

The Guardian  
Saturday September 13, 2003

## Is there still such a thing as a cheap home in France?

Yes, says Judith Lamer, if you know which regions offer the best bargains

- 1 - The dream of owning a second home in France has turned into reality for hundreds of thousands of people in Britain. Abbey National estimates the figure at more than half a million and the demand for accessible homes has pushed prices in parts of the country out of the reach of many. David Wells  
5 - of Abbey National France says the Cote d'Azur is still the most popular with UK buyers. Prices rose 9% over the past year with the average property costing £232,000.

- In the Dordogne, prices rose 12% over the past year pushing the cost of the average house to around £161,000. The French are also being priced out,  
10 - and newspapers across the Channel are exhorting people to look at areas where homes in picturesque locations away from the coast can still be found for less than £50,000.

- Bargain hunters head for the Limoges and Aveyron in central France and northern parts of the Auvergne. Even in popular areas such as Brittany and  
15 - Normandy there are still bargains. One French estate agent says 65% of rural properties in Normandy are bought by the English.

- Maurice Lazarus of UK-based Domus Abroad points money-conscious buyers in the direction of southern Brittany. "It very attractive," he says, "with lovely countryside. You can buy a habitable house from £50,000. It is  
20 - also well-served with Ryanair from Brest and ferry services from St Malo."

- If Brittany is the French Cornwall, then Mayenne is Devon. It's a 90-minute drive from St Malo and is popular with French second home-owners because of its proximity to Paris - just an hour and 20 minutes by high-speed train. Cheap flights by EasyJet and Ryanair are opening up many  
25 - regions.

- Central France is not for everyone. It's extremely rural and unsophisticated. Most people, when they buy a second home, are looking for somewhere with easy access to a major town or a region that is famous for producing something, wine or cheese, etc. Central France could come as a shock. If  
30 - you live in Western Scotland you may feel at home, but people from a city could feel isolated.