

# property

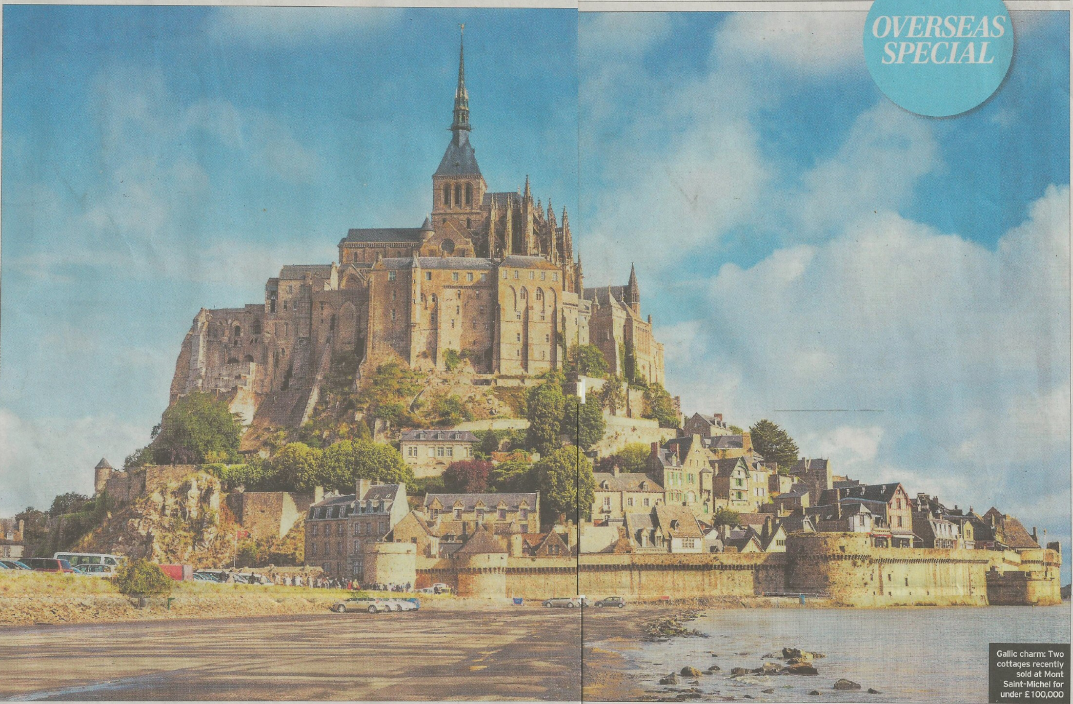
School run in the sun  
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The Daily Telegraph

OVERSEAS SPECIAL



Galloic charm: Two cottages recently sold at Mont Saint-Michel for under £100,000

## A HOUSE-HUNTER'S TOUR DE FRANCE

If you know where to look, you can still find great bargains across the Channel, particularly with the strong pound on your side. Max Davidson reports

**S**unflowers. Vineyards. Sunny beaches. Sleep gorges. Bumbling rivers. And avenues of poplars swaying in the breeze.  
As the Tour de France follows its majestic course, like a series of advertisements by the French tourist board, Britons hankering after a second home in France can feel their antennae twitching.  
"Now wouldn't it be nice to live there. I wonder what that village is called."  
Could 2014 be the year to turn those fantasies into reality?

Many experts are saying "yes", pointing out that if you target the right areas, you can find bargains that were simply not available a few years ago.  
A strong pound is good news for overseas property buyers, and for Brits wanting to purchase in France, the exchange rate is particularly beneficial at the moment," says Jaya Unkiche of Moneycorp (moneycorp.com), the foreign exchange specialist.  
Research by Moneycorp and Savills reveals that France is still the most popular destination for Britons buying holiday

homes overseas, accounting for 26 per cent of the total. Two-thirds of those homes were in rural locations, with half of those surveyed saying that they had paid less than €200,000 (£161,000) for their property.  
"With French interest rates still low, well-located homes are primed for capital growth," explains Lloyd Hughes of Alliance Advisors (allianceadvisors.co.uk), which deals in French property investments. Increases in June were up 63 per cent at the same period a year ago.  
Where a France Briton decides to buy their dream home

will be a matter of taste – as always. The seaside, the country or the city?  
In a bustling, characterful village or the middle of nowhere? If they are after attractively priced properties in equally attractive locations, they are spoilt for choice right now.  
So where to start? Here are 20 delightful areas, including French, that are sufficiently far from the main tourist beat to offer excellent value.  
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### Overseas Special

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**1 Massif Central/ The Auvergne**  
If buyers seek clear of the south of France and head inland, they will see property prices fall dramatically, particularly in the Massif Central. Here, you can buy simple three-bedroom cottages for around €35,000 (£28,000)," says Jaya Unkiche, who works in Moneycorp's French office. For roughly five, there is the added bonus of watching Clermont-Ferrand, the local team, one of the best supported clubs in France.  
**On the market** Four-bedroom, architect-designed house in a pretty hamlet near the Puy de Dôme €150,000 (£120,000) with Leggett Immobilien (french.leggettimmobilien.com).

