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# GUIDE TO THE **GIRONDE**

## *FANCY A NEW START?*

This practical, no-nonsense guide is for anyone considering a move to the Gironde, 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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# GIRONDE

NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE

## SO, YOU'RE CONSIDERING A MOVE TO THE GIRONDE?

Gironde offers one of the most diverse and dynamic lifestyles in south-west France, combining world-class wine regions, Atlantic coastline, vibrant city living and peaceful countryside all within one department.

Anchored by Bordeaux, a UNESCO-listed city, the area provides excellent infrastructure, transport links and a lively international feel. Beyond the city, you'll find the famous vineyards of Saint-Émilion and Médoc, beautiful beaches along the Atlantic coast, and quieter rural areas with attractive property options.



# PROPERTY *in the gironde...*

While property prices can be higher than neighbouring departments like Dordogne or Charente, Gironde appeals to those looking for a balance of lifestyle, accessibility and investment potential, making it particularly popular with expats who want both convenience and the classic French way of life.



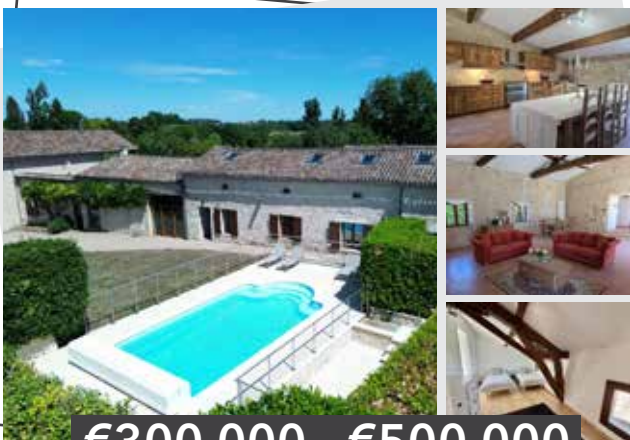
**€60,000 - €100,000**

With prices being more expensive than surrounding departments, this price range will offer some opportunities but they will usually need substantial renovating and additional costs.



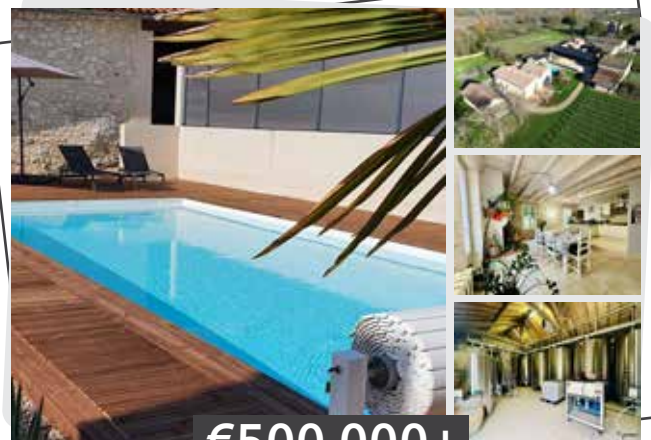
**€100,000 - €300,000**

A range of houses available across this price range, most ready to move in, but light renovation often needed to bring them up to a good standard. Properties usually graced with land and views.



**€300,000 - €500,000**

Looking at properties in the more popular communes in this price range, and edging closer to the popular wine regions. Also, lots of income potential with a lot of these priced properties.



**€500,000+**

Properties in the Gironde can surpass the millions, especially those in wine country, and with vineyard operations. Plenty of business opportunities available, with many large, elegant estates on offer.

