

34 METRO Tuesday, January 19, 2016

Overseas **METRO Property**



LA DURANTIE AT A GLANCE...

Getting there:

Flights to Toulouse take 1 hr 45 min from Gatwick. Transfer by road to La Durantie is 50 minutes

Airfares: From about £60 with EasyJet.

Price: From €333,732 for a one-bed.

Yields: Guaranteed minimum rental occupancy of 9 weeks with the leaseback contract, with yields of 2-3 per cent.

Peak season:

June to September

What to see: Set in hectares of beautiful grounds, with a 1,500 acre oak forest next door, there's wine tasting nearby and skiing in the Pyrenees. **What to do:** Gaillac Wine Festival and the Lautrec Pink Garlic Festival both held every August, while the Tour de France passes by each July.

The real France, but with a reassuring safety net

Oliver Wadson explores a new rural development in the Tarn...

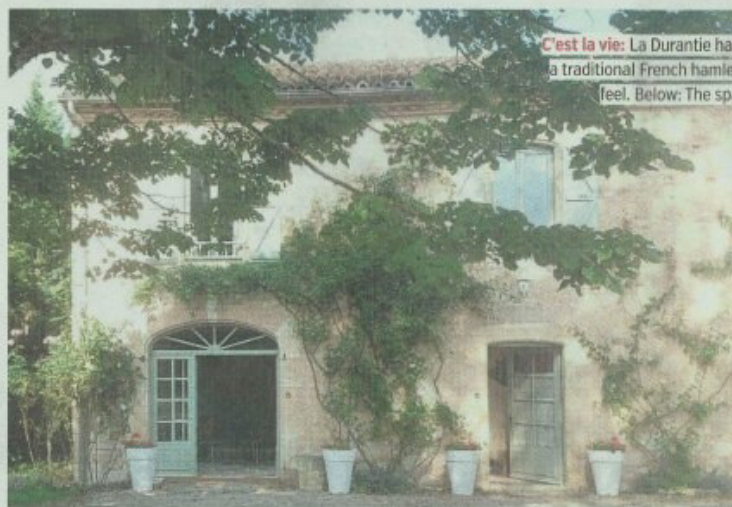
TO DESCRIBE the Tarn as a French department undiscovered by the British would be misleading, but it has certainly attracted

fewer tourists than some of its neighbours such as Provence or Languedoc-Roussillon.

Quite why is something of a mystery. This is the rugby-loving south west, sitting at the foot of the Midi-Pyrenees, and the landscape has a lush, rugged charm. It also has a great culinary traditions – cassoulet, foie gras and blood sausages.

Now the Tarn is about to find its place on the map this side of the Channel thanks to a new development called La Durantie near Gaillac, a short drive from the beautiful city of Albi, birthplace of the French painter Toulouse-Lautrec. The 2014 film *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, starring Helen Mirren and produced by Steven Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey, was filmed in the region and has also helped throw a spotlight on the area.

La Durantie, which is already scooping both European and international property awards, will comprise 57 homes, from one to five bedrooms, within landscaped private gardens. If you sign a leaseback



C'est la vie: La Durantie has a traditional French hamlet feel. Below: The spa

agreement, which means you have to leave the property empty for six weeks in the summer, prices range from €333,732 (about £251,000) to €777,530 (about £584,000).

The development is a perfect example of L'Entente Cordiale – English and French architects have joined forces to present the vision and although the two sides admit to the odd fractious moment in the process, the result is harmonious and sensitive. Materials are being locally sourced and the homes built to different

■ GET 20 per cent off the price of a property at La Durantie by signing a leaseback agreement. A French government initiative to encourage tourism and house-building, owners must leave their property empty for the six-week French holiday period in July and August when it is let out – offering nine week of hassle-free rental income.

heights to create that French hamlet feel. The smaller apartments are being built around a shared outdoor area to create a sense of community.

La Durantie will also offer Le Bistrot and Bar, on the lower ground floor of the magnificent 19th-century Belle-Epoque Chateau, adjacent to the development. There is also Le Club – offering a spa, tennis, croquet, volleyball, a pitch 'n' putt golf course and an indoor and outdoor pool.

Prospective buyers who fear the sort of French adventure-turned-nightmare documented in Peter Mayle's *A Year In Provence* take note: this development offers a 'turn key' service. This means the properties are serviced, cleaned and maintained for an annual charge ranging from €3,200 for a two-bed apartment to €7,250 for a five-bedroom house with a pool.

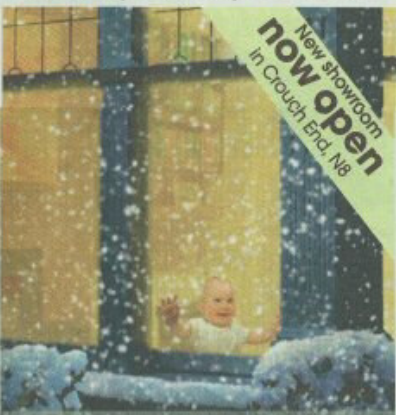
The Tarn is hot in summer but it does rain in May and this is the Midi-Pyrenees, so winters are cold. That, of course, has its benefits – quality skiing is just a two-hour drive away.

■ spherestates.com/durantie

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Say au revoir to holiday home worries

JAN LAWSON, 53, a director at a pensions and healthcare firm from Ripon, North Yorkshire, has bought a two-bedroom house at La Durantie for €333,000. The property is part of the second phase of the development and will be ready this autumn.

'I first heard about La Durantie in 2014 and was really impressed, so decided to find out more,' says Jan, pictured.

'I had been interested in buying in France for some time and was attracted to the Tarn because there are fewer British expats than other areas such as the

Dordogne, and more opportunity to integrate with the locals and experience the real France.

'The Country Club is going to be a draw for a mixture of nationalities, rather than just British residents.

'Knowing that my property would be fully taken care of was

probably the main attraction for me. Everything is looked after while you are away and the English-speaking staff are on hand to help you during your stay. This safety net removes the worry of owning a holiday home abroad where you don't speak the language.

'I plan on gradually increasing the time I spend at my holiday home, as my workload winds down. I am buying through the leaseback system, which requires our home to be included in the rental pool for a

set number of weeks per year and entitles me to a 20 per cent VAT reduction on the sales price.

'The Tarn was attractive to me because it sits within a dramatic landscape without being extreme. I enjoy visiting the many bastide towns, all within striking distance of each other, and exploring the local French markets.

'I have been really impressed with the quality of furnishings inside the buildings and the finish detail on everything. Everything is finished to a high standard and I am excited about owning a property in such a quality development.'

