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The South of France just 99p away

Cheap flights put Languedoc on Britons' holiday-home map

WHEN you can fly there for as little as 99p (plus taxes), it's no wonder the Languedoc Rousillon region in the South of France is booming.

The low-cost airline revolution has made this huge region, stretching from the Spanish border in the south to the Rhone in the east, a hotspot for Britons buying second homes abroad.

Ryanair, easyJet, Flybe and bmi baby are increasing services to Montpellier, Carcassonne, Perpignan and Nîmes, while airports such as Girona, Marseille and Toulouse, just outside the region, offer good

By Cheryl Markosky

alternative routes as well. According to Karl O'Hanlon from Garrigae Investments - which is selling new townhouses and villas from £136,500 at Les Jardins de St Benoit in the village of St Laurent - a variety of housing is available in this mainly rural Mediterranean region.

'You can pick up a one-bedroom apartment for £67,000 or a three-bedroom house on a modern estate for £235,000. But expect to pay £300,000 for a higher-quality new three-bedroom home, and a premium for period homes,' he says.

'A restored traditional stone

three-bedroom villa with a pool fetches more than £400,000.'

As well as a good selection of property types, British buyers are also attracted by the diverse landscapes - from craggy peaks and rolling hills to flat plains and a popular, but more commercialised, coastline, says Alex Charles from Creme de Languedoc.

'The foothills offer the best combination of beautiful countryside and consistently good weather. The gardens here are less steep than in the mountains and prices less steep than on the coast,' he says.

Although the Languedoc is no longer cheap - prices have been rising about ten per cent a year over the past decade - it is still 35 per cent less expensive than Provence or the Cote d'Azur.

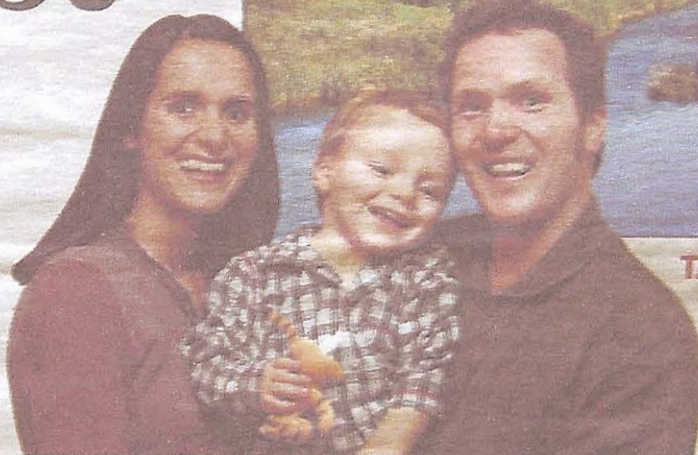
IT worker Mark Lorrimer bought a furnished £77,000 two-bedroom townhouse off-plan at Domaine le Mas des Vignes in Calvisson, near Nîmes, in November through overseas consultant Selection Property.

Because Mark, his 33-year-old wife Denise and son Samuel, two, want to holiday in the house for about four weeks a year and rent it

out the rest of the time, budget flights were a key factor. 'We get direct flights from Leeds to Nîmes for about £20,' says Mark, 34, 'or from Liverpool, 45 minutes away. The trip from our home in Halifax to Calvisson takes about two and a half hours.'

And as the majority of purchasers in the Languedoc are natives, Mark hopes the family experiences the 'real' France.

● *Les Jardins de St Benoit*, Premier Resorts, 020 8940 9406, www.premierlesjardins.co.uk; www.selectionproperty.com.



EASY JETS: Budget flights were the key to the Lorrimers, inset, buying in Languedoc

TAX FACTS:

- **Sales tax** Notaire's fees and stamp duty between seven and eight per cent.
- **Capital gains tax:** Over 33 per cent if sold within two years.
- **Inheritance tax:** Complex and can be up to 60 per cent.