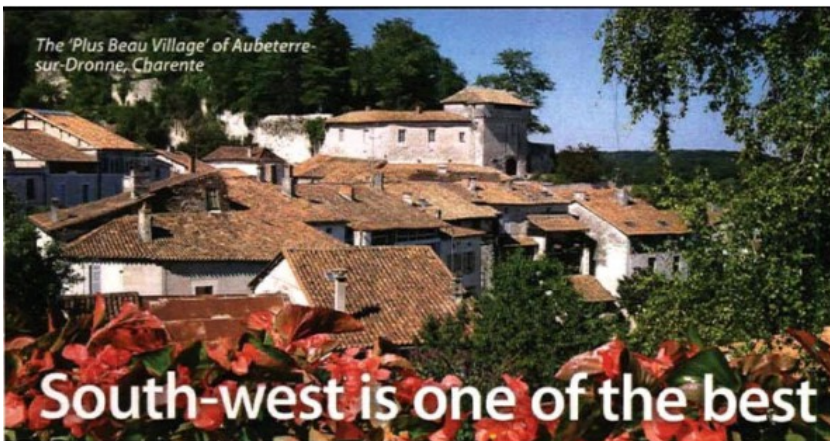


FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS



South-west France is enjoying a surge of interest from househunters, according to data from several market reports.

The spring 2016 report from estate agency **Home Hunts** (home-hunts.com) declares the former regions of Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées as one of its prime market hotspots and one of the most coveted by clients, with significant interest in country properties within half an hour's drive of Bordeaux. This is likely to grow following the recently announced direct TGV to the city from Paris, expected to operate from next year. The report highlights Dordogne and Lot as particularly popular departments, the former with its ever-growing expat community – thus an attractive place to set up gîtes or a *chambres d'hôtes* – and the latter offering greater space and privacy, and a distinct lack of “quality small hotels” according to Home Hunts' south-west consultant, Rory Ramsden. Clients are also expressing interest in vineyard properties, which are in plentiful supply around Bordeaux in the Entre Deux Mers.

Further south in the old province of Gascony (encompassing the department of Gers), towns such as Condom, Lectoure and Fleurance are attracting considerable interest, with a mixed buyer profile – Brits, Americans, Australians, Danes, Germans and also the French – mostly seeking renovated farmhouses or *maisons de maître*. “There are some stunning properties on the market in Gers that could work either as a permanent home or as somewhere to spend just a few weeks in the summer,” Rory explains. Gascony is equally coveted by clients of Knight Frank (knightfrank.co.uk), whose most recent market report dedicates an entire section to the area with its reported 11.4% of second homes. Dubbed the ‘French Tuscany’ by property expert Zoe Dare Hall, the area boasts all that is worshipped about rural France: “There are no waiting lists for restaurant tables and no traffic jams, just old-world courtesy, a lack of pretension and an appreciation of the simple, but very fine, things in life.” Market towns within a 90-minute drive of Toulouse

This lovely Gascon house 10 minutes' drive from Condom boasts five bedrooms plus outbuildings, pool and tennis court, as well as an established gîte to bring in an income – €580,000 (my-french-house.com)

airport are most sought after with the agency's clients, including Marciac, Mirande, Vic Fezensac and Lectoure – and Gascony's proximity to the coast for seaside activities and to the Pyrénées for skiing adds to its appeal.

Results from the latest Rightmove Overseas report also corroborate the surge of interest in south-west France. Aubeterre-sur-Dronne in the department of Charente (bordering Dordogne) has been highlighted in the top 10 climbers within the destinations searched for on the site, moving up by 729 places within a month, representing a 330.82% increase. The town came in at number three in the top 10 trending searches, showing a particularly consistent positive performance. One of France's *Plus Beaux Villages*, Aubeterre is 100km north-east of Bordeaux and has just over 400 residents.