

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS



ISSUE 398
MARCH/APRIL 2026

KISS AND TELL

Your essential guide to French etiquette

RALLYING CRY

How a move to France kickstarted a new life as a female rally driver!

HIDDEN GEMS

Head off the beaten track to discover new corners of rural France in Deux-Sèvres, Creuse and Aveyron

EXPERT ADVICE

Which visa do you need?

French interiors: guest rooms

Buying guide: Haute-Provence

State benefits in France

Inheritance and wills

PROPERTIES FOR ALL BUDGETS

frenchentree.com
francepropertyshop.com



£5.95



FRANCE MEDIA GROUP

Buying a property in France?

We can support your foreign exchange needs



- ◆ Competitive exchange rates and zero transfer fees
- ◆ Manage frequent payments through a regular payment plan before and after your property purchase
- ◆ Lock in exchange rates for up to two years*
- ◆ Dedicated account manager to support you throughout the process
- ◆ Track rates through market alerts
- ◆ 24/7 secure online access to your Moneycorp account

Scan the QR code to open a free Moneycorp account today, and get your French property purchase underway.

We are fully licenced to operate in Europe, so we can continue to support you with payments after your purchase.

Don't forget to quote 'French Property News'

Let's talk +44 (0) 203 773 6355 | frenchentree@moneycorp.com

www.moneycorp.com



*Forward contracts may require a deposit. Currency at risk.
TTT Moneycorp Limited (company number 738837) is registered in England. Its registered office is at Floor 5, Zig Zag Building, 70 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6SQ. Moneycorp is a trading name of TTT Moneycorp Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for the provision of payment services (firm reference number 308919). Moneycorp FRM is a trading name of Moneycorp Financial Risk Management Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for the provision of designated investment business (firm reference number 452443). Date of approval: 02/02/2024.



THOUGHTS FROM THE PIGEONNIER

3 THINGS I'VE LEARNT THIS ISSUE

P10

The best large French town to live in is Vannes in Brittany

P36

Service charges have automatically been added in French cafés and restaurants since the 1980s

P94

You don't have to accept an inheritance - but there are considerable consequences if you don't

As we put this issue to bed, I have not long returned from our French Property Exhibition in London. What a great weekend! Not only was it wonderful to catch up with exhibitors, many of whom write within these pages, and to chat with visitors about their plans to buy a property or move to France, the exhibition acts as a useful barometer on the state of the market. One thing is for sure, the British appetite for a French home, whether a holiday place or permanent residence, has not dulled - although it has changed. Unlike some previous years - and I'm going back to pre-credit crunch and pre-Brexit times - there wasn't a mad rush of visitors with a vague idea about moving to France. These days, buyers are much more clued-up, calmer, realistic and considered, as well as enthusiastic. Even those at the start of their journey already have a good idea about how the process works and even if they don't know the details, they come armed with the right questions. The stands were busy all weekend and the seminars were packed. If you missed out, don't worry, we've added a second exhibition this year, in Birmingham in May - you'll find details on the back cover - hope to see you there!

Karen



EDITOR'S PICK

A character home in the heart of a historic village

I love the combination of character features and sleek contemporary kitchen and bathroom at this surprisingly spacious two-bedroom village house in Lot-et-Garonne. It's in a sought-after historic village with all amenities, just 30 minutes from Bergerac and its airport. With its fresh and bright facade and pretty blue shutters, the property has lots of kerb appeal and it comes with a courtyard, terrace, cellar, a large room for storage, plus an attic suitable for conversion. The price is attractive too - €124,200 (richardimmo.com).



GET INTOUCH!

I love to hear your stories of househunting and owning a home in France
karen.tait@francemedia.com

Contributing this issue...



Page 22

Christophe Guay

Director of Agence TIC in Ruffec, Charente, Christophe is an independent estate agent with over 22 years' experience.



Page 92

Fabienne Quelard

After a diverse career in Paris and Lyon, chartered accountant Fabienne returned to the Alps to join Anderlaine International where she is now a partner.



Page 68

Freddy Rueda

Freddy has been selling property in southern France since 1995 and now runs Real Estate Occitanie covering the Aude and Hérault departments.



Page 50

Susannah Cameron

Provence-based Susannah, co-founder of Chez Pluie, has spent a decade sourcing French antiques and providing worldwide shipping.



Page 86

Sarah Bright

A French-trained, Toulouse-based, English-speaking 'avocat', with 30 years' experience in inheritance, real estate, construction and family law.



Page 58

Victoria Garnham

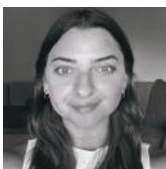
Victoria, Director at Gelas Immobilier, guides clients through Gascony's property market, offering a personal approach and local expertise.



Page 94

Matthew Cameron

Matthew heads Ashtons Legal French services team, and is internationally renowned for his expertise in French law.



Page 16

Josie Sharp

NCTJ-qualified multimedia journalist Josie recently joined the France Media team as a Digital Content Editorial Assistant working across the brands.

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

www.frenchentree.com

OFFICE +44 (0)1225 463 752

SUBSCRIPTIONS +44 (0)1202 087 628

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief: Guy Hibbert, guyhibbert@francemedia.com

Editor: Karen Tait, karen.tait@francemedia.com

Art and Production Director: David Eachus, dave@francemedia.com

Sub-editor: Claire Vaughan

Managing Director: Benjamin Stephens, ben@francemedia.com

Subscriptions Manager: Michaela Sillick, michaela@francemedia.com

Advertising Manager: Emma Kestin, emma.kestin@francemedia.com

UK and US Sales Director: Peter Cullingford, peter@francemedia.com

Business Development Manager: Alison Joyce, alison@francemedia.com

Digital Marketing Manager: Dan Mead, dan@francemedia.com

Digital Content Lead: Elinor Sheridan, elinor.sheridan@francemedia.com

Digital Marketing & Video Executive: Oli White, oli@francemedia.com

Digital Editorial Assistant: Josie Sharp

Media Sales Consultant: Jasmine Thomas, jasmine@francemedia.com

FrenchEntrée Website Editor: Zoë Smith, zoe@frenchentree.com

FrenchEntrée Memberships Manager:

Claire Ewins, members@frenchentree.com



[facebook.com/
frenchpropertynews
magazine](https://facebook.com/frenchpropertynews)



[twitter.com/
frenchpropnews](https://twitter.com/frenchpropnews)



[instagram.com/
frenchpropertynews](https://instagram.com/frenchpropertynews)



[pinterest.com/
frenchpropnews](https://pinterest.com/frenchpropnews)

FRANCE MEDIA GROUP

France Media Ltd publishes a number of print and digital titles for the Francophile audience including *French Property News*, *France Today*, *FrenchEntrée*, *Bonjour Paris* and *Taste of France*.

French Property News is a publication of France Media Group,

+44 (0)1225 463 752, info@francemedia.com

www.francemedia.com

© Copyright 2025 France Media Ltd. Printed by Warners. All rights reserved.

We cannot accept responsibility for any mistakes or misprints. Reproduction in part or whole is strictly prohibited without written permission from the publisher. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs damaged in the post. Material sent on speculation, unless enclosed with a stamped addressed envelope, will not be returned to the sender. France Media Ltd reserve rights of ownership. Euro prices quoted are subject to fluctuations and were correct at the time of going to press. Current exchange rates should always be sought.

French Property News ISSN 1751-6846, is published six times a year by France Media Ltd, Runway East, Kings Court, Parsonage Lane, Bath, BA1 1ER, United Kingdom. Subscription records are maintained at Select Publishing Services, P.O. Box 633 Bournemouth, BH1 9EH.





LEGGETT

INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE



In association with
Hamptons
INTERNATIONAL

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE YOU CAN TRUST

chalet **villa** château **farmhouse** apartment **vineyard** gîte **cottage** coast **country** city



EXCLUSIVE

Brantôme Beauty

Dordogne €275,000

Ref: A36147 - Large 3-bedroom house with beautiful views and pool.

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



Beautiful Property

Gironde €399,990

Ref: A40133 - 5-bedroom property with large garden and estuary views.

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



Business Potential

Hautes-Pyrénées €599,500

Ref: A38720 - Super 6-bedroom property with studio, gîte and land.

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



EXCLUSIVE

Historic Features

Haute-Vienne €248,901

Ref: A31398 - 4-bedroom character home with large gardens and barn.

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



EXCLUSIVE

Renovation Project

Maine-et-Loire €99,000

Ref: A16948 - 4-bedroom house with roof terrace, in the Loire Valley.

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



Maison de Maître

Vienne €585,000

Ref: A39484 - Stunning 5-bedroom home with heated pool and large grounds.

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



Views of Mont Blanc

Savoie €270,000

Ref: A41713 - Two studios in a fantastic location in Plagne Villages.

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



EXCLUSIVE

Little Gem

Pyrénées-Atlantiques €94,500

Ref: A42399 - 3-bedroom town-house in the heart of Les Salisiens.

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



EXCLUSIVE

Elegant Manor

Deux-Sèvres €199,500

Ref: A41600 - 6-bedroom house with outbuilding and walled garden.

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



Lakeside Living

Aude €499,000

Ref: A34571 - Superb 5-bedroom lakeside home with pool and lake access.

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



Huge Potential

Orne €157,608

Ref: A40909 - Large rural home to renovate, in a friendly community.

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



EXCLUSIVE

Location Location Location

Paris €624,000

Ref: A40554 - Spacious top-floor 46m² duplex, in a super area.

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

+33 (0)5 53 60 84 88 • leggettfrance.com • info@leggett.fr

We are recruiting independent sales agents across France

Turn your skills into a successful business with Leggett Immobilier

Change starts here :

+33 (0)5 53 60 82 77 recruitment@leggett.fr



Sophie Lebarcq - Leggett Agent

CONTENTS

WELCOME

- 3 Editor's pick**
A village house with kerb appeal in Lot-et-Garonne
- 8 Tête-à-tête**
Let's chat! Share your views and experiences by letter and social media
- 10 News**
All the latest on the French property market, travel and events
- 145 Next issue**
What can you expect in the next issue of *FPN*?

À VENDRE

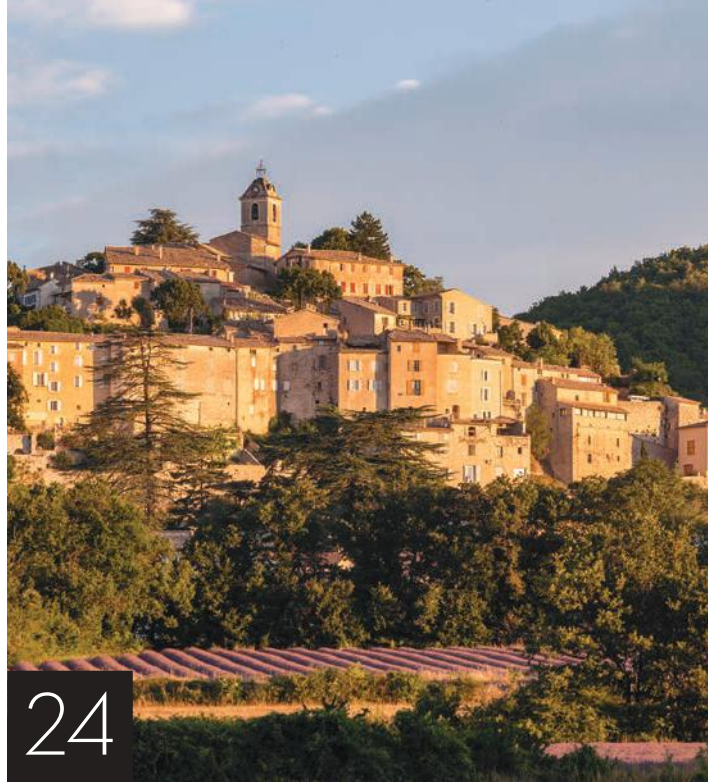
- 14 Three of the best**
A trio of properties with four bedrooms
- 16 French property dreams**
A fairytale château in Mayenne - €795,000!
- 18 Business property pick**
A lovely home with an income in Charente
- 20 Coup de coeur**
Team *FPN*'s choice of edge-of-village houses
- 22 Agent's dream home**
A 10th-century manor house in Charente for just €473,500
- 113 Property showcase**
Our handy map and 24 pages of French properties

LOCATION

- 24 Provence heights**
Guide to the scenic Hautes-Alpes and Alpes-de-Haute-Provence departments
- 38 Hidden gems**
Househunting in Creuse, Deux-Sèvres and Aveyron
- 46 What's in a name**
An amusingly named village in Quercy
- 66 St-Nazaire**
Discover this vibrant town on the Atlantic coast
- 68 Agent interview**
Insight into Hérault & Gard
- 74 Riverside living**
Three towns on the Loire
- 74 The other south**
Head south and west
- 82 Hotspot: Tours**
Gateway to the Loire Valley

REAL LIFE

- 30 Driven to succeed**
Becoming a female rally driver in France
- 42 Lucky 13**
Renovating an old school
- 56 Don't spare the horses**
A lengthy journey in a 2CV
- 58 Brotherly love**
A new life in Gers
- 70 Vintage vantage**
A boutique in Brittany
- 146 My village**
Molsheim, Alsace



ON the cover

A characterful home with a pigeonier in Lot – see page 48

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



frenchentree.com



francepropertyshop.com



completefrance.com



46



30



16



68

EXPERT ADVICE

- 34 Manners matter**
Deciphering the rules of French etiquette
- 50 Making an entrance**
How to create a welcoming guest bedroom in France
- 80 Host with the most**
Holiday accommodation with a difference
- 78 Channel crossings**
What's behind the move?

THE KNOWLEDGE

- 86 Legal column**
We reveal some of the property slip-ups that await a 'DIY' buyer
- 88 Money column**
The steps you need to take when moving to France, including healthcare
- 90 Guide to...**
State benefits part 2: Workers and retirees
- 92 Ask the experts**
Q&As on visas, property contracts, *para-hotellerie*, currency and wills

JOIE DE VIVRE

- 109 Joie de vivre**
Books, films, interiors, quizzes and your photos
- 115 Column: Janine Marsh**
The daily challenges and rewards of French life
- 116 Rural riddles**
Countryside conundrums
- 118 Recipe**
Pastis chicken
- 120 Woody's worries**
Creating a 'Frittanique' country kitchen
- 122 The intrepid châtelaine**
Becoming a part of the eccentric 'châtelains club'

HAVE YOU SEEN?



FRANCE TODAY MAGAZINE

Find out everything you need to know about this fantastic country, with plenty of unique cultural insights and feature pieces to keep you entertained

SPECIAL OFFER



SUBSCRIBE TO SAVE!

Stay informed. Plan with confidence. Make smarter decisions. Save up to 25% when you subscribe to *French Property News*, with every issue delivered free to your door. Turn to page 54 to find out more and subscribe today

Tête à tête

This month's pick of letters and social media



Set in the charming village of Beauville, this spacious four-bedroom home offers generous living areas and plenty of room for family life or entertaining, all within easy reach of the rolling countryside of Lot-et-Garonne. A great option for those seeking space, character and village living in southwest France, offered at €298,000.

Keith Sprague:

Nice house. Not sure I love the renovation. But it's a great house

Julie Adair:

I'm in love!

Susan Palladino:



Graham Baskerville:



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

EXCITING TIMES AHEAD!

We are just writing to say thank you for hosting the French Property Exhibition in London in January. We recently subscribed to *French Property News*, which is where we found out about the show. It really was a gamechanger for us. We've been dreaming and researching for what feels like for ever, browsing countless properties online. We're looking in the Dordogne having spent lots of happy family holidays there over the years - we particularly love the town of Eymet and surrounding area. That

said, we'll happily consider anywhere in the Dordogne, and into neighbouring Charente too. Ideally, we want a two/three-bedroom detached house with a garden - a pool really would be the dream, although we're not sure our budget will stretch to that! Having visited the exhibition, we now feel

like we're well on the road to becoming French property owners. The agents gave us lots of information and talked us through available properties, and we got some great legal and financial advice too, as well as finding out more about visas if we decide to relocate in the future. So thanks again, wish us luck!

Name withheld



The vibrant town of Eymet

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

ON INSTAGRAM

Follow us on Instagram
[@frenchpropertynews](https://www.instagram.com/frenchpropertynews)



€520,000



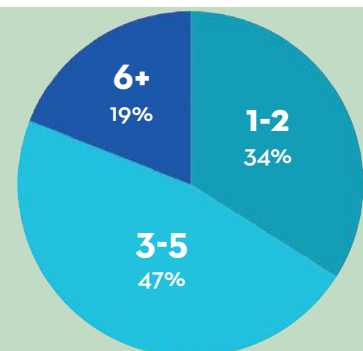
"Just a short walk from the centre of a lively Béarn village, this four-bedroom home delivers classic French country living - add in a huge barn and you have space to dream big, from hosting to hobbies. And with beaches and ski stations just over an hour away, it's the perfect all-seasons escape."



WE ASKED YOU...

"How many bedrooms are you looking for in a French property?"

Join our Facebook group:
Living in France




iadOverseas

Looking for expert property advice abroad?

Our local English-speaking property agents* **will guide you through every step of the buying process** to help you find your dream home in France.

**Define your needs • Property search • Viewings
Financial and administrative procedures guidance**



iad Overseas is part of iad, Europe's leading network of property agents* with more than 14,000 agents in France.

*In France, all iad consultants are independent sales agents of I@D France SAS, registered with the RSAC, and hold a real estate canvassing card on behalf of I@D France SAS (without holding funds)

AU COURANT

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

DREAM TOWNS: DISCOVER THE BEST PLACES TO LIVE IN FRANCE IN 2026

The 2026 list of the best towns and villages in France to live in has been announced by the Ville de Rêve association.

The ranking looks at 900 indicators from more than 130 sources, including quality of life, health, safety, access to nature etc) for over 35,000 communes in France. This year's ranking takes into account new features such as SNCF delays, tourist data and long-distance coaches, and improved air quality data.

The northwest of France scored well in the study, with Brittany and Loire-Atlantique taking the top three spots and appearing frequently in the 'top 10' listings for 2026.

In the 'large and medium-sized towns' section, the top 10 towns are: Vannes (Morbihan), Quimper (Finistère), Besançon (Doubs), Bayonne (Pyrénées-Atlantiques), Chambéry (Savoie), Pessac (Gironde), Dijon (Côte d'Or), Versailles (Yvelines), Annecy (Haute-Savoie) and Brest (Finistère).

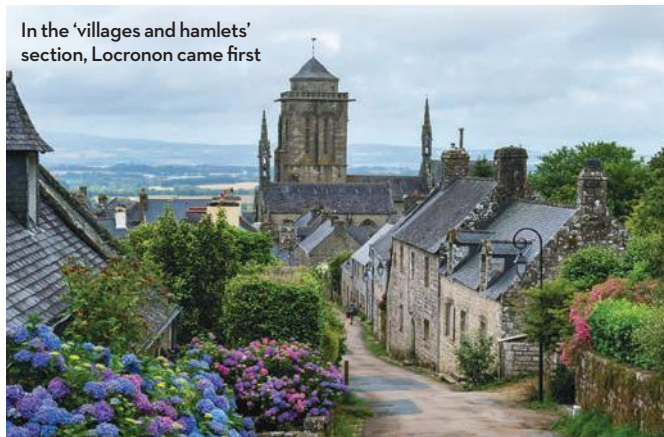
The top 10 'small towns and villages' for 2026 are Guérande (Loire-Atlantique), Glazed (Ille-et-Vilaine), Fouesnant (Finistère), Carnac (Morbihan), Guidel (Morbihan), Kaysersberg (Haut-Rhin), Villard-de-Lans (Isère), Vertou (Loire-Atlantique), Arudy (Pyrénées-Atlantiques) and Cesson-Sevigné (Ille-et-Vilaine).

In the 'villages and hamlets' section, the top 10 are Locronon (Finistère), Châtillon-en-Diois (Drôme), Nances (Savoie), Laruns (Pyrénées-Atlantiques), Montagnoire (Savoie), Verel-Pragondran (Savoie), Eguishem

Vannes is the number one 'large and medium sized town'



In the 'villages and hamlets' section, Locronon came first



"The website is a really useful resource for househunters"

(Haut-Rhin), St-Suliac (Ille-et-Vilaine), Luz St-Sauveur (Hautes-Pyrénées) and Caunterets (Hautes-Pyrénées).

Comprehensive information for each town or village is included on the website, with a description, population and scores received for the various factors. Other places of similar sizes are also listed.

The website is a really useful resource for househunters deciding where to buy a home or live in France. You can search via the rankings or a map, selecting different themes. A handy 'Comparisons' section allows you to select two towns or villages and compare them side by side.

villdereve.fr

Guérande is at the top of the 'small towns and villages'



The Provencal village of Châtillon-en-Diois scored highly too

RETIRES STAY CLOSE TO HOME

While British retirees are tempted to move abroad, "Nine out of 10 French people want to continue living in France," says Marie Auffret, editorial director of *Notre Temps*. The magazine's latest barometer shows that retirees dream of a simple life: in the countryside or by the sea, but above all, close to their loved ones.

RARE LE CORBUSIER DUPLEX APARTMENT IN MARSEILLE

FOR SALE!

A rare double-height Le Corbusier apartment at the Unesco-listed Cité Radieuse in Marseille has come onto the market for €1.4m (architecturedecollection.fr).

Created from two adjacent Type E duplexes on an upper floor, the 200m² apartment features a vast double-height living area bathed in natural light. It extends into a covered terrace of nearly 16m², offering panoramic views of Marseille and its hills. Although renovated in the 1990s, the kitchen respects the original Charlotte Perriand design.

The upper floor contains the sleeping and working areas, with an office and a master suite with a spa tub bathroom. Two additional bedrooms open onto an 8m² covered balcony with panoramic sea views.

Located within the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille's 8th arrondissement, the building continues to operate as a 'city within a city', with shared amenities, roof-level facilities and landscaped grounds.



AUTOMATIC RESIDENCY RENEWALS?

France's National Assembly approved a proposed bill in December 2025, for the automatic renewal of long-term residence permits, aiming to ease backlogs at the prefecture. The bill passed with fairly mild opposition from the government and far right, and at the time of writing was headed for the Senate. The proposal mainly targets multi-year cards (up to four years) and 10-year resident cards, to be renewed by default unless administrative officials prove legal grounds for refusal. This measure would address delays that affect over 99% of approvals, reportedly causing job losses, housing issues, and gaps in healthcare coverage.



WHAT'S ON IN MARCH/APRIL 2026



28 MARCH - 12 APRIL

AIX-EN-PROVENCE

EASTER FESTIVAL

One of Europe's leading musical events, this springtime rendezvous attracts some of the world's finest soloists and orchestras, which this year will feature the Munich Philharmonic. Venues include the Grand Théâtre de Provence, the Conservatoire Darius Milhaud and the Théâtre de Jeu de Paume.

festivalpaques.com



MARCH

BRITTANY & ALPS

MUSIC FESTIVALS

March is a great month for music lovers in France with La Route du Rock festival in St-Malo and Rennes (4-7 March) and electronic music and DJ sets at Chamonix Unlimited (25-29 March) and Tomorrowland Winter in Alpe d'Huez (21-28 March).

laroutedurock.com

unlimited-festival.com

winter-tomorrowland.com



FROM 29 MARCH

DISNEYLAND PARIS

WORLD OF FROZEN

In its most ambitious ever transformation, the resort's second park will be reborn as Disney Adventure World, with the spectacular World of Frozen at its heart. Expect a 36m North Mountain and, of course, Elsa's Glittering Ice Palace. Travel by boat through snowy forests and troll valleys, and enjoy musicals and Scandinavian dining.

disneyland.com



23-26 APRIL

BAYONNE, PYRÉNÉES-ATLANTIQUES

FOIRE DE JAMBON

The Ham Fair is Bayonne's oldest event, dating back to 1462 - this year's edition will be the 563rd! As the name suggests, ham is celebrated and tasted in festivities that have their roots in the Middle Ages. Discover 100% locally made products alongside musical entertainment - and don't miss the best farmhouse ham competition.

visitbayonne.com

TRAVEL NEWS

■ The EU's new EES (Entry and Exit System) has started operating in France, requiring travellers to provide fingerprinting and facial scans at the borders. From 10 April, 100% of non-EU passengers must register under the scheme in order to enter France. The EES will modernise border controls across the 29-countries in the Schengen Area, gradually replacing manual passport stamping for short-stay non-EU visitors with a digital record of entries and exits, combining passport data with fingerprints and facial images.



■ The EES will be followed by Etias, a fee-based travel authorisation for travellers who benefit from visa-free short-stay access to the EU, including Britons. Full details will be revealed closer to the launch date, currently expected to be the last quarter of 2026.

■ France has performed poorly in a global study rating airports by punctuality of flights, customer service and airport food and shopping facilities. In 2025 only 70% of passengers departed on time from French airports. In the survey by AirHelp, Toulouse ranked as France's best airport, closely followed by Lyon St-Exupéry and EuroAirport Basel Mulhouse Freiburg. The worst performing of the French airports in the survey was Nice, just behind Paris Beauvais.

■ Ryanair is set to end all Clermont-Ferrand flights, including the UK route. The seasonal route to London-Stansted will not return this summer. The airline has said they will scale back operations in France due to the 180% tax increase on airline tickets, which was passed in the 2025 finance bill, putting regional airports under pressure.

BABY BLUES: DEATHS NOW EXCEED BIRTHS IN FRANCE



Mainland France recorded more deaths than births in 2025 for the first time since World War II, marking a historic negative natural population balance of -6,000, according to an annual report from statistics agency INSEE.

The total fertility rate dropped to 1.56 children per woman, with maternal age at childbirth rising to 31.2 years, signaling challenges in work/family balance and housing. *Le Monde* reported that “decisions about whether to start a family, have more children, or have none at all hinge on multiple factors, including inadequate childcare options, rising job insecurity and the ongoing housing crisis”.

With 645,000 births (down 2.1% from 2024, the lowest since 1942) and 651,000 deaths (up 1.5%, driven by a flu epidemic and ageing baby boomers reaching 80),

the country's 69.1 million population grew modestly (+0.25%), solely due to a positive 176,000 migration balance. Life expectancy hit record highs at 85.9 years for women and 80.3 for men, narrowing the gender gap while accelerating demographic ageing - those over 65 now nearly match under-20s (22.2% vs. 22.5%), according to the report.

This shift, expected to worsen with deaths projected at 800,000 by 2040, urges policy action on elderly care, family support (such as the new parental leave from July 2026), and immigration amid Europe's labour needs.

Le Monde's report adds that “the pay-as-you-go pension system, to which the French are deeply attached, is threatened by the widening gap between contributors and recipients, while the country's ageing population places a strain on both public finances and its overall vitality”.

CIVICS TEST

As of 1 January 2026, non-EU nationals seeking multi-year residence permits, 10-year resident cards or naturalisation must pass the ‘examen civique’. This digital, 45-minute test features 40 multiple-choice questions requiring an 80% pass rate (32 correct answers).

The questions include five themes: the principles and values of the Republic (the motto and symbols of the Republic, secularism); the institutional and political system (the organisation of the French Republic, the European Union and its institutions etc); the fundamental rights, obligations and duties of persons residing in France; history, geography and culture; and living in French society (parental



authority and the education system, working in France etc). Conducted in French and aimed at promoting integration, the test is not required for the renewal of multi-year residence permits or *titres de séjour*.

While the civic exam must be passed before submitting the application for a residence permit or naturalisation, it does not have a date of expiration once achieved. Preparation resources are available via the official website formation-civique.interieur.gouv.fr

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: CENTRAL TO A PROPERTY'S APPEAL IN 2026

Old French homes are full of character but it can be a challenge to make them energy efficient



©SHUTTERSTOCK

One trend to look for in 2026 is the growing importance of the DPE (energy efficiency certificate) of individual properties, according to a French property market report from Leggett Immobilier.

Homes with poor energy ratings are known as '*passoires thermiques*'. It has been illegal to rent out a G-labelled property since January 2025; and from January 2028 this will extend to F-rated properties

and from 2034 to E ratings. One of the first questions now asked by Leggett's buyer clients is "what are the running costs?", making the energy performance certificate even more important. "It is clear that there has been a real shift in what buyers want," the report says. "Environmental considerations are not political correctness, they are central to a property's appeal."

The agency is optimistic about the state of the French property market, saying that

their 'offers accepted' pipeline is almost 20% higher than the same time the previous year. The report states: "For the coming year, we are forecasting that national sales will continue to rebound and hit the 950-980,000 transactions mark."

This compares to the Notaires de France predicting that final figures for 2025 will be 929,000. The Notaires' figures show that national house prices rose by 0.2% last year, with apartments up 1.3%.

BEST COUNTRIES TO RETIRE TO

International Living has published its 2026 Annual Global Retirement Index, taking into account cost of living, visa rules, housing, healthcare access and climate. Although aimed at American retirees, the report makes interesting reading for would-be expats from other countries too. In seventh place, France is praised for "a lifestyle that prioritises family, health and leisure".

The report includes average monthly living costs, including basic utilities for a 85m² apartment of €145; mobile phone plan €17; high-speed internet with cable TV €29; car insurance and maintenance around €100; top-up health insurance €80 to €100; and a gourmet lunch around €26 per person (without wine), with dinners costing more.

"A couple could live in France for around €2,121 per month, though the range stretches from €2,021 to €3,200 depending on location and lifestyle" says the report.

Greece comes top place in the Index, followed by Panama, Costa Rica, Portugal, Mexico, Italy, France, Spain, Thailand and Malaysia.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ The EU has approved a €3 flat tax on certain categories of small parcels under €150 imported from non-EU countries, starting no later than 1 July 2026. This targets low-cost e-commerce platforms like Shein and Temu, ending their duty exemption ahead of the 2028 schedule, with France leading the push. While the temporary measure until July 2028 will be paid by the platforms, France may add a further €2 fee, according to a report by *Le Monde*.

■ France is set to ban the use of open fireplaces in homes in approximately 690 communes by the end of 2026 as part of efforts to reduce air pollution



Open fires will be banned in France

and protect public health. Some older woodburning stoves are also affected in certain areas. The bans will vary by location, but many departments and urban areas, including parts of Haute-Savoie, Lyon, Grenoble, St-Étienne, Strasbourg and Lille, have already imposed or plan to introduce restrictions. Failure to follow the new rules may result in fines of €450 or

more, rising to €1,500 in certain areas. Residents are advised to check with their local *mairie* to find out when the ban will be introduced in their commune.

■ *Taxe d'aménagement* will fall for the first time in nearly a decade. The tax applies to extensions, sheds, garages, verandas and other roofed structures over 5m² or 1.8m in height, and is payable within 90 days of the completion, via the *Espaces Finances publiques* website. In 2026, rates will be €1,011/m² in Île-de-France and €892/m² in the rest of France.

■ The French National Assembly has backed a bill to

prevent teenagers under the age of 15 from accessing social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok. The law, which is supported by President Emmanuel Macron, will now go to the Senate for approval.

■ Experts cited by *Les Échos* predict continued recovery for the resale property market in 2026, forecasting 960,000-980,000 sales and modest 1-2% price rises, though fragility persists amid stable 3.12% mortgage rates. Apartment prices hit €4,192/m² on average at the end of 2025 according to estate agent network Century 21 figures, representing a 23.7% increase over the past 10 years.

Three of the best

Looking for manageable living space? Take two minutes to look at these three properties with four bedrooms and you might just find the one, says **Ruth Wood**



€298,000,
CREUSE

A home on the edge of a sought-after village with four bedrooms overlooking a river? In the UK it would cost a fortune, but here you can live the dream for less than the price of an average British semi. Even so, this property outside the village of La Celle-Dunoise is a rare beauty. Tastefully presented, it's created from two old houses joined together and has two bright living rooms with terraces as well as two bathrooms. So you could easily



split it to make a two-bedroom home with a two-bedroom gîte, converting the attic space above to make extra space. Handy for the towns of Guéret and La Souterraine, the house is set in a 1,583m² garden with an outbuilding and garage.

iza-imo.fr

€138,430,
INDRE

All the romance of a cosy cottage, yet with rooms for family and friends - that's the joy of this detached house in southwest France. It's down a quiet country lane outside Chaillac, a pretty village between Poitiers and Limoges. A generous hall opens onto a large open-plan kitchen-diner and traditional country living room on one side and, on the other, bathroom and two of the bedrooms. In the attic you'll find another two bedrooms,



plus an exciting 49m² space that could become a second lounge, hobby room, study or ensuite bedroom. A garage and 2,000m² garden complete the property, a few minutes' drive from one of France's prettiest villages, St-Benoît-du-Sault.

leggettfrance.com



€395,000,
LOT-ET-GARONNE

Now we come to a handsome but homely house in Puymirol, the oldest of Lot-et-Garonne's famous bastide towns. Perched on an outcrop near Agen, the *petite* community is something of an overlooked gem, despite its claim to fame and fabulous views. This house, with its four bedrooms and three bathrooms, is in the village centre, a stroll from amenities. Its high ceilings, beams and exposed stonework blend beautifully with the modern



open kitchen and underfloor heating. French doors lead onto a terrace garden, perfect for alfresco evenings, and a detached garden directly opposite could house a pool. There's even a garage - rare for a home in a character village.

poppinsrealestate.com



Beaux Villages

IMMOBILIER



WINNER OF BEST FRENCH ESTATE AGENCY & WEBSITE FOR SEVEN CONSECUTIVE YEARS



EXCLUSIVE

CHARENTE €484,000 HAI
BVI82691 Fabulous 4-bed, 2-bath stone longère with barns and pool
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €456,604



EXCLUSIVE

DORDOGNE €265,000 HAI
BVI79786 Tastefully renovated 4-bed hamlet property with pool
 Fees: 7% paid by the buyer Net price: €247,664



EXCLUSIVE

HAUTE-VIENNE €88,000 HAI
BVI83942 2-bed, 1-bath stone house and barn near Magnac-Laval town
 Fees: 10% paid by the buyer Net price: €80,000



EXCLUSIVE

AVEYRON €315,000
BVI78163 6-bed property including a 1-bed pigeonier and superb views
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

INDRE €249,899 HAI
BVI77976 3-bed characterful barn conversion with large garden
 Fees: 7% paid by the buyer Net price: €233,551



EXCLUSIVE

CREUSE €109,499 HAI
BVI78078 3-bed hamlet cottage with outbuilding, 15 mins from town
 Fees: 9% paid by the buyer Net price: €100,458



EXCLUSIVE

AUDE €365,000
BVI81825 4-bed, 4-bath villa with pool between coast and mountains
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

TARN €265,000 HAI
BVI82591 Rustic 4-bed, 2-bath village house with salt-water pool
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €250,000



savills

VENDEE €700,000
BVI72046 5-bed manor house plus guest house, stableblock and 4Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



savills

ARIEGE €925,000
BVI83662 Gorgeous rural 3 house property. Pool, rural views and 2Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



savills

TARN-ET-GARONNE €1,699,500 HAI
BVI73432 Spectacular 18thC estate in 8.6Ha - superb pool and views
 Fees: 4% paid by the buyer Net price: €1,634,000



EXCLUSIVE

savills

GIRONDE €1,250,000
BVI82981 Luxury estate with pool, equestrian facilities and 7.8Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



"I have the best colleagues and a great work /life balance" Join our team!

Moving to France?

We're recruiting Independent Property Consultants across South West France.

Want to know more?

Contact Tina Anderson,
 Head of Recruitment
recruitment@beauxvillages.com



www.beauxvillages.com +44 (0)800 270 0101 info@beauxvillages.com

French
property
dreams



Tales from the riverbank

On the banks of the Mayenne, a historic chateau set within tranquil parkland, yet within two hours of the French capital, catches **Josie Sharp's** attention

On the banks of the River Mayenne, a private driveway winds through meadows that give a sense of arrival long before this elegant chateau comes into view. It reveals itself gradually, like a place you've accidentally happened upon and then never want to leave. The generous and well-proportioned rooms are designed for both everyday living and entertaining, keeping all the original period features, while the east-west orientation allows light to move effortlessly through the many stained-glass-lined rooms. On sunny days colour scatters across the floors, while the broad windows draw you to the stunning landscape.

Built at the turn of the 20th century on the site of

an earlier residence which burnt down, the seven-bedroom, neo-medieval chateau was designed by Laval architect Louis Marchal and built from sandstone rubble with slate roofing and granite-framed windows.

The gardens of the 5.2ha estate lead down to the river's edge, which feels less like a feature and more like a quiet companion, shaping the rhythm of life here. Mornings are spent on the small beach dipping your toes in the water, afternoons are for lounging in the riverside boathouse, and evenings are defined by the shifting light rather than by a schedule. Privacy is always assured, yet the landscape feels open and inviting.

Tucked within the grounds, a 70m² caretaker's cottage

in need of restoration offers potential as a guest house, art studio or writer's retreat; a flexible area with the freedom to become almost anything you want it to be. With its own water and electricity meters, an attached garage and additional outbuilding, it offers independence and practicality while remaining an integral part of the estate.

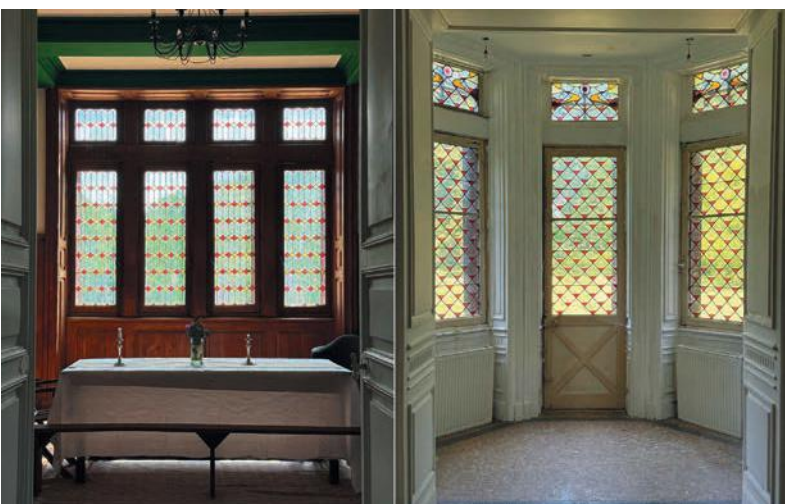
Despite its privacy, the chateau is surprisingly well-connected. Just 2km from the historic centre of Mayenne town, with its shops, services and rich cultural heritage, the estate offers both a retreat and real-world convenience. For longer journeys, Laval's TGV station places Paris within reach for a day trip or weekend visit, with high-speed trains reaching the capital in as

little as 1h15. This blend of accessibility and escape is relatively rare in such grand country properties - and at under €800,000, the price is equally attractive!

Beyond the river and gardens, the estate offers a life shaped by light, space and the gentle rhythm of the countryside. Wander through 13 acres of meadows and trees, explore nearby villages, or take in the ever-changing reflections on the water. The caretaker's cottage sparks creativity, while the surrounding landscape invites discovery at every turn. With history in every stone and serenity in every corner, this is a unique place where you can truly feel at home. ■

On the market for €795,000
[cabinetlenail.com](https://www.cabinetlenail.com)

À VENDRE





Home
and
income

Creature comforts

If you long to escape the crowds, this charming property in rural Charente could be the peaceful haven you're craving, says **Annaliza Davis**

Do you dream of escaping to the French countryside, far from the madding crowd? In western France, inland from La Rochelle and one hour west of Limoges, you'll find tranquility, authenticity and all the creature comforts thanks to this secluded country home - it even has a separate guest cottage that can provide you with an income.