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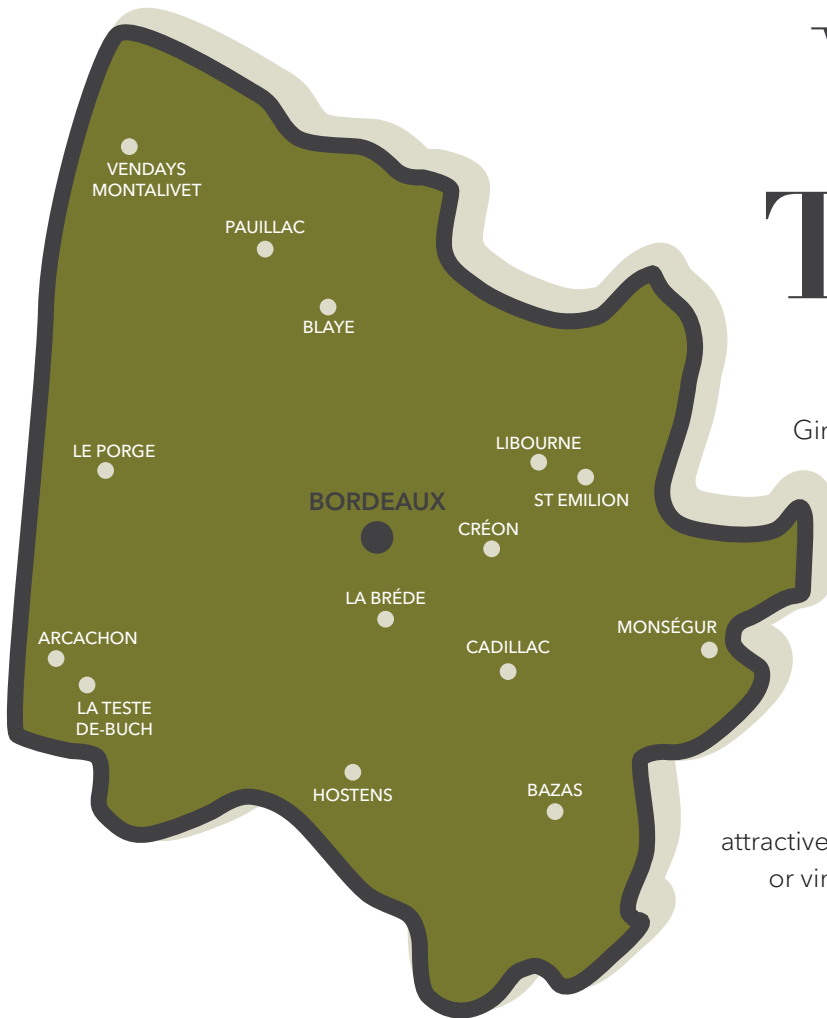


# WHERE TO LIVE *in the gironde...*

Gironde offers a wide variety of lifestyles, and where expats choose to settle often depends on whether they prioritise city life, coast, vineyards or quieter countryside.

With Bordeaux at its heart and easy access to beaches and rural areas, the region attracts a broad mix of international buyers and lifestyle movers.

Overall, Gironde's diversity is what makes it so attractive—whether you want city energy, coastal relaxation or vineyard tranquillity, there's a location to suit almost every lifestyle.



## **Bordeaux & Surrounding Suburbs**

The city of Bordeaux is by far the most popular choice for expats seeking a vibrant, cosmopolitan lifestyle. It offers excellent transport links, international schools, shopping, restaurants and a strong job market. Nearby suburbs such as Mérignac, Pessac and Talence are also popular, offering more space and slightly lower property prices while staying well connected to the city.

## **Arcachon Bay & Coastal Areas**

The Atlantic coast, particularly around Arcachon and La Teste-de-Buch, attracts those looking for a relaxed, seaside lifestyle. These areas are especially popular for second homes and retirees, offering beaches, seafood culture and outdoor living, though prices can be higher and some towns are quieter in winter.

## **Libournais & Saint-Émilion Area**

Around Libourne and Saint-Émilion, expats are drawn to vineyard surroundings and a more traditional pace of life. This area offers beautiful countryside, strong wine culture and good access back into Bordeaux, making it ideal for those wanting a balance between rural charm and convenience.

## **Entre-Deux-Mers & Rural Villages**

For those seeking affordability and space, areas like Monségur and the wider Entre-Deux-Mers region are popular. Expect rolling vineyards, bastide towns and a slower pace of life, with a mix of French locals and international residents. These areas appeal particularly to retirees and those looking to renovate or run lifestyle businesses.

## **Médoc & Northern Gironde**

The Médoc peninsula, north of Bordeaux, offers a quieter lifestyle surrounded by famous wine estates and close to long Atlantic beaches. Towns such as Lesparre-Médoc appeal to those wanting more rural living while still being within reach of the city and coast.

# BORDEAUX

Bordeaux is the capital of the Gironde and one of France's most desirable cities, with a population of around 260,000 people (and over 1 million in the wider metropolitan area).

