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GUIDE TO THE DORDOGNE

CONSIDERING A MOVE?

This practical, no-nonsense guide is for anyone considering a move to the Dordogne, covering where to live, daily life, culture, property, travel and key local services. Everything you need to get a realistic picture of life in south-west France, all in one place.



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DORDOGNE

NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE

SO, YOU'RE CONSIDERING A MOVE TO THE DORDOGNE?

The Dordogne (Département 24), in south-west France's Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, is famous for its idyllic countryside, medieval towns, rivers, markets and relaxed French lifestyle.

You wouldn't be alone in a move here. It's a hugely popular destination for expats – especially from the UK, US, Canada, the Netherlands and elsewhere – due to its rural charm, food culture, safety, affordability and accessibility.



PROPERTY *in the dordogne...*

Buying a home in the Dordogne is a dream for many - whether it's a character stone cottage, a village townhouse, or a rural farmhouse with land. But while the region offers fantastic value and variety, the French property system works very differently to the UK, US and other countries.



€60,000 - €100,000

You will find many renovation projects available in the for under €100,000. Get a professional to look over the property with you to gain an idea on renovation costs before you commit.



€100,000 - €300,000

In the lower end of this range you will start to see some decent sized townhouses, and as you get to the higher prices you'll see a few more detached properties with small gardens.



€300,000 - €500,000

Lots of 'ready-to-move-in' properties available in this price range. You can expect to find many properties with large well-kept gardens, and outbuildings and/or pools included.



€500,000+

Expect prices in the Dordogne to reach the millions, and you'll start to see many properties large enough to consider income potential, and most will have lots of land and be finished to a high standard.

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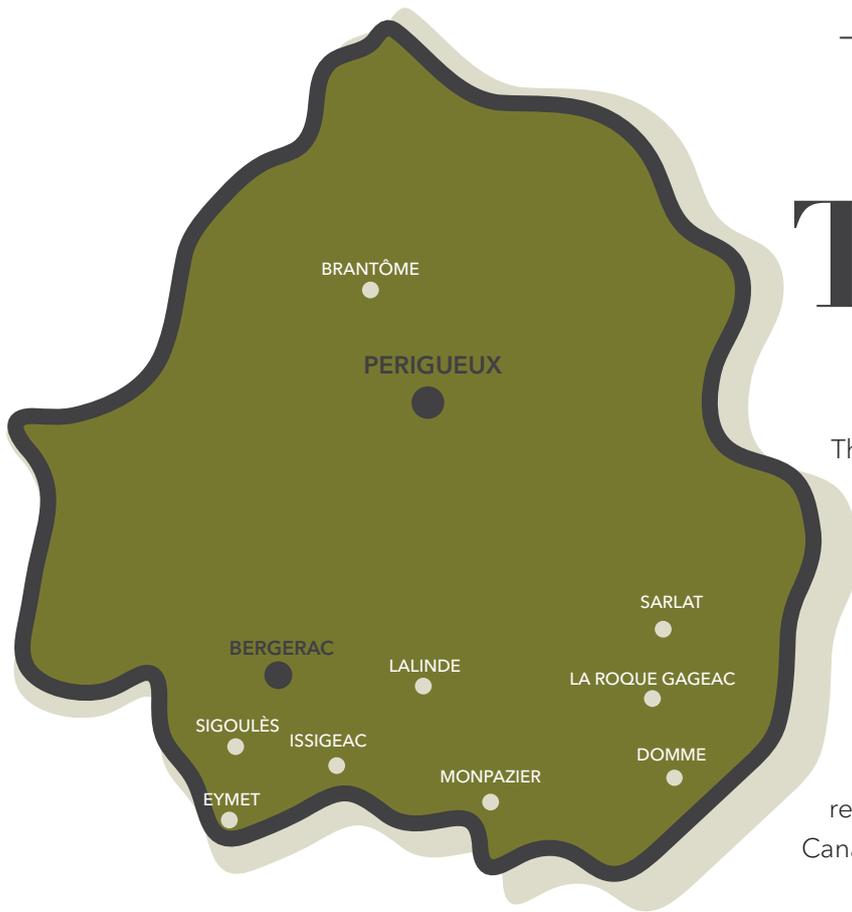
- *a guide covering the most common planning questions*

Buying or renovating property in France is an exciting step – but French planning law can feel complex, unfamiliar, and intimidating, especially if you are not used to the system.