The main house has five bedrooms, and is bursting with traditional character, from its timber floors and exposed stonework to the painted wooden shutters and terracotta-tiled roof. An ideal family home, it offers a fully equipped kitchen that opens onto a bright dining room, perfect for enjoying those French-style sociable

meals that last all evening. The spacious living room has a traditional fireplace with an attractive woodburning stove surrounded by exposed stone walls and large wooden beams, inviting you to cosy up and relax. In fact, the whole house has been designed with both comfort and practicality in mind, so from the moment you arrive, you'll feel at home.

Staying on the ground floor, there's a shower room with WC, a laundry area, office space with practical storage and veranda leading directly to the garden. Upstairs, you'll find a family bathroom and three bedrooms including a master suite with walk-in closet.

If you're looking for a property to accommodate extended family independently from day one, or provide

an income for you, this is a fantastic find: in the grounds there is a ready-made guest house that is ideal for accommodating family members who want to live here all year round, or for occasional visiting guests, but it is a great business opportunity or for generating rental income as a gîte. Separate from the main home, the cottage has plenty of character, including a living-dining room with its own fireplace, a fitted kitchen that opens onto a private patio area, and a ground-floor shower room with WC. Upstairs, there are two bedrooms plus an office space, so it could even be used for someone looking to work from home.

As if the property itself were not enough to win you over, the outside space is sure to seal the

deal. It has one hectare of land with no near neighbours so it is not overlooked at all. Thanks to its elevated position, you can enjoy uninterrupted panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and sunbathe on the lawns or by the swimming pool, which is a definite plus.

If you have bigger plans or want to develop further, this Charente property has an attached barn that could be developed into further accommodation, but it also lends itself to use as a workshop or storage space for leisure equipment. You'll also find another workshop, a garden shed and even a carport in the grounds, so the only limit here is your imagination... ■

On the market for €393,000
anb-immobilier.com

À VENDRE



Best of both worlds



Choose an edge-of-village house for country views and access to amenities - here are a few of our favourites



€785,000, HAUTES-PYRÉNÉES



How much would I love to live in this beautiful home, full of period character and with gorgeous country views. In a peaceful village just minutes from the vibrant town of Tarbes, the property features five spacious bedrooms, a large living and dining room with fireplace, a professionally equipped kitchen with black granite worktops, a converted barn partly fitted as a dining area and summer kitchen, all set on a 2.3ha plot of partly wooded land which runs down to a pretty stream and includes a 100m² outbuilding, hot tub, electric car charging station and carport. There's also geothermal heating and fibre-optic internet.

Ref: 686716 (Agence Le Bonheur)
Karen Tait, Editor



I'm always drawn to a property with potential, and this charming house has plenty of scope for me to put my stamp on it (with the assistance of my much more practical and DIY-proficient husband!). It was originally built around 1910 and benefits from a

beautiful marble floor, high ceiling, large windows and light-filled spacious rooms. There's also a big garden and a detached garage. The house has lovely countryside views, but is on the edge of a pretty village and just a few minutes from the medieval town of St-Germain-les-Belles meaning I can enjoy the advantages of rural living, but know that a good *boulangerie* and brasserie aren't far away!

Ref: 687141 (Limousin Property Agents)
Emma Kestin, Advertising Manager

€159,000, HAUTE-VIENNE



€255,000, AUDE



What makes this property stand out, and what I genuinely love about it, isn't just the practical space and spacious garden; it's the soul and character that come from its period features. The preserved original details, such as old fireplaces, exposed beams, high ceilings and original tiles, give a sense of history that you simply don't get with newer builds. The large windows in every room of this house let in an abundance of light from all angles. Set in a village in the Pyrenean foothills, the property has local amenities close by and easy to get to, with Limoux just 20 minutes away, Carcassonne around 1h10 away, and several airports within reach.

Ref: 7501170224 (Sextant)
Josie Sharp, Digital Content Assistant

A greater selection of French properties than ever before

BETTER FASTER SIMPLER

francepropertyshop.com

TO ADVERTISE ON THE SITE CALL 0044 (0)1225 463752



Don't forget to Like our France Property Shop Facebook page and see our daily property picks. Sign up for the newsletter too!

CRANBURYS

Movers • Shippers • Storers

MOVING TO FRANCE?

We are a reliable and professional removals from a local, independent, fourth generation, family-owned business

- Household & Personal Effects •
- Full, Part and Return Loads •
- Full Packing Service •
- Storage Facilities •
- Antiques and Cars •

www.cranburys.co.uk



T: +44 (0)1962 777684 | E: moving@cranburys.co.uk

Fluent in French legal affairs

For expert legal advice on:

- French property sales, purchases and gifts
- French inheritance law and tax
- Implications on your UK estate of French property ownership.

call 0800 915 6037 or email
france@ashtonslegal.co.uk

www.ashtonslegal.co.uk
www.heslop-platt.co.uk



Ashtons LEGAL heslop & platt
FRENCH LAW SPECIALISTS

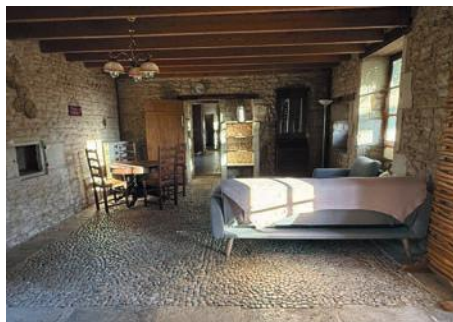




AGENT'S
DREAM HOME



ON THE
MARKET FOR
€473,500



“I love the idea of flexible living – space for family, guests or creative work”

SAYS **CHRISTOPHE GUAY**



For me, a dream property is not about perfection or polish, but about feeling truly connected to a place. This extraordinary 10th-century residence offers exactly that. I would want to live here because it feels alive with history, character and soul, while still allowing a comfortable, modern lifestyle. I am drawn to the sense of permanence and craftsmanship in the exposed stone walls, ancient beams and flagstone floors. Living within these walls would feel grounding, as though the house itself has stories to tell and would


quietly shape the rhythm of daily life. The stone tower and spiral staircase are not just architectural features; they create a sense of romance and escape that makes everyday living feel special.

The layout of the two wings appeals to my desire for both togetherness and privacy. I love the idea of flexible living – space for family, guests or creative work, with the option to separate the house if life ever changes. It is a home that could evolve with me over time.

The land and setting are perhaps the strongest reason I would choose to live

here. Waking up to views over the River Charente, surrounded by two hectares of nature, offers a sense of calm that modern life rarely allows. The peaceful rural environment would give me space to slow down, while nearby towns ensure I am not isolated. This property represents the life I aspire to live: rooted, peaceful and deeply connected to history, nature and home. ■

Christophe Guay is the Director of Agence TIC Ruffec in Charente
Tel: 0033 (0)5 45 71 00 46
tic-ruffec.com



'Expert cross-border legal support
pour les transactions de French property:
due diligence, legal coordination,
tax compliance, *et* estate planning
s'il vous plaît'

'C'est à l'étage madame'

Bright
AVOCATS

Bright Avocats

16, place Saint-Georges 31000 Toulouse

00 33 (0)5 61 57 90 86 or contact@brightavocats.com

www.brightavocats.com



Living the high life...



Sunshine, skiing and a hint of the Med - **Annaliza Davis** looks at what the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence and Hautes-Alpes can offer for househunters

Not far from the Italian border, the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence is generally referred to as 'Haute-Provence', and neighbours the department of Hautes-Alpes. As their names suggest, they are synonymous with snow-topped mountains, skiing and crystal-clear lakes, but also have sunshine, historic towns and quaint villages.

If you appreciate distinct seasons and love the sunlight,

this part of France enjoys over 300 days of sunshine a year, so you can explore the hiking trails, cycle routes, river valleys and glorious Alpine lakes; in winter, you can head to the mountains for a spot of snowboarding or skiing.

The main attraction of this region is that it puts you in reach of all the advantages of the Riviera without the sky-high prices: property here costs less than half (46%) of those

in the neighbouring Alpes-Maritimes, and that's a saving you can't ignore.

MATCH THE PLACE TO YOUR POCKET

The latest figures from Se Loger show that properties in Haute-Provence and Hautes-Alpes currently cost an average of €2,477/m², which is a third cheaper than the average price across France (€3,137/m²), and in certain areas you'll even

find homes for €1,550/m². This means that you can buy a 50m² apartment for under €79,000, and a semi-detached family home of 80m² from €125,000 right here in southern France.

In Haute-Provence, properties are most expensive in the southwest, and in the sought-after Pontis to the north, popular for its lakeside location on Lac de Serre-Ponçon. Here, the price per square metre shoots up to €3,452, meaning



FRANCE'S GRAND CANYON

One of the most spectacular natural features of this region is located in the regional natural park: the Gorges du Verdon, nicknamed 'the Grand Canyon'. Carved by the Verdon river, this ravine is 21km long, 700m deep and can be as narrow as six metres or as wide as 1.5km. The clear running water of the Verdon river is turquoise-green and includes tranquil lake areas, as well as white-water rapids popular with hard-core kayakers. It's an ideal spot for outdoor activities from rock-climbing to hiking, horse-riding, mountain-biking and fly fishing.



Nicknamed 'the Grand Canyon', the Gorges du Verdon are a spectacular sight

Ski resort St-Véran is in the Queyras regional natural park



Gap, a large town known for its outdoor activities, is also popular for its market

Learn more about the regions of France

frenchentree.com/french-property

“The main attraction of this region is it puts you in reach of all the advantages of the Riviera without the sky-high prices”

that a 50m² apartment will fetch around €173,000, and a semi-detached family home starts at €275,000.

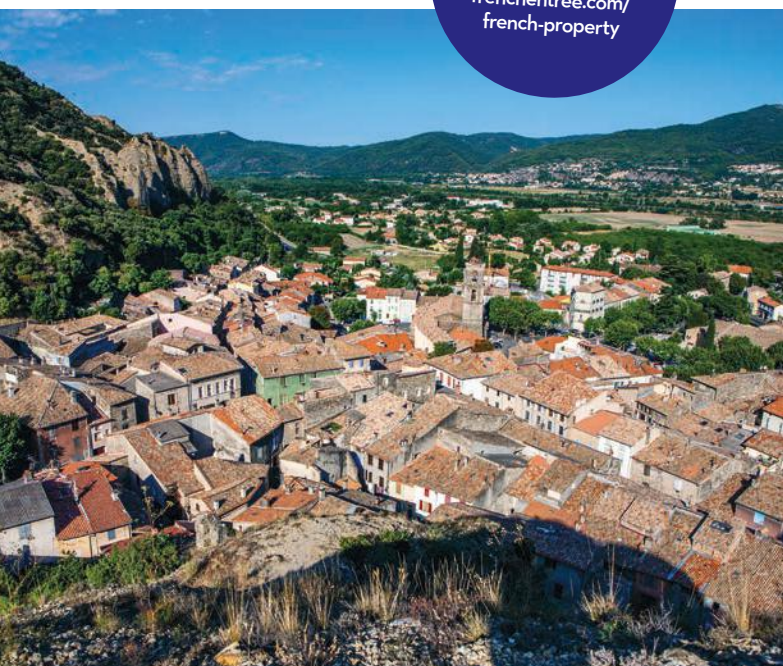
Conversely, in Hautes-Alpes, the most expensive pockets are found in the northeast area around Briançon and along the Italian border, including Montgenèvre, La Salle-les-Alpes and Monêtier-les-Bains, where prices can soar to €5,064/m². At this higher end of the market, a 50m² apartment will cost you more than €250,000 and

a modest family home starts at around €400,000.

LOCATION: WHERE TO FIND WHAT YOU WANT

Overall, population density is just 25 people per square kilometre in this area, compared to the average of 107/km² across France, so if you like the feeling of space, you could be right at home.

“Where I live in Haute-Provence, it’s still relatively unknown to British buyers,”



Known for its olive oil, Les Mées is a good choice for accessibility

FOOD AND DRINK



If you enjoy regional specialities, this part of France is famous for its olive oil, cheese from Banon wrapped in chestnut leaves, dishes that showcase the tender lamb from Sisteron and hearty orges soups featuring barley. The lavender fields mean that local honey is incredible, flavouring many dishes including *tarte aux pommes*, which uses Alpine apples. As for local drinks, look out for Vin de Pierrevert (AOC), wines using the authentic Mollard grapes and the Liqueurs Henri Bardouin de Forcalquier.

says Lara Bahls, who moved here in 2014. “That’s mainly because there are no large cities or mass tourist attractions, which is precisely what makes it so charming: authentic villages, unspoilt landscapes and a truly relaxed way of life.”

Gap, two hours south of Grenoble, is the largest town in the area (population 40,656) and is famous for its outdoor activities. Picture terracotta rooftops set against a mountain backdrop, surrounded by valleys and forests. The centre includes historic properties and new-builds, with accommodation that’s primarily apartments (64%) at an average of €2,639/m², so a 50m² property comes in at €132,000, while a central studio is less than €60,000.

The walled town of Manosque (population 22,807) sits on the edge of the Luberon regional natural park. Its narrow streets feature old townhouses and fill with visitors during the Saturday-morning market. The property market is lively, too, with studios from €55,000, a larger

range of apartments from €110,000, and three-bedroom houses from €235,000.

If you’re looking for a bit of hustle and bustle without sacrificing natural beauty, aim for Digne-les-Bains (population 17,500), popular for its accessibility. It sits between Marseille and Nice, within 50km of ski slopes, yet it isn’t overrun with traffic and is family-friendly with plenty of cultural activities. It has an historic centre, and is famous for its thermal spas and fragrant lavender. A town-centre 50m² apartment starts at €49,000, with a larger 80m² apartment at €80,000, while townhouses start around €165,000 making it an affordable choice.

For ski fans, Briançon (population 11,000) puts you on the Serre Chevalier runs, with a 28m² studio at the foot of the slopes costing €130,000. The most costly areas are towards the slopes rather than in the town centre, whose Unesco status includes historic fortifications and clusters of pretty buildings. From skiing to the summer Alpine activities of

WHY I MOVED HERE



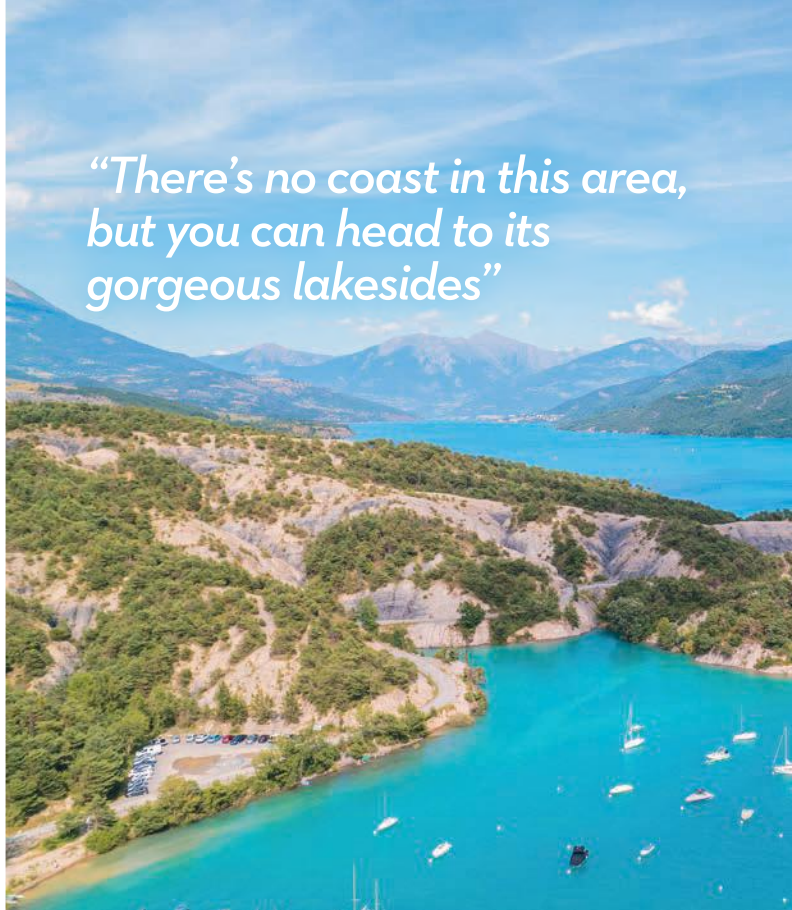
Lara Bahls moved from Germany to the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, where she works in real estate with Sextant Properties.

“Originally from northern Germany, I moved to Castellane in 2014. What I particularly appreciate here is the proximity to nature and the diversity of the landscapes. We are in the heart of the Verdon regional natural park and a stone’s throw from the famous Gorges du Verdon. There are several lakes just a few minutes away, ski resorts are about an hour’s drive, and the Mediterranean is two hours away. Despite this unspoilt natural setting, we are still close to two international airports and several major cities.

“Although still relatively unknown, this part of France is gaining visibility every year. It offers an excellent compromise between nature, accessibility and reasonable prices, as well as a particularly pleasant climate: summers are warm without being excessive, and winters enjoy generous sunshine. It is ideal for those who wish to enjoy the great outdoors all year round.”

© SHUTTERSTOCK

“There’s no coast in this area, but you can head to its gorgeous lakesides”



Clockwise from above: the Unesco-listed historic centre in Briançon is not far from the ski slopes; Moustiers-Ste-Marie is at the gateway to the Gorges du Verdon; Banon, famous for its cheese; the clock tower in Manosque old town

hiking and kayaking, Briançon offers year-round tourism and a great range of property styles.

Another good choice for accessibility is Les Mées, located between Marseille and Aix-en-Provence. It’s possible to buy a house here from €80,000, although you’ll have a better choice at €150,000; €190,000 puts you in reach of a new-build project, and if you have €250,000 you can choose a single-storey villa with a swimming pool.

As for villages, there’s a huge variety here - from the perched village of Banon, where you’ll find detached houses for around €400,000, to the mountain community of Jausiers, where you’ll

find mountain chalets from €160,000. In St-Véran, Europe’s highest village, you’ll find a six-bedroom traditional alpine house for €475,000 framed by pines and the Alps.

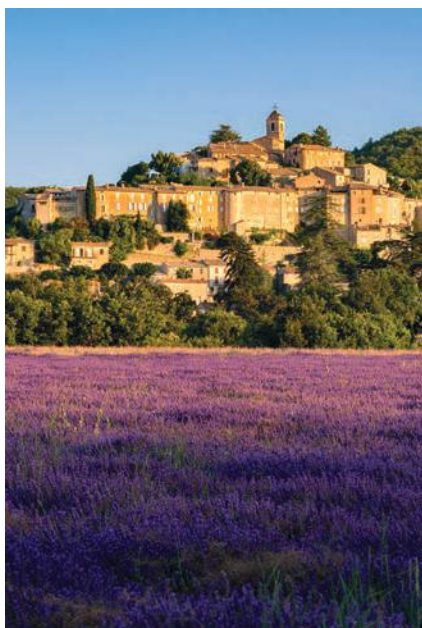
There’s no coast in this area, but you can head to its gorgeous lakesides, such as the popular village of Ste-Croix-du-Verdon to the south, where you’ll find a 50m² apartment for €150,000 and a three-bedroom house with lake views from €395,000.

To the north, around Lac de Serre-Ponçon, you can buy a lake-view house for between €250,000 and €300,000, or in Savines-le-Lac, 36m² apartments from €165,000 offering direct access to the





The shores around Lac de Serre-Ponçon are sought-after by housebuyers



Property types



Provençal farmhouses offer buyers the space they need to be self-sufficient they can be found across Haute-Provence in villages such as Lurs and Niozelles

Bastide

A bastide is a square, stone building, typically one storey with a shallow-pitched roof, but they can be a lot more elaborate, with several outbuildings. Many agencies don't differentiate between mas and bastide, but bastides were generally for the bourgeoisie. A traditional bastide that's well maintained, with a hectare of land or more, can cost upwards of €1.2m, with more luxurious examples having price tags of over €5m.

€625,000, or an eight-bedroom luxury pad is €3,480,000.

Business investment

You might prefer to invest in an established business, such as a 10-bedroom guest house in Rosans, with a swimming pool and three hectares for just €450,000. In St-Laurent-du-Verdon, you can buy a nine-bedroom B&B close to the Gorges du Verdon for €950,000, also complete with a swimming pool and regular rentals.

Provençal farmhouse

If you're searching for a property that will allow you to be self-sufficient, the Haute-Provence has its fair share of farmhouses. A budget of €500,000 will get you a five-bedroom detached farmhouse with plenty of land in Lurs, Niozelles or St-Laurent-du-Cros to set up your smallholding and live the good life.

Villa home

Villas here are generally single-storey homes with a small garden and possibly a pool. You can find a modern, detached villa in Les Mées for €260,000, rising to €750,000 for grander versions with more land and outbuildings. Even in the popular town of Gap, a four-bedroom villa with stunning views and 2,700m² comes in under €655,000.

Mountain chalet

Chalets here can be anything from a shed-like affair in the countryside to a sumptuous retreat. In Jausiers, a 30m² option starts at €125,000, a three-bedroom wooden chalet in Villars-Colmars costs €220,000, while in La Salle-les-Alpes, in the heart of Serre Chevalier, a four-bedroom chalet costs

Village house

This area has a plentiful supply of pretty villages, and some - like Moustiers-Ste-Marie - have even earned a place on the prestigious list of France's most beautiful villages. A two-bedroom townhouse here costs around €210,000, while larger, detached properties can go for over €1m. ▶

LOCATION



The ski resort of Serre Chevalier has 250km of varied slopes and lots of sun

lake shore, a patio and a small garden or outdoor space.

Renovation projects start at around €30,000 for a small stone building or apartment, and €50,000 for a townhouse, but given that you can find habitable properties in this area for €65,000, you'd have to calculate that a full-scale renovation is worthwhile, based on location.

Finally, if you have a €50,000 budget for a building plot, you could buy 3,000m² with utilities ready to connect, but cheaper building plots don't often come up in this area, so you might have to be patient!

TRANSPORT

The nearest airport is Marseille-Provence, which is 90 minutes from Digne-les-Bains. By train, the TGV takes five-and-a-half hours from Paris to Briançon, as well as Digne-les-Bains, Manosque and Sisteron, while the TER railway connects to Marseille and Nice and the regional bus network, ZOU, links to all the main towns and most villages. Also look for Combineige, a combination of train and bus transport that

takes you to the ski resorts of Val d'Allos, leaving from Nice and Digne-les-Bains.

EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY

The latest statistics from INSEE show that this region is not particularly industrial, and new businesses focus on the service industry, with wide use of seasonal contracts (14%) to match tourism requirements.

Unemployment in Hautes-Alpes is representative of France as a whole, with 11% of working-age residents listed as unemployed, a little higher (13.2%) in Haute-Provence. Over three-quarters of workers (78%) are employees, but 12% are self-employed, well beyond the French average (7.7%), showing that an entrepreneurial spirit is supported here.

Over half (56%) of residents are aged 20 to 64 (compared to 54.8% across France), and 28% are aged 65+, making the population a little older than the national average of 22.9%. Haute-Provence and Hautes-Alpes remain an appealing destination, with more people moving here than leaving. ■

WHAT THE AGENTS SAY...



Local property agent Gillian Wilson works with Leggett Immobilier and covers properties in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence.

"This is the real Provence with rosemary, thyme and lavender fields surrounding ancient hilltop villages. The property hotspots are in the villages around the Lac de Ste-Croix such as Bauduen, Quinson and Ste-Croix-du-Verdon. Other sought-after locations include villages near the Gorges du Verdon, which runs to the east of the lake and is a popular tourism destination. Outside of these hotspots, we can find homes to suit all budgets and you can still find properties with large plots of land. It's becoming popular, so there's not as much choice as there was a few years ago, but it's simply a matter of knowing where to look and having the right contacts."
leggettfrance.com

On the market



UNDER €100,000

Peaceful pad

This two-bedroom apartment is in a four-storey building, a 10-minute walk from the centre of Digne-les-Bains. Set in a peaceful spot, it has a south-facing balcony and clear views of the Cousson mountain.

€99,000

(Green Acres, ref 583979)



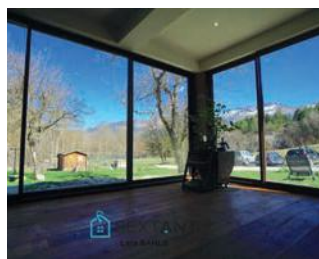
€100,000-€250,000

New apartment

This new-build, one-bedroom apartment is in a development in the historic barracks in central Briançon's 'Eco' district. It offers 38m² with a bright living space, mountain views, a balcony and garage parking.

€244,000

(Leggett, ref A26061MAA05)



€250,000-€350,000

Converted sheepfold

This 130m² property in Blieux, with stunning views over the Verdon Gorges park, is an hour from ski resorts and 90 minutes from the French Riviera. Fully renovated in 2018, it is bright with a south-facing terrace and more than 1.5ha of land.

€324,000

(FrenchEntrée, ref 7501164970)



€350,000-€500,000

Ski paradise

Right in the heart of the Serre Chevalier, this is a new-build apartment with plenty of storage and modern comforts, but traditional-style architecture. It has breathtaking views from the balcony and is just minutes from the slopes with 250km of runs.

€435,600

(Leggett, ref A40195MAA05)



€500,000 TO €1M

Two homes in one

With two three-bedroom houses and a pool, this property is ideal for rental opportunities. The first has a 55m² living space opening onto a terrace, while the second has a veranda. Set in 1,300m² gardens, it's 30 minutes from Moustiers-Ste-Marie.

€598,000

(FrenchEntrée, ref 14211R)



OVER €1M

Complete business

A traditional Alpine property that features a restaurant/bar on the ground floor, two studios for staff or holiday rental, plus a two-bedroom apartment with woodburner. It's next to the ski slopes of La Grave, an-hour-and-three-quarters from Grenoble.

€1.15m

(Leggett, ref A37812JCO5)

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRENCHENTREE.COM

PropertyInFrance.com

The new French property portal from FrenchEntrée

Find your dream property in France

Use the form below or click an area on the map to begin your search.

Search Region, Department, Nearest Town

€0 - €5,000,000+ Reference Minimum Beds

ADVANCED SEARCH FIND PROPERTIES

Find Your Dream Property in France

FrenchEntrée

PROPERTY SEARCH SERVICES MAGAZINE HELP & ADVICE CREATE PROPERTY ALERT LOGIN/REGISTER

Property for sale in Tarn

110 properties found

Filters applied

--	--	--	--

Discover thousands of homes across every region of France with the new **FrenchEntrée property database**.

From rural farmhouses and cosy cottages to coastal apartments and elegant châteaux, **PropertyInFrance.com** makes it easy to search for your perfect French property.

- Thousands of properties across France
- Search by region, department or town, price and property type
- Set property alerts and never miss a new listing

Scan to search



Visit PropertyInFrance.com today!

The now completely renovated house where Helen and Chris live

Get more inspiration from readers' stories
completefrance.com

Driven to succeed

When **Helen Tait-Wright** went to France alone to oversee a renovation project, she never dreamt she'd end up driving the Dakar rally, she tells **Gillian Harvey**

When Helen Tait-Wright and her husband Chris bought their first French house in 2002, it was to fulfil Chris's long-held dream of living in the country. "We're both on our second marriage, and when we got together in 1998, we laid all our cards on the table," Helen explains. "Chris told me he'd like to go and live in France. At the time, my only experience of the country was coming to Le Mans each year for the 24-hour race. But, I thought, why not?"

Little did she know that the move would be life-changing in unexpected ways.

The pair initially bought a run-down stone farmhouse with land in Bouillé-Loretz, Deux-Sèvres, and began to make plans to renovate. "We decided to drive out for one week in each month to work on it," says Helen. However, with progress relatively slow, the couple eventually decided that one of them had to move to

France permanently to oversee the builders and artisans and be an on-site presence.

ALL CHANGE

That decision proved to be transformative for Helen, who relocated to France in January

2005 and met soon-to-be best friend Marcella almost immediately. "Shortly after I arrived, I almost had a head-on collision with a woman at a junction. We both apologised and went on our way. But then, a few days later, I went to a

dinner party at a friend's house and she was there!

"Marcella was over in France with her son Sam while her husband worked in the UK, so we were both in a similar position," explains Helen. "We found that when you're a relatively young woman living by yourself people seem to look at you as if you've got three heads, so we teamed up."

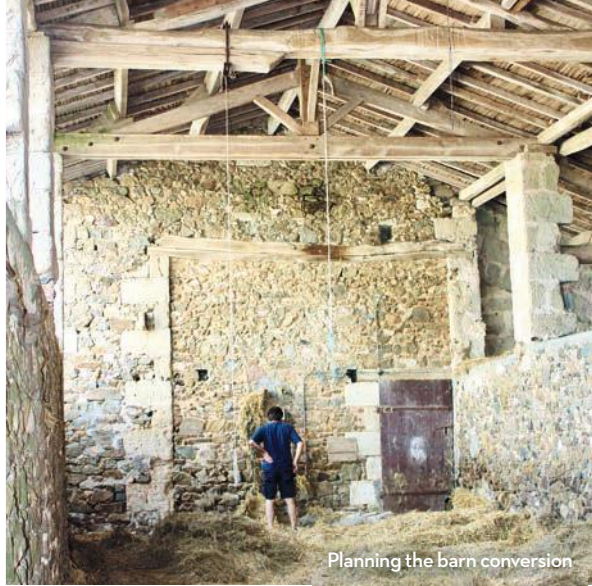
With both husbands working away, the pair were able to navigate establishing their lives in France together. "It helped to have Sam, too, as he went to school, which meant we were able to make inroads in the local community," says Helen.

The house Helen and Chris had purchased was an old farmhouse, with three hectares of land. As Helen had grown up on a farm, she felt quite at home. "It was a typical old French farmhouse, completely rundown. From upstairs, if you dared stand on the old floorboards, you could see

"Helen's obsession with all things automotive began in childhood"



Helen and Chris's wedding outside the *mairie* in Cersay, Val-en-Vignes, in 2016



Planning the barn conversion



Helen's father helped with some of the work



The barn at their second house



Marcella (left) and Helen (right) at a vintage race

through the roof! There was electricity, but no running water in the house. By the end, we'd fully renovated it, added a big extension and a garage big enough for seven cars."

The latter may sound like overkill, but when the pair first moved to France they had a large collection of vehicles. "We owned around 14 sports cars in the UK, and when I first turned up I brought a Jaguar XK and a Land Rover with me. Chris's pride and joy at the time was a Ferrari Testarossa."

PETROL HEADS

Helen's obsession with all things automotive - one she shares with Chris - began in childhood. "My mum would tell you that as a small child going out in the pushchair round our little village in the UK, I could name every car. I still have my 1968 Ladybird book of cars, which was my favourite thing," she says.

Living in France, however, had its share of challenges. "Sadly, French roads and sports cars don't go together. We evolved. One by one the sports cars had to go." Instead, the pair turned their attention elsewhere.



Chris's Ferrari Testarossa wasn't made for rural French roads!



The couple's first project

“Doing the rally with someone I know, and with whom I get on so well, made the experience a thousand times better”

“To me Land Rovers were more of a work vehicle and something I associated with the farm, rather than racing. But that would soon change.”

In 2012, despite working hard to create a beautiful rustic home, they decided to sell up, in part so they could take on a new challenge, but also because the amount of land in Bouillé-Loretz and the care it needed felt overwhelming.

“Although I grew up on a farm, I never really realised the amount of work that went into looking after land. My father had always done that,” Helen says.

So, in September 2012, they bought their current property in Val-en-Vignes, which started out as an almost derelict barn. “We needed a new project. And this was the biggest we’ve tackled. It has 409 square metres of living space, and we’ve renovated the majority of it ourselves. It took us 10 years to complete.”

While many retire to France to live a quiet life, it seems Helen is doing just the opposite. “The house we’ve renovated is now for sale. I think when I’ve finished a project, I’m always looking for the next thing,” she admits. “My background is in design, I originally trained in fashion design and later interior design. I really enjoy planning a beautiful renovation and bringing it to life.”

RALLYING ROUND

Over the past 10 years, Helen has also been busy taking on another, unexpected challenge. “Visiting a friend in Morocco in 2015, I was talking about my love of cars and he asked me why I’d never done the Rallye Aïcha des Gazelles du Maroc. It’s a French-organised women-only rally that happens each year.

“The conversation sowed a seed, and four years later I was in Morocco competing!” Helen’s first taste of rally

driving turned into a whole new series of adventures. “The desert sand gets under your skin and calls you back!”

The Rallye des Gazelles is an endurance event, eight days in duration and covering thousands of off-road miles. As it’s a pure navigation rally, drivers and their navigators are not allowed to use GPS, just a basic compass and a black and white map on which they plot the checkpoints that mark their route.

MORE PLANNING

Meanwhile, Marcella, whose relationship had sadly broken down, moved back to the UK in 2010. However, she and Helen kept in regular contact, and during a visit to her friend in early 2022, a plan was hatched.

“The visit came on the back of a couple of horrible years,” Marcella explains. “I had a health scare in 2020. This resulted in a hysterectomy, which left me feeling shaken. My business also suffered during Covid times.”

As Helen relayed stories of rallying life to her friend, an idea started to form. “I was talking about how I was struggling to find a good navigator, and Marcella said, ‘can’t I come?’. I was astounded, as I’d never considered she might want to do it, but she was really keen.”

Soon after, Helen took Marcella to the local quarry, near Doué-la-Fontaine in her Land Rover and showed her the realities of off-piste driving. “She did really well - there were some very steep drops, but she coped admirably.”

Then, in September 2022, the pair undertook their first rally in Morocco. “Eight consecutive days of driving was a test of our friendship, but luckily we came through. I’d had other navigators before, but driving with Marcella was completely different,” says Helen. “Doing the rally with someone I know,



Helen adjusting tyre pressures



The dream team: Marcella (left) and Helen (right)

and with whom I get on so well, made the whole experience a thousand times better.”

Moreover, as the rally was French run, the pair found that living in France proved a real advantage. “The Road Book is written in French, and the majority of the communication is in French. We have a massive advantage as a British team as we can understand what is going on before it’s translated. Being familiar with French culture also helps: like knowing

that you won’t get any dinner until 9pm, so making sure we take our own food, as we prefer to eat earlier.”

DREAMING OF DAKAR

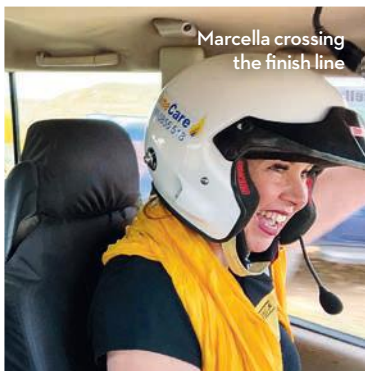
After undertaking a second rally the following year, where they finished as the second all-female crew, Helen and Marcella signed up for their biggest challenge to date. This was the Dakar Classic, which took place in January 2026, and in which they were the



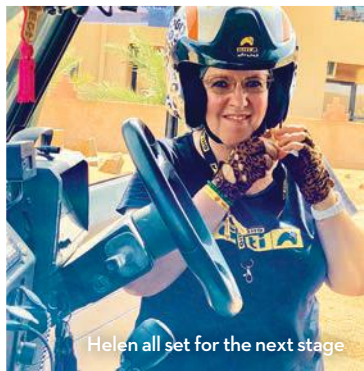
During the race in Morocco



Rallye Aïcha second time round



Marcella crossing the finish line



Helen all set for the next stage



Racing in the desert



Celebrating in Morocco

first-ever British all-female team to compete.

“Chris, who moved over to France permanently in 2009 after retiring from his haulage business, worked with me to build a custom car to the exacting standards required for Dakar,” says Helen. “It’s something we’d never done before, but it’s amazing what information you can discover on YouTube!” she adds. The event was a 14-day endurance rally, covering

“Rallying, particularly endurance rallying, is part of the French DNA in a way it isn't in the UK”

7,281km, 4,162km of which was off-road.

And Helen, whose initial move to France was to fulfil Chris’s dream, has now well and truly fallen in love with life across the Channel. “I love the space. I go back to Suffolk

where I used to live, but so much of the farmland has been sold for new developments. Living in France feels like going back in time to Suffolk 50 years ago.

“In terms of motor sports, it’s a great place to live. Rallying, particularly endurance rallying,

is part of the French DNA in a way it isn’t in the UK. People in the UK think I’m insane to want to drive the Dakar rally, but the French people I know seem to understand.

“Coming to France alone made me stronger; and maybe in some ways that resilience has helped with the endurance part of the rallies. But more than anything, if I’d not done it, I may never have heard of the Rallye des Gazelles, and might never have met Marcella.” ■

La bise is still a popular greeting between friends



BONJOUR



Manners matter

Sarah Daly explores the complex world of social interaction in France - and how to make sure you get it exactly right

France and the UK are separated by only 22 miles of water at the Strait of Dover, and yet they often feel like a world away from each other in terms of etiquette and custom.

Knowing how to navigate situations - from walking into a shop, dining in a restaurant or attending a business meeting, to socialising with colleagues or visiting French friends at home - can make the difference between creating a positive impression and unwittingly causing offense.

THE MAGIC WORD

I've lived in France since 2018 and even after seven years, I'm

still learning when it comes to meeting new people or finding myself in unfamiliar situations. One of the things that took me by surprise initially was that, despite the fact I spoke reasonable French, people would look at me askance when I asked for help. I soon learned that greeting someone with 'excuse me' is considered rude here. Each time I greeted someone this way, I would be met with a very pointed '*bonjour madame*' in return.

Every interaction, almost without exception, I discovered, should begin with 'hello'. On the phone, '*allo*' is common, but whenever you enter a shop or restaurant, or greet anyone, '*bonjour*' is

absolutely essential. Even emails and text messages usually start this way. '*Bonsoir*' after an unspecified point in the evening can be substituted, and '*madame*', '*monsieur*' or '*messieurs dames*' are often added in speech according to the situation.

Beyond this, though, there's not much room for manoeuvre. '*Salut*' is used as 'hello' or 'goodbye' among friends and '*coucou*' is used to greet very good friends or children. I confess I'm rarely brave enough to use either, as I'd rather be too polite than appear rude or overly familiar.

Just to confuse matters, where I will say hello every time I meet someone, in

France, you don't say it again to someone you've already met that day. Instead, you nod, smile or occasionally use *'rebonjour'* (hello again). I find this far more difficult than remembering to say hello in the first place, but to repeat it risks giving the impression that you've forgotten that you've met someone already.

EXPERT ANALYSIS

I ask Alice Burrows, assistant professor of applied linguistics at Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris, if there is such a thing as French etiquette, or whether we risk stereotyping our social interactions by making this assumption. She studies how French is taught as a foreign language and is responsible for programmes teaching French to the university's overseas students. Alice has a French mother, an English father and an Argentinian husband. She also speaks Italian and Arabic, so she is very used to adapting to different cultural situations.

"I look at French and other cultures on an anthropological

level," she tells me. "Jodelet's theory of social representation describes how we develop our system of values and beliefs. It suggested that our first socialisation usually comes from family. Later, friends, university and work contribute to our 'reality filter' and how we expect things to be."

Alice tells me about a study that found that exchange programmes such as Erasmus often seemed to reinforce participants' stereotypes of the country they visited rather than challenge them. "Cultural contact depends on the eyes of the person



Alice Burrows studies French culture



In Paris, English is the lingua franca, so English speakers are widely accepted



Less English is spoken in rural areas of France, so there is more need to adapt

"An apéro invitation is for drinks only and means you should leave before 9pm, it isn't an invitation to a meal"



You may be served nibbles at an apéro, but not a sit-down meal

making the contact," she says. An example she gives of this is that in big cities such as Paris, English is the lingua franca for so many people that it's widely spoken and English-speakers are consequently more accepted. In very rural areas with fewer tourists, English-speakers who move in and don't speak any French or socialise at all with French neighbours are more likely to be frowned upon.