Known for its elegant architecture, riverside setting and world-famous wine culture, Bordeaux offers a vibrant yet liveable city lifestyle that appeals to both professionals and lifestyle movers.

For many expats, Bordeaux offers the best of all worlds. A dynamic, well-connected city with culture, cuisine and easy access to some of the most beautiful parts of south-west France.

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

Living in Bordeaux offers the perfect balance between a lively city and a relaxed southern French lifestyle. The historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, filled with grand boulevards, cafés, restaurants and boutique shops, while areas along the Garonne River provide scenic walks and outdoor spaces.

The city has a strong international feel, with a mix of locals, students and expats, yet it still retains an authentic French atmosphere. Many expats choose to live either in the city centre or in nearby suburbs such as Mérignac, Pessac and Talence, which offer more space and easier parking.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Bordeaux has one of the best shopping scenes in south-west France. The city centre offers everything from independent boutiques, boulangeries, boucheries and wine shops to high-end brands and department stores along streets like Rue Sainte-Catherine—one of the longest pedestrian shopping streets in Europe.

There are also excellent food markets, including the well-known Marché des Capucins, alongside numerous supermarkets and convenience stores throughout the city. On the outskirts, large retail parks and shopping centres provide access to DIY stores, furniture outlets and larger supermarkets.

## **Transport and getting around**

Transport is a major strength of Bordeaux. The city has an extensive and efficient tram network, along with buses that connect the centre to surrounding suburbs, making it easy to get around without a car. Bordeaux also has a major TGV train station (Gare Saint-Jean), with direct high-speed connections to Paris (around 2 hours) and links across France. Bordeaux Airport is located about 20–30 minutes from the city centre and offers a wide range of domestic and international flights.

While many residents in the city centre don't need a car, it can be useful if you plan to explore the wider region, including vineyards and the coast.

# ARCACHON BAY

Arcachon Bay (Bassin d’Arcachon) is one of the most sought-after coastal areas in south-west France, known for its relaxed seaside lifestyle, sandy beaches and strong connection to nature. The main town, Arcachon, has a population of around 11,000, though this increases significantly in summer, while nearby areas such as La Teste-de-Buch and Gujan-Mestras offer a more year-round residential feel.

For those seeking a balance between nature, sea air and French coastal charm, Arcachon Bay offers a unique and highly desirable place to live in Gironde.

## **What it’s like to live there**

Life around Arcachon Bay is centred on the outdoors, with a strong emphasis on coastal living, fresh seafood and a slower pace of life. The area is famous for its oyster culture, beaches and the nearby Dune du Pilat—the tallest sand dune in Europe.

While it can feel lively and busy during the summer months, many areas become much quieter in winter, giving residents a more peaceful, local atmosphere. It’s particularly popular with retirees, second-home owners and those looking for a lifestyle change close to the sea.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Arcachon and surrounding towns are well-equipped for daily life, with a good mix of local shops, boulangeries, seafood markets and independent boutiques. The covered market in Arcachon is a highlight, especially for fresh fish and regional produce. There are also supermarkets and retail areas in La Teste-de-Buch and Gujan-Mestras, offering everything needed for everyday living.

While the shopping offer is smaller than Bordeaux, it comfortably meets most needs, with the city only about an hour away for larger retail options.

## **Transport and getting around**

Arcachon Bay is well connected, though a car is often recommended for convenience, especially if living outside the main towns. Arcachon has a direct train line to Bordeaux, making it possible to reach the city in around an hour. Roads around the bay are good, but traffic can be busy in peak summer season. For international travel, Bordeaux Airport is around an hour’s drive away.

Cycling is also popular, with many dedicated bike paths around the bay and through the surrounding pine forests.

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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  
 Fees: 10% paid by the buyer Net price: €80,000



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



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



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**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



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**GIRONDE** €1,250,000  
**BVI82981** Luxury estate with pool, equestrian facilities and 7.8Ha  
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# SAINT-ÉMILION

Saint-Émilion and its surrounding vineyards form one of the most iconic wine regions in France, offering a truly picturesque and tranquil lifestyle. The village itself is small—home to around 2,000 residents—but the wider Libournais area, including nearby Libourne, provides more services and amenities, making it a practical base for everyday living.

