



Champagne Châteaux

For discerning dreamers

Nothing captures the true flavour of France more than a charismatic château surrounded by the most glorious countryside. And with investment in the French real estate market offering fantastic value, it really is the perfect time to make that property dream come true. The Good Property Guide's great friend and renowned château expert Sarah Francis has discovered a couple of gems in the newly named Aquitaine-Limousin-Poitou Charentes region we think you'll love.

The first of these stunning properties is in the Dordogne in the Périgord Vert bordering on the Vienne to the North – and is south of the Loire Valley and north of the Pyrenees. The department takes its name from the great Dordogne River running through it. Its prefecture in Périgueux, is famous for quality cuisine, excellent wine, postcard villages, cave art, picturesque greenery and colourful history. With an asking price of €2,950,000 this

impressive Dordogne Medieval Listed château, where Richard the Lionheart fled after the battle of Chalus, even comes complete with furniture and equipment. Sarah takes up the story: "This is a really 'rare affaire' as the French would say – as it's so beautifully maintained right down to the chestnut wood tiles on the round towers. The owners spend their time between the castle and their homeland in another part of Europe, and are blessed with an incredibly efficient and meticulous caretaker who manages the estate in their absence. There's a deer park with about 16 deer whose population he culls every year to keep the herd stable. The locals have an annual licence to hunt on the estate which also has wild boar, small game and wild deer. I spent a good two hours there and I never heard a train, plane, car or lorry in all that time. It is blissfully quiet and rural – a lovely outlook, and you do definitely feel like the king of the castle there with the impressive gate, battlements and age-old castle walls.

"The Château is rich in history. Built in the XII Century around 1120, on the site of a building dating from about 1,000, this more modern construction originally had four sides to the courtyard flanked by two large square towers and two round towers. With moats on three sides and protected on the valley side by the steep wall falling away from the 'Motte' or mound on which the castle was built, it's typical of the construction favoured in the XIIIth century.

"Besides Richard Coeur de Lion's visit to this site after his fatal injury at the nearby siege of Chalus, over the years many famous people visited the Château and as you would expect with all its impressive fortifications, it features in many military episodes. One of the most notable frequent visitors was Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henry IV, who himself stayed regularly at the Château. In the XVth Century the Château underwent important transformations from a fortress to a more pleasurable castle. The interior courtyard was opened up on one side and the drawbridge remained lowered. The Château took on the appearance which we see today. In 1850 the water filled moats became dry moats and part were turned into terraces."

In addition to the attributes of the Château and its historic connections, it has a gîte that can accommodate six people, offering annual earning potential of between €7,500 and €8,500. A farm building slightly further away and with a separate entrance, currently used by visiting relatives, can also be rented out for approximately the same price. There is an additional little house

within the walled garden, and another separate house on two storeys just to the left of the gite, and behind the walled garden. A massive barn further away has equestrian possibilities offering potential as an indoor riding school with stables, if somebody wanted to keep horses.

Sarah adds: “This really is the Perigord Vert – the region in which the castle is to be found. With its forests and lakes, and halfway between Perigueux and Limoges, the Château is in the depths of the countryside, in a picturesque and peaceful setting, yet the nearest shops are less than a five minute drive or under 15 minutes to the nearest town. There is access by Autoroute from Paris as far as Limoges (under an hour away) where there is also an airport.



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“I think considering its condition and what is included, this château is a really good prospect for someone wanting a fabulous historic property in incredibly good order, and in a completely unblighted setting.”

And if this doesn't set the pulses racing then how about the most magnificent property close to the river for a cool €2,500,000? It certainly made an impression on Sarah as she revealed: “This is a must for anybody wanting an established business in an idyllic setting with the potential for further expansion. The present owners have done a magnificent job. I happened to view the Château when it was for sale previously when it was in a very tired state. Following its transformation it's barely recognizable.

“They have managed to blend modern furniture and some modern lighting with the classical elegant stone fireplaces and original floors, and it all works brilliantly. Besides the excellent accommodation the idyllic riverside setting lends itself to a perfect commercial venture. The view at different times of the day takes on a completely new look, and the light is magical there. Sitting on the terrace staring down the Dordogne River is definitely very good for the soul. The fact that you can totter up the road to an excellent one starred Michelin restaurant and eat very well, and then roll back down the hill home makes it all the more appealing.

“The present owner offers ‘table d'hôtes’ on



the three nights of the week when the restaurant is closed. This amounts to a plate of delicious local meats and cheeses, salad and fresh French bread – all anybody would want and not impossibly difficult to achieve – but indicative of the attitude that has made this property so successful. It's well placed south of St Emilion with its restaurants and vineyards, and within easy striking distance of both Bordeaux (International airport and TGV) and Bergerac, also with an airport with flights to Paris and the U.K. amongst other destinations. The Château is well placed to benefit from the tourist trade in summer months, and the year round steady flow of people interested in the wines and vineyards of both the region and the UNESCO site of Bordeaux.

“The owners have created a log cabin on the hillside which has wonderful river views and they have even built an additional wooden terrace overlooking the river on which to have

drinks and admire the view. There is a heated pool imaginatively enclosed with a mixture of glass walls and upright wooden stakes to comply with EU safety regulations. With the bedrooms in the Château as chambres d'hôtes, there is the possibility to let out at least a further five bedrooms in the gite, whilst the top floor of the Château has been converted to provide the owners with a staff apartment.”

Sarah Francis certainly knows the world of châteaux inside out, and when she spots something particularly appealing, you can be sure it's of top quality. As far as French property specialists are concerned, Sifex are world leaders with a high-class clientèle. So why not make the dream come true with a champagne château in either the dazzling Dordogne or the gorgeous Gironde.

**You can view both properties
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