Keeping an open mind, doing your best to prioritise politeness and being friendly seems like a good approach then, however little French you speak. "*Bonjour* and *merci* will always be appreciated," Alice says. "Try to learn French and show that you want to adapt if you're moving to a rural area. If you don't speak any French at all and don't plan to learn, you may find it easier to live in a big city."

IN POLITE COMPANY

When I ask her about specific situations that cause confusion, Alice is quick to highlight *l'apéro*. "People who aren't used to this often don't realise that an *apéro* invitation is for drinks only and means you should leave before 9pm," she says. "It isn't an invitation to a meal, so only nibbles will be served and your hosts are probably waiting for you to leave so that they can eat. An *apéro dinatoire*, on the

other hand," Alice adds, "will include a more substantial meal and go on for longer. If in doubt, ask your host what you should expect."

When we moved into our new home, I consulted a French friend before I invited the neighbours to our own afternoon *apéro*. I thought I had it nailed, until I realised that none of our guests would accept a drink until they knew that everyone we were expecting had arrived. I had no idea who was actually coming and found my own desire to be a good host and give everyone a drink at war with each neighbour's desire to be a good guest and wait before accepting one.

"That can be a generational thing as well," Alice says. "It's changing now as get-togethers become less formal affairs." And I'm very pleased to say that the neighbours overlooked our initial ignorance and many have since become good friends, despite the frequent mistakes I still make with language and etiquette.

Which leads us on to *la bise*. The French tradition of greeting friends, colleagues and sometimes complete strangers with a kiss has changed somewhat since the Covid pandemic, Alice tells me. "We no longer do this where I work, but it's still common with friends." How many kisses to



Restaurant staff - from the waiters to the chefs and even the owner - are usually professionally trained to a high level



Estelle Liébert runs Le Darnetal

expect varies between regions, but I've found that a handshake is generally an acceptable alternative when I'm unsure whether to proffer a cheek. In fact, one of my neighbours now enthusiastically fist bumps me when we meet, as he knows I'm English and realises I'm therefore largely clueless about this aspect of French life.

Whether you're visiting, or moving to France for work, another tradition Alice says is important to understand is an invitation to *prendre un pot*, or go out for a drink, after work. "This is very much viewed as part of work," Alice tells me. "It may be once a month or more often, but while it looks like it's optional, it is expected that you will go unless you have a very strong reason for refusing."

"I actually find British visitors to be very polite,"

says Estelle Liébert, who runs Le Darnetal (ledarnetal.fr), a traditional French restaurant in Montreuil-sur-Mer in northern France. "About 70-80% of our clientele is English-speaking and I love having them. They always smile and seem genuinely happy to be here, despite usually speaking very little French." Like most people who come into regular contact with tourists, Estelle speaks English and enjoys chatting with visitors. And like most restaurateurs in France, she is trained to a very high standard.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This is a key difference it's important to understand when visiting a French restaurant: the chances are high that everyone, from waiting staff to the chef and owner, will have attended a specialised catering college and all are skilled and knowledgeable professionals. Estelle trained at the prestigious Lycée Hôtelier du Touquet and has worked in almost every aspect of the restaurant business over the past 20 years.

I ask her what the key differences are between French and English-speaking clients. "French clients will usually eat their main meal at lunchtime," she tells me. "British visitors often prefer to eat in the evening. A common

misunderstanding is that they can arrive early. Brasseries tend to be open all day whereas most restaurants will be open for lunch between noon and 2pm and won't open again until 7pm even if staff are on site. Before you visit a restaurant, a good tip is to look at the menu. If it's available in English, you'll probably find English-speaking staff, whereas that may not be the case if it's only available in French."

And if you're dithering about tipping, service charges have automatically been added in French cafés and restaurants since the 1980s, ensuring staff are paid an adequate wage and

don't need to rely on tips. You should see on the menu and on your bill, the phrase '*prix service compris*', sometimes followed by a percentage or further details. You're not expected to leave anything extra, but a '*pourboire*', or tip, of few coins will always be appreciated, if you feel you've had really good service.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

I'll confess that I cringe now when I'm in a bar or restaurant and I see English-speakers summon a waiter without even saying hello in English, let alone attempting French, and instead launching in with a peremptory 'can I get...?'. While etiquette differs from place to place, politeness and good grace are universal. If you don't speak French, just lead with the word '*bonjour*' and a smile. If you can add '*Est-ce que vous parlez anglais?*', it will be appreciated, but things are far more likely to go smoothly for all concerned after that first simple '*bonjour*'. ■

For more advice about integrating into French life, Alice Burrows suggests visiting ofii.fr/en, the French Office for Immigration and Integration. Its website includes lots of information about French values and principles, as well as handy support for those wishing to live in France.

TOP TIP

For more advice about integrating into French life, Alice Burrows suggests visiting ofii.fr/en, the French Office for Immigration and Integration. Its website includes lots of information about French values and principles, as well as handy support for those wishing to live in France.



Service charges have been included on the bill since the 1980s

MOVING WITH CARE

Removals and Storage
Weekly services to
and from France



GLOBAL RELOCATION
BURKE BROS



Coventry/Warwick: 024 7663 2501 Wolverhampton: 01902 714555
Birmingham: 0121 444 1885 London: 0207 937 1999
Rugby: 01788 541044

sales@burkebros.co.uk www.burkebros.co.uk



French planning
& architectural services



Fully qualified English speaking architects and planning consultants offering full design and planning services for any size of project, anywhere in France.

New Build • Extensions • Renovations • Swimming Pools
Retrospective Permits • Barn Conversions • Châteaux

siret : 881 631 642 00025 email: enquiries@frenchplans.com



www.frenchplans.com

established in 2002



Parthenay is one of the main hubs of Deux-Sèvres, offering good facilities

Hidden gems

Head off the beaten track in Deux-Sèvres, Creuse and Aveyron and you'll discover charm, history and character homes you can make your own, writes **Eleanor Hewitt-Coleman**



France's lesser-known corners hold a charm all of their own. From rolling hills to hidden waterways, and medieval villages to open farmland, the departments of Deux-Sèvres, Creuse and Aveyron combine history, nature and community in a lifestyle that's authentic, accessible and deeply satisfying.

With stone cottages nestled in tranquil countryside and rivers winding past ancient stone bridges, these areas offer a slower pace without sacrificing character.

Each has its own story: Deux-Sèvres charms with gentle *bocage* countryside and secret gardens; Creuse impresses with its artistic heritage and dramatic landscapes; and Aveyron dazzles with southern light, medieval *bastides* and soaring gorges.

Accessible yet off the beaten track, they invite you to slow down, explore the flora and the fauna and imagine a life steeped in storytelling.

DEUX-SÈVRES The part of France you'll want to keep for yourself

Deux-Sèvres is a soft, verdant corner of western France where rolling fields, hedge-lined lanes and sleepy villages create a sense of calm that's hard to find elsewhere. Here, life moves at a slow pace: afternoons are for wandering cobbled streets, discovering artisan workshops or enjoying coffee in a quiet town square.

Bressuire and Parthenay are the main hubs, offering everyday convenience with schools, shops and restaurants, while the countryside around them feels secluded.

Lifestyle and climate

Deux-Sèvres is for those who cherish quiet beauty and hidden charm. The department is dotted with secret gardens - such as Le Jardin des Roches - and centuries-old bridges and chapels whispering stories of the past. Outdoor enthusiasts will find perfect walking and cycling routes through the *bocage*, fields divided by ancient hedgerows and dotted with stone markers. Kayaking along the canals of the Marais Poitevin offers a serene way to explore waterways often overlooked by tourists. Life here balances rural tranquillity with a gentle sense of community.

Summers are mild, often sunny but not overly hot, while winters are cool and crisp. The temperate climate sees the landscape flourish and allows for year-round outdoor activity.

Getting there

This department is reasonably accessible for a rural location, but, depending on where you want to be, travelling times by road, train or plane will vary. Poitiers airport can be one to two hours away and La Rochelle airport one to two and a half.

Property

Village houses in Deux-Sèvres are typically built from local limestone with soft pastel facades, often complemented by wooden shutters and small gardens. Interiors are comfortable and practical, with layouts that suit modern living. For €150,000-€200,000, you can find a charming three/four-bedroom stone house in good condition, often with some character features and a garden.

This area is a good fit for families or retirees who enjoy

quiet villages, local markets and gentle countryside. Nestled in western France, it's a place where you can settle into a community-focused lifestyle, while still being within reach of nearby towns and services.

CREUSE

Your secret slice of France

In this central department, the rolling green valleys are punctuated by forested hills, winding rivers and granite villages that seem to have grown organically from the landscape. The Creuse is a place where space, history and tranquillity come together in a way that feels untouched by time. Life here moves at a slow pace, yet is still full of character - medieval stone churches and turreted castles tell stories stretching back centuries, and tapestry-weaving workshops are around every corner.

Lifestyle and climate

Creuse is a haven for those seeking peace, creativity and a connection with the land. Aubusson, famous for its tapestry heritage, still hums with artisans working on ancient looms, while Château de Boussac recalls the literary footsteps of George Sand. For nature lovers, the Gorges de la Creuse offer dramatic cliffs, hidden swimming spots and trails through forests that feel almost cinematic. This is a region for hiking, kayaking, cycling, or simply watching the seasons change across a wild but welcoming landscape.

Summers are warm without being oppressive, while winters



Aubusson in Creuse is famous for its tapestry making, which continues today

can be cold, often with light snow, giving the countryside a calm beauty. The temperate climate allows for outdoor adventure all year round - through autumnal forests and fields of spring wildflowers.

Getting there

Located in central France, Creuse is a quiet, sparsely populated area of rolling hills, rivers and forests. Despite its rural character, this department is easily accessible by road. Limoges airport is a one to two-hour drive. The main stations at Aubusson and Guéret connect to Limoges and Paris.

Property

Homes are often sturdy granite cottages and farmhouses, sometimes accompanied by barns or small orchards. Many properties have generous plots suitable for gardens,

workshops or studios. For €80,000-€120,000, you can find a cosy two/three-bedroom stone village house needing light renovation, often with a small garden. Creuse appeals to artists, writers or anyone seeking seclusion, offering a peaceful retreat for projects or a slow-paced rural life.

AVEYRON

The wild and beautiful heart of southern France

Aveyron is where wide skies, rolling plateaux and deep river gorges create a landscape that feels both rugged and serene. Stone villages hide among nature, while medieval *bastides* such as Villefranche-de-Rouergue offer lively squares, cafés and a deep sense of history. In this southern department, life moves at its own speed - guided by the sun, seasons and rhythm of the land.

Lifestyle and climate

Aveyron is perfect for those who love space, outdoor adventure and a slower way of life. Kayak along the emerald waters of the Gorges du Tarn, hike the limestone cliffs or explore villages such as Belcastel, crowned by its fairytale château. Conques is home to Pierre Soulages' stained glass and the golden sunset that shines through. Festivals, night markets and local traditions shape daily life, providing a sense of community and continuity often rare today.

Summers are hot and dry, with long sunlit days perfect for outdoor living and a natural, continuous sun. Winters are mild but crisp, particularly on the higher plateaux. The southern climate makes Aveyron ideal for hikers, cyclists and anyone drawn to the great outdoors.



€169,999

CLUSSAIS-LA-POMMERAIE, DEUX-SÈVRES

Beautiful, three-bedroom stone cottage full of character and original features including exposed beams, stone walls and a wood-burning stove; this village house has a spacious open-plan living area, private driveway and garden.



€270,000

LE VERT, DEUX-SÈVRES

Bright and spacious, this four-bedroom property, built in 1900, has been modernised for practical living and comfort but retains plenty of character; it's set in 7,000m² of grounds with mature trees leading down to the banks of the Boutonne River.



€499,000

PARTHENAY, DEUX-SÈVRES

A rare opportunity to own and run a stunning 500-year-old merchant's house in Parthenay's historic quarter; the property has beautiful private quarters, commercial premises, outbuildings, a walled garden, courtyard and potential for further development



€69,800

DOMEYROT, CREUSE

Originally two houses, this spacious four-bedroom, two-bathroom property offers the best of village life and is just a short drive from the popular towns of Boussac and Gouzou; with characterful beams, feature fireplaces and double-glazing

The village of Belcastel in Aveyron is overlooked by its fairytale château



Read more
property buying
guides on

frenchentree.com

Getting there

For travel to Aveyron, the local motorway is the Méridienne A75, which includes the Millau Viaduct and is part of the network that connects Calais to the Mediterranean coast. Rodez airport is 30-60 minutes away and Toulouse airport is two to three hours' drive. Train links run via Rodez or Toulouse.

Property

Situated in southern France, the area combines natural beauty with historic villages. Homes in Aveyron are often built from local stone with slate roofs,

reflecting the department's medieval and rugged heritage. Properties frequently include terraces or courtyards that take full advantage of the dramatic scenery of rivers, valleys and limestone plateaux. For €120,000-€170,000, you can find a charming move-in-ready three/four-bedroom house, often with character features and a cosy garden.

Aveyron suits nature lovers, hikers and history enthusiasts, with spectacular landscapes, traditional villages and opportunities for outdoor living and cultural exploration.

A WAY OF LIFE

These three departments offer a quieter and more-grounded France, where history is woven into daily life and the landscape shapes the rhythm of every day. Here, community still matters, nature sets the pace and the simplest moments - a morning at the market, a walk at dusk, enjoying the view across the rolling fields - carry meaning.

Whether you are drawn to the gentle lanes of Deux-Sèvres, the artistic spirit and wide horizons of Creuse or the sunlit gorges and medieval villages of Aveyron, each area offers its

own version of rural living that feels enriching and accessible.

For anyone seeking space, tranquillity, authenticity and everyday comforts, these rural areas offer something compelling and deeply satisfying. You'll find a way of life connected to the land, the seasons and the stories that shape these remarkable places. A life that is both peaceful and adventurous. ■

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



€99,000

GOUZON, CREUSE

This large four-storey, five-bedroom house is in the heart of an attractive and vibrant town; it needs some love and attention, but has so much to offer in return - fundamentally in good condition, it's awaiting someone with vision, who is looking for a project



€499,000

BOUSSAC, CREUSE

Situated close to historic Boussac, a town with all the necessary amenities this four-bedroom property with château view has been renovated with superb taste; run as a successful high-end bed and breakfast, the contents can be negotiated with the sale



€158,000

CONQUES, AVEYRON

Just 20 minutes from Conques, one of France's Plus Beaux Villages and a celebrated stop on the Camino de Santiago, this beautifully converted stone barn offers character, comfort and charm, with potential to also develop the workshop-cellar beneath the house



€195,000

ST-ANDRE-DE-NAJAC, AVEYRON

For those seeking a property brimming with character and endless potential in the heart of a picturesque French village, this house has many original features, plenty of natural light, large rooms and high ceilings, plus an annexe for renovation

Frog

A TASTE OF *home*

RIGHT HERE IN FRANCE

**YOU'VE CHOSEN FRANCE FOR THE LIFESTYLE,
THE SPACE, THE PACE. NOW DISCOVER THE PUB
YOU'LL COME BACK TO AGAIN & AGAIN!**

Frog Pubs is a familiar place to land whether you live here full time, visit often, or are just beginning your French chapter.

**We brew our own beer and serve generous food made for sharing,
alongside proper pub snacks and hand-crafted cocktails.**

There's room for groups, space to settle in, and big screens showing the sport you love, all in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere that fits naturally into French life, with a reassuring touch of home.

A *Welcome* ON US

COMPLIMENTARY NACHOS
with your first beer or cocktail

Just quote **FROG FRIENDS** at the bar

PARIS • BORDEAUX • TOULOUSE

  FOLLOW US

Frog

FROGPUBS.COM

Get more
inspiration from
readers' stories

completefrance.com



Treize Maison, a former boys' school and post office in St-Séverin, is now a holiday retreat; (inset) when it was a school



Deo and son Jacob] were all born on the 13th. We had owned a holiday home nearby for 13 years. Over time, the number became an anchor, a thread connecting moments and

places. Naming the house felt instinctive - a way to honour that shared history. Treize Maison is not about superstition. It's about recognising patterns and finding meaning in them.

Our professional lives have been shaped by large-scale projects across the Middle East and South Africa - construction, hospitality, operations. These environments taught us precision, pace and performance. But France offered something quieter.

We were drawn to creating a home to share here, one shaped by time and experience. The Charente region had long felt familiar. With its rolling vineyards, stone villages and understated elegance, it offered a rhythm we already understood. Our holiday home nearby had been a retreat for over a decade, and when the former post office in St-Séverin came onto the market, something resonated.

Lucky for some

A shared history linked to the number 13 led to a whole new chapter in St-Séverin for **Kirsten, Deo and Jacob Human**

We're often asked about the history of Treize Maison, our home in St-Séverin, Charente. The building itself has lived many lives. Constructed in 1870 as an all-boys school, it later became the town's post office in 1958, serving generations of locals with quiet reliability. When the post office relocated in 2020, the building stood empty for three years - its tall windows shuttered, its presence unchanged but waiting.

In February 2023, we became its custodians. At first, the purchase felt practical. But as we spent time within its walls, it became clear this was something more personal - a continuation of a story rather than a new beginning.

A SHARED HISTORY

We named it Treize Maison - not for luck, but for legacy. The number 13 has quietly followed our lives. We [Kirsten,



Kirsten, Deo and Jacob are the proud owners of Treize Maison in St-Séverin

HONOURING THE BONES

The structure, itself, carries a dignified restraint. Its façade is symmetrical, its scale confident without excess. Set within the village square, it has always held a public role - as a place of gathering, learning and exchange.

We were deeply aware that this building belonged not only to history, but to memory. Locals still stop by to share stories: attending class here in the early 20th century, posting letters in the 1970s, meeting neighbours in the queue. These conversations reinforced a simple truth - Treize Maison is part of the village's collective life. And so our goal was not reinvention, but continuation.

The building's layers are visible if you pay attention. The stonework bears the weight of decades. The layout reflects its

Simple and practical: the open-plan living space in Treize A



institutional past. The staircase creaks - a sound we decided not to silence.

We resisted the urge to erase these traces. Instead, we focused on careful restoration. The façade wasn't rebuilt; it was cleaned, gently repaired, and allowed to reveal its natural texture. Original proportions were respected. Imperfections remained. We wanted the walls to speak.

RENOVATION REALITY
Renovation is rarely romantic. It's scaffolding, weather delays and learning the correct terms for construction in French. It's uncovering plumbing diagrams from the 1970s that no longer match reality. It's sourcing reclaimed tiles from a barn two villages away and negotiating timelines with masons whose schedules obey a different rhythm.

We approached the project with both professional experience and personal investment. Every decision was intentional. Comfort mattered, but history mattered more. There were frustrations, naturally. Delays, surprises behind walls, moments where progress felt invisible. But

“The façade wasn't rebuilt; it was cleaned, gently repaired, and allowed to reveal its natural texture - original proportions were respected and imperfections remained”



During renovation, the former school house's interior revealed its secrets; and as it is today - ready for guests



From the outside, it was clear that the property needed some care and attention, but luckily the structure was sound



there was also joy: uncovering forgotten details, seeing how the light moved differently through reopened spaces, and watching the house slowly come alive again.

Unlike many renovation stories, the building itself was sound. There were no collapsing roofs or crumbling foundations. The bones were strong. Our task was not rescue, but revival.

ORGANIC CHANGE

The transformation was designed to feel inevitable rather than dramatic. The kitchen, once a dim corner, now opens fully to light - onto a sun-filled wooden deck in one house, and a green courtyard in the other. It's a space meant for unhurried mornings, shared meals and quiet reflection.

Guest rooms are deliberately simple. Modern textures, gentle colour palettes and thoughtful restraint define each space. Every room carries its own character, balancing warmth with elegance rather than surface decoration.

Outside, the signage for the house reads simply: Treize Maison. No ornament, no flourish. Just a name that stands with confidence.

There is no basement, no library, no concert space. Just a welcoming home designed to feel lived in, not performed.

Treize Maison is intended for guests seeking the quiet charm of the Charente with a subtle South African soul. Our heritage finds its way into the interiors through texture, material and tone; elements that bridge continents without

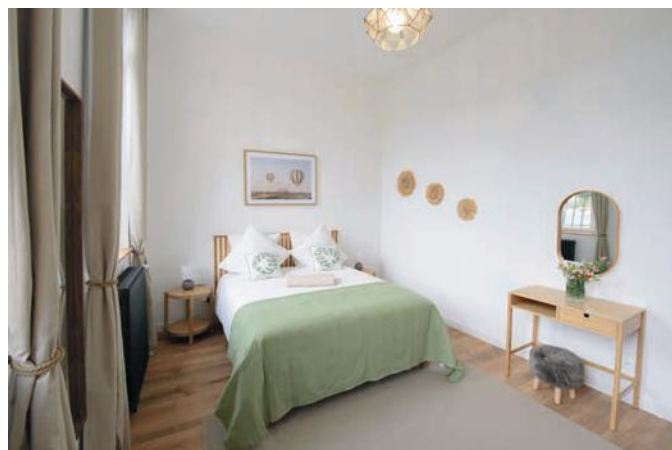
“Unlike many renovation stories, the building itself was sound - there were no collapsing roofs or crumbling foundations, the bones were strong - our task was not rescue, but revival”



There was not much of a garden when the family bought the old school house and moved in



The plot was turfed outside the rental properties and a fence added for privacy so guests can enjoy eating outside



One of the light and airy double bedrooms in Treize B, which sleeps six altogether

announcing themselves. The result is not a theme, but a feeling: grounded, warm and deeply human.

Guests often arrive curious. They leave carrying stories.

LIVING WITH INTENTION

Treize Maison is complete in its simplicity. Our focus is on stewardship - maintaining the integrity of the house, welcoming guests who appreciate its calm, and allowing it to continue to evolve naturally. This project of ours has taught us that

renovation is not simply about perfection. It's about presence. About listening more than imposing. About understanding that buildings, in the same way that people do, carry memory.

Treize Maison now stands once again at the heart of St-Séverin. It's no longer a school, no longer a post office, but it is still a place of connection for all sorts of people. And for us, that feels exactly right. ■

Discover Treize Maison at treize.me



Looking forward to helping you with your French move this year

Offering:

- Door to door service.
- Groupage and full loads.
- Customs clearance formalities taken care of.
- We carry out moves with our own vehicles and full time crews.

**STORAGE
AVAILABLE
OLD FASHIONED
FAMILY
BUSINESS**

Collections throughout UK and France

Britannia Appleyard Rotherham

www.removals-in-rotherham.co.uk

Telephone - 00 44 (0) 1709 549718

Email - david@happleyard.co.uk

British Association of Removers, member AO28


**Britannia
Appleyards**

The bustling centre of Montcuq on market day



What's in a name?

Some place names might see us stifle a giggle - not least Montcuq in Quercy. Forget the jokes, though, it's a beautiful village with a lot going for it, says **Joanna Leggett**

Growing up in England, unusual town and village names weren't uncommon, often raising a smile as we passed through places with evocative names like 'Washaway' in Cornwall.

In France some place names are pure comedic gold. Condom in southwest France, also known as Condom-en-Armagnac, speaks for itself! This small town in the heart of Armagnac country is sited on the ancient pilgrimage Route de Compostela leading to Santiago in Spain. How it got its name is a convoluted story.

Another classic is the Breton village Corps-Nud; who knows what you might glimpse as you pass through. In Moselle in eastern France there is a town called Bitche - its inhabitants called Bitchois - a name to live

up to? Trécon in the Marne translates into English as 'big idiot'. Seix in the Ariège doesn't really match its name; it's quite small although its inhabitants are called Seixoise. And let's not forget the town named Anus in Burgundy, where the street signs keep getting stolen!

BUTT OF MANY JOKES

Then there's Montcuq in the beautiful region of Quercy (Lot). When its name is said with standard French pronunciation, it sounds as if you are calling the town *mon cul*, 'my butt' (the more accurate translation is slightly more vulgar).

This lovely town achieved some notoriety back in the mid-1970s when a comedian on French TV pointed out that, when spoken aloud, Montcuq sounds exactly like *mon cul*

during a 'tasteful' sketch in a comedy show called *Le Petit Rapporteur*. Emphasising this, he stood with his backside twitching next to the town's sign in true Monty Pythonesque style, something that has stuck in the collective memory. In fact, you can still find a link to this piece of TV history on YouTube.

However, the name Montcuq actually has its roots in the ancient Occitan language, which prevailed over this part of southwest France with its different emphasis on pronunciation. Its inhabitants are emphatic that the 'q' is pronounced as a 'k', clearly calling their hometown Mont-cooque. The name, it is said, could derive from the Latin *Mont Circus Vallium*, *Mont Cuneus* or *montem cuci* - 'cuckoo mountain'. Whatever

its origins, it still sounds like *mon cul*. Either way, it's absolutely charming!

Quercy itself is a rural delight boasting lovely countryside with some of the most attractive architecture in rural France. To me it has always seemed to be a name fit for a fairytale. To its west are the Périgord and Dordogne; Berry and Limousin mark its northern boundaries; Auvergne and Languedoc the eastern side with the Pyrenées to the south. It's claimed that its white limestone houses are among the most elegant and graceful of all French country buildings with their external staircases, turrets and gables.

Almost every era of history and invader seems to have left its mark on the region - as well as the local language. The name Quercy itself is thought

“Quercy’s white limestone houses are among the most elegant and graceful of all French country buildings”

to have derived from the Latin name for oak trees ‘*quercus*’, which carpet the hills and surrounding countryside.

A WONDERFUL LIFE

History abounds throughout with prehistoric dolmens, Roman villages and English *bastides* (this area was much fought over during the Hundred Years’ War). There are medieval castles, and every town and village has its own beautiful church, while remote caves and forests have provided perfect hiding places for refugees over the centuries.

It’s all set in some of the most stunning countryside with the wonderful climate of southwest France. The Lot and Dordogne rivers wind their upper reaches through the area - scenic and charming with wonderful local food and, importantly, wine. What a wonderful place to live!

Gorgeous towns and villages pepper the countryside, such as St-Cirq-Lapopie; half hidden among hills overlooking the River Lot, it’s listed as one of France’s most beautiful villages. Its steep, sloping medieval lanes are lined with *colombage* (half-timbered) houses, displaying Renaissance and Gothic details on their ancient façades.

The Quercy capital is Cahors. Its approach is dominated by an impressive medieval bridge over the River Lot, adorned

with three ancient towers. Redolent with history, in the old town you’ll find half-timbered houses, narrow alleyways and the cathedral, built in Gothic and Romanesque style with large domes and centuries-old frescoes.

Then there’s the local (and delicious) Cahors red wine. Was it the scenery or the wine that enticed Queen Margrethe and the Danish Royal Family to buy the Château de Cayx close to Luzech as their summer retreat? Dating back to medieval times, it was fortified in the 14th century and is well known for its wine, still in production. The château itself is not open to visitors although I believe it’s possible to visit its gardens in summer with their spectacular setting over the valleys and river... note to self: must include it on my garden tour list.

Rocamadour, famed for its amazing setting, clinging to the side of rocky cliffs in a gorge over a tributary of the Dordogne, has been a site of pilgrimage since the 12th century. Overlooking the river, it is located within the Causses du Quercy regional natural park, northeast of Cahors.

The first time I visited here, we literally stopped in our tracks at the sight of a perfect double rainbow stretching from one side to the other of the rocky gorge walls, above



€270,000

RELAX AND UNWIND

You can walk to the shops from this fully renovated home with its luscious pool! All areas have direct access to the garden, the pool has large terraces, the landscaped gardens have fruit trees and a vegetable plot. There are three bedrooms, spacious living spaces, a new kitchen, solar panels and mains drainage. It’s located in a quiet area, just a few minutes from all that Montcuq offers.



€657,200

HEART OF TOWN

Beautifully renovated in the centre of Montcuq, this charming family home built from local stone combines character with comfort. Large light-filled living spaces open into the private garden, and there are five generous bedrooms set over three levels. It offers significant income potential with commercial space for a boutique and two independent apartments, as well as a double garage - and best of all, it is literally steps away from the market, shops and cafés of Montcuq.



There’s lots to discover when you explore the back streets of Montcuq

the river far below - it was truly magical!

GREAT OUTDOORS

Causses du Quercy is at Lot’s unspoilt heart, a mecca for walkers, mountain bikers or horse riders, who come to explore the 1,000km plus of paths covering this vast terrain.

Montcuq can be found to the west, in the region known as Quercy Blanc, 40km from Cahors. It’s a great base for all the delights this department has to offer, not least nearby

Lauzerte, another on the list of *Plus Beaux Villages de France*. Despite its comedic name, Montcuq is much more than simply the butt of an old joke, this stunning village is incredibly beautiful.

Dating back to medieval times, it’s dominated by an impressive 12th-century keep rising 24 metres high. It was built to protect the village and repel enemies - it must have been very handy during the Hundred Years’ War. The village developed around it, ▶



Many of the houses in medieval Montcuq are built from Quercy stone

grew through centuries of markets, sieges, land grabs and, no doubt, the odd ecclesiastical dispute. Explore Montcuq on foot and you feel like you're stepping back into more peaceful times - minus the slings and arrows of ancient conflicts of course. It's one of those rare rural villages that seems able to retain a year-round buzz, with its weekly markets, restaurants, cafés, art galleries... the list of entertainments goes on. As well as being picturesque, it occupies the perfect location, in the centre of Quercy Blanc.

The area around Montcuq has its own rugged beauty: lovely villages, ancient towns, lots of open space, fewer people and cheaper property prices than its costlier neighbours. Summers are long here and winters are usually mild - you'll be planning your summer garden from February. It has plenty of waterways too, on which you can take a boat and drift downstream, past castles, fortresses, waterfalls, natural wonders and rocky landscapes - stopping off to sample tasty food and the rich dark wines.

So forget all the jokes, add Montcuq to your househunting itinerary and step into your own fairytale. ■

Joanna Leggett is the Marketing Director at Leggett Immobilier - view the full portfolio of properties for sale in France at leggettfrance.com

STONE PIGEONNIER

In a small village just 5km outside Montcuq sits this beautiful four-bedroom home built from Quercy stone. The front garden courtyard leads into living spaces where character and charm abound, separated from the bedroom wing by the delightful pigeonier, which sits centre stage. The beautifully renovated bathrooms and bedrooms are chic, with true luxe quality. The basement has its own wine cellar and the garden is bursting with flowers, vegetables and fruit trees.

€397,500



€298,000

CONVERTED CONVENT

Once a convent, this beautiful modernised four-bedroom home in St-Géry was built in the traditional vernacular style. It's not overlooked itself, but its large terraces have superb views over the priest's garden and cliffs of the Lot valley. The living spaces are bright and generous in size, there's a well-equipped kitchen, four bedrooms, a study, bathroom and another WC in the dovecote. Close to Cahors and St-Cirq-Lapopie, it's in a sun-blessed location.

€205,000



BLANK CANVAS

This five-bedroom 'longère' is full of charm and potential, with large living spaces and traditional features. The hard work has already been done - it has a new roof and double glazing - just decorate or reconfigure to your taste. You could easily create separate guest accommodation. The mature garden even has two wells.



Les Bons Voisins

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Friendly and professional

Help for home owners throughout France, from security checks, cleaning and changeovers to maintenance, gardening and full guest management.

Contact us now for more info
email: info@LBVfrance.com
+33 (0)5 62 29 26 62

www.LBVfrance.com

Est. 2002 Siret: 507 805 620 00055

Leave your home in **EXPERT** hands and **RELAX**



Flexible  Professional  Trustworthy  Experienced

MOVING CUSTOMERS BETWEEN THE UK AND FRANCE FOR OVER 50 YEARS

- Specialist, experienced, friendly and helpful staff
- Customs clearance included
- Covered against loss or damage
- Full or part loads available
- Storage available if required

Freephone
0808 1000 988

GB Liners



MEMBER NO. G013



Clear's specialist for Worldwide Moves



Branches nationwide:
London
Aberdeen
Brighton
Bristol
Cirencester
Cheltenham
Edinburgh
Hereford
Leeds
Loughborough
Manchester

Local – National – International – Removals & Storage

gbliners.com

Guest-ready

How to add authentic touches and give your guest rooms that *je ne sais quoi*, by **Susannah Cameron**

FRENCH INTERIORS PART 2

Being a guest in a French home is unlike staying anywhere else. It is not concerned with formality, but with a considered balance of comfort and intention. Nowhere is this felt more keenly than in Provence, where old farmhouses, village houses and converted barns share hallmarks shaped by the region's architecture: thick walls dampen sound, timber beams hold centuries of life, and light changes with the progression of the day. In this setting, a guest room becomes more than a place to sleep. It offers welcome, rest and a sense of belonging.

What makes such a room feel so instinctively right is rarely opulence. Instead, it is the thoughtful coexistence of old and new, the presence of objects with history, and the confidence to mix them without self-consciousness. The Provençal guest room lets each piece breathe - an antique *armoire* beside a simple writing

desk, a *boutis* quilt against time-worn wood, the fragrance of fresh stems or a candle. These gestures feel effortless, though they are the result of choices made with care.

This atmosphere can be created anywhere, but it draws its richest cues from Provence. Here, interiors evolve over generations rather than seasons, and the rooms guests occupy often hold traces of the people who have used them before: a stack of books, a framed engraving, a lamp converted from an oil burner, or a *confit* pot planted with narcissus Paperwhite on a bedside table. Such details anchor the room in its setting.

Here are a few aspects that help shape a guest room with genuine warmth and depth, rooted in Provençal sensibility.

BESIDE THE BED

The bedside provides a clear starting point for the room. It sets scale, establishes light and signals whether the space leans towards rustic, elegant, or an



In the Provençal guest room, there is a thoughtful co-existence of old and new

© SUSANNAH CAMERON



Bringing softness and pattern without weight, a *boutis* also tells a cultural story

instinctive blend of both. In Provence, mismatched bedside cabinets feel entirely natural. A simple farmhouse table paired with a more refined *guéridon* can be far more charming than a matching pair. The contrast brings structure and character, as though the furniture has been gathered over years rather than purchased all at once.

Lighting is crucial. Lamps should give a gentle, amber glow that feels calm rather than clinical. Provence is a region where lamplight is favoured over strong overhead lighting, and your bedside lamps should reflect that. A switch that can be reached from the bed is a courtesy your guests will notice immediately.

Small, functional details reinforce the welcome. A

vide-poche for jewellery or a watch saves guests from balancing items on the edge of a book or leaving something behind. Fresh stems enliven the room, especially when picked from your own garden: narcissus, a single rose, a few stems of dried lavender or *immortelle*. A *confit* pot makes an ideal vessel, its glazed upper half and earthy clay base grounding the arrangement in local tradition.

If your guest room has an en suite, echo the same flowers or scent there, creating a subtle connection between the different spaces.

THOUGHTFUL SEATING

A room feels more coherent when there is a place to sit apart from the bed. Even a



“A guest room becomes more than a place to sleep; it offers welcome, rest and a sense of belonging”

modest French guest room benefits from a bench or trunk at the foot of the bed or under a window, offering somewhere to set a folded blanket or to perch while dressing.

If the room allows, a comfortable armchair gives your guests a spot to read or make a phone call. Pair the chair with a small *guéridon* or tripod table - marble-topped, gilt-edged, or plain wood - somewhere to rest a glass of water, morning coffee or evening book.

A well thought-out guest room offers both practicality and invitation: a place to sit, a place to set things down, and a place to retreat. These touches help the room feel considered, as though time has been taken to anticipate what a visitor may need.

PRIVATE CORNER

Many French homes include a small writing desk in the guest room, and it is a custom that deserves revival. A *secrétaire à abattant* or simple oak writing table gives guests a private corner to write a postcard, read the newspaper, or check emails. When open, the desk offers a small world within the room; when closed, it contributes its patina and proportions to the overall aesthetic to the space.

Keep the surface uncluttered. A notebook, two or three postcards and a pen



From far left: A *vide-poche* is a useful extra to keep jewellery or a watch safe; as well as being a welcoming touch, books tell the story of the house and its occupants; a simple writing desk gives guests somewhere to sit and compose a postcard



An antique *armoire* allows guests the opportunity to unpack and settle in

are enough. The aim is not to stage a desk but to make it usable. Books placed nearby - on Provence, art, gardens, local history or architecture - provide an immediate sense of place and will allow guests to engage with the region in their own time.

Storage is equally important. A solid walnut *armoire*, typical of the region, gives guests the opportunity to unpack and settle in. Even if they are staying only briefly, a few empty drawers, wooden hangers and a blanket basket make the room feel prepared for them specifically, not hastily arranged.

DECORATIVE DETAILS

A Provençal guest room is defined by the pieces gathered within it, rather than by symmetry. Artwork is rarely hung in strict alignment; instead, portraits, engravings and landscapes accumulate over time. They can be arranged informally, some hung and others resting against furniture. This

creates a composed, collected character that complements the room's antique pieces.

Portraits in salvaged frames, 19th-century landscapes and engravings softened by age bring nuance and distinction to the space. A large, foxed mirror over a commode can widen the space and bring in shifting reflections from a nearby window. These are not decorative additions so much as pieces that serve to tell the story of the house.

Books add similar warmth. A library wall beside the bed, or a stack of books on a table, suggests that guests are welcome to explore the intellectual life of the home. Volumes on local history, art or French writers sit ready for guests to browse at leisure.

Decorative accents, too, play a role. A carved wooden figure, a sculptural fragment or an old oil lamp converted for electricity all contribute to the atmosphere of a room that has grown organically. Provence has a tradition of using what is at hand, preserving objects



French guest rooms don't feel styled - they seem to have evolved organically

with purpose and allowing them to continue their usefulness. A guest room that follows this ethos feels grounded rather than styled.

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Much of Provence's charm lies in how it appeals to the senses. A guest room should do the same thing.

Textiles matter deeply here. Crisp linen sheets feel cool in summer and insulating in winter. A *boutis* - a lightly padded Provençal quilt, stitched in intricate motifs - adds softness and pattern without weight. Its origins in Marseille and surrounding towns give it cultural resonance as well as beauty.

Fragrance should be natural and subtle. A small spray of lavender for the bed linen, a candle with herbal or resinous notes, or a vase with a single rose from the garden ties the indoors to the landscape.

Lighting must be layered. Use a gentle overhead light only if necessary and allow lamps to take priority. Their warmth creates the intimate ambience typical of older

Fresh stems enliven a room



“Portraits in salvaged frames bring nuance and distinction”

Provençal houses, particularly those with smaller windows or thick stone walls. Guests often remember the glow of the bedside lamps long after they have forgotten other details.

THE FINISHING TOUCH

True hospitality is revealed in small observations. A carafe of water and two tumblers on a tray. A cosy wool blanket placed within reach. A basket for spare cushions. A handwritten note that welcomes the guest. None of these gestures seek attention, yet each contributes to a sense of ease and belonging.

The most accommodating Provençal guest rooms feel neither staged nor newly arranged. They are simply shaped by the life of the house and offered generously to the people who enter it.

Antiques play a central part in this. Artisanal workmanship combined with years of use gives these pieces a substance far beyond anything newly made. More importantly, they carry continuity. Every

scratch, every notch, every worn surface reflects its age, allowing guests to feel part of something enduring.

When these elements come together - textiles chosen for comfort, furniture chosen for use, objects chosen because they matter - the room finds that particular *je ne sais quoi*. It is not found in perfection or excess. It comes from generosity, intention and the assured ease of a home that has matured over time.

