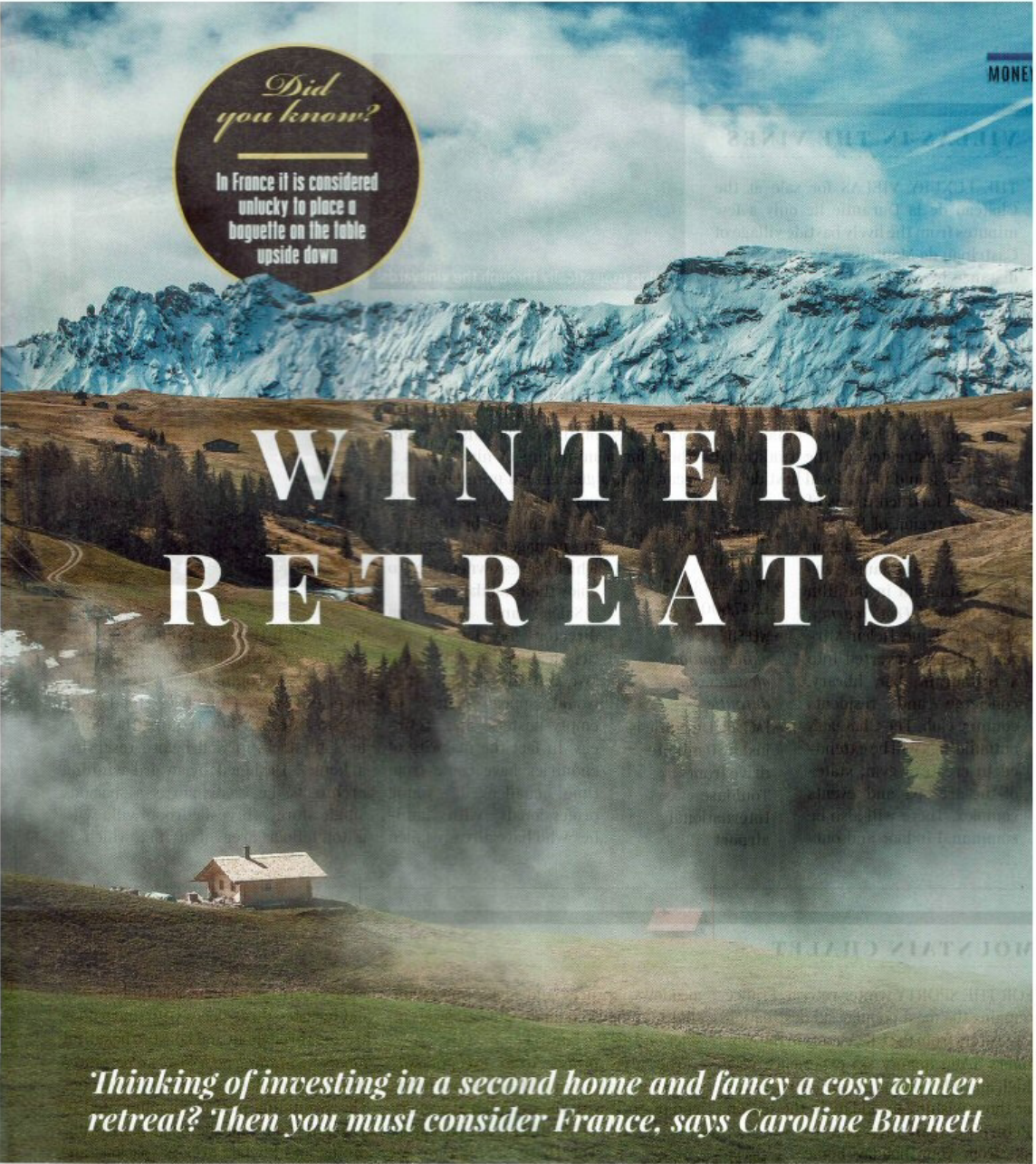


CALIBRE



Did you know?
In France it is considered unlucky to place a baguette on the table upside down

WINTER RETREATS

Thinking of investing in a second home and fancy a cosy winter retreat? Then you must consider France, says Caroline Burnett

If you have been thinking of investing in a second home and like the idea of getting cosy in a luxurious winter retreat this year, then France might be worth considering right now. The local and international economic climate is working in the UK buyers' favour and conditions are good.

Although the exchange rate has fallen since mid-August, the pound remains strong against the euro and British buyers are getting more home for their money now compared to the same time last year. Those currently requiring a mortgage are also onto a good deal as French banks have

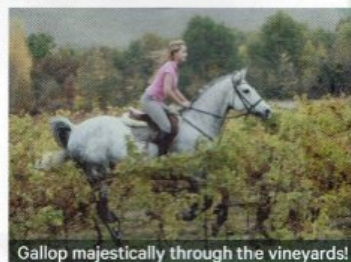
been positively affected by the quantitative easing applied by the European Central Bank to revive the Eurozone market. This means that interest rates remain at an historic low and overseas buyers should be looking at a fixed rate around the 2.5 - 3% mark for a while to come.

