

Luxury Real Estate by Carlton International | issue one Spring 2007

Carpe D

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VIP//INTERIORS//FINANCE//RUGBY//RALLY DIVAS



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Our world is one of general insecurity, climatic turmoil, economic uncertainty, technological revolution and political change. We are dominated by numbers, code numbers, identity numbers, pin numbers and endless statistical numbers inciting us to conform to a model, in a category, in a socio economic environment, within a structure dictating what must be our obligations, our rights and even our needs.

Carpe Diem, the magazine, intends to provide alternative visions of our world. Visions of harmony, design, spontaneity, innovation and hedonism. This, against the backdrop of the logical, the pragmatic and the traditional but equally exciting: Real Estate on the French Riviera and abroad.

Carlton International is proud to bring you the first issue of our magazine which will be followed every three months by further editions, in the hope that you will find amongst its pages inspiration to DO IT and in doing it, share it with those who bring you comfort, care and affection. Life is too short not to.....

Philip Weiser, Carlton International



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Gone are the days when membership to clubs such as The Garrick Club was considered the ultimate in exclusivity. Now groups of elite are joining together to share not only a bottle of Port, but expensive cars, private jets, luxury homes and even handbags. Suzanna Chambers reports.

When The Garrick Club opened its doors to its first members on a cold and foggy day in 1831, the dignified gentleman were invited to take a seat around a vast dining room in the Old Card Room for intellectual discussions on politics and the arts.

The club, founded by a group of literary figures in the heart of London's theatre-land, was in its heyday a very modern concept, offering the elite of society a home from home in which to mingle with like-minded people.

Move the clock forward 175 years, and exclusive members clubs are still very much a la mode. But men - and women - hoping to join today's VIP brotherhoods have to satisfy an altogether different set of qualifications before they are welcome. In place of intellect, substitute a lot of cash, and your application will generally be accepted.

Once 'in', members can expect a lot more than just witty conversation. Holding the right affinity card now opens the door to a world of luxury which is second to none.

Amongst the most elite of today's growing breed of VIP clubs is PrivatSea, which claims to be so exclusive that only 100 people in the world can join at any one time.

The club, which enjoyed a rather more glamorous inauguration than its predecessor at the sun-drenched Monaco Yacht Show in 2005, is primarily a first-class yachting association which offers members a plethora of natural complements such as private jets and exclusive cars.

Those fortunate enough to pass the necessary checks to join receive unrivalled access to some of the world's finest superyachts and the lifestyle which goes with them.

Naturally all this fun comes at a price. And it's not cheap. Members pay a one-off joining fee of 18,000 euros which gives them the keys to their own lifestyle account with the club. There are four tiers on offer, allowing members to choose how much they want to put into that account - be it 150,000 euros for the Intro level; 300,000 euros for the Azure level; 600,000 euros for the Beryl level, or 1.2 million euros for the top Cobalt level.

The money is converted into points which are used at the member's discretion. For example, a week's sailing in high season on one of the world's most beautiful sailing yachts the Mirabella V will eat up 2,280 points (228,000 euros).

If you require something a little larger, the PrivatSea fleet also includes the MV Alexander, a 122 metre vessel with room to hold the party of all parties - with up to 80 guests. Or for the speed demons amongst you, there is the 44 metre The World is Not Enough, the world's fastest superyacht which is capable of an impressive 65 knots.

Through the PrivatSea's 'Reciprocal Club Network' members also get immediate access to other members clubs across the globe. A quick wave of their PrivatSea card and members can waltz onto practically any reputable green in the world - even if those clubs have long waiting lists.

The renowned Automobile Club de Monaco, for example, currently has a lengthy eight years waiting list. But if you can flash the right card at the door to the prestigious association on the Port of Monaco, that list will miraculously disappear.

Also on offer is a 24/7 hotline to your own personal PrivatSea staff, who will help members travel in style to anywhere in the world, including some of the planet's most off-limits. Whether it is a sailing trip to the Antarctica or swimming with whales sharks in the Galapagos, members will have access, according to communications spokesperson Luisa Norfolk, who says it's the clubs one-to-one service which puts it ahead of its competitors.