In Provence, that feeling is almost second nature, but it can be created anywhere. All it requires is attention to the details that make guests feel welcome: not only into a room, but into the life of the house. ■

Susannah Cameron is the Director at Chez Pluie Provence, an online boutique selling French antique and vintage pieces
Tel: 0033 (0)7 84 56 02 37
chezpluie.com

NEXT ISSUE:
How to make an entrance



A collection of books beside the bed invites guests to peruse

Your essential guide To living and buying property in France

BUYING GUIDES • REAL LIFE STORIES • LOCATION FEATURES • LEGAL & FINANCE

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

35+
YEARS
of FRENCH
PROPERTY
ADVICE

ISSUE 398
MARCH/APRIL 2026

KISS AND TELL
Your essential guide
to French etiquette

RALLYING CRY
How a move to France kickstarted
a new life as a female rally driver!

SAVE
MORE WITH
DIRECT
DEBIT



**HIDDEN
GEMS**

Head off the beaten track to discover new corners
of rural France in Deux-Sèvres, Creuse and Aveyron

EXPERT ADVICE

Which visa do you need?
French interiors: guest rooms
Buying guide: Haute-Provence
State benefits in France
Inheritance and wills

PROPERTIES FOR ALL BUDGETS

frenchentree.com
francepropertyshop.com



£5.95
9 771751 684092

SAVE WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE

Whether you're actively searching, planning ahead or simply want to stay informed, **French Property News** gives you the clarity and confidence you need to navigate the French property market – wherever you are on your journey.

With expert-led insight, trusted professional advice and real-life buyer experiences, a subscription is the smart way to stay one step ahead.

- Clear advice on buying, renovating and owning in France
- In-depth regional features to help you choose the right area
- Legal, tax and financial guidance from trusted specialists
- Real-life stories from buyers who've done it successfully

Stay informed. Plan with confidence. Make smarter decisions.

Subscribe to **French Property News** and keep expert insight at your fingertips.

PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT Save 25%!

Never miss an issue with ideas and inspiration to keep your plans on track.

- Just **£13.49 every six months by Direct Debit**
- **Save 25% off the cover price every issue**
- **Spread the cost and keep your money for longer**

2-Year Subscription Save 20%!

Ideal for long term planning and expert updates as your plans evolve

- **Lock in your 20% saving with a 2-year subscription at £57**
- **12 issues of practical guidance and market insight**
- **No more searching in the shops with every issue delivered direct to your door**

2 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE

Online at www.francemedia.shop/FPN398
Or call **+44 (0) 1202 087 628** and quote **FPN398DD**

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: SAVE 25% when you subscribe by 6-monthly Direct Debit (UK only). Your account will be debited £13.49, saving £8.72 on the annual cover price of 6 issues. Any changes to the payment amount will be communicated to you beforehand. Standard annual subscription cost £29.95 for 6 issues. Save 20% when you subscribe for 2 years and pay £57 by credit/debit card. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue.

have lived in France for over 15 years and try to get over to the UK once a year to visit family and friends. However, last autumn I thought I'd make the trip more interesting by going in Poppy, my 51-year-old Citroën 2CV, in which I do much of my local running about.

There are, of course, quicker and more comfortable ways of travelling between France and the UK, but this is something I'd thought of doing ever since I acquired her, just over seven years ago. During that time, I've added a little bit of extra comfort and convenience, such as reupholstering the seats, installing wiring for a GPS and mobile phone and (to the amusement of my friends) fitting a basic cruise control!

I get around France quite a lot in connection with my work as a building surveyor, using my 'regular' car, and much of that is undertaken on motorways. For this trip, however, I decided to travel mostly on N and D roads (the *routes nationales* and *routes départementales*) - partly because I wanted to see a little more of the countryside and villages in areas that I seldom get to. In addition, the top speed of a 2CV is not much more than 100kph, so the benefit of driving fast on motorways doesn't really figure in the equation. And, oddly enough, travelling from A to B using motorways is often longer in distance than the journey using N and D roads.

THE SCENIC ROUTE

Being based close to Béziers, almost on the Mediterranean coast, I have long since given up trying to rush across the length of France in a single day. Usually, I arrange an overnight



Car and driver ready for the off



Ian is based near Béziers, not far from the Mediterranean coast

Get more inspiration from readers' stories

frenchentree.com/
living-in-france

Don't spare the horses!

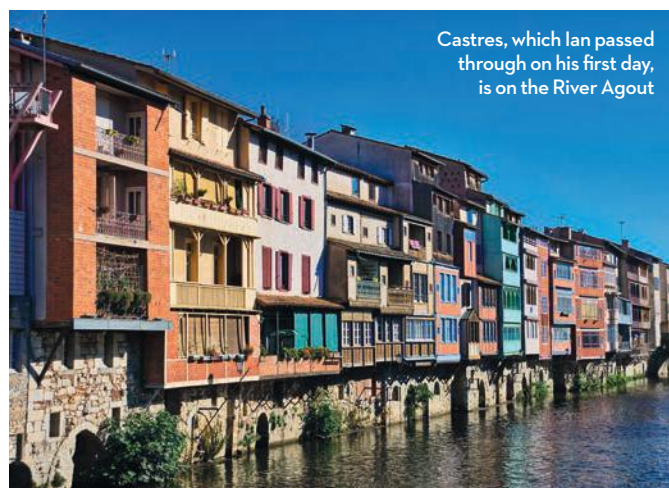
Ian Morris recalls a scenic (and memorable) journey the length of France in Poppy, his 51-year-old Citroën 2CV

stop halfway, but for this trip I had to work out a route that would take account of the somewhat lower average speeds that I could expect to achieve, both on and off motorways.

And anyway, I intended this to be an enjoyable journey, not a competition. So, I decided I'd drive perhaps five to six hours a day which, with the occasional stop, came down to planning a journey that would cover perhaps 300-350km a day. In other words, it would take three days to get from my home to the north coast of France.

I booked Logis hotels, as I always do when travelling across France. Unlike most other groups of (mostly modern) hotels, nearly all of the Logis are independently owned - some run by the same family for several generations. All are very different, and some are very old with their own particular character. They do have to adhere to minimum standards set by Logis de France, the umbrella organisation for marketing purposes. They are almost always excellent value for money, and I was very happy with those I picked this time.

Wherever you travel in France, I always think it's a good idea to try and do some of the journey between the hours of 12 noon and 2pm, or after 7pm. You can almost set your watch



Castres, which Ian passed through on his first day, is on the River Agout

by French mealtimes and you'll find there is much less traffic on the roads at these hours!

I've lost count of the number of times I've driven up the motorways through Toulouse, so for the first day I decided to skip Toulouse altogether and head off through St-Chinian and the Haut-Languedoc regional park. I continued across the Tarn department through Mazamet and Castres, some way east of Toulouse, and on to Gaillac.

FIRST STOP: JAYAC

I then joined the A20 motorway at Caussade for a steady one-hour drive across the Lot department, leaving the motorway at Souillac to travel half an hour into Dordogne

and my first overnight stop in a small village called Jayac. The scenery across Tarn, Lot and Dordogne is magnificent.

For my second day's drive I avoided motorways altogether. Travelling north from Jayac, and running almost parallel to the A20, I took the D road up through St-Yrieix-la-Perche. I skirted the west side of Limoges, then took the N147 to Bellac and from there headed along the D roads again through the Brenne National Park. My second overnight stop was in the medieval town (or rather the 'Royal City') of Loches, although sadly I didn't have enough time to visit the château.

I thought I'd prepared Poppy pretty well before departure, including a full engine service,

“The top speed of a 2CV is not much more than 100kph, so the benefit of driving fast on motorways doesn’t really figure”



Ian at the Café Gondrée, Bénouville

but a day or so before I set off, I noticed signs of wear around the walls of the rear tyres and, although the tread was good, I thought they ought to be replaced. It’s almost impossible to obtain the narrow tyres used on older vehicles from the usual providers, and unfortunately, I didn’t have time to order new ones from a specialist supplier before setting off.

As luck would have it, I was able to make a little detour from my planned route on the second day of my journey, stopping off at the specialist 2CV garage Rénov’2CV in Châteauroux, where they fitted two new tyres while I waited. The tyre fitter said he’d noticed an oil leak at the front of the engine. More about that later...

Still avoiding the motorways, the third day of my journey continued northwards through Amboise on the Loire and La Ferté-Bernard to the east of Le Mans. I then travelled on D

roads across the department of Orne, narrowly missing the famous village of Camembert, and crossed into the Calvados department just to the north of Vimoutiers. I was now within striking distance of the English Channel and it only remained for me to skirt the east side of Caen to arrive at the ferry port at Ouistreham.

I had some time to spare before catching the overnight ferry. I’d toured the Normandy Landing Beaches several times previously over the years, but had never before managed to visit Café Gondrée at Bénouville, so made a point of doing so on this occasion. I was rewarded by being able to shake the hand of, and being served coffee by, Arlette



At Rénov’2CV in Châteauroux

Gondrée, who witnessed the events of D-Day in 1944 as a child. Hers was the first family in France to be liberated and she remembers the occasion well.

The overnight ferry made a late departure so I just had time for a meal, which included a generous portion of *moules*



Medieval town (or ‘Royal City’) Loches is where Ian spent his second night



Citroën 2CV specialist Dave Sparrow takes a look under Poppy’s bonnet

marinières at a restaurant aptly named La Moulerie.

And so I arrived at Portsmouth. But I was not popular when, on the morning after my first overnight stop in Oxfordshire, my friend pointed out a puddle of oil on the drive. It was Sunday morning and I set off to Hereford where I had arranged to meet up with my sister-in-law and niece. At lunch I briefly explained the problem and to my astonishment my niece said: “I’ve heard there’s a garage just outside Hereford that specialises in 2CVs!”. And indeed there is.

OIL BE DAMNED

Dave Sparrow of Sparrow Automotive proved to be a hero. With over 30 years’ experience of working exclusively on this type of car, it took him just seconds to identify the problem - a fractured pipe on the oil cooler. He was kind enough to drop what he was doing and set to work with a replacement. I should imagine you’d have to travel several hundred miles across England to find anyone else with a 2CV oil-cooler element on their shelf!

He also said the car would run better with slightly larger jets in the carburettor, so he enlarged these and fitted a new flasher unit for the indicator lights while I was there. A real star!

The rest of the English leg of my journey, taking in visits to friends in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Wiltshire, passed without incident and Poppy’s little 602cc engine ran like an electric sewing machine.

My only other misfortune was on my return to France. Leaving



Ian and Poppy at Lincoln Cathedral

the ferry port before daybreak and driving through heavy rain in the French rush-hour on the outskirts of Caen, I accidentally exceeded the 70kph speed limit, costing me a fine and the first ever point on my French driving licence. I can understand getting flashed for speeding in a Ferrari, but in a 2CV?!

So, would I do the 3,000km return trip in my 2CV again? I certainly would. This wasn’t just driving, it was ‘motoring’ in every sense of the word, passing through beautiful French towns, villages and countryside, and I enjoyed every minute. ■

Ian Morris is a property surveyor working in France french-surveys.com



Safely back home after an epic trip

© IAN MORRIS SHUTTERSTOCK

The house Colum and Aidan bought is in a tranquil setting near Vic-Fezensac in Gers



What first drew you to the idea of living in France – and specifically the Gers?

Having explored both sides of the Pyrénées, we felt France offered better choice and value to find a home we really wanted. We visited various times over a couple of years and initially began house searching around Oloron-Ste-Marie. Ultimately, we discovered the beautiful rolling hills in the heart of Gascony around Vic-Fezensac and immediately the area felt right!

Had you visited the region before deciding to buy? What aspects of your lifestyle were you hoping to change?

Our ambition was to find somewhere we could enjoy a slower pace, where the people are warm and welcoming. Living in a rural setting where we could be more in tune with the land and nature and, indeed, the local communities.

What type of home were you looking for when you started?
A four- to five-bedroom old

From dream to keys

Victoria Garnham speaks to brothers Colum and Aidan Lovett about finding and making their home in the Gers



The brothers, Colum and Aidan Lovett

stone house or a farmhouse with some land and trees and a great view.

How did the Gers property market compare to what you had seen elsewhere in France?

The house prices around Pau and Oloron-Ste-Marie seemed a little higher than around Vic-Fezensac, but generally still relatively very good value.

How long did it take to find 'the one'?

It took us about six months, with many visits.

Was there anything about the viewing or buying experience that surprised you?

The value for money in Gers.



Colum and Aidan love the view across the fields from the house



Vic-Fezensac is the closest town to the brothers' home, and has all they need



Nearby medieval fortified Lavardens is one of France's Plus Beaux Villages

“We love the peace and tranquillity, as well as being able to enjoy nature every day”

work to do to the property, but you just have to walk outside and you smile at the magical views and sounds of nature. Otherwise, over winter the fireplace in the kitchen has been a godsend!

How have you found settling into the community?

Everyone we have met has been warm and welcoming and we're continuing to enjoy building our network of friends and acquaintances.

Have you met neighbours or joined local associations, markets or events yet?

The farmer who tended the property we bought has become our mentor for anything to do with the land and the machinery needed to care for it. We have also volunteered for a few night markets, which has been a great way to get to know the local community.

Is the pace of life different from what you knew in the UK?

I guess it's what we had hoped for. People are honest and hard-working but there is a healthy amount of catching up through the many local fêtes throughout the year.

What do you love most about the Gers, now that you are living there full time?

Peace and tranquillity, as well as being able to enjoy nature every day. I've stopped wearing a watch and sometimes have to remind myself what day of the week it is!

What are your favourite local discoveries so far?

There are too many to mention, but we are constantly discovering new places and

Were there any challenges during the transaction process, and how did you overcome them?

The buying process in France is different from the UK, so trying to understand all the differences and implications was a challenge.

What advice would you give other British buyers about the *compromise de vente* (sales contract), *acte authentique* (completion), diagnostics (property surveys) and so on?

The information provided to the buyer is great - and far more than we had appreciated. Working with a good agency meant we had help at each step.

What was it like unlocking the door for the first time as the new owners?

We had a sense of calm knowing we had secured a lovely property completely surrounded by nature.

What have been your favourite moments in the home so far?

Every day! There is a fair bit of

View of the Gers countryside from the nearby château à Lagardère



Enjoying a meal in a local bar

artisans. It takes a while to find out where the best *brocantes*, butchers, restaurants and shops are located. Recently, an oak tree came down in a storm and last week we had a local artisan/mobile sawmill arrive to cut the trunk into planks, which we are now drying in order to make a dining table.

Have you renovated or personalised the property since moving in?

We are just starting a four-phase renovation project. Things have taken a little longer than expected to get



Colum and Aidan plan to renovate the house and have already begun demolition

going but all the artisans we have met have been lovely, so we are looking forward to completing the work over the next two years.

Do you have long-term plans?

We have room for a nice gîte so hopefully that can be completed, and next year we'll begin to create a *potager* garden to generate as much homegrown produce as we can.

What should buyers know about buying property in the Gers? Do you have any tips on choosing a village or property?

Trying to understand which villages have the best views is hard from just online research. The only way to find out the actual perspective of a place is to drive around it. We began visiting properties in winter, and in hindsight this was a good thing as it made it easier to understand which would be affected by road noise.

What would you say to someone hesitating to make the move to the Gers?

Le Gers is a hidden gem with beautiful *bastide* villages set among rolling hills, no main

motorway and the Pyrénées only an hour away. There is a wide variety of properties to suit all budgets. Make sure that you engage a good agency and start exploring!

If you had to describe your life in the Gers in three words, what would they be?

Peaceful, beautiful and rewarding.

What does the word 'home' mean to you now?

Being located at the top of a hill, 'home' feels safe and secluded, but close enough to shops and other facilities when you need something. ■

Victoria Garnham runs Gelas Immobilier in Gascony Tel: 0033 (0)5 62 06 52 91 gelas-immobilier.com



A tree came down in their woodland

LANCHE

Comprehensive Real Estate Solutions

LANCHE is a professional buyer's agent service specializing in real estate purchases in France, particularly in the Mont Blanc region.

We work exclusively for buyers, sourcing properties from all agencies, private sellers, and off-market deals.

We offer expert negotiations, property management, and a seamless, stress-free experience – no need for multiple agents.

Contact us for a free 15 minute zoom meeting

Telephone: +33 7 88 36 84 81 Email: info@lanche.fr
Website: <https://lanche.fr/>



Contact: Sarah Day Telephone: +33 6 08 89 12 79
Email: sarah@maisonsetmanoirs.com
Website: www.maisonsetmanoirs.com



GERS SOUTH

Set in a charming hamlet with views over its mature parkland, this superbly renovated maison de maître combines original character with modern comfort. A delightful indoor-outdoor living space opens directly from the kitchen onto a sheltered terrace. The swimming pool lies hidden in a totally private, walled garden. This is a true "arrive with your suitcase and start your new life" home.

Ref MM 2195 SD Price 495,000€



GERS SOUTH

Set in an outstanding elevated position with sweeping views of the Pyrenees and surrounding countryside, this beautifully restored home with independent guest cottage is privately located and full of character. A swimming pool with sun terrace and a choice of shaded outdoor dining areas completes this idyllic countryside retreat...

Ref MM 2186 SD Price 630,000€

MAISONS ET MANOIRS

Growing Across the Southwest

For many years, Maisons et Manoirs has been a trusted, family-run estate agency in the Gers, Hautes-Pyrénées and Haute-Garonne, known for expert local knowledge and a genuinely personal service.

We are pleased to announce our expansion into the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Basque and Bearn regions, welcoming four experienced local agents and their existing portfolio of properties into our team.

This natural evolution allows us to offer the same bespoke service, wider coverage, and even greater choice of quality properties across the southwest of France.

One team. One philosophy. A wider horizon.

Buying a property with rental accommodation is one of the most popular revenue streams for newcomers to France. It's a versatile source of income whether you're looking to run a full-time business with several gîtes or simply rent out a room to top up your retirement plan. Over the last two decades, the number of holiday rental businesses in France has rocketed, and there are now said to be over half a million gîtes and *chambres d'hôte* established throughout the country. It's fair to say that the market is saturated in some regions, but with careful research and planning, as well as offering something more than a standard room and swimming pool, this is still a viable revenue option.

WELLBEING ESCAPES

In 2001, Sharon Black and her family left Glasgow, seeking a warmer climate and a rural lifestyle in France. Inspired by a wellness retreat she'd previously enjoyed on the Greek island of Skyros, she set out to create her own centre offering yoga and holistic holidays, deciding on the Gard department, in southern France. "As soon as we came into the Cévennes region, I knew this was where I wanted to be," Sharon says. "Lush and unspoilt, perfect for a rural getaway and as a place in which to raise our family."

This picturesque region is known for its hidden valleys and spectacular mountain scenery, making it an ideal



Sharon and her guests on the outdoor yoga deck

Host with the most

Yoga, weddings... and something a little different - **Leah Rottier** looks at holiday accommodation with a difference



Sharon pauses for a break on a local hike; her home and business, Gardoussel Retreat, is surrounded by greenery



Within the Cévennes National Park, Alès is a town that mixes old and new

choice for those who love rugged landscapes. With no huge cities to speak of, the closest large town to Sharon's home is Alès, an hour away.

With a population of approximately 45,000, Alès is an enchanting mix of bustling markets and tranquil parks, blending modern industry and old-world charm in equal measure. House prices in the town start at around €200,000 for a modern, two-bedroom detached property. But venture into the outlying villages and valleys and you'll find a range of old houses and derelict farms, covering all budgets, that can

potentially be renovated to provide a rental income.

Sharon has been running her successful Gardoussel Retreat since 2005. The property is surrounded by stunning natural beauty, including a serene river and waterfall, creating a unique and peaceful backdrop for her visitors. Setting herself apart from other gîte businesses, she offers yoga and Buddhist retreats, as well as holidays incorporating writing sessions and cooking workshops.

Her advice to those looking to establish a holiday rental business in France is to network from the beginning.

“I would strongly suggest getting to know your mayor and the person responsible for your local tourist office, as they can be extremely helpful in oiling the chains and giving advice to help you get started,” she states.

“Get to know other people in the area in the same business - they are not competitors, but colleagues in a local network of holiday businesses, which can actually attract more people, not less, into the area.”

Perhaps Sharon’s most valuable piece of advice is to try to offer something a little bit different. “Be realistic about earnings. I couldn’t live off renting out my gîtes and rooms alone. It’s the themed wellbeing groups, especially those taking the catered option, that is my bread-and-butter income.”

Location is paramount if you’re considering offering wellness packages or holistic holidays, so you’ll need to do your research wisely. Also work out if you’re planning to operate year-round, instead of seasonally, as Sharon does. While outdoor yoga sessions can be invigorating on a balmy summer morning, you’ll need to consider indoor locations or alternative activities during the colder months.

WEDDING VENUE

After running a successful wedding business on their farm in the Cotswolds, Gavin and Tina Weaver dreamed of starting a new project in France that could be operated year-round. They first purchased a property in Normandy, before deciding to look further south

“Be realistic about earnings - I couldn't live off renting out my gîtes and rooms alone”

Château Ste-Croix is the perfect venue for one-of-a-kind weddings



in Dordogne, seeking better weather, beautiful scenery and a place that inspired them to run another wedding business.

They recently renovated the elegant Château de Ste-Croix in Dordogne, offering a luxurious wedding venue in a popular tourist destination just a few miles from the delightful bastide town of Monpazier. Their client base is made up of English, French, American and Canadian couples looking for an exceptional venue for their special day.

Josie Batchelor handles the chateau’s marketing and communications. She acknowledges the difficulties often encountered by newcomers to France. “Setting up a business in France hasn’t been without its challenges,” she says. “French bureaucracy and technical language often proved difficult, but Gavin and



Gavin at one of the chateau’s events

Tina both met these hurdles with determination.” She highlights the patience and persistence it takes to succeed. “Over three years, they poured their energy into restoring the property,” she adds. “Of course, not everything has gone smoothly. But it’s always ongoing and evolving.”

Choosing to set up a vacation rental business in an area which is already teeming with gîtes and *chambres d’hôte*, such as Dordogne, can prove challenging. You’ll need a mix of creative marketing skills, a unique feature or product, as well as perseverance and determination to succeed in a competitive region.

But with its sunny mix of vineyards, Unesco World Heritage Sites and delightful gastronomy, Dordogne is a popular year-round destination. International flights from Bergerac airport only add to its allure, making it a tempting and viable region to open a business. Monpazier has earned the prestigious label as one of *Les Plus Beaux Villages de*

France. You can find plenty of houses to buy in and around the bastide to start a holiday business, with prices starting at around €300,000 for a large, detached property with a swimming pool. Count on paying upwards of €550,000 for an existing gîte business in a more rural location, outside the bastide town itself.

At Château de Ste-Croix, the Weavers have created a thriving business, distinguishing themselves by offering full wedding packages that include local excursions, wine tastings, pool parties and drinks receptions. Diversifying their services has been crucial but, as Josie adds, “their success has also been built on hard work, imagination and a shared love of bucketfuls of laughter.”

Whether you’re looking for a sprawling estate to host one-of-a-kind weddings or a remote house to welcome budding writers and yoga enthusiasts, you’ll find an excellent choice of properties in France to establish your holiday rental business. ■

TOP TIP

Location research is crucial for this type of business. Use online resources, property exhibitions and *French Property News* for ideas. Then, reach out to the *mairie*, tourist office and the *chambre de commerce et d’industrie* in the area that interests you to get further advice on the economy and tourism statistics.



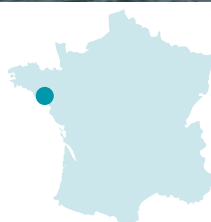
The southwest bastide of Monpazier is a *Plus Beau Village*

Learn more about
the regions of France

frenchentree.com/
french-property

Coastal, cultural and captivating

With its unique blend of seaside charm and urban vitality, St-Nazaire has become a hotspot for tourists and homebuyers alike, despite its industrial past, as **Annaliza Davis** explains



The seaside town of St-Nazaire (pronounced san naz-air) sits on the Loire-Atlantique coast between Vannes and Nantes, two-and-a-half hours south of St-Malo. Long overlooked by British visitors, this destination has become increasingly popular over recent years as it has a lot to offer, including its growing economy, maritime heritage and revitalised waterfront, as well as great value when it comes to holidays and properties.

“Between 2020 and 2024, prices rose by around 30%,” says estate agent Nathalie Toulbot of Cabinet Le Nail, “but the market is currently stabilising. Historically, this was an industrial town but it

has been through a dramatic transformation, particularly with the development of the seafront and the town square, Place du Commando.”

This now features a spacious 4,500m² esplanade that opens

onto the beach, and is home to several bars and restaurants with sea views, as well as water features and children’s play areas. It acts as a central hub for social gatherings and connects directly to the town’s

main tourist attractions and visitor centres.

“St-Nazaire has become an appealing destination for tourists and househunters alike, especially because of its coastal location and accessibility,” adds Nathalie. “By car, we are just one hour from Nantes and Vannes and under five hours from Paris, and if you take the train, we’re 35 minutes from Nantes and Vannes and just three hours from Paris.”

Clearly, the chance to live in a seaside town with all its amenities, while still being within easy reach of the big cities, explains why St-Nazaire has undergone such a rejuvenation.



Fishing huts and nets are a common sight along the coast at St-Nazaire

INDUSTRY TO TOURISM

From certain directions, St-Nazaire can still feel rather industrial - and indeed it has a long and proud tradition of shipbuilding. The Chantiers de l’Atlantique is one of the largest shipyards in the world, building some of the most

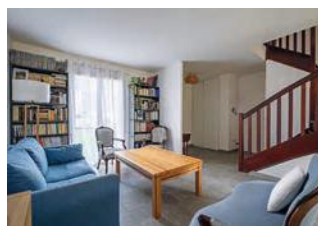
On the market



€144,450: This 68m² town-centre apartment has a balcony, separate bedroom, shower room and WC, parking space and cellar - all 15 minutes from the beach (Century 21)



€287,650: Walking distance from Porcé beach, this family home needs some TLC; it has three bedrooms (one on the ground floor), shower room and office (Maguy Immobilier)



€332,000: Located in the L’Immaculé quarter, this four-bedroom home has an open-plan kitchen-living space, garage, enclosed garden and parking (Loire & Océan Immobilier)



€476,000: In sought-after St-Marc-sur-Mer, this new-build apartment has three bedrooms, a balcony and two parking spaces; ready for spring 2027 (Presqu’île 44 Immobilier)



The Plage de St-Nazaire, in front of Place du Commando

iconic ocean liners such as the Queen Mary 2 and the MS Symphony of the Seas, which was the world's largest cruise ship until 2022. The town is also home to one of the European centres for Airbus Atlantic, building passenger aircraft and employing more than 3,000 staff.

It is telling that both of these companies offer visits to the public, organised by the tourist office. Tourism here is about more than the appeal of a seaside location, it embraces the town's industry and history: the vast concrete structure that once housed German submarines is now home to a visitor centre where you can board a real submarine in its dry dock, and in the museum *Escal'Atlantic*, you can explore full-scale interiors from former cruise ships.

WHAT DOES THE TOWN FEEL LIKE?

It's a city of contrasts. The shipbuilding and legacies of wartime occupation contrast



Colourful murals add to the town's vibrancy

“The vast concrete structure that once housed German submarines is now home to a visitor centre”

against the modern shops, beaches and various parks and gardens: over a third of the town's urban space is green.

St-Nazaire is one of relatively few towns that has retained a unique identity. Among its 73,000 residents are 5,000 university students bringing

a youthful edge and local authorities have encouraged street art, welcoming specialists from various countries to use the cityscape as a canvas. As you explore, you'll see colourful murals that stretch four storeys high, bringing a vibrancy

to otherwise mundane structures. There are also several sculptures throughout the town, the most famous being the three giant stone structures on the shoreline representing a foot, a jumper and a digestive system.

“The town has an active cultural scene, from its theatre and music conservatory to a broad range of clubs putting on events,” says Nathalie, “and the economic sector in the region is very dynamic, from shipbuilding and aircraft to the modern service industry.”

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LIVE HERE

German-born Andrea Klose moved to the town 40 years ago and has lived here ever since. “I moved here almost by chance, but I couldn't imagine living anywhere else now,” she says. “To me, St-Nazaire means an incredible diversity of atmospheres and surroundings. It's in a fabulous location between the Loire estuary and the Atlantic”

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



€508,000: Just 15 minutes west of St-Nazaire, this family home in Brais has five bedrooms, a light-filled ground floor opening onto a covered pool and private gardens (Belles Demeures)



€2.993m: Stunning six-bedroom home in popular St-Marc-sur-Mer, set in four hectares, with sea views, private access to the beach, three balconies, wine cellar and hot tub (Belles Demeures)



The American Expeditionary Forces Memorial near the Plage du Grand Traict

ocean, making for a beautiful coastline with a string of 20 coves and beaches. When I want to go for a walk, I'm spoilt for choice: I can stroll along the seaside promenade in the city centre, looking out for lighthouses and fishing cabins; take the footpath along the coast; or drive a few kilometres to the endless horizons of the Brière wetlands.

"All the daily essentials are here, from good shops, cafés and restaurants to an extensive bus network, education from nursery to university, and there's a rich cultural life spanning live music shows, contemporary art exhibitions and a summer music festival."

NEIGHBOURHOOD OVERVIEW

The town centre, south of the train station, radiates from the spacious Place du Commando, which leads directly to the beach and its seafront promenades. In 2020, the price of apartments here leapt by 15%, although it's possible to get a 22m² studio for €70,000 and a central one-bedroom apartment for €125,000.

To the north, you'll find neighbourhoods such as Berthauderie and Prézégat with easy access to the train station and ring road leading to Nantes. The north has had an overhaul (2017-2022) and you'll find studio apartments from €60,000, while four-bedroom houses with gardens start at €250,000.

To the east sits the historic neighbourhood of Méan-Penhoët-Herbins where you can find buildings dating from the Belle Epoque. A one-bedroom apartment here starts at €80,000, but



Thatched cottages in Kerhinet village, Brière regional natural park

IN THE AREA

ST-MARC-SUR-MER

Sitting 8km southwest of the city, St-Marc-sur-Mer is a gorgeous gem of a coastal resort with every type of property from studio flats to charming whitewashed cottages and elegant seaside villas overlooking the ocean. The seafront, with its golden beach, is the perfect place to unwind. It features in a famous French film (*Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*), so the location is understandably popular with prices to match. Studios start at €130,000 and houses at €395,000, although Cabinet Le Nail recently sold a property for €4m in St-Marc.

BRIÈRE WETLANDS

If you head north from St-Nazaire, you'll reach the Brière, a regional natural park and stunning area of wetlands and rivers that feels almost otherworldly. There's plenty to see and do here. Take a boat trip, go birdwatching, or visit the hamlet of Kerhinet – a collection of 18 traditional thatched cottages. In nearby St-André-des-Eaux – 10km northwest of the town centre – you can buy a detached, three-bedroom home from €275,000, or a five-bedroom property with extensive 2,000m² grounds for less than €500,000.

most properties are around €200,000, with a detached family home about €265,000.

To the west, you'll find many smaller properties, so it's very popular with young couples and singles, as it's also within easy reach of the university campus. Apartments can

sometimes fetch more than houses, although one-bedroom apartments generally cost from €130,000 and houses €225,000.

TO SUM UP...

St-Nazaire offers a great balance of the urban and coastal, the bustle and the

calm, the historic and the modern, but above all, it feels pleasant and welcoming.

"There are so many little things that appeal," says Andrea, "the colours of the winter sky over the estuary at sunrise, the way the ocean sparkles on a summer morning, or picnics on the beach under a pink evening sky."

With so much to recommend it, who wouldn't want to stop a while in St-Nazaire? ■

"It's a beautiful coastline with a string of 20 coves and beaches"



St-Nazaire's shopping areas offer plenty of options for retail therapy



The Pont de St-Nazaire, opened in 1975, is the longest bridge in France

FRENCH MORTGAGE EXPERTS

Whether you have found the perfect Alpine Chalet or magnificent Villa, we make the process of getting a French mortgage simple.

When it comes to French Mortgages, our team speak their language and ours. For a quote from the experts call us now on +44 (0) 207 484 4600

Or visit www.internationalprivatefinance.com

Where we guide you through the French mortgage process.



International Private Finance Ltd Registered Office: 114 St Martin's Lane, Covent Garden, London, WC2N 4BE. Registered in the UK 6292950. International Private Finance Ltd (IPF) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. IPF is entered on the FCA register (fca.gov.uk/register) under reference number 726230



*International
Private Finance*
LONDON


KENTINGTONS
TAX & INVESTMENT CONSULTANTS

MAKING YOUR
MOVE TO FRANCE
LESS TAXING

www.kentingtons.com

FRANCE: 0805 03 00 01 - UK: 08451 23 84 23 - EMAIL: info@kentingtons.com

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

In 1995, after having lived in the UK and worked in Belgium, I decided to come to the south of France. At that time, there weren't any international estate agents selling to overseas buyers in my area, I was really the first. I had the opportunity to be involved in TV programmes such as *A Place in the Sun* with Amanda Lamb.

Which areas of France does your business cover?

The departments of Hérault and Aude in the Languedoc region, now renamed Occitanie.

How would you describe your region in five words?

Coast, mountains, sunshine, easy-access, affordable.

What is the appeal of your area?

You can practice all sorts of sports and activities as you have rivers, lakes, mountains, coast; ideal for holidays or even better for retirement. Also, it's not a costly area once you live here.

What's your favourite corner of the region?

In Hérault, the triangle between Béziers, Pézenas and St-Chinian (it has a very good climate too).

Is the area easy to reach?

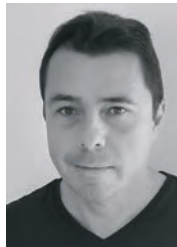
There are two motorways (A75, A9), and airports nearby at Béziers, Montpellier, Narbonne and Carcassonne.

Is the region suited to those seeking a holiday property or a permanent home?

Both really: there's sunshine all year round (in winter it's



Properties in St-Chinian are currently much sought after



Sunny south



Languedoc estate agent **Freddy Rueda** talks to **Karen Tait** about the appeal of his area and the local property market

often possible to have lunch outside, even in December/January); it's a perfect location with some great towns; there are good roads for easy access everywhere, such as the coast or the Haut-Languedoc regional park; it has great landscapes with vineyards and olive trees; and it's a very affordable area, which is surprising when you consider that there is everything that anyone could want here.

Are any locations particularly sought after?

Béziers is a nice city, so a property purchase in a village nearby is ideal if you want both

rural peace and urban living. The St-Chinian and Pézenas areas are also in demand. Places with views of vineyards and mountains are popular.

Is there a typical local architecture or style?

Old winegrowers' houses, with large garages at the front and a garden or courtyard at the back. Also, new bungalows on elevated spots in villages, with views, are really sought after.

What would people get for a budget of:

Under €100k: You can find a house in perfect condition with

no outside space, or with works to plan and perhaps a terrace.

€100,000-€250,000: At the lower end, you can get a village house with a terrace/courtyard; closer to €250,000, there are large village houses with some outside space (but not a big plot of land), or a three-bedroom bungalow on around 600m².

€250,000-€500,000: In this bracket, you find larger houses with pools, some with views and some with gîtes and outbuildings for conversion.

€500,000-€750,000: For this amount, you get businesses such as B&Bs. At the upper end, properties have larger or several

On the market



€1.275m, Béziers: This historic 11-bedroom estate, formerly a mill, is perfect for prestige events; it has nearly 1,000m² of living space, outbuildings and vineyard



€997,500, St-Chinian: Set on a 5,560m² plot overlooking an old mill, this renovated stone property has a main dwelling, a gîte, a pool and great views



€599,000, Olargues: Edged by a river, this 17th-century watermill property comprises a characterful main building, three guest rooms, private parking and parkland



€237,600, Autignac: Single-storey villa with main residence and gîte, with a total of four bedrooms, set on a plot of 599m² with a pool, in a quiet spot

outbuildings, gîtes, more land, better views and location.

€750,000-€1m: The largest properties in the area would be within budget - completely secluded with no neighbours. Also holiday businesses offering gîtes/B&B, and small domaines. **Over €1m:** Domaines and châteaux from €2m.

What's the cheapest property you have on your books?

We have a small stone house to renovate offering a potential of 80m² of living space and two gardens. It's for sale at €59,000 near St-Pons-de-Thomières.

Have you sold any unusual properties recently?

Yes, an old church and an old railway station.

What would be your dream home in the region?

At the moment, I would pick one that we have for sale at €997,500. It's a superb renovated stone property on 5,560m² of land, with a main house, a gîte, a swimming pool and breathtaking views, located in the St-Chinian area.

Why do British people buy houses in your area?

They love France and the food. In our area, you have good local meat (Aubrac), cheeses, oysters from Bouzigues and wines (AOCs: Faugères, St-Chinian, Picpoul de Pinet). It is a winery area, you often have five to six winemakers in each village - and buyers want sunshine and a good quality of life.

What advice would you give to British househunters?

Use an agent who is used to dealing with international

"It's a very affordable area, which is surprising as there is everything that anyone could want here"

buyers and who has been in place for a long time - they will have all the tips you need and can help make your purchase easy. For example, we offer free translations of the preliminary contracts, signing in English on YouSign, help in English with transfer of utilities, foreign exchange, opening bank accounts and house insurance.

What tips do you have to help people settle into life in France?

Learn French (if you don't already speak it) immediately after the purchase. Your life will be much easier and you can have a mix of French friends and international ones. You will

adapt very quickly to the French lifestyle this way.

What are your predictions for your local property market in the coming year?

Good demand is expected for 2026. Last year was favourable compared to 2024 and, taking into account all the enquiries we've received at the start of this year, it looks like many UK clients are going to purchase in my area. People want to make their dream become real. ■

Freddy Rueda is the founder of Real Estate Occitanie
Tel: 0033 (0)4 67 36 34 28
realestateoccitanie.com

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES

How much would you expect to have to pay for:

A detached property with land in good condition?
€350,000-€450,000

A three-bedroom townhouse?
With outside space, but no garden, €150,000; with a garden, closer to €300,000, and more, depending on the size of the property and land

A renovation project? With no garden, €80,000; with a garden, €150,000-€250,000 - again depending on the size of the property and plot



Béziers is a pleasant city with good travel links including an airport - pick a village on its outskirts for the best of all worlds

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRENCHENTREE.COM & FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€415,000, Cruzy: Modern three-bedroom villa, with an open-plan kitchen, a large veranda and cellars, on a landscaped plot of 1,675m² with exceptional views



€129,600, Cessenon-sur-Orb: Charming two-bedroom village house for sale fully furnished, with open kitchen, cellar and roof terrace with a view of the church



€475,200, Trèbes: Single-storey villa with three/four bedrooms (two ensuite), a garage and outbuilding/workshop, on a plot of 3,135m² with a swimming pool



€326,160, Capestang: Centrally located townhouse with four/five bedrooms including a master suite, living area, courtyard with hot tub and covered terrace

Get more
inspiration from
readers' stories

frenchentree.com

Skye is proud of her
vintage clothes shop

KEEPING STOCK

Vintage clothes shop owner **Skye McDonald** tells **Annaliza Davis** about building her business as a teen in Brittany

The French Brit Vintage shop in the corner of the town square in Morlaix, Finistère, is an unexpected burst of colour. Its British-born owner, Skye McDonald, is equally surprising. Aged 26, she has already been running the shop for eight years. "I grew up in

Newquay," she explains, "then, in December 2007, my parents decided to move to Huelgoat in central Brittany.

"There were lots of British families living there at the time, so the local primary school had a few other English-speaking children. Even back then, aged eight, I

can remember the class talking about what jobs they wanted to do, and I said I wanted to be a fashion designer."

Three years later, the family moved to the coastal town of Plestin-les-Grèves, 45 minutes east of Roscoff, but Skye's plans didn't change. At 16, she started a 'CAP Mode' fashion course

in nearby St-Brieuc. However, she decided not to pursue it as the course turned out not to be what she expected.