Potential buyers must remember the process of searching for a second home can be daunting and time consuming if they do not know the language, the specific region - or the French legal system! So, whether you are looking to buy, or just window shopping, here are three very different homes for you to cast your eyes upon. ➔

VILLAS IN THE VINES

THE LUXURY VILLAS for sale at the Château de la Durantie lie only a few minutes from the lively bastide village of Castelnaud de Montmiral. Within a short distance by car are the towns of Gaillac, Cordes and Albi - a medieval jewel on the river Tarn. And Toulouse, with its sophisticated boulevards of shops and restaurants, is under an hour away and easily accessible for commuters.

For those seeking hassle-free family luxury for less, these new-build villas will be constructed of the traditional rose brick found in the local bastide villages and fortified towns of the Tarn region of the Midi-Pyrénées. The Chateau, which was the Le Saule Pleureur restaurant in the film *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, starring Dame Helen Mirren, will be converted into a restaurant, bar, library, concierge and residents country club. The Chateau's outbuildings will be extended to create a gym, state-of-the-art spa and events complex. There will also be communal indoor and out-



Gallop majestically through the vineyards!

door pools, tennis courts, a children's play area and an amphitheatre.

Builder, La Durantie, is offering a nine-year leaseback scheme on these properties for those who wish to rent them for a minimum of nine weeks a year, with a guaranteed minimum 2.6% net return. Homes will be fully-managed by the on-site management company, which leaves owners free to enjoy their holiday time.

Sales and marketing director for La Durantie, Jeanne Boden, says: "We initially thought they would appeal mainly to empty-nesters and retirees. In fact the majority of enquiries have come from time challenged, young professionals with families who have already fallen

- » WHERE: La Durantie, The Tarn
- » PRICE: €473,685 / £347,600
- » WEBSITE: akinternationalestates.com/durantie
- » FACT: La Durantie is just a 50 minute drive from Toulouse International airport



Villa, vineyard, all you need to bring is the va-va-voom.

in love with the area while on holiday, but often find it difficult to find suitable luxury accommodation - especially in peak season. Our buyers tend to be very astute, so they require the numbers to stack-up well before reserving a home." Designed by award-winning architects, Le Castelnaud is a spacious single storey, three-bedroom villa with a total floor area of 104m², which is

accessed through an outer courtyard with attractive views along the pool to the landscaped rear garden. Two of the three bedrooms are doubles with en-suites and the third bedroom is suitable as a children's bunkroom with an adjacent shower room. Le Castelnaud is fitted with a modern kitchen and a cathedral ceiling to the open-plan living areas, which helps give this property a bright-airy feel, with bi-fold doors leading you seamlessly from inside to out.

MOUNTAIN CHALET

FOR THE SPORTY winter retreat, France remains the most popular ski destination for visitors from the UK. A home in the Alps offers a top quality ski experience with high altitude options for the adventurous, or those wishing to ski late in the season. Returning year after year to ski from your holiday home should never get tiresome as the Portes du Soleil has twelve linked resorts either side of the French-Swiss border, just an hour from Geneva. This allows skiers to venture from valley to valley or even from country to country!

This natural powder reserve offers skiers unspoiled surroundings, mountain lifts that keep a low profile amid snow-bound forests, and pistes that wind their way through snow

meadows, spruces and idyllic mountain chalets. This ski domain suits all levels of skier and all the family.

The area profits from exceptionally good snowfall from mid-November to the end of April with the exceptional scenery of Mont Blanc as a backdrop. For those wishing to get good usage from their holiday home, Les Gets is also popular in spring and summer and hosts many downhill mountain biking events and other sports.

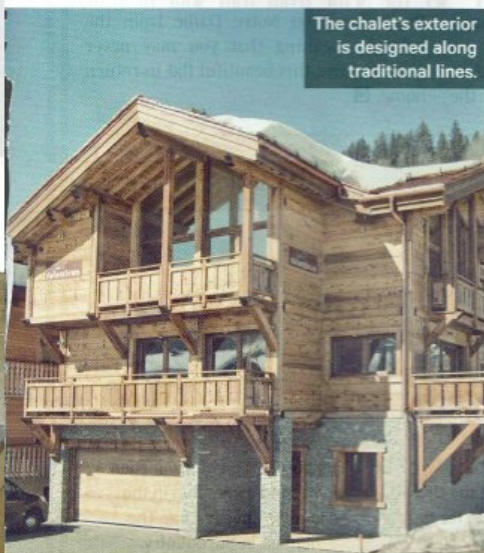
Located in Les Gets town with easy access to the chair lifts, this superb quality chalet is unique in character. The quintessential chalet exterior gives way to quirky interior spaces, which have a touch of humour to them.