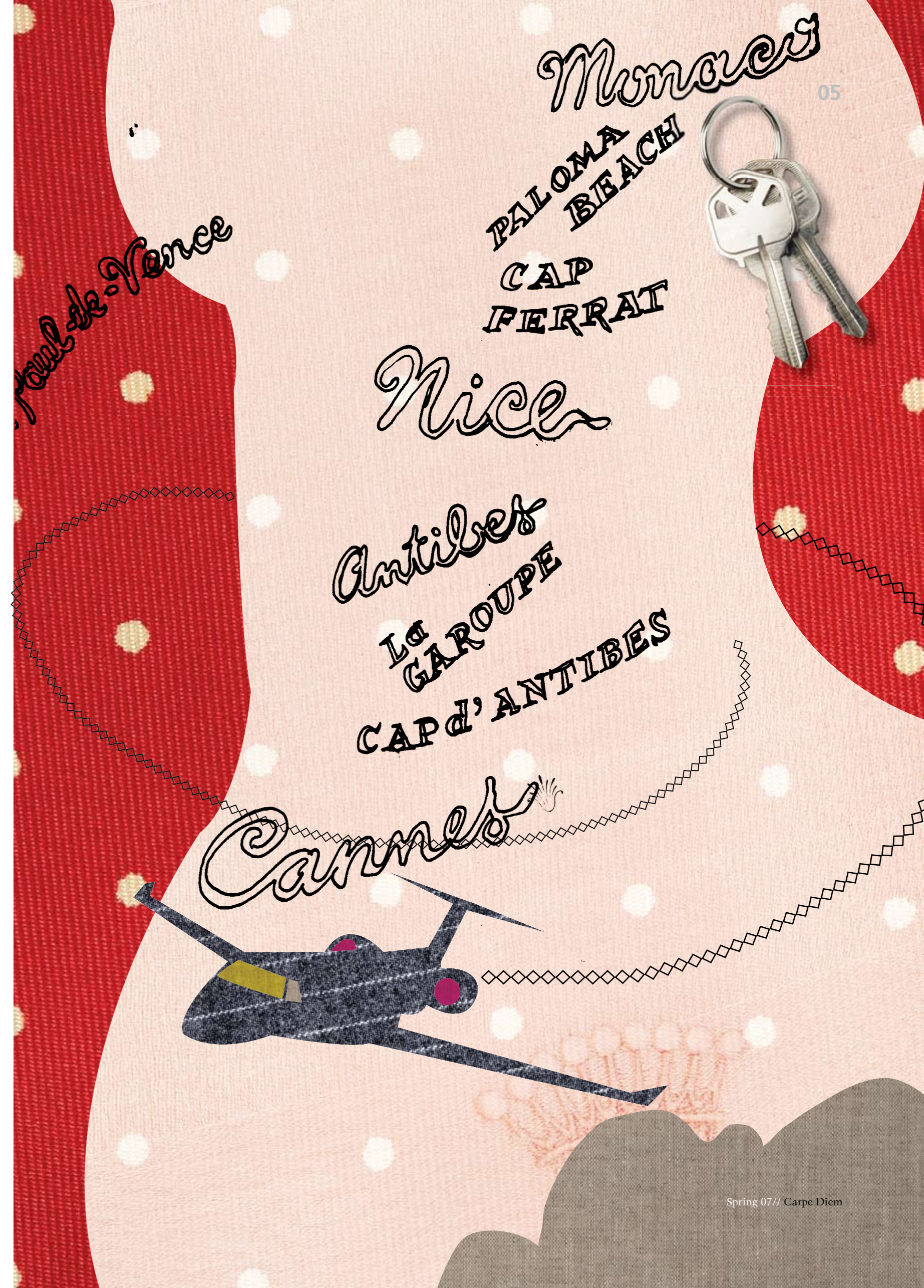
"We offer members a lifestyle platform which is second to none. Through our one-to-one service we can recommend yachts which will match their criteria, and suggest an itinerary to suit," she said.

"We will cap membership at 100 and then prospective members will go on a waiting list. All membership applications are reviewed by the board of directors and we have been known to turn people away. For example we can't take anyone with a bad reputation, or who has been involved in criminal activity such as money laundering."

Current members include men and women between the ages of early 30s to late 60s. However the bulk of members are business men and entrepreneurs in their 40s who, Luisa says, could all probably afford their own superyachts but who do not have enough leisure time to enjoy them.

"The cost of owning and running a yacht is about 10 per cent each year of the yacht's build price, which is currently around 1 million euros per metre. That's a lot of money if you are so busy that you only get to take it out a couple of times a year. We take away the financial burden of ownership." ▀

"Limited Edition members get the keys to a host of prestige vehicles, watercraft and holiday homes from a brand new Lamborghini Gallardo to a Regal 3560 Power Cruiser to a country house in the Hunter Valley wine region."



This theory was very much behind the launch of Limited Edition, Australia's first luxury lifestyle club, whose philosophy is "to stop busy and financially astute people wasting money on luxury items such as cars, boats and holidays that they rarely have time to use".