Whether you are converting a barn, extending a home, opening a gîte, creating a campsite, or simply want to know what is and isn't possible, French Plans provide expert guidance from the very first question through to full approval.

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WHERE TO LIVE

in the dordogne...

The Dordogne offers a wide range of places to live, from lively market towns with full amenities to peaceful villages surrounded by countryside.

Different nationalities tend to gravitate towards different areas depending on lifestyle, budget, transport links and access to services.

Below are some of the most popular towns and regions where expats - particularly from the UK, US, Canada and the Netherlands - choose to settle, along with what makes each one appealing.

Bergerac

- A larger market town with a riverfront, international airport and good amenities.
- Strong expat scene, with Brits especially around Eymet, Sigoulès and La Force.
- Wine-region lifestyle (Bergerac wine) and plenty of restaurants/cafés.

Sarlat-la-Canéda

- One of Dordogne's most beautiful medieval towns (Périgord Noir).
- Vibrant cultural life, markets, restaurants and easy base for exploring the area.

Périgueux

- The departmental capital with good services, shops and transport links.
- Large weekly markets and a strong local community feel.

Rural Market Towns

- Brantôme ("Venice of the Périgord") - riverside charm and regular markets.
- Lalinde - historic bastide with weekly Thursday market and community vibe.
- Issigeac - popular with expats for its Sunday market and village life.

Smaller Villages

- Domme, Monpazier, La Roque-Gageac and others offer picture-perfect rural living.

BERGERAC

Bergerac is one of the most popular places to live in the Dordogne, thanks to its balance of good amenities, a lively town centre and excellent transport links.

With a population of around 27,000 (and a much larger catchment area when you include surrounding villages), it feels like a proper working French town rather than a tourist resort, while still retaining plenty of charm along its riverside old quarter.

What it's like to live there

Life in Bergerac is convenient and social. The historic centre has cobbled streets, cafés, restaurants and small independent shops, while the newer areas on the edge of town provide easy access to supermarkets, retail parks and medical facilities. There's a strong year-round community feel, helped by schools, sports clubs, cinemas and regular events, so it doesn't shut down in winter in the way some smaller Dordogne towns do.

Many expats choose to live just outside the town in nearby villages like Eymet, Sigoulès, La Force and Monbazillac for more space and countryside, while still being only 10-20 minutes from town services.

Shops and everyday amenities

Bergerac is one of the best-served towns in the department for shopping. In the town centre you'll find bakeries, butchers, greengrocers, pharmacies, banks, opticians and clothing shops, plus a lively Wednesday and Saturday market for fresh local produce.

On the outskirts of town are several large retail zones with major supermarkets such as Intermarché, Carrefour and E.Leclerc, along with DIY stores (Leroy Merlin, Mr Bricolage), garden centres, furniture shops and car dealerships. This makes day-to-day life very easy without long rural drives.

Transport and getting around

Bergerac has one of the Dordogne's biggest advantages: its own international airport, offering seasonal and year-round flights to the UK and other European destinations. For longer journeys, Bordeaux Airport is about 1.5 hours by car.

Bergerac also has a mainline train station with regular services to Bordeaux, Périgueux and connections to Paris. Within town there is a local bus network, but like most of rural France, a car is still essential if you plan to live outside the centre or in nearby villages.