For expats looking for a quintessential French vineyard lifestyle, Saint-Émilion and its surrounding villages offer beauty, heritage and a strong sense of place.

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

Living in Saint-Émilion is all about vineyard views, heritage and a slower pace of life. The village is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its cobbled streets, historic buildings and world-famous wine estates.

While it can be busy with tourists in peak season, life in the surrounding villages is peaceful and rural, with a strong sense of local tradition.

This area is particularly appealing to those looking for a classic French countryside lifestyle with a touch of prestige.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Saint-Émilion itself has a selection of artisan shops, wine merchants, cafés and restaurants, but for more practical day-to-day shopping, most residents head to Libourne. There you'll find supermarkets, independent food shops, weekly markets and a wider range of services, including healthcare and schools.

The combination of village charm and nearby town convenience makes the area very liveable.

## **Transport and getting around**

Transport is relatively straightforward, though a car is highly recommended for daily life in rural areas. Libourne has a train station with regular connections to Bordeaux, taking around 30–40 minutes, which makes commuting or accessing the city easy.

Road links are good, and Bordeaux Airport is approximately 45–60 minutes away by car, depending on location.

# MONSÉGUR

Monségur is a charming bastide town in the heart of the Entre-Deux-Mers region, an area known for its rolling vineyards, sunflower fields and relaxed rural lifestyle.

The town itself is small, with around 1,500 residents, but it serves as a lively hub for the surrounding countryside and nearby villages.

For those seeking a quiet, authentic and more affordable lifestyle, Monségur and the Entre-Deux-Mers region offer a compelling alternative to the busier parts of Gironde.

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

Life in Monségur offers a slower, more traditional pace, centred around the town square, local events and the changing seasons. The bastide layout, with its central arcaded square, gives it a classic French feel, and there's a strong sense of community among both locals and expats.

The wider Entre-Deux-Mers area is particularly popular with those looking for space, affordability and a quieter way of life, often with larger properties or renovation opportunities.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

Despite its size, Monségur has a good range of everyday essentials, including a boulangerie, small grocery shops, cafés and a few restaurants. The town hosts a weekly market, which is an important part of local life and a great place to buy fresh produce.

For larger supermarkets and more extensive shopping, residents typically travel to nearby towns such as La Réole or Langon, both of which offer a wider selection of shops and services.

## **Transport and getting around**

In this part of Gironde, a car is essential for daily life, as public transport options are limited. Road connections are good, making it relatively easy to reach larger towns and Bordeaux, which is around 1 to 1.5 hours' drive away.

For rail travel, stations in Langon or La Réole provide connections into Bordeaux and beyond. Bordeaux Airport is the main international gateway for the area.

# MÉDOC

Médoc is a long, scenic peninsula stretching north of Bordeaux, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Gironde estuary on the other.

Known worldwide for its prestigious vineyards, the area is made up of small towns and villages, with Lesparre-Médoc acting as one of the main service centres for the region (population around 6,000).

For expats looking for a blend of coastal living, vineyard scenery and rural tranquillity, the Médoc offers a unique and less crowded alternative within Gironde.

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

Living in the Médoc offers a peaceful, nature-focused lifestyle, surrounded by vineyards, forests and long sandy beaches.

It's less densely populated and more rural than areas closer to Bordeaux, making it ideal for those seeking space and tranquillity. The Atlantic coast provides dramatic scenery and excellent opportunities for walking, surfing and outdoor living, while the inland wine villages maintain a strong sense of tradition and heritage.

## **Shops and everyday amenities**

The Médoc has a spread-out network of local shops, boulangeries, small supermarkets and weekly markets across its towns and villages.

Lesparre-Médoc offers a good range of supermarkets, healthcare services and essential amenities, while smaller villages provide day-to-day basics.

For larger shopping centres, many residents travel towards the outskirts of Bordeaux, where there is a much wider retail offering.

## **Transport and getting around**

A car is essential in the Médoc due to the rural layout and limited public transport options. There is a train line running from Bordeaux into the peninsula, serving towns such as Lesparre-Médoc, but services can be infrequent depending on location.

Driving to Bordeaux typically takes 1 to 1.5 hours, depending on where you are based. Bordeaux Airport is the nearest major airport and provides a wide range of domestic and international connections.