Founder Shane van den Bareslaar, 37, developed the concept more than two years ago when, as a successful economist and senior member of a leading Australian bank, he discovered first hand the difficulty of juggling a high-flying career with the lifestyle to match.

"There are hundreds of cars and boats in Australia that are only being used sporadically and then sold with only a few thousand kilometres or a few hours on the clock for a lot less than the owner paid for it," he said. "The demand for a more financially astute way to enjoy a luxury lifestyle has never been stronger."

For just 10,700 euros (Aus \$18,000) Limited Edition members get the keys to a host of prestige vehicles, watercraft and holiday homes via 'The Collection', from a brand new Lamborghini Gallardo to a Regal 3560 Power Cruiser to a country house in the Hunter Valley wine region. The total value of 'The Collection' exceeds nine million Australian dollars and the selection is regularly updated to suit members' tastes and desires.

Applications to the club opened last July, and membership has already exceeded 100. It will be curbed at 300 to ensure exclusivity. There are also plans to expand the club to Melbourne, the Gold Coast, Perth as well as to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore.

However, if water sports aren't your thing, then paying through the nose to have access to the best yachts in the world – however exclusive – will probably not appeal.

But do not fear. In this age of 'fractional ownership', time-shares are now available in a host of other luxury goods and services with more

and more associations springing up every year.

The Classic Car Club was set up in 1995 out of an unlikely garage in King's Cross, London. With a fleet of just eight cars, the club was amongst the first of its kind to offer motorists the thrill of driving a fast and fancy vehicle with none of the bother of insurance and up-keep.

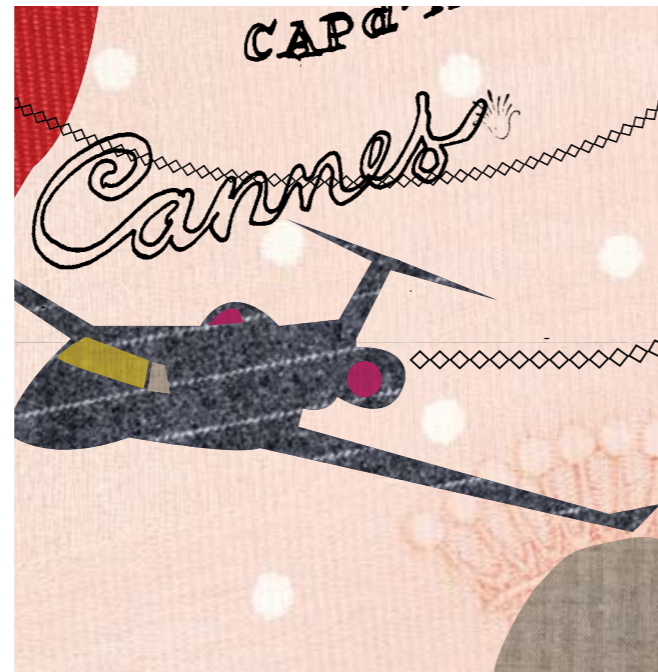
The success of the CCC is tangible. It now boasts offices in Manhattan, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Bath, and has plans to open in Copenhagen, Miami and LA, proving that there are thousands of people out there willing to pay up to 4,500 euros a year for an occasional spin in a sexy car.

Likewise, private jet-sharing organisations are becoming increasingly popular. Jet-Alliance.com was founded in 2000, offering time-impoorished businessmen the chance to become co-owners of a fleet of Eclipse Aviation planes, which cost more than one million euro to buy. Members of the Californian-based company can enjoy sole use of a similar aircraft for 50 hours a year – for as little as 75,000 euro.

But today's VIP clubs aren't all about boys toys. Membership to organisations such as Bag, Borrow or Steal are on the increase, especially in America, where women can feel a million dollars with the latest must-have designer handbag on their shoulder - even if it is for one night only.

Joining fees are slightly more attainable, at around 45 euros a year, although hiring a Vera Wang Japanese Akoya Pearl and diamond necklace, set off by a Lamberton Truex Crocodile clutch handbag for a month of social outings will set you back more than 800 euros.

So, you've hired the outfit and the jewels and your VIP club has provided you with a set of fancy wheels to whisk you away for the evening – but to where? Cue: Quintessentially; the celebrities favourite VIP club which promises to "provide access to the inaccessible".



With offices across the globe including New York, Cape Town, Dubai, Beijing, LA, Istanbul, Dublin and Paris, Quintessentially guarantees members a table at any restaurant, a box at any theatre or a private booth at any nightclub at the drop of a hat.

Joining fees to the club, which was founded in London in 2000, are around 500 euros with annual subscription costs of between 1,000 and 4,000 euros a year. Elite membership is also available by invitation only – from 40,000 euros.

