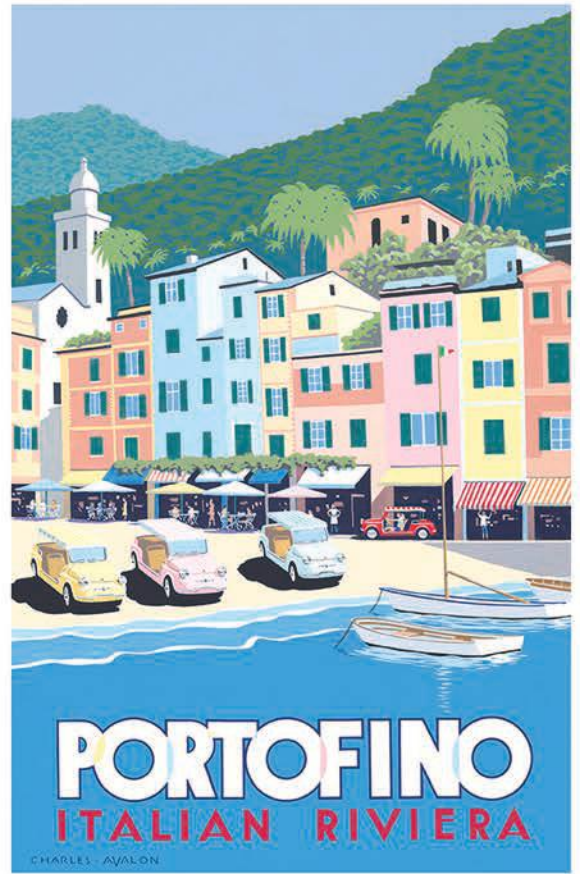
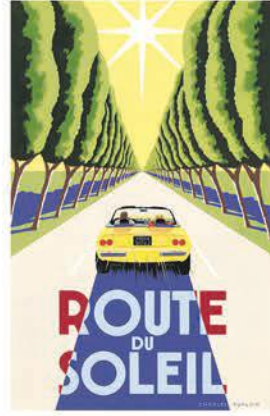
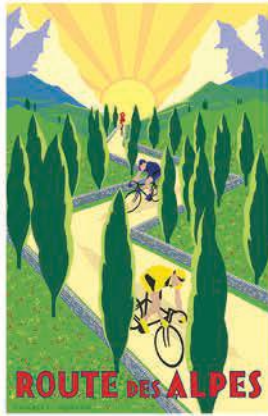
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French
property
dreams

Do you dream big?

Full of character and updated with contemporary comforts, this historic château in Lot-et-Garonne offers a wealth of opportunities, writes **Annaliza Davis**

Are you someone who dreams big? If you've been thinking about setting up a business in France, you might just have found your dream-come-true with this incredible château in southwest France that combines historical features and contemporary luxury.

Business premises come in all shapes and sizes but few are as stunning as this 13th-century château, which is already a fabulous family home and wedding venue but really lends itself to further development as a boutique hotel or exclusive facility for high-end events.

"This property is very unusual for a château as it's a comfortable family home that has been completely renovated to a very high standard, keeping all the charming period features," says agent Carol Ann Wheeler. "My

favourite spaces are the main reception rooms with their magnificent fireplaces where you get a real sense of history - if only they could talk!"

The historical features include stone spiral staircases, timbered ceilings, exposed stone walls, ancient terracotta floors, vaulted rooms and painted frescoes, all of which remind you of the long history of this incredible building.

Thanks to a renovation with quality workmanship, these period features are balanced by all the contemporary comforts, from double glazing to a geothermal heat pump and woodburning stoves, bringing the château into the 21st century in elegant and practical style.

There are nine luxurious bedrooms and several grand yet comfortable reception rooms, a gym and a wine cellar. The modern, fully equipped

kitchen opens through French doors onto a wisteria-covered terrace overlooking the River Lot. As the new owner, you would have access to over 39 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens stretching down to the river, with expansive lawns, specimen trees, and direct access to the water. You'll have a private mooring spot and excellent fishing, not to mention a heated pool and charming pool house.

"In my view, what makes this property truly exceptional is its unique riverside location, which is peaceful but not isolated," says agent Carol Ann.

"It is currently being used as a successful wedding venture with guest accommodation, however, its potential is huge with the right team behind it. There's plenty of tourist traffic as the château is situated close to the historic town of Penne-d'Agenais,

between Toulouse, Bordeaux and Bergerac airports, so it's very accessible, surrounded by vineyards, sunflowers and rivers for kayaking."

If this appeals, you'll be even more thrilled with the stunning vaulted banquet hall, ideal for hosting events, and the additional potential offered by several barns, garages, a former mill house and an estate office. The château itself also has a spacious attic ripe for future development, making it ideal for a private residence or a high-end hospitality business.

"This château is a luxurious family home, but it also has endless business potential," adds Carol Ann. "I can't think who it wouldn't appeal to, and when compared to the international property market, it's frankly a bargain! ■

On the market for €2.2m
wheeler-property.com

À VENDRE



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Character
property
pick

A storybook stone retreat

In the rolling countryside of the Tarn-et-Garonne, **Josie Sharp** unveils a stone cottage plucked from the pages of a fairytale, ready to begin its next chapter

Some houses catch your eye, some steal your heart, and for me this picture-perfect stone cottage is unmistakably the latter.

Framed by climbing roses and with a view of the rolling hills of the Tarn-et-Garonne countryside, the four-bedroom property both looks and feels like it has stepped straight out of the pages of a French fairy tale.

Just three minutes from the medieval hilltop villages of Lauzerte and Montcuq, the chocolate-box house sits between two worlds like a character in a story: close enough to wander the lanes, stop by weekly markets or join a summer night festival, yet sufficiently tucked away to write your own hidden chapter. Driving or walking up the long,

winding road, the tale begins to unfurl. As the oval swimming pool, glistening in the golden Tarn-et-Garonne light, catches your eye, you start to imagine the life stories you'll write here... long summer lunches that last all afternoon, sunset *apéros* on the west-facing terrace and winter nights spent curled up by the woodburning stove. This is a home that makes every season feel like a new page.

Inside, the cottage's charm deepens. Criss-cross beams create a wooden tapestry on the ceilings, stone tones soften the rooms and every corner feels homely, as though the house has been treasured over the years like a beloved book. The fully fitted kitchen, perfect for cooking your favourite French recipe, opens out onto the

covered terrace, a spot that will quickly shape your evening ritual watching the sun sink behind the fields.

Upstairs, the four spacious bedrooms each have exposed beams and a perfect mix of Velux and small floor-level windows. These comforting, character-filled rooms read like stories from the same genre, cohesive yet distinct. And because the house is for sale fully furnished, you can begin your next chapter by the very next sunset.

Outside, the grounds continue the tale. Manicured lawns, shady nooks for afternoon reading, a charming stone outbuilding complete with a traditional bread oven and even a well - details that feel like they've been plucked straight from an

illustrated countryside fable. The tiled pool area will host your summer chapters, but whatever backdrop the story takes - spring's blossoms, autumn's drifting mists or the glow of winter fires - this French setting stays beautiful all year round.

So, if your dream is to step into a story and live inside a book woven with charm, comfort and gentle magic, this property awaits. A move-in-ready, character-rich retreat where every day feels like its own beautifully written line.

This stone home with a soul is as close to stepping into a French fairytale as real life allows. A *belle trouvaille* indeed. ■

On the market for €371,000
[poppinsrealestate.com](https://www.poppinsrealestate.com)

À VENDRE



Bag a bargain!

It's the 100 (thousand) euro question - which properties have the FPN team picked for €100,000 or under?



€78,000, SEINE-MARITIME



I love the elegant period features in this one-bedroom apartment in the Normandy capital Rouen, along with the easy access to all this historic city has to offer, and the fact it has a lovely little courtyard - outside space is such a rarity in a city pied-à-terre. Located on the ground floor with a private entrance, the living room opens onto the terrace and has beautiful parquet floors, wall mouldings and ceiling rose, while the bedroom has an adjoining bathroom. The kitchen is in need of updating - a great opportunity to add value. Rouen is easily reached from the UK via Channel ferry ports at Dieppe and Le Havre.
Ref: 686210 (Sextant French Property)
Karen Tait, Editor



I've chosen this property for a number of reasons... the price, the location and the condition (no urgent repairs or renovation needed here). However, there is a more important criteria... it's flat. You see, my partner is wheelchair bound and the benefit of this property is it's all on one floor. It's something we all take for granted but believe me, trying to find a good, affordable property in France that's accessible for someone in a wheelchair is a soul-destroying task. This bungalow is light, airy and compact with great outdoor space. It's also low maintenance. With easy access to towns and airports, I think this little property will do us very nicely indeed.
Ref: 685876 (Beaux Villages)
David Eachus, Art and production Director

€99,500, HAUTE-VIENNE



€100,000, ORNE



There are many features I like when looking at properties: wooden floors, brick walls and mouldings, for example. This townhouse has them all plus a lovely spiral staircase! It does need some renovation but that simply means I can keep the original features I love so much while adapting it to my taste. Having grown up in a tiny village in the northeast of France, I appreciate the French rural lifestyle. Going to buy a baguette and stopping to talk to people walking by was a weekly routine I now miss. I can picture myself having weekend trips in Normandy indulging in all the history and exploring the beaches while enjoying a savoury *tarte Normande* (too good not to try!).
Ref: 686969 (Leggett Immobilier)
Jasmine Thomas, Media Sales Consultant

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AGENT'S
DREAM HOME

See
SOPHIE FOLLEY
IMMOBILIER
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ON THE
MARKET FOR
€425,000



“It has been lovingly restored to provide a comfortable family home and independent gîte”

SAYS SOPHIE FOLLEY



My favourite property on the market right now is this beautiful village stone house, built in 1832 and set in 6,500m² of mature parkland, with sneak views of the Pyrénées. It has been lovingly restored over the last few years to provide a comfortable family home, oozing character and charm, and an independent, successfully rented-out gîte.

Over two floors, the main house offers 147m² of habitable surface area including a living room with exposed beams and

woodburning stove, a dining room with open fireplace, a kitchen that opens out onto a private paved terrace, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room.

The renovation of the gîte was completed in 2025 and it is in excellent condition throughout. It provides a further 71m² of living space including a large open-plan living/dining room/kitchen and shower room on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a WC on the first floor. It also has its own terrace overlooking the garden.

Gestas is a quiet village, located just a 10-minute drive south of the medieval town of Sauveterre de Béarn, with its shops, bars and restaurants, and beautiful river, the Gave d’Oloron, offering fresh-water bathing, white-water rafting and kayaking. A must see! ■

Sophie Folley heads a multilingual team at **Sophie Folley Immobilier**
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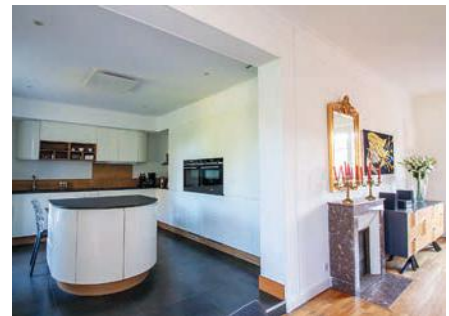




Three in one!

A unique trio of buildings in the heart of a historic town offers multiple opportunities for those seeking a home and an income

Property
with
potential



Just a few steps from the heart of Guéret, capital of the Creuse department, this unique property complex - comprising three separate units - offers a rare opportunity to acquire a lovely home, a reliable rental income and a development project.

Firstly, there's a gorgeous apartment, which stands out for its refined period features and contemporary renovation. A spacious, light-filled living area opens onto a fully equipped modern kitchen. A relaxation/TV room complements the living space, and there are four large bedrooms with built-in storage, an elegant bathroom, additional shower room and functional laundry room. The independent, ground-level entrance guarantees privacy. Outside, a private terrace, landscaped garden and in-ground pool provide an ideal setting to enjoy sunny days in complete serenity.

Secondly, there's a commercial space. Currently leased for several years to a medical laboratory, it offers excellent

rental stability with a monthly rent of €2,907 including all charges. The long-term tenant ensures reliable and sustainable income. The premises also benefit from a private parking area, a valuable asset for a professional activity and its clientele.

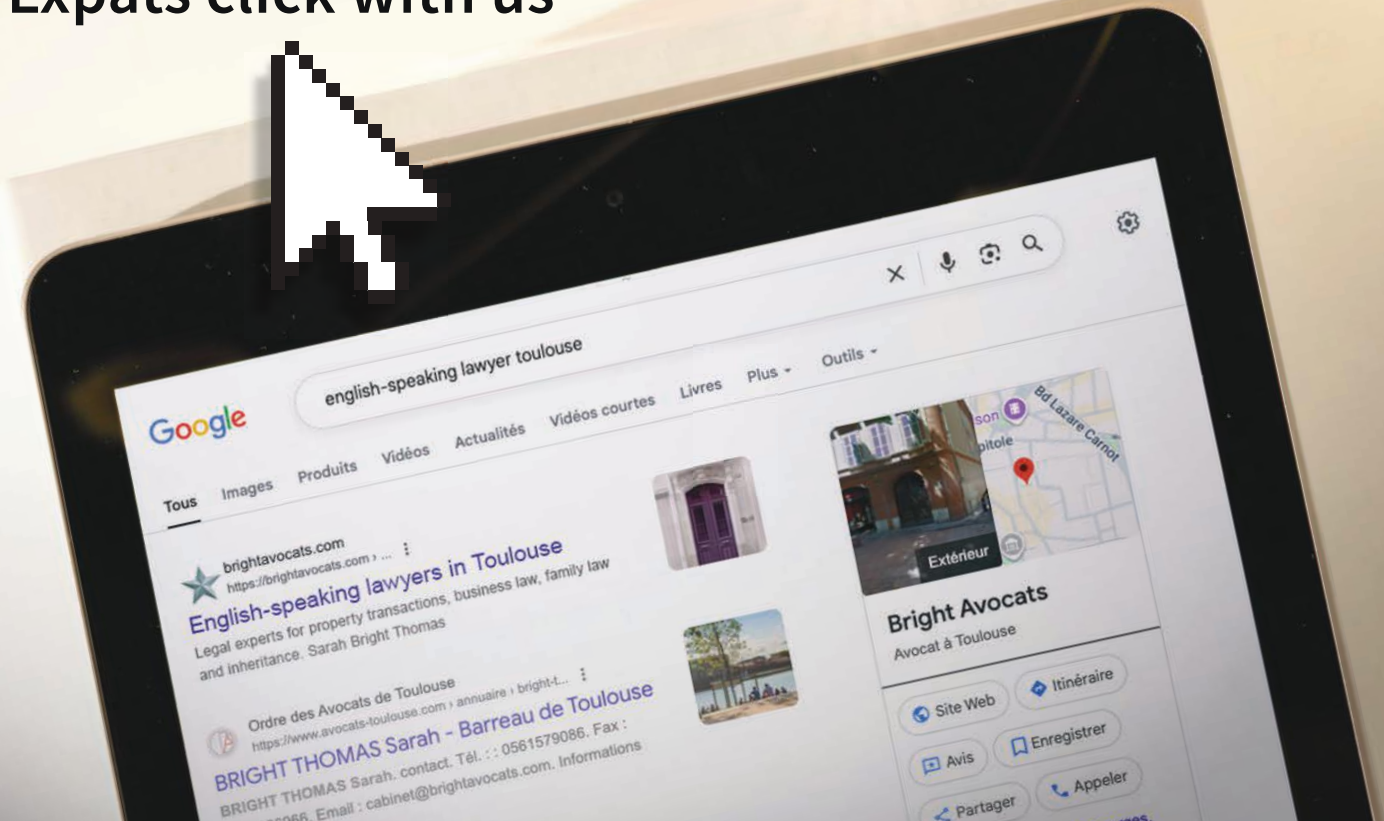
Thirdly, we come to the 'Maison Rocaille', a listed historic building, which owes its name to the stone elements crafted to imitate wood, particularly the railings. It retains numerous remarkable features alongside the Rocaille work such as stained-glass windows. Although it requires renovation, it benefits from state subsidies for restoration. There is also the possibility of creating two additional apartments to further improve rental yield.

The prime location, period features and enormous versatility of this property make it a true one-off - the only limit is your imagination! ■

On the market for €460,000
iza-imo.fr



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Cahors is the main town in Lot

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frenchentree.com/
french-property

Lots of promise

Inland from Bordeaux, the Lot and Lot-et-Garonne departments have a rich character that feels timeless and authentically French - if you love dramatic landscapes and historic villages, this could be your dream destination, as **Annaliza Davis** explains



The Lot and Lot-et-Garonne have a long history and were both among the original 83 departments created in 1790 after the French Revolution. Their rivers and valleys carved out breathtaking landscapes, while their fertile earth

© SHUTTERSTOCK

produces abundant crops and flourishing vineyards.

This area in southwest France is a paradise for anyone who loves outdoor sports, from hiking and cycling to climbing and canoeing - along with anyone who loves outdoor living. Generally less crowded

than in the Dordogne, but warmer and drier, it's hard to see what's not to like about these departments.

The Lot is officially located in Occitanie, about three hours east of Bordeaux. Its main town of Cahors is 90 minutes north of Toulouse, its western

edge borders the Dordogne, while its eastern extremity lies in the foothills of the Massif Central, so you get dramatic steep valleys and panoramic mountain views.

Known as 'Quercy Blanc', the area has white-stone villages that are renowned as



Agen, capital of Lot-et-Garonne, has a broad river and pretty medieval houses



Attractive riverside town Villeneuve-sur-Lot offers great value for housebuyers

Rocamadour, one of Lot's gems



some of the most beautiful in France, bordered by fields of sunflowers, melons and vines, and it also includes a Regional Natural Park complete with oak woods and orchids.

Although adjoining the Lot, Lot-et-Garonne is officially part of Nouvelle-Aquitaine and is located closer to the Atlantic coast. Its northern edge borders the Dordogne, and its main town of Agen is 90 minutes northwest of Toulouse and about two hours southeast of Bordeaux. This landscape has also been shaped by 200km of waterways, and features adorable villages, Atlantic pines, historic *bastides* and castles, as well as plentiful crops. It's the land of good living and good food, but also defined seasons, as you can get severe frosts in winter and often stifling heat in summer.

Tourists who come to this part of France are drawn by the slow pace of life, hearty meals and excellent wine, but also its authentic character. You sense the deep roots of its history and community, and you also sense that the forces of nature are ever-present. If you're looking for a part of France that is still quintessentially French, this could be what you need.

MATCH THE PLACE TO THE POCKET

According to Immobilier Notaires, properties in the Lot and Lot-et-Garonne cost an average of €1,450 per square metre, which is less than half the national average property of €3,098/m² and far better value than neighbouring departments such as Gironde (€3,600/m²) or Landes (€3,015/m²). A budget of €30,000 puts you in reach of renovation projects, €60,000 will give you a choice of apartments and small houses, while €100,000 will buy you anything from a new-build apartment to a renovated stone farmhouse.

LOCATION: WHERE TO FIND WHAT YOU WANT

The largest town in this area is Agen, capital of Lot-et-Garonne, an attractive town with a broad river and pretty medieval buildings. Its population of 33,000 includes 3,000 students and it's

THE INCOMPARABLE ROCAMADOUR

This village sits just off the main A20 route between Limoges and Montauban, and although it has only 600 year-round residents, it attracts over a million visitors every year. Once you've seen it, you'll understand why. This sacred city has been a key pilgrimage site since the Middle Ages, with eight chapels built around a central courtyard, and the scenery will take your breath away, as its layers of buildings seem to cling to the cliffside.

Rocamadour's stunning castle was built to defend the village's sanctuary in the Middle Ages and sits proudly at the top of the village in an extraordinary balancing act. Only the castle's ramparts are open to visitors but the viewpoints over the Alzou Valley are simply breathtaking.

Its steps are not for the fainthearted but visitors are rewarded with incredible views and truly unforgettable architecture that feels like a film set.



Plus Beau Village Autoire



Pretty St-Cirq-Lapopie

The whole area is blessed with picturesque towns and villages. Rocamadour is one of eight Plus Beaux Villages in Lot - St-Cirq-Lapopie, Autoire, Cardaillac, Loubressac, Carennac, Martel, Capdenac-le-Haut - with a further five in Lot-et-Garonne - Pujols-le-Haut, Penne-d'Agenais, Monflanquin, Villeréal and Tournon-d'Agenais



FOOD AND DRINK

This is rich agricultural land, renowned for producing truffles, vines and key ingredients such as foie gras and game. The cuisine here often seems simple, including the filling bean-and-meat stew of cassoulet and the speciality walnut tart. The abundant vineyards of Malbec grapes produce wines with a world-class reputation, particularly Cahors, and if you're looking for a local sweet treat, many desserts feature *pruneaux d'Agen* (pictured), prunes that are grown locally and sold extensively throughout France and beyond.

popular with businesses thanks to its accessibility: it's just one hour from Toulouse and from Bordeaux, with regular rail connections to Paris. It's possible to buy a 20m² studio from €40,000, which could be rented out at around €325 per month, while two-bedroom apartments start at €80,000 and would rent out for around €500 a month.

Both Villeneuve-sur-Lot (population 22,000) and Marmande (population 18,000) in Lot-et-Garonne are attractive riverside towns with ancient architecture. A duplex or even three-bedroom apartment in Marmande starts at €50,000 (it would cost you a little more in Villeneuve) and townhouses start at around €80,000. If you're looking for a detached family home with a garden, these towns are great value, with prices from €110,000. It's worth noting that for business and tourism, Marmande is a practical choice as it's just over an hour southeast of Bordeaux with a direct train link.

Cahors in the Lot (19,937 population) is also very accessible, sitting on the route between Limoges and Toulouse. The town is utterly picturesque, especially its Unesco-listed Valentré Bridge with three fortified towers, dating from the 1300s. Apartments here cost from €60,000 and townhouses from around €85,000.

On the eastern edge of the Lot, Figeac (population 10,000)

is a fascinating town in the heart of the Célé Valley. It has gorgeous old buildings, yet it is also renowned for cutting-edge industrial activity and is the smallest town in France to have a University Institute of Technology. An apartment in Figeac's historic quarter will set you back between €60,000 and €90,000, while a detached family home on the outskirts of the town will cost around €135,000.

For good value, look at the medieval villages of Lauzun and Souillac, which are at opposite sides of this area but both border the Dordogne. A budget of €150,000 will give you a wide selection of detached family homes with a large garden and often a swimming pool, while townhouses will cost upwards of around €80,000.

Renovation projects start at around €20,000 in Lot and Lot-et-Garonne, and this is an area where you'll find a wide range of prospects, particularly in rural settings. In villages and towns, you can also find run-down cottages, old townhouses or potential barn conversions, but do be realistic about the amount of work required and the cost involved.

If you'd prefer to build your own property, look for *terrain constructible* or *terrain viabilisé*. With a budget of €50,000 for a building plot, you could buy a generous 650m² in Marmande, 1,000m² in Villeneuve-sur-Lot or 2,500m² in Souillac. ▶



Figeac has some gorgeous old buildings



Souillac offers great value and borders Dordogne

WHY WE MOVED HERE



Travel journalist Richard Hall and his wife Maria moved from Jersey to Lot-et-Garonne in March 2023.

"In 2020, the pandemic gave us time to reflect and reassess our lives, and we decided to move to France. We initially thought we'd move to the coast, but Maria

came across a modern four-bedroom bungalow 15 minutes from Villeneuve-sur-Lot complete with a pool. Its best feature, though, is the river access, which has become the heart of our life here. We've since turned it into Villa La Rive (villa-la-rive.com), welcoming guests who love spotting herons, kingfishers and, if we're lucky, an otter. The cost of living here is more affordable than in other famous regions, and the people are genuinely welcoming, so we quickly felt part of village life. It takes some adjusting to the slower pace of life, but it's such a gift. And then there's the landscape itself - we're constantly surprised at how beautiful it is, from the river on our doorstep to the rolling hills and the night markets that bring the whole community together. It still amazes us that this is our home."



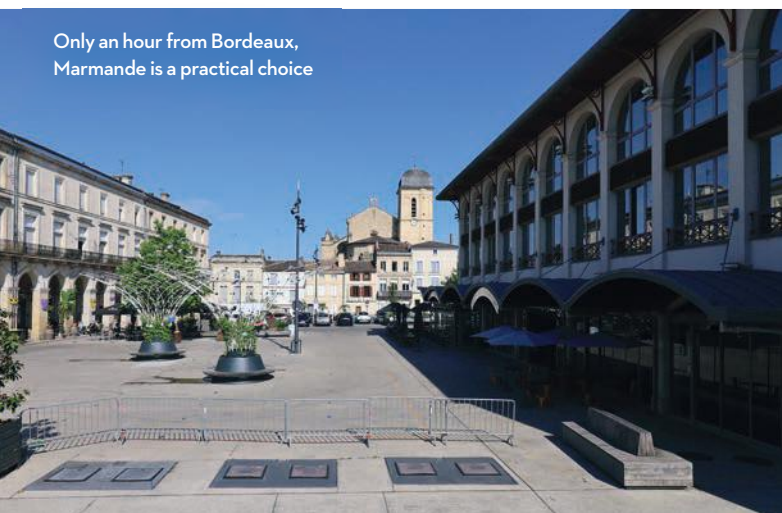


“Figeac is a fascinating town in the heart of the Céle valley”

Lauzun's magnificent château



Only an hour from Bordeaux, Marmande is a practical choice



Property types

Many of the houses are built from pale Quercy stone, with steep brown-tiled roofs



QUERCY STONE

The local stone used to build the area's traditional houses is lighter than that of nearby areas such as the Dordogne.

A pale, near-white shade, this limestone is used for modest farm dwellings as well as grander manor houses, churches and even dry-stone walls. It gives many picturesque villages their character and has created a regional unity.

VINEYARD PROPERTIES

Many building styles developed directly from the agriculture here, so you'll see simple workers' homes known as a 'maison bordier', generally single-storey affairs that face south or southwest. The rather larger 'maison du paysan' or 'maison du vigneron' properties were built for the farmer or vineyard owner, and usually have several bedrooms, a cellar, separate storage barn and an attic. If you want a full, working vineyard, you might have to pay in the region of €2.5m.

PÉRIGOURDINE

As Lot-et-Garonne borders the Périgord (Dordogne), you'll see properties known as 'Périgourdine'. These stone-built houses are sturdy, always have at least two floors, are oriented to the south or southeast and are characterised by their steeply angled roofs that typically feature gables and

other interesting architectural forms. Around €350,000 could buy you a Périgourdine, but be quick, they're popular and get snapped up very quickly!

MAISON DE MAÎTRE

Literally meaning 'the master's house', these elegant buildings generally date from the late 1800s and would originally have been part of a larger estate. Expect high ceilings, sweeping staircases and elongated windows, often arranged symmetrically. You can find them in other parts of the country, but in this area expect to pay around €400,000 for a well-maintained 'maison de maître' with garden.

BUSINESS INVESTMENT

As this is a tourist destination, you might prefer to invest in an established business, such as a successful gîte complex in Marmande or a three-bedroom house with barns to convert in Lauzun, both for sale currently at €400,000.

VILLAGE HOUSE

This area has a plentiful supply of charming villages, some of which have even earned a place on the prestigious list of France's Plus Beaux Villages. If you're happy to do some updating, you can buy a village house that's ready to live in from €65,000.



Penne-d'Agenais is a Plus Beaux Village in Lot-et-Garonne

TRANSPORT

Regular flights connect Paris to Agen in 90 minutes or to Toulouse in just over an hour, and if you prefer rail travel, Paris to Agen is three hours, with Cahors six hours away. By car, you're well connected thanks to the A20, A89 and A62, linking Lot and Lot-et-Garonne to Bordeaux and Toulouse, as well as Limoges and Clermont-Ferrand, all with international airports.

EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY

The Lot is highly agricultural and much of its economy is based around food production and processing known as

agro-alimentaire but it also relies heavily on industry, particularly to the north and east. Similarly, Lot-et-Garonne produces plenty of cereal and fresh crops, but is also home to commercial services and other industries such as aeronautics, logistics and pharmaceuticals.

Tourism is a major part of the economy of both these departments, and in some holiday hotspots more than 45% of properties are second homes, which can create very quiet communities out of season. However, there are more vacant homes here (11%) than is usual in France (8%), which translates into good opportunities for buyers. ■

Bastide market town
Miramont-de-Guyenne



WHAT THE AGENTS SAY...



Local agent Samm Khoury of Richard Immobilier shares her insights into the property market in Lot-et-Garonne.

"This is a picturesque area and there's always high demand for property in charming villages with practical amenities. Lauzun is a hotspot, as are the *bastide* market towns of Miramont-de-Guyenne and Castillonès, as they offer everything you need for year-round living. These days, buyers are especially keen on countryside properties with desirable outdoor dining areas and good accessibility to market towns and villages."

richardimmo.com

On the market



UP TO €100,000

Village location

Ready to renovate, this village house offers 84m² of living space, two bedrooms, two garages and an attic space that could be converted. There's no garden, making this an ideal lock-up-and-leave property for holidays.

€70,800

(French Entrée, ref 123866)



€100,000-€200,000

Townhouse with potential

This spacious 206m² townhouse 20 minutes north of Cahors has three storeys, six bedrooms and a small garden. There's also a workshop and generous storage space. In need of TLC, this could be a fabulous home or B&B.

€200,000

(French Entrée, ref SR 2858)



€200,000-€350,000

Family home

Sitting in enclosed gardens of 1,000m², this lovely three-bedroom home has a balcony, two garages and plenty of storage space. It's a short stroll from a vibrant village community, in a peaceful setting in Lauzun, just an hour north of Agen.

€224,700

(French Entrée, ref L3358)



€350,000-€500,000

Two stone dwellings

Comprising two separate three-bedroom houses (one for you and one for guests), this fabulous stone property is in excellent condition with exposed stone and original features. It also has a pool, rural views and 2,600m² of land, all 30km from Cahors.

€435,000

(French Entrée, ref WMC392)



€500,000-€1M

Period property

Near Villeneuve-sur-Lot, this beautiful 1880 property has 250m² of living space, countless period features, and over 2ha of wooded grounds with a swimming pool, huge convertible garage, a further outbuilding and access to the Lot river.

€639,000

(French Entrée, ref BVI68630)



OVER €1M

Manor house and country estate

Picture-perfect estate including a six-bedroom manor house, three-bedroom gîte and one-bedroom cottage, each with its own pool. Add to that a grand entrance hall, ample parking, a children's play area, and stunning countryside views.

€1,250,000

(French Entrée, ref WMC587)

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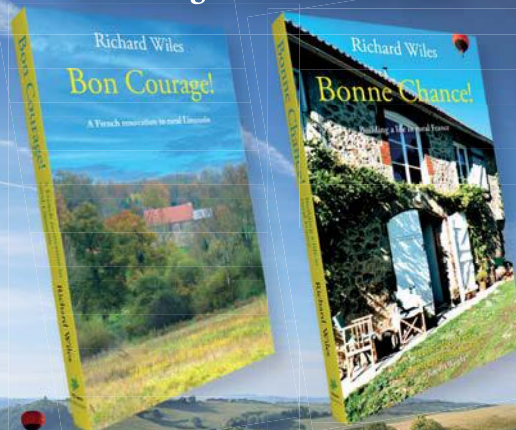


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Creature comforts

For some, having extra space to keep animals is one of the drivers for moving to France – **Gillian Harvey** meets three such people

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WE WANT EVERYONE TO ENJOY OUR ALPACAS

Ken and Jane Walker, Manche, Normandy

When Ken Walker, now 64, and his wife Jane, 63, moved to Normandy in 2001 with their four children Lucy, then 13, Katy, 11, Jack, 7, and Ben, 5, they were already animal lovers. “We had a small three-bedroom semi in the UK, but still managed to have chickens,

rabbits and two dogs: a poodle and a golden retriever.”

While the move was made largely for lifestyle reasons – they wanted a quieter way of life and a more traditional upbringing for their children – having a large house and

five acres of land also meant they could fulfil Lucy’s dream of owning a horse. “My mum had always had ponies and we promised we’d get Lucy one when we arrived,” says Jane.

When they got there, qualified builder Ken soon

“There aren’t many people keeping alpacas in this area”

The house in Normandy that the Walker family call home

started his own business, while Jane worked on the house when she could. They also acquired two milking goats and later investigated creating a cheese-making business. “I learned to make cheese, and began tackling the legislation involved in starting the business, but it proved harder and more expensive than we’d thought. In the end we had to abandon the idea.”

Then, in 2012, the family acquired a rather different type of animal. “We saw two llamas for sale. They’ve always fascinated me, and we decided we’d buy them – almost on a whim. Initially they were just for pleasure and for walks with family and friends.

“In 2021, we decided to purchase some alpacas – three at first, as they are herd animals. Shortly afterwards, a local man got in touch to say he was retiring and wanted to sell his own flock of alpacas. There aren’t many people keeping alpacas in this area, so he’d been pointed in our direction.

“We said yes, as they are such lovely, tranquil animals,” says Jane. “They give out such a peaceful energy.”

The couple came to love their animals so much, they felt it was only right to share them with more people: “We decided to open things up so people can come and visit, and enjoy a bit of tea and cake when they do!” *Bisou d’Alpaga* opened in 2023.

As well as their nine alpacas and four llamas, the pair also have four pygmy goats, a cat, a



Jane and Ken Walker wanted a more traditional upbringing for their children



Jane with one of the alpacas that they keep as part of their business

Jane and Ken's dogs



One of the family's four pygmy goats



Andrew and Sunita McDonald with their children - from left, Austyn, Annalise and Josh - in front of their chateau

Great Dane and a Basset - and lots of time is spent each day caring for them. "To actually keep the alpacas in good condition, including feeding them and cleaning their field, takes two to three hours each morning and another two at night," says Ken.

The business is continuing to evolve and the couple are looking into different ways to support the local community. "We get a lot of enquiries from nursing homes, and we're looking at getting disabled access organised so that we can cater for everyone. We've had some children's parties here and also get a lot of enquiries from schools."

Jane also makes hats and scarves, which she knits from alpaca wool, to sell at Christmas markets as the business is closed for a period over the winter.

While it may not have been their initial plan to keep a herd of alpacas, the couple are more than content with their choice. "We've realised our dream. Many people who visit say how much they'd love to do it. It's such an escape, so tranquil, no passing traffic, no urban noise. It's great being able to give people this experience."

bisoudalpage.com

OUR CHATEAU HOME HAS PLENTY OF ROOM
Andrew and Sunita McDonald, Haute-Garonne, Occitanie

When Andrew, 45, and Sunita McDonald, 42, moved to France with their three children - Josh, now 13, Austyn, 11, and Annalise, eight - things didn't quite go as planned. "We'd been looking at properties close to the Spanish border for over a year and bought a run-down chateau close to Toulouse in 2019," says Sunita. "We had builders in to make it more liveable, but were not yet ready to move. However, we came

for a short holiday in March 2020 and got locked down!"

With only a week's worth of clothing each and a house that wasn't yet complete, Sunita and the children made do with camping equipment as Andrew, a key worker, travelled to and

from the UK. The family cat was still at their house in the UK, but luckily a friend house-sat and looked after her, until Andrew was able to drive over with her in June.

Missing their cat, the family began to put food out for a wild tomcat they'd seen in the driveway. Until, there was a surprise. "Andrew called me and said, 'You know the cat? It's female, not male'," says Sunita. "How do you know?" I asked. "Come and see," he replied."

The builders had discovered two kittens under a floorboard, being cared for by their mother. Five more followed a ▶

"The builders had discovered two kittens under a floorboard"



The McDonalds' geese protect their chickens from foxes



Free-ranging, the chickens enjoy the space at the chateau



Sunita acquired a goat by chance



The couple with some of their menagerie



All the family enjoy the space

few months later. “We wanted to get the cat spayed, but could never catch her,” said Sunita.

Since that time, the family has become used to seeing lots of furry felines. “I also acquired a kitten who fell pregnant before I could get her sterilised,” says Sunita. “She had six! It was a bit of a shock. But the chateau is so big, it doesn’t feel like too many.”

Over time, the family have further increased the headcount with a rescue puppy and now rehomed ex-battery hens too. They also recently acquired a goat, quite by chance. “When you have space, people offer you animals,” says Sunita. “But he’s been quite good, eating the brambles on the land.”

“The family have further increased the headcount with a rescue puppy and ex-battery hens”

In fact, all the animals on site have a role to play. “Cats keep the mice at bay and the dog protects the home. The goat eats the brambles and the chickens lay eggs. We also have some geese now and they guard the chickens from foxes and other predators.”

While their youngest, Annalise, would love to add a horse or pony to the family’s menagerie, for the time being mum is drawing the line. “It’s so much work. She’s been asking for the past three years but I’d prefer to take her horse riding somewhere else.”

