

PLUS
25-page
Living
France
section

ISSUE 369
NOVEMBER 2021

FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

HOST WITH THE MOST

Do you have what it takes to run a bar in France?

EXPERT ADVICE

Guide to integration

Specialist surveys

French inheritance

Free wifi boosts

Living in Brittany

BLOOD, SWEAT AND ROSÉ
From dilapidated old château to award-winning guesthouse

PROPERTIES FOR ALL BUDGETS

completefrance.com
francepropertyshop.com



€74,000
Brittany



€163,043
Limousin



€304,500
Charente

€4.75





© CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

FPN

The coastline of Occitanie stretches over four departments - the Pyrénées-Orientales, Aude, Hérault and Gard - and 220km of beaches.

Six of these golden kilometres belong to the resort of St-Cyprien, which also offers a striking backdrop to the Pyrénées, including the silvery summit of Mount Canigou at 2,784m. Rudyard Kipling described Mount Canigou as a “magician among mountains” while Catalan poet Jacint Verdaguer compared it to an “immense magnolia” surrounded by fairies. And this feeling that the mountain radiates something quite magical or other-worldly is part of what makes St-Cyprien feel like such a special place.

SUNSHINE COAST

It is fitting, too, that this area is in a section of the Côte Vermeille (which stretches from Argelès-sur-Mer, to Cerbère) called the Côte Radieuse, or radiant coast. From water sports (such

Radiant resort

Frances Marcellin visits sunny St-Cyprien, an Occitan beach resort where magic, mountains and modern urban design mix on the Mediterranean



as sailing and jet skiing) in the Mediterranean Sea and local lagoons, to its very own Aqualand and fairground, as well as endearing neighbouring towns like Canet, Collioure and Argèles, St-Cyprien is a holiday destination for all.

“St Cyprien and its surrounding areas have a lot to offer,” says Valérie Tavernier of the Beautiful South estate agency. “Long sandy beaches, the Mediterranean lifestyle, outdoor markets, restaurants, bars - the list goes on. But it is not only a coastal village, as there is also the proper village with its typical Catalan architecture, which is lively all year round.”

“Long sandy beaches, the Mediterranean lifestyle, markets, the list goes on”

PERFECT POSITION

As I am based in Tarn in France (an hour from Toulouse), I’ve visited St-Cyprien several times over the years, and each time the area has visibly improved. From where I live it is a 2h30 car journey to get there, passing through Carcassonne (1h30 from St-Cyprien), Narbonne, Sigean and Perpignan. Visitors should know that there is an African safari park at Sigean (50

minutes from St-Cyprien) and a zoo with over 3,800 animals, including rhinos and lions.

St-Cyprien is also well positioned for travel to Spain, at just 15 minutes from the border. It’s a journey of about 2h30 to Barcelona and 1h30 to the nearest ski resorts.

AFFORDABLE PRICES

It is hardly surprising then that, in parallel with the

Learn more about the regions of France

completefrance.com/regions-of-france



A market stall in St-Cyprien



Water slides at the Al Fresco Holidays park



The Pyrénées form a backdrop to St-Cyprien

luxury properties in the area too, many of which are not staying on the market for long.

“Properties are in demand from northern Europeans - and from continents further afield - who want a sunny escape,” says Phil Rees, a consultant for luxury buyers’ agency Home Hunts. “The area offers a beach retreat combined with the mountain air, routes to Spain and a more relaxed authentic feel than some other parts of southern France.”

DISTINCT DISTRICTS

While the area has three distinctive zones - the port, the village and the beach (St-Cyprien Plage) - property website *Bienici.com* divides St-Cyprien into eight different neighbourhoods. Those closest to the beach are Le Port, Plage de la Lagune, Plage de l’Art and L’Aygual-Golf.

Valérie, at Beautiful South agency, says that one of the most sought-after areas is

3 REASONS TO BUY HERE

It’s one of the more affordable places on the Mediterranean

Long sandy beaches and a magical mountain backdrop

A constantly improving environment with other appealing resorts nearby as well as Spain

for kids (such as climbing and treasure hunts) and adults (including concerts and yoga).

The Port district begins at the top of La Lagune and continues up to Boulevard Aristide Maillol, the main road leading up to the beach. The ample parking here is very helpful if you are driving to the beach with young children. This road also leads to a space that is busy with restaurants and adjoining terraces for lunch and dinner, as well as a beach playground.

The Plage de l’Art extends north from this Boulevard up to Chemin d’Al Roure and sitting behind it is the L’Aygual-Golf neighbourhood, which spreads out below the beautiful Étang (or lagoon) de Canet and down to La Prade, St-Cyprien’s park.

This *quartier* is where you’ll find St-Cyprien’s golf club. “St-Cyprien holds the only international, 27-hole golf course of the area,” says Valérie. “It is really in demand among golfers around the world ▶

La Lagune, which starts just below the port and extends down to Avenue des Champs de Neptune. It is known for its open green spaces and is home to St-Cyprien’s five-hectare Jardin des Plantes. This garden has 800 different species of plants, and hosts summer entertainment and activities

booming French property market, properties here are selling quickly and are more in demand than ever before.