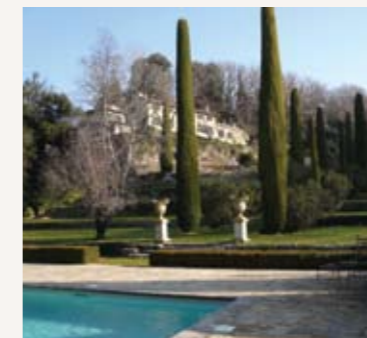
Quintessentially has in a short time attracted a large number of ardent fans, including London socialite Jemima Khan and model Sophie Dahl, who have both publicly endorsed the club's services. Also impressed was an anonymous member who was more than happy to praise the company for sorting out a table at a reindeer restaurant in Helsinki and tickets for the Eurovision Song Contest – but less inclined to give his name. Funny that. //

For more information on the clubs featured go to:
www.privatsea.com
www.limitededition.com.au
www.classiccarclub.com
www.jet-alliance.com
www.bagborroworsteal.com
www.quintessentially.com



Country mansion in Auribeau sur Siagne

Clinging to a rocky spur at the entrance to the Gorges de la Siagne, facing the gulf of La Napoule, Auribeau-sur-Siagne is one of the loveliest hilltop villages on the Riviera.



This unique property, only 20 minutes from Cannes, is an authentic Provençal country mansion enjoying spectacular views over four hectares of parkland, the countryside beyond that and the village of Auribeau-sur-Siagne.

A river wanders across the gardens into a waterfall and large pond. Renovated and decorated to high standards, the property includes an independent housekeeper's cottage and an ancient chapel that has been converted into guests' accommodation. The main house has five bedrooms, a charming dining room and vast vaulted lounge leading onto a large panoramic terrace. The grounds are on several levels filled with an array of beautiful trees leading down to the swimming pool, its pool house, pond and tennis court.

Clinging to a rocky spur at the entrance to the Gorges de la Siagne, facing the gulf of La Napoule, Auribeau-sur-Siagne is one of the loveliest hilltop villages on the Riviera. This medieval village is an enchanting sight in the winter as it wears a golden crown of flowering mimosas, a scenic view so prized by painters.

Ref: 1385 Price: € 10 000 000

Living Area : 178 m² Rooms : 9 Bedrooms : 7
 Terrace : Yes Land Area : 40000 m² Parking : Yes
 Swimming Pool : Yes Environment : Countryside



Provencal Farmhouse in Salernes

Situated at the foot of the picturesque village of Seillans, this property enjoys stunning views of the historic hilltop village of Fayence.



This charming stone-built farmhouse with lovely uninterrupted views over the beautiful Provencal countryside is in perfect condition and dates back to the 18th century. Located one hour from the international airport of Nice and within easy walking distance of the picturesque village of Seillans, this property is surrounded by the historic hilltop villages of Fayence, Montouroux, Tourrettes, Callian and Bargemon. Boasting nearly 2.5 acres of gently sloping gardens, the property has an olive grove which gives a small, domestic production of 70 litres of olive oil. It also has a water-well in the grounds, providing a vast supply of water for irrigation. Very pretty gardens surround the house and ancient mature trees shade the terraces leading to the deep blue mosaic swimming pool.

An abandoned tennis court, set away from the house, could easily be restored.

The villa offers four bedrooms, spacious reception rooms with beamed ceilings, a covered, winter dining terrace, barbecue and summer kitchen together with a separate cottage nearby, needing some renovation.

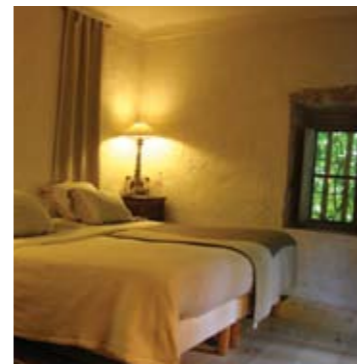
Ref: 951 Price: € 1 450 000
 Living Area : 178 m² Rooms : 5 Bedrooms : 4 Bathrooms : 2
 Terrace : Yes Land Area : 11000 m² Parking : Yes
 Swimming Pool : Yes Environment : Countryside



Mill at Le Rouret

This astounding, stone-built former mill has been restructured and renovated to make an unusual and charming home which is full of character.

Located only 30 minutes from Nice International Airport and five minutes from the picturesque villages of Roquefort-les-Pins and Chateauneuf de Grasse, this astounding, stone-built former mill has been restructured and renovated to make an unusual home. The idyllic sound of a bubbling brook which flows past the ancient mill wheel can be heard from the shady terrace, surrounded by greenery whilst nearby is the swimming pool and summer kitchen, ideal for lazy dining or entertaining friends.