Growing up with animals has had a beneficial effect on the children. “It’s lovely raising the kids with animals. They learn so much from it. They have their chores, they have to feed the animals, put out clean cat litter. If they do something wrong they clean the chicken house! I think it makes children more compassionate, and they learn responsibility from caring for animals.”

There’s plenty of open countryside nearby to exercise Lauren’s horses



Lauren introduces baby Scarlett to one of her horses

WE MOVED FOR THE HORSES! Lauren Quiblier, Deux-Sèvres, Nouvelle-Aquitaine

In 2002, when Lauren Quiblier’s parents decided to move to France, one of the main draws was the fact they’d be able to own horses. Aged just 12 when her parents Kate, now 56, and Roly, now 63, opted to emigrate, Lauren has no doubt that the move was life changing.

“We lived in a house in High Wycombe, but my parents wanted more space. At the time, all I wanted was a little pony of my own - which wasn’t possible in the UK at all as it would have been far too expensive,” she explains.

The family eventually settled in a farmhouse in the Vienne near Poitiers that came with five hectares of land. They acquired their first horse almost immediately.

“We were always animal people. In the UK, we had geckos, a dog and a cat, although only the dog came to



There's lots of space for the dogs



The cats enjoy basking in the sun

France with us," says Lauren. "But once we were here, we never looked back."

The family currently have five horses, a Shetland pony, 10 chickens, a cockerel, two dogs and several cats that live in the barn - some of which are feral.

Still, the family's main focus has been the horses. To be able to ride as much as she wanted has been life changing for Lauren, now 34. "I've competed at dressage to a decent level in France. I've had opportunities to travel to

big competitions, grooming for a friend who's an international dressage rider. In the UK, I never had the chance to compete as it wasn't affordable. Here, because the horses are at home, there are many more opportunities. I also have three competition horses,

which is unheard of for an amateur rider in England."

While it's afforded a lot of opportunities, having so many animals also comes with a great deal of time-consuming responsibility. While Lauren has now married and moved out of the family home, she still

works with her parents to look after the horses every day. "Each day, I get up and feed my own dogs and cats, then spend an hour feeding the horses," she says. "Doing groundwork and potentially riding takes another three to four hours. My parents do the evening at present, which is another good hour."

Lauren also juggles caring for the horses with her business as a distributor for a high-end horse supplement, and caring for her young baby, Scarlett. She and her husband Florian, 34, have also bought a house and are currently renovating it with a view to taking over the horses in the coming years.

Roly, Lauren's father, who commuted to the UK for work as a structural engineer for many years, has now retired due to ill health. Her mother, who formerly worked locally in hospitality, has started her own horse-related business, washing and repairing horse rugs for local owners.

"The downside of having horses is that you can't go on holiday or travel easily. But my parents are getting to the point where they might want to slow down and go on holiday more. The place Florian and I have bought has three hectares of land and will be perfect for the horses. And I'm looking forward to many years of riding in the future!" ■

chevalchic.fr

"Lauren's family have five horses, a Shetland pony, 10 chickens, two dogs and several cats"



Living in France, Lauren has been able to compete in dressage

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Let them eat cake

Given the French love of pastries and desserts, sweet-toothed buyers should have no problem finding a home in France close to a *boulangerie* or *pâtisserie*, says **Joanna Leggett**

Rightly or wrongly, it's claimed that when she was told the starving French people couldn't buy bread, Marie Antoinette said, "let them eat cake". Due to quirks of translation, it's possible the exchange referred to *brioche* (sweetened dough), rather than *baguette* - although it's more likely she never said it at all and it's just bad press.

Today, France has a reputation for producing the finest *pâtisserie* and *gâteaux* *par excellence*. It's home to a range of desserts and sweet treats as long as any proverbial arm, with pastries so light they seem to float away like the 'thousand leaves' of *mille feuilles*, a perennial favourite. Open tarts full of local fruits are glazed to make every berry shine to perfection, and sometimes laced with *eau de vie* or other liqueurs. Wonderful

choux pastry is fashioned into eclairs, covered with chocolate or coffee icing, filled with *crème pâtissière* or *crème Chantilly*.

Choux is also shaped into balls for the traditional '*piece montée*' *Croquembouche* - towering edifices of delicious little caramel-glazed buns artfully placed over inverted

cones - the centrepiece of most French weddings. Its invention is often attributed to Carême, the famed pastry chef who worked for anybody who was anyone in Napoleonic and Regency times - from the Prince Regent in Brighton and London, to the Russian Czar Alexander in St-Petersburg and Paris - you



Macarons are a French dessert staple, and said to have been first made by nuns

Love French *pâtisserie*? Then you'll love living near a *boulangerie*!

can be sure *Croquembouche* (literally 'crunches in the mouth') figured prominently in his dessert displays.

Choux pastry is the base of the *Paris-Brest* gâteau, created to celebrate the Paris to Brest leg of the *Tour de France* in 1910. It's also used for *La Tropezienne* - a traditional gâteau from St-Tropez on the French Riviera, eponymously named by Brigitte Bardot when she was filming *And God Created Woman* there in the 1950s.

There's a huge range of fruit tarts, always featuring the very best of seasonal produce. As tiny strawberries first come into season, little individual tarts are filled with *crème pâtissière*, topped with delicious berries covered with redcurrant jelly glaze. Soon after, raspberries arrive and who doesn't salivate over apricot, cherry or greengage tarts and, of course, then there's apples.

Each fruit is a delicious seasonal treat - blueberries, redcurrants, plums and prunes, including the tiny and delicious *mirabelle* plums. Agen in southwest France is famed for its prune production with many a local recipe for prune tarts. Almonds and lemons come from the south of France, as do delicious lemon tarts, while ground almonds are used in a variety of treats, from *macarons* to pastry.

SWEET BEGINNINGS

But how did it all start? The art of creating French pastries and *gâteaux* began in order to sate the desire for a sweet treat at the end of a meal. Traditionally fruit and cheeses were served, however, the art of *pâtisserie* opened up a world of opportunity for burgeoning famous pastry chefs such as Carême or Escoffier.

Back in 1270, the status of *oublieurs*, the ancestors of confectioners, was registered. It was only in the 16th century, when the Florentine noblewoman, Catherine de Medici married Henry II of France, that the profession of pastry chefs was born. She must have had a sweet tooth as she brought with her chefs who



€141,700

FAR BRETON

Close to Pleyben, with its restaurants and amenities, this traditional Breton house in a pretty hamlet is an ideal family or holiday home. There's spacious living downstairs, four bedrooms, plus a room in the loft, as well as large gardens offering great space for growing fruit and vegetables - so you can create your own dessert. Ideally situated to explore beautiful Finistère.



€139,500

BABBLING BROOK

At this property in the Sourdeval area, your first course could be trout from your own stream before the serious business of dessert with fruit from your Norman garden. Downstairs living revolves around the woodburner, making this the cosiest of homes. There are three bedrooms and two bathrooms, plus a modern kitchen. Outside are the covered terrace and patio, and an abundance of fruit trees.

created sponge cakes, macarons and marzipan delights. But it was two nuns who really popularised the macaron as a 'staple' of French dessert and treats. Escaping the French Revolution, they sought asylum in Nancy, baking and selling macarons to pay their rent.

PERFECT PASTRIES

As for puff pastry, it appears an apprentice pastry cook first created this delight in 1645, although others claim it was known to the ancient Greeks or even that the recipe had appeared in 13th-century Spanish Arabic cookbooks. Wherever it started, it's served us well ever since.

In the early 18th century, patisserie became increasingly popular. Stohrer, the oldest patisserie in Paris, was founded by Louis XV's pastry chef, Nicolas Stohrer, in Rue Montorgueil. Still at the same address today, with its lavish decor, it's now listed as an historical site. It remains a mecca for both sweet and savoury baked treats. It was here that Stohrer perfected his classic French pastry *rhum baba*, a delicious sponge doused in rum. When served, you are asked 'encore du rhum?'. Remember, it's rude to say no as they shake more golden liquid over this delicious sweet treat.

Every city, town and almost every village has its own *boulangerie* - under French law every village must have a

“Stohrer, the oldest patisserie in Paris, was founded by Louis XV's pastry chef, Nicolas Stohrer”

bakery selling bread, and strict rules govern its contents - no additives here. *Boulangeries* diversify into making desserts and regional flavours come into play with local produce naturally to the fore.

Apples are at the heart of many desserts in Normandy, but apple tarts in various forms can be found across the country. One of the most famous is *Tarte Tatin*, the famed upside-down apple tart. According to legend, it was created as the result of an accident in the late 19th century at the Hotel Tatin in Lamotte-Beuvron in central France, run by two sisters, Caroline and Stephanie Tatin.

Stephanie, who did most of the cooking, was distracted one day when making a traditional apple pie and left the apples cooking in butter and sugar too long. She tried to rescue the dish by putting the pastry base on top of the pan of apples then stuck the lot in the oven. After turning out the upside-down tart to reveal caramelised apples in all their glory, it became an immediate hit.

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

Opera Cake is a Parisian speciality dating back to the mid 1950s. Characterised by its attention to detail with alternating layers of almond

sponge, coffee buttercream and chocolate ganache, it is topped with chocolate glaze. The combination of flavour and textures are divine and, it is said, it was created as a tribute to the Paris Opera Garnier.

Paris Brest has become a staple; its shape is said to resemble a bicycle wheel. Choux pastry is baked in a ring, sliced in half, laden with *crème mousseline* and anointed with almonds. It is still made by the bakery that originally created it, Maison Durand.

Not far from my home, the 12th-century walled *château* in Villebois-Lavalette dominates surrounding countryside, just as in Carcassonne. Below it is the village - with its ancient covered market, next to the *boulangerie* - where mass is celebrated each Palm Sunday followed by a procession through the streets celebrating ▶



Head to your local patisserie to sample the best of French pastries, including macarons, mille feuilles and fruit tarts



Tarte Tatin, created by the Tatin sisters

the *Cornuelle* - the local pastry, its origins lost in the mists of time. Triangles of this biscuit-type pastry are sandwiched together with lashings of Chantilly cream. On Palm Sunday, a mega-sized pastry is paraded through the streets, accompanied by bands and attendants before it's broken into small pieces and handed out like communion.

TASTY TREATS

All around France there are other wonderful taste sensations to try - little *canalés* from Bordeaux, delicious with their caramelised crust and soft centres. Normandy Tart is a staple throughout northern France - pastry-based tarts filled with apples, topped with sliced almonds and egg custard, baked until caramelised.

Clafoutis, which comes from the Limousin, features sour cherries covered with batter then baked to form a crustless tart. *Far Breton* is similar, but made with prunes or raisins (often soaked in alcohol); made in Brittany, of course.

Other favourites include *crème brûlée*, mentioned in a 1691 cookbook, and Madeleines, small shell-shaped sponge cakes from Lorraine in eastern France. *Île Flottante* features meringue islands floating in a sea of *crème anglaise*, which bears little relation to English custard, while *Charlotte Russe* was another masterpiece created by Carème, this time with sweet biscuits lining the mould before filling with Bavarian cream.

If you want to enjoy these and other treats from across France, make sure your local *boulangerie* is within easy reach!

Joanna Leggett is the Marketing Director at Leggett Immobilier leggettfrance.com

PEACEFUL SETTING

Located in France's verdant centre, where you can find many a tasty apple tart, this beautiful character home in Villemaury, Eure-et-Loire, is set in a delightfully peaceful environment. It offers spacious living, with three bedrooms and two bathrooms. There's a wine cellar, a garage with enough room for two cars, gardens on all sides that include a productive vegetable plot, an outbuilding and a lovely terrace to enjoy a glass of the local wine on.



€181,440



€379,950

PRIME POSITION

Once the schoolhouse in Villebois-Lavalette, this stone townhouse combines modern-day comfort with period charm. Its generous living spaces include a country-style kitchen, living and dining rooms, while upstairs there are four bedrooms and three bathrooms and the attic space is arranged as a further bedroom. There's a large garden with garage and storage. It's a real find in the middle of this busy village, with all amenities - including the village *boulangerie* - close to the front door.



€485,000

PROVENÇAL CHARMER

Just a short drive from the Côte d'Azur and St-Tropez *boulangeries*, this elegant property in Bagnols-en-Forêt offers comfortable living - even in the hottest summer (it has aircon). Downstairs, the rooms flow out onto the terrace, upstairs there are three large bedrooms including the master suite. In immaculate condition, the lush garden and house are in a quiet setting surrounded by nature, just a few minutes from local amenities in this picturesque village.



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Gordes in Provence was the film location for *The Good Year*



Living in the spotlight

Discover the fabulous film locations you could call home in the south of France - **Eleanor Hewitt Coleman** leads the tour

Seeing a quaint village captured on screen has an enchanting feel to it: the sunlight glimmering off golden stone facades, the sounds of locals chatting in cafés filling the air, and the gentle rustling as a breeze blows through a vineyard creating a tranquil atmosphere. Imagine waking up to such a location every day.

For property buyers in the south of France, this picturesque charm is not just a fantasy. Many of the most captivating villages and historic châteaux have appeared in films and TV shows that have touched hearts around the world. In fact, in some of these locations, you could turn that dream into everyday reality.

HISTORY ON SCREEN

Take the Dordogne, for example, an area as cinematic as it is historic. Beynac-et-Cazenac and Cénac-et-St-Julien were chosen as filming locations for *Chocolat* (2000), starring Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp. The production captured the villages' cobbled streets, riverside charm and inviting squares, but in real life,

these features define daily life. Imagine strolling through the markets, past stone houses and arcades, as locals sell cheese, walnuts and fresh bread - the kind of scene that looks like it belongs on screen yet happens every week. Nearby Bergerac offers a perfect mix of medieval architecture and modern amenities for buyers looking for convenience and character.

History continues to shine in the region. Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel* (2021), which was filmed during 2020, used locations in Monpazier, Château de Beynac and Château de Fénelon. The imposing castles, stone walls and medieval streets bring

history vividly to life, creating a backdrop so authentic that walking around the villages feels like you're stepping into the movie itself.

MORE THAN A HOUSE

With views of rolling fields, Monpazier, one of the Dordogne's best-preserved *bastides*, offers a variety of property options, from larger homes just outside the centre to stone townhouses in the square. In this case, you might be buying more than just a house; you might be purchasing history.

Provence offers its own distinct kind of charm. The Luberon valley was featured in

A Good Year (2006) - starring Russell Crowe and Marion Cotillard - which included Aix-en-Provence, the charming villages of Cucuron and Gordes, and Château La Canorgue in Bonnieux. Sun-soaked vineyards, hilltop villages and tranquil squares in these locations create a lifestyle that's both indulgent and serene.

Properties here range from restored farmhouses and stone *bastides* to contemporary homes with sweeping views of olive groves and lavender fields. Provence isn't just a backdrop; it's an immersive experience in beauty, culture and cuisine.

The south of France continues to draw filmmakers. *Emily in Paris* Season 2 was filmed in Villefranche-sur-Mer, the Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, Gordes and Aix-en-Provence, combining coastal luxury with hilltop charm.

Meanwhile, *Charlotte Gray* (2001) and *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (2014) brought audiences to St-Antonin-Noble-Val (Tarn-et-Garonne) and Les Cabannes (Ariège), showcasing villages that balance timeless streetscapes with accessible, everyday life.

Even the recent French film *The Animal Kingdom* (2023), which was set in Le Temple-sur-Lot, Castelmoron-sur-Lot and Monflanquin (Lot-et-Garonne), proves that these



Chocolat, starring Juliette Binoche, was filmed in pretty Beynac-et-Cazenac



€599,500

BEYNAC-ET-CAZENAC, DORDOGNE

Beautifully renovated five-bedroom, four-bathroom stone house blending charm and comfort. A short walk from the historic heart of Beynac, it enjoys a privileged position overlooking the château. The property has a lovely garden with mature trees and a terrace.



€400,000

BEYNAC-ET-CAZENAC, DORDOGNE

Located just outside this beautiful village, this three-bedroom house is currently run as a gîte, although it would also make an excellent home or lock-up-and-leave property. It features a bright open-plan living space and a ground-floor bedroom and bathroom.



€452,150

MONPAZIER, DORDOGNE

This attractive and generously proportioned five-bedroom stone village property is situated just a short stroll from the heart of the town. Combining comfort with character, the house is set in 2,115m² of landscaped gardens with a salt-water pool and sweeping views.



€700,000

CENAC-ET-ST-JULIEN, DORDOGNE

Situated just 1km from the village centre and 12km from Sarlat-la-Canéda, this 18th-century Périgord house offers 190m² of living space with four bedrooms and elegant living spaces. It's set in a 9,000m² enclosed garden with a swimming pool and garage.

villages continue to inspire directors today.

For property buyers, cinematic history is more than a novelty. Locations chosen for filming are generally places with strong architecture, authentic village life and extraordinary landscapes; qualities that make homes in these areas so desirable.

CINEMATIC BACKDROP

In the Dordogne, you can find medieval townhouses with exposed beams and stone facades, nestled in squares where markets and festivals take place. In Provence, hilltop *bastides*, vineyards and olive groves offer privacy and charm,

while being close enough to cafés, shops and cultural hubs to enjoy the Provençal lifestyle.

Each village has its own personality, and for buyers

that's where the real magic lies. Monpazier offers perfectly preserved medieval streets; Beynac-et-Cazenac features a riverfront setting crowned by

its dramatic château; Cénac-et-St-Julien combines quiet lanes with bustling local markets; and Monflanquin provides sweeping hilltop views with a rich local history. In Provence, Gordes and Bonnieux offer the iconic landscapes filmmakers adore, while Aix-en-Provence provides the elegance and culture of a small city.

For those seeking a sense of community, villages like St-Antonin-Noble-Val and Les Cabannes blend history with daily life, where neighbours gather in squares and markets overflow with local produce.

Property opportunities are as varied as the scenery itself: from characterful stone

THE FRENCH FILM INDUSTRY

France is not only the birthplace of cinema (thanks to the Lumière brothers in Lyon, 1895), but it also remains one of the world's largest film producers, with hundreds of feature films made each year.

The country is proud of its cultural heritage, and French cinema enjoys strong support through government funding and tax incentives. This helps keep the industry thriving and ensures France continues to attract international productions.

Most foreign films are *doublé* (dubbed) into French, and the profession of voice acting is taken very seriously. Some artists build entire careers as the French voice of a Hollywood star, so when that star's career takes off, their French counterpart often enjoys fame too.

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€787,500

BERGERAC, DORDOGNE

Step into history with this magnificent medieval property in a peaceful, tree-lined riverside setting just minutes from Bergerac. It showcases timeless character - high ceilings, exposed beams, stone walls and wooden floors. It comes with a guesthouse, pool and barn.



€1.35m

ROGNES, BOUCHES-DU-RHONE

Exceptional 19th-century stone property with character, light-filled interiors, a swimming pool and panoramic views. It's located in the heart of an historic village that's renowned for its vineyards, weekly market and easy access to Aix-en-Provence, the TGV and Marseille.



€1.442m

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, BOUCHES-DE-RHONE

Spacious five-bedroom property with pool, independent studio and landscaped garden, in St-Marc-Jaumegarde, just minutes from the centre of Aix-en-Provence. This charming Provençal house has 240m² of light-filled living space set within a 1,089m² garden.



€1.65m

GORDES, VAUCLUSE

Discover this exceptional 280m² property, which has been elegantly renovated and is situated just a few steps from the beautiful village of Gordes. It offers panoramic views over the Luberon valley, 2,713m² of landscaped grounds and a swimming pool.

townhouses and courtyard homes in the heart of the action to expansive country estates with vineyards, olive groves or panoramic terraces designed for sunset dinners.

WHY FRANCE?

For filmmakers, the attraction of France goes beyond pretty villages. The country has a long-established film industry, excellent technical crews and a remarkable diversity of landscapes packed into a relatively small area - from rugged coastlines to vineyard valleys, fortified towns to glittering Riviera resorts. It's

little wonder that directors like Ridley Scott and Lasse Hallström keep returning here to tell their stories.

For residents, the magic of cinema often comes surprisingly close to home.

When a production team arrives in town, casting calls for extras are not unusual, and locals sometimes find themselves stepping into costume for a day on set. In France, cinema is not just

something you watch, it's woven into the culture, the places and occasionally the daily life of its people.

For buyers, it's more than just buying a property, it's the chance to step into a landscape so unique filmmakers travel the world to capture it. Whether it's a riverside home in the Dordogne, or a townhouse in a medieval *bastide*, unlike the movies, you get to stay after the credits have rolled. ■

FRENCH BLOCKBUSTERS

France doesn't just host international productions; it creates its own global hits. Thanks to strong cinema laws that protect and fund local filmmaking, French cinema continues to thrive. The *Intouchables* (2011), the story of an unlikely friendship between a Parisian aristocrat and his caretaker, became one of the most successful French films of all time, winning fans across the globe and inspiring several remakes. In 2012, it was the fourth-highest-grossing French-language film in the United States since 1980!

*Eleanor Hewitt Coleman is on the marketing team at **Beaux Villages Immobilier** beauxvillages.com*

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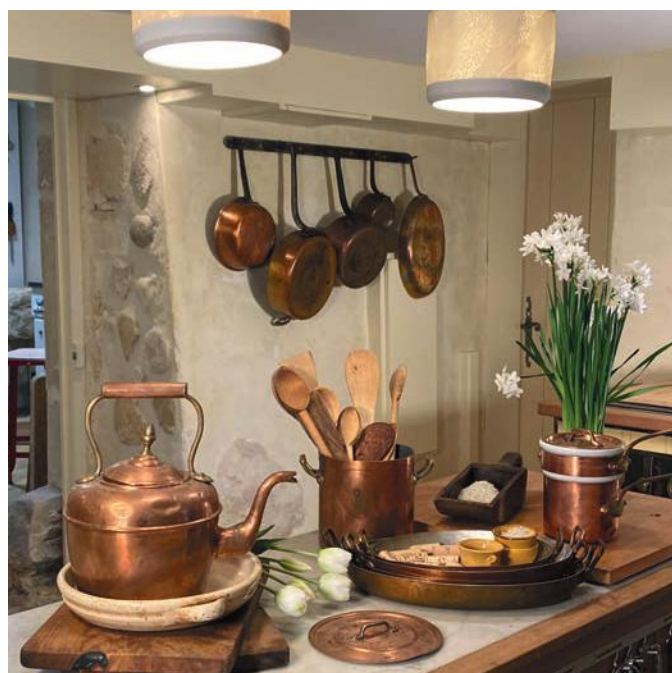


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FRENCH INTERIORS
 PART 1

Heart of the home

A French country kitchen celebrates warmth and generosity, and savours daily ritual. Here's how to create your own Provençal haven, says **Susannah Cameron**



Copper kitchenware on display creates a warm glow in a kitchen

There is something instantly inviting about a Provençal kitchen.

Step inside and you are enveloped in warmth: the smell of garlic caramelising in olive oil from Nyons, the coolness of terracotta *tomettes* underfoot, the gleam of old copper saucepans catching the light. It is a space that feels lived in, generous and timeless. Here, beauty is never superficial. Every pot, every bowl, every linen has a purpose, yet each one is chosen with an eye for character. To embrace this way of living is to bring a little of Provence into your own home.

At the centre of it all stands a work surface that brings the room together. A salvaged draper's table or an old shop counter makes a perfect kitchen island. Broad enough

for kneading dough or rolling pastry, sturdy enough to stand up to decades of family meals, and handsome enough to serve as a bar when friends gather with glasses of chilled rosé. Laden with bowls of sun-ripened fruit, a copper kettle ready for a tisane, or a simple bunch of garden flowers, this island becomes the anchor of the kitchen.

POTS OF CHARACTER

The objects that give a French country kitchen its soul are full of character. Nineteenth-century *confit* pots, glazed in ochres and greens, once held *confit de canard* and other preserved meats and were stored in cool cellars through the winter months. The lower half was left unglazed so the clay could breathe when buried



From top: Confit pots and jars line shelves; flowers brighten a table top

in earth, while the upper glaze protected the pot from fat and handling. Now they sit happily on shelves, filled with utensils and potted herbs or are left empty as decoration.

Wide, shallow *tians* are still used for washing vegetables or serving delicate salad greens, their clay bodies carrying the memory of farmhouse cooking. Carved walnut salt boxes and *fariniers* (flour chests) are reminders that even the humblest storage once deserved craftsmanship. Salt boxes were made with two compartments - one for coarse salt, one for fine - depending on the quantity called for in your *recette*.

No Provençal kitchen is complete without a pestle and mortar. With a bowl carved from marble, paired with a worn wooden pestle, it is used to pound basil, garlic and olive oil into *pistou*. The name comes from *pista*, meaning "to pound". Unlike pesto, *pistou* contains no nuts, only those three ingredients. It is always made by hand so the basil stays cool and keeps its fresh, green ▶



Fresh produce used as decoration in the French kitchen

“Every pot, every bowl, every linen has a purpose, yet each one is chosen with an eye for character”



Decorative items provide interest



Monogrammed linens add history



Salvaged furniture, such as an old draper's table, makes a perfect island

flavour. *Pistou* is added only at the very end, when the dish is ready to serve, so its perfume is released but never cooked away. Making it is more than cooking; it is a small ritual. The mortar sits heavy on the counter, linking today's cook to the generations before. It is a task easily shared with a guest, pestle in one hand and a glass of chilled *vin blanc* in the other.

CREATING WARMTH

Copper cookware brings its own allure. Whether a set of pans with gleaming brass handles or moulds in fanciful shapes, these pieces add warmth to a room. Hung above a hob or arranged on a wall, they glow like firelight, each dent marking years of celebration and use.

In Provence, kitchen tools are rarely hidden away. Wooden cutting boards lean against the backsplash, their knife marks telling the story of countless meals. A linen towel, monogrammed decades ago, hangs on a hook or sits in a neat stack, ready to be used as a napkin beside a *daube* simmered in red wine with orange peel and thyme. Linen carries these meals with grace, softening with every wash.

Storage, too, becomes part of the scene. A wire-front hutch



“Surround yourself with objects that are useful and beautiful”

or antique dresser displays dinnerware, copper and glass. Fish-shaped plates from Vallauris were once used to serve the day's Mediterranean catch; displayed together, they carry the memory of salt air and sunlight. Collections

are encouraged; mismatched perhaps, but always abundant. This is not a place for austerity, but for celebrating the richness of daily life.

Small touches complete the picture. A braid of garlic or onions hangs from a knobbly wooden ceiling beam, both sculpture and pantry. A sprig of thyme in a glass jar scents the air. Even a wicker basket of glossy, ink-coloured aubergines on the counter becomes a still life. These are the details that make a kitchen feel alive.

Colour is drawn directly from the landscape. Honeyed tiles echo the ochre villages of the Luberon, while deep-green glazes recall the cypress and vineyards. Patterned tablecloths carry the cheer of wildflower fields, shifting from scarlet poppies in spring to lavender in summer. None of this feels contrived. It's simply Provence brought indoors.

MARKET STYLE

Step into the markets of Apt on a Saturday or Vaison-la-Romaine on a Tuesday and you see how this style comes together. The chatter of stall holders and the scent of ripe melons fill the air. Stalls overflow with fresh produce,

Head to a French market for ideas on how to bring this style together

wire baskets, pottery, olive-wood boards and embroidered linens, all destined for kitchens across the region. A bunch of purple-tipped asparagus, clusters of artichokes or strawberries still warm from the sun can be displayed as proudly as any heirloom piece, blurring the line between cooking and decoration.

Ultimately, creating a French country kitchen is not about strict rules but about generosity of spirit. Surround yourself with objects that are both useful and beautiful, layer them until the room tells your story. A Provençal kitchen invites you to cook, to linger, to laugh and to share. It is not a showroom but a living space, marked by warmth, sincerity and the joy of daily rituals.

This is Provence. Practical. Beautiful. Alive. A kitchen here is never just decoration. It is a room where life itself is savoured, one meal, one gathering, one story at a time. ■

Susannah Cameron is the Director at Chez Pluie Provence, an online boutique for French antique and vintage pieces
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Next issue: How to create the perfect guest room



A display of fish-shaped plates, once used to serve the catch of the day



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Harbour town
St-Martin-de-Ré
on the Île de Ré



How long have you worked as an estate agent in France and how did you start out in the profession?

I have been working as an estate agent since 2005 - I started off while I was searching for a different profession after teaching Business and Legal English.

Which area of France do you cover?

We are in the west of France and cover the whole of the Charente-Maritime department, parts of the Charente department around Cognac, and the Vendée department up to the town and resort of Les Sables d'Olonne town and the surrounding area.

Describe your area in five words.

Sunlight, beaches, vineyards and fun cities.



Is west best?

Estate agent **Pauline Bruneau** talks to **Karen Tait** about her corner of France



What is the appeal of your area?

The ocean, the amazing cities of La Rochelle, Les Sables-d'Olonne, Saintes and Cognac. Music, culture, fun summers and festivities.

What's your favourite corner of the region?

I love it all and enjoy moving from one part to another, because of the variety... cognac-tasting, beach-going, biking on the Île de Ré, sea

fishing on the Île d'Oleron, surfing in La-Tranche-sur-Mer, music festivals in Saintes and La Rochelle, watching the Vendée Globe sailing race in Les Sables-d'Olonne, enjoying the classic music festival in Saintes, theatre in La Rochelle.... And just visiting all the enjoyable towns and cities.

Is it easy to reach?

Yes, by plane, train or car. There are international airports at

La Rochelle, Poitiers and Bordeaux, and La Rochelle is under four hours' drive from St-Malo ferry port.

Any hidden areas not as well known by British buyers?

You could discover the beautiful village of Port d'Envaux on the banks of the Charente river; the Marais Poitevin wetlands known as 'Green Venice'; or the port of Mortagne-sur-Gironde on the Gironde estuary...

On the market



€196,000, Berneuil: This three-bedroom Charentaise stone house blends old-world charm like exposed beams and stone walls with all mod cons



€222,000, Luçon: Five-bedroom townhouse with potential, garage and workshop; in a town with all amenities, 20 mins from the sea and 45 mins from La Rochelle



€270,000, Virollet: Charentaise stone house and gardens in a peaceful hamlet, featuring a beautiful living room with a cathedral ceiling and fireplace



€289,000, Saintes: In a quiet area close to the town centre, single-storey house with three bedrooms, large living room, garden and double garage



Saintes with its impressive cathedral



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What kind of properties does the area offer?

Charentaise stone houses are typical, along with manor houses, townhouses, a few châteaux, beach houses and lovely bungalows.

What are the cheapest and most expensive properties on your books at present?

A charming three-bedroom stone house in Charente for sale at €196,000 and a 16-bedroom château in the Vendée for €4m.

Why do British people buy houses in your area?

Life is nice on the west coast. Whether you live inland or by the ocean, the beach is always nearby. The nature is a lovely mix of vineyards, grassland and woods. The people are friendly and welcoming. The culture is grand. Markets and *brocantes*

“Enjoy mixing with the locals and village life à la française”

are a way of life, and there are lots of clubs to join.

What advice would you give to buyers looking in your region?

Drive around the area before viewing to understand what is best for you. The market is active so when you see the right one, go for it - it may not be for sale for long. Charente-Maritime

has the highest number of sales in the Poitou-Charente area, which is very reassuring.

What tips would you give to help people settle into French life?

Enjoy mixing with the locals and small village life *à la française*, visit café-bars and restaurants, and get involved with a club or association.

What are your predictions for your local property market?

2025 was good and actually quite chaotic - the end of 2025 was very active and we feel that will be the tone for 2026. ■

immobiliere-internationale.fr/en

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES

Property prices vary significantly according to location, with seaside homes generally costing more than those inland.

- Charente-Maritime: €2,321/m²
- Charente: €1,290/m²
- Vendée: €2,245/m²
- La Rochelle: €3,906/m²
- Saintes: €2,015/m²
- Cognac: €1,554/m²
- Île de Ré: €6,364/m²

Source: Notaires de France



Cognac, on the River Charente

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRENCHENTREE.COM & FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€367,000, St-Jean-d'Angély: Elegant 19th-century manor house close to amenities, with four bedrooms, two dressing rooms, swimming pool and barn



€375,000, Pons: Character house in the historic centre, with spiral stone staircase, two converted outbuildings, garage and a second adjoining house



€449,000, Mirambeau: Five-bedroom character property with country views, modern open-plan kitchen, dining room and cosy living room with fireplace



€485,000, Marennes: Four-bedroom 17th-century 'maison de maître', with original wood floors, high ceilings, period fireplaces and characterful outbuilding



Love and olives in Provence

After falling in love with a Frenchman, actress and author **Carol Drinkwater** moved to France and the pair bought and restored a derelict house and olive farm in the hills above Cannes - here she chats with **Angela Sara West** about her passion for France

All Creatures Great and Small actress Carol Drinkwater's road to romance and adventure on the Riviera began when she met her French

TV/film producer husband. "Michel invited me to Cannes, where he was working at the spring television festival, and I found Appassionata, a crumbling villa with ivy-infested sinking swimming pool and farm. I dreamed of renovating it as a holiday home for relaxing in between film/TV commitments, not relocating there, but love, landscape and destiny (or maybe the wine!) had other plans..."

Acquiring their early-20th-century farm in 1984 was fraught with financial issues and French bureaucracy. Costing three times more than their budget, Carol says their "charming ruin crippled us". Without a centime to their names, the couple cooked on a cheap barbecue. "Filling water canisters from the village fountain, we'd haul them up the mountainside for cooking and washing. We were insanely in love and happy-go-lucky in this glorious

overgrown kingdom of ours under forever-blue skies.

"Scorching hot summers were spent staring at the empty pool. I'd read, write, walk, swim at the beach, visit museums

and enjoy daily discoveries." The loved-up pair painted the dilapidated shutters turquoise and blue. "Echoes of the aquamarine sea and cerulean sky," says Carol. "Discovering



A 2,500-year-old olive tree



Carol enjoys the local wine and sunshine in her corner of paradise

our land's indigenous plants and regional history, I learnt to see colours, appreciate diverse nuances and look at the world through unfiltered eyes. I'd found peace... come home. This magical house, an unruly yet lyrical beauty, and the natural world's healing power is reflected in everything I have written since."

FOREVER HOME

In between family and work commitments, the couple dedicated themselves to the relentless, often backbreaking renovation of their rundown property, gradually nursing it back to life. "We discovered 68 olive trees growing in statuesque glory, some up to 400 years old, and have since added over 250 more," Carol smiles proudly. "The work is rigorous and very physical. Professional labour is expensive here so we've been very 'hands on' with

"The sea views, scents of nature, vegetation and cicadas are the background to my musings"

transformations, taking much longer but with no rash decisions. We're still building, renovating and planting!"

Set within limestone rocks, surrounded by vineyards on a drystone-wall-fringed hillside overlooking Cannes' beautiful bay, their 10-acre grounds now relish ancient and junior olive trees, many strikingly gnarled.

Adorned with an Art Deco pool, Carol's cream-balustraded house is "quite simple and basic, with light-and-airy living spaces. We've built a little house in an old grove for the olives and laundry and constructed a large greenhouse". The stables/garage is one great space with a shower room. "And, possibly, an editing suite or library. I like to remain flexible while at work on books or buildings!"

Expansive terraces boast bountiful bougainvillea and



Decanting the 'liquid gold' olive oil from her farm into bottles to sell

wisteria, overlooking the bay, Lérins Islands and cruisers in the harbour. "Home on the lip of the Mediterranean coast is bliss. The sea views, scents of nature, vegetation and cicadas are the background orchestra to my musings," she says.

LIQUID GOLD

In her quest to make their olive farm pay its way, Carol

documented her experiences in a vivid series of bestselling books. "I'm an Irish-Brit who has successfully upped sticks and made the move to France," she says. Bursting with joie de vivre tainted with times of sadness, her memoirs set on the farm recount tales of run-ins with wild boars, forest fires, leaking sewage and losing long-standing honeybee

colonies, all set against a backdrop of colourful French rural characters, customs and, of course, cuisine.

Acquiring the rigorously controlled AOC (*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*) benchmark for quality comestible produce proved another challenge. "We're one of only two foreigner-owned Alpes-Maritimes farms awarded. How proud we were after five years of land-and-tree inspections. Not bad for an actress and writer!"

All the work is performed manually, painstakingly picking the olives by hand; their production technique yields far smaller harvests than treated trees but results in totally natural 'liquid gold'. Guests at Appassionata's rental cottage appreciate tastings, where Carol talks about the olive culture history and the work involved in production.

A decade ago, they acquired an adjacent strip of land. "We cut back the briars and ivy throttling old olive trees and rebuilt the *restanque* (drystone) walls." The pair planted sapling trees and created a small almond grove in memory of Carol's mother who loved pale pink - "a swathe of light pink blossom for her to look down upon from heaven".

Carol's love of olives changed her life. She travelled solo for 17 months, discovering mythical secrets of the sacred tree along with the Mediterranean's traditions, language and history. "I encountered 6,000-7,000-year-old trees, still fruiting and producing the finest golden olive oils."

