



Provence in the south of France: perennially (and justifiably) popular.

D'accord – the appeal of the south of France

Flavours of the month may come and go but the south of France simply never goes out of fashion. Consequently, properties along the Côte d'Azur are among the most sought after anywhere in Europe.

With long hot summers book-ended by mild winters, its appeal for holiday-makers and investors alike is clear.

At just two hours' flying time from most European capitals, Nice International is France's largest airport outside of Paris. Now that it has been expanded to cater for the large number of low-cost airlines that serve it, including Ryanair and EasyJet, demand is set to intensify even further.

Like the ads say, the value of investments can fall as well as rise. There are, however, a number of other reasons why property along the Côte d'Azur makes a good bet.

Chief among these is the law of supply and demand. Although demand is high, stringent government restrictions designed to preserve the coast's green belts prevent over-development and keep a lid on supply.

Very many Irish investors have already got a foothold

in the French market thanks to its government-backed sale and lease-back system. By Irish standards, such developments offer terrific value and have the added advantage of providing a guaranteed return.

For example, around €200,000 will bag you a fully furnished two-bedroom apartment in a sale and lease-back scheme in Provence, including the use of communal gardens and swimming pool.

In return for your payment, the management company will rent out the apartments for you for an agreed number of weeks each year, providing rental income with a typical return of between 4 and 5 per cent.

You also get to use the property for a certain number of

In return for your payment, the management company will rent out the apartments for you

weeks during the year. There are, however, downsides to sale and lease-back schemes, not least that your use of the property is so restricted.

A small price to pay for a guaranteed return? Perhaps, but with typical lease-back schemes lasting over a decade, if you choose to sell early the buyer must honour the remaining lease – which could restrict your market.

Moreover, if you sell the property within 20 years, a proportion of the VAT may have to be refunded to the French government, amounting to one twentieth of the VAT for every year until 20 years has expired.

There is also the possibility that, at the end of the initial lease, all of the apartments in a development could well appear on the market at the same time, impacting negatively on capital appreciation.

On the other hand, finding a traditional buy-to-let in France can seem too much like hard work. Not only do you have to find the right property but you have to find a management company to look after it too – and maybe even tenants – all in French.

There are however ways around this. A buy-to-let scheme in Cannes that includes the possibility of a guaranteed rental

income has been developed by two French property firms working in partnership.

Attika International is a fully registered and FNAIM bonded French real estate agency specialising in property sales in Cannes as well as the rest of the Côte d'Azur and Languedoc. AC Rentals specialises in property management in the region.

The system works like this. Attika International sources a selection of the best investment apartments in Cannes, accompanies the client on visits, advises and negotiates any offers.

Once the final choice is down to two or three possible properties, AC Rentals will then visit them to say which one it reckons would make the best investment and is therefore the one they would be most happy to guarantee rental income on.

If you're happy with the property, you buy it and AC Rentals takes over the management and marketing of it for you. Even better, staff at both companies speak English.

For further information contact Attika International at 00 334 93 44 67 01 or AC Rentals at 00 334 936 829 71.

– Sandra O'Connell

The and peo offe T num dev gro frel 7 res 50) Pre are wiu wit 1 Po rot ap €2 the fiv pa Be en be di C cl R ci P w D E o p S it fe v n p k a f c g t h F c f a v c a o m at ou ha dk co sw an th are