SARLAT

Sarlat-la-Canéda is one of the Dordogne's most iconic and picturesque towns, often topping lists of the most beautiful places to live in south-west France. Located in the heart of the Périgord Noir, it's a medieval town with honey-coloured stone buildings, narrow cobbled streets and a rich food culture.

With a population of around 9,000, Sarlat is much smaller than Bergerac, but it punches well above its weight in terms of atmosphere, tourism and cultural life.

What it's like to live there

Life in Sarlat feels charming, sociable and very food-focused. The historic centre is lively year-round, though it becomes especially busy in summer when tourists arrive.

Many expats enjoy the sense of community, walkable streets and café culture, but some choose to live just outside the town in surrounding villages such as Vitrac, Carsac-Aillac and Proissans to avoid peak-season crowds while still being only 10-15 minutes from town amenities. Winters are quieter and more local, which many residents see as a big plus.

Shops and everyday amenities

Despite its small size, Sarlat is well equipped for daily life. The town centre has plenty of bakeries, butchers, delicatessens, wine shops, pharmacies, clothing boutiques and independent food stores. It's also famous for its large Wednesday and Saturday markets, which are among the best in the Dordogne and a major part of local life.

On the outskirts of town, there are several supermarkets including Intermarché, Carrefour Market and E.Leclerc, as well as DIY stores, garden centres and basic retail parks. You won't find huge shopping malls here, but for most people's day-to-day needs, Sarlat is very practical.

Transport and getting around

Sarlat has a train station with regional services connecting to Bordeaux, Périgueux and Brive (with changes), making it possible to travel without a car for longer journeys.

However, public transport within the surrounding countryside is limited, so a car is strongly recommended, especially if you live outside the centre. The nearest airports are Brive-Souillac (about 1 hour) and Bergerac (around 1.5 hours), with Bordeaux Airport roughly 2.5 hours away by car.

Beaux Villages

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CHARENTE €484,000 HAI
BVI82691 Fabulous 4-bed, 2-bath stone longère with barns and pool
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €456,604



EXCLUSIVE

DORDOGNE €265,000 HAI
BVI79786 Tastefully renovated 4-bed hamlet property with pool
 Fees: 7% paid by the buyer Net price: €247,664



EXCLUSIVE

HAUTE-VIENNE €88,000 HAI
BVI83942 2-bed, 1-bath stone house and barn near Magnac-Laval town
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EXCLUSIVE

AVEYRON €315,000
BVI78163 6-bed property including a 1-bed pigeonier and superb views
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

INDRE €249,899 HAI
BVI77976 3-bed characterful barn conversion with large garden
 Fees: 7% paid by the buyer Net price: €233,551



EXCLUSIVE

CREUSE €109,499 HAI
BVI78078 3-bed hamlet cottage with outbuilding, 15 mins from town
 Fees: 9% paid by the buyer Net price: €100,458



EXCLUSIVE

AUDE €365,000
BVI81825 4-bed, 4-bath villa with pool between coast and mountains
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

TARN €265,000 HAI
BVI82591 Rustic 4-bed, 2-bath village house with salt-water pool
 Fees: 6% paid by the buyer Net price: €250,000



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VENDEE €700,000
BVI72046 5-bed manor house plus guest house, stableblock and 4Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



savills

ARIEGE €925,000
BVI83662 Gorgeous rural 3 house property. Pool, rural views and 2Ha
 Fees: Paid by the vendor



savills

TARN-ET-GARONNE €1,699,500 HAI
BVI73432 Spectacular 18thC estate in 8.6Ha - superb pool and views
 Fees: 4% paid by the buyer Net price: €1,634,000



EXCLUSIVE

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GIRONDE €1,250,000
BVI82981 Luxury estate with pool, equestrian facilities and 7.8Ha
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PÉRIGUEUX

Périgueux is the capital of the Dordogne and its largest urban centre, offering the most complete range of services and infrastructure in the department.

