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# GUIDE TO THE HAUTE VIENNE

*STARTING A NEW LIFE IN FRANCE?*

This practical guide gives you a great overview of the department of Haute Vienne, giving you clear, no nonsense advice about what your new life in the Nouvelle Aquitaine region could look like.



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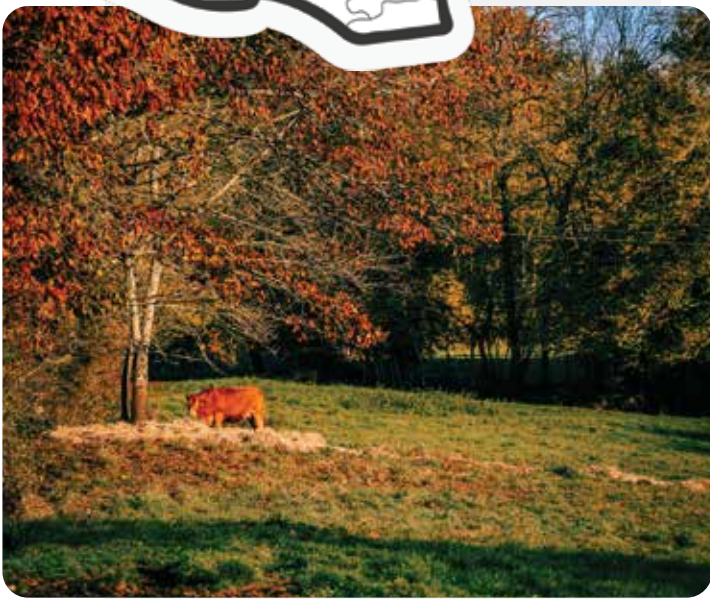
# HAUTE VIENNE

NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE

## WHY PEOPLE MOVE TO THE HAUTE VIENNE?

Haute-Vienne offers a quieter and more affordable alternative to some of the better-known areas of south-west France while still delivering the lifestyle many people dream of when moving to the French countryside. Known for its rolling green landscapes, the department combines rural charm with practical living thanks to the presence of Limoges, its historic capital.

Property prices are generally lower than in many parts of the Dordogne, making it particularly attractive to buyers looking for space, renovation projects or countryside homes with land. With a relaxed pace of life, strong local communities, excellent walking and outdoor opportunities, and good transport links via Limoges airport and rail connections, Haute-Vienne is increasingly appealing to expats seeking authentic French living without the crowds of more tourist-heavy regions.



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# PROPERTY *in the haute vienne...*

Property in the Haute-Vienne offers excellent value for those looking to buy in rural France, with everything from traditional stone cottages and village houses to farmhouses, renovation projects and larger homes with land.



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At the lower end of this scale you'll likely see some pretty well maintained townhouses, and as the budget increases you'll find more rural properties with land and potential.



There are many properties in this price range, many 4-7 bedroom properties with land and many with pools, or the potential for pools. With this price range, these are mostly rural properties with land.



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# WHERE TO LIVE

*in the haute vienne...*

Haute-Vienne offers a mix of small cities, market towns and peaceful rural villages, giving buyers plenty of choice depending on the lifestyle they want.

Some expats prefer the convenience of living close to Limoges, the department's main city, while others choose smaller towns where property prices are lower and the pace of life is slower.



## Limoges

Limoges is the capital of Haute-Vienne and the largest city in the department, with a population of around 130,000 people. It offers the widest range of services, including hospitals, universities, shopping centres, restaurants and cultural attractions. Known internationally for its fine porcelain and historic old town, Limoges provides a good balance between city convenience and manageable size. Many expats choose Limoges or its surrounding suburbs because of the strong infrastructure, public transport, rail connections and proximity to Limoges International Airport.

## Saint-Junien

Located about 30 minutes west of Limoges, Saint-Junien is one of the department's largest towns and has become popular with expats looking for affordable property with good amenities. Historically known for its leather and glove-making industry, the town today offers supermarkets, schools, healthcare facilities and a pleasant town centre.

## Bellac

Bellac is a charming small town in the north of Haute-Vienne, set above the Vincou River and surrounded by countryside. With a population of around 4,000, it offers a slower pace of life while still providing essential services such as shops, cafés, markets and healthcare.

## Rochechouart

Rochechouart is a picturesque historic town close to the Charente border, best known for its impressive château and fascinating meteorite crater geology. The town has a relaxed rural feel but still offers basic amenities, including shops, restaurants and schools.