Helping Unesco create a Mediterranean Basin



Renovating and relining the swimming pool - ready for use in the long hot summers that characterise the region



Step into the pool straight from the terrace



Peach blossom in front of the greenhouse



The citrus garden



Enjoying food with friends en plein air

heritage trail honouring the tree's historic roots, her epic adventure inspired bestselling books *The Olive Route* and *The Olive Tree* plus five films. "I still seek clues, facts, history and long-buried secrets," she says.

Long-term projects include the planting of an oak forest. "We grow three varieties," she explains. "It's an ecological investment; I love the long-range thinking of planting for the future." The land is increasingly laborious due to climate change. "Weather patterns are certainly changing... Scorching, unseasonably high summer temperatures and furious winter tempests are new to us. Storms cause flooding and decimation in our pine forest. We've lost trees to wild weather and pathogens from cargo ships."

SOUTHERN SUMMERS

Carol's recently released novel, *One Summer in Provence*, is set on a vineyard in the south of France. "With many levels to the story, the main themes are betrayal and belonging, with thriller aspects!" she reveals.

When not engaged in professional commitments, she works from home. "It's a joy while polishing texts. I love swimming in the pool, reading in the garden, walking the land, tending the plants and staring at the sea. Being surrounded by blossoms, orange, cherry and jasmine scents, colours and warmth lifts my spirits."

The pair eat out infrequently. "Our two kitchens are my favourite restaurants! We grow our own and enjoy the quiet private time *Appassionata* affords us. We eat plenty of raw food; salads and garden fruits, herbs, tomatoes, courgettes, citrus fruits, apples, peaches, figs - all fresh and chemical-free. Guests are bowled over by our delicious avocados' creaminess..."

They also buy from the fruit-and-vegetable and fish market behind Cannes' old port and farmers' markets inland. "The produce is exceptional. Excellent fish, cheese shops and butchers... All we need to live the Mediterranean Diet."

On special occasions, Carol and Michel dine at delectable

hilltop gem - and A-lister mecca - La Colombe d'Or in St-Paul de Vence. "We enjoyed (liquid!) lunches there with Donald Pleasence when he lived in the village. A treat to dine, and an overnight stay is a dream come true! This exquisite, tiny hotel overlooking valleys and pine groves houses one of the finest collections of original 20th-century artworks, almost all given by the artists, including Chagall and Matisse."

PARTY TIME

Only a *boule's* throw away from star-studded Cannes, they tend to stay away from the celebrity hobnobbing the glitzy town is famous for, throwing parties during the world-famous film festival and meeting industry friends for socials and screenings. "We host big summer parties lasting several days," says Carol. "Friends from my showbiz life fly in to stay. Otherwise, our lives are quiet."

Carol finds inspiration along the Côte d'Azur and beyond. "My outings tend to be work-related; places I write about. The Camargue is my out-of-season secret place, and Marseille is one of my favourite spots in the world... The novel I'm writing, *The Girl From Marseille*, is set there. I love the Hôtel Belle-Vue, fish restaurant Coquille, La Vieille Charité, former Fort St-Jean's Mucem museum, and adore the ancient harbour, walking



There are sweeping views from the house down to the Mediterranean Sea

"It has been a true labour of love and four decades of French adventures!"

the hilly streets, visiting old buildings, and imbibing the lively atmosphere."

She uses location almost as another character. "It was love at first sight with Cassis!" she discloses. "Les Calanques are a corner of paradise."

While writing *The Forgotten Summer*, Carol visited many vineyards to learn about grape harvests and winemaking. "Mostly in the Var, renowned for its rosés," she reveals. "Chatting with owners, reading manuals, getting deep into the land history and geography at wineries near Bandol and smaller estates with wine for local consumption, I drank (and purchased) many cartons of wine!"

And her preferred *vin*? "Pouilly-Fuissé (although I

can't afford it!) and Mersault. Michel loves local rosés, which I drink in summer."

PARIS AND PROVENCE

Alongside life on the fashionable French Riviera, they have also lived "five steps from La Notre-Dame", with time spent in the capital inspiring her books. "I love wandering the Left Bank. Springtime's like no other time of year and no other place on earth. April in Paris!"

Carol's old stone 13th-century *commanderie* east of the city is set across four acres of *la France profonde*. "It's a pretty big manor where Knights Templar lived, with a crofter's house and pond. Every square inch required renovation and water/

electricity installation." The 'Mad Old Château', as she calls it, is surrounded by vast "pale-to-purply-blue-coloured fields, depending on the season".

Language-wise, Carol nailed her French at Nice University and via immersion in the region's rich and colourful culture. "I love all agricultural aspects of French life: farming activities, olive oil fairs, cheese-making, honey and wine festivals."

Her perfect day in Provence? "Waking up to the sun, that special Med light, a sight of the sea, brilliantly coloured flowers and olive trees, silvery and elegant. Oscar Peterson playing, Michel brings me coffee in bed. Music, light and gestures of love - already the day is rich. I potter to my den and prepare for a long day at my desk, stopping to swim, stroll around the garden, gathering fresh veggies and salads. Evening, I hit the hammock with a book, we light the barbecue, or pine-and-olive log fire in winter, jazz on the stereo, read, talk, drink wine, make dinner and share our day's discoveries."

It sounds idyllic... "It can be so beautiful it seduces me away from work! I miss acting, otherwise I'm enormously happy here. We live life to the full. Halcyon days - and we cherish each one. A love story in every sense, it has been a true labour of love and four decades of French adventures!"

And finally, does Carol have any tips or advice for readers seeking to buy property in the region? "If you're dreaming of it, make the leap," she advises. Fancy the south? "Unless funds are very plentiful, look inland. There are still lovely spots with acres of olive groves high in the Var and even an organic village or two." ■

Win a signed copy of Carol's latest novel, *One Summer in Provence* at thetriplic.co.uk (Cancer Care Community) caroldrinkwater.com



The shady terrace at Appassionata



See
AGENCE NEWTON
 at the French
 Property Exhibition
 Stand 41

Buying guide

Thinking of buying a French property or moving to France? Read this before you pack your bags, says **Dan Newton**

So, you've decided you want a home in France. Congratulations - it's the start of an incredible adventure! But before you grab the ferry timetables and start dreaming about evenings on the terrace with a glass of chilled wine and the setting sun, it's worth taking a step back to look at how the process really works.

Buying a property in France is a wonderfully rewarding experience, but it's also very

different to what many British, American or Australian buyers are used to. Having guided hundreds of clients through it over the years, I can tell you: the best place to begin your journey isn't on the road, it's right at home, in front of your computer. Unless, of course, you're lucky enough to be at the French Property Exhibition (see page 53), where you can meet experienced estate agents, relocation experts and legal advisers face-to-face.

WRITE YOUR WISHLIST

Before you start scrolling through listings, write down your non-negotiables. How many bedrooms do you really need? How much land? Do you want a renovation project, a light refresh, or a turnkey home where you can simply unpack and start living?

Think also about lifestyle preferences: walking distance to village shops, not being on a main road, perhaps space for a pool or guest gîte. The

clearer your priorities, the less likely you'll fall for something impractical.

LOCATION, LOCATION - AND REALISM

France is vast - more than four times the size of England - and its regional variations are dramatic. The coastlines, for instance, are like the 'Tunbridge Wells of France': charming, but expensive.

Decide how far you really need to be from the sea, or from airports and ferry ports if you plan to travel back regularly.

Climate is another major factor. The old rule of thumb - the further south you go, the hotter it gets - is true, but remember, hot summers often come with cold winters. Many expats end up preferring the milder, greener regions of the west and southwest.

And of course, be realistic about your budget. If you're selling a home in the UK or other overseas country, calculate your available equity carefully. If you need a mortgage, check your eligibility before travelling. French banks are cautious with non-resident borrowers, and you'll need a clear financial plan.

FIND YOUR AGENT

If you don't speak French fluently, you could start your search on FrancePropertyShop.com, the English-language portal for properties in France and the sister site to *French Property News*. Any French agency advertising there is used to working with international clients and will guide you through both the property

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On the market



€159,900, Côtes d'Armor, Brittany: Three-bedroom stone cottage with magnificent raised terrace, views, workshop, large basement and land



€131,250, Morbihan, Brittany: Two-bedroom country house with garden, outbuildings and adjoining space to renovate or use as a studio



€395,000, Manche, Normandy: Near Mont St-Michel, large country home with five ensuite bedrooms and four acres of land



€598,500, Haute-Vienne, Nouvelle-Aquitaine: Overlooking the Gartempe valley, renovated eight-bedroom chateau, for sale fully furnished

search and the legal process of buying in France.

A little word of warning: sometimes you're better off with a French agent whose English is a bit rough but whose local and legal knowledge is excellent, rather than some British commercial agent fresh off the ferry. Experience matters - especially when navigating the French property buying process.

PLAN YOUR VIEWING TRIP

When's the best time to come househunting? In truth, there's no bad time but try to avoid mid-December to mid-February (short days, bad weather) and July-August (when owners and agents alike are on holiday).

Limit yourself to no more than four properties a day. After that, everything blurs together. And remember: France is big! What looks like 'just up the road' on a map might be an hour's drive through the countryside.

When you meet your agent, you'll usually sign a *bon de visite*, a standard legal form confirming that you're viewing each property through that agent. It's part of the French legal process and provides insurance cover during the visit, so don't be alarmed when asked.

Take photos, make notes and here's a practical tip: remember each house by something distinctive - an unusual picture, a quirky feature, or even the colour of the shutters. It helps your memory far more than trying to recall the number of bedrooms or which way the kitchen faced.



How many bedrooms do you need?



Limit viewings to four a day - France is big!

“Before you start scrolling through listings, write down your non-negotiables - think too about lifestyle preferences”

MAKE AN OFFER

Once you've found 'the one', check what's actually included in the advertised price. Are the agency fees and notary's fees (roughly 7-8% of the price) included? What about any furniture or fixtures?

Your agent will formalise your offer in writing, which, once accepted and counter-signed by the vendor, forms a binding agreement. This leads to the signing of either a *compromis de vente* or

a *promesse de vente* - the preliminary contract. (The differences between the two forms of the contract could fill another article entirely!)

LEGAL AND PRACTICAL BITS

Before that first contract can be prepared, the seller must provide a set of mandatory diagnostic reports (*Dossier de Diagnostic Technique* or DDT) - energy rating, asbestos, lead, septic system and so on. If they weren't done at the time of listing, this stage can take a week or two.

You'll also be asked for identity documents, birth and marriage certificates and, if applicable, divorce papers. Increasingly, French *notaires* require these to be officially translated by a court-registered translator, so budget an extra €200-€500.

If you're buying from abroad, most agencies and notaries can now handle the signing process electronically or by video conference, using secure codes sent to your phone.

A 10% deposit (or sometimes less) is paid into a holding account - usually with the notary - until completion.

THE WAITING GAME

From accepted offer to final signing, expect three to four months. During this time, the notary conducts legal searches, checks planning permissions and ensures there are no pre-emption rights or unpaid taxes attached to the property. You won't hear much - in France, no news is good news - until about two weeks before completion.

You'll then be asked to transfer the balance of funds and provide proof of home insurance, which is compulsory on the day of signing. If you can't attend in person, you can authorise someone to sign on your behalf via *procuration* (power of attorney).

THE BIG DAY

At the notary's office, you'll need your passport and patience; the contract is long and detailed, but your agent or translator will guide you through it. Once the final page is signed, the keys are yours, the wine is chilled, and the adventure begins.

Note that the *notaire* will automatically register you for local property taxes, so there's no need to rush to the *mairie* (town hall) with paperwork. The first bills will arrive in due course.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Buying in France is rarely a quick process, but it's a secure and transparent one - and with the right preparation and a knowledgeable, bilingual agent at your side, it can be an enjoyable journey from start to finish.

Take your time, plan carefully and don't be afraid to ask questions - France rewards those who do their homework. And when you finally turn the key in that old oak door, you'll know that every step was worth it. ■

Dan Newton is the founder of Agence Newton and host of the YouTube channel 'Dan Newton - The French Estate Agent' agence-newton.com

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€267,750, Dordogne, Nouvelle-Aquitaine: Four-bedroom Perigourdine house, full of character features, with barn and country views



€420,000, Lot, Occitanie: Renovated four-bedroom house with pigeonnier and heated swimming pool on a plot of almost one hectare



Learn more about
the regions of France

frenchentree.com/
french-property

Fairway to heaven

A globally renowned private golf club, timeless new residences and a future Six Senses resort and spa will wow anyone who loves sport and luxury - **Karen Tait** visits Les Bordes Estate in the Loire Valley



There's a reason why the kings of France built their châteaux in the Loire Valley. Centuries after they chose the 'Garden of France' as their escape from the distractions and politics of the French court in the capital, their opulent homes still stand proudly; the region is also known for its quality gastronomy, exceptional wines

and cultural attractions. The tranquil scenery is as appealing today as it was centuries ago, offering a bucolic haven from the stresses of daily life.

France's longest river, the Loire, winds lazily through rolling countryside, verdant vineyards and lush woodlands, and the unspoilt landscape offers one of the best locations in France to enjoy outdoor

pursuits, from cycling to boating and horse-riding. And then there's the golf...

At the heart of the region, tucked away in the beautiful Sologne Forest, Les Bordes Estate is home to one of the world's most acclaimed golf courses, yet most people passing by wouldn't even know it's there. Discreet signs and long driveways lead through

the forest to the clubhouse, set alongside the first and final holes of the Old Course.

The estate started out as a private sanctuary, created in the 1980s by Baron Marcel Bich (co-founder of the world-famous BIC company). He brought in the renowned American golf architect Robert Von Hagge to design a golf course for his and his friends

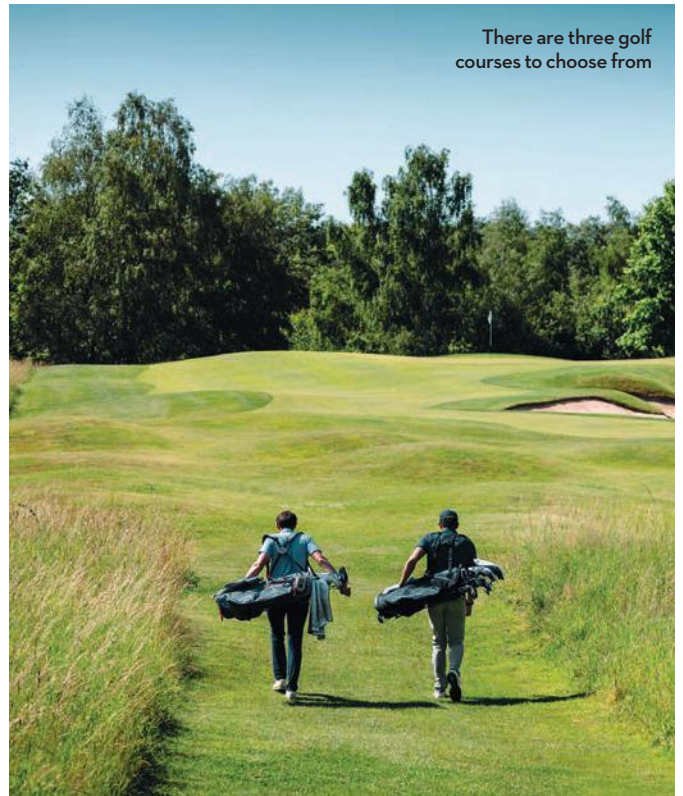


Head to the clubhouse
after a day's golfing



Cour du Baron residences at Les Bordes Estate

There are three golf courses to choose from



“The estate started out as a private sanctuary, created by Baron Marcel Bic”

and family’s personal use, along with the occasional event. Part of the Baron’s vision was to create a demanding course that would challenge professional French players in order for them to compete successfully on the world stage. The estate remained private until the baron’s death in 1994.

It wasn’t until 2018 that Les Bordes Golf Club was formed,

after the estate was acquired by an investment group. As a private club it maintained its air of exclusivity and mystery, with a multinational founder membership group of a little over 100 golfers.

Two further golf courses were added, planned by American course designer Gil Hanse: a championship 18-hole course and a 10-hole

Members can stable their own horses here



Cour du Baron properties are set within a forest environment

Relax by one of the lakes





Cour du Baron residences are modern yet comfortable, with their own pools



The fully furnished Sixth Sense residences will be the height of laidback luxury

par-three course, creating a unique 46-hole golf experience. Consistently ranked as one of Europe's greatest, the Old Course remains the most demanding and the most scenic - every tree-lined turn reveals a new vista and the many lakes, often with island greens, form tricky conundrums for even the most skilled golfers.

The New Course - ranked within the 'Top 100 Courses in the World' by *Golf Magazine* when it opened in 2021 - is heathland-inspired on sandy soils, with wide playing corridors, and firmer and faster playing terrain than its older sibling. The Wild Piglet Course adds an element of fun with bunkers in the middle of greens, multi-tiered surfaces and unusual angles. Rated among the 'Top 25 Short Courses in the World' by *Golf Magazine*, it is ideally suited to juniors or those more experienced golfers looking for a lighter, quicker game.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Keeping the membership relatively small was key to maintaining the estate's privacy, and exclusive yet homely atmosphere. Despite its international acclaim, the course is still only available to members and their guests so it never feels crowded. Members form friendship groups, meeting up at certain times of the year, and there's a relaxed dynamic between staff and members. There's also a sense of community and shared interests.

The clubhouse and restaurant are the ideal places

"The Six Senses hotel, state-of-the-art spa and private homes will usher in a new era for Les Bordes"

to recharge and socialise after a day's golfing. With its soaring timbered ceiling, the bar and lounge area is both sumptuous and welcoming, with a décor that features tactile fabrics and rich colours. Taxidermy heads of stag and wild boar displayed on the walls are a nod to the area's long hunting heritage.

The restaurant has a simple and traditional aesthetic, with a stone fireplace and decorative antique earthenware pots. The menu reflects the ambiance, focusing on seasonal local ingredients, which are elevated with a light touch by the Michelin-experienced chefs.

The clubhouse also has a high-end gym, golf simulator and games room, while outside is one of the only grass driving ranges in France.

Members often visit with their family, not all of whom

may be keen golfers, but that's not a problem as the 1,400-acre estate has plenty more to offer: it's a holistic experience for the whole family. Nature trails meander through the forest - perfect for biking, walking and horse-riding - past lakes where you can enjoy water sports including boating or paddle-boarding. The estate provides for a variety of ball games too from tennis, padel and pickleball to basketball and football, plus there's a fabulous adventure playground for the kids. If you just want to relax and recharge your batteries, you could spoil yourself with an indulgent treatment at the lakeside spa - or head for the estate's naturally filtered swimming lake, complete with its own white-sand beach.

With 13 stables, a variety of well-trained horses,

lessons and guided tours, the equestrian centre has partnered with two-time Olympic gold medallist Scott Brash MBE to bring exclusive events and clinics to the estate, and a unique opportunity to learn from one of the sport's top athletes. Plans for a six-hectare performance centre will see Les Bordes become one of Europe's premier equestrian centres, catering to riders of all levels. At its heart will be a clubhouse with restaurant, lounge, rooftop bar, performance gym and rider treatment rooms, alongside cutting-edge facilities for the horses.

Building on its connection with local heritage and culture, Les Bordes also has ambitious plans for its collection of ancient lakeside buildings, including the former 12th-century priory. Le Village will become a thriving social hub for the estate, with a bakery, café and farmers' market.

HOME FROM HOME

Members, who hail from around the globe, can stay in one of the guest cottages, but a new development launched in 2018 added branded residences to the estate, for sale to members and non-members.

Just a stone's throw from the Old Course, Cours du Baron is a collection of three- to seven-bedroom villas, designed by the renowned Soho Farmhouse architects, Michaelis Boyd. Blending traditional Loire Valley architecture with modern comforts, the properties are ideal for families. Set within a natural and safe forest environment, they

Le Village comprises several ancient buildings



each have their own pool and landscaped gardens, while the airy open-plan living areas feature natural materials such as limestone flooring and exposed oak beams set in vaulted ceilings. Newly built luxury homes are a rarity in the Loire Valley where historic castles, manor houses and large estates are more the norm.

The last remaining villas in Phase 1 are ready to move into, with four- to six-bedroom villas priced from €1,903,000. They will be fully managed by Les Bordes Estate, providing hassle-free ownership alongside residence services and an option for managed rentals. Many of the owners are members of the golf club, creating a like-minded community, and owners can stable their own horses at the equestrian centre.

For those seeking more privacy and individuality, a limited selection of estate lots are available (ranging from 4,000m² to 100,000m²), presenting an opportunity to create a bespoke residence in some of the estate's most privileged positions. Some offer direct access to the Old Course, others are close to the clubhouse or Le Village, while some enjoy a more secluded location on the edge of the forest and, it goes without saying, they all offer exceptional views of the course or natural landscape.

SIXTH SENSE

Now Les Bordes is set to welcome a new global player to the estate. With some of the world's finest resorts, five-star hotels and spas, the Six Senses brand has been built on a commitment to luxury and wellbeing combined with sustainability. From 2027, its portfolio will include a development right at the heart of the Sologne Forest, on Les Bordes Estate.

Six Senses Loire Valley will feature a 50-key hotel (including guest suites in the main building and in lodges), a vast (1,672m²) spa, and several restaurants/bars. At the heart of the development will be the estate's stunning 19th-century château, which will be transformed into a fine dining



The estate's 19th-century château will become a sumptuous hotel and bar

venue and Speakeasy bar, with several grand suites.

Set around the hotel and château will be 52 fully serviced private homes, on large plots with south-facing gardens and heated pools. Fully furnished and equipped, the properties will feature interiors inspired by the unique colour palette and diverse flora and fauna of the Sologne Forest. The three- to seven-bedroom villas will be available from €2.99m (completion due 2027).

Owners will have access to all the hotel and spa facilities and other amenities on the estate, and a dedicated Six Senses

Hotel team will be available 24 hours a day to ensure each home is meticulously serviced and maintained. Owners may also have the opportunity to place their homes in a hotel-run rental programme.

IN THE AREA

The Sologne Forest forms part of the Unesco-listed Loire Valley - recognised for its natural beauty, heritage and biodiversity. Covering nearly 500,000 hectares, the forest's oak, pine and chestnut trees provide a haven for deer, wild boar, roe deer, pheasants and ducks. Once home to the

Gauls, Romans and Franks, the Sologne later became a royal hunting ground in the Middle Ages - a legacy that is still felt in its quiet grandeur and untamed character.

But, of course, the Loire Valley is best known for its châteaux - more than 300 of them - including Chambord, just 20 minutes from Les Bordes estate, Chenonceau and Villandry. Most local towns have a château - including Blois and Ambois - and are celebrated in their own right, with historic centres, fine architecture, museums and art galleries, as well as having a wide range of amenities.

The region is renowned for its gastronomy, from hearty local fare to over 20 Michelin-starred restaurants, alongside Loire Valley wines that include Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé and Vouvray. There are 800km of wine routes to explore, plus thousands of kilometres of walking and cycling trails (including La Loire à Vélo), not to mention the Loire River on which you can enjoy boat trips and canoeing.

Despite the secluded natural setting, Les Bordes is remarkably well connected. It's a mere 90 minutes from Paris by road or rail. International flights are available via airports at Paris and Tours, as well as private airports. ■

To find out more about Les Bordes Estate, visit lesbordesestate.com

Members can explore nearby cycling trails



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A picturesque barn may seem ripe for conversion but do local planning rules allow for change of use?

Due diligence

Stripping a property back to the facts, and having a clear vision of what those facts could become, are the key to a successful purchase, says planning expert **Tom Easdown**

For many overseas buyers, purchasing a home in France begins with a vision - drinks on a sunny terrace, stone walls steeped in history, or the romance of transforming a rural farmhouse into a family retreat. Yet between dream and reality lies a vital, often overlooked process: due diligence.

In nearly every property purchase in the world the principle of 'caveat emptor' (buyer beware) exists - that it is the buyer's responsibility to determine if the property is fit for their purpose.

In the UK, US and many other countries, whole industries exist to protect the purchaser through legal assistance (real estate solicitors or attorneys) and professional assessments (building inspectors and surveyors). In France, however, the emphasis remains on the individual buyer to determine whether

a property is truly the right one for them.

BUYING WELL

The key to buying well in France lies in combining rigorous investigation with creative foresight, combining due diligence with visioning

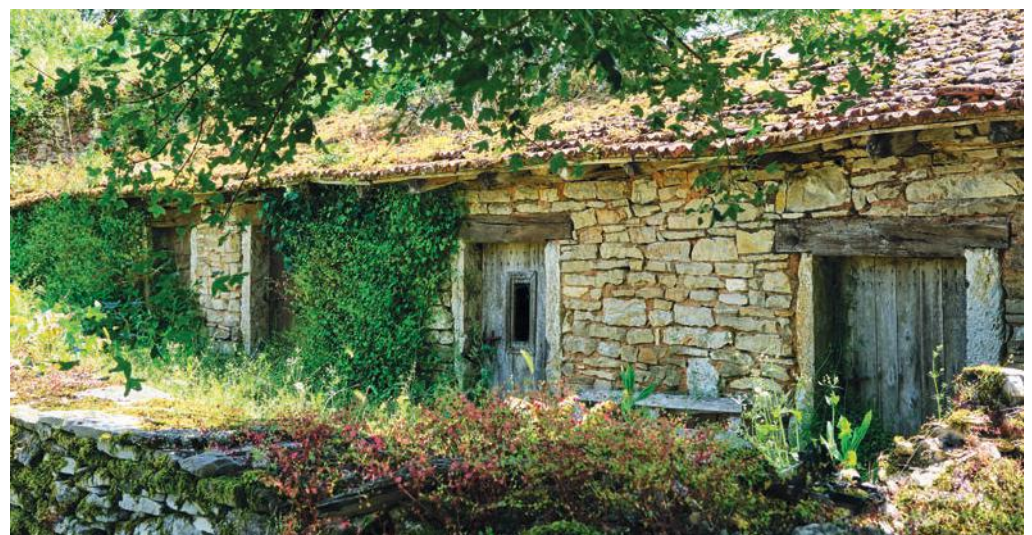
to see the reality of a property today and the possibilities it holds for the future.

Buying property in France is highly regulated and one of the safest transaction processes in the world but that doesn't mean it isn't without its quirks. For many international buyers,

getting a building survey is the norm but in France that isn't the case and, in fact, is a relatively underused service.

What is provided within the sales process is a set of diagnostic reports, which highlight issues associated with thermal performance, electrical system compliance, drainage system compliance, flood risk, subsidence risk, the presence of lead, asbestos and insects, and also gas installations if applicable.

While these reports are useful, they rarely paint the whole picture. For example, a subsidence report may indicate a risk but not whether the property has been affected. A termite report may confirm



The key to a successful purchase lies in combining due diligence with vision

pests but not whether the structure has been damaged. Commissioning a survey, especially if the building is old or you have significant plans for it, can provide peace of mind and allow you to limit the potential surprises that could affect budgets and timelines.

ZONE IN

Alongside understanding the physical condition of the property, it is also important to understand the planning and legal position. The *notaire*, during the period between signing of the *compromis de vente* and the signing of the *acte de vente*, will ensure that the property title is clear and if there are any issues of rights of way, servitude or charges on the property.

What often gets overlooked, however, is the property's planning zoning and any future development plans nearby. Once again, it is the purchaser's responsibility to ensure the planning zoning allows for their development plans and to identify and consider any proposed developments in the area.

A picturesque barn may seem ripe for conversion but if local planning rules prohibit the change of use, the dream can quickly collapse. It is also important to understand if the property is close to a historic monument or is itself protected as this can affect what future development is possible.

Financial due diligence should also not be overlooked. Renovation costs in France vary widely, and buyers often underestimate the scale of investment required to bring older properties up to modern standards. Only recently we did some work on a small chateau where the costs of improving the thermal performance was more than €200,000; fortunately, our clients had engaged us to undertake pre-purchase reviews and this figure was in the budget, but if it had come as a surprise it could have led to difficult decisions and compromise.

BARE TRUTHS

In essence, due diligence is about stripping away



It is the buyer's responsibility to determine the scope of planning zoning

“Buying property in France is often described as a dream, but in truth it is a decision that demands both head and heart”

the layers of romance and marketing to reveal the bare truth of a property. Done well, it empowers buyers to make informed decisions, avoid any unpleasant surprises and, ultimately, approach their French property journey with confidence.

If due diligence strips a property back to the facts, visioning is about imagining what those facts could become. It means looking past the peeling wallpaper, hay-filled barn or outdated layouts and recognising the potential hidden in a building's bones.

French property offers so much opportunity and potential but the imagination to see what a property could become must remain grounded in reality: the reality of a purchaser's budget, the reality of planning regulation and the structural reality of the building. In the end visioning is not about indulging a fantasy but about unlocking an opportunity; when it is combined and

interlinked with rigorous due diligence, it allows buyers to see a neglected property not for its flaws but for the real home it could one day become.

Turning due diligence and visioning into action requires structure. The most successful buyers in France follow a clear process, supported by the right team.

- **Assemble your team early:** Estate agents are helpful for finding properties but their role is to sell. Independent professionals, such as architects, surveyors or renovation consultants, give unbiased insight. Legal help in your own language can also be a helpful service to investigate.
- **Go beyond the legally required diagnostic report:** A full structural survey and renovation cost estimate provide facts that enable confident decisions.
- **Investigate planning and permissions:** Visit the local *mairie* (or appoint someone to do it for you) to confirm

the property's zoning and if there are due to be any changes. Ask about recent planning approvals near to the property. Ensure that your vision is feasible in regulatory terms.

- **Build a realistic budget:** Work through your vision to build a realistic plan for the property, combine this with the information gathered in the survey to develop a budget that includes professional fees and a contingency. Trimming a budget before work commences is a lot easier than trying to do it halfway through because an unknown or unforeseen issue arises.
- **Take your time:** French property purchases can feel slow compared to other countries, but this pace is an advantage. Use it to gather information, ask the right questions and refine your vision.

THE RIGHT BALANCE

Buying property in France is often described as a dream, but in truth it is a decision that demands both head and heart. It comes down to balance, focusing only on the technical risks overlooking the opportunities; relying solely on the romance can lead to disappointment.

The right due diligence equips the buyer with clarity; merging this with the right vision allows for the dream of a barn conversion or a stylish pied-a-terre to become a reality. One without the other leaves the buyer feeling exposed: facts without imagination can feel limiting, but imagination without facts can be ruinous.

For buyers willing to pair rigour with imagination, France offers something rare: the chance to not only acquire stones and mortar but to create a life within them that reflects both ambition and authenticity. ■

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The Canal du Midi where it passes by Homps in Aude



Canal of dreams



The Canal du Midi flows through some beautiful locations - **Carolyn Reynier** explores three tempting places to buy along its route: Revel, Olonzac and Agde

For leisurely househunting *par excellence*, we're meandering in an easterly direction through the Occitanie region along one of the oldest operating canals in Europe. The Canal du Midi was the realisation of an ancient dream - to connect the Atlantic with the Mediterranean. The Unesco-listed 240km-long canal, engineered by Pierre-Paul Riquet for Louis XIV, flows south of the Parc Naturel Régional du Haut-Languedoc through Haute-Garonne, Aude, Hérault (and Tarn for its Montagne Noire water supply

system). It starts at Toulouse and finishes at Agde, the Étang de Thau and the Golfe du Lion.

Our first stop will be north of the canal in the *bastide* of Revel-St-Férreol in Haute-Garonne, bordering Tarn and Aude, near the Montagne Noir. Revel is a *Plus Beaux Détours de France* and a *Station Verte*, and has a popular Saturday market in its 700-year-old *Halle*. Riquet's 67-hectare wood-surrounded reservoir lake at St-Ferréol feeds the canal and is perfect for walking, bathing, fishing and nautical activities.

We'll then glide on into Hérault to either moor at

Olonzac, the Minervois capital, or at nearby Homps in Aude with its port and 110-hectare Jouarres Lake, surrounded by pine trees and hills.

At the crossroads of marine and fresh water, we'll reach our final port of call - Agde, Le Cap d'Agde, Le Grau d'Agde and La Tamarissière at the mouth of the Hérault - four different river and seafront locations: sandy beaches, nautical activities, vineyards and volcanic cliffs.

REVEL-ST-FÉRREOL

Revel (population circa 10,000) has lots of greenery and cycle paths. The main square and

church lies within what is called *le tour de ville*, the boulevards that encircle the historic centre. Jean-Pierre Desplats of Agence SAS Desplats Immobilier explains that town centre streets are some distance apart but linked by several old stone or half-timbered buildings and courtyards.

"Investors have renovated these buildings to provide apartments. When the renovation is well done - not always the case - they produce good returns," he says. If you want to buy an apartment, you'll pay around €2,000/m².

There are still some fine undivided town-centre houses with gardens. He's currently marketing an old 300m² *maison de caractère* next to the main square for €490,000.

The other side of the *tour de ville* you'll find 1960s single-storey houses. "It's mainly retirees who buy these properties, which are around 100m² with gardens up to 1,000m² with hedges offering some privacy," he continues. Folk buy them for €180,000-€200,000, renovate them to their taste and can live close to the town centre.

For a more recent property with more land and no or little work required, you'll pay €250,000-€300,000 and be a kilometre or so from the centre. Jean-Pierre says Sorèze, east of Revel, is second choice for buyers who can't find what they want in Revel. You have similar but fewer shops and you're only six kilometres away from Revel.

You'll also find old properties divided into apartments and more recent villas in housing

On the market



€260,000, Revel: Close to the town centre, this character house in enclosed grounds has three first-floor bedrooms, a ground-floor bedroom and a garage (SAS Desplats Immobilier)



€498,000, Revel: Set in grounds of 1,700m², this five-bedroom property has three ground-floor bedrooms and offices rented out at €1,200/month (SAS Desplats Immobilier)



€260,000, Sorèze: Just east of Revel in Tarn, this single-storey villa has four bedrooms, a garage and a covered pool in grounds of 1,500m² (SAS Desplats Immobilier)



€375,000, Labécède-Lauragais: The gateway of this three-bed house is from the 17th-century *château*; it has a large outbuilding and 900m² land (SAS Desplats Immobilier)

estates on the village outskirts. Prices are around €1,800/m².

Up until the 1960s, St-Ferréol mainly consisted of holiday homes. Once the motorway to the sea was built - the A61 Autoroute des Deux Mers - these were transformed into main residences. "Apart from restaurants, there's not much else at St-Ferréol, so you have to drive the 3km into Revel for shopping. But it's the setting that attracts buyers and prices are similar to those of property in Revel," Jean-Pierre says.

You're also at the crossroads of three departments as the Ferréol Lake straddles Haute-Garonne, Aude and Tarn.

In surrounding villages, narrow stone terraced houses have one or two bedrooms on the first floor and often the same above. Jean-Pierre is selling one with a roof terrace in Durfort southeast of Revel. "The sale price is €88,000 so it'll be negotiated between €60,000 and €80,000. *C'est des petits prix.*"

Prospective buyers expect some outside space. He warns against fully renovating a property bought for less than €200,000 that doesn't have any, because you'll still only sell it for under €200,000. "You'll make zero profit."

Attractions in these parts are many. Jean-Pierre tells me about a client in Sorèze who offered meals, B&B, gîtes and long-term let apartments in an old mill. When she decided to sell, he imagined her turnover was made in July and August. "Not at all," she replied. "People come to us to visit Carcassonne, Albi, Toulouse. We're right in the middle of all

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Revel is a 14th-century bastide in Haute-Garonne; many of the old properties are divided up into apartments

these centres of interest that's why we work 10 months of the year" - "I was the first to be surprised," admits Jean-Pierre.

If you're interested in a tourist-based accommodation business, you can find stone farmsteads with 5,000 hectares or more and 400m²-500m² of buildings for conversion to *chambres d'hôte* and gîtes.

OLONZAC

With a population of 1,600 souls, Olonzac in Hérault has as many second homes as main ones, according to William Giacone of 11-34 Immobilier. In the village centre most houses are terraced stone buildings with a small exterior - a little rear courtyard and/or roof

terrace. You'll pay €80,000-€120,000 for one requiring no work. Houses with gardens are outside the town centre. "Olonzac's great attraction is that although it's a village it operates as a dynamic town for all the surrounding villages," explains William.

"In bygone days, Olonzac had an MP, and important winemaking families lived here so we're lucky to have some fine old terraced stone mansions - *maisons de maître* - in the commune with 100m² of living space and rear gardens," he continues. Prices are €300,000-€500,000. You can still find some for renovation. Others have been converted into long-term let apartments.

Generally, it's small village houses that are available here with few apartments. There are also some residential quarters with 1970s housing and more recent detached homes (€180,000-€250,000).

