

The development of Limousin's transport infrastructure is one of the major reasons for growing interest in this part of France

is like St Tropez probably looked before Brigitte Bardot decided to grace the beach there... with one of the most unspoiled ports in France." More pretty than gritty, its quays and back streets feature attractive bars and restaurants, a chic tea-room-cum-homewares shop, a gourmet delicatessen, the Noilly Prat distillery, and Le Château du Port, a gourmet dining spot on the quayside run by Michelin-starred chefs.

On the waterfront, Garrigae Investissements is building *Residence Rive Gauche*, a development of 12 two-bedroom apartments with lagoon views. Prices start from €430,000 (£293,000) for a 58-square-metre apartment with terrace, parking space and furniture, including VAT – guaranteed rental returns are an option. But what really makes this project noteworthy is its contemporary detailing (parquet and flagstone floors, underfloor air conditioning and heating, flat-screen TVs and DVD players, WiFi access) and its location. Those who buy through leaseback can save 19.6 per cent of the price, making it an even more enticing package.

LIMOUSIN

Dubbed "the new Provence" by national newspaper *Le Monde*, Brits have been flocking to this under-populated region (42 inhabitants per square kilometre,

compared with England's average of 375). The départements of Creuse and Haute-Vienne are nearest to Limoges airport and its direct flights to four UK destinations, but tipped for the top is Corrèze. Situated in the south, bordering Dordogne to the east, it has a new motorway linking the main towns of Brive, Tulle and Ussel, rail links with Paris and Marseille, and a new international airport due to open at Brive in 2008.

Gary Delahunty of Celtic Immobilier cites the town of Brive-la-Gaillarde with its traditional architecture, pedestrianised old quarter and lively cafés as a potential French hotspot. With the advent of the airport and bypasses planned for local villages, house prices are likely to take off, but for now, a three-bedroom stone house in habitable condition and in a central location can be bought for around €150,000 (£102,000); expect to pay from €100,000 (£68,000) for a two-bedroom holiday home in need of work. "The area south of Brive towards the Lot border will probably become more popular, too," says Delahunty, who observes that the development of Limousin's transport infrastructure, backed by outgoing president and local boy Jacques Chirac, is one of the major reasons for growing interest in this part of France.

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ABOVE Pretty, character homes like this sell for around £150,000 in La Petite Raon, Lorraine LEFT Marseillan – one of the most unspoilt ports in France, and the location for 12 state-of-the-art apartments to be built by Garrigae Investissements BELOW Traditional homes are always at the top of buyers wish-lists



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