## Smaller Villages and Rural Areas

Many international buyers choose to settle in the smaller villages scattered across Haute-Vienne, particularly in areas such as the Monts de Blond, around Oradour-sur-Vayres, and near the lakes of the Parc Naturel Régional Périgord-Limousin. These locations offer peaceful countryside living, larger properties and land at relatively affordable prices.

# LIMOGES

Limoges is the capital of Haute-Vienne and the largest city in the department, with a population of around 130,000 people, and closer to 200,000 in the wider metropolitan area. It's known internationally for its fine Limoges porcelain and enamel work, but today it's also a lively regional city with universities, hospitals, shopping centres and a strong cultural scene.

Despite being a city, Limoges still feels manageable and relaxed compared with larger French urban centres, making it appealing to expats who want amenities without the pace or cost of major cities.

## **What it's like to live there**

Living in Limoges offers a good balance between city convenience and a slower provincial lifestyle.

The historic centre around Saint-Étienne Cathedral and the old butcher's quarter (Quartier de la Boucherie) is full of character, with cafés, restaurants and independent shops, while newer districts provide modern housing and easy access to services.

The city remains active year-round thanks to its student population and cultural calendar, including theatres, museums, concerts and sporting events. Many expats choose to live either in the city itself or in nearby suburbs and villages such as Panazol, Couzeix or Isle, where they can enjoy more space while remaining only a short drive from the centre.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Limoges has the widest range of shopping in Haute-Vienne. The city centre features boutiques, bakeries, delicatessens, cafés and restaurants, alongside larger retail chains. There are also several major shopping areas and retail parks on the outskirts of the city, with supermarkets such as Carrefour, E.Leclerc and Intermarché, along with DIY stores, furniture shops, garden centres and electronics retailers.

The Les Halles Central Market is a highlight for food lovers, offering fresh produce, local cheeses, meat, fish and regional specialities in a beautiful historic market hall.

## **Transport and getting around**

Transport links in Limoges are among the best in the region. The city has a good local bus network, making it possible to get around without a car if you live in or near the centre. Limoges also has a mainline train station (Limoges-Bénédictins) with connections to Paris, Bordeaux, Toulouse and other major cities.

Just outside the city is Limoges International Airport, which offers flights to the UK and other European destinations. While many residents still use a car—particularly if they live in surrounding rural areas—the city itself is relatively easy to navigate, and driving times are short compared with larger urban areas.

# SAINT JUNIEN

Saint-Junien is one of the largest towns in Haute-Vienne after Limoges, with a population of around 11,000 people, and sits about 30 minutes west of Limoges close to the Charente border. Historically the town was famous for its glove-making and leather industry, which helped shape its character and prosperity.

Today it remains a lively market town with good everyday amenities, making it popular with both locals and expats who want convenience without living in a larger city.

## **What it's like to live there**

Life in Saint-Junien feels relaxed and practical, with a strong local community and a slower pace than nearby Limoges. The town centre has a traditional French feel with cafés, bakeries and small independent shops, while the surrounding countryside provides plenty of space and quiet villages.

Many expats choose to live either within the town itself or in nearby rural areas, enjoying larger properties and gardens while still being only a short drive from shops and services. Its location also makes it a good base for exploring both Haute-Vienne and neighbouring Charente, giving residents access to even more towns and countryside.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

For a town of its size, Saint-Junien is well equipped for daily life. The centre includes boulangeries, boucheries, cafés, pharmacies, banks and small boutiques, along with a regular weekly market selling fresh produce and local products.

On the outskirts of town there are larger supermarkets such as Leclerc and Intermarché, along with DIY stores, garden centres and other retail outlets. This means most day-to-day shopping can be done locally without needing to travel into Limoges.

## **Transport and getting around**

Saint-Junien is well positioned for road travel, sitting along a main route between Limoges and Angoulême, making commuting straightforward. Limoges International Airport is around 30-35 minutes away by car, providing easy access to flights to the UK and other European destinations.

The town also has a train station with regional services connecting to Limoges and other nearby towns. While there are some local buses, most residents rely on a car for everyday travel, particularly if living in surrounding villages.