At nearby Homps in Aude, with its port and small restaurants, there are also as many main homes as holiday ones, thanks to the canal and Lac de Jouarres. You'll find village houses and *maisons de maître* owned by rich families and wealthy winemakers who used the canal to transport their wine in days of yore. Prices are generally similar to Olonzac. Homps is also a dynamic sector and William says that following the Covid price hike, prices are now "more normal" in both sectors.

There are many old stone countryside properties too - some isolated, others with gardens in attractive historic villages - as well as some wine

"St-Ferréol is at the crossroads of three departments - Haute-Garonne, Aude and Tarn"

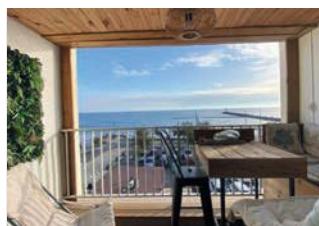
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€714,000, Cap d'Agde: In the Maraval area, this villa has three bedrooms - two on the ground floor - a heated pool, summer kitchen, basement and solar panels (Inter-Med-Immo34)



€459,000, Cap d'Agde: Overlooking the port is this top-floor two-bedroom duplex, with southeast-facing terrace, private parking and storeroom (Inter-Med-Immo34)



€220,000, Le Grau d'Agde: With views over the sea and the mouth of the Hérault, this third-floor one-bedroom apartment has private parking and a storeroom (Inter-Med-Immo34)



€156,000, Olonzac: Two properties joined offering four bedrooms, a terrace and original features: 'tomette' floor tiles, fireplace, beams and exposed stonework (11-34 Immobilier)

The mouth of the River Hérault at Le Grau d'Agde



domains either still in activity or not. This is a region of vines and olives. If your property comes with an olive grove, there are cooperatives at Bize-Minervois and Roubia. "People moving to the south of France expect outside space with their property so houses without are difficult to sell," says William. Prices are not dissimilar to those in Olonzac. So there's plenty of choice for lovers of old stone (*les amateurs de vieilles pierres*) and modern residential areas for those of you who aren't. Shops are scarce in these country villages, so you drive to Olonzac. And you're virtually equidistant from the historic towns of Béziers, Narbonne and Carcassonne.

The sea is 45 minutes away and what with the Canal du Midi, the Corbières, the Minervois and the Montagne Noire, there's plenty to do. William arrived here from central France in 2004. "It's my personal opinion that

it's a good place to live, we have a very good quality of life, property prices remain reasonable. And we don't have mass tourism either."

AGDE AGGLOMERATION

And so we gently navigate on to Agde. "The agglomeration of Agde, Le Cap d'Agde, Le Grau d'Agde and La Tamarissière has an annual population of around 30,000, which rises to 250,000 during the summer," says Patrick Roussillon of Agence Inter-Med-Immo34.

"Agde - the name is of Greek origin - was once known as the 'Black Pearl of the Mediterranean' because pirates came into the port and up the Hérault to barter their booty," he explains. There are fine apartments in old houses in the historic centre built of the local black basalt Agde stone. The St-Étienne cathedral is built in the same stone, which comes from the extinct Mont St-Loup volcano.

"The charming authentic small lanes make parking a problem, however, the *mairie* is working on a redevelopment project to provide underground parking," he adds. Apartment prices remain very affordable - €40,000-€90,000.

On quaysides and riverbanks, the restaurants have floating terraces. If you prefer a house, have a look on the opposite riverbank leading to La Tamarissière. There's a small area here where you can find character stone houses, some terraced, with attractive gardens, pools and a sea view. Prices start at about €400,000.

In the 1970s, they pulled up vines to create the Cap d'Agde resort on the coast. Residential apartment buildings here start from €70,000 for a studio with a glimpse of the sea. There are also two sectors with beautiful houses and sea views priced from €500,000 to €1m-plus - Le Mont St-Martin and La Pinède (next to the popular

naturist quarter). Mariners can buy moorings with a house attached in one of two island marinas - from €300,000 for the older one and €700,000 for the other.

In the fishing port of Le Grau d'Agde, to the west and opposite La Tamarissière, colourful fishermen's cottages are painted in different shades. This is a small, popular and pricey residential sector - minimum €300,000 for a 70m² house and €200,000 for a one-bedroom seaview apartment. "We have a market to suit all pockets," says Patrick, from the Agde town centre *pied-à-terre* at €50,000 to the fine villa with sea view at €2m. ■

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minervois-caroux.com
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3 REASONS TO BUY HERE

Lovely landscapes and historic towns and villages along and near the Canal du Midi in Haute-Garonne, Aude and Hérault

Choice of town-centre and seafront apartments, stone 'maisons de maître' and farmsteads, fishermen's cottages and village houses

Good motorway access and airports at Toulouse, Carcassonne, Béziers and Montpellier

On the market

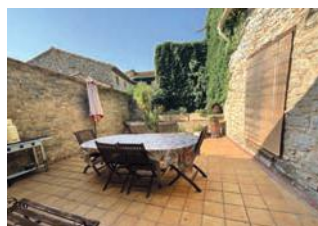
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€572,000, Tourouzelle: Located near Homps, this old stone village-centre villa has four bedrooms and a swimming pool, all set in enclosed grounds (11-34 Immobilier)



€435,000, Olonzac: On the Canal du Midi is this large stone property with five bedrooms; it has an independent studio and bedroom, terraces, pool, garage and workshop (11-34 Immobilier)



€179,000, Cesseroas: This three-bedroom stone property in Minervois village has original features, terrace, courtyard, garage and outbuilding for renovation (11-34 Immobilier)



€413,000, Agde: Situated in Capiscol, close to shops, is this modern villa with ground-floor master bedroom, two upper-floor bedrooms, terrace with pergola and garage (Inter-Med-Immo34)



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In an era where remote working is increasingly normalised, thousands of international professionals are eyeing France as a base for remote work. But there's a catch: if you're entering on a long-stay visitor visa (VLS-TS *Visiteur*) and continuing your overseas job from a sun-drenched balcony in Provence, you may inadvertently be stepping into murky legal waters.

This growing dilemma exposes a conflict between immigration permissions and tax/social security obligations, often resulting in contradictory advice and the possibility of unwelcome surprises.

TWO SYSTEMS, TWO QUESTIONS

The root of the problem is simple: two different French authorities are answering two entirely different questions.

- The French consulate (or the visa platform, France-Visas) is focused on immigration: "Can we issue this visa?"
- The tax authorities (DGFiP) and social contributions agency (URSSAF) ask: "If someone is physically working in France, who is entitled to taxes and social charges?"

You might be told at your visa appointment: "As long as you're not working with French clients, it's fine." But that informal assurance does not carry legal weight with DGFiP



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Stand 29

The visa myth

Working remotely in France under the French visitor status could land you in deep water, says **Fabien Pelissier**

or URSSAF, nor does it override the written commitment made during your visa application: that you will carry out no professional activity in France.

The result? A visitor visa may be granted for someone earning income from remote work abroad, but that doesn't

make the tax and social situation compliant.

WHAT THE VISA REALLY SAYS

The French VLS-TS '*Visiteur*' is designed for people not engaging in professional activity on French soil.

Applicants must show they have independent means to support themselves, typically through pensions, savings or passive income. Employment income, even from abroad, is a grey area; although you will probably get your visitor visa, that remote income would then be flying under the radar and without any guarantees regarding its tax and social contribution compliance.

Crucially, the visa approval process is not designed to assess tax residency, employer obligations or contribution liability. It's solely about whether the applicant ticks the boxes for an entry stamp.

So yes, you may get a visitor visa even if you're planning to keep working for your foreign employer. But once you're physically in France and working remotely, a whole new legal regime applies.

For French tax and social bodies, work done from French soil is work in France - full stop. Let's break it down:

- **SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS (URSSAF):** Even if your



Individuals carrying out professional work on French soil are liable to pay income tax in France, even on a visitor visa

employer is based in the UK, US or Canada, for example, if you are physically working in France, they may be required to register and pay French social contributions. URSSAF operates a dedicated pathway called '*firμες étrangères sans établissement en France*' for foreign companies employing remote workers in France. That mechanism exists precisely because France treats any remote work carried out from its territory as local employment.

If the employer fails to register via URSSAF's *firμες étrangères* channel, they remain the primary party responsible. However, if no employer compliance is established, the worker may, in practice, choose to affiliate as self-employed to regularise their contributions, though this is not the default legal mechanism, and reclassification as self-employed is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

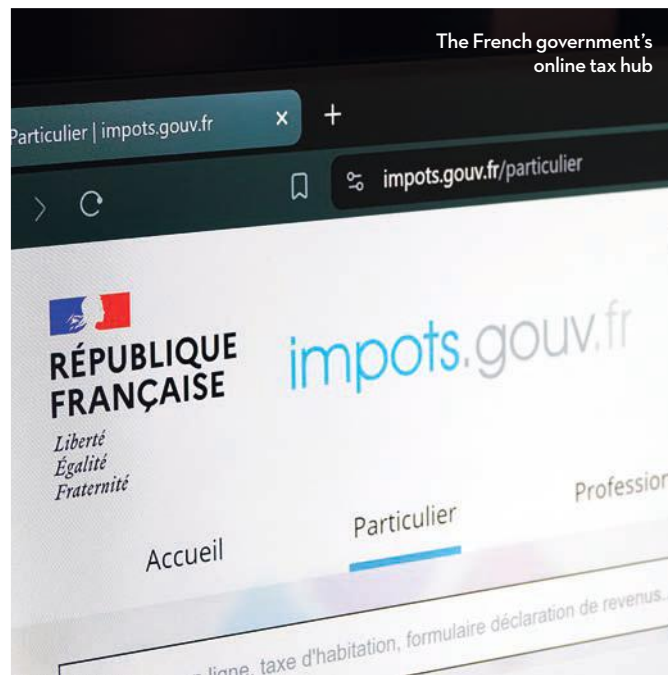
An exception exists for posted workers (within the EU/EEA/UK/CH) under the A1 certificate scheme. But outside that framework, there is no automatic social security exemption.

- **INCOME TAX (DGFIP):** As for taxes, income that is earned for work carried out in France is in principle taxable in France, even if the client or employer is abroad. Double taxation treaties may offer relief, but conditions apply so a consultation with a tax lawyer is always advised.

WHY THE MIXED MESSAGES?

People often encounter wildly different responses depending on who they ask. That's because consular staff answer immigration questions, and may take a light-touch view for simplicity's sake. Tax and social security officials, by contrast, apply stricter criteria based on where the work is actually being performed.

The consulate may look the other way. But URSSAF and DGFIP don't. And no, a consulate's informal



“It’s essential to choose a visa or residence status that reflects your actual economic activity”

reassurance is not legally binding over other authorities.

RISKS OF LOOKING THE OTHER WAY

Many digital nomads or ‘slowmads’ assume that keeping their income overseas keeps them safe. In reality, the risks can be serious:

- Retroactive URSSAF assessments, if you are deemed to have been employed or self-employed in France.
- Employer obligations to register and pay French contributions.
- Income tax liability on income tied to days worked from France.
- Visa renewal complications, especially if authorities suspect undeclared work.
- In extreme cases, administrative sanctions or removal orders if immigration fraud is alleged to have occurred.

While enforcement may not be aggressive for short stays, longer-term stays increase your visibility and exposure, especially if you’re building a life in France and are considering being a ‘remote worker’ for decades.

WHAT STATUS FOR REMOTE WORKERS?

If you’re planning to live in France while working remotely, even if your employer or clients are based abroad, it’s essential to choose a visa or residence status that reflects your actual economic activity. This ensures that you have legal work status, proper tax alignment, and valid access to health coverage. The options include:

- **Salaried route** (e.g. a formal cross-border telework agreement or secondment) with a valid A1 certificate: Within the EU/EEA/UK/Switzerland, an A1 form may allow you to remain under your home country’s social security for a limited period.
- **Bilateral agreements:** If you’re from a country that has a bilateral social security agreement with France (e.g. US, Canada, Japan), and formal detachment conditions are met, you may be able to stay under your home-country coverage for a limited time. Check current eligibility and documentation via cleiss.fr.
- **‘Profession libérale/entrepreneur’ status:** This

self-employed category allows you to work legally as a freelancer or business owner in France.

- **Talent permit:** For qualified professionals, entrepreneurs or employees of foreign companies with a long-term work and residency plan in France.

These routes provide a legal framework to allow you to work from France while remaining compliant with French tax and social security obligations – especially if your remote work is ongoing rather than temporary.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Some newcomers assume this is a recent crackdown. In fact, nothing in the law has really changed. What has changed though is the volume of remote workers and digital nomads trying to blend their lifestyle with career, and the resulting scrutiny.

French tax and social security rules are territorial: they care about where the work is physically performed, not where the company is based. And with France now being a top destination for remote workers, the spotlight has become even brighter.

It’s technically possible to live in France on a visitor visa and work remotely for a foreign company, but you are very likely out of compliance with tax and social rules. Whether enforcement is lax or strict depends on many factors, but the legal risk remains.

If you’re planning to work while enjoying life in France, the wise course is to speak with a qualified immigration and tax advisor and choose the right visa category for your individual situation.

At the end of the day, France’s main priority is to ensure that taxes and social contributions are paid in France if you live on and work from French soil, and in most cases, there is a compliant path that allows you to do that. ■

Fabien Pelissier runs Fab Expat and Fab French Insurance – visit the website for free monthly webinars or to book a consultation call fabexpat.com



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Northern bounty

Sarah Daly explores two neighbouring towns in the beautiful area of Pas-de-Calais she calls home: Montreuil-sur-Mer and Hesdin-la-Forêt

In 2018, I moved with my family to a small village just outside Montreuil-sur-Mer in the Pas-de-Calais and completely fell in love with this area. It has been variously occupied by Viking, English, Spanish, Flemish and German forces in the past - with Kent only about 50 miles away - and yet it is completely and unequivocally French. The architecture, food and lifestyle here are distinctive and very distinct from its island neighbour across the Channel.

Montreuil-sur-Mer is about eight miles inland from the Opal Coast and Hesdin-la-Forêt is the principal town in the area known as Les Sept Vallées, holding the rivers that flow into the Channel here. Each town has its own character but this area, part of the Ch'ti (local dialect), is renowned for the warmth and humour of its people. It's something I can attest to, as we've been fully embraced by our community. I was gifted five trout caught by a neighbour recently, along with some delicious fish *rillettes*, and there is a regular exchange of seedlings, garden produce and recipes along our road.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Montreuil's position close to the coast and on the River

Canche explains its former strategic importance: there was a Viking-era port nearby called Quentovic and the town, which sits on a promontory, was fortified with medieval

ramparts that still enclose it today.

Vauban was instrumental in developing the impressive citadel and reinforcing the town's defences. Today the



The historic centre of Hesdin-la-Forêt, just an hour's drive from Calais

On the market



€229,000, Chériennes: This renovated single-storey country house has a pretty garden, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, sitting room and office both with a log burner, a conservatory and loft (laforet.com/hesdin)



€159,000, Hesdin-la-Forêt: With two-bedrooms downstairs and one upstairs, this detached home also has a large attic, a basement, generous garden and is close to local amenities (laforet.com/hesdin)

Left: Beautiful Montreuil-sur-Mer is surrounded by countryside

town is lively, prosperous and culturally rich, but it was the inspiration for *Les Misérables*, after Victor Hugo spent time here in the early 1800s. It's a fact that's still celebrated every summer with a sound and light show involving the local community. Now the town prides itself on its ecotourism credentials: it's accessible by train, bike and bus, with waymarked cycle routes and footpaths locally.

On an average Thursday morning in Hesdin-la-Forêt, the town is bustling with activity. The market is in full swing with some stalls selling an array of cheese, meat or fish, some offering a kaleidoscope of seasonal vegetables and others concentrating on smoked garlic or a dazzling array of bread. If you wanted the inspiration to cook wonderful French dishes at home, this is the place to find it.

This town too boasts plenty of history. One of the most fascinating buildings was lived in by Abbé Prévost, 18th-century author of *Manon Lescaut*. His former home is now a bookshop, with a secondhand section that sometimes includes English-language books - something I treasure whenever I find them. It is also home to a pottery and creative workshops that bring the community together in their artistic endeavours.

CREATING A HOME

Canadian Andrea Harding and her British husband James live in East Sussex and have had a



€229,000, Créquy: Set in a garden of around 1,000m², this four-bedroom property has been renovated and has a large light living room with a pellet burner, and space for an extra bathroom (laforet.com/hesdin)



Pretty Montreuil was the headquarters of the British Army during WW1



Montreuil-sur-Mer



The ramparts at Montreuil are perfect for enjoying a picnic

second home in Montreuil since 2017, which they have almost finished renovating. “When we started househunting we were considering the Alps, but didn’t want a project so far from home and we realised we just wouldn’t visit as often,” Andrea says. “We travel here most months with our two dogs, Bingley and Buck. We love being so close to the Tunnel – it’s just three and a half hours door to door. Our adult children live in East Sussex and Surrey, which is very convenient.

“I did a lot of research before we chose Montreuil, which was a standout from the beginning. I wanted somewhere vibrant and interesting all year round and discovered that Montreuil was a gastronomic destination as well as being the British headquarters in the First World War. I also feel an affinity for this coast as so many young Canadian men landed here

“It’s a beautiful town, with ramparts and stunning scenery”

and fought for the Allies in World War Two.

“This is a beautiful town, surrounded by ramparts and with stunning scenery in every direction. The people are warm and welcoming.

We are especially lucky with our neighbours, the delicious restaurants with their magnificent staff in town and our group of friends. There are so many things to do but my firm favourites are

walks on the beach; strolling around the ramparts; prowling around *brocantes*; having an *apéro* in our courtyard; and informal, spontaneous picnics at our friends’ allotment in the summer sunshine.

“If you move here,” Andrea advises, “find friends straightway. Be proactive on social media or talk to people in cafés who are speaking English. It’s a boon to have a gang. We all look out for each other and together have more confidence to get involved with local activities and events.

“I’m also delighted that we were able to host a family of Ukrainian women and children when the war broke out. They arrived in March 2022 and stayed for 14 months and we’re still firm friends now they’ve moved up the coast to Calais.”

Jonathan Morris is director of Laforêt Hesdin estate agency. He says: “This region has a ▶



Andrea (in black holding a glass) outside her house with friends, July 2025

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON [FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM](https://francepropertyshop.com) & [FRENCHENTREE.COM](https://frenchentree.com)



€557,500, Montreuil: This town-centre 1930s house boasts four bedrooms, two reception rooms, three bathrooms and tasteful decor throughout; it has a pretty private garden and a vaulted cellar (century21.fr)



€231,000, Neuville-sous-Montreuil: Blending tradition with modern comfort, this light-filled, character home is only a few minutes from Montreuil and has three bedrooms, parking and a garden with views (century21.fr)



€295,000, Ecuire: A renovated four-bedroom bungalow less than a mile from Montreuil’s centre, with gardens of 1,000m², a parking area and an open-plan living area with a log-burner (century21.fr)



€367,500, Alette: With four bedrooms and an office, this country home includes a separate two-bedroom annexe for guests or with rental potential; it’s close to amenities, with grounds of over 1,400m² (century21.fr)

LOCATION



Recently restored, this street is one of Montreuil's historic gems

significant British community, and there's still steady interest in buying main residences and second homes here.

"The appeal of the area, for me and for many British buyers, is that we're an hour's drive or less from Calais, making it easy to travel from the UK. The beaches are 30 minutes away and we have beautiful countryside, with stunning landscapes and charming rivers."

EXPERT ANALYSIS

If you want to buy a three-bedroom family home in good condition in the Hesdin-La-Forêt area, prices are typically around €160,000 to €170,000, Jonathan tells me.

"English-speaking buyers tend to look for character properties, often *fermettes*, with exposed beams and traditional charm, or for single-storey houses with a bit of land. The property market has remained active and,

while there are currently fewer British buyers than before, the French market is strong, which keeps things balanced.

"It's important to double-check what you're buying: unlike in the UK, there are no chartered surveyors here, so essentially very few guarantees. Take the time to carefully inspect the property before committing yourself, work with a professional estate agent and you shouldn't encounter any problems."

Aurore Kawaler is manager at Century 21 estate agency in Montreuil. She says: "For me, the best thing about living here is the feeling that time has stood still. With picturesque cobbled streets, homes full of character and pretty squares filled with flowers, the town breathes history from every

street corner and I think this is what attracts people. We tend to find that foreign buyers are looking for authenticity and heritage, property to renovate and a more rural lifestyle.

"For a three-bedroom family home in and around Montreuil you can expect to pay between €180,000 and €400,000 depending on where it is, its condition and the quality of the property itself. The most popular areas are Ville Basse, close to bus and train services, or the communities and villages neighbouring the town."

PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Aurore echoes Jonathan's advice to buyers and adds: "As well as understanding the area, get familiar with practical aspects of purchasing a property and the admin involved in establishing yourself as part of the community. If you can, visit in summer and winter to understand the pace of life in each season."

Northern France is better known for its beer production than for its wines, although this coast is now home to vineyards and wine producers, but Le Perlé is produced in a small valley between the two towns. Fermenting redcurrants, raspberries or cherries instead

of grapes, the Delobel Brothers have created subtle and delicate sparkling fruit wines that can be tasted on site, as well as a very refreshing non-alcoholic drink made from ash leaves, called *La Frenette*.

Mead, too, is created locally, at Histoire d'Abeilles, where everything bee-related is celebrated. You can watch the insects at work and stroll through beautiful, blossom-filled gardens. L'Encas Échoppe garden and café near Hesdin is owned by a Franco-British couple. Tucked away on an ordinary residential street, the entrance opens up onto a gloriously nature-filled garden.

The nearby Forêt d'Hesdin covers around 2,500 acres, including ancient woodland, with footpaths and cycle routes that we love to explore in between visits to local beaches, gardens or museums.

MAKE THE MOVE

Closer to Montreuil, La Chartreuse de Neuville was formerly a monastery and the gardens have been recreated with medicinal plants and vegetables. Our latest visit included an encounter with someone in a monk's habit telling us about monastic life and another person in the gardens was eager to read us poetry, which was a surprisingly lovely addition to an already gentle visit.

If you're looking for an immersive French move that keeps you close to the UK, or want a pied-à-terre that's easy to visit, this part of France is the perfect place to start your search. It has certainly been transformative for our family and we've recently launched Opal Coast Food Tours (opalcoastfoodtours.com), gastronomic walking tours of Montreuil. It's great to be able to share our love of this area, and celebrate its food and the relaxed way of life.

We've discovered a real warmth and sense of community here, together with a gentle and grounded approach to life that really does nourish the soul. ■

Find out more at valleesdopale.com or destinationmontreuilloisencotedopale.com

"English-speaking buyers tend to look for character properties"

THREE REASONS TO BUY HERE

Montreuil and Hesdin's location close to Calais means both are an easy UK commute to the UK

Steeped in history, with an active cultural life and great food, both towns are lively, attractive and welcoming places to live all year round

Close to the beaches of the Opal Coast, woodlands, marshes and gentle countryside, the area is perfect for an outdoor lifestyle



The annual brocante in Montreuil



Le Perlé, produced near both towns



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The private courtyard is a peaceful haven
yet close to the heart of the village

Raised from the ruins

The dream of living in France was one thing, but to take on a huge renovation project was another completely and not something I'd planned to do until the day my husband and I fell in love with a ruin. I'd been living next door to it for some years but hadn't given it a second thought. That was before I met my husband in 2017, and he joined me here in lovely Languedoc.

I was still working in those days, running my vineyard tour business. One day while I was out, Kevin climbed over the wall that divided us from the ruin. When I got home that evening, he showed me a video he'd taken of the tumbledown

Saving a dilapidated old winery from ruin wasn't the plan when she moved to France, says **Wendy Gedney**, but turning it into a wonderful home was a privilege and a joy

old place. It was like stepping back in time. Cartwheels leant against the crumbling walls, harnesses and bridles still hung on hooks - there was even a carriage hanging from the rafters. The building had been abandoned 70 years ago and looked about to fall down. It seemed such a pity to let that happen, but it would be a huge undertaking to try to save it.

The winery was made up of three buildings interlinked

through crumbling archways. Of the two smaller barns, one was a complete ruin and the other still had part of its roof seen through its collapsed ceiling. They were joined to the main building; a huge two-storey hulk that included a stable big enough to take three cart horses.

The earthen floor was heaped with debris, the ceiling almost non-existent and the roof open to the sky in a thousand

places. Even if there had been a staircase, we couldn't have gone upstairs, it was far too dangerous up there.

PASSION PROJECT

I knew the owner and I also knew the building had been up for sale since 2014. He was asking too much money for it, but I don't think that was why it hadn't sold. More likely it needed someone with vision and deep pockets. We didn't have a lot of money, but we did have vision and a strong desire to save the poor old place, so we offered half the asking price. He refused so we walked away but a week later he caved in and we bought our ugly duckling in November 2017.

We had a grand design, but no grand budget and that meant we had no money for an architect, but we managed to find a woman who could draw plans and set about designing it ourselves. We submitted the plans to the *mairie* and very quickly we received permission to go



Wendy and Kevin among the vines



Some of the buildings were a total ruin when they bought their 'ugly duckling'



From top: Empty for 70 years, there was debris everywhere; cartwheels and carts leant against crumbling walls

ahead. The winery is in a prominent position by the river on the edge of the village and I think they were keen for us to rescue it and remove the eyesore it had become.

We set to work with a husband-and-wife team who were wonderful at getting things going. Through them, we contracted a local construction firm to carry out all the big works, starting with a concrete block-and-beam ceiling. This replaced the wooden beams, which broke our hearts, but it was the right thing to do. The wood wasn't in good condition having been left open to the elements for decades. The new ceiling would also help tie in the walls, which were rather unstable.

BARNSTORMING

At the forefront of our minds was the desire to preserve as much of the original building as possible - or at least recycle the materials. We also wanted to create a garden. There was hardly any outdoor space, just the courtyard, but there was stacks of living space - more than we wanted. We decided to knock down the two small barns making room for a ▶



They had to remove the wine press to fit the kitchen



“A week later the seller caved in and we bought our ugly duckling”



The open-plan living space and kitchen



Artisans created a floating staircase from the old ceiling beams

The pair created a roof terrace



Wendy and Kevin added the pool

small swimming pool, a terrace and a BBQ area. This produced lots of rubble and stone, which we used to build a raised terrace and homemade gabions (rock-filled baskets) to form a river-wall along it.

It took nearly two years to do the demolition work and put the new ceiling, floor and roof in place. Then we could say goodbye to the contractors and get much more involved ourselves, which saved us a lot of money. We also found fantastic artisans who stayed with us throughout the build and were responsible for all



Handcrafted wrought-iron windows and doors were made by a local craftsman

“Our budget wasn’t huge but we were prepared to spend every penny on quality workmanship”

the amazing work carried out. Nearly all of them were English, working within the French system and taking a deep pride in their work.

Now we could begin to design the interior. At one end of the ground floor, the stable doors opened onto the road, so logically we made that into the garage and the rest of the

ground floor we kept open plan. Upstairs was just one enormous space, which gave us a blank canvas - we had great fun deciding how to divide it up into rooms. The only access to this floor was by ladder and deciding the positioning of a staircase was key to how we would design the whole space. We thought of many scenarios,

but in the end located it on the wall that divides the house from the stable. Bearing in mind our requests to re-use as many original materials as possible, our artisans built a superb floating staircase for us using the old ceiling beams.

BEDROOMS BY DESIGN

Designing the upstairs took a lot of thought. The surface area of that floor is about 150 square metres; it was big and tall. We could easily have fitted six bedrooms into it, but felt that was too many so plumped for four large ones - each with an ensuite bathroom.

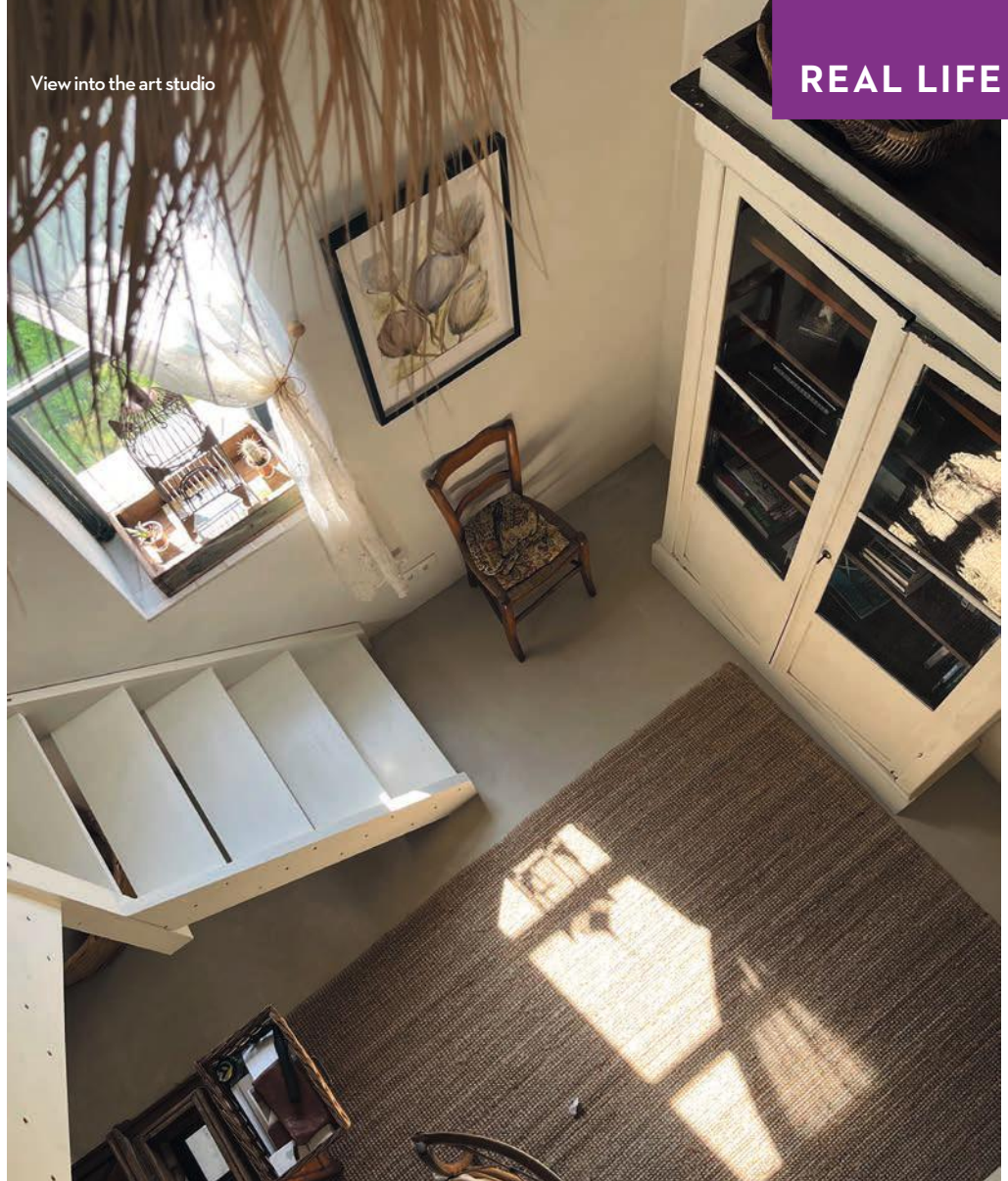
When it had been a working winery, it would have been filled with *foudre* - massive fermentation barrels that sat on stone blocks. These had been dismantled, but the blocks were still there - 25 of them. They were heavy and hard to move and even if we had been able to shift them, where would we put them? Because our ethos was to reuse everything, this helped us land on the idea of having them carved into slabs that could be used in various places around the property including the terrace.

Finding someone to cut them up wasn't easy, especially when you don't speak good French. In the end we found a man who slices marble. It took him a couple of trips to collect them, almost wrecking his vehicle in the process. When he'd finished, we were €7,000 poorer, but rich in beautiful stone slabs that speak of the place they were always intended to be.

Kevin had a grand old time repurposing all the old metal bolts, handmade nails and other ironmongery he found lying around the place. We found new homes for all the carts and cartwheels - keeping one for ourselves.

We had to get someone in to remove the wine press. It wasn't a pretty thing, just a big rusty screw thrusting out of the floor exactly where we wanted to put the kitchen. Below it was a huge underground tank, which the pressed wine would have flowed into. This we recycled by hooking it up to the gutter and using it to collect rainwater for use in the garden.

View into the art studio



The building's shape is quite unusual. It looks a little like an open book with one side shortened and as it's such an old building none of the angles is perfect. Because of this, we worried about the choice of flooring, thinking tiles would produce dozens of tramlines heading off in strange directions. We wanted something that looked like the limestone hills around here and found *béton ciré*, or microcement as it's called in England, and put it in all the rooms. It looks and feels like walking on ancient stone and accentuates the feeling of space and we love its softness.

For the windows and doors, we chose hand-crafted wrought iron made by a local blacksmith. They are double glazed and do a great job of keeping the house cosy during the winter months, alongside the underfloor heating and woodburning stove.

COURTYARD HAVEN

One of the things we love are the high walls surrounding the property. You enter through a gate into an unexpected lush and peaceful courtyard where the only sound is the murmur of the trickling fountain. It feels like an intimate and private world, but the village is just a stone's throw away.

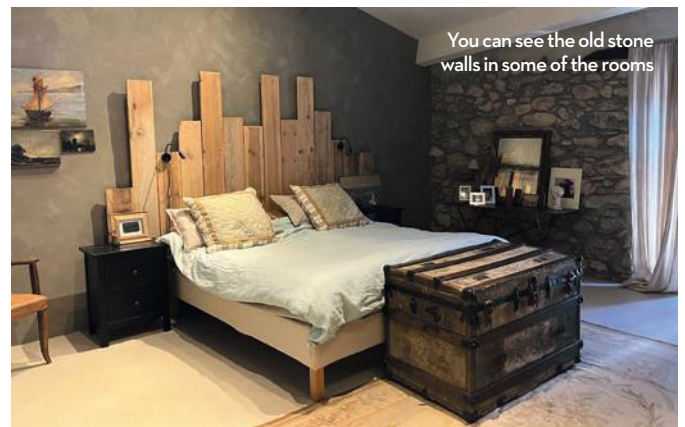
When we bought the ruin, friends thought we'd gone mad, but we were confident knowing we both had design capabilities and were sure we could create something exceptional. We also strongly believe that our success is down to our budget. It wasn't huge, but it was enough - and we were prepared to spend every penny on quality workmanship.

Saving and protecting this lovely building has been a privilege and we have loved living in it. However, we have also accepted that it's too large for just one couple and so we came to the difficult decision to sell. Maybe because the house is so unique we found a buyer very quickly. In January we will be handing over the keys and heading off on our next adventure.

We won't be leaving France or the Languedoc though - this region is just too special. ■



There are four large bedrooms



You can see the old stone walls in some of the rooms



The master bedroom



All the bedrooms are ensuite

It's fair to say there are several recurring reasons why people move to France. A

better climate, world-class gastronomy and the option to have a rural home with plenty of land usually top the list. But for many Francophiles, it's the chance to integrate into a country and culture they adore, using the beautiful French language in their professional and social lives.

If you arrive in France with even just a smattering of *la langue française*, you'll be able to get by in some occupations, including as a property agent, and improve your language skills as you go. For those who already have a strong level of French, working as a translator or interpreter can be an excellent way to bring in an income, with the added advantage of cutting out an office commute.

But a popular route for those who speak French is to become an English teacher. French families often turn to agencies, such as Acadomia and Lauréat, to hire native English speakers to give their children a helping hand with homework and exam preparation.

HOST FAMILIES

If you're fortunate to buy a home in France with a spare bedroom or two, and you're willing to study for a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign



Helen Wilson and her family

Parlez-vous français?

Speaking even just a little French can stand you in good stead when it comes to finding work in the country, but you need to pick the right location too, says **Leah Rottier**

Language) qualification, you could even welcome French students into your home and earn a living teaching English as a host family.

Helen Wilson decided to follow this path when she

arrived in France with her family in 2009 - and settling close to the picturesque town of Pontorson, in Normandy, had its advantages. Surrounded by scenic countryside, yet close to the tourist areas of Mont

St-Michel, Dinard and St-Malo, she was able to establish her linguistic holiday business very quickly.

Séjours Anglais en France is now a thriving company, attracting French students



Pontorson, a picturesque village in Normandy, is surrounded by beautiful countryside but has amenities and a market



Students on a visit to Mont St-Michel

from all over the country. They live as part of Helen's family during their stay, having English lessons in the morning, then participating in fun activities for the rest of the day.

Helen passes on her advice for those looking to establish their own linguistic immersion business in France. "A basic knowledge of French is essential, but I quickly learned that social etiquette is just as important. For example, starting every conversation with 'Bonjour' - without it, you may appear rude!

"Even students with very little English can thrive in the right setting, gaining both confidence and communication skills," she adds.

"Learning doesn't stop at the classroom door. We combine English lessons with hands-on activities, such as cooking, bowling and even visits to the beach."