"One of the downsides of the French school system is that there's zero flexibility for anyone like me who has symptoms of ADHD or dyslexia," says Skye.

"I couldn't understand why even though I'd chosen to do a vocational course, only 14 of my 31 teaching hours were actually about fashion and the rest was still really academic, including French, English, science and maths. You can't just choose to focus on the subject you want to do and for me the balance wasn't right."

TEEN BUSINESSWOMAN

In August 2017, aged 18, Skye started her own online business via Etsy, selling jewellery, handbags, scarves and clothes. It was a much better fit than her college course, but she found it hard working on her own, so decided to open a physical shop, choosing Morlaix for its proximity to Roscoff and direct train links to Paris.

Seven months later, Skye found a property in Place des



Skye's shop is in Morlaix, Finistère



It's a bright pop of colour in the corner of the town square

Jacobins, Morlaix, which she was able to buy thanks to a loan from a family member, paying it back through monthly instalments with interest. She took a one-week business course and registered as a self-employed *micro-entreprise* business, renovated the property with help from her parents, and finally opened French Brit Vintage in 2019.

“At first, the shop was partly a *brocante* with clothes on the ground floor and artwork for sale upstairs, painted by my mum, the artist Melanie McDonald,” explains Skye, “but after about a year, I realised that we really needed to focus on clothing and accessories. To start with, 40% of my sales were clothes and the rest was artwork and *brocante* items, but now my sales are 90% clothes.

“I was still living with my parents, which really helped me to save money. The shop finally broke even after three years. As well as the shop in Morlaix, I have been listing items on Vinted since July 2021, and I still sold on Etsy, but a big percentage of my sales was to the US and I had to stop when Trump changed the tariffs in 2025. It’s all part of adapting the business.”

Opening a shop requires a lot of stock upfront, and when Skye started out, she was helped by the generosity of family and friends, donating items from various decades and even different countries including Thailand.

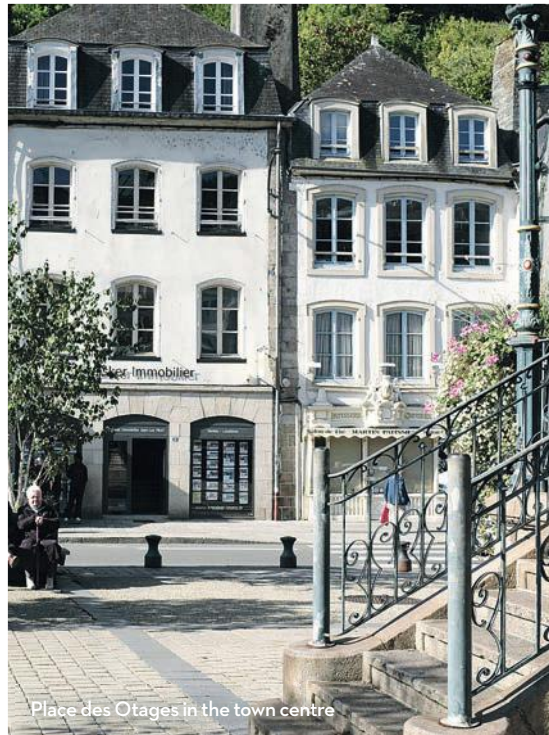
“My dad gave me a loan to start with and whatever money I made from a sale went straight back into the business to buy more stock,” explains Skye. “Now, I source items on Vinted, from local *vide-greniers*, which are similar to car-boot sales, and through charity shops both in France and the UK. I have been known to buy an extra suitcase while on a trip to England just to bring back all the stock I’ve found!”

LIFE AS A SINGLE MUM

Life changed in 2022 when Skye realised she was pregnant, which presented a practical challenge for her business, but also tested her friendships. “The stigma around being a single mum is still very



Morlaix's town square



Place des Otages in the town centre



Skye has had to adapt her business over the years

“Now, I source items on Vinted and from local *vide-greniers*”



Morlaix is a bustling town with good travel links

Morlaix is known for its *maisons à pondalez* (overhanging houses)



strong here, especially among men,” says Skye, “and a lot of my friends didn’t understand why I’d choose to be a mum at 23. I was told that I was too immature, that having a child in this economy was selfish, even that I should think about World War Three.

“It hurt at the time, but this is how I learned who my real friends were. I guess it’s not surprising, but the people who judged me for choosing to keep my baby were the same ones who used to make me feel bad if I talked about my business. I’ve kept my true friends and through the shop I’ve met new people so it turns out I was just in the wrong crowd.”

FAMILY SUPPORT

Skye faced a difficult pregnancy and became very ill, but as a *micro-entreprise*, her potential maternity pay would have been very low, so it made more sense to continue the online businesses rather than take maternity leave. Her dad, Rod, stepped in to look after the shop for nearly two years and Skye’s little boy, Karadoc, was born in December 2022. After being a single mum for a couple of years, in 2024 Skye

“Now her business has been open for six years, Skye is focused on growing her sales”

met her French boyfriend, Jean, who runs his own business in Morlaix.

“I know for a fact that I wouldn’t have the shop without my family’s support,” says Skye. “Mum helped me to look for business premises in the first place and supplied her artwork for sale in the shop, while dad helped me with all the legal stuff so I understood what I was signing at 18. He still helps me with the paperwork, he’s basically like an accountant for me.

“I’m sure if I’d gone to a bank for a mortgage, they would have said no because, based on my Etsy takings, I wasn’t making enough in 2019 or 2020 to pay them back monthly - so the loan from a family member is what made it possible for me to buy the property.

“Even now, my parents still help with picking up Karadoc after school or minding the shop and I don’t make enough money to pay an employee.

I’m very lucky and I’m very appreciative of the help I’ve had from those around me.”

Having moved out of her parents’ house and into her own studio flat in 2024, Skye now has a home life with Karadoc and Jean, a good base of regular, loyal clients and a group of genuine friends.

THE RIGHT FIT

“For a long time, I felt like I never truly fitted in,” she says. “During my teens I struggled with not feeling accepted, I’d always had this sense of being too English for the French, and too French for the English. When you’re 18, most people your age are focused on parties, drinking, drugs, learning to drive, travelling or going to uni, so opening my own shop when I was so young seemed to reinforce those feelings of being different. In the end, I learned to just not talk about it. When I began my business, it gave me something of my own

to focus on, something I could be passionate about. I wasn’t put in a box anymore, I could do it my way and make my own rules doing something that I enjoyed.

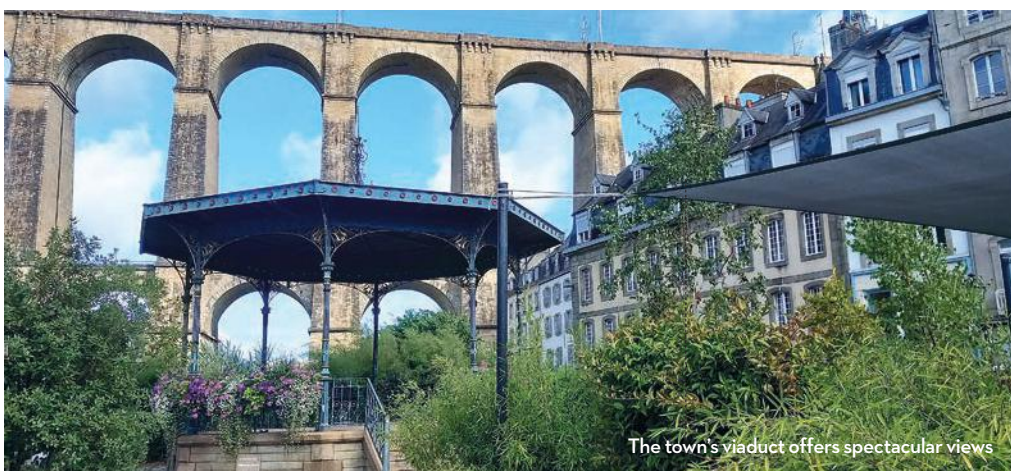
A BRIGHT FUTURE

“The majority of the friends I have now are bilingual, multicultural, self-employed or creative and/or parents. These days, when people ask me about my work, it comes from genuine curiosity and their reaction is a lot more positive.”

Skye remembers back to her school days. “Just before our exams, one of my teachers went around the class asking each of us what our plans were after our CAP fashion course. Some wanted to go into commerce, others to take a Fashion Bac Pro or something completely different but most wanted to carry on studying. When it was my turn, I told her my plan of selling secondhand clothes online and her reply was, ‘I don’t think you’ll make much of a living doing that’. I’m really glad that I proved her wrong!”

Now her business has been open for six years, Skye is focused on growing her sales and is looking for a little home with a garden for herself, Karadoc and Jean.

“In France children can start going to school at age three,” she says, “so my son has just started primary school nearby. Jean runs his own café in Morlaix, with plans to open another business, so I can’t see us moving anywhere else in the near future. I love what I do. I appreciate the flexibility of it and I’m truly grateful to be in this situation.” ■



The town's viaduct offers spectacular views

Find Skye in Morlaix or on Instagram @FrenchBritVintage



Turnkey living in Europe's most desirable *private estate near Paris*

Set within 1,400 acres of private forest in the Loire Valley, Les Bordes offers a rare chance to own a residence in a secure, gated community near Paris. From fully-serviced Six Senses Residences to Cour du Baron villas or expansive estate lots, enjoy effortless living with championship golf, wellness, equestrian and concierge services - plus a future Six Senses resort - all in a truly natural setting.



DISCOVER LES BORDES

Scan the QR code to visit: www.lesbordes.com



lonemi

health & travel - corporate - aviation & space

Your new life starts here.

- ✔ Visa health insurance
- ✔ Temporary health insurance
- ✔ PHI - private health insurance
- ✔ Company health insurance



CRIP COUR PAGE - 5 allée du Roussillon, 37700 coborniers - Inscrite au RCS de TOURNAI sous le numéro de commerce 082229 - Immatriculée à l'ONIAS en qualité de courtier sous le numéro 14.003.353 (0000000000)

+33 (0)5 54 54 85 59

contact@lonemi.fr

www.lonemi.com



Les Rives d'Aurec, an outdoor activities centre at Aurec-sur-Loire

hectare medieval Bertranges oak forest is close by, while lovers of the sauvignon grape can fill their cellars with sancerre and pouilly-fumé from nearby vineyards.

The third location is Les Rosiers-sur-Loire in Maine-et-Loire (Pays de la Loire), part of the Gennes-Val-de-Loire commune in the 277,063-hectare Parc Naturel Régional de la Loire-Anjou-Touraine. It lies on the north bank on the Grande Levée, now the D952, the Angers-Saumur road built by the English Henry II, also Count of Anjou; a suspension bridge links it to Gennes on the southern bank. Although named after the *roseaux* (reeds) which covered the valley, you'll find many varieties of old roses in a local nursery.

Lure of the Loire

Riverside towns are charming and sought after – **Carolyn Reynier** picks out three set along France's longest waterway, the mighty River Loire

I've often thought it would be fun to have a French address on a river – you know, like living in a beautiful village such as Talmont-sur-Gironde or Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne. Where better to look than along France's longest river, the mighty 1,020km Loire? It rises in Ardèche, flows north, hangs a left at Orléans then heads west to Nantes where it enters the Atlantic Ocean (so it's a *fleuve*, not a *rivière*, which flows into another river). I'm going to take a look at properties in

three riverside communes in three different departments.

Firstly, Aurec-sur-Loire – with a medieval château, stone houses and picturesque lanes – is in the Haute-Loire department (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region). Part of the Loire Semène territory, it nestles in a river bend just southwest of St-Étienne, prefecture of the neighbouring department Loire, and north of the Loire gorges. With verdant river banks, a popular nautical base and the Teinturerie Street

Art festival in September, it's surrounded by rolling landscapes, walking and cycle paths with natural sites for fishing and canoë-kayak.

Secondly, La Charité-sur-Loire in Nièvre (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté) is a Unesco-classified 11th-century Clunisien monastic site and a *Ville d'Art et d'Histoire*. It's a stopover on the Via Lemovicensis, one of the Ways of Saint James to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. The 10,000-

HAUTE-LOIRE

Aurec-sur-Loire is a welcoming commune, says Maxime Boncori of Val de Loire Immobilier, with embankments and small beaches along the riverbanks. The most sought-after property is situated along these banks. These symmetrical bourgeois *maison de maître* dwellings in attractive tree-filled grounds often belonged to former local industrialists. Prices start around €300,000-€400,000 for a pleasant property with cachet and pretty grounds.

The other characteristic type of property in local hamlets and villages is renovated stone *corps de ferme* (farmsteads; agriculture here is mainly dairy herds and some cereal)

On the market



€264,000, Marseilles-Lès-Aubigny: South of La Charité four-bed property for renovation, original features, attic, outbuilding, grounds and river views (Agence Berry-Nivernais)



€422,000, St-Aubin-les-Forges: Southeast of La Charité, four-bed property with terrace, garden, garage, workshop, 1.85ha land, plus building plot opposite house (Agence Berry-Nivernais)



€320,000, La Charité-sur-Loire: Old house with original features, four bedrooms, interior courtyard room, atelier with Loire view and attic for conversion (Agence Berry-Nivernais)



€295,000, Jussy-Le-Chaudrier: 10 minutes from La Charité, renovated three-bed longère with terrace, pool, horse boxes, old house for renovation, 2ha land (Agence Berry-Nivernais)

with open views in a natural tranquil environment. Around €350,000 should buy you a decent property, says Maxime. You may still find old barns or farm buildings for renovation. Some - with direct access to rural hiking paths - offer gîtes and *chambres d'hôte*.

If you prefer to be in the historic centre of Aurec-sur-Loire, a small, terraced townhouse with terrace or *jardinnet* (small garden) would be around €150,000. Apartments in old stone buildings are priced at €1,800-€2,100/m², rising to €2,100/m² for one in a modern building.

Due south, Monistrol-sur-Loire (population 9,000) is the second largest town in Haute-Loire. St-Étienne is just 25 minutes on the RN88 so lots of folk who work there settle here. In the centre you'll find old stone townhouses with or without a garden, and apartments. There are also some detached bourgeois properties - cut stone, hipped roof (*toit à quatre pentes*), large staircases and tree-lined grounds (*parc arboré*).

Authentic elements have usually been preserved which gives interiors their cachet, says Maxime. Apartments have magnificent stone and timber staircases, but rarely have lifts, and are priced around €2,200-€2,500/m².

Apartments in residences '*de bon standing*' (quality) built from the 1990s on can reach €3,000/m². Maxime mentions La Rivoire, an attractive late-1970s residential sector, with around 200 houses, each with lots of surrounding space. It has been designed "to create a

Learn more about the regions of France

frenchentree.com/
regional-property-guides



An aerial view of La Charité-sur-Loire

© STEPHANE JEAN-BAPTISTE

“La Charité lies at the crossroads of two major cycle paths linking the Atlantic with the Danube”

country effect although you're in town,” he says. Prices range from €250,000 to €600,000.

It's easier to find a farmhouse around Monistrol because there are more of them (€300,000-€500,000), he says.

Have a look, too, at nearby Bas-en-Basset - more detached houses, fewer apartments, historic centre, pretty Sunday morning market, and you can walk around large *étangs* (ponds or small lakes). You'll find hamlets, says Maxime - “a bit isolated, very typical of the locality” - which are “très sympathiques”. A distinctive feature is that many enclosures and some houses are built from *pisé* (rammed earth).

BURGUNDY LOIRE

La Charité-sur-Loire lies at the crossroads of two major cycle paths: the St-Jacques à Vélo, and the Loire à Vélo, part of the 4,500km Euro Vélo 6, which follows rivers to link the Atlantic to the Black Sea, from the Loire to the Danube via the Rhine.

Small stone, terraced townhouses have open beams and fireplaces and, although rare in the *centre-bourg*, may come with small courtyard or garden, says Marie-Louise Watine of Agence Berry-Nivernais. Expect to pay €80,000-€120,000 for one with a little outside space and no work required.

There are also some attractive terraced bourgeois houses with pretty reception rooms, panelling and moulding and *jardinnet*; Marie-Louise quotes a bracket of €300,000-€350,000. The pale building stone, *la pierre de Bourgogne*, is from the local Champcelée quarry. There are two post-war central residential buildings which offer pleasant east-west dual-aspect (*traversant*) apartments. Expect to pay circa €50,000 plus work in the older one, and €80,000-€100,000 in the more modern one.

A little further from the centre you see detached late-19th-century/early-20th-century properties with

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€435,000, Monistrol-sur-Loire: In the La Rivoire estate, a four-bedroom villa with pool, outbuildings and exceptional views in enclosed garden (Val de Loire Immobilier)



€207,000, Monistrol-sur-Loire: Close to shops, three-bedroom house requiring renovation with garage, cellar and laundry at garden level (Val de Loire Immobilier)



€479,000, Pont-Salomon: Southeast of Aurec, 1920 maison de maître with eight bedrooms, attic, terrace, basement, garages, and two-bed annexe with large garage (Val de Loire Immobilier)



€499,000, Bas-en-Basset: Five-bed property with games room, pool house, bar, kitchen, small disco area, two garages and large basement with workshop and storage (Val de Loire Immobilier)

gardens - attractive facades, central front door, brick window surrounds, four ground floor rooms leading off from a corridor, for around €150,000-€200,000.

Post-war detached homes built over garden-level basement and garage with living area on the first floor sell for €120,000-€160,000.

Within a 15km radius, you drive through villages and hamlets with old terraced houses with small rear gardens in their centres, while further afield, you'll find modern properties with larger gardens. Marie-Louise explains that the La Charité-sur-Loire *taxe foncière* (property tax) is quite high so you may want to checkout surrounding villages like Chaulgnes to the southeast, and Narcy and Bulcy to the north. Have a look, too, at La Chapelle-Montlinard opposite La Charité in Cher and other villages on or near the canal lateral to the Loire.

Often village houses are in a poor state of repair; expect to pay around €100,000 for a renovated one. You also find pretty little farmhouses (*fermettes*) in Cher (and Nièvre), with living area and barn next door for possible conversion into gîtes - €150,000-€250,000.

MAINE-ET-LOIRE

In the centre of Les Rosiers-sur-Loire, terraced houses (one storey plus attic) are built from local tuffeau stone (pale fine-grained sandy limestone) generally with attractive rear gardens, says Nathalie Vincent of Albert Immo. You may still find a few for renovation. Expect to pay €250,000-



Walking round the Étang de Joreau, near Gennes opposite Les Rosiers

€300,000 for a *maison de bourg* in good condition with garden. There are some small food shops here and you walk across the bridge to the supermarket at Gennes.

This is not really apartment country. "People who buy here absolutely want a garden otherwise they go to Angers or Saumur," says Nathalie.

For around €250,000 you could buy a little country *longère*, a long stone building with ground floor and first floor under the eaves. For a larger one, 180m² say, prices can rise to €400,000-€500,000. On this northern bank heading down river, Nathalie says St-Mathurin-sur-Loire is a "*petit village sympa*," and mentions too La Ménitré, also on the river. Both are Unesco-listed.

Prices are a little higher as you head towards prefecture Angers. Nathalie points out that on this northern bank, you can buy a property with Loire views but you'll have the Levée in front of you. It's agricultural plain here whereas

when you cross over to Gennes on the southern bank, there are hillsides so you get a view of the Loire without the road.

Let's stroll across the bridge to Gennes - it has a similar layout to Les Rosiers but no main road so life is quieter here. Small terraced village houses and larger properties with a rear garden sell at similar prices to Les Rosiers.

In the undulating wooded countryside with lots of hiking paths, you'll find *longères* and also larger former farms, which you don't find north of the river. "The Gennes countryside is more sought after than that of Les Rosiers," says Nathalie, so property is a tad more expensive.

Pretty hamlets include upstream Chênehutte-Trèves-Cunault, a *Petite Cité de Caractère* made up of three villages with a rich architectural heritage including the medieval priory at Cunault, a chef-d'oeuvre of Romanesque art. Downstream you have a magnificent view of the Loire at

Le Thoureil and from the 9th-century St-Maur abbey.

The train from Les Rosiers gets you to Angers in 20 minutes. Another not inconsiderable advantage is the *vignoble ligérien*. This useful adjective, meaning relative to the Loire, comes from Liger, the Latin name for the river. The Anjou, Saumurois and Touraine vineyards are nearby. And yes, they too are Unesco-listed.

The Loire continues its journey but we have reached the end of ours. I hope it may help you find your ideal home in Somewhere-sur-Loire. ■

mairie-aurec.fr/loire-semene.fr/gorgesdelaloire.fr/lacharitesurloire.fr/lacharitesurloire-tourisme.com/gennesvaldeloire.fr/parc-loire-anjou-touraine.fr

3 REASONS TO BUY HERE

Three attractive medieval communes in three different rural departments along the banks of the Loire, France's longest river

Range of properties and prices - old stone village houses, riverside maisons de maîtres, country longères and farmsteads with tourist accommodation possibilities

Good motorway access; international airports at Lyon for Aurec, Paris for La Charité and Nantes for Les Rosiers

On the market

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRENCHENTREE.COM



€199,470, Les Rosiers-sur-Loire: Five minutes from shops and station in peaceful location, three-bed tuffeau stone house with well, timber sheds and a tree-lined garden (Albert Immo)



€179,740, Chênehutte: On southern bank of Loire between Saumur and Gennes, modern three-bed detached house in enclosed garden with garden-level basement (Albert Immo)



€164,420, Chênehutte: Sout of Gennes, small, old renovated house in a tranquil hamlet with two bedrooms - one with a balcony - garden and two cellars (Albert Immo)



€459,800, Louerre: In a village near Gennes, 17th-century four-bedroom property with original features, barn and second outbuilding in large tree-lined garden with pasture (Albert Immo)



GOLDENWAY INTERNATIONAL PETS & LIVE ANIMALS

✈️ WORLDWIDE LIVE ANIMAL RELOCATION SERVICES ✈️



SETTING THE GOLD STANDARD OF GLOBAL ANIMAL RELOCATION

- First worldwide freight forwarder specialising in live animals to obtain the IATA Certificate of Excellence for Independent Validators in Live Animal Logistics (CEIV)
- Working together with worldwide Zoos to ensure the safe and tranquil transport of these precious animals
- Preparing pets and following strict country regulations to ensure we unite pets and families together again
- Luxury transit lounge for animals in our care when transiting, before export and after import
- IATA Certified Agent
- Air-conditioned vehicles & live animal facilities on CDG Airport
- DDCSPP Approved (Ministry vet)
- AEO accreditation



PROVIDING A PROFESSIONAL AND CARING TEAM
READY TO FULFIL ANY OF YOUR ANIMAL LOGISTICS.

Contact Goldenway for a free quote at our
CDG Airport Office Paris



Accredited
Partner



Aéroport Charles De Gaulle
Bat 3421J Cargo 6
Rue De La Jeune Fille
BP 19379
95706 Roissy CDG
France

"Safety comfort and care for your pet, peace of mind for you" ©

Tel: +33 (0)1 48 62 87 25/ 11/ 27/ 59
Fax: +33 (0)1 48 62 87 30
Email: Contact@goldenwaypets.com

www.goldenwaypets.com



No two moves are ever the same, so every journey needs to be planned with precision

Read more
about moving to
France on

frenchentree.com

For many people, the decision to move to France is the realisation of a long-held dream, a new lifestyle, better weather and a fresh start. Before you can settle into your new château in Provence or pied-à-terre in Paris, there's a detailed behind-the-scenes operation: getting your belongings safely from the UK to France.

What may seem at first glance to be a simple van trip across the Channel is, in fact, somewhat more involved. This is where a professional removal company comes into play. The process is carefully engineered to prevent delays, damage and unnecessary stress. Here's an inside look at what actually happens before your belongings cross the Channel.

SETTING THE STAGE

The pre-move survey

Your relocation begins long before moving day. One of our expert surveyors will either visit your property to perform an in-house survey, or they will complete the survey via a virtual video call.

During this survey, they will assess everything you want to take. However, we're not just counting boxes. We're planning your entire move. This means we calculate the volume, to ensure we send the right size

Behind the move

What really happens before your belongings cross the Channel on their journey to your new home? **Ben Hingley** explains



A professional mover should provide bespoke packing for special items

vehicle(s) and determine whether access is tricky. Narrow village streets, rural farmland, steep driveways, top-floor flats without lifts all need to be factored into the logistics.

Our surveyors also note what needs specialist care (pianos, artworks, family heirlooms). We'll also discuss with you anything restricted by customs

rules. "A successful move to France is all about preparation and spotting challenges early, so they don't become problems later on," says Steve Ball, sales representative at Burke Bros Moving Group.

POST-BREXIT REALITY

Customs and paperwork

There was a time when your

belongings could glide into France without any formalities. However, post-Brexit the landscape is different and there are quite a few requirements.

An extensive amount of paperwork is required to bring your belongings into France. It is important to have the help and guidance of a removal company that is fully conversant with all these new requirements. A professional removal company will help you prepare a detailed inventory that lists each item correctly and advise you on what you need as proof of the move.

It should also help you avoid the pitfalls, for example, packing anything that customs might see as a red flag. If something isn't quite right, belongings can be held at the border. That's why having specialists on your side matters now more than ever.

Choose a removal company with a detailed knowledge of

the customs requirements, one that deals with the customs procedures every single day, so you can feel confident in them guiding you through this.

PACKING FOR EXPORT

A different level of care

Packing for a move abroad isn't just a case of popping things into the back of a van on moving day. Your furniture and possessions will be travelling a long way. We use export-grade materials and industry-leading techniques to protect items through lifting, stacking, transit and Channel weather.

A professional mover should be able to create bespoke wooden crates for fragile or precious items, provide protective wrapping for large furniture and antiques and special cartons to transport the contents of your wardrobe to prevent creasing. We've even transported tractors, wine



Clothes are moved in special cartons

collections and motorbikes. If it matters to you, we'll find the right way to move it.

Choose a removal company with a detailed knowledge of the customs requirements. One that deals with the necessary procedures every single day, so you can feel confident in them guiding you through this.

THE LOGISTICAL BALLET

Planning the journey

The moving company will need to coordinate ferry timings, legal driving time limits for their driver, traffic and any access rules in historic French towns and navigate any potential issues that seasonal weather may throw

“Choose a removal company that’s an established authority in international moves and accredited with the British Association of Removers”



If access to your French home is tricky, it may be necessary to organise a smaller vehicle to act as a 'shuttle'

into the mix. If access to your French home is difficult, it may be necessary to arrange for a smaller vehicle to act as a 'shuttle' between the larger van and your property. If needed, we can arrange secure UK or French storage if you don't want your effects going straight to your home in France.

Customers can choose between a dedicated vehicle, which ensures faster delivery as your effects travel on their own, or a part load, involving

shared transport with other moves heading to France. We'll always explain the costs and timeline clearly so you can choose what suits you best.

“No two French moves are ever the same, so we plan every journey with precision,” says Dave Colley, operations manager at Burke Bros Moving Group.

While most customers only meet the surveyor, the packers (if packing is included in your move) and the removal

crew on the day itself, your move involves a large team of experts, from storage operatives, to the customs compliance experts that ensure your move goes smoothly.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH EXPERTS

Moving to France is a significant undertaking and surrounding yourself with expertise makes all the difference. Choose a removal company that is an established authority in international moves, British Association of Removers (BAR) accredited; a specialist in UK-France relocation; highly experienced with customs compliance; and able to offer professional packing services.

By the time the front door opens at your new place in France, countless meticulous steps will already have taken place. Your belongings aren't just transported, they're cared for, tracked and protected every mile of the journey. This means that you will have the best possible start to your new life in France. ■



Using a specialist mover means you will have the best start to your new life

Ben Hingley is the Sales Manager at Burke Bros Moving Group
Tel: 01902 714555
burkebros.co.uk

Known as 'the Tuscany of France', Gers has rolling, unspoilt countryside



In a striking shift over the past couple of years, Americans have surged to become the number one foreign buyers of property in Paris, and growing numbers are beginning to look to other regions of France in a way that is having an impact on the French property market.

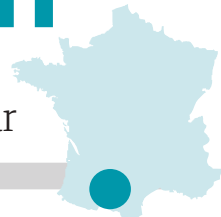
According to Reuters, French government data for the first quarter of 2025 showed that long-stay visa requests from Americans stood at 2,383, compared to a total of 1,980 over the same period the previous year. Increasing numbers of Americans are turning their dreams of French home ownership into reality and they are expected to be among the top five nationalities looking for property in France this year.

They are increasingly looking to France not just as a dream holiday destination, but as a place to build a new life. Some are seeking a slower, more meaningful existence, tired of the relentless work culture and rising costs in the USA. Others are drawn by France's strong sense of community, excellent healthcare and emphasis on work-life balance.

More recently, the growing tension and divisive political situation in America, along with concerns over economic instability, gun violence and social unrest, have prompted many to rethink their long-term

The 'other' south

Nadia Jordan explains the reasons southwest France should definitely be on your property radar



future. Since Donald Trump's re-election, interest from American property buyers in France has surged significantly.

However, American buyers in France tend to purchase in either Paris or Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA); these are the two regions that seem to personify the French dream for Americans. But they are also two of the most expensive regions for property, as well as being the most crowded - especially in summer. In addition, Provence is becoming so hot in the summer months, with increasing wildfires, that the reality might not always live up to the dream.

Meanwhile, tucked a little further west and south, below the radar of many American buyers - but long popular with Brits - lies a part of France that offers a region equally as beautiful but also more authentic, less spoiled and more peaceful, where nature, culture, history and lifestyle come together and where the dream of French home

ownership is not only alive, but still affordable, unlike much of the southeast of France. Are Americans perhaps missing a trick, focusing on one small part of France and missing the best bit?

GENTLE PACE OF LIFE

Tucked between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, with the backdrop of the spectacular Pyrénées mountains, southwest France is one of those rare places that has it all. With its pretty villages, sweeping mountain views and a gentler pace of life, it offers exactly the lifestyle that so many Americans are dreaming about, if they only knew to look here.

This is a land of colourful local markets and café terraces, quiet, tree-lined country lanes and rolling hills where seasons still matter. Whether you are looking for a holiday home or a more permanent escape, the southwest quietly delivers on every front.

The Ariège, Haute-Garonne, Gers and Hautes-Pyrénées

departments are steeped in history yet brimming with possibility, offering character-filled properties at prices far below those of Provence or Côte d'Azur. These are places where dotting the hillsides are pretty farmhouses with thick stone walls, hand-carved fireplaces, beautiful views, blue shutters, vines, large gardens and lots of traditional charm.

The beauty of this part of France is not only in its houses, villages and landscapes, which shift from lush valleys to dramatic mountain peaks, but in its rhythm of life. It's a region that invites you to slow down and stay a while, to wander around ancient market towns like Auch or Marciac, or to sit with a coffee in a sleepy village square. It's not a curated postcard version of France, it's the real thing. And that is what makes it so compelling.

● ARIÈGE

The Ariège makes up much of the Pyrénées national park, an accolade awarded to recognise

“This is a land of colourful local markets and café terraces, quiet tree-lined country lanes and rolling hills where seasons still matter”

the unspoiled landscapes and natural beauty. Here, there's a winning combination of lush valleys, soaring mountain peaks and traditional French villages that seem unchanged for centuries.

The area prides itself on its organic local produce and artistic, down-to-earth inhabitants. In terms of property, you'll find affordable farmhouses, stone cottages and even the occasional château that would cost 10 times as much in Provence. If you're looking for a project then, yes, you can still find houses for renovation or updating here and barns crying out for conversion, which means you can create both the property and the lifestyle you want. Outdoor fans will feel instantly at home with wonderful walking trails, cycling, horse-riding, skiing, kayaking and beautiful picnic spots all on your doorstep. Along with peace and quiet.

● HAUTE-GARONNE

South and west of Toulouse, the Haute-Garonne offers a great blend of beautiful countryside, far-reaching mountain views, peace and quiet - and proximity to the thriving city of Toulouse, with its vibrant city culture and major international airport.

Charming villages such as Aurignac and Aspet provide French country life with local cafés, restaurants and *boulangeries* all within easy reach. For anyone looking to move to France full time, while continuing to work and stay connected to the rest of the world, this area is perfect.

● GERS

Known as 'the Tuscany of France', and of course Gascony, Gers is one of the best-known corners of France for traditional country cooking and produce. It's the land of *confit de canard*, paté and armagnac brandy.

The landscape is that of a French postcard: sunflowers and rolling hills, *bastide* towns, Romanesque churches and mountains on the horizon. The Gers is ideal for those seeking a

relaxed, deeply rural lifestyle, infused with gastronomy, tradition and a gentle climate with sunshine much of the year.

Property here ranges from grand *manoirs* and *maisons de maître* to simple village houses and traditional L-shape farmhouses, which often come with sweeping views and generous amounts of land.

● HAUTES-PYRÉNÉES

Like a prettier and gentler version of the Alps, Hautes-Pyrénées has all the same activities and quality of life on offer, but with significantly lower house prices. Wide open valleys are dotted with pretty sunny villages and farmhouses with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains.

Every sort of sport is available here. In the heat of the summer, it's not far to escape to the cooler mountain air, while in winter there are numerous ski resorts within an hour's drive. But, unlike the Alps, this is a mountain region that still feels undiscovered. It is also known for its thermal baths and spas, so whether you are drawn to the skiing, hiking or simply soaking in thermal waters while gazing at the mountains, there is something for everyone.

REASONS TO BUY HERE

The southwest of France may be

less well known than Provence and the southeast of France, but it's just as charming and beautiful while being quieter and less developed. In terms of buying property, you will also get much more for your money here, so it's also likely to be a good long-term investment - whether for a permanent home or holiday house.

Property is incredibly good value compared to many other areas of France, and you can still find generously sized stone houses with gardens and views of the Pyrénées for less than €250,000. Whether you are dreaming of a rambling countryside retreat, a lock-up-and-leave village house or a gîte business, the options here are as varied as they are affordable.

LIFESTYLE CHOICE

Then there's the lifestyle. The southwest of France offers something truly rare, a balance between tranquillity and connection. Toulouse airport, with regular transatlantic links via Paris or London, makes international travel surprisingly easy. The TGV (high-speed rail) reaches down into the region, currently as far as Bordeaux, but you'll soon be able to get from Toulouse directly to Paris in three hours.

The roads are empty and well-maintained, so you

are never very far from the mountains, the Atlantic coast, the Mediterranean, the vineyards of Bordeaux or the city buzz of Toulouse. You really can have it all.

Most importantly, life here feels sustainable - ecologically and financially. You don't need to be a millionaire to own your home, nor sacrifice modern comforts. The food is local, the feeling of community is strong and the sense of wellbeing is something buyers often say they didn't realise they were missing until they arrived.

The climate is also arguably more liveable than that of Provence and the Côte d'Azur. With more than 2,000 hours of sunshine a year, this is one of France's sunniest corners. Summers can be hot, but they are manageable and there is not the wildfire risk here that there is further east. There are four distinct seasons and winters are short, sunny and offer an intensity of light missing in northern climes in the colder months. So, what are you waiting for? ■

Nadia Jordan runs [the frenchpropertyfinders.com](https://www.thefrenchpropertyfinders.com), a network of property finders across France, and [foothillsoffrance.com](https://www.foothillsoffrance.com), a property search agency in southwest France



Located in the heart of the Ariège valley in the Pyrénées, Tarascon-sur-Ariège has remained unchanged for centuries



Place Plumereau is at the heart of Tours

Gateway to the Loire

With a lively town centre, river activities and some of France's finest châteaux on the doorstep, Tours is in a class of its own, writes **Karen Tait**



The gateway to the Loire Valley, Tours is the ideal base for those who love châteaux - Chenonceau, Amboise, Villandry and Azay-le-Rideau are just a few close by - gastronomy (respected local wines include Vouvray, Chinon and Bourgueil, while rillettes, terrines and goat's cheese feature on menus) and French heritage and culture.

The entire Loire Valley is Unesco-listed for its exceptional cultural landscape. The area's rich history stretches back centuries, with plenty of museums, festivals and churches to visit beyond the famous châteaux.

Tours itself has a picturesque old town, with half-timbered buildings, cobblestone streets and bustling squares like Place Plumereau, lined with cafés, bars and restaurants. It's less crowded than larger French cities but offers a vibrant urban lifestyle and youthful vibe thanks to its university. This combines with easy access to

beautiful countryside and, of course, the Loire river, where locals and tourists alike enjoy cycling (including the Loire à Vélo route), walking and other outdoor pursuits.

The town is easy to reach too - just an hour by high-speed train from Paris, with good road connections and UK Ryanair flights to Tours airport.

The old town is ideal for househunters seeking culture, nightlife and properties suitable for student or holiday lets. The market is mainly

made up of apartments, often in ancient *colombage* buildings; note that parking in the narrow streets is limited.

Popular too is the Centre-Ville/Préfecture quarter, which offers classic, Haussmannian-style buildings, with shops, offices and services, close to the train station. Also by the station, the Gare/Sanitas area is handy for regular travel to Paris (so is popular with renters) and offers more affordable property.

For leafier, green, residential districts, look at Les Prébendes,

which has a bourgeois air, a lovely park and beautiful townhouses and apartments - prices are higher in this prestigious neighbourhood. The village-like Velpéau area and suburban Ste-Radegonde are also popular with families.

The average square metre house price in Tours is €3,082, rising to €4,222 in the centre. This compares to €2,037 in the Indre-et-Loire department, of which Tours is the capital, and €1,523 in the wider Centre-Val de Loire region. ■

On the market

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM & FRENCHENTRÉE.COM



€310,000: New-build 35m² studio apartment in the town centre; the apartment benefits from an additional 18.5m² under the eaves (Leggett)



€244,940: Two-bedroom 105m² apartment in the Fondettes area on the outskirts of Tours, with access to the garden and terrace (Immobilier Le Figaro)



€2.1m: Your own Loire Valley chateau, complete with fairytale turrets, 13 bedrooms, five bathrooms, 1,000m² living space and 6ha of land (Cabinet le Nail)

Say 'au revoir' to currency worries and 'bonjour' to certainty – because exchange rates shouldn't spoil your Provençal paradise.



Since 2004, Excel Currencies has helped buyers like you save thousands on French property transfers with our multiple award-winning products and services. Beat the banks, protect against fluctuations, and gain peace of mind with our trusted solutions.

- ✓ **Certainty in Uncertain Times:** Fix your rate today for future payments up to 2 years – no surprises on the cost of your dream home.
- ✓ **Save Time & Money:** Avoid costly bank rates; our experts guide you with bespoke risk tools.
- ✓ **Real Savings Example:** Like Mr & Mrs Jones, who locked in at the right time and saved over € 15,000



see how Mr & Mrs Jones saved by scanning...

Or visit
www.excelcurrencies.com/forward-contract

Excellent 5 Stars



#1 of 44 companies for Money Transfers
#1 of 71 companies for Payment Services

Call today on +44 1322 221121 and quote FPN to get a
FREE tailored currency assessment and property purchase strategy.

• ANDERLAINE INTERNATIONAL

**YOUR ALPINE BRIDGE TO
FRENCH BUSINESS AND PROPERTY**



English-speaking experts in legal, tax and property investment support across the French Alps.

Thinking of investing, relocating, or starting a business in France?

Meet us:

- Anancy, Les Gets, Morzine, St-Pierre-en Faucigny
- anderlaine.com/en/
- +33 (0)4 50 25 08 08

Anderlaine •

CASHIN
since 1978



Stoves & Cookers

ZA 68370 ORBEY

Tel. 03 89 71 26 67

www.cashin-france.com

Franklins

UK & European Removals and Storage



- Family run business established in 1985.
- Removal services to and from France.
- Packing Services.
- Storage.
- Full loads, part loads and single items.
- Excellent reviews online.
- Customs Clearance.