# Beaux Villages

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



EXCLUSIVE

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**BVI78163** 6-bed property including a 1-bed pigeonier and superb views  
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EXCLUSIVE

**CREUSE** €109,499 HAI  
**BVI78078** 3-bed hamlet cottage with outbuilding, 15 mins from town  
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EXCLUSIVE

**AUDE** €365,000  
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 Fees: Paid by the vendor



EXCLUSIVE

**TARN** €265,000 HAI  
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 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  
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**ARIEGE** €925,000  
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# BELLAC

Bellac is a small historic town in the north of Haute-Vienne, with a population of around 4,000 people. Set above the scenic Vincou River, the town is surrounded by rolling countryside and offers a peaceful, traditional French lifestyle.

Bellac has become increasingly popular with expats looking for affordable property and a slower pace of life, while still having access to the essential services needed for day-to-day living.

## **What it's like to live there**

Life in Bellac is quiet, friendly and community-focused. The town has a charming historic centre with narrow streets, old stone houses and small cafés, creating a classic small-town atmosphere. It's the kind of place where locals still greet each other in the street and where markets and cafés act as social hubs.

While Bellac is quieter than larger towns in the region, many people enjoy the relaxed lifestyle and the strong connection to the surrounding countryside. The area is particularly attractive to buyers looking for character homes, renovation projects and larger properties with land.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Despite its small size, Bellac provides most of the everyday services residents need. The town centre has bakeries, a butcher, cafés, pharmacies, banks and small local shops, along with a regular weekly market where you can buy fresh produce and regional specialities.

There are also supermarkets such as Intermarché and Super U nearby, making grocery shopping convenient without needing to travel too far. For a wider range of shopping and services, many residents occasionally travel to Limoges, which is about 45 minutes away.

## **Transport and getting around**

Bellac has a regional train station with services connecting to Limoges and Poitiers, which makes it relatively well connected for a town of its size. By road, Limoges is around 40-45 minutes away, providing access to larger hospitals, shopping centres and Limoges International Airport.

As with most rural areas in France, a car is recommended for everyday life, particularly for those living in nearby villages or the countryside.

# ROCHECHOUART

Rochechouart is a charming historic town in the south-west of Haute-Vienne, close to the border with Charente, with a population of around 3,700 people. The town is best known for its impressive medieval château, which now houses a contemporary art museum, and for the fascinating geological history of the Rochechouart meteorite impact crater, one of the largest in Western Europe.

Surrounded by peaceful countryside and lakes, Rochechouart offers a relaxed rural lifestyle that appeals to buyers looking for character, history and space.

## **What it's like to live there**

Life in Rochechouart is quiet and traditional, with a strong sense of community and a slower pace than larger towns. The historic centre is compact but attractive, with old stone buildings, small squares and cafés where locals gather throughout the week.

Many residents enjoy the town's cultural side, with exhibitions and events hosted at the château and community activities taking place throughout the year. Expats often settle either in the town itself or in the surrounding villages, where properties with land and countryside views are more common.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Although small, Rochechouart provides the essentials for daily life. The town has bakeries, cafés, pharmacies, small grocery shops and local services, along with a weekly market where residents can buy fresh produce and regional specialities.

There are also a few restaurants and traditional cafés in the centre. For larger supermarkets and a wider range of retail options, residents often travel to Saint-Junien or Limoges, both of which are within comfortable driving distance.

## **Transport and getting around**

Rochechouart is well positioned for road travel, with Saint-Junien around 15 minutes away and Limoges about 40 minutes by car, providing access to larger hospitals, shopping centres and Limoges International Airport.

Public transport options are limited, so a car is generally essential for day-to-day living, especially for those living in surrounding rural areas.

# MARKETS & SHOPPING

*in the haute vienne...*

## Everyday Shopping

Even smaller towns in the Haute-Vienne tend to have essential local shops such as boulangeries (bakeries), boucheries (butchers), pharmacies, cafés and small grocery stores. Larger towns like Limoges and Saint-Junien offer a wider selection of clothing shops, banks, opticians and other services.

## Supermarkets and Retail Parks

For larger weekly shops, most residents use supermarkets located in or near the main towns. Common chains include E.Leclerc, Carrefour, Intermarché, Super U and Lidl, with larger retail zones on the outskirts of Limoges and Saint-Junien offering additional stores such as DIY centres, garden centres, furniture shops and electronics retailers.

## Opening Hours

In rural parts of the Haute-Vienne, many independent shops still follow traditional French opening hours. It's common for smaller shops to close for a long lunch break between roughly 12:00 and 14:00, and many are also closed on Sunday afternoons or all day Sunday. Supermarkets, however, usually stay open throughout the day and often on Sunday mornings.