"Working with children can be immensely rewarding - and there are often moments of hilarity too"

If you're looking to go down this career path, be sure to research the area where you're looking to buy property to attract students. Pontorson is in a fantastic location on the Normandy/Brittany border, with a lots of attractions and activities nearby for visitors of all ages. While its proximity to Mont St-Michel does increase house prices in the area, there are still bargains to be found, especially if you're looking for a fixer-upper.

Working with children can be immensely rewarding and there are often moments of hilarity. Helen recalls: "One student proudly announced he had 'cooked himself on the cooker' when he meant he had cooked using the oven!"



Gemma and Andy run French Admin Assistance, which helps with paperwork

ADMIN ANGELS

If you prefer working with computers to children, and you're one of those rare people who enjoys dealing with French administration, this could open up another working opportunity for you.

Established in 2023, French Admin Assistance is run by husband-and-wife team, Andy and Gemma. They use their bilingual expertise and knowledge of the French system to help those who don't want to deal with the dreaded French bureaucracy.

"A lot of our work is setting up expats before they even leave for France," Andy says. "We offer a package that includes visa applications, driving licence exchange, registering their cars in France and healthcare affiliation."

For those already settled in France but overwhelmed with paperwork or finding the language barrier challenging, Gemma and Andy's services also include help with translating letters, setting up entrepreneurs and preparing income declarations.

Working as a professional

'hand holder' is a great way to earn an income in France while having the satisfaction of helping others. You'll also have the flexibility of building your own timetable and meeting lots of different people along the way.

When asked about any difficulties they have faced in their business, Andy shares a common problem that self-employed people encounter in France. "The most challenging part was figuring out how much to invoice people for whatever task was needed.

"At first, we found that we were working longer than we'd originally been paid for. There are often unexpected 'curveballs' in French bureaucracy and these can lead to more work than you initially agree on."

THE RIGHT PLACE

In addition, to calculating your fees appropriately, choosing the right location in France for your business is, again, a very important consideration.

Andy and Gemma lived in Chamonix for several years before deciding to move to

Dordogne, when Gemma was pregnant with their second child. Seeking a change of pace in a quieter region of France, with plenty of child-friendly activities in the area, they chose a scenic village halfway between Bergerac and Sarlat-la-Canéda to settle down.

With house prices in the sector around Trémolat and Lalinde significantly lower than in Chamonix, a house with a big garden was also an incentive to move to Dordogne, not to mention the large expat population for plenty of opportunities for their business venture. This department has long been sought after by newcomers to France for its rolling landscapes, spectacular vineyards and mild climate.

Lalinde is known for its bustling market and friendly, laidback vibe. With easy access to Bergerac and its international airport, as well as Sarlat-la-Canéda with its medieval charm, it's a popular spot with house buyers and tourists alike.

Houses in and around Lalinde are very affordable, with prices starting from approximately €140,000 for a three-bedroom property. If you're looking for a fixer-upper or a complete renovation project, the local villages have reasonably priced options too.

Putting your French language skills to use is a good way to earn an income in France, and joining in with local activities is a wonderful excuse to practise and improve your French too.

Whether you're looking to teach English or help newcomers to France overcome all the administrative hurdles they will face, be sure to do your research and choose your location wisely. ■



Lalinde in Dordogne, where Andy and Gemma settled with their young family

TOP TIP

If you decide to become a host family or set up your own linguistic immersion business, be sure to check your house insurance policy. You'll need additional cover if you're welcoming children into your home as part of your business.



Morzine features traditional chalet architecture



Majestic Morzine

Surrounded by soaring mountains, the Alpine resort of Morzine offers a village atmosphere with year-round activities, writes **Karen Tait**



With its charming wooden chalet architecture, backed by majestic Alpine peaks, Morzine is one of the gems of the Haute-Savoie department. A renowned ski resort, it is also Europe's top location for downhill mountain biking. The town is lively year-round, making it a great place for a holiday home. It's also home to a varied expat community, many of whom moved to benefit from skiing and other mountain activities alongside the opportunity to run a business within the thriving local hospitality and tourism sector.

Part of the Portes du Soleil, the largest ski area in the world with over 600km of slopes, Morzine offers everything from gentle beginner runs to challenging off-piste terrain, as well as snow parks and excellent ski schools.

In summer, in addition to mountain biking (note that the ski lifts are adapted for bikes), the area is popular for

walking, hiking, trail running, paragliding, canyoning, rafting and other high-octane activities. The town has a large swimming pool complex and several of the hotels and property developments offer spa facilities.

Morzine has the feel of a traditional Alpine village but also offers access to the higher and more modern resort of Avoriaz, as well as the smaller resort of Les Gets. The town has lots of restaurants, bars and shops, as well as a weekly

market and summer festivals and concerts. Authentic Savoyard cuisine like fondue, tartiflette, raclette and charcuterie feature on local menus, and the après ski ranges from a relaxed beer to a big night out. The resort is family-orientated too, with beginner areas, children's clubs and summer activity programmes.

At only 1h15 from Geneva airport, Morzine is one of the most accessible major resorts, making it great for weekend breaks, as well as longer stays.

Buyers will find a good choice of properties - from modern apartments near the lifts to luxury chalets with panoramic views. There's a strong rental market, in both winter and summer, and property values have shown a steady increase over the past decade.

Prices are highest in the heart of the resort, with ski-in ski-out properties in high demand. Super Morzine, by the Avoriaz gondola, and Pleney, close to the slopes and lifts, are also popular areas. ■

On the market

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON [FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM](https://www.francepropertyshop.com)



€286,000: One-bedroom apartment in new development in Montriond, a hamlet on the edge of Morzine, with parking (underground) and ski locker



€525,000: Two-bedroom, two-bathroom furnished apartment with three balconies near the river and close to Morzine centre; garage, parking space and cellar



€850,000: Three-bedroom duplex with panoramic views, terrace, large cellar, ski locker and garage, near the town centre and lifts; for sale fully furnished



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Established in 2004, our Mountain Base agencies in Morzine and Chamonix are delighted to announce that we have joined the Douglas Elliman Global network.

This partnership strengthens our presence in the French Alps, connecting motivated buyers with exceptional properties throughout the Portes du Soleil and beyond.



Play your cards right

Monique Jackman reveals the culture around sending greeting cards in France - and the one occasion it's a must...

In France, a relatively small selection of greeting cards has pretty much always been available in stationery shops or *papeteries*. They've also started gradually appearing in supermarkets and on card-display holders inside or outside a small number of other shops, such as newsagents. These card sections and display holders are known as *carteries*.

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

The first greeting card appeared in 1843 in the UK, and small and big greeting card shops have been commonplace for many decades there, but it is a different story in my native country. Indeed, greeting cards have only very gradually started to appear over the past 30 years in France.

The French outlook on sending or giving greeting cards has been, and still is, very different to the British



Bonne Année cards tend to be simple, with a homely picture on the front

“Greeting cards are available in ‘papeteries’ or stationery shops”

view. Apart from homemade cards by children at school for their parents for the main annual celebrations, families and friends never gave, and

still generally don't give or send each other any sort of greeting cards - no matter the celebration or occasion.

The culture of sending greeting cards for all sorts of special occasions or other important times - such as illness, starting a new job or moving house - is still very far from that of the British. In fact, apart from group cards from people for a special occasion - for example, a work leaving do - it would still be really odd for someone to send a member of the family or a friend a greeting card, never mind to actually give someone a card in person.

NEW YEAR GREETINGS

However, although the French don't feel the need to convey

lovely thoughts and feelings by sending or giving appropriate cards as has been done in the UK for getting on for 200 years, there is one big exception.

Every year, French people wish a 'happy New Year' to all their family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances the first time they see them between the 1st and 31st of January. They also like to send a card to, email or phone all those they know they won't see during that key period to express this unmissable annual wish.

Although French 'happy New Year' cards have started to appear over the past few years, they are mostly just the size of half a postcard, or smaller, usually sold in packs of six. They're generally adorned with a suitable picture, often a small and homely house in the snow with smoke coming out of its chimney, and just the words '*Bonne année*' or '*Bonnes fêtes*' on the front. Family and friends write their very short messages on the back. Some people use their business card instead to convey this important annual message.

Although phone calls or emails are now often used instead of sending or giving *Bonne année* cards, these very basic and small cards, together with a few larger folded versions, are still available to buy in card outlets at the appropriate time of the year. ■

Monique Jackman has written several French language books, including the *Better French* series, available from Amazon and other bookshops



Larger folding *Bonne Année* cards are becoming more commonplace



Postcard-style New Year cards

THE KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is power and when it comes to buying a French property, it's important to understand as much as possible about the process



ALAN PONDANCE © SHUTTERSTOCK

P86 **LEGAL COLUMN**

Can trusts and usufruits be used in France as a way of financially protecting spouses and children in wills?

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How to hedge your bets and ensure your budget stays on track when buying a property in a different currency

P90 **GUIDE TO...**

State benefits for families – how to register and the different types of benefits, including the back-to-school payment and holiday camps

P92 **ASK THE EXPERTS**

Q&As on visas, insurance, French wills, rental income, removals, self-employment in France, accessing French healthcare and more

Legal column

Charlotte Macdonald

explains how trusts and 'usufruits' can be used as a way of financially protecting spouses and children in wills



Making a will and estate planning differs considerably between France and other countries - especially 'common-law' countries such as England and Wales, Canada, the USA and Australia (to name a few). One of the big differences is that in common-law countries, trusts are a common legal structure to include in a will.

They are particularly common in the wills of blended families (where the spouses bring children with them from earlier relationships). For example, Mr and Mrs Smith are married. It is the second marriage for them both. Mr Smith has one child from a former relationship and Mrs Smith has two children from her first marriage.

Mr and Mrs Smith want the survivor of them to be able to use all their assets for the rest of their life, but ultimately want their respective children to inherit their 'half' of their assets.

If Mr and Mrs Smith were making a will in England, they would likely be advised to consider putting a 'life interest trust' into their will. This would allow the survivor of them to stay in any property owned by the trust; for the trust to buy and sell property if the surviving spouse needed to move home; and for the surviving spouse to be entitled to any income earned by trust assets. The trust can also be set up in such a way to allow the trustees to give the surviving spouse capital if needed.

CARE NEEDED

Trusts can also be established which are discretionary in nature. These types of trusts will name a number

of beneficiaries, but none of these beneficiaries have a 'right' to income or capital. It is up to the trustees to decide how much, if any, they should receive. This type of trust can be very useful if one or more of the beneficiaries is not able to handle their own money, or it may harm their financial position if they are entitled to receive funds (for example, if they are on benefits or going through a divorce).

While trusts can be very helpful if you are UK resident, they are not a useful tool if you are French tax resident. Although it is possible to make a will in France and choose for the law of your nationality to apply to that will, extreme caution must be practised before including a common-law style trust in your French will.

“There can be tax advantages of establishing a ‘usufruit’ in your will”

This is for two reasons:

- It may not be possible to enforce the trust in France as you can in your common-law country
- There may be very adverse tax consequences and disproportionately high legal and administrative costs in trying to work with the trust in France

Therefore, if you are living in France and you would like to protect your spouse or partner if you die before them, but ultimately want your assets to pass to your children, it is sensible to place a different

See
STONE KING
at the French
Property Exhibition
Stand 19



type of structure to put into your will.

BARE OWNERSHIP

Perhaps, the closest equivalent to the life interest trust in France is the 'usufruit'. Although not the same, there are some similarities.

By leaving your spouse the usufruit of your home, they can enjoy the property for the rest of their life. They are known as the usufruitier.

If they decide that they no longer wish to live in the property, they can leave and put the property up for rent. Your spouse will be entitled to the rental income produced.

If you leave your spouse the usufruit in your will then you must also decide who

you would like to leave the underlying ownership of the property to - this is known as the bare ownership, or 'nue propriété'. In most cases, individuals choose to leave the nue propriété to their children.

While the spouse (the usufruitier) is alive, the children have no right to use the property; however, on the death of the spouse, the children will become owners of the whole of the property.

During their lifetime, the usufruitier has the responsibility of maintaining the property (paying taxes and keeping it in good repair).

If the property is to be sold, both the usufruitier and the nuropriétaire must agree to the sale. This is different to a life



interest trust where only the trustees need to agree to a sale.

BLENDING FAMILIES

Another option to establishing a *usufruit* in your will is to instead give your spouse the right to use and live in your property only; this is known as the '*droit d'usage et d'habitation*'. While a *usufruit* entitles its holder to both use the property and collect all its income, the *droit d'usage et d'habitation* only grants the right to live in the property and does not allow the holder to rent out the property.

There can be good tax advantages of establishing a *usufruit* in your will, especially for blended families. This is because in France, although

spouses inherit free of inheritance tax, children can receive up to €100,000 free of inheritance tax and then pay tax on a sliding scale between 5%-45%, while stepchildren pay inheritance tax at the highest rate of 60% over a small tax-free allowance of €1,594.

This means that if you leave your property directly to your spouse, which is possible in some circumstances, and then your spouse leaves the property to your children - their stepchildren - the children would pay French inheritance tax at the rate of 60%. This can be avoided by establishing a *usufruit* in your will and leaving your spouse the *usufruit* and your children the *nue propriété*. Because the

children would be inheriting directly from their parent, they would therefore pay a far lower rate of tax (if any), compared to inheriting the property from their stepparent.

For tax purposes, the value of the property is split between the *usufruitier* and the *nue propriété*; the split is calculated by the age of the *usufruitier*.

It is not only possible to give away the *nue propriété* of your property by your will, it can also be done during your lifetime. This is known as 'dismembering the ownership of the property'. However, it is very important to proceed with caution if you are UK tax resident when doing this as it could have adverse tax consequences back in the UK.

Both life interest trusts and *usufruit* can be very useful tools for those with blended families, wishing to ensure that all family members are cared for after death in a practical and tax-efficient manner. If, however, you live between France and a common-law country, or have assets in both, it is important to carefully consider which structure is appropriate to use where, and both the local and international tax consequences. ■

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Money column

How to budget when buying a property in a different currency, by **Mar Bonnin-Palmer**



Whether you're buying a home in France, renovating a property abroad, retiring overseas or simply managing income and expenses across borders, budgeting in a different currency introduces a layer of complexity that many overlook.

Exchange rate fluctuations can dramatically affect your purchasing power, and without a clear strategy, your budget can quickly unravel.

In this guide, we want to offer practical, step-by-step support to help you navigate multi-currency budgeting with confidence - whatever your risk profile or your budget.

BUILD YOUR BUDGET FRAMEWORK

Start by defining the currencies involved. Most international scenarios involve a base currency (e.g. GBP) and a target currency (e.g. EUR). Your budget should account for:

- **Fixed costs:** Property deposits, legal fees, mortgage repayments.
- **Variable costs:** Renovation phases, utilities, travel and maintenance.
- **Currency conversion buffer:** We advocate for adding 3-5% to your euro estimates to account for any potential FX movements.

Example: If you're buying a €300,000 property and the GBP/EUR rate drops from 1.21 to 1.14, your cost in pounds increases by over £15,000 - nearly 6.5% of the total cost of the property.

UNDERSTAND YOUR RISK PROFILE

Your approach to foreign exchange (FX) budgeting should reflect your comfort with risk. For example,

someone who is more sensitive to risk might prefer certainty over potential gains. So, they could consider forward contracts to lock in exchange rates for future payments or benefit from fixed-rate regular payment plans for ongoing costs like mortgages or pensions.

Someone more risk-tolerant might be willing to wait and see if the market moves in a favourable way for them. They could choose to use market orders to target an exchange rate instead, but combine it with stop-loss orders to manage some of their risk.

There is no right or wrong answer; it depends on your individual circumstances and preferences.

Tip: Define your 'happy rate' and 'must-not-go-below' rate early. This will help inform your approach to foreign exchange and avoid emotional decision-making.

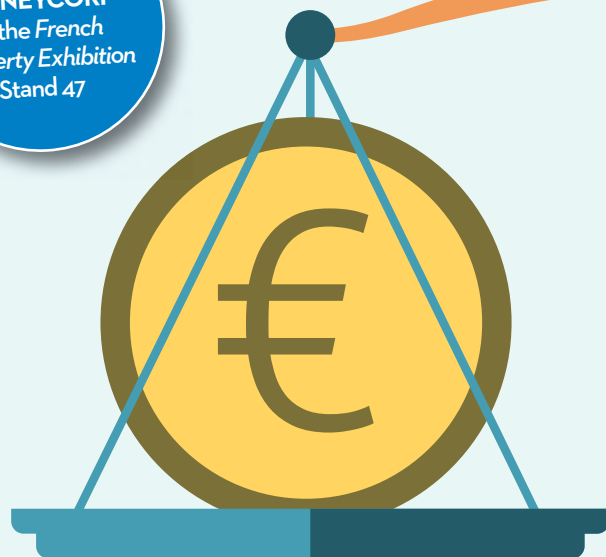
THINK ABOUT FX TOOLS

Foreign exchange specialists offer a suite of tools to help you manage currency exposure:

Forward contracts: These allow you to lock in today's exchange rate for a future payment. This is particularly useful for property purchases and renovations, where payment timelines are known in advance and the budget is fixed. (Note that forward contracts may require a deposit.)

Market orders: These allow you to set a target exchange rate, and if the market reaches that rate, your transfer is executed automatically. To manage downside risk, you can pair this with a stop-loss order, which triggers a transaction if the rate falls to a minimum acceptable level.

See **MONEYPORP** at the French Property Exhibition Stand 47



“Your approach to currency budgeting and foreign exchange tools should reflect your comfort with risk”

Regular payment plans:

For those managing regular expenses like mortgage payments or pension transfers, regular payment plans offer automation and consistency. These can be fixed in advance, helping you maintain control over your monthly budget.

Spot contracts: Spot contracts are the simplest type of foreign exchange tool. They are used for immediate transfers at the current market rate and are often used when timing is critical.

WORKING WITH A TIGHT BUDGET

If you're working with limited funds, FX volatility can be especially stressful. Here are some tips that may help you to stay in control:

- **Prioritise essentials:** Focus on obtaining rates for critical payments like deposits or mortgage instalments.
- **Track rates:** Set up alerts to monitor currency movements.
- **Avoid last-minute transfers:** These often result in poor rates and higher fees.
- **Speak to an expert:** A foreign exchange expert can help you build a plan that works for you, giving you the confidence to navigate currency markets with clarity and make informed decisions that support your financial goals.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Even with the best planning, it is important to be aware



when you don't convert all funds at once but spread transfers across phases. This strategy can even out exchange rate peaks and troughs, but like all strategies, it might not work for everyone.

- **Stay informed:** Make sure you understand the currency trend - it's difficult to know what 'good' and 'bad' look like for you, without knowing what the market has been doing.

CONFIDENCE THROUGH PREPARATION

Budgeting across different currencies doesn't have to be daunting. With the right tools, clear planning and expert support, you can take control of your finances and avoid costly surprises.

Whether you're buying, renovating, retiring or selling abroad, a well-planned FX strategy is your best defence against volatility. By getting ahead of the process, you give your budget the best chance to stay on track, minimising surprises and maximising control. Your future self will thank you! ■

Mar Bonnin-Palmer is Head of Partnerships at Moneycorp
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that markets can still move unexpectedly. To help you manage any expected currency fluctuations, you can also consider building some resilience into your budget:

- **Add a currency buffer:** 3-5% of your total budget to absorb rate changes.
- **Plan for delays:** Property transactions already take months but they can extend longer than expected if something unexpected happens. You can consider locking in rates early to reduce your exposure.
- **Diversify timing:** This is

STEP-BY-STEP BUDGETING GUIDE

Here's a practical approach to setting up your multi-currency budget:

Step 1: Open a foreign exchange account early on

Open an FX account as soon as you begin your property search or start planning your finances. Doing this early gives you access to support and expertise through your account manager, the ability to monitor exchange rates and to act quickly if favourable opportunities arise.

Step 2: Map out your payment timeline

Begin by identifying the key financial milestones in your journey, such as the property deposit, completion payment, renovation phases and any ongoing costs. For each of these, estimate the amount you'll need and the expected timing, so you can plan your currency transfers accordingly and avoid surprises.

Step 3: Consider locking in rates for major payments

To help you manage your risk, you might consider using forward contracts for your deposit and completion payments. This will give you more certainty over your costs ahead of time. If your renovation schedule is clearly defined, it may also be worth fixing rates for those phases to avoid potential unexpected increases in expenses.

Step 4: Automate where possible

To simplify your recurring international payments, you could also set up a regular payment plan. This allows you to automate transfers for costs like mortgage instalments or pension contributions. If you'd prefer more flexibility, but would rather not monitor exchange rates constantly, you can also use rate alerts to stay informed and act when conditions are favourable.

Step 5: Review and adjust

It's important to revisit your foreign exchange strategy regularly to ensure it still aligns with your goals. Market conditions can shift, and your personal circumstances may change, so monitoring your approach helps you stay on track and keeps your plan aligned with your goals.



BENEFITS IN FRANCE

FIND OUT MORE
Read our guides to
living in France on
frenchentree.com

Supporting families is an intrinsic part of life in France, on both a personal and governmental level, and this includes extensive state benefits - in part one of this two-part series **Catharine Higginson** explains some of the key child benefits

When I'm chatting to people about their reasons for moving to France, three words always stand out and those are 'quality of life'. Talk to people with children and an extra word always comes up: 'family' life. And it's absolutely true. France places huge importance on family life. The *repas de famille* (family dinner) is an institution in France and even adult children will hightail it home when *maman* announces there is a *repas de famille*. Presence is non-negotiable and quite rightly,

family events take priority over almost everything else.

Supporting families is an intrinsic part of life in France, on a personal and governmental level, and as a result, families receive extensive state benefits. The benefits system has been designed to support those in need of help and assistance.

There is a huge range of payments and grants available and understanding what you are entitled to and how to claim can be daunting. However, the system has been set up to enable anyone who needs help to be able to access it.

“The various benefits are known as ‘allocations’, often abbreviated to ‘les allocs’”



There is a wide range of payments available to families in France

All the various benefits are known as ‘allocations’ and this is often abbreviated to ‘les allocs’. Obviously to qualify for any type of benefit you must first of all be living in France and ensure that any particular conditions relating to your visa/residence permit have been met. So before you even think about making a claim, it is sensible to ensure that all your paperwork is in order.

YOUNG CHILDREN

Once you are registered with the CAF (*les Caisses d'Allocations Familiales*) the French equivalent of UK child benefit (known as *allocations familiales* or AF) kicks in automatically on the arrival of your second child. However, there are numerous other benefits that parents will qualify for even if they only have one child.

The benefit known as PAJE or *la prestation d'accueil du jeune enfant* is a benefit paid on the birth or adoption of any child. It's divided into four parts: the benefit payable at birth or adoption, the basic allowance, and then what's known as *la prestation partagée de l'éducation de l'enfant* (PreParE) and *le complément de libre choix du mode de garde* (CMG).

The PreParE is payable to parents who give up or reduce their working hours in order to look after their children aged three and under, or aged 20 and under in the case of adoption. The CMG is a benefit paid to parents who want their child aged six and under to be cared for by a registered childminder, either in their home or that of the childminder or an organisation providing childcare or a crèche. The payments vary according to



family circumstances and whether the child is in a crèche or with a childminder. The amounts drop when the child is aged three or over as the expectation is that he/she will be in school, but the amounts currently range between €203 and €984 per child.

Then there is *l'allocation de base*; this is paid to parents with a child aged three and under, or for the first three years after the adoption if the child is older. It is calculated according to family income, can be paid at either a full or partial rate (*taux plein ou taux partiel*) and is currently €196.

Le complément familial is paid to families with at least three children aged between three and 21 years old. This payment is dependent on family income; both partners' revenues will be factored into the calculation as will any other people the family is financially responsible for (disabled or elderly relatives for example) and can also be claimed by adult children still living at home.

Single parents can claim the ASF (*l'allocation de soutien familial*), which applies if one of the two parents is unable to provide financial support for the child. This benefit is often referred to as '*alloc parent isolé*'.

SUPPORT SERVICES

While the back-to-school payment known as *l'allocation de rentrée scolaire* (ARS) is also means tested, the income platforms are generous and almost all families in France on 'normal' incomes receive this.

This is a one-off payment made in August to enable parents to purchase all the clothing, equipment, stationery and so forth that the children



“Holidays are seen as being vitally important in France so there are benefits to cover this - including a payment towards the cost of holiday camps”

need for the coming academic year. Current amounts start at €416 for the 6-10 age group rising to €454 for the 15-18 year olds. This payment is a real bonus for families on low to moderate incomes and enables parents to ensure that their children have everything they require without worrying too much about the cost.

The CAF is also there to support families facing any kind of emotional as well as financial difficulties. If you are separated or in the process of separating from your partner, the CAF will provide support services to help you determine the amount of child maintenance (*pension alimentaire*) you should be receiving, organise payments and if necessary, help you recover unpaid maintenance.

If you have separated and the childcare arrangements are 'one week on, one week off' (*garde alternée*), you can choose to have any CAF benefits split between the two households.

The CAF can also provide emergency financial assistance to allow victims of domestic violence to get away from their abuser. This is known as *l'aide d'urgence pour les victimes de violences conjugales*.

They will also provide help with administrative tasks, family mediation and are a hugely useful source of support and information in the case of divorce or separation, and will be able to advise on accessing different benefits as your personal and financial circumstances change.

LEISURE TIME

Holidays and leisure time are seen as being vitally important in France so of course the CAF has a role to play here too. Parents whose children aged 11 and over who take part in a holiday camp (*colonie de vacances*) can apply for *le Pass'colo* - a state-funded grant which covers part of the cost - and the CAF also provides an *aide aux vacances* for families.

Like almost all benefits, this is income dependent and there are conditions; at least one parent must go on the holiday with the children and the holiday centre needs to be at least 200km away from the family home and on the official VACAF list.

Payments are generous and can be up to 80% of the cost of the stay with a €700 limit. Extra funding of up to €200 is even available if you travel further afield.

Families can obtain reduced train fares too, ranging from 30-75% if they apply for *la carte familles nombreuses*. This card also gives discounts and offers with various partners including supermarkets, museums, clothing stores, holiday destinations and car rental, and even restaurants. Offers change all the time so if you have a card, do check out the official website and see what is available.

The CAF provides many other benefits and services to people of working age and over (which we'll be covering next time) but their raison d'être is supporting families and they do an excellent job. ■

USEFUL LINKS

caf.fr/allocataires
carte-familles-nombreuses.gouv.fr/home

NEXT MONTH

Guide to: Part 2 covers benefits for workers and retirees



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The back-to-school payment covers clothing and stationary needs

Top tip

Whatever the situation, the CAF is bound to be able to help with some form of specific financial or personal assistance. As everyone's circumstances are different, it's a good idea to make an appointment with an *assistante sociale* at your local CAF and see what they can do for you.

Q&A Ask the experts

Need advice? Put your problems to our panel

CAN I APPLY FOR A RESIDENCY CARD?

What are the new requirements for a multi-year *carte de séjour* or 10-year residence card?

ALLISON GRANT LOUNES of Your Franceformation responds (yourfranceformation.com):

The concept of a multi-year *carte de séjour* has been in place for several years and is meant to ease the processing burden on *préfectures* by reducing the number of annual applications. However, new restrictions on who is eligible for a multi-year card will make them more difficult to obtain.

The Interior Ministry has also implemented restrictions on renewals of 'temporary' *titres de séjour*. Certain visa types will now be limited to three renewals before you will either need to be eligible for a multi-year card, or change your visa status. Those who hold a series of one-year *cartes de séjour* for self-employment, for



Allison Grant Lounes

example, may not be able to renew for a fourth year if they continually fail to meet the income requirements expected for their visa type, or do not meet minimum language requirements.

After spending your first year in France with a one-year residence permit (a *visa de long séjour valant titre de séjour*, or VLS-TS), you may be eligible to request a multi-year *carte de séjour* (*carte pluriannuelle*), valid for two to four years. This card reduces the frequency of prefecture renewals but

is available only if you meet several key requirements. Some categories, such as visitors, interns, au pairs and temporary salaried employees, are not eligible for a multi-year card.

To qualify for a multi-year residence card, you must:

1. Have signed and completed the *Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine* (CIR), including the 24 hours of mandatory civics classes and French language classes to an A2 level.
2. Have signed the *Contrat d'Engagement à Respecter les Valeurs de la République*, affirming your commitment to French republican values.
3. Demonstrate A2-level French proficiency through an official test such as the TCF (valid for two years) or the DELF (valid for life).
4. Still meet the financial and activity requirements tied to your current residence status. For example, if you are self-employed, you must show that you are earning at least French

minimum wage (SMIC).

5. From January 2026, pass a new 40-question civics exam.

Holders of a 'Talent Passport' type of visa are typically exempt from the CIR and language requirements.

Previously, the French language requirement applied only to a 10-year residence or naturalisation. The minimum language requirements were A2 for a 10-year residence card and B1 for naturalisation, which has been increased to B1 and B2 respectively. Now, even those applying for a multi-year card of two to four years must prove they've reached basic conversational ability in French, or an A2 level.



VISAS: TRAVEL INSURANCE VS HEALTH INSURANCE

Will travel insurance suffice for my visa application?

PAULETTE BOOTH of Lonemi responds (lonemi.fr):

Understanding the visa requirements, especially regarding insurance, can sometimes be daunting. Clarifying the differences between travel and dedicated health insurance is essential to ensure you meet the criteria.

When applying for a French long-stay visa (*visa de long séjour*) for stays over 90 days, the French authorities require proof of comprehensive insurance.



Paulette Booth

This must include coverage for medical expenses, hospitalisation and repatriation, with a minimum of €30,000. The insurance must be valid throughout France and

the entire Schengen zone. The main aim is to guarantee that visitors can access healthcare without becoming a financial burden on the state.

Many applicants initially consider travel insurance because it's familiar, simple to purchase and often more affordable. It is generally designed for short-term trips. While it does cover emergency medical expenses, hospitalisation and repatriation, it isn't suitable for the longer, more complex needs associated with relocating to France. Due to the limits on how long it remains valid - often

90 to 180 days - it means you'll need to renew or buy a new policy if you plan to stay longer.

Moreover, travel insurance typically excludes routine medical treatments, ongoing care or pre-existing conditions - all of which are essential considerations once you're living in France.

Those relocating to France will need a private health insurance (PHI) that is tailored for expatriates, students or retirees. Unlike travel insurance, comprehensive health plans provide continuous, broad coverage that extends beyond

See
ALL THESE
EXPERTS AT THE
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Exhibition

TRE DE SEJOUR



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You must register for an official exam like the TCF (*Test des Connaissances du Français*) or DELF (*Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française*), typically through your local Alliance Française or an accredited test centre through France Éducation International. Results of the TCF are valid for two years, while results of the DELF are valid for life. Registration is often one month in advance, and results take about a month to arrive.

Starting in 2026, applicants for multi-year cards, 10-year residence cards and naturalisation must pass a 45-minute, 40-question multiple-choice exam in French. The

exam covers six areas:

- Republican principles and values (11 questions)
- French institutional and political systems (6)
- Rights and responsibilities for living in France (11)
- French history, geography, and culture (8)
- Everyday life in French society (4)

A minimum score of 32/40 (80%) is required to pass. The test will be taken on a tablet, similar to the driver's theory test, and an official study guide will be provided by the Interior Ministry. Details on possible exam fees or how to register for the exam have not yet been announced.

emergencies, and that will be accepted with your visa application. A PHI policy can also include regular doctor visits, ongoing treatments, prescriptions, preventive care, and specialist consultations. This ensures your healthcare needs are met for your first few months in France, offering stability and peace of mind.

It's worth noting that some individuals – such as those moving with work visas or possessing certain social security arrangements – may not need immediate private health insurance. For example,

UK retirees with valid S1 forms can access France's social security system directly, which may satisfy the health coverage requirements. However, even in these cases, having private insurance during the initial months is highly advisable, as delays or administrative hurdles can occur before social security benefits are fully operational.

Having the correct cover not only helps you meet visa requirements but also provides reassurance when you arrive in France. Being prepared means you can start to enjoy your new life without unnecessary worry.

HANDWRITTEN WILLS

We would like to have a French will covering our French property.

Are there different types and formalities, and if so what would be a suitable will for us to choose?

MATTHEW CAMERON of Ashtons Legal responds

(ashtonslegal.co.uk): While a valid English will can cover French assets, it is sometimes preferable to have a French will in place instead. Among the various types of French wills available, the handwritten holographic will stands out for its simplicity and accessibility, requiring neither witnesses nor the involvement of a *notaire*.

However, this apparent simplicity comes with strict formality requirements, which if not observed, can lead to the will being invalidated and the testator's intentions set aside.

The formality requirements are set out at Article 970 of the Civil Code, which provides that a holographic will is valid if it is handwritten in its entirety by the testator and signed and dated by him.

An English-style typed will would, therefore, be invalid, even if it is signed and dated by the testator. By contrast, it is possible to use a template if the testator's own free will and intentions are clear; this would typically be the case where the draft will was prepared by a legal professional in accordance with the client's instructions following advice. While it is preferable to write the will on clear A4 paper, the courts have accepted various written supports, such as handwriting in a notebook, at the back of an insurance policy or even on the side of a washing machine!

French holographic wills are usually shorter than English wills; however, if more than one page is needed, it is possible to write on the reverse side, or a separate sheet but



Matthew Cameron

there must be a clear link between the pages.

As for the signature, it is advisable to use the full name, although signing with initials or a nickname would not automatically invalidate the will if the testator routinely used this form during his lifetime. The signature must strictly appear at the end of the document after the text. There have been instances of wills declared void where the testator's signature appears in other places such as at the beginning of the text.

The courts are, however, more pragmatic regarding the date, as they will consider all available evidence to ascertain the approximate date and testator's capacity at the time. A will where the last of the four digits of the year was missing was, for instance, valid as it was accepted that it was the last expression of the testator's final intentions and there was no evidence to suggest that the testator had lost capacity.

Finally, the Highest Court clarified in 2021 that the will must be written in a language which the testator understands; thereby invalidating a French holographic will written in French by a German testator even though a translation had been provided. A French holographic will should be written in the testator's native language unless fluent in French. Professional guidance should help navigate through any pitfalls when preparing wills in cross-border contexts.

Get in touch!

Ask your questions about French property or life in France...

Email: karen.tait@francemedia.com

Alternatively, you can post your question on our **Facebook** page

Working it out

Debbie Nye answers your questions relating to income in France



I am a non-resident receiving rental income from my furnished apartment in France. Will I get extra tax allowances if I include my spouse and children on my French tax return?

In France, a non-resident tax return is filed by the person or persons carrying out an activity in France. Therefore, if you are registered in your sole name for the furnished rental activity (for example, if you use the simplified MICRO tax regime) then you are only declaring the income earned in your sole name and are considered as 'single' for tax purposes.

Non-residents are taxed at a flat rate of income tax according to the net taxable income. There is no reason to include your spouse or children on the tax return, as you do not get the advantages linked to household shares that you would as a French tax resident. You do get the tax-free allowances from the MICRO tax regime (50% if you rent long-



term, or short-term with a tourist certificate; 30% if you rent short-term without a tourist certificate), but you are not taxed

on the sliding scale and are not eligible for the household share system.

The non-resident income tax rate is fixed at 20% on taxable income (profit) not exceeding the second resident tax band (€29,315 in 2024) and 30% on any taxable income exceeding this amount. For rental activities, there are also social taxes applied to the same net (17.2% for non-EU residents, or 7.5% if you are affiliated to the obligatory healthcare system in an EU/EEA country or the UK).

In the event you are running your furnished rental activity in joint names with your spouse, you must use the REEL regime of taxation and file a set of profit and loss accounts (usually via an accountant) in addition to an annual income tax return. In this case, both co-owners will be named on the French tax return and

the relevant proportion of profit or loss highlighted in their individual column. This doesn't change the overall taxation indicated above but would be a reason to include your spouse or civil partner.

My wife and I have moved to France and want to run a small antiques business from our home. Can we both register as 'auto-entrepreneurs' and take advantage of the individual thresholds and tax allowances?

No, not when you are running the same business from the same address with the same clients. The French consider this a partnership and would oblige you to register the business in joint names, bringing about the requirement of annual profit and loss accounts. You would each pay into French social security according to gross profit and the majority of the social contributions would be offset in the accounts prior to calculating income tax. In addition to filing the accounts, the financial result would be declared in each spouse's column on the personal household tax return and taxed on the sliding scale along with all other worldwide income.

It is only possible to have two individual enterprises (whether using MICRO or REEL) in the same household when you each have different professional activities and/or distinct clients and services.

In any case, you may find it more tax-efficient to have a partnership with one set of

See
FRENCH ENTRÉE MEMBERSHIPS
at the French
Property Exhibition
Stand 71b

accounts, where you can offset all your running costs and purchase costs, rather than both being registered as *auto-entrepreneur* and paying social security contributions on gross income. It would be a good idea to get a simulation from an accounting firm to find the best solution in your particular case.