# MARKETS & SHOPPING CULTURE *in the gironde...*

Gironde offers a rich and varied shopping experience, combining traditional French market culture with the convenience of modern retail—particularly around Bordeaux. Whether you're living in the city, a market town or a rural village, daily life often revolves around a mix of weekly markets, local food shops and larger supermarkets, giving residents the best of both worlds.

## Major Weekly Markets

Markets are a key part of life across Gironde, with options ranging from large, vibrant city markets to smaller, local village gatherings.

- **Bordeaux** - Marché des Capucins: One of the most famous markets in the region, offering fresh produce, seafood, meat, cheese and local delicacies in a lively atmosphere.
- **Libourne** - Sunday Market: A large and popular market in the town square, known for its variety of food stalls and regional products.
- **Arcachon** - Covered Market: A fantastic coastal market specialising in fresh seafood, alongside fruit, vegetables and local goods.

## MARKET CULTURE

- Market culture in Gironde is lively and social, especially in & around Bordeaux and larger towns.
- Markets run from early morning til around midday, with the busiest atmosphere earlier in the day.
- Seasonal produce plays a big role, reflecting the region's strong agricultural and wine heritage.

## Daily Shopping & Opening Hours

Across Gironde, even smaller towns typically have essential shops such as boulangeries, boucheries, pharmacies, wine shops and cafés. In more rural areas, these local businesses are central to daily life, while in larger towns and cities there is a wider mix of independent boutiques, specialist food shops and high-street brands.

As with much of France, smaller independent shops may close for a lunch break (typically 12:00–14:00) and often shut on Sunday afternoons or all day Sunday. However, in busier areas—especially in and around Bordeaux—shops are more likely to stay open throughout the day, and some shopping centres open on Sundays, offering greater flexibility.

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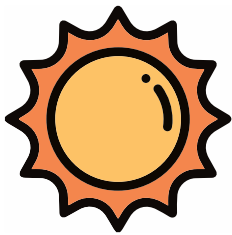
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# WEATHER & CLIMATE *in the gironde...*

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



Summers are warm, sunny and lively, with average temperatures around 26-27°C, though it can occasionally climb into the 30s or higher during heatwaves. The Atlantic breeze can help moderate the heat, especially near the coast.

*Great for: beach days around Arcachon Bay, outdoor dining, festivals and making the most of long sunny evenings.*

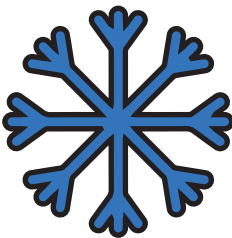
## **Autumn (September-October)**



Autumn is often one of the best times of year in Gironde, with warm early months (often still around 20-25°C in September) and a slower pace after summer. The grape harvest season adds to the atmosphere across wine regions.

*Great for: wine harvest season, food festivals, exploring towns and enjoying milder weather without peak tourist crowds.*

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



Winters are generally mild compared to much of Europe, with daytime temperatures around 8-12°C, though it can feel cooler with rain and coastal winds. Frosts can occur, but snow is rare.

*Great for: experiencing everyday local life, lower property prices, quieter towns and a more relaxed pace—ideal for those considering a permanent move.*

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



Spring in Gironde starts gently, with temperatures gradually rising from around 15°C in March to low 20s by May. The season can be a mix of sunshine and showers, but it brings the countryside and vineyards to life.

*Great for: exploring vineyards, house hunting, outdoor markets and getting a feel for the region before the summer crowds arrive.*

# TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

*in the gironde...*

Gironde is one of the best-connected departments in south-west France, with excellent transport links centred around Bordeaux. Whether you're travelling locally, across France or internationally, the region offers a strong mix of rail, road and air connections, making it particularly appealing for expats who want both accessibility and lifestyle.

**Bordeaux-Mérignac Airport (BOD)** – the main international gateway, located around 20-30 minutes from Bordeaux city centre. It offers a wide range of domestic and international flights, including routes to the UK, Ireland, Europe and beyond. The airport is well connected by road and public transport, making it convenient for both residents and visitors.