0121 353 7263

f /franklinsremovalsltd

**www.franklinsremovals.co.uk
sales@franklinsremovals.co.uk**

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



ARZSI AND MORHMAN SHUTTERSTOCK

P86 **LEGAL COLUMN**

Thinking of going it alone without legal advice? We reveal some of the property slip-ups that await a DIY buyer, from contracts to boundaries

P88 **MONEY COLUMN**

Healthcare insurance timeline - what you need and when - for your visa application, during the move and once you're settled in France

P90 **GUIDE TO...**

State benefits part 2, for those of working or retirement age, including help with housing, healthcare and income - and how to keep up to date

P92 **ASK THE EXPERTS**

Q&As on the *compromis de vente* sale contract, French wills, visas, *para-hotellerie* rentals VAT refunds, currency exchange, and more

Legal column

Sarah Bright-Thomas reveals some of the property slip-ups that await a DIY buyer



often refer to buying French property as the ‘ballet of the banana skins’ - a performance in which we attempt to lead our prima property-buying ballerinas safely across a stage strewn with slippery obstacles.

This article is for the bold, confident, gung-ho expat who wholeheartedly believes they are a wily DIY buyer. As a French lawyer specialising in French property law for longer than I care to admit, I have met many expats who fall into this category. They arrive at my door in various stages of despair, not understanding how the purchase could have gone so askew and asking whether I might possibly help them get back on their feet and resolve their problem. And I do, because getting expats out of trouble is part of my job. But it doesn't need to be like this.

Although there is no legal obligation to take independent legal advice when buying in France, you would practically need to be an experienced, bilingual French lawyer yourself not to benefit from doing so. The banana skins are everywhere. As a little springtime treat, allow me to reveal 10 of the most treacherous ones - potential slip-ups that proper legal guidance can help you sidestep.

1. BEGINNING THE SEARCH WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH PROPERTY MARKET

Many British buyers begin with the cheery assumption that the French system is simply a ‘continental version’ of the UK's. It isn't. France has no

centralised property database, no universal listing site and no guarantee that you won't see the same charming farmhouse advertised in three different agencies - or that it is even still for sale. The result? Wasted journeys, duplicated visits, wildly differing prices, plus a creeping suspicion that the French are playing a practical joke on you. Alas, they are not. That's just the market.

2. MAKING AN OFFER TOO QUICKLY - AND WITHOUT GRASPING ITS CONSEQUENCES

In France, even a simple written *offre d'achat* can bind the buyer more tightly than expected. I meet many clients who made their offer while

in a haze of holiday

enchantment - rosé, sunshine and the

irresistible scent of woodsmoke from an ancient stone fireplace. Only later do they realise the barn is about to collapse, or that the roof is older than the Last Supper. Retracting an offer can be messy, awkward, and occasionally expensive. Breathe first, signature later.

3. SIGNING THE COMPROMIS DE VENTE WITHOUT INDEPENDENT LEGAL ADVICE

Ah, the mother of all banana skins. The *compromis de vente* is not a friendly handshake; it is a binding contract with penalties, deadlines and obligations. And yet buyers routinely sign it after the briskest of skims. Hidden within may be clauses on septic tanks, co-ownership rules, access rights, planning breaches, zoning classifications, mortgage

conditions, and a list of annexes longer than the average French lunch. By the time you bring it to me - usually with a hint of panic - it is too late to renegotiate.

This also goes for vendors: it is the main contract with the buyers, so the correct legal advice before signing to understand what you need to do and say can prevent very complicated and expensive litigation down the line

French law allows buyers to protect themselves by inserting conditional clauses into the contract. But these clauses must be drafted specifically, precisely, and in advance. A vague intention to ‘obtain a mortgage’ is not the same as a legally enforceable financing clause. Likewise, if you plan to convert the attic, run a B&B, install a pool, or keep a herd of rare alpacas, the contract

needs tailored conditions. Many DIY buyers omit them entirely and then discover that without conditions, they are stuck - financially, legally, and occasionally with a herd of animals they never intended to own.

4. SKIPPING PROPER DUE DILIGENCE ON THE PROPERTY'S CONDITION

Expat buyers often assume that the French diagnostic surveys are equivalent to a full structural survey. They are not. Diagnostics are designed to provide limited safety information, not to reassure

you that the house won't

fall down during a stiff breeze. Asbestos, termites, structural movement, out-of-date wiring, lead in the pipes are included but ancient plumbing, barn



“The ‘compromis de vente’ is not a friendly handshake; it is a binding contract, with obligations and penalties”



9. BELIEVING THE NOTAIRE IS YOUR PERSONAL LEGAL ADVISOR

The *notaire* is a public official who ensures the transaction complies with French law and that the taxes are correctly collected. Ideally, they should also be informed of your exact situation as a buyer and this will invariably be taken into account allowing them to act in the best interests of the transaction. Although many gladly will, *notaires* are not required to advise you strategically, and if they are not made aware of every aspect of your individual legal situation, they cannot protect you from a bad deal, and they are certainly not responsible for interpreting the finer points of cross-border legal issues. To expect a *notaire* to defend your interests is like expecting the referee to help you score.

10. ASSUMING THE WORK ENDS AT COMPLETION

For many buyers, the champagne cork pops and the mental switch flips to ‘holiday mode’. Meanwhile, essential administrative obligations quietly pile up: property insurance, tax declarations, drainage compliance deadlines, utility registrations or co-ownership rules.

Neglecting these can lead to fines, disputes, or - in one memorable case - a furious neighbour and a court order about hedge-cutting. French bureaucracy may be slow, but it never forgets. ■

Sarah Bright is an avocat at Bright Avocats, a bilingual law firm located in Toulouse
brightavocats.com

stability and roof integrity are not. A qualified surveyor is worth their fee; repairing 18th-century stonework is not.

5. MISUNDERSTANDING FRENCH PLANNING RULES (ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS)

France adores regulation, and nowhere is this more apparent than in planning law. Your dream of transforming a picturesque barn into a gîte empire may rapidly collide with heritage-protection rules, zoning restrictions, agricultural land classifications, or simply the commune’s personal dislike of skylights. Many buyers only discover these limitations after completion, at which point their grand renovation plans must be replaced by something more modest, like repainting the shutters.

6. OVERLOOKING BOUNDARIES, ACCESS RIGHTS, SHARED AREAS

Nothing spices up a move to France like discovering that your charming driveway belongs partly to your neighbour, who reserves the right to park his tractor on it. Or that a pedestrian right-of-way runs precisely where you planned to place your pool. Boundary maps (*cadastre*) can be imprecise, and rural deeds often contain historic easements written in beautiful but baffling 19th-century French. Independent legal review is essential unless you enjoy surprises.

7. CHOOSING THE WRONG OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

France’s inheritance rules bear only a passing resemblance to those in the UK. Choosing between *indivision*, *tontine*, an SCI, a marriage regime or cross-border estate planning can significantly affect inheritance tax, capital gains liability and future sales. Too

many buyers sort it out ‘later’, only to discover that restructuring ownership after completion is slow, costly, and occasionally impossible without selling the property.

8. PROCEEDING WITH INADEQUATE FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

Some buyers assume that a French mortgage can be arranged in a fortnight, in August, during a national holiday, while everyone is at the beach. This is optimistic. Others neglect to include a proper mortgage clause in the contract or fail to account for fluctuating exchange rates, resulting in thousands of euros in unexpected costs. A little planning goes a long way; a little naivety goes straight into your budget.



Money column

Paulette Booth

explains how visa health insurance and state healthcare works



Moving to France is an exciting adventure, but navigating the administrative and healthcare requirements can be daunting. Here we outline the steps you need to take before you leave, on arrival, and once you have settled into your new life in France.

PHASE 1: BEFORE YOUR MOVE - SETTING THE FOUNDATION

The preparation for a move to France begins months before you actually board your plane, boat or train. For UK citizens, the post-Brexit landscape means that moving to France now requires careful visa planning and a clear understanding of your healthcare rights. The priority during this phase is securing the legal right to stay and ensuring you have immediate health protection.

1) Secure visa-compliant health insurance: For most long-stay visa applications, providing proof of health insurance is a non-negotiable requirement. It is essential to have this in place before you even submit your application to the French consulate. To be accepted, your insurance plan must meet specific criteria:

- **Minimum coverage:** It must provide at least €30,000 in medical coverage.
- **Medical repatriation:** The policy must include emergency repatriation.
- **Duration:** It must cover your entire stay.

Important note: One of the most common reasons a visa application is rejected is insufficient health insurance; for example, a standard annual travel insurance rather than a specialist long-stay policy. While an annual policy might seem convenient, it

fails to meet a fundamental requirement for French consulates: providing continuous cover for the entire duration of your stay. Most standard travel insurance policies are designed for holidaymakers and are strictly limited to a maximum stay of 30 to 90 days per individual trip. Because they do not offer uninterrupted protection for a full 365 days, they do not satisfy the essential criteria for visa-approved insurance. To ensure your application is successful, you must secure a plan that guarantees comprehensive medical coverage and repatriation for every single day you are in the country.

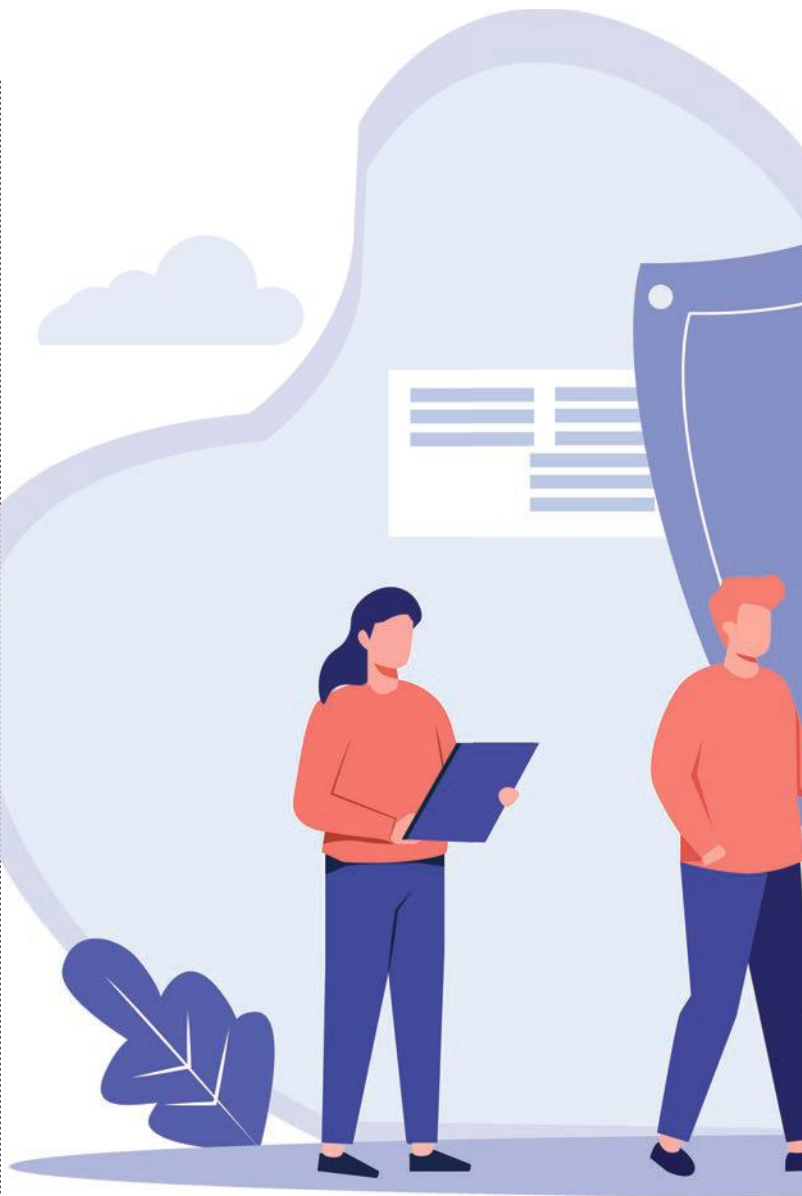
At Lonemi we ensure your plan is fully compliant, avoiding delays or potential visa rejections.

2) Understanding the S1 form (for eligible EU/UK citizens): If you are relocating from the UK and have reached state pension age or receive certain exportable benefits, you may be eligible for an S1 form.

The S1 is a European health entitlement form that enables individuals who have paid social security in the UK to access healthcare in France. It is issued by the NHS Overseas Healthcare Services in the UK.

Important note: In France, the healthcare system generally operates on a reimbursement basis where the state (social security) covers a percentage of the costs, and you – or your top-up insurance (*mutuelle*) – covers the rest.

If you are hospitalised with an S1 but have not yet received your French social security number, here is how the financial responsibility works:



● **Liability for the difference:**

Even with an S1, you would typically be liable for the ‘co-payment’ or the difference not covered by social security. In France, the social security system usually refunds an average of 70% of set medical fees. Without a *mutuelle* (top-up insurance) in place, you are personally responsible for the remaining balance, known as the *ticket modérateur*.

● **Reimbursement delays:**

Obtaining a social security number can take several months. During this ‘gap’, you must pay for medical services upfront and collect paper receipts called *feuilles de soins*, commonly known as the ‘brown form’. You can only claim your 70% refund once your social security number is finally issued.

● **Importance of private insurance:** Because of these potential gaps in coverage and

the long administrative wait times, it is strongly advised to maintain temporary private health insurance during the application process. It provides:

● **Comprehensive protection:** Coverage for the areas not fully protected by the social security or an S1.

● **Accident and emergency cover:** Specialist plans are specifically designed to bridge this exact gap until you are fully integrated and can switch to a *mutuelle* top-up.

3) Submit your visa application: Once your insurance is in place, you can finalise your visa application.

PHASE 2: ARRIVAL AND INITIAL SETTLEMENT

The first few months in France involve significant administrative tasks as you transition into the local system.

4) Manage initial administrative tasks: Upon



“Access to the French healthcare system is not immediate - private health insurance bridges the gap”

arrival, your first priority is validating your visa (if required) and handling immediate logistics like housing and banking. While Lonemi focuses on your health, we work with a specialist partner who can assist with broader administrative requirements during the initial move, including banking and home and car insurance.

5) Bridging the healthcare gap: Access to the French healthcare system, known as *l'Assurance Maladie*, is not immediate. While many individuals must wait until they have been

residents for three months before applying for a social security number, in some cases, you may be able to apply right away. If you are arriving for work, are self-employed, or have an S1 form, you may be eligible to apply for a social security number immediately upon arrival.

Important note: Regardless of when you apply, the administrative process can take several months. During this time, it's essential to maintain your private health insurance, which offers a strong safety net and quicker access to medical services.

PHASE 3: SETTLING IN - JOINING THE FRENCH HEALTH SYSTEM

6) Apply for a French social security number: This is a critical step that can take several months to complete.

- **The process:** You submit your application when you arrive or after three months of legal residence in France, depending on your circumstances.
- **Keep your records:** During the waiting period, keep all *feuilles de soins* (the brown forms given by doctors). Once you receive your social security number, you can add it to these forms and send them to your local CPAM (*Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie*) for reimbursement.
- **The 'carte vitale':** Eventually, you will receive a request for a photo to produce your *carte vitale*, the green card that confirms your social security

status and streamlines medical payments.

7) Secure a 'mutuelle' (top-up insurance)

Once you have your social security number, you can officially switch from your international private insurance to a *mutuelle* top-up policy, completing your integration into the French health system. The *mutuelle* is then automatically linked to your social security account to make reimbursements seamless.

- **Coverage gaps:** Social security sets a fee for each procedure and typically refunds a percentage - the average is around 70% - of this amount.

- **The role of a 'mutuelle':** A *mutuelle* policy covers the difference between the actual cost and the social security refund.

- **Enhanced benefits:** A *mutuelle* can also provide coverage for private hospital rooms, complementary treatments, and higher-tier dental or optical care. It often

includes additional services such as home help, pet care and study support.

Important note: It is important to understand that the French social security system does not cover 100% of healthcare costs.

Relocating to France is a life-changing journey, and while the administrative path may have its twists and turns, you don't have to navigate it alone. By ticking off these milestones and ensuring your healthcare is secured at every stage, you can focus on what really matters: enjoying the vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and incomparable lifestyle of your new home.

Your new life starts here! ■

Paulette Booth is the Manager at Lonemi, which provides tailored insurance solutions, paving the way to a seamless visa application
lonemi.fr

STATE BENEFITS

FIND OUT MORE
Read our guides to
living in France on
frenchentree.com

In part two of our guide to benefits in France, **Catharine Higginson** looks at what's available for those of working or retirement age, including help with housing, healthcare and income - and where to keep abreast with the latest local news

The CAF (*Caisse des Allocations Familiales*) is the organisation in France that is responsible for administering and paying nearly all state benefits. In the last issue we looked at the various benefits and allowances that are paid by the French state to parents and families - but despite its name, the CAF is also responsible for administering all of the benefits that people of working age, and beyond, may be entitled to.

SOCIAL WELFARE

One of the best known is the RSA (*le revenu de solidarité*

active). This payment guarantees a minimum income level of €646.52 per month for a single person and increases to €1,357.69 for a couple with two children. It is resource-based and only available to those aged 25 or over unless they are pregnant or already have a child.

This allowance becomes *le revenu de solidarité* for those aged between 55 and 60 - the word *active* has been dropped as they are considered to be of pre-retirement/retirement age according to different professions. As with the majority of CAF benefits, the amount you receive is



Those on a low income can seek help with rent and mortgage payments



You can even get assistance with moving costs

reassessed every three months and may increase or decrease if there's been a change in personal circumstances.

La prime d'activité is another well-known benefit and this is paid to people who are working, whether as an employee or freelancer but whose income is low. It can also kick in when people have been placed on *chômage partiel/technique* - in other words, their employer is experiencing cashflow issues and in order to keep the business afloat, the employer can pay the employees around 60% of their salary and *la prime d'activité* will make up the rest. Again, this is means-tested and reassessed every three months. It is an incredibly useful benefit and provides a real safety net for freelancers especially or anyone whose income might fluctuate from month to month.

HOUSING HELP

Those on a low income will also be eligible for help with housing and there are numerous benefits available. The best known of these is probably APL (*aide personnelle au logement*). Available to anyone on a low income - students and young people included - the APL will help you to pay your rent or mortgage. However, not all rental properties are eligible. For example, if the property is not sufficiently thermally efficient, it will not qualify, and this is why rental adverts often state 'eligible CAF', so do make sure you check before signing a rental contract if you think you might be applying for APL.

If you are a landlord and your tenant receives housing benefit or APL, you will need to confirm their continued occupation and rental payments to the CAF so

that their benefits continue to be paid. This is done online via the CAF website; you will need to use the 'Pro' part of the site and will require separate log-in details for this.

Moving house is also something that the CAF will help with; families with three or more children can apply for *la prime de déménagement*; this is currently around €1,138 for families with three children and increases slightly if you have more dependents.

Once you've moved, whether you are a tenant or an owner, the CAF will assist with the general improvement of the property if this includes key elements such as sewage, insulation, repairs and so forth. They won't help with decorative elements but anything that could impact the health of those living in the property may qualify for *le pret à l'amélioration de l'habitat* (PAH).

The CAF will also help families receiving benefits with various other housing issues and all of this comes under what is termed *l'action sociale pour le logement*. This help could include assistance with costs such as unpaid rent, loan payments, water and electricity bills or loans to purchase essential household equipment such as a washing machine or fridge. A huge amount of assistance is available for housing matters but as everyone's circumstances are different, it's best to contact your regional CAF and see what they can help with.

UNEMPLOYED AND CARERS

Obviously, there are also numerous payments available for those who cannot work for whatever reason. Parents with

a disabled child receive the AEEH (*allocation d'éducation de l'enfant handicapé*) and disabled adults receive the AAH, which guarantees them a minimum income and varies according to whether or not they are working and their household income.

The AJPA (*allocation journalière du proche aidant*) is a payment made to anyone giving up their job or reducing their hours in order to look after a family member who is disabled or can no longer function independently. The AJPP (*allocation journalière de présence parentale*) is paid to parents whose child is seriously ill, has suffered an accident or has some form of disability.

Pension rights (*assurance vieillesse*) are also included for those who have reduced their working hours in order to look after a disabled or seriously ill family member. Should the unthinkable happen, the CAF will also make a payment on the death of a child, to help support the family through this time. If you experience a death in

the family, the CAF can assist you through the process, both financially and emotionally.

These types of benefits are all part of the CAF's remit to assist families with each and every event that may impact family life, whether it's separation, the death of a family member, single parenting, moving house or unpaid bills.

HEALTHCARE INSURANCE

The CAF is also responsible for administering the CSS (*complémentaire santé solidaire*), which is free or partly subsidised *mutuelle* or top-up health insurance cover. Over eight million people benefit from this and it means that any healthcare expenses incurred

over and above the ceiling fixed by French social security are fully covered.

Students, retirees, the unemployed and anyone working on a low income are eligible to apply, along with cross-border workers and those in receipt of various other benefits. It is well worth taking a look and seeing if you qualify; there is a really easy to use online calculator (mesdroitssociaux.gouv.fr/votre-simulateur/accueil) which covers not only the CSS but all the benefits administered by the CAF in addition to various regional grants. The page is updated on a regular basis so it is one to bookmark.

Keeping up to date with the various allowances and being aware of your eligibility is a key part of claiming benefits in France. These days there is a huge amount of information online via the official French government websites and the CAF also produces its own magazine *Vies de famille*. This is published quarterly and sent to anyone receiving benefits or you can read it online (caf.fr/allocataires/vies-de-famille/lire-le-magazine).

Things change all the time so get into the habit of reading the magazine. It will keep you up to speed - and improve your French! ■

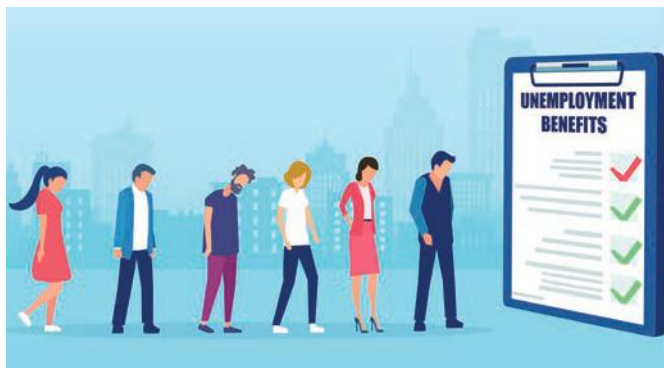
NEXT MONTH

Guide to: Regional grants and assistance for starting a business



Subsidised healthcare is available for the unemployed and those on a low income

“Over eight million people in France benefit from free or subsidised top-up health insurance cover”



There are numerous benefits for those who cannot work, for whatever reason

Top tip

The best way to discover what might apply to your individual circumstances is to make an appointment with an *assistante sociale* or social worker, either via the CAF or your local *mairie* (town hall). They will help you create the file (*le dossier*) for your application, explain exactly what you need to provide and advise on what you are entitled to. This is vital in situations where, for example, ill health means you need to create *un dossier d'invalidité* (which could result in an earlier retirement date) so it's vitally important that you get it right.

Q&A Ask the experts

Need advice? Put your problems to our panel

WHAT DOES PARA-HOTELLERIE INVOLVE?

I am considering buying a property in France to run a *para-hotelier* activity and recover VAT on the purchase. Is this a good idea, and what should I watch out for?

FABIENNE QUÉLARD
of **Anderlaine International responds** (anderlaine.com): The prospect of recovering 20% VAT on a French property purchase is undeniably appealing – especially for British investors seeking to optimise returns in a competitive market. However, this opportunity is far from straightforward. It comes with strict compliance requirements and significant risks. If you fail to meet the conditions, the French tax authorities will not only deny the refund but may also demand repayment with interest and penalties.

To qualify for VAT recovery, your rental activity must genuinely operate as *para-hotellerie*: essentially, providing hotel-style services



Fabienne Quélard

in a furnished property. This is not just a label; it is a legal definition. You must offer at least three of these services:

- On-site reception for guests
- Regular cleaning during their stay (not just at arrival and departure)
- Provision/change of linen
- Breakfast served to guests

These services must be clearly advertised and consistently delivered. Simply renting a furnished property or leaving croissants for guests does not meet the criteria. Failure to comply can result in

the tax authorities denying VAT recovery and even reclaiming previously refunded amounts.

Recent case law highlights the consequences of non-compliance. In one case, an investor lost over €69,000 because they failed to contest a VAT refund rejection within the legal timeframe. Once a decision becomes final, you cannot carry the claim forward. This illustrates two key points:

1. The tax authorities actively monitor *para-hotelier* activities.
2. Timing and documentation are critical: delays or missing evidence can lead to severe financial strain.

For UK investors, here is some practical advice:

1. Choose a reliable management agency:

Your agency should not only deliver the required services but also provide detailed evidence – guest reception logs, cleaning schedules, linen invoices and breakfast records. These documents are essential



Para-hotellerie operations must provide certain services such as changing bed linen and cleaning

during a tax audit.

2. Plan before you buy:

- Register the activity correctly with the French authorities (CCI and RCS unless you opt for *micro-entrepreneur* status);
- Select the appropriate tax regime: if you intend to recover VAT, make sure with your accountant or tax advisor beforehand that the chosen regime permits VAT recovery.
- Understand your obligations for social contributions, annual accounts, and legal compliance.

3. Act quickly on tax notices:

If the tax office queries

HOW CAN I ENSURE THE PRICE I AGREE IS THE PRICE I PAY?

We have been saving for a property in France for the last decade and are now ready to put in an offer. We are based in the UK, with funds in sterling, and are concerned that with the current uncertainty in the markets, the cost of the property might vary during the transaction due to potential negative exchange-rate fluctuations. What can we do to help make sure the property remains affordable?

MAR BONNIN-PALMER
of **Moneycorp responds** (moneycorp.com): Exchange



Mar Bonnin-Palmer

rates fluctuate constantly, and even small movements can make a big financial impact. In 2025, for example, GBP/EUR moved between 1.13 and 1.21. On a €500,000 property,

this swing could have created a difference of nearly £30,000 (€35,000) – simply due to currency movements. That's why understanding your options early – even before you start viewing properties – is essential. In fact, the earlier you prepare, the better your chances of keeping your budget on track.

Many buyers only think about foreign exchange (FX) at the end of the process, shortly before completion, believing that FX is simply the act of sending money from one country to another.

In reality, FX planning should begin before you start viewing

properties, because knowing your real, currency-adjusted budget helps you search for properties in the right price bracket; avoid falling in love with a home that becomes unaffordable; reduce the risk of unexpected market movements; and plan confidently rather than reactively. Working with a dedicated FX specialist early gives you access to market guidance, rate alerts and risk management tools that banks typically don't provide.

Most FX specialists offer tools to help you manage the risk of unwanted exchange rate

THE SALES CONTRACT

Before I buy, what do I need to know about French property law and the initial sales contract or *compromis de vente*?

DEBORAH VAYSSE
of Furley Page responds

(furleypage.co.uk): Once the offer to purchase has been accepted, a preliminary contract must be signed to formalise the agreement between the parties. There are several types of these contracts in France, such as the *promesse de vente* (unilateral promise to sell), but the most common and comprehensive form is the *compromis de vente*. It is customary for the estate agent or the *notaire* to prepare it.

The *compromis* represents a crucial stage in the process. Both buyer and seller formally agree to proceed with the sale, subject to specific conditions. Although often described as a 'pre-contract', it is legally binding; both parties are committed to completing the transaction unless one of the conditions is not fulfilled.

The *compromis* must include all essential elements of the sale, including: a precise description of the property; the agreed purchase price; the identity of the parties; any fixtures or furniture included in the sale. Fixtures attached to the property are automatically included, even if not listed. By contrast, movable items or furnishings must be expressly mentioned in the contract.

Conditions suspensives (conditions precedent) are a distinctive feature of French conveyancing, designed to protect both parties, and most often the buyer, against unforeseen events that could prevent completion. Put simply, if the condition isn't met, the sale cannot go ahead.

The most common clause relates to obtaining a loan or mortgage; unless the buyer has expressly declared that the purchase will be made



Deborah Vaysse

without borrowing. If the buyer is unable to obtain the loan within the timeframe stated in the contract and can demonstrate that they made genuine efforts to do so, the *compromis* becomes null and void and any deposit paid must be refunded in full. Other conditions concern confirmation that there is no pre-emption right exercised by the local authority. The parties may also agree on additional conditions, provided they don't contravene public policy; for example, receiving planning permission for works planned.

Once the *compromis* has been signed, the buyer benefits from a 10-day cooling-off period during which they may withdraw from the purchase without justification and without incurring any penalty. This applies only to those purchasing a residential property for personal use; not to professional buyers, nor to the purchase of building plots or mixed-use premises.

It is customary for the buyer to pay a deposit, typically 5%-10% of the price, held by the *notaire* or estate agent in escrow. If the buyer withdraws after the cooling-off period or fails to complete without lawful reason, the seller may retain this deposit as compensation.

In summary, the *compromis de vente* marks the formal start of the sale process but already carries substantial legal effect. It is recommended to seek professional advice before entering into any legal contract.



© SHUTTERSTOCK

your VAT claim, respond immediately and seek professional advice. Missing deadlines can make a rejection irreversible, and the sums involved are often substantial.

Beyond VAT, remember that *para-hotelier* activities are treated as professional businesses in France. You will be liable for social security contributions, local taxes, and possibly corporation tax if you operate through a company structure. These costs can significantly impact profitability, so factor them into

your financial planning.

VAT recovery can make a French property investment more attractive, but it is not a quick win. It requires genuine hotel-style services, meticulous record-keeping, and proactive compliance. If you are serious about this route, take professional advice before signing on the dotted line, because in France the devil is in the detail! Done correctly, *para-hotellerie* can be rewarding, but only for those prepared to meet the obligations head-on.

changes. If your budget is tight or you cannot afford any surprises, a forward contract might be worth considering. This allows you to fix an exchange rate now for a payment you'll make in the future. It's one of the most popular tools for overseas property buyers because it lets you plan ahead with a clear understanding of what you'll need for the purchase.

There are two main reasons buyers choose to lock in a rate ahead of completion:

1. To fix a favourable rate if the market moves in your favour.
2. To reduce the risk of negative fluctuations, giving you a

clear understanding of what you'll need in sterling at completion.

This is especially valuable if:

- You have a strict budget
- You cannot afford the cost to increase before completion
- You want peace of mind throughout the buying process

To book a forward contract, you don't need the full amount up front. Instead, you typically place a small deposit of up to 10%, which holds the agreed rate. This deposit is not a fee – it simply holds your contracted rate in place. You then pay the remaining 90% on the agreed future date (e.g. completion day).

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

Where there's a will...

Matthew Cameron looks at inheritance issues



We live in England and have a house in France. We have English and French wills, and have just prepared lasting powers of attorney. Should we do something similar for the French house?

Broadly, a lasting power of attorney (LPA) is an English legal document that works to authorise someone to represent your interests in the future, should you lose the ability to do so yourself.

There are two types of LPA: one allows your representative to make decisions about your health and welfare, but here we are considering the second version, under which you confer authority on your attorney to manage your property and financial affairs.

It is sensible for UK residents to complete these two documents, even though they may never be needed. If, for example, you lose mental capacity, you might need someone to manage your bank account or even sell your home to cover care fees. Without an LPA in place, the only option would be to apply to the court of protection for a deputyship order. This application can be slow, and expensive.

Loss of capacity can be problematic for a French property transaction. In that case, a *notaire* would need to see a suitable document of authorisation before someone can sign on your behalf. There is a French equivalent of an LPA, known as a *mandat de protection future* (MPF). An MPF must be completed by a *notaire* so you may wish to discuss it with your local *notaire* on a future visit.

It is, in fact, possible to implement an English LPA in France, however, the procedure for this is burdensome. An LPA

is a large document, which would have to be translated into French, which in itself would be costly, and as the *notaire* may not recognise the document, or its validity, it will probably be necessary to obtain a legal opinion from a solicitor, also produced in French.

It may never be necessary to use one, yet knowing they are in place might offer you some peace of mind. If you decide to complete both types, make sure the same people are named as attorney in them both.

My father died in the home he had lived at in France. The notaire has told me that he did not have a will and I am the only beneficiary, but I do not want anything from him. Can I refuse it - the notaire is asking me to sign a power of attorney to finalise the succession?

Even if you are the only

child, you are not obliged to accept a succession in France. There are many reasons why someone may not wish to accept a deceased parent's legacy. One relatively common example is where there is a risk that the deceased had debts: in accepting a succession, the beneficiary takes on the liability for any debts as well as the assets.

It may be possible to accept the succession subject to an inventory being produced of the overall value of the estate, so that you can decide whether it is in your interests to do so.

Of more importance, though, is the consequence of a renunciation. If you choose to renounce an inheritance from a parent, you are deemed to have died before the parent. The children of a predeceased parent take the place of their parent in an inheritance coming down through the direct family line.

This means that if you renounce, your children will inherit in your place. Your children would then have to decide for themselves whether they would want to choose to accept the succession or renounce it themselves.

However, they are only able to make such a choice if they are adults: if they are not 18, then a court would have to

take that decision for them. Furthermore, if the children are UK nationals, then it would be for the English court to take that decision on their behalf. The cost, time and stress of asking an English court to authorise a renunciation of a French inheritance would have to be considered.

These rules of representation, where a child stands in place of a predeceased parent, only work in the direct line. That is to say, the grandchild would only have to inherit where the inheritance comes from the estate of a grandparent if you have renounced.

In this particular case, the legacy is from your father, so if you have children they would inherit in your place should you decide to renounce. Had the legacy come from a sibling, for example, the situation would be different.

Suffice to say that you are not obliged to accept a legacy, nevertheless, you should consider the consequences of renouncing. This can prove particularly complex, and detailed advice should be sought. ■

Matthew Cameron heads the French legal services team at Ashtons Legal
Tel: 0330 1914450
ashtonslegal.co.uk

"It may never be necessary to use a power of attorney but it can offer peace of mind"



Which visa do you need

Advice on relocation from **Fabien Pelissier**



Which visa do I need if I want to retire in France?

For retirees, France has a very clear legal pathway: the long-stay visitor visa (*visa long séjour visiteur*). This visa is designed for people who want to live in France without working. It is the correct choice if you are moving on the basis of pensions, investments, rental income or savings. It allows you to live in France legally for one year, after which you convert it into a renewable residence permit.

What matters most for this visa is not your age, but your financial independence. You must be able to show that you can support yourself financially. There is no fixed amount written into law, but in practice authorities expect income at least equivalent to the French minimum wage (as of January 2026, around €1,443 per person).

This visa also requires medical insurance, because you are entering France as a non-working resident. That does not mean you will be excluded from French healthcare forever, but it does mean you must arrive covered.

For most retirees, the visitor visa is not a restriction. On the contrary, it is a recognition that you are bringing stable income, paying taxes and contributing to the local economy without competing on the French labour market. France is remarkably open to this kind of resident.

Which visa do I need if I want to run a gîte?

This is where things become more subtle,

and where many people accidentally fall into legal trouble. France allows people on a visitor visa to earn limited passive income, including from property. If you own a holiday rental or gîte and earn a modest amount from it, this is often tolerated. In practice, the accepted threshold is around €23,000 per year.

Below this level, rental income is generally treated as secondary income rather than a business. This means many retirees can legally rent out a small gîte while keeping their visitor status.

However, the moment the gîte becomes more than a side activity, if it is marketed

aggressively, becomes your main income, or involves staff or multiple properties, it is no longer considered passive income. At that point, French law sees you as running a business.

That is when you need a business or entrepreneur visa, not a visitor visa. This distinction matters enormously. Someone who runs a full-time gîte on a visitor visa may seem fine for years, only to be blocked when they try to renew their residence permit or apply for permanent residency. The French administration rarely looks backwards, it looks at what you are doing today.

The good news is that France does offer visas for gîte owners and entrepreneurs. They require a business plan, proof of viability, and registration with the French system.

If I'm eligible for an S1 form, do I still need health insurance?

This is one of the biggest misunderstandings

in expat life. If you are a UK or EU pensioner with an S1 form, you will be entitled to French public healthcare, paid for by your home country. This is an enormous benefit, and one of the reasons France is so attractive to retirees.

But the S1 does not work instantly. You must first arrive in France, register with the local health authority (CPAM), submit your S1, and wait for your French health number and *carte vitale*.

During that period, you are technically insured but it is a bit of a challenge until you get your French social security number so you may want to get private medical insurance in the interim to avoid a potential gap.

Once your S1 is activated, you are part of the French healthcare system. At that point, most people take out a *mutuelle* (top-up insurance), which is a French policy that covers what the public system does not. Most French residents have one, because it reduces out-of-pocket costs and gives access to better dental, optical and hospital cover.

So no, you do not need long-term private insurance if you have an S1. But you may need insurance to bridge the gap, and you will almost certainly want a *mutuelle* once you are inside the system.

France has a reputation for bureaucracy, but its philosophy is actually simple. If you are financially independent, respect the system and contribute to the country, France welcomes you.

Getting the visa and healthcare right at the beginning is not about red tape. It is about protecting your future in France.

Fabien Pelissier is the founder of **Fab Expat**, guiding expats through the French system, from visas to healthcare and residence fabexpat.com



“For most retirees, the visitor visa is not a restriction”



French Entrée

With you every step of the way



FROM DREAM TO DOORSTEP

Every step covered... Guidance, advice, and support

FrenchEntrée Plus Membership

What's included in your one-year membership:

- **First-step consultation:** Explore your plans and map out your journey
- **Personalised roadmap:** Turn your goals into a clear, actionable strategy
 - **Second consultation:** Extra guidance whenever you need it
 - **Ongoing phone & email support:** Friendly help at every stage
 - **In-depth expert guides:** Everything from buying to settling into life in France
- **French Property News digital subscription:** Full access to the archive and every new issue
- **Trusted network of experts:** We connect you only with the specialists you actually need

Whether you're setting up a new life, buying a holiday home, planning retirement or exploring investment opportunities, we are here to help you avoid the common pitfalls of moving to France

WHY CHOOSE US?

Since 2003 we've been helping buyers fulfil their dream to own a place in France. Our print media, websites, newsletters, webinars and exhibitions are there at every step of the journey. Property search, legal & tax, regional choices, planning and building, healthcare & pensions - we've got all the answers.



Next steps...

