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INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE

House Hunting in ... France



Julien Goldstein for The New York Times

A house in Provence, France, has a pool, about 40 feet long, with an extendable glass cover to protect it from rain and cold weather.

By **JEFF VANDAM**

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A SIX-BEDROOM HOUSE IN PROVENCE

Multimedia



House Hunting in France

1.273 MILLION EUROS (\$1.57 MILLION)

This 1890 stone house has a pool, cherry and apricot trees, and patios and gardens; it is set on 5,200 square meters (about 56,000 square feet, at 10.76 square feet to the square meter).

The house has 450 square meters of living space. Original details like beamed ceilings, wood floors and marble staircases can be found throughout.

The eat-in kitchen with room for a four-person table has a Samsung refrigerator, a cooktop by Arthur Martin Electrolux and an oven by the French company Sauter.

The open living and dining area has a fireplace and terra cotta tile flooring, as do several other rooms on the main level. Off this southern-facing room is an 80-square-meter terrace with both shaded and sunny spots for sitting.

A spiral staircase leads upstairs to the 82-square-meter master bedroom, which overlooks the garden and has its own sink.

The property also has a pond with goldfish and water irises, and flower beds with lavender and roses. The pool is about 40 feet long, and can be covered in colder months with a canopylike glass structure. There is also a small storage shed near the pool.

The house is in the Bouches-du-Rhône countryside, between the cities of Arles and Avignon.

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Basic shops can be found in the nearby commune of Vallabrègues, said Muriel Ducloy of Agence des Alpilles Immobilier, which is listing the property. Five minutes away, across the Rhône, the larger town of Beaucaire has a branch of the French hypermarket Carrefour.

The Avignon airport is about 15 minutes away by car; the Marseille airport is about an hour away. Paris is three hours by high-speed train.

MARKET OVERVIEW

The Bouches-du-Rhône was only marginally affected by the financial crisis and resulting property market downturn. "If you wanted to do an average," Ms. Ducloy said, "you could say maybe it was 10 percent down over the last two years."

Philippe Boulet, director of the Saint-Rémy-de-Provence office of Émile Garcin, a French real estate company, said that prices had been "stuck in the middle" but were now moving up again. For his company, home sales for the quarter have increased 40 percent since last year. In general, he said, well-appointed houses continue to sell for a wide range of prices, from 400,000 euros or so (\$495,000, at \$1.24 per euro) up into the high seven-digit range — and, on occasion, past 10 million euros.

Benjamin Deswarte, a consultant for Provence Secrète, a real estate company in nearby Ménerbes, said it was difficult to estimate a current price per square meter in the region, since properties vary so widely by location, view and condition. Many houses sell for around 4,000 euros a square meter, he said; the one described here is listed for 2,829 euros a square meter.

WHO BUYS IN THE BOUCHES-DU-RHÔNE

Mr. Boulet says most foreign buyers come from Belgium, Switzerland and Britain. Mr. Deswarte of Provence Secrète estimated that a full 40 percent of buyers in the region are from Belgium. There have also been more Americans lately, Mr. Boulet said, than in recent years when the dollar was weaker.

"When the Dow was good, we had a lot of Americans," Ms. Ducloy said. "When the pound was good, we had a lot of English people."

BUYING BASICS

There are no buying restrictions on foreigners. All property sales are administered by notaries; buyers should expect to pay 6.5 to 7 percent of the purchase price on notary fees and transfer taxes, Ms. Ducloy said.

French homes are subject to two property taxes, called the *taxe foncière* (land tax) and the *taxe d'habitation* (residence tax). They are determined at the beginning of each year and are pegged to property value.

WEB SITES

Bouches-du-Rhône official tourism site: visitprovence.com

Official Rhône wineries guide: vins-rhone-tourisme.com/discover.html?lang=en

LANGUAGES AND CURRENCY

French; euro (1 euro = \$1.24)

TAXES AND FEES

The *taxe foncière* for the house is 2,000 euros a year, Ms. Ducloy said, and the *taxe d'habitation* is 1,800 a year. In terms of the transfer and notary costs to be paid upon purchase, 6.5 percent of its listed price is about 83,000 euros.