

Paris

Population: 2.2 million

The capital of France is an architectural feast on the banks of the mighty Seine. Home to some of Europe's most famous galleries and museums, along with cafés, restaurants and romance and much more. Who wouldn't want to call the City of Light home? Find out more: paris.fr



Paris Tourist Office/Amelie Dupont



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Downtown dreaming

If reading about Marseille has given you a taste for city life, **Lynette Eyb** explores four of her French favourites that offer a rich heritage and easy access

Buying property in Paris

Paris, like all great cities, is a sprawling, thriving metropolis, but with the right research, it is possible to find your own slice of Parisian magic.

The city is split into 20 *arrondissements*, the first being the area surrounding the Louvre, with the others numerically spiralling out in a clockwise direction. Generally, the larger the number, the further away the *arrondissement* is located from the city centre.

Property is priced by the square metre, with the overwhelming majority of properties split into apartments. Prices depend on the location and quality of the property, as well as whether it has an elevator, a balcony or access to shared gardens or a courtyard.

One-bedroom apartments start at around 30m², with prices in the

first 10 or 11 *arrondissements* starting at €8,000 or €9,000/m² and going up to more than €15,000/m². It is possible to pick up apartments in outer *arrondissements* for less than €5,000/m², but make sure you consider other factors too, such as lifestyle, safety and the return on your investment.

"Central Paris is very much a high-end buyer's market," says [Hervé Lévy of Home Hunts](#), "with a top-floor apartment with a terrace and Seine views likely to set you back around €1.1m."

He suggests professionals looking for executive properties should start their search in Neuilly-sur-Seine and Levallois-Perret, or on Île de la Jatte.

"Outside of Paris, the St-Germain-en-Laye area with its excellent schools attracts a lot of buyers."



Paris Tourist Office/Marc Bertrand



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Main image: The view across the Paris rooftops **Inset:** Enjoying sports in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower **Above:** Colourful houses on Rue Cremieux in Paris, similar to London's Portobello Road **Below:** Rue des Thermopyles in the 14th 'arrondissement'

Nice

Population: 343,000

Nice, the capital of the decadent French Riviera, is a wonderful mix of ancient and modern, sunshine and sea. It has long been a draw for the rich and famous.

The city has a thriving local economy, built largely on a lucrative maritime industry and the tourism sector that feeds off it. More recently, IT, engineering and real estate have become important sectors. There is also a large expat community. Find out more: nice.fr



CRT Cote d'Azur



CRT Riviera Cote d'Azur/Pierre Behar

Above: Attractive properties nestle around the Baie des Anges in Nice **Below:** Place Massena is the largest square in Vieux Nice

Buying property in Nice

"The property market in Nice is extremely dynamic," says Anne Piolet of Leggett Immobilier. "The holiday rental business is flourishing – Nice is the second most-visited city in France after Paris so it's a good place to invest."

"Nice Carré d'Or, which is the very heart of the city, tends to be the most expensive area, but in general, I would suggest that €250,000-€300,000 is a realistic budget for a two-bedroom apartment in the city," she says.

"The old town and the port are also hugely popular. Good value areas within the city centre include Quartier des Musiciens, Fleurs, Quartier de la Libération and Quartier Tzarévitch.

"Outside the city centre you're looking at €150,000-€200,000 for a two-bedroom apartment, although some areas are cheaper.

The further you go from the sea, the cheaper it will become.

"For gardens, look for pretty villas in areas like St-Pierre-de-Féric and Cimiez, which have houses from €500,000 to €600,000. For cheaper houses and apartments, look at Fabron and La Lanterne. The west should also increase in value with the new tramline in 2017."

Property is priced by the square metre, with the overwhelming majority of properties split into apartments



Lyon

Population: 480,000

UNESCO-listed Lyon, on the banks of the River Rhône, is widely acknowledged as France's gastronomic capital.