- ✓ **Book a free 15-minute discovery call to find out whether membership is the right fit for you**
 - ✓ **Join as a Plus member and schedule your first consultation with our Relocation Advisor**
- ✓ **Get your personalised, in-depth Roadmap, guiding you through every stage of your journey**
- ✓ **We'll introduce you to any experts identified during your consultation. VIP service available**

FRENCH
PROPERTY NEWS

FrenchEntrée
FIRST FOR BUYING PROPERTY & LIVING IN FRANCE

FRANCE
PropertyShop

COMPLETE
FRANCE

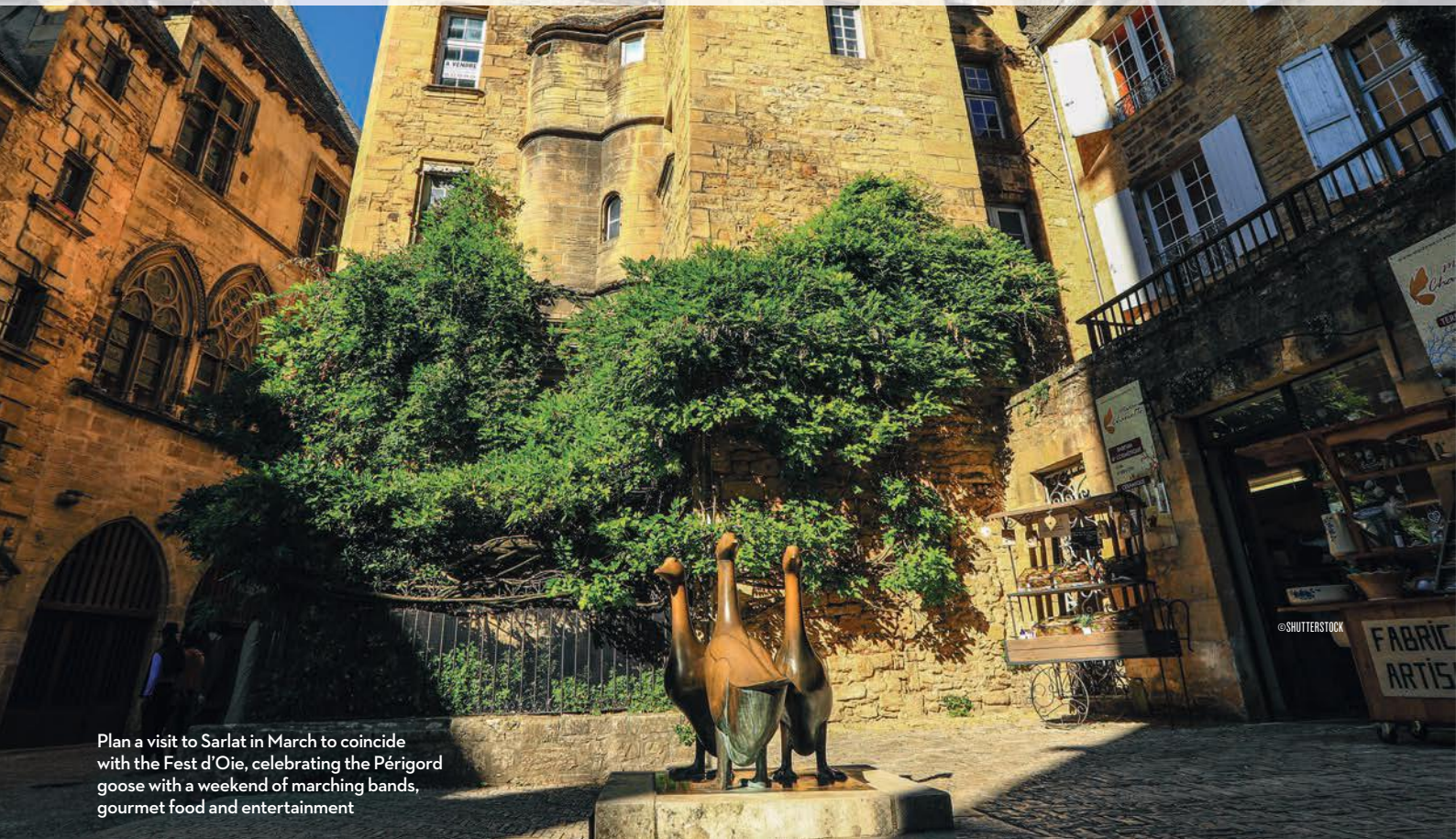
FRENCH
PROPERTY
EXHIBITION



Book Call

[join.frenchentree.com /](https://join.frenchentree.com/)
members@frenchentree.com
or call us on +44 (0)1225 463752

Joie de vivre



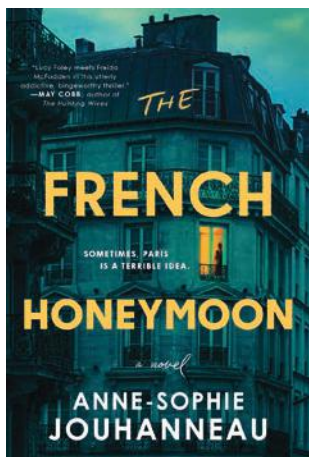
Plan a visit to Sarlat in March to coincide with the Fest d'Oie, celebrating the Périgord goose with a weekend of marching bands, gourmet food and entertainment

READ

THE FRENCH HONEYMOON

By Anne Sophie Jouhanneau

Two interwoven stories set in Paris and a series of flashbacks reveal that appearances are rarely what they seem. Taylor Quinn arrives with no suitcase and a bag of stolen cash, watching newlyweds Cassie and Olivier, who seem to be having the picture-perfect French honeymoon. As we learn how they all got to this point, the tension mounts and the City of Light suddenly seems very dark indeed.



WATCH

LE MYSTÈRE HENRI PICK

Watch on Netflix

A literary critic is amazed by a new manuscript apparently discovered in a library for rejected novels. He is sceptical that such a masterpiece could have been penned by a lowly Breton pizza chef, so he abandons everything in his obsession to find the truth. Only available with French subtitles but relatively easy to follow, raising interesting questions on how literature is truly valued.

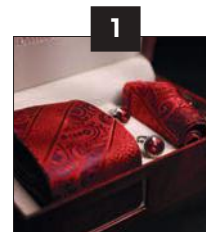


TEST YOURSELF

Les associations

Match each image with its French name

- 1 PANIER
- 2 BALLOTIN
- 3 CARTON
- 4 COFFRET



answers p101

DID YOU KNOW?

FREE ACCESS TO STUNNING LANDSCAPES

France has an impressive record for protecting its natural heritage, and over 20% of its land is designated as a protected natural area, managed by the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB). From lowland forests home to deer and wild boar to the woodlands of the Alps and Pyrénées providing refuge for antelope, ibex and brown bears, and coastlines that shelter millions of migrating African birds, these parks play a vital role in biodiversity and conservation. France's national parks alone cover over 50,000km² of spaces open to the public, free of charge. Over 10 million visitors every year come to explore the 10,000km of paths and trails that lead through some of the country's most beautiful landscapes.



© ADAMIS

Test yourself



© GEMASTER - SHOOK / BETTY MARCS

PROPERTY TALK

What does 'le contreplaqué' mean?

1. Plywood
2. Gutter
3. Mains cable

answers p101

French interiors

Spring has arrived so it's a great excuse to add a few French touches to your sunroom or conservatory



Ornate Emmanuelle wicker chair named after the French film
 ✨ £433, maisonsdumonde.com



French garden chair in wrought iron dating from the late 1800s
 ✨ €959.95, chezpluie.com



Hand-stitched padded blanket 180x80cm in floral block print
 ✨ €159, blancdivoire.com



Fleur de lys ceramic jug, 18cm (matching plant pots from £4)
 ✨ £13.50, maisoncherie.shop



This elegant chair is perfect for lounging and reading
 ✨ €1,659, la-maison-chic.co.uk

CHEZ VOUS

Send us pictures of your French home to inspire us with your interior design!

CLICK OF THE MONTH

LE MÉDIA POSITIF



This website's name translates as 'positive media', and it does what it says, bringing its readers news in French that has an optimistic or positive outlook. This project is not the only one of its kind, but it came about during the Covid pandemic, in reaction to all the negative and depressing headlines, and has a self-proclaimed mission of showcasing all the positive initiatives and 'good news' stories that tend to be overlooked or ignored by mainstream media. From environmental progress to personal achievements and scientific breakthroughs, these feel-good stories help readers to feel more optimistic about the world.

Test yourself



IDIOM

“Faire du lèche-vitrines”

1. To clean thoroughly
2. To go on a detox
3. To go window shopping

answers p101

French icon

Discover some of France's most fascinating icons



ANTOINE-AUGUSTIN PARMENTIER

If you've seen the word 'parmentier' anywhere in France, it would most likely have related to a meal featuring potatoes, particularly *hâchis parmentier*, a baked dish of minced beef topped with mashed potatoes, similar to the British cottage pie. You might not have realised, however, where the name of this dish originates.

Born in the Somme, Antoine-Augustin Parmentier (12 August 1737 - 13 December 1813) served as an army pharmacist in the Seven Years' War, during which he was captured by the Prussians. As a prisoner, he was fed potatoes, a crop that the French in those days only deemed fit to feed to animals, and was believed to cause leprosy.

When Parmentier returned to Paris in 1763, he studied nutritional chemistry and won a prize for suggesting potatoes as a nourishing food for dysentery patients, a persuading factor for the Paris Faculty of

Medicine declaring potatoes 'edible' in 1772. In 1779, Parmentier was tasked with helping to stabilise Paris' food supply and finding ways to make bread more cost-efficiently. He planted potatoes in the plains outside of Paris, allegedly placing guards there to make the crops seem precious, then allowing peasants to steal and use the potatoes, thereby spreading their acceptance.

In 1785, a year of bad harvests, the scorned potatoes staved off famine in northern France and Louis XVI commented: "One day France will thank you for having found the bread for the poor!"

Parmentier became Inspector-General of the Health Service, established France's first mandatory smallpox vaccinations and studied various methods of conserving food. He died aged 76 and is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, in a plot ringed by potato plants.

© ANNE-CECILE CHATELAIN/GETTY IMAGES, FRANCE 24/AGF



What to drink...

Each issue, we take a look at a different French drink. This time, it's Aperol spritz...

With the start of spring and warmer weather, it's time to think about a refreshing spritzer. Aperol spritz is a classic choice for apéritifs. Its base is a botanical liqueur that was created in Padua, Italy, over a hundred years ago, although the spritz only became popular in the late 2010s. Aperol is recognisable for its bright-orange shade and bitter flavour, infused with orange, gentian, chinchona and an array of other herbs and spices. With its bittersweet, citrus overtones, it is one of the amaro family of spirit-based drinks that also include Campari, Averna and Cynar.

Aperol spritz is typically created by combining the liqueur with prosecco and soda water; for a classic combination, try three parts Prosecco, two parts Aperol and one part soda water. Its unique aromatic taste and low alcohol content make it the perfect drink to serve before dinner or on those early sunny days of spring.



READERS' PHOTOS



WIN

This issue's star photographer wins a year's subscription to French Property News!



Rosemary Auchmuty sent in this striking image of the Musée d'Alsace, which occupies three former houses in Strasbourg, linked by stairways and passages



Roasting chestnuts the traditional way, at the Fête de la Chataigne in Collobrières, captured by Stephanie Jackman

ANSWERS: Les associations: 1. Coffret = a gift set, 2. Panier = basket (wicker), 3. Ballotin = gift box for chocolates, 4. Carton = cardboard box; Property talk: Le contrep-plaque = Plywood; Idiom: Faire du léche-vitrines = to go window shopping

STAR PHOTO
Send us your photos of France and be in with the chance to win a prize!



STAR PHOTO Jeanne Walker and David Moore sent in this wonderful view from their balcony in Villefranche-sur-Mer looking over to Cap Ferrat



Team FPN loved this three-wheeler, spotted in the beautiful village of La Romieu in Gers

SEND US YOUR PICS

We love seeing your photos of France. If you would like to share them with us, then email: karen.tait@francemedia.com. Or share on [@FrenchPropertyNews](https://www.instagram.com/FrenchPropertyNews) or [facebook.com/frenchpropertynewsmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/frenchpropertynewsmagazine)



“Small pleasures make a big impact on your daily happiness quota”

Art de vivre, and appreciating the ordinary things, is a way of life in France, says **Janine Marsh**

To many who know France only from Instagram influencers, it may seem that French people mainly live in villas surrounded by vineyards and lavender fields in the sun-kissed south, or sit on balconies eating seemingly calorie-free croissants while overlooking the Eiffel Tower in Paris, or live a life of charm renovating crumbling, but dazzling châteaux. It may also seem that lunches are long and lingering, all meals are gastronomic, and the wine is divine. An enchanted place where every woman is slim and stylish, and every man is handsome and seductive.

Hmmm. Let me tell you, this is a rather rosy view of France, although there are elements of truth, particularly the food and wine bits.

Conversely, if you know France from reading newspapers, then you may think that everyone is constantly complaining, going on strike and dumping tractor loads of manure on council office doorsteps.

Of course, this is not true either. Well, not entirely!

The fact is, France is not perfect. No matter whether you are French or a foreigner living in France, the administrative processes can, frankly, be wretched. Whether you're running a business, or filing your tax returns, there are numerous forms to complete, boxes to tick, and hoops to jump through.

On the other hand, the arts and culture are honoured,



One thing patisserie lover Janine finds great pleasure in is French cheese and cakes – big and small!



traditions and history are revered, people are polite, daily markets offer fresh seasonal food, gourmet food shops are normal, and excellence in cooking and wine is a way of life.

France has a rich and diverse landscape which encompasses a stunning coastline, majestic mountains and glorious countryside. Trains by and large run to schedule (when not on strike), roads are generally in good condition, healthcare is excellent and family values are cherished.

L'art de vivre (the art of living well) is something French people learn from birth. We might call it 'the good life', but it's a bit more complicated than

that. It's about appreciating the ordinary things in everyday life, embracing simple things and elevating them to a moment of pleasure, from savouring a coal-black espresso in a pure white cup sipped slowly in a café to a just-baked baguette, artisan-made cheese, a jewel-like gateau or a bustling street market.

Small pleasures make a big impact on your daily happiness quota – and it's a way of life in France.

So, though there are times when the bureaucracy drives you mad and grappling with French grammar can be maddening, once dealt with, you can breathe a sigh of relief and, as the French say, *mangez*

bien, riez souvent, aimez beaucoup (eat well, laugh often, love a lot) – the fundamental principles at the heart of the great French lifestyle as much as *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.

The reality is that life in France can be frustrating, but the rosy far, far outweighs the wretched.

As the great French writer Victor Hugo once said: “*La France est grande parce qu'elle est la France*” (France is great because she is France). ■

Janine Marsh lives in France with her husband and 72 animals. Her latest book is 'How to be French: Eat, Drink, Dress, Travel, Love' thegoodlifeinfrance.com



ANGLO PROPERTY SEARCH

- Are you looking for a property in France but you can't get here?
- Would you like personalised, impartial information about properties to help you make a purchase decision?
- Would you benefit from help with the purchase process every step of the way?
- Do you want to relocate in France to enjoy your dream property? Then SOS Anglo can help!



Telephone: 00 33 971 429 051 Email: valerie@sosanglo.com
Website: www.sosanglopropertysearch.com

Animalcouriers

Professional pet transport and animal shipping services between the UK and France

Animalcouriers can transport your pets between the UK and France by road or by air. We are experienced animal handlers and offer a specialist, caring service that extends throughout the world.

Contact us to find out how we can help:
+44 1483 200123 or +44 7736 251800

contact@animalcouriers.com /
worldwide@animalcouriers.com
www.animalcouriers.com
Our travel blog:
<http://animalcouriers.wordpress.com>



DAVID DALE REMOVALS

Trust the experts to make your move

Call us on 01423 324948



For over 40 years we have been moving people to and from Europe, we collect regularly in all parts of the U.K. and deliver in most areas of France bi-weekly. We can offer clean, safe container storage facilities until your dream home is completed. We are always on the move helping our customers to settle in to new homes and businesses. Try us for service and value.



David Dale Removals, 3 Milby Road,
Boroughbridge, York YO51 9BW
email: david@daviddale.co.uk

www.daviddale.co.uk



annabel
administration of life

your trusted administration partner

annabel offers discreet, trustworthy and experienced administrative and PA support to simplify every stage of your life.

Our services include:

- **Life administration** – allowing you to focus on what matters most, whilst we administer the everyday
- **Household administration** – simplifying and organising your home and family life including the administration of downsizing locally or relocating internationally
- **Financial administration** – administering your financial affairs seamlessly - tax returns, income and expenditure budgets, bookkeeping – and gathering essential home, legal and financial documents critical for legacy planning

Please contact us at help@annabel.co.uk
call +44(0)7771 900661
or visit www.annabel.co.uk to find out more



Trusted legal advice by French avocats

- French property conveyancing
- French estate administration
- Wills, French estate and tax planning
- Ownership structure, gift and transfer of French properties
- French property administration, disputes and litigation

Contact

Deborah Vaysse
01227 763939
france@furleypage.co.uk
furleypage.co.uk

Canterbury office
39 St Margaret's Street Canterbury Kent CT1 2TX
Also at Chatham and Whitstable

**furley
page**

Knowledge. Experience. Results.

Kingsfords FRENCH LEGAL ADVICE
SOLICITORS www.kingsfords-solicitors.com

Leading Southeast Law Firm offering a full range of bilingual legal services to national and international clients

- ◀ Fixed price packages for purchasers and vendors of property
- ◀ French property issues
- ◀ French inheritance, successions and French wills
- ◀ Property transfer following relationship breakdown
- ◀ Hand-holding service for problems with French administration and utility suppliers

Contact Marie Antoinette Bassini, French Department,
Telephone: (+44) 01233.624545 2, Elwick Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PD, United Kingdom
E-mail mab@kingsfords.net Website www.kingsfords-solicitors.com

Regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority SRA No 621166 / Law Society Accredited

Rural riddles

Jeremy Hobson solves more of your pastoral problems

Antler growth can be affected by an injury



Maximum points

Q I know all deer shed their antlers and we are lucky in sometimes seeing red deer here within the regional park region of Millevaches in Limousin. Some of the stags have quite magnificent heads and I was wondering whether there is a maximum number of points a stag can grow on its antlers.

Faye Roberts

A Antler growth depends on many factors, including the stag's age, its overall

health and condition, and whether an injury or anything else occurring in the wild has caused a particular year's growth to be stunted or deformed. As you might expect, managed red deer (in the park of a château, for instance) which are regularly fed are more likely to have more points on each antler than those fending for themselves in the wild. Deer experts tell me that wild deer rarely exceed a total of 18-20.

Out of interest, in the UK, a 12-pointer is sometimes known as a Royal, a 14-pointer, an Imperial and a 16-point antler, a Monarch. Moving up from the coronet (the base of the antler), the major points or tines are traditionally referred to as the brow, bey, trey, cup, offer - presumably terms derived from medieval French/English at a time when hunting the red deer (and fallow) was the prerogative of kings and noblemen.

RIGHT OF PANNAGE

Q Last September, visiting my sister and brother-in-law near Southampton, we were out in the New Forest and saw pigs roaming 'wild'. At the pub (where we had a lovely lunch!) we were told it's a seasonal thing whereby the commoners' pigs were allowed out onto the forest to eat the fallen acorns. As we now live in France - in an area where there are lots of oaks and acorns - we wondered if the practice was carried out anywhere here?

Sally Lewis

A Grazing pigs on fallen acorns in this way is known by those around the New Forest as 'pannage' - it's a word apparently derived from the Old French word '*pasnage*' meaning the right to pasture pigs on common ground.

Turning pigs out to Hoover-up acorns, beech-mast and the like was certainly a regular and seasonal occurrence in France and other parts of



Pigs love foraging for food

WATER DECISION

Q Advice on chicken drinking water please: what's better, tap water that's come through the water softener (salt) or rainwater that's been sitting in a water butt? I can't get any sense from searching online...

Peter Roberts

A I've always used clean tap water for my chickens and bantams - but have drawn it the day before (when I remembered!) so as to give the chlorine a chance to dissipate. With rainwater collected and stored in butts for some time, there is always the possibility that bacteria may develop which might, in the worst case scenario, be potentially harmful. I don't know about tap water purified in the way you describe but I would doubt that there would be



Eau for a chicken's life

any likelihood of a salt deposit building up in the birds over time - if it's safe for you, it surely must be safe for them! So, on balance I think I'd personally be using the tap water.

Europe in the Middle Ages but it seems less so now. Nevertheless, it is still carried out to a certain degree in various regions - such as in areas of the Hautes-Pyrénées where (as mentioned in the 'Rural Riddles' of July-August 2025, issue 394), in order to produce *le porc noir de Bigorre* pigs are allowed in the woodlands between October to January so they can forage on acorns, mast and chestnuts.

In areas where other livestock graze, the practice of pannage also helps clear up the glut of acorns which, although not harmful to pigs, can be poisonous to other livestock and animals.

Neighbourly nuisance



© BHARATI'S AMBASTHAN CREATIVE COMMONS

A BERRY GOOD IDEA

Q As we are heading into spring, I'd like to plant some shrubs that will both offer shelter and produce the sort of fruit/berries the songbirds might like. We have long winters here in our part of eastern France and we'd like to help the birds get through it if at all possible. As an aside, we do already use feeders in the existing trees and around the house.

Robert Donoghue



A burst of colour in winter months

A A visit to the garden centre in the autumn would have helped establish what shrubs and bushes carry berries around that time of year but, in general, there are several possible options. The fruits of a wild crab apple tree (*Malus sylvestris*) will fall in the autumn and get eaten by birds (and some small mammals) as they rot on the ground. The guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) produces hips loved by birds - as does the rowan tree or mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*). Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus*) are also liked for their berries. For winter warmth and security from predators, many species of songbirds might appreciate a clump of blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) but beware of the latter as it has very sharp thorns and, self-propagating via rhizomes, it can spread and become a thicket rather than a single bush after a few years.

THEY LOVE TO GO A'WANDERING

I'm always pleased when *FPN* readers respond further to previous queries posed in 'Rural Riddles'. This, from Martin Kerr: "In your November-December 'Rural Riddles', you carried a Q&A regarding peafowl (*FPN396*). Having kept peafowl in the past, I can concur with the need to keep them penned

until they are settled and know their home base. With the first ones we had we didn't and, as you say in your reply to Mo and Barry Peters, they are inclined to wander towards the neighbours.

"Our neighbours were not, unfortunately, very receptive towards having our peafowl in their garden and

even though we kept herding them back home, the peafowl loved visiting there for some reason - so much so that the neighbours eventually complained at the *maire* and they in turn, sent us a letter! In the end we had to build a big pen and keep them confined (the peafowl, not our neighbours!)"

SUPPORT FOR IVY

Over the years I've been collating the 'Rural Riddles' pages, I've received several queries regarding ivy growth on their outbuildings and trees from readers concerned that it might be causing damage to bricks and mortar and be harmful to trees. While it might be prudent to get rid of ivy on buildings, I've always been a supporter of it in a natural environment and, in various answers, have outlined its benefits. With that in mind, I was very pleased to recently see the following comment posted on a nature-minded Facebook group:

"Ivy often receives criticism for supposedly strangling trees, but it actually uses them merely for support. It has its own roots and relies on its own nutrients, so it doesn't harm the tree... Trees with ivy provide significant benefits to wildlife. In autumn and winter, the berries, pollen and nectar are crucial food



Good for the birds and bees

sources for birds and insects when food is scarce, and they offer shelter to birds, bats and insects. Insects consume the highly nutritious berries before hibernating, and it serves as an essential food source for certain butterfly and moth larvae too."

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

Woody's worries

Ruth Wood is dreaming of creating a 'Fritannique' country kitchen



Are you in love with the French country kitchen style? I thought I was. But recently I made a discovery. The cuisine of my dreams is actually not so much 'française' as 'Fritannique' - a combo of French and British design clichés. The centime finally dropped the other day when my husband Jon and I started looking for a cooker for our holiday home in Brittany.

We've owned a cottage in the Morbihan countryside since 2016, but for the last decade we've got by with a combination-microwave and a plug-in hob that only heats one ring at a time. Now that we're planning a permanent move across the Channel, we're finally ready to invest in a French cooker. Or are we?

NOT MUCH OF A RANGE

What with France being the home of gastronomy and all, I thought we'd be spoilt for choice. La Cornue seems to be the most desirable French brand. But I can't look at their cookers without thinking of those boxes that magicians'

assistants climb into before being sawn in half. Plus, they're so expensive, some websites say 'price on application'.

Anyway, we seem to be conditioned to Anglo Saxon tastes. In the UK, we drool over the Rangemaster Classic, which - true to its name - is available in a range of sizes,

"Our house in Brittany only cost us £45,000 a decade ago - we can't spend a tenth of that on a new cooker, can we?"

fuel types, configurations, trims and colours. Heather? Mineral Green? Bordeaux, anyone? In France, though, this brand of range cooker (*piano de cuisson*) is typically £4,000 or more, especially if - like us - you're not on mains gas. The house only cost us £45,000 a decade ago. We can't spend a tenth of that on a new cooker, can we? As for other brands, there's just not the, well, the range we were hoping for.

COPPER CONUNDRUM

Mais oui! What could be more French (and Downton Abbey) than an array of copper pans and jelly moulds hanging from hooks on the wall or dangling from the ceiling? Like most Francophiles, Jon and I lust over copper pans and they will definitely feature in our *Fritannique* kitchen - though not dangling from the ceiling as I'm not prepared to 'doink' my head on them every time I get up from the table.

Sometimes on our way back to the ferry port, we stop off in Villedieu-les-Poêles, a Norman town so respected for its copperware that its name translates as God's Pan Town. Do we own any French copperware? Only unusable treasures from bric-a-brac shops, as a brand new Villedieu



The kitchen is the heart of the home



Open shelves are traditionally French

between two cabinets so we could store pasta, lentils, grains, nuts and seeds in jars and tins we've picked up along the way. To me, it's a French concept. All these years we've been scouring *brocante* shops looking for a big Breton dresser so we could do the same thing on a bigger scale in Brittany.

But so far, no good. Oh sure, the French have beautiful vintage '*vaisseliers*' - typically, two ornate cabinets at the bottom with glazed or fully enclosed cabinets above. The antique Breton ones are made from intricately carved dark oak. But what I'm looking for is something wider, heftier, plainer - a Welsh dresser basically. Why haven't I found one? The clue's in the name!

FRTANNIQUE FIREPLACE

Even though our kitchen will probably end up being as much British as French or Bretonne, I still can't wait to get started on it. On both sides of the Channel, it seems to be a truth universally acknowledged that the kitchen is the heart of the home, and when I first stepped inside our Morbihan cottage in 2016, it was the kitchen that got me thinking this house was 'the one'. Specifically, I fell head over heels for the fireplace with its exposed stone wall and glittering granite step.

One of the first things we did when we moved in was install a vintage cast-iron kitchen range in it called a *Belle Portable*. It was made in Scotland and restored in Bristol. But at least it has a French name, right? ■

saucepan will cost you €300 or more, and don't even ask the price of the re-tinned jelly moulds we once saw at St-Ouen flea market in Paris.

The only copper pan we cook with cost £30 in a John Lewis sale and was made in China. Living the dream.

BRETON DRESSER?

When Jon built our little kitchen in Bristol years ago, he created open plywood shelves



Ruth and Jon love scouring brocantes for vintage kitchen finds



The Scottish-Bristolian-French stove



Elitax

One Stop Service for Taxes in France

At Elitax, we're well aware of the difficulties expatriate communities face when it comes to tax matters, so our services span the full spectrum of tax advice, assistance and support to meet the specific needs of each individual expatriate.

 Facebook @Elitax
 LinkedIn @Elitax
 Twitter @ElitaxParis

 Address 10 rue Pergolèse, 75116 Paris
 Email general@elitax.com
 Phone +33 (0)6 27 80 24 54



SCAN ME

www.elitax.com



PRISTINE PISCINES
all things pool

For the pool of your dreams
www.pristinepiscines.fr
pool installation & renovation

NAVIGATE FRANCE
French long stay visa & relocation specialists




Your one-stop solution for all your French administration requirements

- French healthcare registration
- Document & Letter translation
- Buying a property
- Utility connections
- Property diagnostics & surveys
- Feasibility studies & renovation budgets
- Sourcing contractors
- Vehicle import
- Transfer driving licence
- Starting a business
- Importing furniture

Making your move to France just that little bit easier

www.navigatefrance.com

Don't let French legal matters get lost in translation



Whether you're buying property in France or taking care of a cross-border estate, it can feel overwhelming until you get the right guidance.



- Nicole Fenwick is a legal expert in **English and French law**, specialising in translating legal documents for **property, probate, succession and other official matters**.
- She'll help you **understand every detail** before signing, so you avoid **costly** mistakes.
- She'll **support** you, ensuring your rights and intentions are protected.

Contact Nicole to make your French legal journey smooth, stress-free, and informed.

 (+34) 711038194
 info@coleytranslates.com
 www.coleytranslates.com




Scan the QR code for a free quote and expert support.

PASTIS CHICKEN

“One very chilly fall day, a dear friend invited me to dinner at her beautiful home in Lacoste (a village in the Luberon crowned by an 11th-century château that was home to the Marquis de Sade in the late 1700s and later owned by the couturier Pierre Cardin). Somewhere between invite and arrival, the weeknight dinner turned dinner party, with a long table bedecked with local flowers and the platonic ideal of vintage linens and serving ware running the length of her living room straight into the kitchen. Ruth made gin and tonics, pavlova, and a chicken that was not this chicken. But I wrote this chicken recipe for and by channeling her.” **Rebekah Pepler**

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

1.8kg chicken thighs (about eight thighs)
 Fine sea salt
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
 2 medium fennel bulbs, trimmed and thinly sliced, fronds reserved
 Freshly ground black pepper
 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 2 sprigs fresh thyme
 1 lemon, halved crosswise
 60ml pastis (see note)
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C.
2 Pat the chicken thighs dry with a paper towel and season with salt (you can also season the chicken the night before and remove from the refrigerator about one hour before cooking).
3 In a Dutch oven or large ovenproof skillet over medium heat, add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the chicken pieces in a single layer to the pot, working in batches, and cook until well browned on both sides, six to eight minutes on each side. Transfer to a plate and repeat until all the chicken is browned.
4 Add the shallots to the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and translucent, for about

three to five minutes.

5 Add the fennel, season with salt and pepper, and cook until the fennel starts to soften, six to eight minutes more.

6 Stir in the garlic and thyme sprigs; season with salt. Cook for two minutes, then remove the pot from the heat.

7 Nestle the lemon halves, cut-side down, into the fennel mixture until they press onto the bottom of the pot. Pour the pastis into the pot and add the chicken as well as any juices that have collected on the plate, nestling it into the fennel mixture. Dot with the butter.

8 Roast in the oven until the chicken is cooked through and a deep golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes.

9 Transfer the chicken to a plate and set aside to rest for a few minutes. If the fennel mixture is still a little too liquidy, continue to cook on the stovetop over medium-high heat until the liquid evaporates a bit more, then spoon the fennel mixture onto a serving platter and squeeze the juice from one of the lemon halves over the top.

10 Season with salt and pepper. Arrange the chicken on top of the fennel and squeeze the juice of the other lemon half over the chicken.

11 Serve warm.

CHEF'S NOTE: *If you're not a pastis lover, fear not this recipe. The liqueur boosts the sweet, herbal notes of the fennel and shallots without leaving you feeling like you're sitting down to drink a tall glass of anise.*





Excerpt from **Le Sud: Recipes from Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur** by Rebekah Pepler ©2024. Published by Chronicle Books. Photographs ©Joanne Pai.



The intrepid châtelaine

Finding herself part of an eccentric 'club' of châtelains, **Erin Choa** reflects on the warmth she has encountered despite the chilly château rooms

Since we moved to Château de Bourneau, we have had the unexpected honour of surprise invitations from unknown châtelains. Doors suddenly opened into a secret world all over France because now we were part of the 'Club', the unwritten society of slightly eccentric people who were also the custodians of old buildings who gravitate towards each other. They either had the baton of filial responsibility thrust upon them from a long line of ancestors or they were like us and passionate enough (or eccentric enough) to buy a property on this scale to protect and look after for the next generations to come.

Eccentrics also find other eccentrics in this small world of art and historic appreciation. Suddenly, we found ourselves around dining tables with artists and viscounts, countesses, actresses, military generals and politicians, which felt like stepping back in time to dinner parties worthy of an Agatha Christie country house murder mystery but without a team of staff and (fortunately) no sparkling cyanide.

And there I was, the English filling the comedic vacancy, invited into this exclusive club by some happy accident, stepping behind the red rope of châteaux opened to the public to dine on those very tables often dressed with plastic fruit and fake candles.

Within these closed walls of ancient French etiquette and eating with silverware from



Dinner parties can feel like stepping back in time, in more ways than one

Napoleon's last campaign, French conversation flowed but I realised that the reality was perhaps not as chic as what most people would expect.

One time, mid-meal, a hosting marquis had to fix the toilet, kneeling in black tie as he squatted at the inlet valve of a cramped 1920s loo that had chosen that night to finally fail. Bats circled around the chandelier and no one seemed to care or notice the water running down the panelling.

Sometimes we would receive invitations that suggested, very politely, to bring an indoor coat or we were met by a collection of hats laid out across the table for added warmth and I spent the evening wearing a Napoleon III bonnet talking to my serious neighbour wearing

a fez tarboosh. Another dinner we didn't eat until midnight because everyone seemed to have forgotten that the staff left in 1950.

The conversation topics were always entertaining: one viscountess recounted having to quickly put up a ladder to remove bat poo off a 17th-century portrait that was due to be collected by a team of white-gloved conservators for an exhibition at the Louvre... and she only had window cleaner to hand. One charming châtelain leaned towards me and told me how delighted he was to discover that he was 30% English by some gifted genetic test but reflected that it wasn't too surprising since he was directly descended from the Plantagenets.

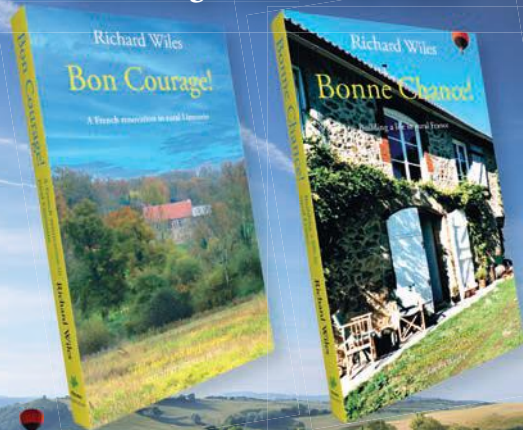
Others complained about the 'rubbish' hoarded in the attics over the last 300 years; they had started to tackle the moulding piles of paperwork shoved into a desk only to discover a cachet of letters from Voltaire. Another broke his toe tripping over a cannon ball sticking out of the lawn, revealed by a recent storm that had flooded gutter-work that last worked in Molières time.

To me, these colourful and eccentric characters seemed to belong to another era or as if they'd stepped out of a Nancy Mitford novel, but they were real, warm and welcoming, despite the glacial conditions of their homes. I loved their stories and how, like us, they were willing martyrs to old stones and heritage.

Recently, a young couple bought a neighbouring château and so we returned the kindness shown to us and invited them to Château de Bourneau. I smiled to myself when I realised that I too was gently shooing the bats out of the dining room and had suggested they wore a hat. Were we finally as eccentric as the rest of the club or had the château just awakened some latent streak that was always there? ■

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 @chateaubourneau

Llamas, hot air balloons and the dream of renovating a ramshackle barn!



The road to a new life in rural France...

The first two books in the trilogy by Richard Wiles are now available



From Amazon & bookshops:
Paperback £10.99 Ebook £7.99
www.richardwiles.co.uk



Ruth Semple Building Surveying

Independent Professional Building Advice in France

Own a property?

Damp, cracks, roof problems?
Advice, diagnosis and solutions.

Buying a property?

Building surveys.
Pre-purchase advice.

Ruth Semple MRICS, chartered surveyor since 1993
rsbuildingsurvey@gmail.com
www.ruthsemplebuildingsurveying.com/

+33 (0) 6 95 97 77 57
+44 (0) 7753 678 817



Certified
Historic Building
Professional



BUILDING SURVEYORS FRANCE

MKN Surveyors Ltd - RICS Chartered Building Surveyors

Matt and Kay Noble | Boutique, Independent

We provide detailed, impartial RICS Building Surveys across all parts of France, specialising in rural, complex and historic properties including chateaux, mills, manoirs and character homes.

- Level 3 RICS Building Surveys (France-wide)
- Heritage & Historic Building Expertise
- Drone roof inspections (registered French operators)
- Technical Due Diligence

MKN Surveyors Ltd - Independent. Bilingual. Trusted

Web: www.mkn-surveyors.com
Email: france@mkn-surveyors.com
SIRET: 921 979 118 00012





NEPTUNE

Timeless British Interiors for Your French Home

For over 10 years, we've been bringing elegant British design to homes across France. From kitchens to interiors, we offer expert design, delivery, and installation—all tailored to your space.

Call us: +33 (0)1 40 28 90 56

Email us: paris@neptune.com

Visit our NEPTUNE FLAGSHIP STORE :

Neptune Paris Ouest – 8 place de l'Eglise, 78640 Neauphle-le-Château

or

Neptune Paris Centre – 12 rue d'Uzes, 75002 Paris

Virtual visit of
our store:



neptune.com



Learn French in Provence

Since 1995, Millefeuille Provence has welcomed adults from around the world to learn French through full immersion. Our intensive courses are designed for people who want to see real progress fast. Most students stay for two weeks, but even one week makes a big difference.

Our school is located in the stunning 18th-century Château Correnson, a former wine estate in the Rhône Valley. Surrounded by vineyards and hills, it's an inspiring and peaceful setting to focus on your French.

Classes run Monday to Friday, with six lessons a day. But learning doesn't stop there — you'll continue through shared meals, evening conversations and cultural activities around **French and Francophonie news, way of life and traditions.**

You'll stay on site in a private en-suite room, with freshly prepared meals every day. By the end of your stay, you'll not only boost your French, but enjoy a truly memorable experience in Provence.



Millefeuille-Provence, Château Correnson, 40 route d'Avignon, F-30150 Saint-Geniès-de-Comolas
 Email: info@millefeuille-provence.com | Website: www.millefeuille-provence.com



MAP YOUR SEARCH

Use our handy regions and departments map to help you find your dream property

Turn over to browse properties



KEY

- Ferry port
- Airport
- Eurostar
- Regional capital

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 Ain | 16 Charente | 32 Gers | 48 Lozère | 64 Pyrénées-Atlantiques | 80 Somme |
| 02 Aisne | 17 Charente-Maritime | 33 Gironde | 49 Maine-et-Loire | 65 Hautes-Pyrénées | 81 Tarn |
| 03 Allier | 18 Cher | 34 Hérault | 50 Manche | 66 Pyrénées-Orientales | 82 Tarn-et-Garonne |
| 04 Alpes-de-Haute-Provence | 19 Corrèze | 35 Ille-et-Vilaine | 51 Marne | 67 Bas-Rhin | 83 Var |
| 05 Hautes-Alpes | 20 Corsica | 36 Indre | 52 Haute-Marne | 68 Haut-Rhin | 84 Vaucluse |
| 06 Alpes-Maritimes | 21 Côte-d'Or | 37 Indre-et-Loire | 53 Mayenne | 69 Rhône | 85 Vendée |
| 07 Ardèche | 22 Côtes-d'Armor | 38 Isère | 54 Meurthe-et-Moselle | 70 Haute-Saône | 86 Vienne |
| 08 Ardennes | 23 Creuse | 39 Jura | 55 Meuse | 71 Saône-et-Loire | 87 Haute-Vienne |
| 09 Ariège | 24 Dordogne | 40 Landes | 56 Morbihan | 72 Sarthe | 88 Vosges |
| 10 Aube | 25 Doubs | 41 Loir-et-Cher | 57 Moselle | 73 Savoie | 89 Yonne |
| 11 Aude | 26 Drôme | 42 Loire | 58 Nièvre | 74 Haute-Savoie | 90 Territoire de Belfort |
| 12 Aveyron | 27 Eure | 43 Haute-Loire | 59 Nord | 75 Ville de Paris | 91 Essonne |
| 13 Bouches-du-Rhône | 28 Eure-et-Loire | 44 Loire-Atlantique | 60 Oise | 76 Seine-Maritime | 92 Hauts-de-Seine |
| 14 Calvados | 29 Finistère | 45 Loiret | 61 Orne | 77 Seine-et-Marne | 93 Seine-Saint-Denis |
| 15 Cantal | 30 Gard | 46 Lot | 62 Pas-de-Calais | 78 Yvelines | 94 Val-de-Marne |
| | 31 Haute-Garonne | 47 Lot-et-Garonne | 63 Puy-de-Dôme | 79 Deux-Sèvres | 95 Val-d'Oise |

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

AUBETERRE-SUR-DRONNE, CHARENTE REF: BV183859

€172,800



This charming 3-bed detached property with small garden is less than 5 mins from one of France's *Plus Beaux Villages*. Perfectly-positioned for ease and enjoyment, this home is within easy reach of Aubeterre's popular river beach and local amenities, making it an ideal holiday retreat or low-maintenance permanent residence.

