

# HOMES FROM HOME

Looking for an outstanding holiday home in France? **Glynis Shaw** discovers five inspiring properties across the country that are ideal second homes or holiday rentals

## Catalan character

On the lower slopes of the Pyrénées, the peaceful Catalan village of Vives has elegant tall buildings with narrow façades on tree-lined roads, while the central square is filled with the buzz of cafés and a 12th-century church.

There are also a number of restaurants proud of their gourmet traditions, including one with a Michelin star. A swimming lake is nearby and the Mediterranean coast is just half an hour's drive away, with a highlight being the port of Collioure, while the Spanish border is a few miles to the west.

This three-storey, three-bedroom house is just off the square, and its

stone walls, roof tiles and shutters are typical of the local architectural character. That character has been carefully maintained during renovations, with its tiled ground floor and original oak beams. The main living area is on the second floor, where a large kitchen-diner and living room with log-burning fire both have access to a terrace with rooftop views.

The house is clearly in an appealing location for holidays and lettings, and as the area enjoys an average of 300 days of sunshine a year, there is potential for year-round use or a long winter let.

£150,000

## Pyrenean views

The small village of Hères lies close to the River Adour at the northern tip of the Hautes-Pyrénées department. Agriculture dominates the landscape, with fields full of maize, sunflowers and vines, and farms of ducks, cattle and pigs. This is a landscape of hills and valleys with atmospheric *bastide* villages on the hills.

The one inescapable feature is the Pyrenean mountains, which stretch from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, acting as a granite frontier between France and Spain.

Off a narrow rustic lane in Hères village, Maison Lavande was built 150 years ago and would originally have been a *paysan's* home. It now consists of a three-bedroom house

and a detached two-bedroom cottage, which was probably once a forge. Both are well established as holiday lets. Outside is a walled garden with a sunny terrace and pool. The charming buildings have been constructed from rounded river stones from the Adour valley, so have a close link with the landscape.

The property lies about one hour from Pau airport and 40 minutes from Lourdes-Tarbes. €299,900





## Dordogne farmhouse

In this south-western area of France, nature and man seem to have conspired to create an overwhelmingly alluring combination. The temperate climate, picturesque villages, pastoral farmland, winding rivers and rich, fascinating history – together with renowned wines and cuisine – has made it a popular destination for scores of visitors.

The village of St-Pierre-de-Frugie lies at the heart of lush Périgord Vert, within the Parc Naturel Régional Périgord-Limousin, and is home

to around 400 inhabitants, including artists and potters. The beautifully preserved stone buildings are topped by steeply sloping tiled roofs with verges of grasses and flowers.

There are few amenities but it is just a five-minute drive from La Coquille's shops, *boulangeries* and restaurants. This combination of peace and accessibility are very much



part of the appeal of Les Landes, a converted Dordogne farmhouse and barn with its own swimming pool and surrounded by grassland and woodland that stretches for almost two acres.

The five-bedroom farmhouse has been renovated to expose the bare walls and wooden beams and has a spacious lounge and kitchen. An outbuilding

that used to house a bread oven is now the pool house, and there is also a summerhouse and attractive timber structure housing a covered games area.

Les Landes offers all the facilities needed for both a relaxing holiday home and a holiday let to accommodate families and groups.

€249,000

The village oozes rural charm, with preserved stone buildings topped by steeply sloping tiled roofs and verges of grasses and flowers



## Normandy longère

The traditional *longère* farmhouse is one of the most typical and popular styles of countryside property in France, and this handsome example lies in the south of the Manche department of Normandy, the small peninsula with the port of Cherbourg at its northern tip and Mont St-Michel in the west.

Le Pertuis is surrounded by gentle Norman countryside, a place of cows and apple orchards, close to the flourishing market town of St-Hilaire-du-Harcouet. It was originally owned by the mother of a local farmer, who lived in a small part of the house, now the lounge and hall. There was an attached stable, now the kitchen, and a further barn which has become the dining room and mezzanine.

The first floor used to be a grain store and has now been converted into bedrooms and bathrooms and to the end of

the building is an area constructed from wattle and daub. The asymmetric combination of stone, timber beams and whitewash lends great architectural charm, with the agricultural roots of Le Pertuis reflected in the adjoining land, used as an orchard for apples to make calvados.

This property has four bedrooms, half an acre of land with ample parking and a garden, so it would be ideal as both a holiday home and a holiday let, especially as it is for sale fully furnished and equipped. There is also an unrenovated barn for conversion to a two-bedroom gîte, or perhaps an indoor swimming pool. ■

€240,000



## Renovation potential

In the rural Deux-Sèvres department of Poitou-Charentes, it's still possible to pick up beautiful rustic buildings for renovation or conversion at bargain prices.

This really is *la France profonde*: a delight for walkers and nature lovers, especially those who like to be near water, as the fascinating green waterways of the *Marais Poitevin* are nearby, while the Atlantic coast is about an hour's drive away.

This barn has the potential to be a four-bedroom house, with the garden able to take a pool, terraced area and vegetable plot, while the cottages opposite offer an opportunity for renovation into holiday lets (one large or two

smaller gîtes). Water and electricity have been connected, there is a septic tank and one of the houses has been partially converted.

The property reflects a traditional rural style and is located near the market town of Chef-Boutonne, which is surrounded by rolling fields and expanses of woodland. The town is close to four airports: Angoulême, La Rochelle, Poitiers and Limoges. TGV trains go to Poitiers and the ferry ports of Caen and St-Malo are an easy drive. £79,950

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