**2 Finistère, Brittany**  
It may not be as warm as the south of France, but Brittany has long been a magnet for British second-homeowners. Most are attracted by its accessibility and great-value properties – not to mention its fish restaurants. In Finistère, the western tip of Brittany, you can pick up a timbered cottage in a small village for less than €50,000 (£40,000). Morbihan, to the south, is another great area to home hunt.  
**On the market** Four-bedroom cottage in a village in Finistère in need of renovation €41,600 (£33,000) with a House in Brittany (french.houseinbrittany.com).

**3 Olonzac, Languedoc-Roussillon**  
The Languedoc offers some of the best value in the south of France. The old market town of Olonzac, the capital of the Minervois, between Carcassonne and Narbonne, exemplifies the homopart charm of the region. It is only about 30 minutes from the coast, and also close to the Canal du Midi, one of the unending gems of rural France.  
**On the market** Four-bedroom stone cottage in the heart of Olonzac €72,000 (£58,000) with French Prime Properties (french.primproperties.com).

**4 Drôme, Provence**  
"The Drôme-Provençal is off the beaten track, but has a lot to offer, from old Roman towns to olive groves and fields of lavender," explains William Pearson of French Prime Properties. The area is north of Provence and further from the sea, but the competitive property prices reflect that.  
**On the market** Two-bedroom village house in Nyons €140,000 (£120,000) with French Prime Properties (french.primproperties.com).



**5 Le Loir**  
No, not La Loire, though it is an easy mistake to make. The great châteaux of the Loire Valley are famous, and property prices in towns such as Saumur and Amboise reflect that. But go a bit further north, and you will find that houses close to the smaller Loir river, in towns such as La Chartre-sur-le-Loir, cost a third less. In addition, 99.5 per cent of your friends will assume you live on La Loire, the famous one. Result.  
**On the market** Four-bedroom maison de ville with valley views in La Chartre-sur-Loir €225,000 (£212,000) with Healey &rai Ltd (healeyrai.co.uk).

**6 Flassans-sur-issole, Provence**  
Provence has never been so hip, thanks to Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, who now own a vineyard there. Prices in sought-after villages such as Lorgues and Gignac have inflated as a result. But there are still bargains to be had. For example, in the village of Flassans-sur-issole, Central Var, which is a little off the main tourist trail but less than an hour from St Tropez.  
**On the market** Five-bedroom single-storey villa in a quiet wooded location near Flassans-sur-issole €420,000 (£340,000) with HomeHunt (homehunt.co.uk).

**7 Armagnac, Gascogne**  
You don't need a taste for Armagnac – France's oldest spirit, 700 years and counting – to love this sleepy corner of the south-west. "Starry in terms of rural beauty, Armagnac is the heart of ancient Gascogne, and you find some fabulous old properties, from châteaux to farmhouses, all competitively priced," adds Mark Wilkins of Champions of Gascony.  
**On the market** Six-bedroom converted Gascon farmhouse in Haut Armagnac

with a pool €538,000 (£468,000) with Champions of France (championsofrance.com).

**8 Entre-Deux-Mers, the Gironde**  
"The area between Bordeaux and Entre-Deux-Mers is offering good value at the moment, certainly compared with the Riviera," explains Jelena Cijebkovic of Savills.  
British buyers tend to target properties within striking distance of Bordeaux airport. If they want rural France at its picturesque best, they are spoilt for choice, with vineyards, rolling hills and bastide towns such as Sauveterre and Monsegur.

**On the market** Five-bedroom (pictured below) Maison de Maître in Paris, just south of St Emilion, an hour from Bordeaux €742,000 (£593,000) with Savills (savills.com).

**9 Les Issambres, the Riviera**  
"Nice and St Tropez are world-famous, with prices to match. However, there are plenty of neighbouring towns and villages that are just as charming and far more affordable," says Camille Letreau of Alliance Advisors.  
Les Issambres, near Saint-Maximin, offers particularly good value. South-facing apartments with sea views cost roughly a third of equivalent apartments in St Tropez.

**On the market** Two-bedroom apartments in the Les Cabannes development in Les Issambres, 200 yards from the sea (on €429,000 (£343,000)) with Alliance Advisors (allianceadvisors.co.uk).

**10 Mont Saint-Michel, Normandy**  
You would have thought that an area so revered by tourists as Mont Saint-Michel, on the Normandy coast, would have inflated property prices. It certainly has. Eijay Weitz, of French agents Delamarche