EXCLUSIVE GOURDON, LOT REF: BV180288

€299,000



Set in a pretty medieval village just 15 minutes from Gourdon, this well-presented property comprises two independent stone houses, offering an ideal solution for buyers seeking a comfortable main home with a ready-to-use guest house for visiting family, friends or occasional rental - all with minimal upkeep. A large garage/workshop completes the property.

JARNAC, CHARENTE REF: BV181446

€449,000



This handsome 19th century village property is a hidden gem, tucked away on the edge of an historic village just 15 mins from Jarnac. The 6-bed house boasts high ceilings and wooden floors throughout. The large walled garden encloses beautiful trees, terraces, a swimming pool and outbuildings, and provides far-reaching views across the rolling Charentais countryside.

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

CASTELNAU-DE-MONTMIRAL, TARN REF: BVI81104

€749,500



Nestled in the tranquil heart of the Tarn, this beautifully renovated former vigneron's home offers both charm and modern comfort. Set on 2.6 ha of peaceful land, the property blends historic character with tasteful upgrades, making it an ideal family residence or potential income-generating retreat. 30mins to Albi and 1 hour to Toulouse.

VILLEBRAMAR, LOT-ET-GARONNE REF: BVI73983

€979,000



Stunning 5-bed stone property dating from the early 1800s with a 13th century tower. A character-filled home, renovated with care, offering an elegant lifestyle and flexible accommodation options. Sitting on 3ha with 2 barns, a lake, a 12m x 6m pool and summer kitchen. Breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside.

CARCASSONNE, AUDE REF: BVI82677

€1,300,000



This former equestrian property enjoys stunning views of the Pyrénées and Black Mountains. It has been carefully renovated and boasts exceptional finishes across both the main house and guest accommodation. In a private setting, but not isolated, with access to great transport links - 15 mins to Carcassonne, 60 mins to the Mediterranean and Toulouse, 90 mins to Spain.

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

EXCLUSIVE CORRÈZE, LIMOUSIN REF: A36688PJ19 €172,800



Spacious 5-bed character family home with garden, garages and potential attic conversion. Close to shops and services, this property blends period charm with practicality on 1745 m² land.

EXCLUSIVE CHARENTE-MARITIME, POITOU-CHARENTES REF: A40719JH17 €530,000



Elegant Maison de Maître in with 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, private walled park gardens and a heated pool with summer kitchen. Spacious reception rooms, original features and outbuildings make a superb family home.

EXCLUSIVE ILLE-ET-VILAINE, BRITTANY REF: A40513HL35 €445,000



Historic 19th-century windmill offering three bedrooms and breathtaking views across Mont-Saint-Michel Bay. Beautifully restored, this unique coastal home combines character, light-filled living spaces and an exceptional Breton seaside setting with charm and tranquility.

VAUCLUSE, PROVENCE-CÔTE-D'AZUR REF: A37913 €298,000



Charming 19th-century village house offering three bedrooms and an attic room, with private garden and bright living spaces. Full of authentic character, this appealing home enjoys a peaceful setting close to everyday amenities and countryside walks.

AUDE, LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON REF: A36881SOM11 €220,000



Charming, spacious village house in Mas-Cabardès with riverside garden, balcony terrace and plenty of character. Two inviting reception rooms, generous 4 bedrooms, attic potential and delightful south-France setting with lettings appeal.

EXCLUSIVE DORDOGNE, AQUITAINE REF: A361473GE24 €275,000



Characterful 3-bed home near Brantôme with lovely Dordogne countryside views, original features and a swimming pool. Ready to move into, this charming property enjoys peaceful hamlet setting just minutes from town amenities.

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 GIRONDE, AQUITAINE REF: A2583IND33

€599,000



Charming stone house near Blaye with four bedrooms, garden, private pool, garage, workshop and outbuildings. Spacious interiors with character and versatile space offer ideal family home, holiday retreat or business potential.

EXCLUSIVE DEUX-SÈVRES, POITOU-CHARENTES REF: A27912NHA79

€184,680



Charming 4-bed hamlet home surrounded by Gâtine countryside. Spacious living areas with fireplace, outbuildings and garage, just minutes from amenities and towns, ideal for family living or rural retreat.

EXCLUSIVE VIENNE, POITOU-CHARENTES REF: A27422JCC86

€174,950



Charming stone house near village amenities, offering three bedrooms, character interior with large kitchen/dining room and lovely country views. Ideal village home or holiday base in the south Loire Valley.

EXCLUSIVE SARTHE, PAYS-DE-LA-LOIRE REF: A40071E172

€90,000



Charming old stone cottage in to restore, tucked at the end of a peaceful lane with outbuildings, lovely views and great renovation potential – a perfect rural retreat or project in nature.

EXCLUSIVE EURE, HIGHER NORMANDY REF: A40479CBU27

€185,000



Charming family home with great renovation potential, offering a bright living area, kitchen, four bedrooms and attic space. Includes garage and outbuilding, ideal for creating a personalised country residence in a peaceful setting.

EXCLUSIVE CREUSE, LIMOUSIN REF: A41002LEL23

€109,000



Charming renovation opportunity with two stone houses and a barn offering flexible living or rental potential. Set in peaceful countryside with private parking and plenty of character, this project invites creative transformation.

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

DORDOGNE REF: L3414

€127,840*



An attractive "bijou" property situated in the heart of Eymet. In good condition with an option of expanding the property on the second floor. All amenities conveniently in hand. An ideal lock up and leave holiday home! Land: None

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3163

€124,200*



A deceptive village house in excellent condition with new roof and spacious living across 2 floors and is ideally situated in a historic village with all amenities within walking distance and less than 30 minutes drive from Bergerac airport. Land: Courtyard

GIRONDE REF: 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 REF: L3402

€210,000*



Attractive stone-built single-storey character home, formerly the village épicerie with a rich history. Edge-of-village setting with shop and countryside views, barn and fenced garden, ten minutes from Ste Foy-la-Grande market town, hospital, shops and restaurants nearby. Land: 1600m²

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3316

€230,000*



Beautifully renovated former railway house on over an acre of enclosed garden, with large barn and above-ground pool needing new liner. Walk to La Sauvetat du Dropt, drive to Eymet, countryside living with development potential. Land: 4921m²

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3231

€307,400*



Attractive stone-built compact farmhouse in open countryside, elevated with pool and woodland, farmland and orchard views. Good condition throughout, tranquil setting near village, ten minutes from market towns Lauzun, Eymet, Cancon and Castillonnes. Land: 1.5ha approx.

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

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3248

€315,000



A stone 6 bedroom 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.

LOT ET GARONNE REF: L3412

€330,750*



A modern, recently built four-bedroom home in excellent condition, with garage, pool, outdoor living area, electric gates and tarmac driveway. Edge-of-village setting, countryside views, walk to bar and restaurant, fully insulated with air-conditioning and heating. Land: 1900m² Enclosed

GIRONDE REF: L3172

€357,000*



Charming old farmhouse with exposed stone, four bedrooms, double garages, pool and potential two-bedroom gîte. Large plot with fruit trees, terraces and Dordogne river views. Walk to bastide town amenities; Bergerac 20 minutes. Land: 5000m²

33 GIRONDE REF: L3376

€378,000*



Charming former winegrower's stone home 2km from Ste Foy La Grande, with hospital and rail links. Four bedrooms plus independent gîte, outbuildings and in-ground pool. Sold fully furnished. Land: 89 m²

LOT ET GARONNE REF: 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 REF: 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

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

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 90497

150,000€ 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...?

GERS REF: 99362

550,000€ AFI



Two houses in one! Possibility to have one large family home or a gîte/guesthouse in this beautiful Lectoure townhouse with large garden with views.

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: 98298

499,000€ AFI



Beautiful village house in very good condition. Possibility of an independent apartment. Great outside spaces including summer kitchen, gym, pool, garage and terraces with views.

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

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 97985

444,000€ AFI



Country property with pool and outbuildings. Set up as two independent apartments, this could easily be converted to a comfortable family home. No neighbours, views and peace and quiet guaranteed.

GERS REF: 99344

695,000€ AFI



Country property in immaculate condition, recently renovated to a very high standard. Three bedrooms, ample light and bright living spaces, large garden - a real family home.

LOT ET GARONNE REF: 93826

1,600,000€ AFI



Riverside estate with private jetty onto the Lot. Beautifully presented, there is nothing to do except enjoy the gardens, pool and tennis court. Elegant, private, perfect.

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. Gîte with its own pool, and numerous outbuildings. Perfect condition throughout.

TARN ET GARONNE REF: 89418

695,000€ AFI



Two houses - one entirely renovated to a very high standard, the other with bags of character and original details. Refurbished pool, over 8 acres of garden, large outbuilding with new roof. The best of rural France.

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

NEAR VERTEUIL-SUR-CHARENTE (16) R7415 €60,000



Charming old farmhouse to renovate, set on 1,220 m² with land, front garden, slate roof, three large bedrooms, spacious living room, potential kitchen area, plus two barns and additional outbuildings, ready to become a character home.

NEAR RUFFEC (16) R7417

€86,000



16th-century logis wing full of character, in need of renovation, offering historic charm and authenticity. Stone-pillared gates welcome you into a property that instantly transports you back in time.

NEAR VILLEFAGNAN (16) R7414

€139,780



Comfortable three-bedroom detached bungalow with new 2024 oil-fired central heating and mostly double glazing, featuring a large enclosed garden perfect for children and pets, plus two garages offering parking and extra storage space.

NEAR RUFFEC (16) R7416

€149,000



Charming four-bedroom stone house with exposed beams and wooden floors, featuring a front courtyard, rear garden, separate vegetable plot, and opposite barn/garage, offering character, authenticity and versatile opportunities for living and storage.

NEAR CIVRAY (86) R7423

€168,000



Beautiful exposed-stone house offering five bedrooms or living, plus a small house to renovate as a gite, with walled garden and riverside leisure plot on the Charente, ideal for fishing or relaxing.

NEAR MANSLE (16) R7411

€170,200



Beautiful restored Charentaise stone house offering generous living spaces and refined warmth, with a private walled courtyard, traditional well, effortless maintenance and move-in-ready comfort- simply settle in and enjoy peaceful living today here.



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

NANTEUIL-EN-VALLÉE (16) R7367

€187,000



Beautiful two-bedroom bungalow in picturesque Nanteuil-en-Vallée, a characterful new-build with covered wooden terrace, wood-burning stove, plunge pool and private enclosed landscaped garden filled with diverse, established plants and peaceful village setting nearby.

RUFFEC (16) R7410

€336,800



Exceptional riverside home in central Ruffec, set beside a peaceful stream flowing into the River Lien, just minutes from shops, schools, restaurants and bars, offering rare tranquility with everything accessible on foot.

SAUZÉ VAUSSAIS (79) R7021

€394,725



Elegant stone longhouse with outbuildings, swimming pool and landscaped park, set in a peaceful wooded location between Ruffec and Sauzé-Vaussais. Combines authentic charm, spacious interiors, modern amenities and easy access to the N10.

CHARME (16) R7361

€392,650



Spacious 1856 house in a charming village between Ruffec and Aigre, offering six bedrooms, three bathrooms, heated pool, private garden, oil-fired central heating, two living rooms with wood-burning stoves, natural light and exposed stone.

COUHE (86) R7370

€289,450



Superb character presbytery with exposed stone, original beams, and stone-flag floors, offering three spacious bedrooms, beautiful gardens and a warm, authentic and historically rich living environment.

MANSLE (16) R7021

€324,950



Magnificent barn conversion with separate guest house and outbuildings on over 1 acre, set in a hamlet between Mansle and Saint-Claud. Spacious living includes huge sitting room, cathedral-style fitted kitchen with dining area and second ground-floor sitting room.



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

MORBIHAN REF: DN4650

€630,000



Set in the Brittany countryside, equidistant from Rennes, Nantes, and Vannes, this characterful manor sits on 7 1/2 acres, offering two liveable sections with scope for integration and further development.

HAUTE VIENNE REF: AM4984

€60,000



Located in the Gartempe Valley, 10 minutes from Bessines-sur-Gartempe and near Folles, this Maison de Maître offers renovation potential, with a 959 m² garden, two barns and a small stone house.

LOT REF: SR4791

€409,500



Charming, renovated home with panoramic views, set in a tranquil, private location near Praysac. Just a 5-minute drive from the village bakery, it offers the perfect balance of peace and accessibility.

FINISTERE REF: KT4585

€159,950



South-facing two-bedroom village house in Poullaouen, Finistère, with private garden, wood-burning stove, wraparound garage, and flexible loft space. Comfortable, practical, and full of potential, close to amenities, nature, and Brittany's coastline.

MORBIHAN REF: TR4500

€397,000



Stunning renovated Breton home in Locmalo, combining charm and high-quality finishes. Four bedrooms, spacious lounge, country kitchen, terraces, gardens, and outbuildings with conversion potential. Peaceful hamlet location near Guémené-sur-Scorff and Pontivy amenities.

COTES D'ARMOR REF: YL4957

€273,000



Exceptional 4-5 bedroom stone property, once a 19th-century coach house, set at the end of a quiet hamlet road near Merléac. Move-in ready, peaceful, yet only 15 minutes from Mur de Bretagne and Lac de Guerlédan.

AGENCE NEWTON

7 Guenevin, 56500 Moreac

TEL: 0033 (0) 2 22 44 40 80 **EMAIL:** contact@agencenewton.com **WEB:** www.agencenewton.com



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

CALVADOS REF: SG4948

€970,000



Late-1800s property, beautifully presented with nine bedrooms, four reception rooms and multiple outbuildings offering great potential. Less than 10 minutes from Omaha Beach, with Wi-Fi-controlled electric heating and fibre internet, ideal for history or business.

HAUTE VIENNE REF: AM4925

€598,500



Fully renovated, furnished chateau in Châteauponsac overlooking the Gartempe Valley. A rare turnkey property, ideal as an elegant home, refined B&B, or luxury investment, blending heritage, comfort and modern living, beautifully balanced.

CORREZE REF: CC4830

€1,080,000



Placed beautifully at the end of a private lane in the centre of Brive-la-Gaillarde is this exceptional and unique architect-designed 6 bed perigordian style house with sous-sol offering a garage, wine cave and a ground floor apartment of 68m².

CREUSE REF: MS4834

€315,000



Located in a small hamlet in the commune of Saint Agnant de versillat, is this beautifully renovated stone country house, with 4 bedrooms. carefully modernised ensuring some of the old character of the house has been maintained.

COTES D'ARMOR REF: JD4412

€137,000



This stunning property has just been renovated to a high standard. It is a detached stone property with 3 beds, 2 bathrooms, a study and 2407m² of land.

VIENNE REF: AM4887

€899,950



Own a historic chateau dating back to 1350, elevated by royal decree. Originally a fortress, it now operates as a successful holiday rental while offering a magnificent private estate full of history and character.

AGENCE NEWTON

7 Guenevin, 56500 Moreac

TEL: 0033 (0) 2 22 44 40 80 **EMAIL:** contact@agencenewton.com **WEB:** www.agencenewton.com



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

SALIES DE BEARN REF: 2036

€690,000



Elegant neo-Basque property, in excellent condition throughout, with garden and garage, ideally located within walking distance to the thermal spa, shops, bars and restaurants.

HABAS REF: 2030

€449,500



Spacious and luminous Landaise family home with approximately 220m² of living accommodation and a gîte, situated in a charming village of the Chalosse with medical facilities, shops and a restaurant.

SAUVETERRE DE BEARN REF: 2033

€350,000



Stylish townhouse with courtyard garden located in the centre of a medieval market town. Walking distance to a river offering the perfect spot for bathing and picnics in the Summer.

GOTEIN LIBARRENX REF: 2039

€299,000



Charming country home, situated in a tranquil environment in the foothills of the Pyrenees, a short drive to the market town of Mauleon, and one hour to the ski slopes!

SALIES DE BEARN REF: 2038

€245,000



Unique 1930s semi-detached townhouse, on three floors, with pool and courtyard garden, located within walking distance to the thermal spa, shops, bars and restaurants.

SALIES DE BEARN REF: 2041

€233,000



Three-bedroom townhouse with garden, in good condition throughout, walking distance to all amenities and just a stone's throw from the town's 9-hole golf course!

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

HÉRAULT REF: SA699840E

€ 699,840



Impressive maison de maitre, dating from the 18th century, offering 7 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a garage, 2 courtyards and a garden with swimming pool. Rare!

HÉRAULT REF: PC800000E

€800,000



Exceptionally furnished character house, retaining all the authenticity and charm of its origins, with 300 m² of living space, on the Canal du Midi.

AUDE REF: CB345600E

€345,600



Charming villa with 180 m² of living space offering a main house and an independent gite on a landscaped plot of 2360 m² with beautiful views.

HÉRAULT REF: SA259200EB

€259,200



Charming building with 300 m² of living space and a small private courtyard. A gem with character in the heart of a sought-after village.

HÉRAULT REF: SA419000EC

€419,000



Old stone barn/farmhouse renovated in 1974, approximately 165 m² of living space including 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a summer lounge and a small annex in the garden.

HÉRAULT REF: C326160E

€326,160



Beautiful town house full of character offering 195 m² of living space, a delightful courtyard with jacuzzi and a pleasant terrace, in the heart of the centre!

REAL ESTATE LANGUEDOC

TEL: +33 (0)6.09.58.54.26 EMAIL: frueda@aol.com WEB: www.realestateoccitanie.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
TEL: 00 33 (0) 6 60 97 65 21 TEL: 0044 (0) 7767 706000
EMAIL: isabelle.cortot@iza-imo.fr WEB: www.iza-imo.fr

IZA-IMO

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

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, pigeonier, 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.

LAVERCANTIÈRE, 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

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.



POPPINS REAL ESTATE

Touffailles, 82190, France

TEL: 0033647784916 / 0033652714556

EMAIL: poppinsrealestate@gmail.com

WEB: poppinsrealestate.com

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.



POPPINS REAL ESTATE

Touffailles, 82190, France

TEL: 0033647784916 / 0033652714556

EMAIL: poppinsrealestate@gmail.com

WEB: poppinsrealestate.com

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

DORDOGNE REF: 689146

€295,000



A four bedroom house in Nontron. Generous space, plenty of light, and amenities nearby.

LOT-ET-GARONNE REF: 689133

€1,150,000



Riverside estate with Gites on the River Lot.

CÔTES-D'ARMOR REF: 689037

€215,250



Four bedroom properties with beautiful views.

HÉRAULT REF: 688940

€370,000



Authentic character-filled winegrower's house in the heart of Saint-Thibéry offering exceptional potential.

FRANCE PROPERTY SHOP

TEL: 0044 (0) 1225 463 752 EMAIL: admin@francepropertyshop.com WEB: Francepropertyshop.com

FRANCE
PropertyShop

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

ALPES-MARITIMES REF: 688907

€2,300,000



Private riverside estate with business potential and existing rental activity.
Only 40 minutes to Nice Airport.

DORDOGNE REF: 689127

€249,000



Single-storey villa with swimming pool close to Bergerac.

AUDE REF: 689052

€209,900



Detached three bed villa with garden-level apartment, terrace, large garden
and panoramic views.

CHARENTE REF: 687959

€135,000



Charming country house restored with great taste located in a quiet hamlet,
close to Confolens.

FRANCE PROPERTY SHOP

TEL: 0044 (0) 1225 463 752 EMAIL: admin@francepropertyshop.com WEB: Francepropertyshop.com



PROPERTY SHOWCASE

ANTIBES REF: 86374747

€422,000



Elegant new residences opposite Antibes' iconic Fort Carré, moments from the beach and harbour. Pied-à-terre opportunity with two-bedroom apartments, parking, storage, reduced stamp duty, 20-minute drive from Nice Airport.

AUDE REF: CB345600E

€345,600



Charming Minervois villa with independent gîte, set on landscaped grounds with valley views and pool. Ideal rental potential, four bedrooms, peaceful village location near Carcassonne and beaches.

MORBIHAN REF: 75011170702

€259,800



Stone house offering 145 m² with stone outbuildings and open barns on 5,000 m² of land, in a hamlet near Locminé. Spacious living areas, two large bedrooms, fireplace, wood stove, attic, garages and former stable.

EURE REF: 75011170762

€188,000



Bright single-storey home of 96 m² with three bedrooms, set on a 700 m² fenced garden in a quiet area. No work required, fibre internet, schools nearby and excellent transport links.

FRENCHENTRÉE

TEL: 0044 (0) 1225 463 752 EMAIL: propertysales@frenchentree.com WEB: propertyinfrance.com

French Entrée
FIRST FOR BUYING PROPERTY & LIVING IN FRANCE

PROPERTY SHOWCASE

SAVOIE REF: MDH2025009

€395,000



Authentic 1869 Savoyard farmhouse of approx. 250 m² to renovate, set in a tranquil natural setting. Includes former living area and 135 m² barn, offering excellent potential for lovers of space and traditional charm.

PROVENCE REF: 85939569

€860,000



Private domain in Gros Baux, set in a lush forest, offering three high-spec semi-detached villas. Each 96 m², 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, terraces, private garden (70-300 m²), air-conditioning, parking and communal pool access.

VAR REF: 84715589

€462,000



Charming 3-bedroom, 2-bath villa in Cogolin, 15 mins walk to the village, 20 mins from St Tropez. Part of a Provençal-style development of 24 villas with private garden, terrace, parking and low stamp duty.

ALPES-MARITIMES REF: 84034751

€435,000



Elegant new development in Le Cannet, 250 m from Boulevard Carnot. Spacious 3-bedroom, 2-bath apartments with walk-in wardrobes, parking and easy access to shops, restaurants, transport and La Croisette.

FRENCHENTRÉE

TEL: 0044 (0) 1225 463 752 EMAIL: propertysales@frenchentree.com WEB: propertyinfrance.com

French Entrée
FIRST FOR BUYING PROPERTY & LIVING IN FRANCE

PRIVATE SALES

Nouvelle-Aquitaine

Deux-Sevres, Faye l'Abbesse

€110,000

FrenchEntrée Ref MOFAYEo81



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

Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Lot-et-Garonne

Castelmoron-sur-Lot

1,195,000€

FrenchEntrée Ref FRE112678



Stunning turnkey manoir and gîte business in prime location with loyal clientele

Well-established, turnkey manoir sleeping 14, a cottage for 6 and an owners' apartment, all fully equipped for self-catering rentals. Set in a prime location with breathtaking countryside views and excellent access to transport links, it comprises fully equipped, well-maintained accommodation ready for immediate operation and growth.

An award-winning business with a strong reputation, proven marketing strategies and established support team. It generates €95,000-€100,000 annually, with over €80,000 already booked for 2026 and all future booking income transferred to the buyer.

This is an ideal lifestyle, investment, or income-producing opportunity in a top French destination.

CONTACT: Liz and Martyn Tanguy
EMAIL: info@francemanoirgite-sale.com
TELEPHONE: 0033 (0) 6 3724 7914

PACA

Alpes-Maritimes

€2,300,000

France Property Shop ID: 688907



Riverside Estate with Business Potential & Existing Rental Activity. Only 40mins to Nice Airport

This exceptional riverside estate centres on Le Foulon, a grand 769m² Maison de Maître dating from circa 1890. It offers nine en-suite bedrooms, a separate one-bedroom staff apartment and versatile additional rooms. The striking 143m² open-plan entrance, lounge and dining area enjoys glorious south-facing views and abundant natural light. The property's fascinating past includes ownership by a Spanish industrialist, a New York resident during WWII, and later a renowned restaurant celebrated for its trout and crayfish.

A secondary two-bedroom house, garages and workshop sit alongside the main residence. Renovated over the past 22 years, the estate features a heated pool and strong income potential. Now within a protected natural park, its uninterrupted views are guaranteed forever.

CONTACT: Nick Vyse **EMAIL:** nick@le-foulon.com **TELEPHONE:** +33(0)688657443 **WEBSITE:** www.le-foulon.com

PRIVATE SALES

Occitanie, Gers

Auch

220,000€

FrenchEntrée Ref CLAR123



Charming house in South West France with stunning views of the Pyrenees. A little piece of paradise

The property is located on a very quiet road, with no close neighbours and absolutely stunning views of the Pyrenees.

It is close to a quiet village, Marciac, with all amenities.

The house is well maintained.

The large barn could be a project to develop into the main residence with several bedrooms.

There is a small apartment with two bedrooms which could be used for friends and family or holiday rental.

The gardens are mature and well maintained.

CONTACT: Irene Clarke **EMAIL:** Irene.Clarke.2244@gmail.com
TELEPHONE: 0033780506971

Brittany, Côtes-d'Armor

Illifaut

165,000€

FrenchEntrée Ref FRE112618



Peaceful south-facing country home with land and orchard

South-facing property set on a fully fenced 4,775 m² plot offering peace, space and privacy. The home features two generous double bedrooms, a large bathroom with shower, toilet and double sink, a utility room and an open-plan kitchen/diner with woodburner and radiators. Outside, enjoy a large garden with orchard, vegetable plot, a well for irrigation, double garage and off-road parking. Fibre-optic 5G internet is available, no close neighbours and just a 15-minute walk to the village: ideal for a self-sufficient lifestyle.

CONTACT: Ernest Mayzube **EMAIL:** ernest.mayzube@univ-rennes.fr
TELEPHONE: 0033789 856162

Occitanie, Gers

L'Isle Bouzon

Offers around 420,000€
or rent for 1,000€ month

FrenchEntrée Ref FRE112677



Beautiful traditional Gascony house with gîtes, yoga studio and one hectare of gardens

Attractive traditional Gascony property with many original features, offering both lifestyle appeal and business potential. The main house includes a rustic kitchen with AGA and Polyflam heating, salon with Jøtul woodburner, entrance hall with Godin stove, three to four bedrooms, bathroom and two WCs, with original tiled floors throughout. A room with own entrance is currently used as a yoga studio. Two independent gîtes sit within one hectare of gardens with fruit trees, bamboo, woodland, ponds and streams.

CONTACT: Katie Gibbon **EMAIL:** gershhouse32@gmail.com
TELEPHONE: +33(0) 641107229

Ile de France, Yvelines

Saint Germain en Laye

495,000€

FrenchEntrée Ref FRE112676



Elegant third top floor apartment with open living space and panoramic Seine views

Set in a prestigious residence with concierge and landscaped grounds, this 80m² 3rd and top-floor apartment is a quick walk to town centre and the RER A for access to Paris. In excellent condition, it features a bright 42m² living area with balcony offering spectacular 180° Seine views with the Eiffel Tower's beacon visible as it sweeps the skyline, a fitted kitchen, two bedrooms (with option to create a third), a bathroom with bath and shower and separate WC. Recently repainted and insulated, it also includes a cellar, communal parking, bike storage and collective heating.

CONTACT: Mélanie Pelleau **EMAIL:** pelleau@immobilierduparc.immo
TELEPHONE: 00 33 (0) 1 30 15 53 90

PACA

Var (83), Callas

€870,000

FrenchEntrée Ref (FE) FRE105557



Callas rare opportunity:

5 bed, 4 bath villa with air con and pool - 200m to village centre, 6,000m² of land and 236m² of living 1 hr to Nice airport - 40 mins to coast, 40 mins to mountain/ski

Les Micocouliers is a very privately positioned villa, 30m from the road and 200m walk to the village centre. Accommodation offers stunning 25 miles of panoramic views stretching to the coast. With 4 air-conditioned bedrooms, access to surrounding terrace and views with multiple outdoor seating spots on the terrace. A pool, garage with EV, auto-watering and shade add convenience. Originally two shepherd cottages, property blends history with comfort. Property supplied fully furnished if required, see more details online.

CONTACT: Colin Cook **EMAIL:** colinm.cook@btinternet.com

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Drôme

Chanos-Curson

750,000€

FrenchEntrée Ref MOJ123



Elegant provencal 19th century manor with pool, outbuildings and immediate vacant possession

This fully renovated 19th century manor offers 400 m² of living space across three levels, including 7 bedrooms, generous reception areas and an independent loft. Set within a secure 1.2 hectare park with swimming pool, summer loft, stables and multiple outbuildings, the property combines historic character with modern comfort. The owner is ready to vacate immediately and is willing to leave all furniture, equipment and contents, officially valued at 70,000€, making this an exceptional turnkey opportunity.

CONTACT: Pierre Mojon **EMAIL:** pieralyse@wanadoo.fr
TELEPHONE: 0033475073235

Occitania, Aude

Nearest town: Limoux

€75,000

FrenchEntrée Ref: FRE12040



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

WANTED...

LONG TERM RENTAL

(Autumn 2026 - Autumn 2027) with possible view to purchase

Minimum 3 bed, dog friendly property, with at least 2 acres minimum of enclosed land for animals.

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

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.

Award-winning rental income. 5-star reviews.

See more on our own website: www.villaromantique.co.uk
(Optional adjacent land with building permission also for sale)

CONTACT: Tony Cremer-Price
EMAIL: tony@villaromantique.co.uk **TELEPHONE:** +44(0) 7836 291791



SELLING YOUR HOUSE IN FRANCE?

Market your property with us and start generating enquiries by speaking to one of our advertising consultants. We will be happy to create a package for you that is quick, easy and cost effective in *French Property News* magazine and online.

For more information and to book, contact: sales@frenchentree.com

FRANCE **PropertyShop**

FrenchEntrée

Join us online!



If you enjoy reading the magazine, you'll love our websites too - head online to discover all these stories and more



A virtual walk through the French Property Exhibition

Whether you came along to the French Property exhibition in London in January or couldn't make it, check out the video to refresh your memories or see what you missed! **Watch on [youtube.com/c/FrenchEntréeMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/c/FrenchEntréeMagazine)**



OUR VERY OWN FRENCH CHATEAU

An inspiring tale of a young couple's hard work and dedication renovating an elegant château in Provence, and turning it into a chic rental and destination wedding venue. **Read more on [frenchentree.com](https://www.frenchentree.com)**



FRENCH PROPERTY

BUYING PROPERTY IN FRANCE: Tontine clauses, DPE diagnostics and notaire's fees explained

Before you buy a French property, find out the answers to these three frequently asked French conveyancing queries to avoid any problems down the line.

Read more on [frenchentree.com](https://www.frenchentree.com)



WORKING IN FRANCE

BECOMING A VIGNERON IN FRANCE: A comprehensive guide to winemaking

Do you dream of making wine in the south of France? Discover the ins and outs of owning and running a vineyard. **Read more on [frenchentree.com](https://www.frenchentree.com)**



FRANCE TRAVEL

7 Unexpected dog-friendly spots in Paris

As travel evolves, the concept of bringing your pup along becomes so much easier. Paris, however, is rarely a city that comes to mind when you think of a dog-friendly getaway, but for those in the know, there are some fantastic spots for you and your furry best friend.

Read more on [francetoday.com](https://www.francetoday.com)



FRENCH LIFE

How to talk about the weather in France

The British are famous for being preoccupied with the weather. But can the same be said for the French? We provide some basic phrases to help you in your conversations with your French friends and neighbours.

Read more on [frenchentree.com](https://www.frenchentree.com)

Keep up with the latest articles and news online by signing up to receive our newsletters at: [completefrance.com](https://www.completefrance.com) & [frenchentree.com](https://www.frenchentree.com)

FRANCE PropertyShop



Dordogne, Nouvelle Aquitaine

POA

Chateau de Monboucher - own a slice of luxury in south west France



Corrèze, Nouvelle Aquitaine

€370,000

Correze 2 farmhouses, outbuildings, 2 acres, well and lots of quiet



Hérault, Occitanie

€864,000

Superb Character Property With 311 M2 Of Living Space, Annexe And Park Of 1660 M2. Unique



Drôme, Auvergne and Rhône-Alpes

€995,000

19th Century Manor house at the gateway to Provence

A greater selection of French properties than ever before

Whether you're looking for a cottage in Normandy, a mountain chalet, or a new-build apartment or villa on the coast, **France Property Shop** has a property and location to suit all tastes.

Sign up to our weekly e-newsletter and property alerts to make sure you don't miss out on your dream home!



www.francepropertyshop.com



MOVE TO EUROPE

(STRESS FREE, NO HASSLE!)

Visa | Residency | Tax | Insurance | Health | Translation | Business Setup

Relocating to a new country can be overwhelming. From visas to starting a business, from banking to finding a home, navigating European regulations isn't easy. That's where Please Help comes in — your professional relocation partner with over a decade of experience.



FULLY REGULATED EXPERTS

We're EURA & ORIAS regulated, ensuring compliance and professional guidance



COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

We handle every step of your visa application, residency permit, and all legal requirements



FINANCE AND TAX SPECIALISTS

Europe's tax system is complicated, so we help you stay compliant and avoid penalties



EASY BUSINESS SETUP

If you need to register a company or become self-employed, we'll handle everything



EFFORTLESS ADMINISTRATION

From document translation to dealing with local authorities, banks and utilities, we manage it all







END-TO-END SUPPORT

We don't just help with the move — we make sure you're fully settled and supported long-term



Ready to make a stress-free move to Europe?

Let our experts handle everything so you can focus on your journey. Contact us today and take the first step towards your new life!

 www.pleasehelp.eu
 +33 9 72 26 52 36 (France)
 +44 1143 910 012 (UK)
 +34 711 05 32 58 (WhatsApp)

Béziers, capital of Hérault



ISSUE: MAY/JUNE 2026
ON SALE 23 APRIL

BUY YOUR COPY AT FRANCEMEDIA.SHOP

NEXT ISSUE

in

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

HELLO HÉRAULT!

Find out why this scenic and sunny southern corner of Languedoc has to offer buyers

SANTÉ!

"Since moving to France, we're healthier than ever!" Meet the expats who've embraced fitness

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

The next part in our French interiors series focuses on halls that offer a warm welcome

BUYING PROCESS

A closer look at the roles played by the estate agent and the *notaire* in a French property transaction

ROUEN & AROUND

Why the Normandy capital and surrounding countryside and coastline deserve your attention

OPEN GARDENS

Whether you want to visit lovely French gardens or share your own, the *Jardins Ouverts* is for you

BORDEAUX BEAUTY

Renovating a 600-year-old townhouse in a pretty village outside the southwest city

EXPERT IMMOBILIER

Did you know there are over 10 methods for property valuations in France? Meet the expert valuer.

LAKESIDE LIVING

Discover three mountain lakes in Aveyron, Isère and Jura - with charming local villages and homes

WRITE ON

Joanne Harris, author of bestseller *Chocolat*, talks about her new novel *Vianne* set in Marseille

GUIDE TO...

Regional grants and assistance for people setting up a new business in France

ASK THE EXPERTS

Your legal, financial and property questions answered along with advice on living in France



A fairytale in Alsace

Californian **Ashley Sorci** took the long way round to put down roots in Molsheim, where she found the perfect blend of countryside charm close to Strasbourg's international energy

How did you discover your village?

I first landed in Bordeaux in 2012 to do my sociology degree. Five years ago, I was looking for a life change and chose Strasbourg because it was very different and central to the rest of Europe. I was just fascinated by the international aspect. You have the Council of Europe and the European Parliament there. After living in the city for a few years, I bought a home in Molsheim, a village just outside, because I prefer the countryside but still with easy access to the city.

What aspects of the local lifestyle do you enjoy?

I love this blend of German and French culture; Alsace really marries the two quite well. There's a small community vibe, I've actually gotten to know my neighbours quite well, but I can get to the city on a train in 15 minutes.

What is there to see and do in your area?

In Strasbourg you have the most amazing cathedral in Europe, the Petit France area is very charming, and Molsheim is on the Alsace wine trail. I can be walking in the vineyard in five minutes. The half-timbered houses are so unique and very beautiful. A fun fact is that Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* was actually inspired by the village of Riquewihr. It feels like you're stepping into a storybook, it is stunning. Colmar as well, all those little villages that make you feel like you are in Disneyland, but this is real. In winter the Christmas markets are fun, there's tons of castles to visit around here and towards the Vosges mountains where I love to hike. And then Germany is just 15 minutes away, so I can go grocery shopping there, I can go to the



Ashley has embraced the small community vibe in Molsheim

Black Forest - and I can enjoy a good schnitzel.

How was your French when you arrived?

Terrible. I had taken nine years of French and thought I was set. But I remember arriving and I couldn't understand a word anyone was saying to me. So, it took time, and a lot of trial and error. Eventually I got up to speed, so my French now is fine. I'm able to get along professionally and personally. But it was really an uphill battle, there were days where I'd feel like I was making progress, and then I would fall back, such as trying to tell the doctor what's wrong.

How do you find interacting with the locals socially?

I'd say it's like the coconut versus the peach analysis. The locals have the harder outer shell, so relationships take time to grow, but once you're in their circle, you're really in. You have fewer casual relationships and more deep ones that take time to grow. At first my neighbours had a lot of questions about a Californian living next to them. Now we're invited to have a *tarte flambée* in the garden, and

we've helped each other with little tasks around the house.

How have you found working in France?

I've had different jobs, but in general a French office environment is definitely more of a hierarchy. There's more formality and work-life balance, keeping private and work life separate. Of course, now that I work solo and with collaborators it is different.

What type of work do you do?

I work as a relocation concierge, not just for Americans but English speakers in general. I help people in Alsace and other parts of France with administrative things, phone calls, doctor's appointments. I'm quite busy now because there's a lot of people who have been thinking about it for a long time, and now they want to make that leap. I collaborate with real estate agents, notaries that I'm putting my clients in contact with. In these five years I have grown quite a network of people.

Any local speciality that you've developed a taste for?

I wasn't a big wine drinker,

even living back in Bordeaux, but Alsatian wines are the best I've ever had. I love their white wines; Gewürztraminer, Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Cremant, you name it. I love a *tarte flambée* (also known as *flammkuchen* or *flammekueche*) - it's sort of a religion here, everyone has an oven in their backyard, they'll have parties and everyone can make their own, but the traditional is onion, little bacon pieces and crème fraîche. A new love of mine is Munster cheese, it's highly recommended, you just have to get past the smell.

What has surprised you the most about living in your area?

Bilingualism. Other areas of France, such as Brittany, also have two languages, but it's not so much part of their everyday life. Here people speak Alsatian on the street, my neighbours speak it almost exclusively. I was also surprised by the people because they are so warm and friendly once you get past the proverbial coconut shell.

What is your favourite French saying?

I like the concept of saying "*on est bien ici*". It's not translatable. In English, we don't say "I'm good here". It's this simple, warm way to say: I'm happy, this is good, I'm good right where I am.

I think, especially in American culture, we're rushing, we're pushing, and this embodies an idea that France in general, but this region in particular, is really good at, of bringing you back and living in the present moment. ■

To find out more about Ashley's life in France and relocation services visit chezmoialsa.com



Morzine Real Estate Local Experts, Global Reach

Douglas Elliman Morzine

OFFICE: +33 (0)4 80 96 50 03 | morzine@elliman.fr
82 Route de la Combe à Zore - 74110 Morzine

elliman.fr

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.

Introducing the French Property Exhibition

New for 2026



BIRMINGHAM

- Browse through hundreds of properties from across France and speak to the agents
- Attend the free and informative seminar programme covering all aspects of buying in and moving to France
- Meet the experts - get free advice from the legal, financial, relocation, tax and visa specialists

16-17
MAY 2026

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM

10AM - 5PM



HELPING YOU FIND YOUR DREAM HOME
IN FRANCE FOR OVER 35 YEARS

Register for *FREE* tickets at:
www.frenchpropertyexhibition.com