## Major Weekly Markets

- Limoges - Les Halles Market (daily):  
*A beautiful covered market hall in the city centre offering high-quality local produce, meat, fish, cheese and baked goods.*
- Limoges Outdoor Markets:  
*Several neighbourhood markets take place during the week, particularly popular for fresh fruit, vegetables and local foods.*
- Saint-Junien - Saturday Market:  
*A busy market with a mix of local produce, food stalls and everyday goods.*
- Bellac - Saturday Market:  
*A traditional market serving the local community with fresh produce, meats, cheeses and regional products.*
- Rochechouart - Wednesday Market:  
*A smaller but friendly market where locals gather for fresh produce and socialising.*

## MARKET CULTURE

Markets in Haute-Vienne are about more than just shopping—they're a social part of everyday life. Locals often meet friends for coffee before or after browsing the stalls, and many shoppers buy directly from farmers and producers.

Markets typically run from early morning until around midday, with the best selection often available earlier in the day.

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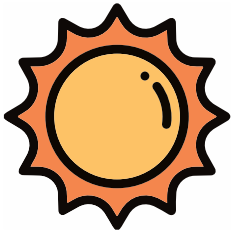
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# WEATHER & CLIMATE *in the haute vienne...*



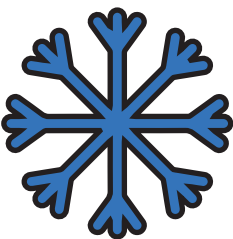
## **Summer (June-August)**

Summers in Haute-Vienne are typically warm and pleasant, with daytime temperatures usually between 22-30°C, although occasional heatwaves can push temperatures higher. The countryside is at its most vibrant during this period, and long daylight hours mean plenty of time to enjoy outdoor dining, village events and local markets. Lakes and rivers become popular for swimming, fishing and canoeing.



## **Autumn (September-October)**

Autumn brings cooler temperatures and beautiful colours across the forests and countryside. Days are often mild, typically between 15-22°C, making it comfortable for outdoor activities without the heat of summer. Harvest season arrives with local produce such as mushrooms, apples and chestnuts appearing in markets and restaurants. Tourist numbers drop during this period, giving towns and villages a calmer atmosphere.



## **Winter (November-February)**

Winters in Haute-Vienne are generally cool but rarely extreme. Temperatures usually range between 2-10°C, with occasional frost and the possibility of light snow, particularly in rural areas. Winter is also a time when locals gather in cafés and restaurants, and seasonal markets and festive events bring life to town centres. It's a great time for cosy village living, local culture and enjoying the slower pace of rural France.



## **Spring (March-May)**

Spring sees the countryside burst back into life, with blossoming trees, fresh green landscapes and gradually warming temperatures, typically between 10-20°C. Markets begin to expand again, café terraces reopen and villages become more active as the region prepares for summer. It's a great season for gardening, exploring rural walking routes and house-hunting, as the landscape shows the region at its most vibrant.

# TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

*in the haute vienne...*

## **Airports**

The main airport serving the department is **Limoges-Bellegarde Airport**, located just outside the city of Limoges. It offers a range of flights to the UK and other European destinations, making it particularly convenient for expats travelling between France and their home countries. For a wider range of international routes, larger airports such as Bordeaux, Toulouse and Paris can be reached within a few hours by car or train.

## **Rail Connections**

Haute-Vienne is served by Limoges-Bénédictins station, one of the most important railway hubs in the region. From here, regular trains connect to Paris, Toulouse, Bordeaux and other major French cities. The journey to Paris typically takes around 3-3.5 hours.

## **Road Network**

The department is well connected by road, particularly via the A20 motorway, which runs north-south through Limoges and links Paris with Toulouse. This makes driving between major cities relatively straightforward. Many smaller towns and villages are connected by well-maintained regional roads.

## **Local Transport**

Within Limoges, there is a reliable bus network that connects the city centre with surrounding suburbs and neighbourhoods. Smaller towns such as Saint-Junien and Bellac also have limited bus services, but these are generally less frequent.

## **TRAVEL TIPS**

- A car is usually essential
- Use Limoges as your rail hub
- Check seasonal flight routes
- Take advantage of the A20 motorway
  - Enjoy slow travel locally
- Plan shopping trips if you live rurally



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# LIFESTYLE & CULTURE

*in the haute vienne...*

Life in Haute-Vienne is centred around a slower, more traditional French way of living, where food, community and the surrounding countryside play an important role in everyday life.