I am retiring to France but would like to run a small consultancy business to top up my pension income. Is this possible?

You can, of course, carry out a professional activity in France at the same time as being retired. However, you need to work out whether this is worth your while, as you will probably be obliged to pay social security contributions* despite already receiving a pension, and in addition, as you will be paying into the obligatory French healthcare system, you would also be liable for social taxes on your foreign pension income! These social taxes are currently set at 9.10%, with possible reduced rates according to previous years' fiscal revenue.

It would be important to look at your household situation, the amount of pension income and the anticipated consultancy income, to see whether the amount of contributions and social taxes you would be liable for still left enough profit to make the work worthwhile.

* If you are in one of the exceptional cases of being covered for life by another social security system (such as the UN), then you would be exempt from French social security contributions and social taxes - which as you can imagine would make a big difference in the net profit available to you. ■

"The non-resident income tax rate is fixed at 20% on taxable income (profit)"



Debbie Nye is a Property & Relocation Adviser at FrenchEntrée. If you are looking to move to France and would like guidance on your individual situation and the steps to take to help make your dream a reality, find out more about our FrenchEntrée Member packages at [frenchentree/members.com](https://frenchentree.com/members.com)

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Renovation projects

Advice from architect
Anne-Sophie Donèche



Is it compulsory to use a registered French architect for my building/renovation project in France?

Whether you need to hire a registered French architect for your project in France depends on several key factors, including the size of the project, type of property you own and where it is situated, and the specific nature of the work you want to undertake.

Understanding these requirements is essential before starting on any construction or renovation work.

• **Size threshold requirements:** The primary determining factor is the floor area of your project. Since 2017, French law has required you to hire a registered French architect when the total floor area exceeds 150m². Your planning permission won't be approved unless it is signed by a French-registered architect. This threshold applies not only to new construction but also to extensions and renovation.

In France, we look at the *surfaces de plancher* of the project. This floor area calculation includes closed and covered surfaces, with deductions for external and internal wall thickness and areas with ceiling heights of 1.80m or less. However, it excludes parking areas, basements, technical rooms, cellars and attics.

It's crucial to understand that this 150m² threshold includes the total floor area after any extension work. For example, if your existing house is 130m² and you plan an extension of 25m², you would exceed the 150m² threshold and therefore require a registered architect.

For smaller extensions (20-40m²), and in urban areas covered by a *Plan Local d'Urbanisme* (PLU), you may only need a *déclaration préalable* (a simplified planning permission) rather than a full *permis de construire*, and an architect may not be required if the total floor area remains under 150m². However, any extension exceeding 40m² requires a registered architect.

For projects under 150m², you have more flexibility. You can work with other professionals such as a *maître d'oeuvre* (a project manager) or manage smaller projects yourself.

• **Listed buildings:** Certain projects requires the help of a registered architect

regardless of size considerations. If you're renovating a listed building, you will be required to hire a French architect as they will need to work closely with the *Architectes des Bâtiments de France* (ABF).

• **Legal entity requirements:** A critical exception exists for legal entities: if your project is being undertaken by a company, association or any legal person such as a civil property company, called an SCI (*société civile immobilière*), you must hire an architect regardless of the project size. This requirement applies even for very small projects, making it essential to consider your ownership structure before beginning any work.

What are the benefits of hiring an architect?

Even when not legally required, engaging a French architect offers significant advantages. They ensure compliance with French local planning regulations, they can identify potential issues

See
SWEETCH ARCHITECTS
at the French
Property Exhibition
Stand 24

before they become costly problems, and often save money through efficient design and competitive tendering to building companies. Architects are

familiar with the bureaucratic processes involved in French construction projects and can navigate the planning system effectively. French planning regulations can be complex and vary by cities and regions, with specific rules about building materials, roof pitches, window proportions, and aesthetic considerations designed to preserve regional architectural heritage. A French architect's expertise in these local requirements is invaluable.

Can I ask my UK architect to draw the plans and get a French-registered architect to sign the project?

Some clients start working with their UK architect and hope to find a French-registered architect to sign the project. It is strictly illegal. By doing so you face the risk of having your project stopped forever and the French architect would be penalised.

For projects requiring an architect, you must use a state-certified architect. They are registered with the *Ordre des Architectes*. The profession is strictly regulated in France, and using an unregistered person claiming to be an architect is illegal. French registered architects are recognisable under the title *architecte DE-HMONP* or *architecte*

DPLG. An *architecte DE* isn't registered and they can't sign your planning permission for you. You can search for qualified architects through the official website - *architectes-pour-tous.fr* - which provides listings of professionals and architectural firms in your area along with examples of their work. ■

Anne-Sophie Donèche
is a Director at
Sweetch Architects
Tel: 0033 (0)7 83 11 06 09
sweetcharchitects.com

“A French architect ensures compliance with planning regulations, identifies issues before they become problems and can often save money”



Making the move

Tracy Leonetti answers your relocation questions



My wife and I are British passport holders and have bought our home in France and now wish to move there permanently. I will be retired but my wife is a consultant and would wish to continue working, we are confused about what visa to apply for?

As British passport holders, you and your wife will now need to apply for a long-stay visa (*visa de long séjour*) if you plan to live in France permanently, as the UK is no longer part of the EU.

If you're retiring and don't intend to work, the long-stay visitor visa (*visa de long séjour 'visiteur'*) is usually the best option. This visa allows you to settle in France provided you can show that you have sufficient financial means to support yourself and that you hold comprehensive private health insurance. The visa is applied for in the UK and can be renewed annually once you're living in France.

For your wife, things are a little more complex, as she wishes to continue her consultancy work. She would need to apply for a business visa, which allows self-employed professionals to operate in France. The most suitable option for independent consultants is the *profession*

libérale visa, designed specifically for freelancers and those running their own businesses. Once granted, she'll need to register her professional activity in France.

The visa application process is the same for all types of visa, with only the required documents varying:

1. Complete the application online through the official visa portal.
2. Book an appointment at your nearest TLS Contact centre (London, Manchester, or Edinburgh).
3. Attend the appointment with all necessary documents.
4. Validate your visa online once you arrive in France.

For the profession *libérale* visa, your wife will need to provide a business and financial plan as part of her application. After arriving in France, she'll also take part in the *contrat d'intégration républicaine* (CIR) process, which includes a short assessment of her French language skills.

We have been told that the French healthcare system is

very good but difficult to get into. As retirees from the UK, would we be able to get access do you think and how long does it take?

It's true, France's healthcare system is often praised as one of the best in the world, but many newcomers find the process of joining it a little daunting at first. The good news is that, as retirees from the UK, you absolutely can access French healthcare - it just takes a bit of patience and paperwork.

If you move to France with the correct long-stay visa and become a legal resident, you can apply to join the system through your local CPAM (*Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie*) office. This is where you'll be issued with a French social security number, which is the key to accessing healthcare services.

You can apply once you can prove that you've been living legally in France for at least three months. The only exception is if you hold an S1 form - available to UK state pensioners. If you have an S1, you can register for healthcare immediately, without waiting the three months.

The process itself is paperwork-heavy, and it's not unusual for the CPAM to ask for duplicate or additional documents - or even to misplace a file. It's best to send your application by post, keep copies of everything, and follow up if you haven't heard back after about five or six weeks.

Once your application has been approved, you'll eventually receive your *carte vitale* - the green health insurance card that makes life so much easier when visiting doctors, pharmacies or hospitals. Reimbursements are processed automatically, and once you're in the system, it runs very efficiently.

So, while the paperwork can be slow, the end result is worth it. A little patience (and persistence) goes a long way in France!

Do you have any other tips for us once we've moved to France?

Once you've sorted your visa and healthcare, there are a few other key steps that help you settle smoothly into life in France. None of them are particularly difficult but they do require a bit of organisation and patience. I haven't mentioned 'language' as I take it you are all learning the lingo!

● **Registering your residence:** When you arrive, you'll need to make sure your address is correctly registered. For those applying for long-stay visas, this often happens automatically when you validate your visa online, but it's worth checking that your local *mairie* has you on record, especially if you live in a smaller commune.

● **Setting up finances:** Opening a French bank account is essential - it makes paying bills, setting up utilities and managing taxes far easier. French banks do tend to ask for plenty of documents (proof of address, ID, visa etc) so be prepared!

● **Sorting utilities and insurance:** You'll need to set up or transfer accounts for electricity, gas, water, and internet. Don't forget home insurance - it's a legal requirement for homeowners and tenants in France. Many people also take out car insurance and top-up health insurance (*mutuelle*) at the same time.

● **Understanding taxes:** Even if your income comes from abroad, you'll likely need to file a French tax return once you're classed as a resident. It's worth speaking to a tax adviser early on to understand your obligations and avoid surprises later.

● **Driving and vehicles:** If you plan to drive, check whether you need to exchange your UK driving licence for a French one (in many cases, this is now required). You'll also need to register your car in France if you bring one over - generally within the first month. ■

Tracy Leonetti is the Director of Leonetti Business Services lbsinfrance.com

See
**LBS Leonetti
Business Services**
at the *French
Property Exhibition*
Stand 25



How long before I move to France should I contact removals companies for a quote? And what information should I give them?

The earlier you get in touch, the better. Contacting a removals company well in advance ensures you have plenty of time to organise your move and secure a date that suits you. Most companies recommend reaching out at least four to six weeks before your move, but if you can plan even earlier, that's ideal - especially during busy periods like spring and summer.

To provide an accurate quote, it's important to give as much detail as possible. Start with a complete list of the items you plan to move. If you can, send photos or videos of your home and belongings; this helps the company understand the volume of your move, which is key to calculating costs. Include both your collection and delivery addresses, so travel time and logistics can be properly assessed.

Let the removals company know if you would like any additional services, such as packing, dismantling furniture or reassembly at your new home. Also, mention any potential access issues, such as narrow driveways, stairs, or restricted parking. This helps to avoid any unexpected complications on moving day.

Clear communication at the start sets the stage for a stress-free, organised move, letting you focus on settling into your new home

What does the quote include?

When you receive a quote from a professional removals

The big day

How can you ensure a stress-free moving day? **Ben Franklin** offers his advice



company, it's designed to cover all the key aspects of a smooth and hassle-free move. This includes customs clearance and guidance when required, ensuring that your cross-border move is handled correctly. You'll be given fixed collection and delivery date windows, so you know exactly when your belongings will be collected and delivered.

See **FRANKLINS REMOVALS** at the French Property Exhibition Stand 51

All furniture should be carefully protected during transit, with removal protection covers, mattress covers, sofa bags and armchair bags included. The team provides professional loading and unloading, placing items in the rooms of your choice. Collection and delivery are carried out from both ground and first floors,

giving you peace of mind that everything will be handled safely. Your quote should also cover essential costs such as fuel, tolls, ferries and Eurotunnel fees, so there are no hidden surprises.

If there are any additional services you require - such as packing, dismantling or storage - these can be requested and added to your quote. This ensures your move is tailored to your needs, giving you confidence that every detail is planned and your belongings are in safe hands.

If there's a gap between our UK home selling and the purchase of our French property completing, what storage options do we have?

If there's a delay between selling your UK home and completing on your new property in France, good removals companies often offer flexible storage solutions to keep your belongings safe. For example, your goods can be stored for any period of time in our dry, secure warehouse, with each customer's items placed in their own dedicated, breathable storage containers.

When you have a clearer idea of your moving dates, simply contact the company and they should be able to provide availability and options to suit your schedule. This ensures your belongings remain protected and ready for delivery when your new home is ready, giving you peace of mind during the transition period. ■

Ben Franklin is a Director at Franklins Removals Ltd
Tel: 0121 353 7263
franklinsremovals.co.uk

“Your quote should cover all essential costs such as fuel, tolls, ferries and Eurotunnel fees, so there are no hidden surprises”



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Join us for a winter feast in Issue 9 of **Taste of France**. From Michelin stars and moreish mountain cheeses in Isère to the remarkable story of Comté in the Jura, and the secrets of Chartreuse to gourmet shopping in Chamonix, this edition celebrates the flavours of the mountains.

Also join us as we explore spa town Vichy, savour the seafood of the Opal Coast and discover Cantal's famous church-belfry ham.

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Plus there's wine wisdom, foodie news, the best restaurants, shopping, cocktails and, bien sûr, some deliciously comforting seasonal recipes.

For lovers of French gastronomy, this is essential winter reading. **Bon appétit!**

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EXPERTS AT THE
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Top tips

Exhibitors from the forthcoming
French Property Exhibition
share their expert knowledge

BUYING

Searching for a property



Jerry Green,
Clé Rouge
Immobilier,
Stand 55

Before you even start looking for a property, focus on finding which region of France will actually be the right one for you (or confirming, if you've already got one in mind), using practical criteria:

- **Property prices by area:** What will your budget afford?
- **Climate:** Seeking better weather is one of the biggest reasons people in the UK seek a permanent or holiday home abroad. But don't just look at average annual sunshine, compare wind strength/direction, rainfall and relative humidity; check seasonal variations.
- **Lifestyle:** What amenities do you need (shops/restaurants/sports/medical etc)?
- **Communication:** Access to airports (check summer and winter flight availability), rail and road access. In many rural French areas, don't expect the availability of buses, taxis/Ubbers or food home delivery that you are used to in the UK.

Remember, the above factors

will not just impact your own quality of life/enjoyment, they will also affect whether family and friends will be able to or want to visit.

If you would like a free guide including property prices and climate across all regions of France, email 'Request Free Guide' at contact@clerouge.fr

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Seek professional advice



Robert Kent,
Kentingtons,
Stand 33

France can be a tax haven in disguise for those who plan correctly. Many people assume they will face punitive taxation, only to find

that with proper planning, they could actually pay less. The challenge is that most movers do not know the right questions to ask.

The real trick isn't knowing all the answers but knowing which questions matter. That is why professional advice is so valuable, as a suitably French-qualified and regulated adviser will raise the critical points that need attention; the ones you may not even know about. "What do you mean, how are we married?" and "What on earth is a juicy fruit?" (yes, those were real questions - and if you're wondering, unlike the UK, France has different marriage regimes; and, put very simply, a 'usufruit' is a right to use something for a specified time period, e.g. a lifetime - come to our stand and we can explain more).

UK wrappers such as ISAs become irrelevant once you live in France, while French investment wrappers like the *assurance vie* offer tax efficiency, flexibility and inheritance benefits that few other systems can match.

The key is to seek advice before you move, so that when you arrive, everything can be structured correctly from day one. With sound planning, your money will work quietly behind the scenes, allowing you to focus on living the life you came to France for.

kentingtons.com

FRENCH LIFESTYLE

Everyday tips for a smooth and easy transition



Pauline Voisin,
IAD Overseas,
Stand 1

Starting a new life in France is not just about

paperwork and property, it's about embracing a new culture and rhythm. Here are five key aspects of everyday life to help you settle in smoothly.

1. Speak the language, live the experience: Even a few words make a difference. Learning to say '*bonjour*' or order your coffee in French breaks the ice instantly. Locals appreciate the effort: it's how friendships start!

2. Take time for the table: Meals in France are never



When researching where to buy, look at what your budget will afford

rushed. Whether it's a baguette from the market or oysters on the Atlantic coast, food is about sharing and slowing down. In the southwest, lunch often stretches into laughter and good wine.

3. Master the art of politeness: A 'bonjour' opens every door. Handshakes for new acquaintances, kisses for friends, and always a 'merci' before you go. Courtesy is part of daily warmth.

4. Slow down to the French pace: Shops close for lunch, Sundays are quiet and holidays are sacred. Once you adjust, you'll wonder why you ever rushed.

5. Explore beyond the postcard: From Bordeaux's vineyards to Atlantic waves, each region has its own rhythm and charm. Find yours and let it feel like home!
iadoverseas.com

RENTING RULES

Renting out your home in France



Fabienne Quelard, Anderlaine, Stand 5
Thinking of buying a

charming chalet in the Alps or a village house in the Dordogne and renting it out when you're not there? The Non-Professional

Furnished Rental (LMNP) status remains a highly lucrative option for French property investors, offering significant tax advantages. By opting for the *régime réel* (actual cost regime), you can often deduct expenses and the property's depreciation, dramatically reducing or eliminating tax on your rental income.

However, the French fiscal system is not easy, and the rules are constantly evolving. Before you commit, you must be aware that local *mairies* (town halls), particularly in popular tourist areas, have the authority to establish strict rules that can restrict your ability to rent out your property. This may include limiting the number of rental days per year or even requiring a compensatory rental or change of use authorisation.

Furthermore, your property's official 'classé' (classified) status is now crucial for determining which simplified tax scheme (Micro-BIC) and deduction rate you may be eligible for.

These regulations are complex and essential to master for a successful investment. To make the most of your investment, speak with a local accountant who knows the terrain.

anderlaine.com



A survey looks below the surface to ensure there are no nasty surprises

SURVEYS

Why a survey is key



Matthew Noble, MKN Surveyors, Stand 61

Buying a property in France can be one of life's great adventures - but French houses often hold surprises that aren't immediately obvious. From beautiful stone farmhouses to coastal villas and Alpine chalets, every region brings its own construction styles and quirks. A professional RICS Building Survey gives you clarity before you commit, highlighting not just visible defects but the underlying causes, whether that's roof detailing, damp proofing, structural movement or outdated services.

Unlike the UK, France has no tradition of pre-purchase

surveys, so a buyer's due diligence is essential. Our role is to translate local building practices into clear, actionable advice - explaining what's typical, what's repairable and what's a real concern. For overseas buyers, that reassurance is invaluable.

We also help bridge the gap between French diagnostics reports (which are statutory but limited) and the more comprehensive condition reports that British buyers expect. It's about confidence, transparency and protecting your investment.

At MKN Surveyors we work across the UK and France, combining RICS heritage expertise with on-the-ground local knowledge - from medieval masonry to modern timber frames. Our advice helps clients plan sensibly, avoid surprises, and buy with confidence.
mkn-surveyors.com

REMOVALS

Choose the right removals partner



Ben Hingley, Burke Bros, Stand 3

Before you book your removals company,

take the time to do a little homework, it can make all the difference to your international move. Relocating abroad, especially moving to France, comes with unique challenges that require specialist expertise. Look for a removals company that focuses specifically on international moves and ideally has extensive experience with French relocations.

Reputable companies will hold membership with the British Association of Removers

A holiday home can be both a lifestyle and a financial investment





Look for a removals company with industry accreditations

“Starting a new life in France is not just about paperwork and property, it’s about embracing a new culture and rhythm”

(BAR) and FIDI accreditation, two respected industry standards that guarantee professionalism, reliability and financial protection throughout your move. These accreditations mean your belongings are in safe hands, from careful packing and customs paperwork to delivery at your new French home.

While it might be tempting to choose a local firm, remember that experience outweighs proximity. A team that understands the logistics, language and regulations of cross-Channel removals will save you time, stress and potential headaches.

So before signing on the dotted line, research your options, check credentials and ask about their experience with moves to France. With the right removals partner, your journey to a new life across the Channel can be seamless, secure and surprisingly straightforward. burkebros.co.uk

BUYING

Insider tips to help you stand out and be taken seriously by agents



Jenny and Jessica Small, Poppins Real Estate, Stand 7

First, get your house in order!

Make sure your current property is sold (or on the market), your cash is available, or your mortgage is in place. Agents give priority to buyers who are ready to move when the right property appears. If your plan is still five years away, don't be surprised if responses are slower; timing matters.

Be clear and honest about your budget and timeline. Transparency helps agents match you with the perfect home rather than chasing unrealistic options.

It's also useful to know the area you're in or be open to working with several agents

in different regions. Our network of over 250 agents across France means we can help you anywhere.

Finally, communication is key. If you make an enquiry, be sure to stay in touch, whether by email or WhatsApp. Remember, it's a two-way relationship, we invest time in your search, and when we work together, amazing homes and smooth transactions follow.

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FINANCE

Use a French mortgage to boost your buying power



Jeevanthy Nivert, Societé2Courtage, Stand 23

If you're a UK resident dreaming of a home in France, here's a strategy many savvy investors use - and it's not as complicated as you might think. Instead of transferring large sums or selling off your investments to buy in cash, consider financing your French property locally.

French banks continue to welcome UK buyers, and the interest rates available here are often significantly lower than in the UK. Even with recent global fluctuations, many lenders still offer long-term fixed rates that provide both security and predictability.

By borrowing in France, you can keep your existing assets invested, allowing them to continue generating returns - often higher than the cost of the mortgage itself. In other words, your capital keeps working for you while you enjoy your French home. This approach is not only



French mortgage rates remain low

financially efficient but also strategically smart. It gives you greater liquidity, preserves your wealth, and lets you benefit from the exceptional lending conditions still available to non-resident buyers.

At Societé2Courtage, we help UK clients structure their financing with French lenders who understand international profiles and can tailor competitive solutions to your needs. Whether you're purchasing a pied-à-terre in Paris or a villa in Provence, our team ensures a smooth and advantageous process from application to completion.

So before moving funds across borders, take a moment to explore your French financing options - it could be one of the most profitable decisions you make this year. societe2courtage.com

INSURANCE

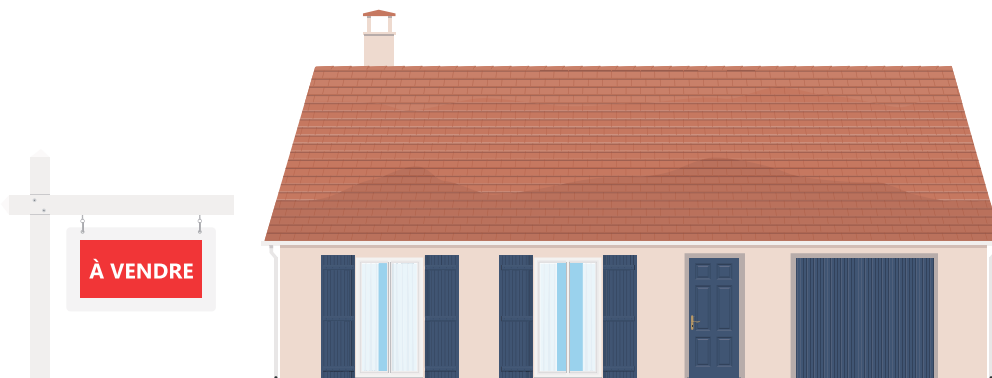
Can I get holiday home insurance if I rent out my French property?



Jason Jackson, Boshers Insurance, Stand 35

When you're looking for overseas holiday home insurance, consider the amount of time your property is left unoccupied, and whether your guests are paying or non-paying. If your property is classified as commercial, you will need a different type of policy compared to a residential home. Holiday letting insurance is for holiday homes and cottages which are let to guests for short-term holidays, under a holiday letting contract, for a period of 31 days or less.

Residential landlords' insurance is for owners of homes, houses and apartments ▶



When speaking to agents, be clear and honest about your budget and timeline

which are rented out on an assured shorthold tenancy or similar. Commercial landlords' insurance is for owners of shops or offices that may have mixed residential use.

Factors to consider and let your broker know of include:

- Property location risk level
- Value of the property
- How often it is occupied

Boshers can provide insurance for a wide range of French properties, from older character homes to holiday let complexes. So, if your property is unique or niche, situated in a remote location, or you use it for a combination of both personal holidays and holiday lets, come and see us at the exhibition. boshers.co.uk

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“Focus on finding which region of France will actually be the right one for you”

BUYING
Househunting on the French Riviera



Fabienne Bisset, Halkin Riviera, Stand 31

The French Riviera, the second most popular tourist destination after Paris, has seen its holiday rental market experience significant growth in recent years, both in coastal towns and inland areas. This profitability remains very attractive to investors, who see it as a way to combine business with pleasure: renting out their property and enjoying it whenever they wish.

Key investment towns such as Nice with its bourgeois and



When choosing an area, consider access as well as climate and lifestyle

Belle Époque architecture, Cannes with its international events, and Antibes offering a typical Provençal picture dominate, but if you are interested in better value for your money, we can also suggest emerging towns such as St-Laurent-du-Var and Cagnes-sur-Mer, ideally located between Antibes and Nice, and benefiting from direct access to the sea. Vallauris, a ‘natural

balcony’ over the Med with Antibes and Cannes at its feet, is a city of art par excellence that attracted great artists such as Pablo Picasso, while Golfe-Juan, with its expanding port and sandy beaches, is strategically located between Juan-les-Pins and Cannes, minutes from the famous perfume town of Grasse, the Golf of Mougins or the cobbled streets of Valbonne old town. halkinriviera.co.uk

Popular tourist areas offer lucrative rental markets too



PROPERTY FINDERS

A helping hand



Christine Collombel-Pelosse, Homelike Home, Stand 22

In today’s busy world many buyers struggle to find time to search for properties, often leading to frustration and missed opportunities. There is another way though.

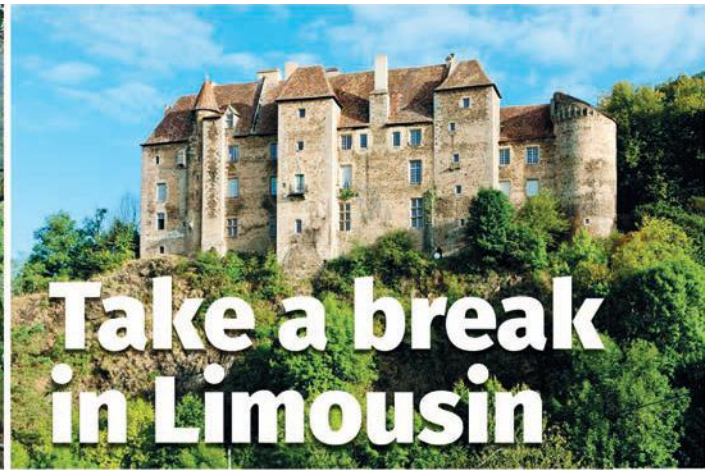
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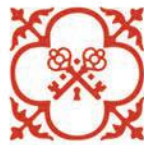
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Winter is the perfect time to visit the mountains - this is the fairytale village of St-Léger-les-Mélèzes in the Hautes-Alpes



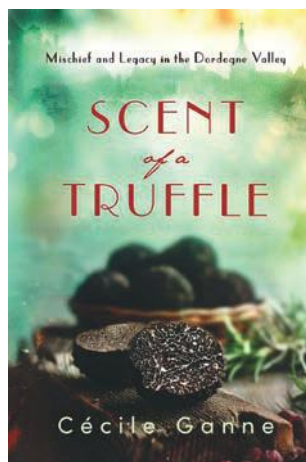
Joie de vivre

READ

SCENT OF A TRUFFLE

By Cécile Ganne

Adèle Montfort is a widow whose community and way of life are threatened by poachers, a predatory mayor and her own mortality. She desperately hopes that her young granddaughter will inherit her love of the countryside along with her truffle-rich land, but nothing is certain. The author's childhood in the Dordogne valley permeates every page of this novel, rich in evocative scenes and traditions.



WATCH

LA PETITE FEMELLE

Stream on Disney

This 2020 film with English subtitles explores how one woman's past indiscretions can shadow her entire life. Set in the 1940s-60s, it raises questions about societal prejudice and double standards but it's really about betrayal, murder and what can or cannot be forgiven. Based on the true life-story of Pauline Dubuisson (1927-1963), it will leave you questioning what really happened.



TEST YOURSELF

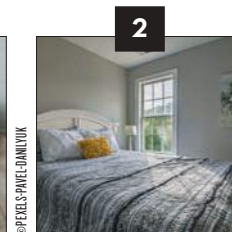
Les associations

Match each image with its French name

- 1 UN PLAID
- 2 UN JETÉ DE LIT
- 3 UNE COUVERTURE
- 4 UN POLAIRE



1



2



3



4

answers p112

DID YOU KNOW?

EVERYBODY SAY 'CHEESE'

Charles de Gaulle once mused, "How can you govern a country where there are 258 varieties of cheese?" More recent calculations now place the figure at 3,423 types, but whatever the exact number, there's no doubting the importance of cheese here. In tangible terms, the French consume more than 27kg of cheese per person every year, which equates to more than 860,000 tonnes sold at retail, and those sales are worth more than €9bn to the economy. And if you're curious as to the most popular, that would be Emmental, Camembert, Brie, Raclette and Mozzarella, with Roquefort and goat's cheese not far behind.



© PIRELS-POLINA-FANALE/UTOPIC

Test yourself



© GEMSTAR - STODOLSKA/BETTY MARSH

PROPERTY TALK

What does 'une serpillère' mean?

1. A corkscrew
2. A floor cloth
3. A serving dish

answers p112

French interiors

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French icon

Discover some of France's most fascinating icons

THE LUMIÈRE BROTHERS

Known as the fathers of cinema, Auguste and Louis Lumière were born in Besançon in 1862 and 1864 respectively, before the family moved to Lyon. Originally a painter, their father turned to photography and his sons showed an early interest in his work, both going on to attend the largest technical school in Lyon. Louis was particularly gifted in photographic processes and developed a 'dry plate' method that boosted the family business, producing millions of plates per year by 1894.

Also in 1894, their father happened to see a demonstration of Thomas Edison's 'Kinetoscope', a projector that enabled one person at a time to watch a short film. Little did he know that his own sons' creations would go on to replace this modern invention.

Louis developed a lightweight, non-electrical device called a Cinématographe that used pinholes in the film to capture and project 16 frames per second using intermittent movement based on a sewing machine. The Cinématographe was patented in February 1895 and the next month the brothers used it to film workers leaving the Lumière factory. This short film was screened in Paris for around 200 members of the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale, and that event is considered the first presentation of projected film.

The brothers made over 1,400 short films, mostly featuring everyday scenes, and travelled as far as Bombay, New York and Buenos Aires, amazing audiences. While other inventors worked on similar processes, Louis and Auguste were the first to understand the importance of making cameras more portable, and the value of being able to show films to the public. Their family home is now the Musée Lumière in Lyon, dedicated to the history of cinema.



What to drink...

Each issue, we take a look at a different French drink. This time, the spotlight falls on Dubonnet...

Have you ever tried a Dubonnet? This sweet fortified wine has a deep red colour and a distinctive flavour that comes from the added herbs, blackcurrant, cane sugar and quinine. Back in the European Colonial days, quinine was given to troops working in malaria-ridden countries. It was an effective medicine but its bitter taste made it a hard sell, so in the 1830s the French government launched a contest to make it more palatable, and Joseph Dubonnet rose to the challenge.

The classic Dubonnet cocktail mixes one part gin and two parts Dubonnet with ice, garnished with a lemon twist. It was a favourite of the late Queen Mother, who once wrote: "I think that I will take two small bottles of Dubonnet and gin with me this morning, in case it is needed." This handwritten note was sold at auction for £16,000, and confirms the royal approval of a drink that was initially invented to make the medicine go down.



CLICK OF THE MONTH

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Test yourself



IDIOM

"Je mets ma main au feu"

- 1 I'm taking a huge risk
- 2 I ran the lights
- 3 I'd stake my life on it

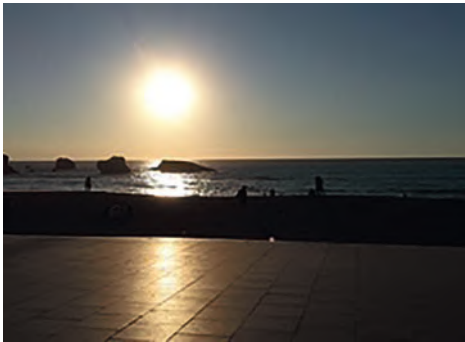
answers p112

READERS' PHOTOS

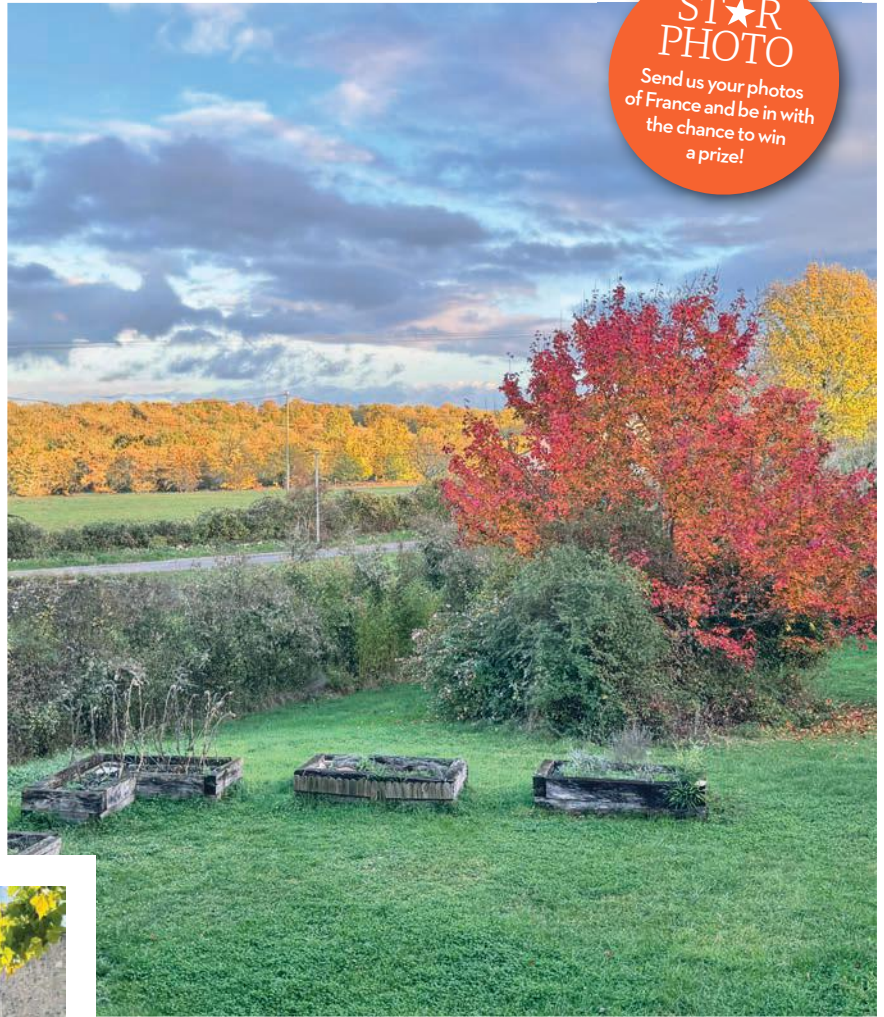


WIN

This issue's star photographer wins a year's subscription to French Property News!



A beautiful seaside sunset photo taken on holiday by **Karen Hutchinson**



STAR PHOTO
Send us your photos of France and be in with the chance to win a prize!

STAR PHOTO Peter and Anita Jesson were admiring the clouds when they snapped this autumnal view from their house in Cremps in the Lot



Stephanie Jackman visited the annual Fête de la Chataigne in Collobrières in Var, celebrating local chestnuts



Lovely half-timbered buildings and a glimpse of the Gothic cathedral in Rouen, capital of Normandy, shot by **Bruce Ayling**

ANSWERS:

Les associations: 1. Une couverture = blanket, 2. Un jete de lit = bedspread, 3. Un polaire = fleece, 4. Un plaid = tartan blanket; Property talk: Une serpilière = a floor cloth; Idiom: Je mets ma main au feu = I'd stake my life on it

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“I am not blessed with patience”

Ian Moore should be enjoying vignettes of domesticity, but his mood is dark and the animals sense it...

It's income tax month - I have to start gathering all our documents and receipts in January because my dossier is 'complicated' - so my mood is dark anyway, and the animals sense it. The whole thing starts just before 6am with Gigi barking, which sets Kipper off barking, He barks like a teenager who's just discovered cheap cider, full of gusto and enthusiasm, and now he's started he's unlikely to stop until he's made himself sick. It means that one of us has to get up and deal with it. Me, usually. Natalie works during the week and so any weekend sleep is precious and as I'm at home more, I'm supposed to be enjoying these vignettes of domesticity.

For 'vignettes of domesticity' however, read, amateur expert in pet scatology. Don't ask me why we need so many animals, nor in what state I must have been in when I acquiesced to the revolving door policy that has seen our home take on the role of some kind of animal *Byker Grove*, the famous children's TV series about largely troubled kids finding a centre for their mischief and growing pains. They had social worker Geoff to aid their troubled paths; our quadruped misfits, three cats, some dogs, hens, goats, horse etc have me. I am not blessed with Geoff's patience and when they all get ill at once, it usually coincides with Natalie needing a lie-in



after a hefty week at work. And they didn't all just get ill at once this time; they got really visibly ill. I stepped out of the bedroom door, slipped on something malodorous and kept on sliding towards the lounge, only stopping when dog A blocked my path while still eating the vomit of cat C. Cat A was trying to clean her paws of dog B's evacuations, while cat B, a disdainful look on her face, coughed up a half-eaten mouse which the others all pounced on, spreading their excrement like an homage to Jackson Pollock. Which I then had to clean with peg-on-nose.