With a population of around 30,000, it feels more like a small city than a market town, making it especially attractive to expats who want strong transport links, healthcare access and year-round activity without the intensity or prices of a major French city.

What it's like to live there

Life in Périgueux is practical, varied and well-connected. The town is divided into different neighbourhoods, from the historic old quarter around Saint-Front Cathedral to modern residential areas and leafy suburbs. It has a more "working French town" feel than Sarlat and is less tourist-driven, which many full-time residents prefer.

Expats often choose areas just outside the centre, such as Trélissac, Coulounieix-Chamiers and Boulazac Isle Manoire, for quieter living with easy access to shops and services.

Shops and everyday amenities

Périgueux is one of the best places in the Dordogne for retail choice and medical services. The town centre has a wide range of shops, including national chains, independent boutiques, bakeries, pharmacies and specialist food stores. The Wednesday and Saturday markets are large and lively, offering everything from fresh produce to clothing and household goods.

Around the outskirts are major retail zones with large supermarkets such as E.Leclerc, Auchan and Intermarché, along with furniture stores, DIY centres, cinemas, fast-food outlets and shopping parks. For many expats, Périgueux offers the easiest day-to-day life in the department.

Transport and getting around

Périgueux has excellent rail connections, with direct trains to Bordeaux and regular services linking to Paris (via Bordeaux), Limoges and Brive. Road access is also good, with the A89 motorway nearby, making driving to Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand and central France straightforward.

The town has a local bus network that makes it possible to get around without a car if you live in or near the centre, although a car is still useful for exploring rural areas.

The nearest major airport is Bordeaux-Mérignac, around 1.5 hours away by car.

MARKETS & SHOPPING CULTURE *in the dordogne...*

Markets are central to Dordogne life – and one of its greatest joys: fresh local produce, wine, cheese, honey, mushrooms, walnuts, foie gras, truffles, artisan goods and antiques.

Major Weekly Markets

- Sarlat: Wednesday & Saturday – major and bustling.
- Périgueux: Wednesday & Saturday – big variety including antiques.
- Ribérac: Friday – one of the largest in the region.
- Issigeac: Sunday – lovely village market.
- Brantôme: Friday – scenic riverside.

MARKET CULTURE TIPS

- Markets often run morning to lunchtime, so make sure you arrive early to make the most of them.
- Small food stalls sometimes prefer cash, so best to carry multiple payment types.
- Markets are socia. Locals chat, sample, and catch up as much as shop.

Daily Shopping & Opening Hours

In daily life, most small towns and villages in the Dordogne are well served by local essentials such as bakeries (boulangeries), butchers (boucheries), greengrocers and wine shops, while larger towns also have full-size supermarkets including Intermarché, Carrefour, Leclerc and Lidl for weekly shops.

It's worth noting that in rural areas many independent shops still close for a long lunch break, typically between around 12:00 and 14:00, and a lot are also shut on Sundays, so planning ahead quickly becomes part of everyday French life.

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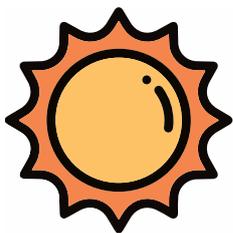
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WEATHER & CLIMATE

in the dordogne...



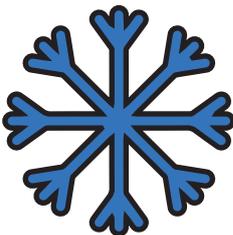
Summer (June-August)

Summers in the Dordogne are warm, sunny and vibrant. Expect warm to hot temperatures, often 20-30°C; can see temperatures above 30°C at times during heatwaves. Great for river swimming, markets and outdoor dining.



Autumn (September-October)

As the intense summer heat fades, the countryside takes on rich golden colours. Temperatures are still pleasantly mild, often in the 15-25°C range, making it comfortable for walking, cycling and sightseeing.



