



By Dominic Connolly

With the simple, pastel-coloured serenity of the house and perfectly manicured lawns and gardens of the grounds, it is somewhat surprising to learn that the owner of this stone farmhouse in Provence is the rock star Eric Clapton.

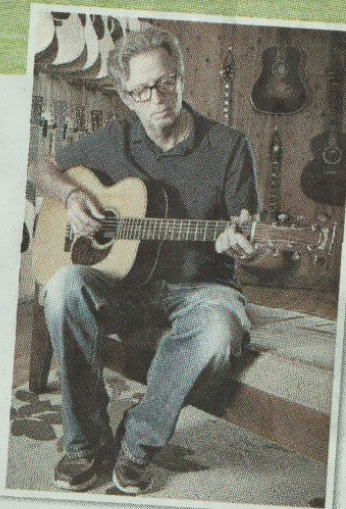
But the writer of hits such as *Wonderful Tonight* and *Layla* bought the ten-bedroom, nine-bathroom home near the village of Nans les Pins 12 years ago as an antidote to life on the road and in the studio. 'The area is so peaceful,' he says. 'It is a perfect place to relax and unwind in complete privacy.'

However, Clapton – who has a grown-up daughter, and three children from his second marriage – is now selling the property, as his schedule has not allowed enough time for him and his family to fully appreciate it. 'In the past few years we have not managed to use the house as much as we would have liked, despite the convenient location from the UK,' he says.

'This house is the type of home to unwind in and enjoy the Provencal pace of life. Work and family commitments in recent times have made it impossible to come and visit for as long as we would really like so we decided it was time to let someone else enjoy its charm.'

Clapton has certainly been busy in the past 12 months. Last summer he released a tribute album to singer-songwriter JJ Cale, called *The Breeze*, before touring Britain and Europe and then going into the studio to record. He has a new compilation album, *Forever Man*, which is available in stores tomorrow, and via his

Heavenly... the hideaway fit for a guitar god



RUSTIC BEAUTY: The property in Provence and Clapton relaxing with his guitar collection

AT A GLANCE

Price	€2.95m (£2.18m)
Location	Nans Le Pins, Provence
Bedrooms	Ten
Unique features	Nine bathrooms, separate two-bedroom annexe, swimming pool, tennis court, boules court, cinema, owned by Eric Clapton

website eric-clapton.com. And he has just played two nights at New York's Madison Square Garden. This Thursday, he also starts a run at London's Royal Albert Hall.

'I have always very much enjoyed the South of France, having visited countless times over the years,' he says. 'Apart from the weather, the scenery and the food, the area holds some great memories for me.'

The property includes an annexe with two large guest rooms with ensuite bathrooms, a double garage, a landscaped garden, lawns, woodland, a lavender field, terraces, a heated swimming pool, a tennis court, a boules pitch, a children's play area and views overlooking the neighbouring countryside.

'The house itself flows very well, it

has lots of space but doesn't feel too large because of the way it is laid out,' Clapton says. 'Although it has ten bedrooms, I can come here on my own and just use a few of the rooms without feeling like I am rattling around. Likewise, we have had large groups of family and friends over on many occasions and everyone can have their own space without being on top of one another.'

'I like the position, the tranquility and the total privacy it offers. Once you get through those gates, it is like entering an oasis of calm. I can really switch off and relax. I will certainly miss the serenity here.'

'The house is in a unique location, on its own, in an unspoilt area a little off the beaten path. The local village is very much a traditional and charming French one which is lively all year round.'

'We are really in the countryside here with no immediate neighbours, but then again, we are not isolated. We are less than an hour from Aix en Provence, Marseilles and Toulon.'

The property is on the market for €2.95million (around £2.18million) having been reduced from €3.25million.

'We would certainly class this authentic farmhouse as a hidden gem,' says Tim Swannie, Director of Home Hunts, the sole agent selling the property.

'The property and the grounds are beautifully presented and it is rare to find one of this size and condition in this area of Provence.'

He says there has been a recent rise in interest in properties in Provence from British-based buyers, which he puts down partly to the strength of the pound and the British economy.

'The fact that Provence property prices have dropped by ten to 15 per cent over the past few years is also a big factor too,' he adds.



ELEGANT: A spacious living room in Clapton's French retreat

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