It's now 6.20 and the weekend is off to a flyer.

It was not then a happy family Moore that braved the torrential rain to watch Maurice and Thérance compete in a fun run. "Right," said the starter, "here are the rules! When I fire the starting pistol, you start, but..." - of course, there's a but, it's France - "you must not run past my colleague on the bicycle there." He pointed to an old fella on a bike. "This is for your own safety. Do not, and I want to make this clear, overtake my colleague on the bicycle or you will be disqualified!" The kids looked at him like he was nuts.

"On your marks, get set, GO!" The kids set off at a pace, but Bicycle Man wasn't ready and only 20 metres down the track he was gripped with panic. He wasn't even on the bloody bicycle. He jumped on, wobbling terribly, and tried to get going but it was too late. All of a sudden he was engulfed by 40-odd youths who were terrified to pass him but had nowhere else to go. It was a debacle, a badly organised, over organised car crash, which summed up perfectly well my feelings about stifling income tax red tape.

It actually cheered me up, it was so Keystone Cops like, such a perfect allegory of bureaucratic nincompoopery that it almost drowned out my pride when Maurice won his age-group race by a huge distance. Thérance, tearfully pushing himself through the pain - a lesson not lost on me - came a brilliant fifth, crying as he crossed the line. "It hurts too much," he wept, a mix of pride and agony. It turned out to be some weekend and when we got back I cleared up some more cat vomit using an old tax bill as a scoop. Another small, but important victory. ■

Ian Moore is a comedian, writer, chutney-maker and mod who lives with his family in the Loire Valley. His latest book is *Vive le Chaos* (£9.99, amazon.co.uk) ianmoore.info lapausevaldeloire.com

Rural riddles

Jeremy Hobson solves more of your pastoral problems



Roe doe show

Q Late last summer, out on a walk near the *Fôret de Preuilly* in *Indre-et-Loire* (Dept 27), we saw a single roe deer doe which appeared to have two white 'socks' like you occasionally see on some horses. Is it unusual - and is the colouration likely to be hereditary?

Gordon Peters

A As far as roe deer are concerned, it's not as unusual as you might think to

see individuals with a certain amount of white on them; particularly in specific regional areas where, so experts - quite literally in the field - tell me; "their appearance is put down to the genetics of the local population". It is a shame that the roe doe you saw was on her own as otherwise, with offspring alongside, you might have been able to see whether any hereditary mis-colouration had been passed down to

the next generation. Still on the subject of any white seen on roe deer, while they have no visible tail, a white rump (caudal disc) can often be noticed, particularly when in their winter coat. Adult does also have a white anal tuft. This is most easily seen if the deer is disturbed as, when it runs off, the white areas become far more obvious in order to act as an alarm signal to others.

MYSTERY OBJECT

Lucy Banks sent a photo of a bucket her husband had bought from a recent *brocante* for €7 (apparently he'd haggled the seller down from €15!) and wondered whether it might have an agricultural use or whether it was simply a galvanised bucket with a lid.

Being of a 'certain age' (her words, not mine) to remember such things, Lucy wondered whether it might have been a bucket for sanitising nappies in the days before disposables were available.

Other than possibly being a bucket used around the mid-20th century to preserve eggs in isinglass (a substance apparently obtained from the dried swim bladders of fish!) - in which case it should also have an insert of a wire-frame liner with two small semi-circular lifting handles - I am at a loss. Perhaps a 'Rural Riddles' reader may know more?



Bucket list

NO-DIG FOR VICTORY



Hugelkultur is a layering process

Q I've been reading about 'Hugelkultur' which is apparently a popular way of gardening in Germany as it's said to be good for the environment (needing less water and no carbon release by digging) and 'like a compost heap and garden bed in one'. Do you happen to know if it is practiced in French vegetable gardens and, if so, where might I go to learn more?

Wayne Spencer

A I must admit that, after your email, I had to make my own enquiries in order to find out more! One definition has it that "Hugelkultur is a type of raised bed gardening that involves layering logs, branches, leaves, compost and soil to create a mound."

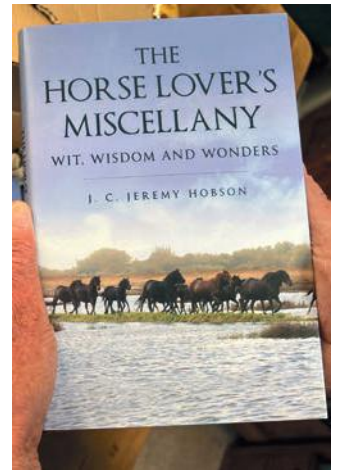
The supposed benefits are that, as the beds "mimic the decomposition process of a forest, creating a rich environment that retains moisture and nutrients", there is a reduced need to water or add fertilisers. The system is also said to improve soil structure and encourage plant growth.

As to whether Hugelkultur (the word being a combination of 'Hügel' meaning mound or hill and 'kultur' meaning - rather more obviously - culture or cultivation) is common practice in France, while I'm sure that French vegetable growers have used very similar methods over the years, there is not, to my knowledge, a specific following or teaching of the practice in rural France.

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Last August, my latest book - *The Horse Lover's Miscellany: Wit Wisdom and Wonders* - was published by Quiller (quillerpublishing.com) and, thinking of all the *French Property News* horse owners, our editor Karen has kindly suggested that I might like to make mention of it here.

As the publishers say, the book includes: "fascinating, amusing, quirky and practical information likely to be of interest to every weekend rider, horse owner and enthusiastic equestrian. [It] focuses on many aspects; from equine ancestry to equine epitaphs; from dressage to showjumping; carriage driving to ploughing matches; pony clubs to polo and much more besides... an eclectic mix of fact, moving tales of endurance in the harshest conditions, eccentricity, quotes, amusing anecdotes and 'I never knew that' snippets from both times past and the present day."



Jeremy's latest publication

A review in *Your Horse* magazine opines that it is: "... a rich and varied read for anyone with a passion for horses ... with its accessible format, the book invites readers to dip in and out or read from cover to cover."



What is this hairy growth?

THE GALL OF IT

Q Early on in the autumn, I came across a rather attractive-looking hairy growth on the stem of a rose-hip bush. It didn't look to be a part of the plant and I wondered if you might be able to say what it could possibly have been?

Mary Lane

A Given the above (and also the other notes you made in your email), what you observed is most likely to have been what many call a 'Robin's Pincushion' - a gall caused by tiny gall-wasp larvae (*Diplolepis rosae*). The galls are there earlier in the year but become rather more noticeable in September or thereabouts as they turn from green to red. Some think that the name of 'Robin' is derived from the mythical

sprite Robin Goodfellow (also known as Puck in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Another name is the Bedeguar gall.

It is, though, perhaps more universally known as the rose-gall due to the fact that the larvae can sometimes be found in cultivated garden roses and, frequently, out in the countryside wherever the wild dog-rose (*Rosa canina*) grows.

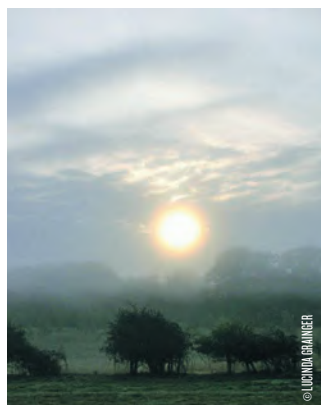
Once a female has laid her eggs, the larvae hatch and secrete chemicals that cause the rose stem to swell and develop into the hairy-looking gall. The gall grows around the bud or vegetation, creating a number of chambers in which each grub develops and subsequently feeds on the plant tissue which is, as a result, then inside the gall.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Q Walking one early morning in September, my wife and I were a bit spooked by the rather eerie halo we saw surrounding the sun. Bearing in mind the world events of the time, we wondered if it was a sign that the Apocalypse was nigh! Failing that, what might have caused the halo? As a little extra information, it was a misty morning (as can perhaps be seen by the poor quality of the photo).

Lucinda and Jessie Grainger

A Hopefully we will all be safe for a little while longer yet! The appearance of a halo



The Apocalypse or rain on the way?

doesn't mean the end of the world, but is more likely to be seen as a precursor to rain or

similar - the fact that you say it was misty could help to explain it. Although you noticed it in September, a halo around the sun can be seen at almost any time of the year if the weather conditions are right.

As to what actually creates this particular optical phenomenon, it seems that it is the refraction and reflection of sunlight through thousands of tiny water droplets or even ice crystals in high level clouds. Like light on the chandelier of an opulent ballroom, the crystals create a prism and, with many of them together, the halo.

GET IN TOUCH! If you have any 'rural riddles' for Jeremy, contact him by email at jcjeremyhobson@gmail.com
Jeremy Hobson is a France-based writer who specialises in all country matters j-c-jeremy-hobson.co.uk

SCALLOP TARTARE WITH ISIGNY SAINTE-MÈRE TRUFFLE CREAM

Isigny Sainte-Mère is a Normandy-based dairy cooperative renowned for its exceptional butter, cream, cheeses and caramels. Formed in 1980 through the merger of two long-established farmer cooperatives, it now represents around 600 producers across 380 farms. Its PDO-protected products are made using traditional methods and reflect the distinctive qualities of the Isigny-sur-Mer terroir, where the coastal climate and fertile pastures produce milk of remarkable richness and flavour.

Serves 4
Preparation time: 15min
Cooking time: 20min

INGREDIENTS

- 8 fresh scallops
- 1 small bunch of chervil
- 4 quenelles of Isigny Sainte-Mère truffle cream
- Quarter celeriac
- 50g parmesan cheese
- 4tbsp walnut oil
- Juice of half a lemon
- 1 dash of olive oil
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

- 1 Wash, peel and dice the celeriac. Place the diced celeriac in an ovenproof dish with a dash of olive oil, salt and pepper. Bake for 20 minutes at 200°C.
- 2 Rinse and cut the scallops into small cubes. Mix the scallops with the lemon juice and walnut oil in a bowl. Marinate for 30 minutes in the refrigerator.
- 3 Just before serving, add the shaved parmesan and chopped chervil to the bowl, season with salt and pepper and mix together gently.
- 4 Divide the mixture between four soup plates and place a quenelle of Isigny Sainte-Mère Truffle Cream onto each plate using a teaspoon.



Elegant and delicious - scallops with celeriac and truffle cream



Dairy display: the Isigny Sainte-Mère shop



Cream flavoured with truffles, mushrooms and brandy





Recipe courtesy of Isigny Saint-Mère Dairy
isigny-ste-mere.com

Woody's worries

Is there anybody out there?
Ruth Wood has got used to being ghosted in France



Ghosting. That's what people call it these days, isn't it, when a person ends a

relationship with someone by stopping all communication without any explanation?

It's one of those terms created for the age of internet dating, along with 'pocketing' (never introducing a partner to friends and family), 'breadcrumbing' (sending occasional, non-committal messages to keep someone interested) and 'zombieing' (suddenly reappearing in someone's life after ghosting them).

Although I've never been ghosted by a romantic partner, I do know what it feels like in the professional sense because I own a holiday home in France and have been 'ghosted' by my fair share of estate agents, artisans and administrators.

In the early years, I thought it was my fault. When estate agents didn't respond to my enthusiastic emails, I thought it was because my French lacked finesse or frankness. One agent let my husband

and me turn up in Brittany to view a property that had sold several days earlier.

When the local *maire's* charming secretary told me she'd send me some details about planning permission, but I never heard from her again - I thought perhaps I'd given her the wrong email address. But even when I emailed her, I got no response.

"Sometimes a bit of ghosting can work in your favour - our water company in France didn't bill us for three years!"

When artisans promised faithfully to give me a quote and then disappeared into the ether, I thought it was because they were put off by our UK mobile number. So we bought a French mobile number, but only scammers call it.

It's been three months since we were given a written quote to dismantle a dangerous ruin on our land. The demolition

man said he'd come at the end of October, but since then he's been about as forthcoming as a phantom.

NOTHING PERSONAL

Gradually it has dawned on me. When professionals in France ghost you, it's nothing personal. They simply don't feel obliged to respond.

A customer relationship - especially one started through the written word - is something they can take or leave. Turn up face-to-face and they'll be more than happy to help but contact them digitally and they'll feel free to 'swipe left', as internet daters would say.

And it's not just the French who are like this. We've met plenty of ethereal expat professionals too.

Sometimes a bit of ghosting can work in your favour. Our water company in France didn't send us a bill for three

years! We simply dropped off their radar and when they finally got in touch, I don't think they charged us the full amount.

Before I lay this stereotype on too thick, I should acknowledge some exceptions. When we found an exposed cable sticking out of our house, the electricity company turned up quick smartish.

Likewise, an installer came to the rescue promptly when our boiler split and began drenching the kitchen.

FIRST-CLASS COMMS

However, the most impressive example of French responsiveness I've ever experienced was last summer when we travelled by train from Brittany to Provence.

Two hours before our first train was due to depart, my phone went 'PING!' with a text message in English from SNCF warning us of a 20-minute delay out of Rennes.

The train was indeed exactly 20 minutes late leaving the Breton city for Paris Montparnasse, putting us in a sticky situation. How on earth would we get to Gare de Lyon on time to make our connecting train to Avignon?

Just as we were frantically searching for the fastest metro route, an announcer came on the Tannoy and calmly listed the times of all the later trains passengers should take for travel beyond Paris.

"That's all very well," muttered my husband Jon. "But what about our tickets? Presumably, we'll have to buy new ones and then apply for a refund when we get home."

"And we'll probably get ghosted by SNCF," I added gloomily.

Just then I heard a 'PING, PING, PING, PING!' as multiple phones went off in the carriage. I looked at mine and found a text message from SNCF linking me to brand new e-tickets.

A copy of the message had been sent to my email inbox: 'IMPORTANT SNCF - Votre nouveau billet suite à votre rupture de correspondance en gare de Paris Montparnasse.'

I was dumbstruck. No need to make a mad dash across the capital. No need to buy new tickets and beg for a refund. No stress. No fuss. It was all sorted. I was blown away by the sheer efficiency of it all, the crème de la crème quality of the communication.

"Mum?" said my daughter Mabel, freaked out by my ashen face. "What on earth's the matter? You look like you've seen a ghost." ■



Jon and Ruth love travelling by train in France



The demolition of the ruin will have to wait

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The intrepid châtelaine

It's **Erin Choa's** birthday but she's celebrating another occasion - central heating at the château!

I have the dubious honour of a January birthday on what is statistically known as the most depressing week of the calendar year. However, a birthday provides the excuse for a château party and some enforced merriment to chase away the winter blues and to quash my friends' saintly New Year's resolutions of becoming tee-total or trapped in sad post-Christmas diets.

We usually host a silly themed dinner party within the arctic depths of a château winter; guests courageously come dressed *à theme* as pirates (or whatever nonsense we've conjured up for that year) all prepared to brave the glacial conditions, as they politely pretend not to shiver in the unheated dining room while the winds rage outside and everyone is praying that the birthday cake candles might at least be a source of heat, however feeble. Any tee-totalling sentiments tend to fly out of the single-glazed windows as guests reach for the whisky to numb the burgeoning hypothermia.



The only heat was from the candles



Crack open the champagne! After half a decade of freezing winters, the Château de Bourneau now has central heating!

However, this year, the château has a surprise for all. After half a decade of freezing château winters, we have an announcement: Château de Bourneau now has central heating! It took years of saving and various complex building studies to try and find a system that was able to heat 1,000sqm of castle without needing to win the lottery. Most of the salesmen who visited to pitch us their heating system took one look at our rising turrets and defensive medieval moat (that funnily enough makes access a challenge) and ghosted us, never to be seen again. Or they proposed ludicrously expensive suggestions that would involve us building either another moat bridge or a new building to house the heating system.

After years of boiler discussions, we finally found a business not scared away by our historic walls, 4.5m-high ceilings and pesky water

feature, and who provided the logical and sustainable solution that we had been searching for, enabling us to use wood from our own forest.

As expected, the delivery wasn't without drama - the 950kg machine was randomly delivered to our village rather than the château without any warning. Luckily, our kind farmer neighbour was available last minute to meet us with his telescopic handler to move the boiler into the château boiler room, managing just to squeeze between the eastern façade and the extremely practical moat wall.

Disaster almost struck when the telescopic handler could not advance the final metre into the boiler room, blocked by steps that descend from the Yellow salon. Fortunately, château problem-solving is our forté and it is amazing what can be done with a series of ramps, old palettes, a manual fork-lift and bloody



mindedness. Despite the machine weighing almost a tonne and the ramps supposedly only able to support a weight of 400kg, the boiler glided into position.

This is a momentous occasion, not just for our own comfort but for the structural integrity of the château, driving away humidity and enabling us to progress with the restoration. We wondered if we should launch a bottle of champagne at it to christen the boiler like a good luck talisman for a ship but it might be better to simply drink it and toast to a toasty winter. I wonder if this year's birthday theme should be Hawaiian? ■

London-born hospital doctor Erin Choa is the 6th châtelaine of Château de Bourneau, where she lives with her French fiancé Jean-Baptiste and bossy cat HRH Oscar. She blogs about their château-life on Instagram @theintrepidchâtelaine



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Hello, I'm John Dislins, founder of pleasehelp.eu.

If you're reading this, you probably have a connection to France - perhaps you're planning a move or you're already navigating life across the Channel. Moving to France can be daunting, especially the paperwork - but form-filling is only the surface. It barely touches what it truly takes to build and sustain a life in France.

BEYOND THE FORM: SEEING THE WHOLE PICTURE

At *pleasehelp.eu*, we believe the real challenge isn't completing documents, it's managing the entire ecosystem of tasks that shape your life in France. From the moment you decide to relocate, you enter a year-long cycle of procedures, renewals, declarations and administrative interaction. What people actually need is not a form-filler, but guidance, insight and complete task management.

When you deal with French administration - whether it's the *Préfecture*, *Assurance Maladie* or *Impôts* - you are engaging with a large, complex system. Success comes from understanding how that system works.

- It's not only submitting a residency application; it's understanding why

your 'carte de séjour' is approved or refused.

- It's not only declaring taxes; it's knowing how France interprets your global income.
- It's not only registering a car; it's navigating customs, conformity checks, and registration rules.

When something goes wrong, you need to be able to take quick, informed action. That requires insider-level knowledge.

DECADE-LONG EXPERTISE

Since 2014, *pleasehelp.eu* has developed a deep, wide-ranging knowledge base. Our expertise covers:

- Residency and visas
- Nationality applications
- Health rights and access
- Driving licence recognition
- Business creation and taxation
- Imports, customs and vehicle registration
- Daily-life issues, including support after loss or theft

France is wonderfully rewarding but undeniably complex. That's why you need current, accurate, impartial advice; not outdated anecdotes.

RETIREMENT OR BUSINESS

Whether you're retiring to France or moving with plans to run a business, we can help with both long-stay visitor visa and working visa applications. The classifications for the working visa are growing day by day and include: salaried, talent passport, investor and *entrepreneur*. We handle the permission to work as well as the business plan aspects.

AVOIDING MISPLACED EXPERTISE

Some turn to solicitors when facing administrative resistance but this can backfire. French bureaucratic bodies may react negatively to legal pressure, especially in discretionary decisions. Our approach works with the system, understanding when to push and when to adapt, achieving results without confrontation.

YOUR PARTNER IN FRANCE

At *pleasehelp.eu*, we handle complexity so you can enjoy the best of France. Contact us to talk about the real challenges of life in France - and how we can help you navigate them. ■

For more information, visit pleasehelp.eu



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€690,000



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HAUTES PYRÉNÉES REF: EL5318

€208,000



Charming 5-bed home set in the Adour valley, blending rustic character with bright, spacious interiors. With a welcoming courtyard, traditional features and exciting renovation potential, it offers serene countryside living close to local amenities – a truly rare opportunity.

PYRENEES ATLANTIQUE REF: EL5285

€285,000



This fully restored pre-Revolutionary mill offers serene country seclusion, a private stream-fed lake, natural swimming pools, stone architecture and wooded grounds. A regional award winner for exceptional renovation.

PYRENEES ATLANTIQUE REF: EL5317

€295,000



Charming house with 2/3 bedrooms and a substantial independent barn set in a hamlet in an idyllic surrounding looking out over the church and vineyards to the rear and rolling hills and the Madiran vineyards to the front.

HAUTES PYRENEES REF: LC5262

€449,900



Beautiful 292m² character home combining generous light-filled living spaces, 4-5 inviting bedrooms and a pool with sunny terraces on 2503m². Full of warmth and charm, it offers effortless family living and an inspiring setting to relax or entertain.

HAUTES PYRENEES REF: EL5260

€650,000



Historic 17th-century coaching house at the foot of the Pyrénées, beautifully restored and filled with light, offering generous character-filled spaces, mountain views and flexibility for a stunning family home, guesthouse or venue in peaceful setting.



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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2556

€769,600 AFI



A rare equestrian property near Castelsagrat, lovely valley views and 18 hectares of pasture, 11 stables, 3 bed stone house and swimming pool. Easy access to village.

LOT ET GARONNE REF JAS-2554

€1040000 AFI



Stunning domaine near Agen with manor house, guardian cottage, large barn for events, lake and 19 hectares. Many opportunities available at this property with extended families, rentals and farming or stud.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JK-2552

€426,000 AFI



A beautifully restored stone farmhouse, with guest cottage, apartment, pool and gardens set in a peaceful hamlet near to Bourg de Visa. Ideal for extended families or hosting guests.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JK-2549

€275,000 AFI



This 3 bedroom home offers both tranquillity and convenience, just a short stroll from the Quercy village of Castelsagrat, with 1,9 hectares of land, bordered on one side by woodland.

LOT REF JAS-2546

€372,500 AFI



Renovated home near Castelnaud Montratier with outbuildings, 2 hectares of flat land. Thanks to new heat pump system, and complete insulation, it has an excellent B energy performance rating.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2501

€315,000 AFI



Charming stone house near Lauzerte with 4 bedrooms, swimming pool and with small stone barn to renovate. With 3,096m² of gardens a very easy house to look after.



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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2506

€795,000 AFI



A stunning ensemble of stone properties near to Montaigu de Quercy with a traditional 3 bed farmhouse, a fully renovated barn, a guest cottage, swimming pool, 13 hectares of land.

LOT ET GARONNE REF JK-2513

€395,000 AFI



Located in the heart of a medieval village, near Agen a well-renovated stone house with 4 bedrooms, a garden and terrace plus a larger garden opposite with lovely south facing views.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2510

€472,500 AFI



Authentic stone farmhouse near Bourg de Visa with 4 bedrooms, a large barn, swimming pool and a manageable 4857m² garden. Easy access to the village with local commerce.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2523

€685,000 AFI



A wonderful country house a short drive from Moissac, with 5 bedrooms, a guest cottage with 3 beds, swimming pool and 3 acres of gardens plus 13 acres of land.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JAS-2522

€474,000 AFI



A stunning 3 bedroom stone property, swimming pool, 2 bedroom guest cottage and 8686m² of gardens and woodland located in a small hamlet between Montaigu de Quercy and Lauzerte.

TARN ET GARONNE REF JK-2545

€295,000 AFI



A modern 4-bedroom home, on the edge of Roquecor, with countryside views underfloor heating throughout (powered by a new heat pump), with large separate workshop and garden of 1570m².



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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3282

€429,500*



A desirable and impeccably presented stone built farmhouse with spacious living and idyllic dining areas with swimming pool, overlooking the Lot et Garonne countryside. 5 minutes to an historic village with amenities. Land: 3720m².

LOT ET GARONNE L3162

€450,000*



Beautiful renovated stone barn with double garages, stone barn, outbuildings, heated pool and panoramic views. Set on village edge with bakery and café, just 10 minutes from several Bastide market towns and charming surrounding countryside. Land: 5500m²

DORDOGNE L3363

€546,000*



Just 15 minutes from Eymet, this restored 5-bed stone property includes two spacious gîtes (2 and 3 beds), perfect for holiday rentals. Close to the prestigious Golf des Vigiers, offering a rare opportunity for French lifestyle and income. Land: 3243 m² fenced

DORDOGNE REF: L3216

€299,500*



An imposing traditionally built property, situated on a good sized plot of land with established gardens and a wealth of fruit trees. A detached outbuilding ripe for conversion. 5 minutes to Bergerac centre. Land: 3533m². Fenced grounds.

LOT ET GARONNE L3360

€399,000*



Charming 5-bedroom stone property with outdoor dining, heated pool, indoor Jacuzzi, wooden chalet, paddock and horsebox. Close to amenities like chemist, doctors, bakery and a traditional French market, all within walking distance. Land: 7000 m² fenced

DORDOGNE L3348

€294,995*



Elevated home with sweeping countryside views, a traditional pigeonier and modern comforts including partial underfloor heating and double glazing. Near a village with essential amenities and a short drive to the bastide town of Eymet. Land: 2507m²

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*Agency fees included.

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LOT ET GARONNE L3322

€315,000*



Beautifully restored 120m² stone village house full of character, featuring a sunny south-facing courtyard and a convertible attic for additional space. Presented in excellent condition, it offers comfortable, charming living in the heart of the village. Courtyard - 400m² approx.

GIRONDE L3293

€151,200*



An attractive périgourdine property with a manageable sized garden, just a stone's throw away from the Dordogne River. The property benefits from a garage and countryside views, in walking distance of a market village with basic amenities. Land: 1600m²

GIRONDE L3195

€210,000



Attractive single-storey stone property, formerly the village épicerie, full of character and history. Set on the edge of a pretty village with shop, countryside views, separate barn and fenced garden, just 10 minutes from Ste Foy La Grande. Land: 1600m²

LOT ET GARONNE L3204

€609,000



Attractive countryside estate with private driveway, in good condition, offering idyllic outdoor living with a 5000m² lake, 3 hectares of woodland and 8 hectares of equestrian-friendly meadows, all set on extensive secluded grounds with no close neighbours. Land: 10 Hectares

LOT ET GARONNE L3284

€903,000



Rare opportunity to acquire an enchanting 1820 château in an elevated setting with countryside views, swimming pool and excellent stone barn. Full of character, with a four-storey stone staircase and spacious yet manageable accommodation. Viewing recommended. Land: 2.5 hectares approx.

LOT ET GARONNE L3248

€315,000



A stone 6 bedroomed house with an attached separate cottage, a barn, small pigeonier and Chai all in good condition. Gas central heating and double glazing. Situated in the countryside, 3km from Lauzun with amenities. Land: 4000m².

RICHARD IMMOBILIER

7 rue du Chateau 47410 Lauzun

TEL: +33 (0)5 53 83 30 46 EMAIL: info@richardimmo.com WEB: richardimmo.com



*Agency fees included.

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

SAINTE-SÉVÈRE, CHARENTE BV181014

€440,000



Nestled on the edge of a village with amenities, close to Jarnac and Cognac, this impressive, contemporary 5-bedroom/en suite villa is not to be missed. The beautiful grounds of nearly 1.4 hectares, which boast a number of fruit trees, perfectly frame this magnificent house with its wrap-around terrace leading out to its sparkling inground swimming pool.

CAMBOULIT, LOT BV183115

€199,000



Close to Figeac, this delightful 2-bed stone property was once a miller's house and enjoys beautiful views towards the stunning Château de Bédier. It has been tastefully decorated and the airy living space - kitchen, diner and cosy lounge area with wood-burning stove - just oozes charm. It is being sold furnished (subject to conditions).

SAINTE-FOY-LA-GRANDE, DORDOGNE BV176194

€898,000



This stunning property is arranged around a charming courtyard enclosed on three sides, centred on a magnificent mature tree and accessed through an arched gateway. The spacious main house enjoys direct access to the Dordogne river and open countryside, while a perpendicular wing houses a barn, workshop and storage space.

BEAUX VILLAGES IMMOBILIER

Head office: 3 Rue Robert Descorne, 33580 Monségur

TEL: +44 (0)800 270 0101 / +33 (0)8 05 69 23 23 EMAIL: info@beauxvillages.com WEB: www.beauxvillages.com

Beaux Villages
IMMOBILIER

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LIMOUX, AUDE BVI76705

€280,000



In the popular village of Pomas, set in an elevated position in a quiet street, this attractive single-level 3-bed villa offers lovely views over the surrounding hills and countryside. At garden level, the existing garage and workshop provide potential for future development. Just a short drive from both Carcassonne and Limoux.

GOURDON, LOT BVI82244

€349,800



On the edge of a charming village, this contemporary 4-bed, 2-bath single-storey house benefits from a bright open-plan living space. As well as a separate home office, the property has a fenced pool, a low-maintenance garden, a productive vegetable plot and a section of woodland. An air-source heat-pump powers underfloor heating.

RIBÉrac, DORDOGNE BVI69326

€299,600



This jewel, situated in a quiet hamlet close to a vibrant town with all amenities, has been tastefully converted into a 5-bedroom, 3-bathroom family home. Additional features include a large multi-purpose atelier on the second floor, a second "summer" kitchen, a garage with mezzanine and landscaped gardens. For those looking for a property with rich history, a visit is a must!

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Beaux Villages
IMMOBILIER

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

TERRES-DE-HAUTE-CHARENTE, CHARENTE REF: A38266NAM16 €149,950



Charming stone house with 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, bright living spaces, private courtyard and garden with fruit trees. Full of character and ideal for relaxed village living or B&B potential.

EXCLUSIVE CÔTES-D'ARMOR, BRITTANY REF.: A39316JAM22 €277,000



Historic 2-bedroom stone manor offering character, original beams, and inviting living spaces. Surrounded by peaceful grounds with mature trees and a charming outbuilding, it delivers timeless appeal, privacy and the perfect setting for relaxed country living.

EXCLUSIVE SAÔNE-ET-LOIRE, BURGUNDY REF: A30405GC71 €134,000



Bright stone farmhouse with warm character, updated interiors and welcoming flow. Peaceful grounds with views, mature trees and a large barn add charm. A comfortable blend of history, space, quiet country living, and style.

DEUX-SÈVRES, POITOU-CHARENTES REF: A38752NHA79 €379,000



Character filled stone house with 7 bedrooms, bright living spaces, a charming kitchen and dining area, mature garden, sunny terrace and useful outbuilding. A warm, spacious home with plenty of room for easy country living.

EURE-ET-LOIR, CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE REF: A36497LIL28 €181,440



Stone house with 3 bedrooms, spacious lounge-diner opening to gardens at front and back, a generous garage for two cars, veggie plot and outbuilding. Peaceful setting, flexible upstairs space and comfortable flow.

LOT, MIDI-PYRÉNÉES REF: A39488SNM46 €205,000



Charming 5-bed longère offering character and versatility. Stonework and exposed beams give real rustic charm, while a large garage and mature garden, plus extra land with wells, open up possibilities for a guest house or separate unit.

LEGGETT IMMOBILIER INTERNATIONAL

Head Office: Route de Ribérac, 24340 La Rochebeaucourt et Argentine

TEL: +33 (0)5 53 56 62 54 / UK : 08700 11 51 51 EMAIL: info@leggett.fr WEB: www.frenchestateagents.com

LEGGETT
IMMOBILIER INTERNATIONAL

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

EXCLUSIVE ORNE, NORMANDY REF: A38447RBR61

€441,500



Elegant 5 bedroom stone manor house blending classic charm and comfort. Original "Belle Époque" staircase and oak-parquet floors give timeless character. Spacious living room with wood-burner, bright modern kitchen and winter garden annex.

EXCLUSIVE AUDE, LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON REF: A36459AGU11

€375,000



Charming stone house quietly nestled near a village, blending rustic character with modern comfort. 4 bedrooms, sunny garden, saltwater pool and a spacious garage. Inside, beamed ceilings and a wood-burner add warmth.

CHARENTE-MARITIME, POITOU-CHARENTES REF:A36057JH117

€229,000



Character 4 bedroom home with a tranquil garden, flowing stream and historic wash-house. Inside, a warm rustic feel with, open kitchen and unique bread-oven entrance. Includes a separate apartment and useful outbuildings for flexible living or guests.

DORDOGNE, AQUITAINE REF: A41301HRC24

€372,500



Welcoming family home set in peaceful countryside surroundings, light-filled kitchen, spacious living/dining area, five bedrooms. Includes cellar, garage plus wood-workshop, terrace with views over open fields and generous gardens.

EXCLUSIVE CREUSE, LIMOUSIN REF: A40467MRS23

€119,900



Charming stone 3 bedroom house with warm living spaces, balcony views and classic character. Includes vaulted cellars plus a barn and stable. Two gardens and an additional field offer privacy and room to grow.

EXCLUSIVE INDRE, CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE REF: A37361JNH36

€138,430



Charming 4 bedroom detached cottage with rustic character, surrounded by a lovely garden and mature trees. Inside, exposed beams, stone walls and a welcoming fireplace create warm, classic atmosphere. A great mix of old-world charm, potential to personalise.

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LEGGETT
IMMOBILIER INTERNATIONAL

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

TOUFFAILLES, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC381

€845,000



Stunning restored 1850s stone country house, set on 2.8 ha at the end of a quiet lane with no close neighbours. Features 4 beds, 4 baths, pool, barn, workshop and spectacular views.

NEAR MONTAIGU DE QUERCY, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC638

€875,000



Idyllic 1771 French stone country house with six bedrooms, vaulted cellars, pigeonnier, equestrian facilities, swimming pool and gardens, blending historic charm with modern comforts, just minutes from Montaignu-de-Quercy and Lauzerte.

BENQUE, HAUTE GARONNE WMC656

€750,000



Early 19th-century Maison de Maître in SW France with restored interiors, guest annexe, landscaped gardens, woodland, swimming pool, terraces, garage and flexible living spaces—offering elegance, charm, and panoramic hilltop views.

NEAR VILLERÉAL, LOT-ET-GARONNE WMC643

€349,000



Charming 18th-century Lot-et-Garonne stone cottage with two bedrooms, guest annexe, pool house, gardens and panoramic countryside views, blending historic character with modern comforts, just minutes from Villeréal's shops and markets.

LAVERCANTIERE, LOT WMC666

€480,000



Elegant 19th-century stone village house, featuring five bedrooms, restored historic features, modern kitchen, terraces, walled gardens, stone barn and stunning countryside views, blending timeless character with contemporary comfort.

LAUZERTE, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC260

€415,000



Ancient stone town house in historic Lauzerte, fully restored with vaulted cellar, bespoke kitchen, modern bathrooms, lift, roof terrace, guest apartment, garage and period features, blending luxury living with rich heritage.

WHEELER PROPERTY SARL

18 Grand Rue, 47470 Beauville

TEL: 05 53 47 92 30 TEL: Carol Ann 06 70 47 23 53 TEL: Robert 06 44 96 05 88

WHEELER
PROPERTY SOUTHWEST FRANCE

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

BOUSSAN, HAUTE GARONNE WMC576

€575,000



1856 stone chateau in SW France with thermal springs, outbuildings, extensive gardens, river access, grand period interiors, terrace, workshops and flexible living spaces—ideal for family home, B&B, or unique cultural project.

ROQUECOR, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC606

€564,000



Mid-19th-century stone house in Tarn-et-Garonne with three bedrooms, guest annexe, barn, swimming pool, summer kitchen, landscaped gardens, orchard and terraces—blending period charm with modern comforts within walking distance of village amenities.

MONFLANQUIN, LOT-ET-GARONNE WMC517

€375,000



Late 19th-century Monflanquin town house with three bedrooms, roof terraces, grand period interiors, marble fireplace, panelled ceilings, garden with topiary, fruit trees, outbuilding and views—blending historic charm with modern comfort.

BOURG DE VISA, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC655

€159,000



Charming stone village house in Bourg-de-Visa with restored period interiors, stylish kitchen, log-burning stove, bedrooms, courtyard, garage and garden—offering authentic South-West French living just an hour from Toulouse.

LAUZERTE, TARN-ET-GARONNE WMC573

€298,000



Charming two-bedroom stone and brick country house in Tarn-et-Garonne with modern kitchen, two bathrooms, roof terrace, log-burning stoves, established gardens, woodland, outbuildings and panoramic countryside views—newly refurbished and ready to move in.

BEAUVILLE, LOT-ET-GARONNE WMC639

€285,000



Charming stone village house with colombage façade in Beauville, featuring three bedrooms, two bathrooms, modern kitchen, open-plan living, log-burning stove, sun terrace, balcony and stunning village views—move-in ready and beautifully presented.

WHEELER PROPERTY SARL

18 Grand Rue, 47470 Beauville

TEL: 05 53 47 92 30 TEL: Carol Ann 06 70 47 23 53 TEL: Robert 06 44 96 05 88

WHEELER
PROPERTY SOUTHWEST FRANCE

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

NANTEUIL-EN-VALLÉE CHARENTE R7395 €145,000



Set in a quiet hamlet just a five-minute drive from the picturesque village of Nanteuil-en-Vallée, this charming country home showcases some beautiful original features.

