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Homes abroad **Homes & Property**

Latest advances in high-speed train travel put the fine wines and great-value homes of Bordeaux less than five hours away, says **Cathy Hawker**

WHILE we get hot under the collar debating high-speed train travel, the Continent is steadily upgrading its already impressive network. The next city to benefit is Bordeaux in south-west France where the elegant, classical 18th-century architecture reflects the city's historic wealth from the wine trade.

By 2017, current track upgrades will shave an hour off the Paris to Bordeaux journey. Centre to centre will take two hours – encouraging more visitors to this clean, limestone city close to the Atlantic. With the train journey from St Pancras to the French capital about two and a half hours, French wine country feels tantalisingly close.

“Bordeaux is a year-round, compact and green city,” says Doug Storrie of Maxwell-Storrie-Baynes agency, who has lived nearby with his family since leaving London eight years ago. “Architecturally it resembles a mini Paris with Haussmann-style streets and a historic Old Town. It’s an affluent city where property represents really good value compared with many other French cities.”

BARGAINS IN A PRIME SPOT

With wide, sandy Atlantic beaches to the west, Pyrénées ski resorts to the south and France’s most celebrated vineyards on the doorstep, there’s plenty of potential in a Bordeaux holiday home. It’s a young city with 70,000 students and also a Unesco World Heritage Site with one of the best-known names in wine. Worldwide, 24 bottles of Bordeaux are sold every second. Three streets



French charmer: an outdoor café in leafy, compact Bordeaux, with celebrated vineyards, beaches and ski resorts in reach

France in time for cocktails



– Allées de Tourny, Cours George Clémenceau and pedestrianised Cours de l’Intendance – enclose the city’s prime “Golden Triangle”. Compact apartments of 420 square feet start from £210,400, or £336,600 for two bedrooms, and they sell quickly, says Storrie.

Karen Maxwell, who lives in the

countryside an hour from Bordeaux, paid £193,500 five years ago for a buy-to-let flat in this part of the centre on Rue Michel-Montaigne. Today, the one-bedroom furnished flat rents for £500 a week on short-term lets.

For value, Maxwell advises buyers to look at Place du Parlement in the Old Town, minutes from the Grand

Reduced to £833,000: a four-bedroom stone house with over an acre of walled gardens and a pool in sought-after Duras. Through Savills (020 7016 3740)

Théâtre de Bordeaux, along with new-builds around the docks at the top end of the Chartrons district. Another up-and-coming area is Quinconces, bordering on the Jardin Public, where warehouses along the river and houses in garden squares provide edgier apartments that are popular with younger buyers.

“Bordeaux changed dramatically in the past 10 years,” says Kirsten Pollard of Home Hunts agency. “The limestone buildings are clean, public transport is impressive and it has become a younger, laid-back city based around good street life, cafés and, of course, the wine trade.”

RURAL HOMES.

South and east of Bordeaux, Entre-deux-mers lies between the Garonne and Dordogne rivers. Good-quality stone country manor houses start at £589,000, while the same with a



£579,500: five-bedroom house with a pool in central Bordeaux, through Savills

vineyard will cost from £1 million. British buyers want to be close to villages and traditional fortified medieval bastide towns, according to Storrie. “Pujols, Gensac, Créon and Duras are all sought after.” A two-minute walk from the centre of Duras, he is selling a renovated four-bedroom stone house with over an acre of walled gardens including a pool, reduced from £1,051,000 to £833,000. Through Savills.

In the middle of vineyards in a small hamlet close to Monségur, an hour from Bordeaux and 45 minutes from Bergerac airport, an English family is selling a beautifully kept, five-bedroom house with a welcoming, expansive family kitchen opening on to lavender-filled gardens and a pool. Priced at £669,000 through Savills, the house would rent easily for 12 weeks a year.

Yorkshire couple Andrew and Victoria Smyth, a former baker and a teacher, both in their forties, have lived near Monségur for six years. Their children Freddie, Ella and Harry, aged 11 to 15, attend local schools and the Smyths are caretakers for 11 second homes within a 10-mile radius.

“This is an international area, very friendly and with a good sense of community for all ages,” says Andrew. “Our family is very involved in the local commune, organising the regular summer night fêtes for example. It is safe, too. Our children have much more freedom here than they did in England.”

CONTACTS

■ **Maxwell-Storrie-Baynes:** through Savills (savills.com; 020 7016 3740)
 ■ **Home Hunts:** home-hunts.com (020 8144 5501)