

MARKET

PROPERTY SUPPLEMENT OF THE YEAR

THE NEXT STEP

Novelist Julie Myerson on the joys of the empty nest p10

NEW HOMES AT NEW LOWER PRICES
How to snap up a designer property at a discount | p4

HAVE YOU HEARD IT ON THE GRAPEVINE?
Why everyone – in the City at least – wants to buy a vineyard | p18

LIVING ON A PRAIRIE
Garden guru Tom Stuart-Smith reveals his new low-maintenance meadow | p32

HOME 22

DORDOGNE

A few minutes drive from the market town of La Roque – an 18th-century chateau in the heart of the Vézère valley – is a perfect place for exploring the area's prehistoric sites. This stone house has three bedrooms and two bathrooms. It has been renovated, but the new owners will probably want to install a better heating system. The property is set in 400 acres of land, with a pool and a few outbuildings, including a walled garden and an orchard with 100 trees. **0670 011 9381, frenchestateagents.com**

€285,000

LIMOUSIN

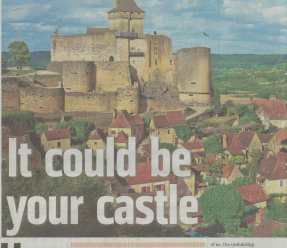
This 19th-century chateau is built on the edge of Comand, a village in the Haute-Vienne – in a parkland, and surrounded by chateau walls in the style of Richard the Lionheart, as well as lakes, trees and forests. It has six bedrooms, a salon with a fireplace, a dining room and a billiard room, but the whole has been renovated. The grounds span more than three acres and there are a three-bedroom caretaker's house. **03323 888122, frenchestateagents.com**

€349,800

BRITTANY

Recently reduced from €324,000, this three-bedroom stone house sits in a picturesque rural setting between the towns of Plouha, Plouha and Landerneau, with easy access to the beaches and ports of St-Malo, Dinan and Dinard. It's in good condition and would make a lovely holiday home – or something more permanent. You'll find more than an acre of garden, with mature trees and a garage. **0670 011 9381, frenchestateagents.com**

€107,000



You could be your castle

As the French exodus from the home market continues to be replaced by the east coast and Marne's house now has a new twist – that the charming folk who you enjoy so much – and turned back by the case – simply want to get on in good at home?

On the one hand, many of you are newly returned from a holiday across the Channel – last year, there were 84.7m international visitors to France – and have already checked up several hours browsing Rightmove. Others, reading that the Channel is not as busy as it once was, are looking to get on in good at home? Or are you simply looking for a property in France – and have already checked up several hours browsing Rightmove. Others, reading that the Channel is not as busy as it once was, are looking to get on in good at home? Or are you simply looking for a property in France – and have already checked up several hours browsing Rightmove.

Les rosiffs are invading France again, thanks to a healthy exchange rate and low mortgage costs. **Emma Wells** looks at the best places to buy, from the Limousin to Languedoc.

"Borrowing costs have fallen in recent months, and mortgage rates are at their lowest in years," says Mark Hodgson, a director at HBS. "Affordability has also been boosted by a shorter property market, as word-of-mouth remains that France may be lagging behind the rest of the continent in terms of economic growth."

All of which means there are bargains to be had. "In the south and 'pays ruraux' are places that have become increasingly popular," says William Pearson, who runs France Property, based in East Sussex. "It's fair to say that a high percentage of homes in France have been owned by their owners for 20 years or more. It's a fair to say that a high percentage of homes in France have been owned by their owners for 20 years or more. It's a fair to say that a high percentage of homes in France have been owned by their owners for 20 years or more."

Buyers who do take the plunge should be in for a real return, too. Research by HolidayLettings.co.uk has shown that inquiries are up, especially in the general rural market. The Côte d'Azur, the Dordogne and the Limousin.

However, it's not all rosy. As always, watch out for hidden costs lurking in the purchase price. They should also factor in the exchange rate fluctuations – and take note of the value of the franc. The franc's value against the pound has fallen by 10% since 2008. This puts many homes in the Limousin and Languedoc regions in the UK for less than they were for a while. The Limousin, however, has seen only slight falls in the same period.

Before 2008, a renovated three-bedroom detached property in some parts of the Dordogne would have sold for about €189,000," says Guy Hibbert, managing director of the French estate agent. "It would fetch about €150,000 – far closer to the average cost of a detached house in France, which has fallen by 10% since 2008. This puts many homes in the Limousin and Languedoc regions in the UK for less than they were for a while. The Limousin, however, has seen only slight falls in the same period."

Brittany

Cost of a similar property in the Limousin, which is now priced at about €180,000. "There's clearly more money available this year, because buyers are targeting the Limousin and purchasing the price-perfect Limousin of France."

Lily Hetherington, a National Three-bedroom, and her husband, David Williams, 52, a charity worker, have long been looking for a house in France. "We both studied the country, population and

BRITTANY AND NORMANDY

With the changing weather we've enjoyed this side of La Manche, there are not here several much in price in leading to France's northwest coast, a more lively big across the Channel over the first Country would have served just as well. Yet France's coastline is not the most popular area for British buyers at the moment – part of a general trend that has seen the firm's sales to British across France rise by 75% since 2012.

French real estate company Savills report that prices in the region have fallen by 2.7% in the past 12 months, falling below the 2008 level. The average price of a three-bedroom house in the region is now €170,000, down from €175,000 in 2012.

For those after a renovation project, the 18th-century stone house in the village of Les Bains is a good option. It has a large garden, a swimming pool and a garage. The house is in good condition and would make a lovely holiday home – or something more permanent. You'll find more than an acre of garden, with mature trees and a garage. **0670 011 9381, frenchestateagents.com**

Brittany is one of the most popular regions for British buyers, with sales up 70% year on year, but prices down 2.7%

Left, the Ashburton, in Devon; middle, the Ashburton, in Devon; right, the Ashburton, in Devon.

Neighbouring Normandy, where prices have dropped by up to 10% since 2008, is a particularly expensive hot spot. The five-bedroom property has high ceilings, fine floors and an excellent location. The house is in good condition and would make a lovely holiday home – or something more permanent. You'll find more than an acre of garden, with mature trees and a garage. **0670 011 9381, frenchestateagents.com**

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LOT-ET-GARONNE

Just south of the Dordogne, the Lot-et-Garonne is a beautiful area with a long history of wine-making. The region is known for its beautiful scenery and its delicious food. The Lot-et-Garonne is a beautiful area with a long history of wine-making. The region is known for its beautiful scenery and its delicious food.

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

"Languedoc-Roussillon, which straddles Provence, has long been popular with buyers looking for a low-cost lifestyle offering services to Carcassonne, Nîmes, Montpellier, and other cities in the region. The region is known for its beautiful scenery and its delicious food. The Languedoc-Roussillon is a beautiful area with a long history of wine-making. The region is known for its beautiful scenery and its delicious food."

COTE D'AZUR

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THE COSE D'AZUR AND PROVENCE

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LOT-ET-GARONNE

This 18th-century house, six miles from the regional capital, Agen, has been completely renovated and modernized, with a particularly impressive roof space. The five-bedroom property has high ceilings, fine floors and an excellent location. The house is in good condition and would make a lovely holiday home – or something more permanent. You'll find more than an acre of garden, with mature trees and a garage. **025 8144 9381, frenchestateagents.com**

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