The city has been working hard to become one of France's most 'liveable' cities, with efforts being made to return riverfront areas to community use and to adopt sustainable urban planning principles. The city is also home to one of France's largest public bike hire schemes. Find out more: onlylyon.org

Buying property in Lyon

Laurence Husni, of Leggett Immobilier, says there is a large price variation on two-bedroom apartments in the city centre. They can range from around €2,700/m² to more than €5,000 (or €190,000 to over €350,000), depending on the location and quality. In the suburbs, prices can vary from €170,000 to around €235,000.

For houses, expect to pay anything from €250,000 in one of the more affordable suburbs to an entry price of €500,000 in Lyon Croix Rousse, which overlooks the city.

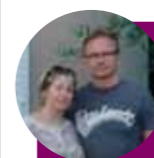
"High-value areas include La Confluence, which has a lot of new developments, the 8th *arrondissement*, which is near the hospitals and universities, and Jean-Macé for student rental and

first-time buyers," she says.

"Cité Internationale near Parc de la Tête d'Or is good for high-end investors as it gives easy access to the centre. At the other end of the market, Vaise is a good investment; many first-time buyers live there as it's not as expensive as the city centre.

"Oullins in the southern suburbs has been recently linked to the Métro and would make a good rental investment for around €2,300/m². Meyzieu is also good value at around €2,400/m² as it's close to St-Exupéry airport and also the new football stadium.

"The most expensive areas remain the Triangle d'Or in the 6th *arrondissement* and Place Bellecour, which have old character apartments for around €6,000/m²."



Rachel Martin-Webb moved to Lyon in 2008

"I'm originally from Southampton but lived for more than 10 years in London where I met and married my French husband. We first moved to Thorigny-sur-Marne near Paris in 2004, and then to Lyon in 2008 for my husband's job. What we like about Lyon is its size – it's much more manageable than Paris. It has quite a good international population because of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and therefore has good international and bilingual schools for our three boys.

"When we first moved here we rented a flat in Ste-Foy-lès-Lyon, which is on the west side, and later found a house in the 5th *arrondissement* to buy. The 5th *arrondissement* is a large area, which covers the centre and climbs up the hill of Fourvière to the west of Lyon. We live up on the hill, which allows us some fresh air in the summer months but we also have quick access to the town centre by bus or car. We are also close to the mountains so it's a great place if you love to ski."



Bordeaux

Population: 236,000

France's wine capital has brushed itself off and dolled itself up in the last decade, transforming itself into a modern, progressive city with a new tramway, restored buildings and a multi-million euro riverfront development that's helped return the streets to the people.

It has a thriving tourism sector, as well as dynamic aviation, education and research sectors. A new TGV link will soon put Bordeaux within two hours of Paris, making it an even more attractive place to do business.

Find out more: bordeaux.fr

Buying property in Bordeaux

"Bordeaux has a centre called the 'Gold Triangle' where prices for a three-bedroom apartment go up to €350,000 or more (that's €5,000/m²)," says Lars Eriksen, of Sextant Properties. "Average prices in the city and suburbs are more likely to be around €3,100/m², or around €217,000.

"You have left bank and right bank, and the right bank is still much cheaper – you may find apartments there as low as €2,500/m², but not often. Houses close to amenities and with

gardens in the suburbs can average €3,000/m².

"Opportunities exist in areas where the new tramline will go, such as Pessac and Merignac, or in Bègles or Villenave d'Ornon, which have improved road access.

"Longer term, I'd look at the northern areas around Bacalan, while at Bassins à Flot there will soon be a luxury marina. The area around the train station is also being improved." ■

home-hunts.com
leggettfrance.com
sextantproperties.com



Main photo: Buzzing Bordeaux has been given a new lease of life in the last decade
Above: The new tram network makes travelling around the city much easier

City buying

- Do your research and target areas that meet your lifestyle needs
- Consider where you will be working and consider transport options to avoid long commutes
- Consider the investment potential in terms of resale and future rental income
- Be realistic in what you will find: for example, parking is rare with city centre properties
- If you're buying an apartment, understand charges and fees relating to the upkeep of the building, and how the building is collectively managed by its owners (the leasehold/freehold title does not exist in France as it does in the UK)