Bordeaux is a major rail hub, with Gare de Bordeaux-Saint-Jean offering high-speed TGV services. Direct trains to Paris take around 2 hours, making it one of the fastest connections from the south-west to the capital. Regular regional trains connect Bordeaux to towns such as Libourne, Arcachon, Langon and Lesparre-Médoc, making commuting and day trips straightforward.

Gironde has a well-developed road network, including major routes such as the A10, A62 and A63, connecting the region to Paris, Toulouse, Spain and the Atlantic coast. Driving is often the easiest way to explore vineyards, rural villages and coastal areas, particularly outside Bordeaux. In the city itself, traffic can be busy, and parking in central areas may be limited, so many residents rely on public transport.

The Atlantic coast, including Arcachon Bay, is around 1 hour from Bordeaux by car or train. Vineyard regions such as Saint-Émilion and the Médoc are also easily accessible, making weekend trips and day outings simple.



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# LIFESTYLE & CULTURE

*in the gironde...*

Lifestyle in Gironde is vibrant, varied and deeply rooted in food, wine and outdoor living, offering a blend of cosmopolitan energy and relaxed south-west France charm. With Bordeaux at its heart and world-famous wine regions surrounding it, the department provides a lifestyle that can be as lively or as restful as you choose, whether that's city living, coastal relaxation or vineyard tranquillity.

## **Food & Drink**

Gironde is a gastronomic hotspot, best known for its exceptional wines from regions such as Saint-Émilion and the Médoc. Food culture is central to daily life, with a strong focus on fresh, seasonal and locally sourced produce. You'll find everything from traditional dishes like duck confit and oysters from the Atlantic coast to modern French cuisine in Bordeaux's thriving restaurant scene.

Café culture is a big part of everyday life, particularly in Bordeaux, where terraces are busy year-round with people enjoying coffee, wine or long lunches.

## **Outdoor Activities**

The region is ideal for those who enjoy the outdoors. The Atlantic coastline offers beaches, surfing and coastal walks, especially around Arcachon Bay, while inland areas provide opportunities for cycling, hiking and exploring vineyards. The relatively flat terrain makes it accessible for all ages.

## **Festivals & Events**

Gironde has a lively calendar of events throughout the year. Bordeaux hosts numerous cultural festivals, food events and exhibitions, while wine festivals and harvest celebrations take place across the region. Coastal areas and smaller towns also host night markets, music festivals and seasonal fairs, particularly during the summer months, creating a sociable and welcoming atmosphere.

## **Community & Expat Life**

Gironde has a growing and diverse expat community, particularly in and around Bordeaux and the coastal areas. The international feel of the city makes it easy to settle in, while smaller towns and villages offer a more traditional French experience.

There are plenty of expat groups, language exchanges and social clubs, helping newcomers integrate and build connections. While English is more widely spoken than in more rural departments, learning French is still important for fully enjoying life and becoming part of the local community.

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# PRACTICAL LIVING *in the dordogne...*

## **Healthcare & Services**

Healthcare in Gironde is excellent, with a wide range of services available. Bordeaux is home to major hospitals, including the CHU de Bordeaux, one of the largest and most respected hospital centres in France. Towns such as Libourne, Arcachon and Langon also have hospitals, clinics and specialist services. Across the department, you'll find local doctors (médecins), pharmacies and dentists in most towns. As with many parts of France, access to some specialists can involve waiting times, but overall the quality of care is high and accessible once registered in the French healthcare system.

## **Education**

Gironde offers strong education options, particularly around Bordeaux. There are public primary and secondary schools throughout the department, which are generally well regarded and a popular choice for expat families looking to integrate. Bordeaux also has a number of international and bilingual schools, as well as universities and higher education institutions. In more rural areas, options may be more limited, so some families consider private schooling, homeschooling or online international programmes depending on their needs.

## **Cost of Living**

The cost of living in Gironde varies depending on location. Bordeaux and the Arcachon Bay area are among the more expensive parts of south-west France, particularly for property, dining and services. However, moving further out into areas such as Entre-Deux-Mers or northern Gironde can offer better value and more space. Everyday costs such as groceries and utilities are generally in line with the French average, and markets can offer good value for fresh, local produce.

## **Language**

French is essential for daily life in Gironde, especially when dealing with administration, healthcare and local services. In Bordeaux and more international areas, you may find more English speakers, but outside of these, day-to-day interactions are predominantly in French. Even a basic level of the language will make a big difference when settling in, from shopping to building relationships. There are plenty of language schools, conversation groups and expat networks that can help you improve your French and integrate more easily.