Compared with more tourist-heavy regions, the department feels authentic and local, with strong traditions, seasonal festivals and a relaxed pace that many expats find appealing. From weekly markets and village events to outdoor activities and cultural attractions, Haute-Vienne offers plenty of opportunities to enjoy a balanced and sociable lifestyle.

## Food & Drink

Haute-Vienne has a rich culinary heritage rooted in simple, high-quality local ingredients. Regional specialities include Limousin beef, one of France's most prized beef breeds, along with dishes such as clafoutis (a traditional baked fruit dessert), pâtés, local cheeses and seasonal produce.

Everyday food culture revolves around visits to boulangeries, boucheries and weekly markets, where residents buy fresh bread, meat and vegetables. Café culture is also a big part of daily life, with locals gathering on terraces for coffee in the morning or enjoying relaxed lunches and evening meals at traditional bistros and restaurants.

## Festivals & Events

Throughout the year, towns and villages host a range of festivals, markets and community celebrations. In Limoges, cultural events include music festivals, theatre performances and exhibitions celebrating the city's famous porcelain and enamel traditions.

Smaller towns also hold seasonal fairs, food festivals and summer night markets, where locals and visitors gather to eat, drink and enjoy live music. These events help create a strong sense of community and provide a great way for newcomers to meet people.

## Outdoor Activities

Haute-Vienne is surrounded by forests, lakes and rolling countryside, making it ideal for outdoor living. The region offers excellent opportunities for walking, cycling, fishing and kayaking, with many scenic trails and quiet rural roads to explore.

Lakes such as Lac de Saint-Pardoux, just north of Limoges, are popular spots for swimming, sailing and family activities during the warmer months. The peaceful countryside also makes the area attractive for gardening, nature lovers and those looking for a slower, healthier lifestyle.

## Community & Expat Life

Although Haute-Vienne feels authentically French, it has a welcoming and growing international community. Expats from the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and increasingly North America have settled throughout the department, particularly in rural areas where property is affordable.

Many towns host language groups, social clubs, local associations and community events, which help newcomers integrate and make friends.

While learning French is important for daily life, most newcomers find the local communities friendly and supportive as they settle into the region.

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# PRACTICAL LIVING *in the haute vienne...*

## **Healthcare & Services**

Healthcare in Haute-Vienne is generally reliable and accessible, particularly thanks to the facilities in Limoges, which acts as the department's main medical hub. The city is home to the large Limoges University Hospital, one of the major hospitals in central France, offering a wide range of specialist services, emergency care and medical research facilities. Smaller towns across the department also have local doctors (médecins généralistes), dentists, pharmacies and clinics, meaning everyday healthcare is usually available close to home. While waiting times for some specialists can be longer in rural areas, many expats find the overall standard of care high and costs significantly lower than in the UK, US or Canada once registered with the French healthcare system.

## **Education**

Education in Haute-Vienne follows the French national system, with public schools available in most towns and larger villages. Many expat families choose local French schools, which are generally well regarded and provide a good opportunity for children to integrate into French life and language. Limoges also has a university and several higher education institutions, giving the city a lively student population. Dedicated international schools are limited within the department itself, so some families opt for bilingual private schools, distance learning or international online programmes, depending on their needs and the age of their children.

## **Cost of Living**

The cost of living in Haute-Vienne is typically lower than in many parts of France, particularly when compared with major cities such as Paris or popular tourist regions. Property prices are often significantly more affordable than in neighbouring departments like the Dordogne, which is one of the main reasons the area attracts international buyers. Everyday expenses such as groceries, local produce, utilities and dining out are generally reasonable, especially if you shop at markets and local food stores. However, costs can vary depending on location, with properties closer to Limoges or in desirable countryside areas sometimes commanding higher prices.

## **Language**

French is the main language used in everyday life across Haute-Vienne, and learning at least basic French will make settling into the region much easier. While some people in tourist areas or international communities may speak English, many local services—from doctors and tradespeople to administrative offices—operate primarily in French. Even a modest level of language ability helps with daily tasks, building relationships with neighbours and becoming part of the local community. Many towns offer adult French classes, conversation groups and informal language exchanges, which can be a helpful way for newcomers to improve their confidence while meeting other residents.

