

# FRENCH PROPERTY NEWS

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YEARS  
of FRENCH  
PROPERTY  
ADVICE

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## THE MAYENNE ATTRACTION

The undervalued area  
with much to offer

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found their forever home

## BAG A BARGAIN

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in France to buy a property

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€5.95





# Golden triangle

**Natasha and Tony Crawley** moved to the welcoming heart of the Vézère and Dordogne valleys

## How did you choose your village?

We live in Castelnau-la-Chapelle, in Dordogne. We chose this particular region and village for the climate, close to the larger town of Sarlat. It is a very popular tourist area, which was important as we have opened a gîte business in this tranquil village.

## What aspects of village life do you enjoy?

The peace and quiet, the friendly neighbours and beautiful surrounding villages. I think coming from the UK - we lived in one of the suburbs of London - we had careers where we were rushing around so this is like going back in time to memories of childhood because of the slower pace. We have fallen in love with not only the area, but the way of life. It's so charming, so relaxing. Almost as if we found ourselves again, if that makes any sense. We feel healthier, invigorated. Our friends and family joke that they are jealous, and in fact we've had friends say they are considering doing what we've done, so we must be doing something right. We also feel that our relationship is stronger even though we are living 24/7 together, which can sometimes be difficult.

## When did you arrive?

Late February 2024 - we had only visited previously when on holiday and undertaking our property search and due diligence of the area.

## What is there to see and do locally?

There are so many tourist attractions, with the Dordogne river, and the castles, caves and many medieval villages with a long history, like the castle of Castelnau and nearby La Roque, both dating back to



Castelnau-la-Chapelle occupies a spectacular position above the Dordogne river

the 12th century. Sarlat is the biggest draw for us. We looked for property for over three years, all over Dordogne. Every time we would look at each other and say... let's go back to Sarlat. We love it here, we are within walking distance to the river on the hill, with the hot-air balloons flying above, it's just stunning.

## How was your French when you arrived? And now?

Let's just say very basic at first. Natasha is Ukrainian and speaks Russian, so she already had the experience of learning a foreign language when she moved to England. Now she is improving rapidly and attending lessons at a local college, while my French is much slower having to work 24/7 on our refurbishment, but I do my best, I'm proud when I manage to order in French at the *boulangerie*.

## How do you find interacting with the locals socially?

This has been amazing and exceeded our expectations with how friendly and helpful everyone is. To give you one example, our direct neighbours casually said, oh, come over for *l'apéro*. Little did we know they had invited everyone in

the village to meet us. It was so lovely of them to do that.

## What do you do for work?

I'm currently working on our refurbishment, and Natasha is overseeing the gîte business. We've both really enjoyed our first successful season in 2024. Meeting the guests and helping them with discovering the area has been a real pleasure with clients from France, Germany, Holland and the UK, to date.

## Tell us about La Trilogie d'Or

Our business consists of three gîtes housing four, six and 10. We live on site and chose the name La Trilogie d'Or as this reflects the 'golden triangle' region with us located central to the triangle. This year we'll have the two and three double-bed properties available, and the bigger one in 2026. Our properties all have their own names to reflect their position. The two-bedroom property is called *Vue Sur La Prairie*, the three-bedroom *Vue Sur Le Vallon* and the main house five-bed property *Vue Dorée*. The site is on the top of the hill with spectacular views and beautiful outside spaces with their own terraces and a large, heated pool and lounge area. We have recently achieved a four-star

classification on the two-bedroom property and hope to obtain the same for the other two in the coming months.

## Any local speciality that you have developed a taste for?

We love the cheese, bread and the variety of wines - the list is never ending. We visit the vineyard *Vignobles des Verdots*, near Bergerac, and offer their wine to guests in the welcome package. It's lovely.

## What has surprised you the most about living in this part of France?

We can't stress enough how friendly and inviting our local neighbours and the French community in general has been. It's truly been a lovely surprise.

## What is your favourite French saying?

The French expression '*après la pluie, le beau temps*' (after the rain comes the good weather) is so hopeful, signifying that difficult moments are temporary and will inevitably be followed by more positive and joyful experiences. ■

**To follow Natasha and Tony's life in the Dordogne or book your stay at La Trilogie d'Or visit [latrilogiedor.com](http://latrilogiedor.com)**