



Inspiration calling

The motivation for buying a French property comes from many different sources, finds **Nadia Jordan**

One of the great things about my job as a property finder is getting to know my clients as the search process evolves. This includes discovering the very many different reasons they have for wanting to own a house in France; a dream it turns out that many have harboured for a very long time.

Most are Francophiles from a young age thanks to family holidays in France as children. These experiences seem to ignite a lifelong passion for the French lifestyle and a longing to recreate it for themselves and their children.

Others have been converted simply by a long weekend in Paris, Toulouse or Nice where city life suddenly looks so different to that back home. Less rushing, more pleasure, less stress, more passion; in addition to the beautiful architecture and chic boutiques

at every turn. One client told me that her dream was to be able to cycle to the local *boulangerie* for her baguette and bring it home in the basket on the front of her bike - what a great image!

SILVER SCREEN

Some of my clients barely knew France when they decided to buy a house here but have been fascinated and influenced in equal amounts by French films, particularly those set in Paris or deep in the French countryside (or any starring Juliette Binoche for some reason!)

For others, it was often a book that kickstarted the French dream. This was the case for me; I read the semi-autobiographical *La Gloire de mon Père* by Marcel Pagnol at school and, thanks to a very passionate French teacher, became intrigued about the little boy's adventures



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“With everything within its borders, it’s no surprise that France is the most visited country”

during his summer holidays, immersed in the peasant culture of rural Provence, exploring the limestone hills of the French countryside. So vivid were the descriptions that I was transported straight to the garrigue of Provence and the wonderful landscape steeped in tradition.

This book led me to Pagnol’s other books, most notably *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* and then to the films which are still great favourites, however much of a cliché.

And who hasn’t sat at their desk in some grey city or town imagining long French lunches under blue skies, the sound of cicadas in the background. French cuisine is, for most people, one of the major draws of coming to France, even if it’s just the idea of local markets, leisurely meals, and a café culture.

The concept of the French lifestyle - *la belle vie* - exists vividly in the imagination for many of us and the more we dream of it, the more we yearn to experience a bit of it

for ourselves, if only for a few weeks a year.

I have even had clients who have bought a house in France on the strength of seeing the Tour de France on TV, never having been to the region. Others are desperate for space around them and the thought of being able to go skiing or to cycle the cols as and when it takes them, the mountains just a short hop away.

DREAMING BIG

Sometimes it feels as if every lifestyle dream can come true here in France. There are beautiful beaches, sophisticated cities, rural regions where life has barely changed for generations and the connection with the land as strong as ever. There are mountains, vineyards, vast lakes, endless walking and cycling; in fact, every sport imaginable (only the French could have invented hot air ballooning!). If you want beautiful architecture, it is here along with culture, great art, world class ballet and cinema,

delicious food and wine, and peace and quiet in unspoiled countryside. With everything within its borders, it is hardly surprising that France is the most visited country in the world and that so many people want to come on holiday or make their home here.

Despite the huge variety of reasons clients have for wanting to own a French property, there is one thing that unites us all and that is the romance of France and the French lifestyle, which I think underpins all those dreams. And the best thing of all is that France seems to be the place to make those dreams come true, whatever your reasons for coming in the first place and whatever it was that inspired those dreams. ■

Nadia Jordan runs thefrenchpropertyfinders.com, a network of property finders covering the most sought-after regions of France, and foothilloffrance.com, a property search agency in southwest France

A book about rural Provence inspired Nadia to move to France

Café culture and a slower way of life has a great appeal



Gastronomy is a big motivation for coming to France, from fine dining to local markets



French landscapes are so varied, from rolling vineyards...



...to dramatic mountain scenery