“We have noticed that there are fewer properties for sale as there is a lot of demand,” says Valérie. “The buyers are mostly French, as the lockdown hasn’t really allowed foreigners to come, but we have noticed that since the travel restrictions have changed, our clientele is turning to northern Europeans.”

House prices and the number of sales have been climbing in France since 2015, indicating that bricks and mortar here is a solid investment and even pandemic-proof. Despite this, it is still possible to pick up a property by or close to the beach in St-Cyprien for under €200,000 (some studios are less than €100,000), and, if you look carefully, there are apartments in this price range that come with sea views.

For buyers with a more generous budget there are plenty of higher-priced and

On the market

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€949,000: Contemporary four-bed villa near golf course in 2,200m² grounds with saltwater pool, summer kitchen and two car ports (home-hunts.com)



€95,000: In the Lagune area, a studio apartment in excellent condition in a secure condominium with parking, pool and caretaker (laforet.com)



€321,000: In neighbouring Collioure, an off-plan one-bed apartment with sea view, aircon and option to purchase garage or parking (leggettfrance.com)

as it is set in a superb natural and preserved environment with Canigou mountain views, as well as being close to the sea.”

Just across from the park in St-Cyprien lies Le Soleil de la Méditerranée, a five-star Al Fresco Holidays (alfresco-holidays.com) campsite and holiday village that is 1km from St-Cyprien beach. This is where I stayed with my family (husband, three young children and baby) over the summer and it was an excellent base from which to enjoy all that St-Cyprien has to offer, as well as explore the neighbouring towns. It would work well as a place for buyers to stay when doing area research and property viewings.

“St-Cyprien and the surrounding area is vastly popular, with multiple things to do for all families, not to mention retired couples who often choose to have a second home or retire there,” says Mike McDowell, contracting manager, at Al Fresco Holidays. If you do stay here, you might not need to visit Aqualand as well, because there are three pools - one was a water playground - and five waterslides (three medium-sized and two giant).

MODERN MED

One of the stand-out aspects of St-Cyprien is the development of urban architecture in the town. Great efforts have been made to create functional, aesthetically pleasing street furniture, such as concrete and wood seating by water taps to wash sand off feet after the beach. There are also collections of fixed, curved sunbeds that are overlooked by tall, angular streetlights, and spherical bicycle racks. Even the roundabouts are eye-catching in St-Cyprien, most of which include unique landscaping designs and uncommon water features.

Valérie says that the St-Cyprien *commune* leads an active policy to “join both preservation of its natural and building heritage and the new expectations for wide open space, aesthetic urban furniture and structures”. Some of this design would not



Caliente Beach Club - St-Cyprien's answer to Cannes

be out of place in Bordeaux. Yet have a night out at the Caliente restaurant and beach club and you could be in Cannes. The restaurant's decking extends out onto the beach where tables, chairs and wooden parasols mingle with exotic purple flowers and palm trees and on warm summer nights a path leads guests down to the sea shore.

In fact, the entire area is being improved. Take northern neighbour Canet-en-Roussillon. The port area near the Canet Beach Club has been developed and a stunningly beautiful aquarium, called Oniria (oniria.fr), has just launched. Enormous tanks containing hundreds of different varieties of marine life, including sharks, moray eels and lion fish are on every floor (an outdoor aquarium

overlooks the port) and each visit helps fund the company's research into coral reef protection and climate change.

Just a few minutes west of here on foot a new district called Port Alizés (port-alizes.com) has been developed to offer new modern apartments, such as Residence Blue Eden, which contains 76 new apartments on four hectares of unspoilt land by a lagoon, less than 2km from the beach.

Some 10km south of St-Cyprien, Argelès-sur-Mer has also been pedestrianised and revitalised with an expansive no-car zone, beachside cafes and an outdoor art gallery. A few minutes further and the famous craggy coastline of Collioure sits in all her glory - perfect for summer day trips. Owning a property nearby means you can have the

Collioure experience without the price tag.

For buyers wishing to invest in second homes, there is more good news. The summer season here can be longer than in other coastal resorts, which maximises rental income.

“Typically, we get a longer season in this area due to the climate but also the fact that the Mediterranean appeals to multiple markets beyond the British and Irish,” says Mike, of Al Fresco Holidays, explaining that it's also popular with Dutch, German, Polish and Danish tourists. “All guests, however, come for the sun, beaches, culture, gastronomy and warm welcome from the locals,” he adds. ■

home-hunts.com
beautifulsouth66.com
alfresco-holidays.com

On the market

FIND MORE PROPERTIES ON FRANCEPROPERTYSHOP.COM



€1.99m: Unique glass cube-style property perched on the marina, with private pontoon, mountain views, three suites, pool and 751m² gardens (home-hunts.com)



€129,000: A stroll from the beach, a marina apartment on the second (top) floor with one bedroom, mezzanine sleeping area and fine views (lafort.com)



€970,000: Near the beach and golf course, a spacious home with three bedrooms, billiard room, pool and garage in 1,341m² grounds (home-hunts.com)