# BUSINESS DIRECTORY

*in the haute vienne...*

A few of our favourite featured businesses in the Haute Vienne:



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*the french*  
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You'll find a range of different businesses, in a variety of sectors, but all  
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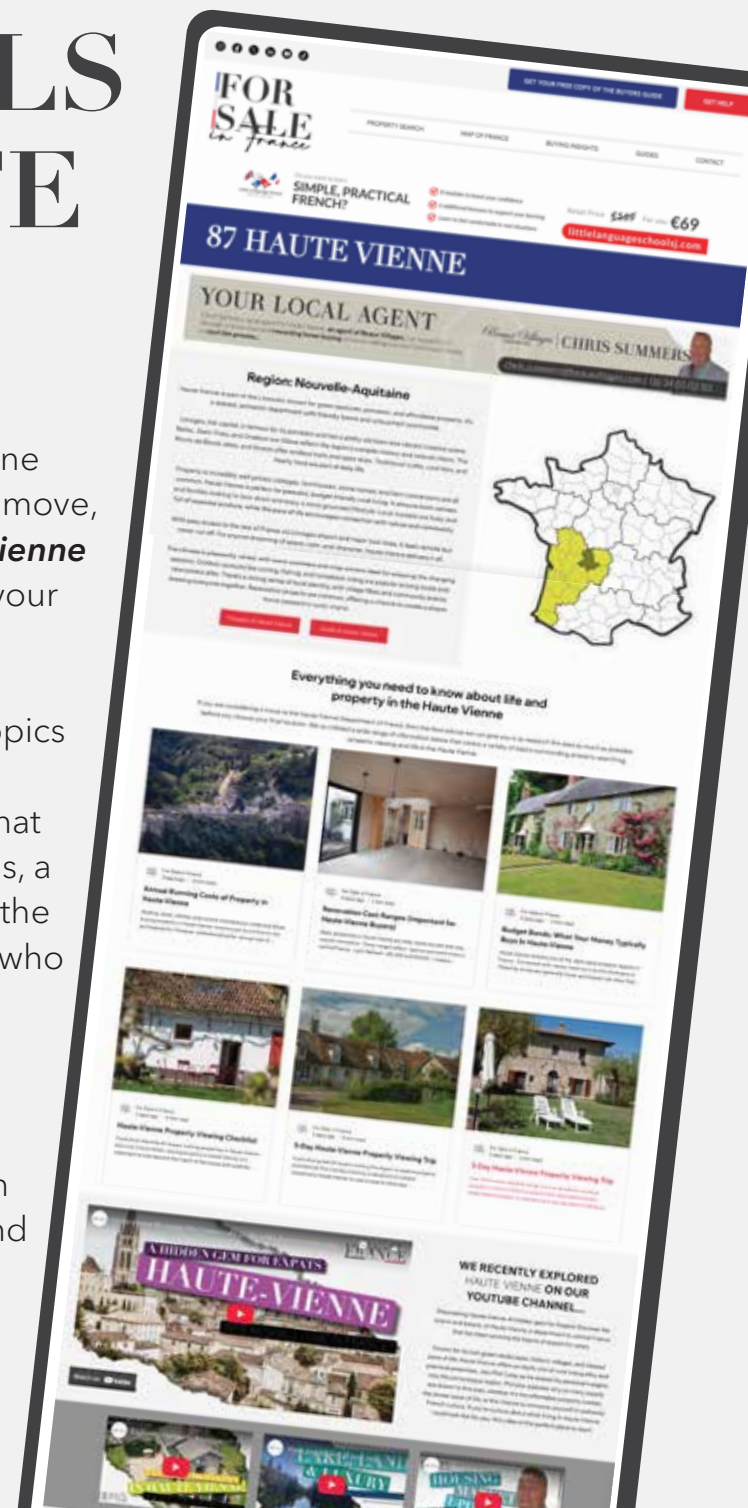
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# MORE DETAILS ABOUT HAUTE VIENNE

For a further dive into property in the Haute Vienne department and personalised support with your move, head over to [forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-haute-vienne](https://forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-haute-vienne) 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 Haute Vienne, renovation budgets, property finding options, what your budget can realistically buy in different areas, a practical property checklist to help you navigate the process with confidence, and stories from those who have made the move to the area for a real first person account.

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.



[FORSALEINFRANCE.COM/LIFE-IN-HAUTE-VIENNE](https://forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-haute-vienne)





# YOUR GUIDE TO THE HAUTE VIENNE