Winter (November-February)

Winters are generally cool rather than severe, with temperatures between 2-10°C. Many tourist-oriented restaurants and attractions close or reduce hours, but everyday life continues normally in larger towns.



Spring (March-May)

Spring weather can be changeable, with sunny days mixed with showers, but it's an especially beautiful time of year. It's a great time for house-hunting, gardening, exploring the countryside.

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

in the dordogne...

The Dordogne is well served by several airports, making international and domestic travel relatively straightforward.

Bergerac Dordogne Périgord Airport (EGC) is the closest and most convenient for many residents, offering seasonal and year-round flights to the UK and other European destinations.

Brive-Souillac Airport (BVE) serves the northern part of the department and provides additional regional connections, while **Bordeaux-Mérignac Airport (BOD)** is the main international hub, with a far wider range of long-haul and European routes, located around 1.5-2 hours' drive from most parts of the Dordogne.

As flight schedules and destinations can change depending on the time of year, it's always worth checking current routes and airline availability when planning travel.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Good train connections from Sarlat, Périgueux and Bergerac to Bordeaux, Paris and beyond.
- A car is essential for rural living – public transport tends to be limited.



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LIFESTYLE & CULTURE

in the dordogne...

The Dordogne offers a rich, slow-paced lifestyle built around food, nature and community, making it one of the most appealing regions in France for long-term living.

Daily life is shaped by seasonal produce, traditional festivals and an outdoor culture that makes the most of the rivers, forests and historic landscapes. From world-famous gastronomy and lively local events to scenic walks, canoe trips and a welcoming expat scene, the Dordogne provides plenty of ways to stay active, social and deeply connected to the rhythms of French life.

Food & Drink

The Dordogne is widely regarded as a gastronomic paradise, famous for its foie gras, truffles, walnuts, duck confit, local cheeses and Bergerac wines, but everyday food culture is just as important as its fine dining reputation.

Life revolves around local boulangeries, boucheries and weekly markets. Café culture plays a big role too, with locals lingering over coffee on sunny terraces, meeting friends for apéritifs and enjoying long, relaxed lunches.

Eating out is affordable and varied, ranging from traditional family-run bistros to more refined restaurants, making good food and social dining a central part of life in the Dordogne.

Festivals & Events

Fest'Oie

- foie gras & goose festival in Sarlat (March).

Truffle Festival

- focused on the "black diamond".

Carnaval de Périgueux

- colourful annual carnival.

Outdoor Activities

Plenty of adventure open to you in the Dordogne, including canoeing, hiking and cycling along rivers like the Dordogne and Vézère.

Community & Expat Life

Active expat groups, clubs, language exchange meetups and social events help newcomers settle and make friends.

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PRACTICAL LIVING *in the dordogne...*

Healthcare & Services

Healthcare in the Dordogne is generally reliable and affordable, with a good network of local doctors, dentists, specialists and pharmacies spread across towns and larger villages. For routine care, most residents register with a local GP, while bigger hospitals and specialist services are based in Périgueux and Bergerac. Many expats find the overall standard of care high and costs significantly lower than in the UK, US or Canada, especially once registered into the French healthcare system.

Education

International schooling options within the Dordogne itself are limited, so many expat families choose local French public schools, which are well-regarded and help children integrate quickly into French life. For older children or those needing English-language education, some families use private bilingual schools in neighbouring departments or opt for online international schooling.

Cost of Living

The cost of living in the Dordogne is generally lower than in Paris or major cities in the UK, US and Canada, particularly when it comes to housing, food and dining out. However, prices can vary widely depending on location, with sought-after market towns, tourist hotspots and areas close to expat hubs tending to be more expensive. Day-to-day expenses such as groceries, utilities and healthcare are typically reasonable, making the region especially attractive for retirees and those on fixed incomes.

