

# Ask the agent

No one knows the area like a local estate agent. We asked Jean-Stéphane Vilain, of Selection Habitat, for the inside track on this peaceful area of France



## What's the cheapest property you have on your books right now?

In Aveyron we have a village property to be renovated, with an attached barn and small garden for €25,000. A great project if you're willing to do a bit of hard work.

## What's the most unusual property you have available at the moment?

We have a very rare castle from the 11th and 15th centuries in Aveyron, totally restored with original features, beautiful views of the surrounding countryside and full of history. It is one of a kind and is extremely well priced at only €495,000.

## How much would you expect to pay for:

● *a detached property with land in good condition?*

In Aveyron, about €170,000; in Cantal and Lozère around €150,000.

● *a three-bedroom townhouse?*

Again, Aveyron is slightly more expensive at around €120,000, while in Cantal and Lozère, about €100,000.

● *a renovation opportunity?*

In Cantal and Lozère I would expect to pay €80,000, while in Aveyron about €100,000.

## Is there a typical architecture or style in the area?

In the Marcillac wine-producing area of Aveyron the properties are built from red stone - it's quite a contrast from the beige and grey stone. Cantal is known for its draping lauze-tiled roofing, and Lozère is famous for its 'Philibert' carpentry, inspired by a boat's hull.

## Why do British people buy houses in the area?

Authenticity, sunshine, affordable properties... We're in southern France but away from the crowds.

## What tips would you give to help people settle into life in the area?

The most important advice I would give is to learn French as it will help you integrate into all areas of life in France. This is often understated but really necessary in my opinion. Secondly, participate and get involved in local village events and *fêtes*, if you open up to people they will open up to

you. Lastly, I would say get a job. Working in France is a wonderful way to meet people, understand the culture and improve language skills.

## What are your predictions for the property market in the area?

My predictions are very optimistic! Over the last four months we have seen a large increase in the number of enquiries and sales from UK clients. Together with a 30% price drop since the economic crisis and the strong pound, I am confident this will lead to more UK buyers.

## What are the regional specialities?

There's a local dish that spans these three departments: *aligot*. It is a hearty dish made with cheese and mashed potato - a favourite among adults and kids alike!

## What's your favourite corner of the area?

In Aveyron it would have to be Marcillac for its wine-production, and I have just recently discovered the village of Marcolès in Cantal where I was fortunate to find a very good traditional, gastronomic restaurant!

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## Is it right for you?

### Property prices

Aveyron is the most expensive department with an average resale price of €120,000, followed by Lozère at €112,900 and Cantal at €105,000. All three are well below the €160,000 average for the country.

### Weather

Villages along the river have mild winters and warm summers, while up in the hills of the Aubrac plateau there is snow during the winter.

### Activities

This is definitely an area for those who love the great outdoors, with hiking and horse-riding trails across the Aubrac plateau, and plenty of cycling paths. The Lot River also provides plenty of activities, whether you prefer energetic watersports or a leisurely afternoon's fishing. There are also plenty of pretty historic villages to explore and mouth-watering beef and cheeses to try.



## FACT FILE

### LOT VALLEY

**Regions:** Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon, Auvergne

**Departments:** Aveyron, Lozère, Cantal

**Capitals:** Rodez, Mende, Aurillac

✈️ Ryanair operates regular flights from London Stansted to Rodez, and there are flights from the UK to Montpellier, Béziers and Toulouse.

🚆 Eurostar to Paris, TGV to Brive, Montpellier or Toulouse and then change for services to Rodez.

🗺️ For driving times consult one of the many online route planners such as those at [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com), [www.mappy.com](http://www.mappy.com) and [www.theaa.com](http://www.theaa.com).