- » WHERE: Les Gets, The Alps
- » PRICE: €2.59m / £1.9m
- » WEBSITE: home-hunts.com
- » FACT: French ski resorts are easily accessible by driving, which can be economical and allows you to transport plenty of equipment!

This south facing home was built in 2013 and includes three floors with underfloor heating throughout and boasts a beautiful indoor swimming pool that can be viewed from the glass floor in the master bedroom. The swimming pool is complimented by a steam room and the open-plan living, dining and kitchen area is spacious and well equipped. This is the perfect home for those who like entertaining guests, since it also has its very own wine cellar! ➤

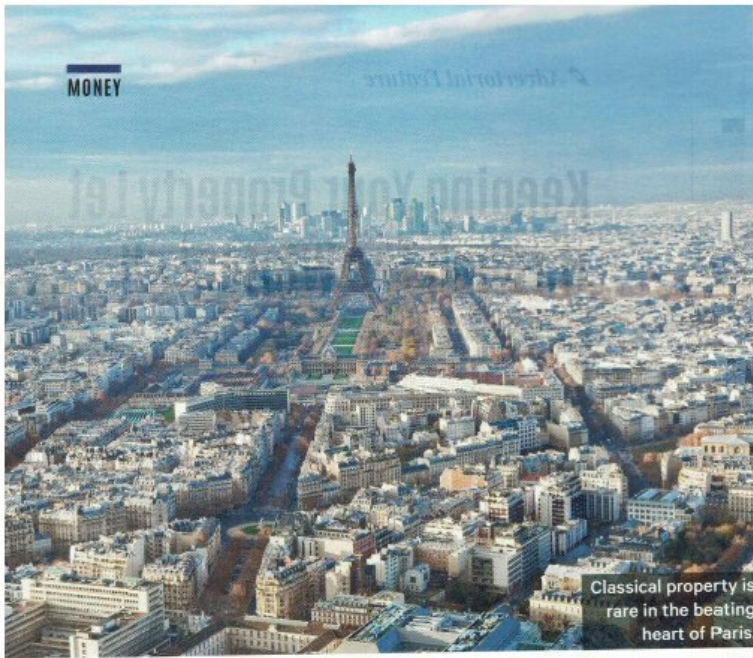


The ideal place to relax after a day on the slopes.



The chalet's exterior is designed along traditional lines.

MONEY



Classical property is rare in the beating heart of Paris.



This traditional property has a modern trappings.



PARIS PAD

THIS PROPERTY PROVIDES you with the rare opportunity to own a home on the coveted Quai des Grands Augustins - located along the Seine, on the Left Bank, in the esteemed 6th district, between Saint Michel Bridge and Pont Neuf.

The sixth arrondissement, which includes the historic district of Saint-Germain-des-Prés has a concentration of some of Paris's most famous monuments such as Saint-Germain Abbey, St Sulpice Church, the Pont des Arts and the Jardins du Lux-

embourg. It is also well known for its café culture and has been home to revolutionary intellectualism and literature. It is a major area for art galleries and one of the most fashionable districts of Paris as well as being the most expensive area to boot.

- » WHERE: 6th arrondissement, Paris
- » PRICE: €4.9m/£3.6m
- » WEBSITE: home-hunts.com
- » FACT: Reach this central Paris pad by Eurostar in just two hours - it is the ultimate cultural winter retreat

The Quai des Grands Augustins is easily reached by Metro directly from Eurostar's terminus at Gare Du Nord or St Michel. This three-bedroom apartment (261m²) is positioned on the top floor of this elegant French building, and the

expansive living space very much has the feel of a house due to its four orientations. The property is in perfect condition and consists of a large living room, a dining room, a library, a large fitted kitchen and four bedrooms with their own bathrooms.

An extra bonus of this home is the guest apartment which is accessed via the pretty exterior 52m² terrace, so you can easily invite your friends and extended family over to enjoy your festive celebrations.

Its prime location means that you can see the Seine from your sofa, or watch the sun set on Notre Dame from the balcony, meaning that you may never want to leave this beautiful flat to return home. ☐

FRENCH PROPERTY STATS

french-property.com

11%

Over the seven year period up to 2014 the average price of rural property fell by around 11%, from €179,100 to €159,800.

300K

France manages to deliver around 300,000 new homes a year, twice as many as are built in the UK. Perhaps George Osborne should be reaching for the number of his French cohort to find out how!

45%

The percentage of properties in second ownership in the Hautes-Alpes is 45%. The highest in the country.

*Investors should remember that the value of investments, and the income from them, can go down as well as up. Investors may not receive what they invest. *Figures are based on data from the French Property Council.