Language

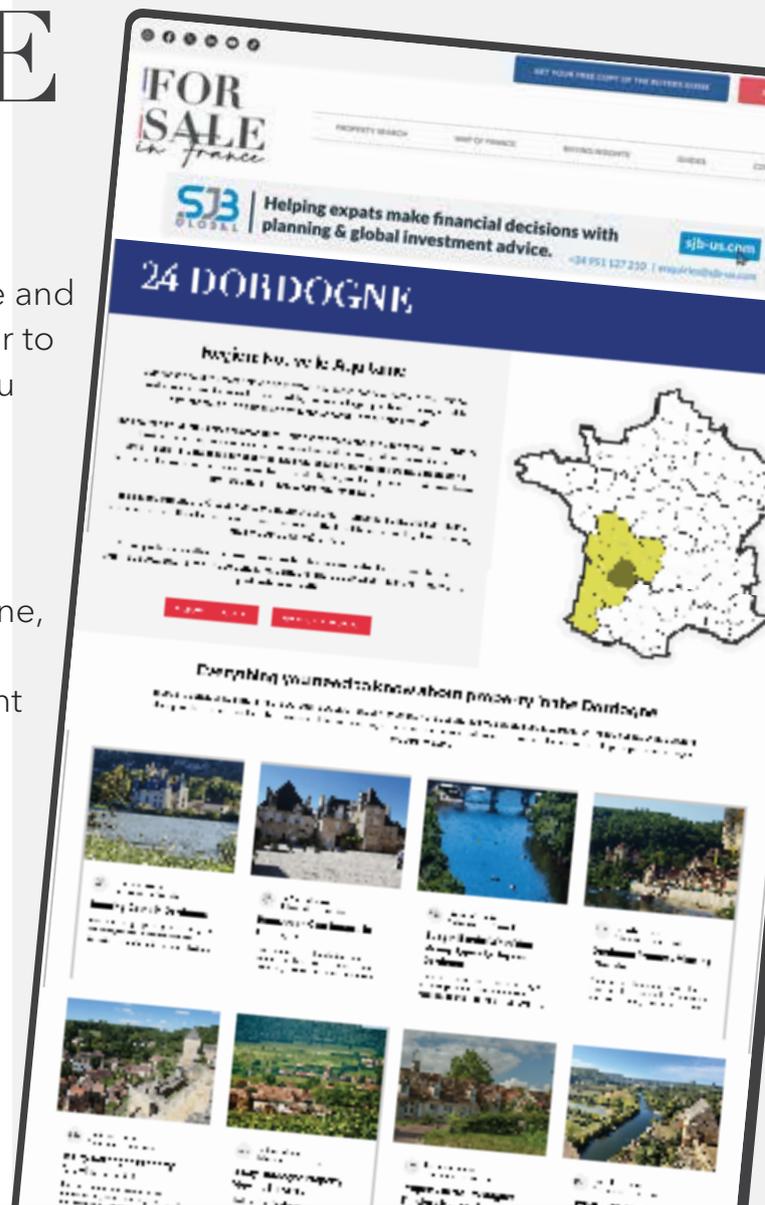
While it's possible to get by in some expat-heavy areas with limited French, learning the language is essential for truly settling into life in the Dordogne. Even basic French makes a huge difference when dealing with doctors, builders, schools, banks and local administration, and it's also key to forming friendships with neighbours and integrating into the community. Many towns offer adult French classes, conversation groups and informal language exchanges, which are a great way to improve skills while meeting people.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE DORDOGNE

For a further dive into property in the Dordogne and personalised support with your move, head over to forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-dordogne where you can explore current listings and start your home search right away.

There you'll also find tailored guidance on key topics like running costs of living in the Dordogne, renovation budgets, property finding options, what your budget can realistically buy in different areas, and a practical property checklist to help you navigate the process with confidence.

Whether you're looking for detailed living-cost insights, renovation advice or hands-on help with viewings and buying logistics, the team is on hand to support you at every step.



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YOUR GUIDE TO THE DORDOGNE