AUNAC CHARENTE R7394 €175,000



Step into this beautifully presented character property, where original charm meets modern open-plan living. Inside, the generous living space with 5 bedrooms features exposed stone walls and wooden beams, blending rustic authenticity with everyday comfort.

AUNAC CHARENTE R7385 €265,950



This beautiful property offers the possibility of choosing between two houses: one to live in, the other to welcome guests as a holiday cottage. It will also appeal to horse lovers thanks to its three shelters and approximately 1.5 hectares of land.

CIVRAY VIENNE R7396 €349,950



On over three acres with woodland, heated swimming pool and river frontage. 6 bedrooms between the main house and gîte. Full of character in a quiet hamlet.

SALLES DE VILFAGNAN CHARENTE R7386 €415,750



Sublime country house with large grounds, four spacious bedrooms, three shower rooms, a beautiful kitchen, and two lovely living rooms. Outside, there is a heated swimming pool with a terrace and an independent gîte.

CIVRAY VIENNE R7390 €473,600



This exceptional 10th-century residence with 2 wings combines history and character, with remarkably well-preserved original features: stone tower, exposed stone walls, beams, flagstones and cœur de demoiselle stone floor. A rare property offering charm, authenticity, and modern comfort.



AGENCE TIC RUFFEC

31 Place des Martyrs de L'Occupation, 16700 RUFFEC

TEL: 00 33 (0)545710046

EMAIL: info@tic-ruffec.com

WEB: www.tic-ruffec.com

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

CIVRAY REF: R7359

€117,645



Secluded riverside stone house with outbuildings and private fishing plot.

CHAMPAGNE MOUTON REF: R7314

€178,200



Beautiful 5-bedroom village house near Champagne Mouton.

SAUZE VAUSSAIS REF: R7257

€399,950



Elegant stone longhouse in the heart of a wooded park with large pool.

CHARENTE REF: R7350

€248,650



Dream Charente retreat for sale with swimming pool and countryside views.

VERTEUIL-SUR-CHARENTE REF: R7217

€263,150



Charming old water mill for sale in an idyllic setting.

CHAMPAGNE MOUTON REF: R7216

€336,800



Views to die for. 5 bedroom country farmhouse on 2 acres with swimming pool and barns.



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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LAAS REF: 2028

€520,000



Beautiful country home in an idyllic setting, with just under a hectare of land, large barn, swimming pool and picturesque view to the Pyrenees.
An excellent restaurant is within walking distance!

AMOU REF: 2029

€625,000 INCLUDING FEES



A beautiful 5 bedroom renovated farm house with a swimming pool, 2 hectares of land, ideally located just outside of a vibrant market town.

SALIES DE BEARN REF: 2024

€129,000



This stylishly decorated and luminous first-floor apartment with west-facing balcony and parking space, offers one bedroom, a living room with kitchen, pantry, bathroom and WC.

MUSCUDY REF: 2020

€299,900



Former convent built in 1910, in a rural setting offering magnificent views of the surrounding countryside and the Pyrenees. The property oozes charm and currently comprises two separate dwellings.

ORAAS REF: 2027

€520,000



Discover this stunning property, set in over 6 hectares of land, with outbuildings, located in the beautiful French countryside, a short drive to local market towns.

SALIES DE BEARN REF: 2025

€313,500



Full of charm, where modern harmonises with old, in a tranquil quarter of the thermal spa town of Salies-de-Béarn, this 19th century house awaits a new guardian.

SOPHIE FOLLEY IMMOBILIER

3 Place Jeanne d'Albret, 64270 Salies-de-Béarn, France
TEL: +33 5 59 38 32 50 EMAIL: contact@sophiefolley.com



SOPHIE FOLLEY
IMMOBILIER

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

1833 ROUTE DE LA MANCHE, 74110, MORZINE REF: NUMA €1,550,000



Turnkey 6-bedroom chalet in Morzine's Vallée de la Manche, offering double-height living, sunny terraces with hot tub, quality finishes, strong rental history, low-maintenance design and peaceful alpine views throughout.

25 ROUTE DE HAUT MONTRIOND, 74110 MONTRIOND REF: PANORAMIQUE €1,795,000



Recently built 6-bedroom chalet in Montriond's L'Élé area, offering panoramic views, superb energy efficiency, stylish double-height living, south-west sun, flexible layout including optional two-bedroom apartment - true turnkey quality and comfort.

247 ROUTE DES UDREZANTS, 74110, MORZINE REF: ALTAVISTA €950,000



Modern 2-bedroom chalet in central Morzine with extra bunk room, south-facing balconies, wood-pellet burner, parking and garage. Bright living space, great views, and easy potential to add a third bedroom and bathroom.

304 ROUTE DE L'ABBAYE, 74430, ST JEAN D'AULPS REF: GRANDE VUE €995,000



7-bedroom chalet in St Jean d'Aulps with flexible layout, landscaped terraces, south-west views, parking and turnkey rental potential - ideal as a spacious family home or dual-use business property.

DOUGLAS ELLIMAN MORZINE

82 route de la Combe à Zore, Morzine

TEL: +33 (0)4 80 96 50 03 WEB: www.estateprestige.com/en/

 Douglas Elliman
FRANCE

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 90497

€170,000 AFI



Wonderful town house ranging over three floors, habitable immediately and with potential to extend. Walking distance to all amenities.
Excellent lock-up-and-leave holiday home.

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 95840

€695,000 AFI



In perfect condition, an amazing renovation in a village with facilities.
Four-five bedrooms, great reception space, walled private garden with room for a pool.
What's not to like...?

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 91987

€319,000 AFI



Two houses in one! Possibility to have one large family home or a gîte/guesthouse in this beautiful village on the borders of the Gers and the T&G.

GERS REF: 94311

€495,000 AFI



Beautiful country property with a brand-new pool. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms, immaculate throughout. One large space to renovate, if desired. Large garden with barn and workshop. 2 minutes to a lovely village with amenities.

GERS REF: 85023

€640,000 AFI



Fabulous property offering 4 en-suite bedrooms, large reception rooms, an upstairs terrace and an amazing pool area with pool-house. Surrounded by 4h of land in a private setting.

GERS REF: 84650

€615,000 AFI



A lovely, well maintained stone house with a large barn in good condition, surrounded by 2h of gardens with beautiful views. Private, but only a 5 min walk to a village with amenities.

LOMAGNE PROPERTIES

EIRL - Resi Limbeek - Character houses in the South West of France

TEL: 0033 (0) 7.60.85.21.76 EMAIL: Lomagne.properties@gmail.com WEB: www.lomagne-properties.com



LOMAGNE PROPERTIES

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

GERS REF: 83102

€260,000 AFI



Old Presbytery, well renovated, three bedrooms, ample living space, lots of storage and possibility to extend. Possible to install a swimming pool and/or a car-port.

GERS REF: 94148

€1,495,000 AFI



Fabulous 18th century manor house run as a gite and B&B business. 2.8h of land. Revenue potential immediately. A must-see for those with a project in mind.

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 91557

€750,000 AFI



14th century stone townhouse with pool and shop, in very good condition, situated in an historic village in the T&G. High ceilings, stone staircases, old fireplaces - charm, original features and character throughout.

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 97377

€656,000 AFI



Authentic Gascon house with an independent studio apartment, pool, wine cellar and outbuildings, sitting in a lovely garden of over 2 acres. Wide views across the countryside.

GERS REF: 98439

1,895,000€ AFI



A rare opportunity to buy a fully renovated property. Main house with five bedrooms, great entertaining space, large newly refurbished pool area. Gite with its own pool, and numerous outbuildings. Perfect condition throughout.

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 90727

685,000€ AFI



Well-maintained Manoir with a spacious guesthouse, several garages, a heated pool, and terraces to capture the lovely views of the countryside. Surrounded by 14h of land.

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LOMAGNE PROPERTIES

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

SAINT FRAIMBAULT - SOUTHERN ORNE REF: 6163715

€127,200 HAI TTC



Immaculate four bedroom village centre property with small outside terrace space.

LA HAUTE CHAPELLE - ORNE REF: 6164115

€183,750 HAI TTC



Spacious character property with original features in a quiet village. $\frac{3}{4}$ acre garden.

LE TEILLEUL, SOUTH MANCHE REF: 5022615

€143,100 HAI TTC



Pretty three bedroom cottage with a large stone barn, garage and 1 acre of land.



ASI IMMOBILIER

2 Place du Marché, Passais la Conception, 61350, France

TEL: 0 33 (0)2 33 65 79 26 EMAIL: info@asiimmobilier.fr WEB: www.asiimmobilier.com

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LASSAY LES CHATEAUX, MAYENNE REF: 5317715

€334,200 HAI TTC



Château, original features, parquet floors, walled garden and outbuildings.

SAINT FRAIMBAULT, ORNE REF: 6162915

€106,500 HAI TTC



Perfect holiday home in stunning village. Two bedrooms, fitted kitchen, enclosed garden.

ST MARS D'EGRENNE, ORNE REF: 6163615

€69,300 HAITTC



Cottage with garage and rear garden. Convertible attic and open fireplaces.



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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

HÉRAULT REF: NPO658800E

€658,800



Impressive 18th-century mansion of over 400 m² with period features, multiple reception rooms, 6 kitchens, 8 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, loft, veranda and 80 m² courtyard, ideal for B&B or apartment conversion, offering excellent potential.

HÉRAULT REF: PFM264000E

€264,000



15th-century former presbytery with dovecote, offering 145 m², 3-4 bedrooms including a master suite, two bathrooms, spacious living area with terrace, and large vaulted cellars -an exceptional property steeped in history!

HÉRAULT REF: C140400E

€140,400



Pretty 60m² village house on three levels with two ensuite bedrooms, fully habitable, set in a lively picturesque riverside village with restaurants and a market. An ideal pied-à-terre or charming home to enjoy the mild climate of the south.

HÉRAULT REF: LA253000E

€253,000



Charming renovated winegrower's house with five bedrooms, four shower rooms, bright living room, kitchen, 28 m² studio, large terrace with views, nearly 100 m² double garage and attic, offering authenticity, comfort and strong rental potential.

HÉRAULT REF: BH315000E

€315,000



Beautifully renovated 1920s house offering 148 m² living space with three bedrooms, two shower rooms, terrace, pool and garden on 422 m² plot, ideally located in the town centre near amenities, blending authentic charm with modern comfort.

HÉRAULT REF: FB489000E

€389,000



Set atop the village in a peaceful, private setting, this superb 130 m² villa offers three bedrooms, multiple terraces with stunning views, a garage, and a 2746 m² plot suitable for a pool. A real coup de cœur!

REAL ESTATE LANGUEDOC

TEL: +33 (0)6.09.58.54.26 EMAIL: frueda@aol.com WEB: www.realestateoccitanie.com



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

VIC-FEZENSAC, GERS REF: SNM_145

€56,000



Discover this townhouse on three levels located in the centre of town. Ideal for a young couple or investor.

PLAISANCE, GERS REF: SNM_161

€159,000



Discover this charming house located close to a town with shops, ideal for those seeking a peaceful living environment. Comprising 4 rooms including 2 bedrooms, it offers comfortable, well-appointed living space.

VIC-FEZENSAC, GERS REF: SNM_159

€296,000



4-storey, 368 m² building in the centre of town with courtyard, terrace and balcony. With 6 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms and a large 50 m² room, this property can accommodate a large number of guests. Tastefully renovated, it combines old-world charm with modern comforts.

MIRANDE, GERS REF: SNM_164

€369,000



Discover this magnificent 1990 construction on a 4594m² wooded and fenced plot, with covered swimming pool, spa and summer kitchen, all in a very quiet environment.

PLAISANCE, GERS REF: SNM_165

€499,500



Beautiful old mill situated in the heart of the Gers countryside with 7 hectares of land. A rare property full of potential.

VIC-FEZENSAC, GERS REF: SNM_114

€599,000



Exclusive opportunity to discover this sublime property in a quiet location 10 minutes from Vic-Fezensac in the commune of Castillon-debats, comprising a main house, gîte, swimming pool and numerous outbuildings set in 3 hectares of grounds.



GELAS IMMOBILIER

19 avenue de Lorraine, 32190 Vic-Fezensac, Gers

TEL: +33(0) 7 70 66 84 30

EMAIL: contact@gelasimmo.com

WEB: www.gelas-immobilier.com



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

GERS REF: MM2185MD

€315,000



Quiet country cottage in Gascony with Pyrénées views. Offering expansive outdoor living and a light bright interior. 10 minutes from 2 market towns.

GERS REF: MM2064MDS

€620,000



Outstanding Gascon manor house on 35 hectares of land, pool. Absolute privacy in this beautiful old manor house with a courtyard out buildings, set in the middle of its own land

GERS REF: MM2172SDMD

€580,000



Restored country house on 14 fenced hectares. Quiet setting near lively hamlet and Marciac. With barns, stables, and panoramic views. Wildlife haven, perfect for horses or rural lifestyle.

GERS REF: MM2186SD

€630,000



Beautifully restored country home with guest cottage. Pool, and panoramic Pyrenees views. Natural finishes, high ceilings, and shaded terraces. Peaceful elevated setting, full of character and perfect for entertaining.

GERS REF: MM1933SD

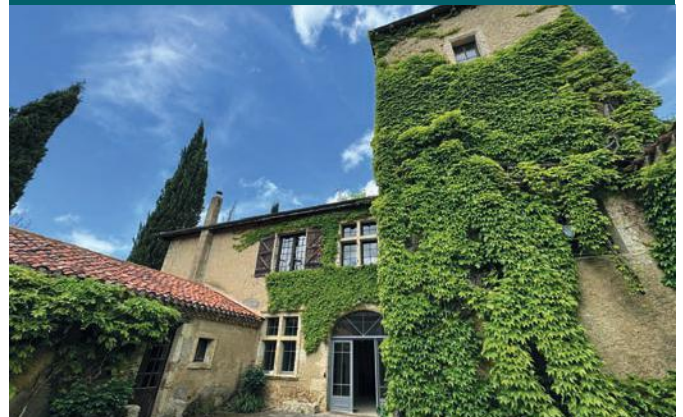
€265,000



Restored farmhouse with pool and Pyrenees views. Just five minutes from a lively market town. Peaceful setting, covered terrace, charming interiors, and easy-care garden. Ideal for family life or holidays.

GERS REF: MM1903SD

€790,000



Magnificent 15th-century manor near Auch with guest house. Outbuildings, dovescote, and 30 hectares of meadows. Elegant reception rooms, historic features, and endless potential for family, equestrian or hospitality use.



MAISONS ET MANOIRS

21 Rue du Générale de Gaulle 32140 Masseube.

TEL: +33(0)608040910

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WEB: www.maisonsetmanoirs.com

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

CREUSE REF: 171

€97,826



Situated in a quiet and rural environment, this authentic stone house offers great renovation potential, with adjoining barn, garden and land in Vigeville.

CREUSE REF: 174

€102,000



A rare property in the heart of a village undergoing a complete revival, offering an exceptional living environment, located in the centre of the charming and dynamic village of Châtelus-Malvaleix.

CREUSE REF: 170

€133,000



Authentic six bedroom village house, full of charm with garden, converted barn and furniture included located in Saint-Georges-la-Pouge.

CREUSE REF: 183

€165,000



Charming stone house with a swimming pool and unobstructed views of the countryside, in Saint-Dizier-les-Domaines.

CREUSE REF: 172

€199,000



Nestled in a bucolic setting, this property has been tastefully renovated throughout and comprises two adjoining houses - ideal for a large family, to provide independent living for guests, or be used for tourism-related activities.

CREUSE REF: 192

€128,000



Renovated village house with cosy living room, kitchen opening to a terrace, two bedrooms with shower room, office space, independent barn and one of the finest gardens in Creuse (the current owners are part of the Open Gardens association)!

IZA-IMO

IZA IMO

Isabelle CORTOT, 33, Avenue Gambetta, 23000 GUERET
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IZA-IMO

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

LOT-ET-GARONNE, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687636 €230,000



An attractive set of two stone houses in the countryside close to a small market town and five minutes drive from Eymet.

FINISTÈRE, BRITTANY REF: 687587

€256,250



Campsite with 40 pitches with swimming pool set on a 13,668 m² plot.

LOT-ET-GARONNE, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687632 €110,000



A compact single storey property offering an ideal lock up and leave holiday home or a retirement home.

GIRONDE, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687625

€1,588,000



Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Vineyard estate with traditional six bedroom stone house.

CÔTES-D'ARMOR, BRITTANY REF: 687503

€243,000



Charming 17th-Century home with modern comforts and endless possibilities.

DORDOGNE, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687693

€772,000



Beautiful Chateau overlooking Bergerac and the Dordogne Valley.

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VIENNE, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687619

€88,000



A truly exceptional opportunity to acquire a beautifully renovated 3-storey house between Poitiers and Limoges.

VAUCLUSE, OCCITANIE REF: 687708

€329,000



South facing villa with swimming pool and pool house in walking distance of nearest town.

PARIS, ÎLE-DE-FRANCE REF: 687467

€730,000



Splendid two room apartment in a dynamic, vibrant area of Central Paris in the 1st arrondissement.

DEUX-SÈVRES, NOUVELLE AQUITAINE REF: 687709

€158,000



A five bedroom village house with an enchanting view in the heart of Pamproux.

TARN, OCCITANIE REF: 687627

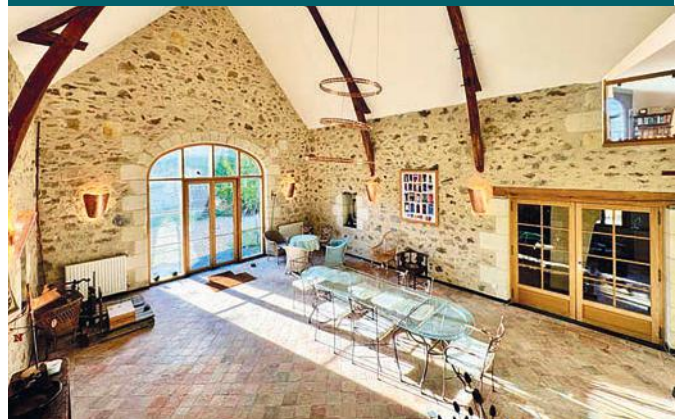
€254,400



Contemporary timber-frame home - bright, with pool and independent studio.

MAINE-ET-LOIRE, PAYS DE LA LOIRE REF: 686922

€489,500



Superb barn conversion in a quiet hamlet by the Loire.

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COTES-D'ARMOR YL-4960

€243,000



Restored 1600s longère in peaceful countryside, 10 minutes from Lac de Guerlédan. Modernised kitchen and lounge, two bedrooms, workshop, garage, stone outbuilding, large hangar, combining historic charm with comfort, space and creative potential.

CANNES 75011169685

€394,000



Brand-new 1-bedroom apartment in Petit Juas, Cannes, with terrace, pool, and panoramic views. Contemporary residence near La Croisette, beaches, and amenities. Secure, elegant, peaceful setting—ideal for living or investment. Last units available.

DORDOGNE BV182054

€895,000



Grand 7-bedroom, 3-bathroom property with spacious reception, dining room, and eat-in kitchen. Set on 3,600m² with landscaped gardens, river access, terraces, coach house, swimming pool, cellars, attics, and all modern utilities included.

EURE 75011169736

€338,000



Charming 1900 Norman house with spacious rooms and authentic character. Features large kitchen, bright 61m² living room with fireplace, four bedrooms, terrace, garage, and landscaped 1,963m² plot. Ideal countryside retreat with Paris and major roads nearby.

ALPES-MARITIMES 85256001

€526,000



New elegant development near Cannes and Antibes, 500m from town centre and 700m from beaches. Off-plan 3-bedroom apartments with terraces or gardens, communal pool, parking, markets and restaurants nearby. Delivery March 2027, low French stamp duty.

MANCHE SIF-002027

€256,500



Spacious 11-bedroom stone house on $\frac{3}{4}$ acre with above-ground pool. Former B&B with 4 letting rooms, owner's accommodation, and potential for multi-occupation. Level, well-maintained land surrounds the property. Viewing recommended to appreciate its potential.

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PROPERTY SHOWCASE

ANGERS LN-Y858N

€2,650,000



Elegant 19th-century chateau on the Loire, 25 minutes from Angers. Ideally located in the historic "Valley of the Kings," with easy access to Paris, Bordeaux, Angers and Nantes, plus nearby villages, essential shops and rich cultural attractions.

VAR 75011169603

€5,530,000



Exclusive Beauvallon Bartole estate of six luxury villas, each 360-600 sqm on large, landscaped plots with total privacy and panoramic Saint-Tropez Bay views. Exceptional design, premium finishes and amenities, close to beaches, golf and Saint-Tropez village.

LOT ET GARONNE WMC648-NH

€2,200,000



Magnificent 13th-century chateau overlooking the Lot River, fully restored to exceptional standards with modern comforts including geothermal heating and double glazing. Featuring spiral staircases, vaulted rooms, frescoes and grand fireplaces, it offers immaculate historic charm ready to enjoy immediately.

LA ROCHELLE O49AB

€1,366,000



Charming Fetilly property in La Rochelle's sought-after neighbourhood, just 10 minutes from the historic centre and Central Market. Features a 1910 period veranda, landscaped garden, and heated swimming pool, offering elegance, calm and timeless appeal.

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Vendée

Pays de la Loire

€665,000

FrenchEntrée Ref PETITCHATEAU4



Impressive 'Petit Château', a 4* Gite business and equestrian facilities (10.5 Acres)

Dating from the 11th Century and steeped in over one thousand years of history, Château Le Retail offers an immaculate family home with 5 main rooms and 5 bedrooms. An additional adjacent 2 main rooms and 3 bedrooms, having ensuite bathrooms, are available for use for guests or extended family.

Extensive renovations include large external buildings offering multiple use options. Set within 4.26 hectares with excellent equestrian facilities (inc. 60mx20m menage and 7 stables).

A dream home in the popular area of Vendée, close to pretty villages and local amenities, ready to move straight into and enjoy!



CONTACT: Pauline Richardson **EMAIL:** paulinerichardson.private@gmail.com **TELEPHONE:** +44 (0) 7764 987236

Pays de la Loire

Vendee(85), Vouvant

€350,000

FrenchEntrée Ref: FRE108806



Renovated detached Farmhouse on 2 acres, outbuildings and annex

Ideally situated down a quiet country lane, this charming, renovated property sits centrally in its private 9,160 m² plot. It offers a generous 217 m² of living space, consisting of 5 bedrooms and 5 bathrooms, including an adjoining 2-bedroom annex.

The land features a varied orchard, veg patch, vines and useful barns.

Whether you're seeking a peaceful retreat, self-sufficiency or a property with income, this property offers flexibility. Perfect for multi-generational living, guest accommodation or simply a spacious family home surrounded by nature.

Private sale, no agency fees.



CONTACT: Corin Bird **EMAIL:** corinbird26@gmail.com **TELEPHONE:** 0033 (0) 602640399

PRIVATE SALES

PACA

Var (83), Callas

€870,000

FrenchEntrée Ref (FE) FRE105557



5 bed house in Callas/Var: 200m from village centre, view, pool, 3 acres

Les Micocouliers is a beautifully positioned villa, set 30 metres from the road with a 200-metre walk to the village center. Located on a rocky outcrop, it offers stunning 30km views across the Var to the coast and only 54 miles to Nice airport. The house, with 4 air-conditioned bedrooms has terraces surrounding it and multiple outdoor seating spots. A pool, garage with EV charger and automated systems for shade and watering add convenience. Originally two shepherds' cottages, the property blends history with comfort. Property supplied fully furnished, see more details online.

CONTACT: Colin Cook **EMAIL:** colinm.cook@btinternet.com

Nouvelle-Aquitaine

Deux-Sevres, Faye l'Abbesse

€110,000

FrenchEntrée Ref MOFAYE081



Spacious, detached 3-bedroom house in a commune surrounded by countryside in 79350 Deux-Sevres, Nouvelle-Aquitaine

Located in the centre of a commune with shop, post office, library, pharmacy, garage and a short drive to a hospital and large town, this 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom house is ready to move in to. Fully re-wired and decorated in 2022, it retains a French feel. It boasts a large loft space and full C/H. It has secure parking and outside space. Mains drainage. Separate land included. Main home or lock-up and leave. No agency fees and opportunity to pay in Sterling.

CONTACT: Adrian Moore **EMAIL:** vanade1966@gmail.com

Vienne

Nouvelle Aquitaine

€820,000



A highly successful 3* gîte business with accommodation for 45 guests; 1270 sq m and 4 hectares of land

The main gîte building has 6 gîtes with 17 bedrooms, the family home, nestled behind, offers 7 bedrooms and an attached further gîte with 2 bedrooms. 10 minute walk to the lively village of Availles-Limouzine. Quasi-automatic French residency due to a history of significant revenue.

Impressive bookings for 2026 and 2027 means this is a genuine turn-key opportunity.

Perfectly positioned with the major cities of Poitiers, Limoges and Angoulême only 1 hour away. Ideal for a family with junior, middle and senior schools just 15 minutes by bus. Highly energy efficient with a DPE "C", 21 newly installed solar panels provide 9,000 kWh. Mini-farm, playground, pétanque court, stunning heated swimming pool, beautiful views. Handover support offered for a 3 months. www.giteavendre86.com



CONTACT: Graham Glass **EMAIL:** giteavendre86@gmail.com **TELEPHONE:** +33 (0) 6 04 02 69 15

Nouvelle Aquitaine

Dordogne, Ribérac

Price : POA

Frenchentree Ref : MontaqueCourt



Elegant estate with guest house, cottages and a swimming pool set on a large plot near Ribérac

Set on 1.42 hectares in the Dordogne countryside, this beautifully renovated estate combines charm and modern comfort. It features a 264 m² guest house with 5 suites, an independent 88 m² gîte, two cottages and a 100 m² reception/events room. There is also a heated swimming pool, landscaped gardens, garage/workshop, and two wells. Connected to mains drainage, the property offers double-glazing, central/electric heating, and versatile layouts. Currently run as an events venue, it has potential for six further dwellings (STPP). Shops, restaurants, and amenities in Ribérac are five minutes by car.

CONTACT: Kathy Maslen **EMAIL:** k.maslen59@hotmail.com **TELEPHONE:** 0044 (0) 7729057217



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French Entrée

PRIVATE SALES

Occitania, Aude

Nearest town: Limoux

€75,000

FrenchEntrée Ref: FRE112040



Former wine storage building to renovate in the Upper Aude Valley

Large building to renovate with garage, parking and secluded south facing garden in a village setting within the Val du Faby. The ground floor comprises a central aisle of 71 sq.m. currently used as a garage and storage. On each side of the aisle are 6 vats, 12 in total, formerly used for wine storage, each measuring 9.6 sq.m. We have opened up 2 of these vats and are using one for storage. A wooden staircase at the far end of the aisle leads to the first floor, currently a u-shaped area of 139 sq.m. over the vats. By extending the floor area over the central void, this could provide a space of 199 sq.m. and create a sitting room, dining room, kitchen, interior garden/lounge area, 2 bedrooms, one with en suite shower room, separate bathroom, separate wc, study/bedroom 3.

CONTACT: Joanna Ismay **EMAIL:** joannaismay@gmail.com
TELEPHONE: +44 (0)7532 789415

Provence

Gard (Beaucaire-Tarascon)

€960,000

FrenchEntrée Ref: 42664m0



Unique and special. A stunning and spacious stone-built hilltop villa, pool and gite in Provence

Urgent Retirement Sale after 23 years - All offers considered
Wonderful views. 6 bedrooms, 5 baths etc. Parking for 6+ cars and 2 garages. Magnificent pool with sun terrace, summer kitchen, BBQ, shaded summer lounge. Detached 1-bed gite in the garden. Superbly located, private and exclusive but not isolated. In the 'golden circle' of Avignon, St. Remy de Provence, Arles, Nimes, Uzès and the Pont du Gard.

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CONTACT: Tony Cremer-Price
EMAIL: tony@villaromantique.co.uk **TELEPHONE:** +44(0) 7836 291791

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**(Autumn 2026 - Autumn 2027)
with possible view to purchase**

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Must have internet access and be driving distance to basic amenities.

Maximum monthly rent: 1,000€

Location: the area around Ruffec, Civray, Champagne Mouton and Confolens.

CONTACT: frenchfields2026@yahoo.com

Nouvelle Aquitaine

Lot-et-Garonne Nearest town: Fumel

€699,000

FrenchEntrée Ref: FRE112076



Beautifully renovated house with stables and income potential

This beautifully renovated property, set on nearly 3 hectares, is fully ready to move in. The main house features a bright kitchen, spacious living/dining area with raised terrace, mezzanine, two bedrooms and a stylish new bathroom. The adjoining guest house, refurbished to a high standard, currently generates income as a gite but it can also be integrated seamlessly into the main home. The property also offers extensive stone outbuildings including stables, workshops and a renovated tobacco barn, summer kitchen and a heated swimming pool.

CONTACT: Pete Smith **EMAIL:** smithpeter66@gmail.com
TELEPHONE: +44 (0)7842652535

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How many other lawyers can be said to feel the same?



French Inheritance Law

Gifting a Property in France

Buying a Property in France

What our clients say...

Thank you for your valued information - it was extremely helpful to talk with you and your advice has enabled us to have a very clear picture of the situation regarding our french property and will be acted upon. Thank you very much for your effort.

Mr BD
March 2018

I would like to take this opportunity, to thank David Barney, of Barney and co, for having worked tirelessly over the last year, to bring closure to my late fathers estate. My father had left shares in A French bank, and the French made it very difficult every step of the way for my mother, who at the age of 89, found everything too much to handle. David kept us informed every step of the way, and his knowledge in French law, and his persistence was the key to being able after so long to bring this to its conclusion. I would highly recommend David to anyone.

Mr WB of Bristol
July 2018

Please give David Barney a call to discuss your legal requirements and our ability to satisfy them.

Alternatively, you can drop him an email outlining your requirements.

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S1 FORM – CAN YOU USE IT FOR A FRENCH VISA?



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Are you retired and planning a move to France? Our expert explains when and how the S1 form can be used to meet healthcare requirements for your visa application. **Watch on [youtube.com/c/FrenchEntréeMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/c/FrenchEntréeMagazine)**


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SETTLING IN FRANCE AFTER DECADES OF GLOBETROTTING

How an impromptu trip to Saumur in the Loire Valley led to a new life and a historic home with links to the château! [Read more on frenchentree.com](#)

FRENCH TRAVEL



How France's riverside towns are welcoming slow tourism

France's canals were once the highlight of rural travel. While a lot of tourism has drifted towards larger cities and coastal resorts, these inland waterways and quaint quayside towns are experiencing a quiet revival. [Read more on francetoday.com](#)

WORKING IN FRANCE



Making a living with a creative job in France

If you have artistic talent, you may be able to use it to support your new life in France. Two expats who've started up creative businesses share their experiences and advice. [Read more on frenchentree.com](#)

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LOCATION GUIDE



Three vibrant market towns

Le marché is at the heart of French daily culture and a lively market town is often top of a property buyer's wish list. We pick out three towns across France - Dinan in Brittany, Louhans in Burgundy and Niort in Poitou-Charentes - offering colourful markets, affordable property and a vibrant lifestyle. [Read more on frenchentree.com](#)

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FRENCH LIFE



What to do if you get bitten by a dog in France

Being bitten by a dog is horrible wherever you are, let alone with a foreign language and unfamiliar systems. The good news is that France has clear rules regarding responsibility and good medical care. [Read more on frenchentree.com](#)

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How to navigate conversations with strangers, neighbours and the French administration

RENOVATION TALE

Converting a boy's boarding school and post office into holiday rentals on the Charente/Dordogne border

LIVING IN GASCONY

From dreams to keys: case studies of British buyers who have made the Gers their home

COASTAL CACHET

With seaside charm and urban vitality, St-Nazaire has become a hotspot for tourists and buyers

BE MY GUEST

Part two in our new interiors series looks at the little touches that give your guest rooms that *je ne sais quoi*

HIDDEN GEMS

Househunting in less well-known areas within the Deux-Sèvres, Creuse and Aveyron departments

WORKING LIFE

Running a holiday business with a twist in France - yoga retreats, wedding destinations and more

LURE OF THE LOIRE

We visit three towns on France's longest river - in Haute-Loire, Nièvre and Maine-et-Loire

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Meet the British woman who moved to France for a quiet life - and is now a rally driver!

GUIDE TO...

CAF (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*) benefits - part 2 will cover workers and retirees

ASK THE EXPERTS

Your legal, financial and property questions answered along with advice on living in France



A new chapter

American couple **Valerie** and **Ralph Rivera** settled in a placid village-cum-small town in Bordeaux wine country and discovered that slow living and friendly neighbours offer the ultimate luxury

Why did you choose your village?

We live in a small riverside village called Castillon-la-Bataille, in southwest France. We arrived in late August 2024, after several years in Germany. We had a hunch after visiting France that we'd feel at home here, and we couldn't be happier with our decision! When we were looking for a home, walkability was high on our wish list - we wanted to live daily life without needing a car. When we stumbled upon a coup de cœur of a house with river views just steps from shops, restaurants and a train station, the decision practically made itself.

What aspects of the French lifestyle do you enjoy?

It's hard to pick! The friendliness of the people, the slower pace of life, the affordability, and the sheer appreciation for life's simple pleasures. There's a deep sense of community here - you can't be anonymous in a small town of 3,300. We also love sharing a slice of our French life with visiting family and friends. It's fun to see things through their eyes - they're still amazed to watch people linger over coffee instead of rushing off with a to-go cup.

What is there to see and do in the area?

More than we expected. Bordeaux is just 35 minutes away by train, St-Émilion a 17-minute drive, and countless smaller towns fill the gaps with their own charms and festivals. Wine is at the heart of life here - there's always a new château to visit or vineyard to discover. There are also concerts, antique fairs, art exhibitions, and markets. Beyond that, there's a wonderfully laidback, agricultural rhythm that keeps



Castillon-la-Bataille is on the River Dordogne in the Gironde department

life grounded. Closer to home, Ralph enjoys fishing from the bridge - but he's still waiting to hook a huge catfish of his own.

How was your French when you arrived?

It was pretty basic. I took French in high school more than 25 years ago, and while a few words stuck, the grammar certainly didn't. Let's just say I started off strong in enthusiasm if not in accuracy.

And how is your French now?

It's improving - *petit à petit!* Living in a small village means that fewer people speak English, so there's no hiding from real-life practice. Locals have been incredibly patient and kind. I've learned that a warm *bonjour* and a good dose of *politesse* go a long way. But I've also realised that immersion alone isn't enough. I'm taking online classes through Lingoda and enjoying the structure and flexibility.

How do you find interacting with the locals socially?

It's been one of the best surprises. We've become friendly with shopkeepers and restaurateurs, and even our doctor has invited us over for dinner. We do almost everything on foot - groceries,

haircuts, massages, pharmacy, even dog grooming - so we see familiar faces every day. There's not a huge amount of choice in a village this size, but that simplicity has its own charm. We've made wonderful friends (both French and international) and rarely go a week without an *apéro*, lunch, or some local event to attend.

What about work?

I'm a consultant and hold a *profession-libérale* visa, which allows me to work independently in France. I design and facilitate leadership retreats and company offsites - and now, with new friends here in France, I'm organising a women's retreat in the Bordeaux region. It's our way of introducing this beautiful corner of the world to others. For fun, I write a Substack blog called *Delightfully Disoriented en France*, where I chronicle our adventures and lessons learned - from navigating the immigration process to uncovering the quirks of French culture, language, and cuisine. My clients are mostly English-speaking, so I travel to the US occasionally, and work online the rest of the time. The paperwork is no small feat, but the freedom it gives me is absolutely worth it.

Any local speciality you've developed a taste for?

Bordeaux wines are, of course, world-famous but our local Castillon Côtes de Bordeaux wines deserve more love. They share the same terroir as St-Émilion but with a bit more creative freedom, and often at a fraction of the price. I've fallen hard for the fresh oysters and pink shrimp from the coast - they're a local staple and a total treat. Meanwhile, Ralph has developed an affinity for *pâté en croûte* and terrine. We're on the border with the Dordogne, so I hope to go truffle-hunting this winter with friends.

What about the local architecture and history?

The area is full of classic Girondine stone houses, with charming shutters and tiled roofs. Castillon itself is steeped in history - it's the site of the last battle of the Hundred Years' War, over five centuries ago. The town still celebrates that history each summer with a massive outdoor re-enactment that draws visitors from all over France.

What has surprised you most about living in France?

I never expected to love small-town life as much as I do. I worried it might feel too quiet, but it's been wonderfully restorative - especially since I travel so much for work. And as one French friend put it, this region is known for being particularly friendly and welcoming. I'd have to agree!

What's your favourite saying?

Definitely *'petit à petit'* - little by little. It perfectly sums up learning French, integrating into a new culture, and building a life here. ■

Follow Valerie on her blog at: vdizzy.substack.com



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Financial and administrative procedures guidance**



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