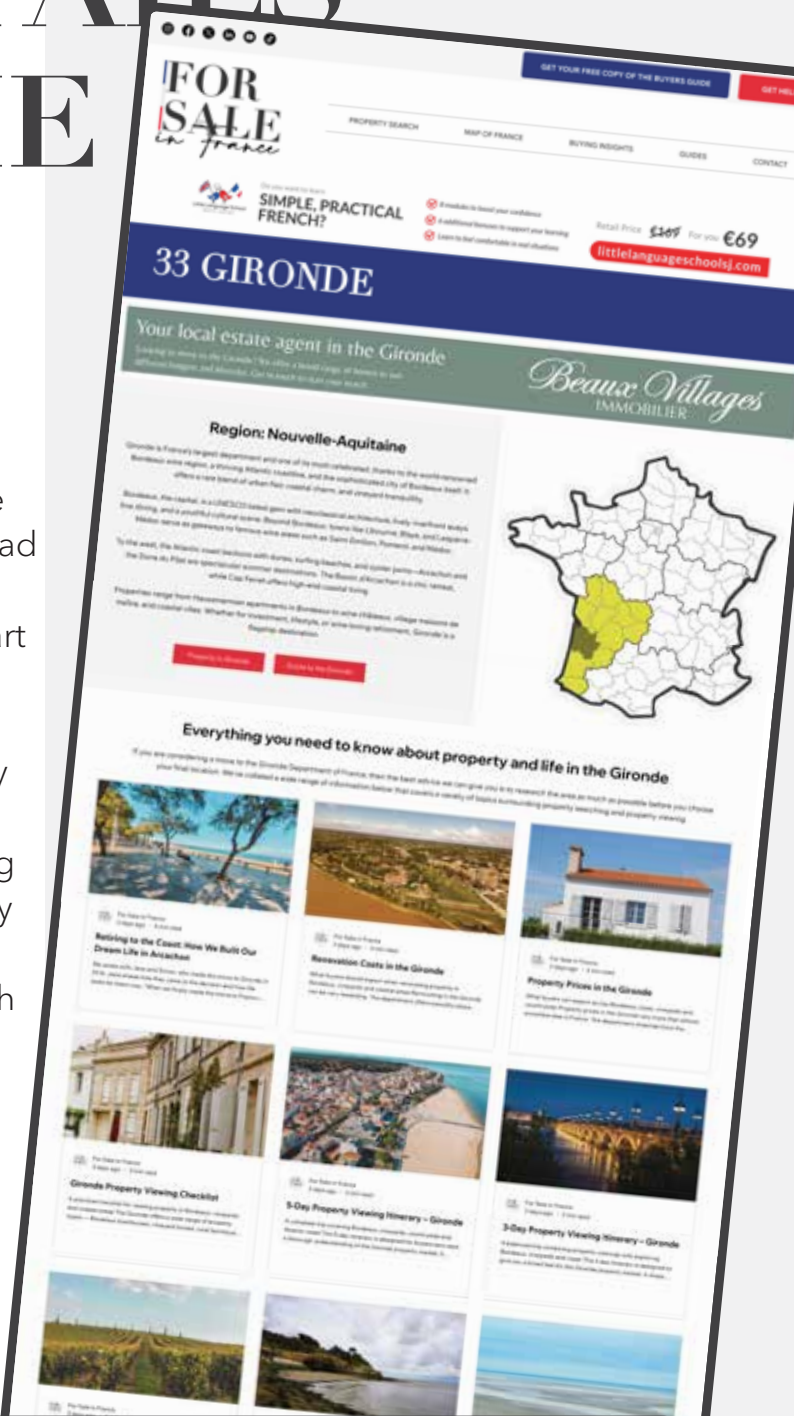
# MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE GIRONDE

For a further dive into property in the Gironde and personalised support with your move, head over to [forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-gironde](https://forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-gironde) 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 Gironde, 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

[FORSALEINFRANCE.COM/LIFE-IN-GIRONDE](https://forsaleinfrance.com/life-in-gironde)





# YOUR GUIDE TO THE GIRONDE

