

**On the market**

**Béarnaise house with guest house and barn**

This traditional Béarnaise house is situated in Pyrénées-Atlantiques, at the eastern end of the mountain range, towards the Atlantic coast. It's close to the village of L'Hôpital-d'Orion, which has a fine stone church, restaurants and a sense of community, and it's about an hour and a half's drive to the Atlantic beaches around Biarritz and the ski resort of La Pierre St Martin in the Parc National des Pyrénées. Set in 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of land with mountain views, the property has been lovingly restored, using original materials where possible. The main house has a large lounge and two to three bedrooms plus two terraces. The guest house, which is ideal for letting, has two bedrooms and its own private terrace. There is also a barn with potential for conversion.

**HOME WITH INCOME**  
**€488,000**



**An grand home with gite and B&B potential**

With a grand entrance and Juliet balcony, this four-bed house in Arthez-de-Béarn is within easy reach of the Atlantic coast and Pyrenean ski resorts including Col d'Aubisque, Gavarnie and Gourette, as well as the city of Pau which offers museums, restaurants and the famous Boulevard des Pyrénées, with its breathtaking views of the mountains. Set in just under two hectares of land, with a large barn, stables and a pool, the main house is in move-in condition and there is potential to convert the lot space and outbuildings for gites or B&B.

**DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**  
**€399,000**



with a preserved natural environment and a very French feel in the laid-back resorts. Ski lifts and restaurants are much cheaper than in the Alps and there is great, authentic local food to enjoy too.

Skiing here can be attractive to mature couples, along with families with small children, as the nursery slopes are very user-friendly. A holiday with varied activity options can also appeal to mixed generations and interests, where some members of the party want to make the most of the slopes, while others prefer to relax, walk or go sightseeing. Visitors appreciate museums and galleries during the winter months, along with places of historical interest, Christmas markets and festive celebrations.

Owners who want to market this type of winter break at their property should highlight the varied activities in their online listing. Spell out the type of holiday, show great photos of views of the mountains and the ski slopes and villages in winter, and suggest an extended stay if you want to offer long winter lets. You can also leave information in the property to encourage summer guests to re-book for winter.

Visit the ski villages yourself and emphasise their appeal to potential visitors – beautiful scenery, great value for money, easy accessibility from the property. Specify whether the property is available for Christmas and the New Year and, if you are offering long winter lets, get yourself listed in the relevant section of your host website.

If you are looking for a property to buy as a holiday let, then this is an area that offers generally good weather and a wonderfully



varied lifestyle. Visits to the coast, trips over the border to explore northern Spain, easy city breaks to Carcassonne and Toulouse, a wealth of local history and tradition, along with varied cuisine and wine varieties, mean you can enjoy the best of all worlds. ■

*Donna Sloane is general manager of French Connections holiday rentals and property sales online*

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# Season to taste

Skiing in France doesn't just mean the Alps – the Pyrénées have plenty to offer too, especially if you're keen to invest in a holiday let with year-round appeal, says **Donna Sloane**

The Alps may have become synonymous with skiing in France but they are by no means the only French location with great ski slopes and attractive ski villages. The Pyrénées mountains, in the south and south-west, provide a real opportunity for owners of holiday lets to offer skiing as part of a different, more varied winter holiday. In this area visitors can ski as well as enjoy winter sun and fascinating places – and owners can benefit from an appealing and varied lifestyle too.

There are many beautiful locations within around an hour's drive of the Pyrénées ski villages – and many of them are well established as great summer destinations. Locations that are accessible to Perpignan,

Céret, Lourdes, Pau, even Bayonne and Biarritz, may also be within easy reach of the Pyrénées slopes. Owners of some properties that thrive here in summer also offer their accommodation for winter sunshine holidays or long winter lets. The option for visitors to spend a couple of days skiing as part of that break adds an extra appeal.

In this article, we feature a holiday let close to the Mediterranean coast and discover what the owners love about owning and letting in the area and skiing in the Pyrénées. We also look at two properties for sale within striking distance of both France's Atlantic coast and the mountains, which both have the potential for holiday letting.

## Best of both

The Pyrénées mountains run from west to east along the French border with Spain and the ski resorts are mainly located within three national parks – Parc National Pyrénées, Parc National des Pyrénées Ariégeoises and Parc Naturel des Pyrénées Catalanes. All have ski resorts of varying sizes and all the resorts are accessible within about 90 minutes from an extensive surrounding area.

This means that winter visitors can enjoy a varied stay that includes days on the ski slopes along with strolling in sunshine and other attractions such as the coast, historic places and beautiful scenery. Not that the ski areas are short on scenery – this is an unspoilt region

## A year-round villa in Catalan country

"I love winter at our villa," enthuses Toni Howarth. "We can have breakfast on the terrace looking at snow-capped mountains, then drive to one of nine different ski resorts within an hour, spend about four hours skiing and come home to a blazing log fire in time for dinner."

El Couloumer (ID 147443), the three-bedroom villa that Toni and husband Michael bought in 2007, sits on the edge of the hilltop Pyrenean village of Arboussols, surrounded by vineyards and woodland with outstanding views of Mount Canigou. Arboussols is in the picturesque Tet valley in Pyrénées-Orientales, in the heart of the Catalan region.

El Couloumer sleeps six, has a solar-heated swimming pool and is popular for summer lets. It's a 30-minute drive west of Perpignan on the Mediterranean coast and the beaches of Canet, Argelès and St-Cyprien and the pretty port of Collioure are all 50 minutes away.

For winter visitors, the ski resorts of Les Angles and Font-Romeu in the Parc Naturel des Pyrénées Catalanes



are about a 45-minute drive away.

"All the ski resorts have a different personality," explains Toni. "Les Angles is popular and probably busiest, although still a village. There are 45 ski runs on open slopes



and through pine forests and the runs go right down to the edge of the village too.

"Font-Romeu is lovely – it

has slopes for beginners and children, great snow machines and plenty of culture and entertainment. I also like Formigüères because it is a quieter ski destination and a pretty village between the mountains and a lake.

"The resorts open in November and skiing is usually great in February and March – even up to Easter. We are happy to offer our villa to holidaymakers during the winter months so they can share all that we love about the area – the skiing, beaches, lakes.

"There's so much here. Although we've had the property for nine years, we still haven't visited all the places or done all the things that we want to!"