Ref: 1168 Price: € 3 200 500
 Living Area : 490 m² Rooms : 13 Bedrooms : 5 Balcony : Yes
 Terrace : Yes Land Area : 9000 m² Parking : Yes Garage : Yes
 Swimming Pool : Yes Environment : Countryside

Pour Les Femmes: Speed Queens - Divas in Rally Driving

It's the image of an oil-streaked man, hair disheveled under a unattractive helmet, which springs to mind when rallying driving is mentioned - and not of a beautiful woman whose long locks tumble from her bonnet as she steps out of her car.

But surprisingly, racing has long been a ladies' passion. The first women to compete in rally driving, or in long distance, endurance and speed tests, did so at the turn of the nineteenth century. Subsequent adventure races such as the exotic Peking to Paris Motor Challenge, which began in 1907 when five cars set out from China for the French capital across vast expanses of uninhabitable Asia and Russia, often included a token female face.

However, the sport never went out of its way to attract women participants. Until now. Next month dozens of women will take place in the world's first female race between Paris and Monaco, in Rally des Princesses.

The event, now in its eighth year, promises to give just as thrilling a

"Few can remain unmoved by the stunning site of a caravan of vintage cars such as gleaming Ferraris, MGs, Austin Healeys, Bugattis, and Alfa Romeos racing along next to a stream of Jaguars, Aston Martins, Triumphs and Mini Coopers"

ride to participants and spectators alike. It is the brainchild of Viviane Zaniroli, a veteran and pioneer of 4x4 rallies around the world who was eager to give women the chance to forget their lives as wives and mothers and indulge in themselves. And how better to do this than by hurtling down the wide tree-lined roads of France to the glamorous Cote d'Azur.

Rally des Princesses is in fact a replica of the Paris - Vichy - Hyeres - Saint Raphael Feminin race which was created by Count Rohan-Chabot in 1929 and which saw ladies and men competing from all over the world until 1974. Daring mother-of-two Viviane, with the support of the Rohan-Chabot family, decided to relaunch the race in 2000, with the unique twist of only allowing women to take part.

Another added challenge set by Viviane is that all cars driven in the race must date between pre-war and 1976, meaning that they enjoy none of the mod cons that we all take for granted in the 21st century such as automatic steering, comfort enhancing shock absorbers, or high-tech satellite navigation systems to help drivers who find themselves off the beaten track. For Rally des Princesses is all about pure skill. It is a unique event that requires a high level of precision and discipline from both the driver and the navigator.

It is also about fun. "I don't think it's possible to have more fun than we had during that week last year," said former British participant Christine du Toit, who drove a Morris Minor 1965 in the 2006 Rally des Princesses. "Viviane set out to make us feel like princesses and she certainly achieved her goal. It was a wonderful experience."

The race, which oozes glamour and style, has become so popular amongst enthusiasts that it is now an ultimate part of the summer season for many women across the world.

Few can remain unmoved by the stunning site of a caravan of vintage cars such as gleaming Ferraris, MGs,

Historically, rallying has been a man's domain. But now, races solely for women are opening the sport up to the fairer sex. Nicky Cahill reports. Photography: Clément Marin

Austin Healeys, Bugattis, and Alfa Romeos racing along next to a stream of Jaguars, Aston Martins, Triumphs and Mini Coopers. The drivers aren't that bad either!

The prestigious race attracts participants from all corners of the globe, and of all ages - from 18 to 84. And with their feet firmly on the accelerator and the wind in their hair, many women find that the rally offers the perfect way to rediscover those girlhood fantasies. The 'apres' driving scene is equally as important. Girls just like to have fun, and these ladies are no different. With their vehicles safely parked, competitors spend each evening at luxury hotels relaxing with champagne, massages and delicious food.

"I have never experienced anything like it. The thrills were incomparable. To rally through France with Princesses will stay with me as a fond memory forever. I had such fun and I hope to do it again next year," US competitor Susan Lane said.

The rally allows women to test their wits and race on their own strategy and skill through some of the most breathtaking vistas of France as they race from the capital to the Principality of Monaco. The 1700 kilometre distance takes five days.

The key to winning this race, it seems, is not speed but the ability to drive with regularity. To you and I, this means the ability to stick as closely as possible to a specified average speed limit within each 'regularity' section. A start point is given, but the finish is either unknown or indicated approximately by the commissioner in charge of the start of the regularity section. There are 450km of these sections over the course of the race.

"Easy as pie", some may think. "Surprisingly challenging" swear those who have tried it. This race is not about pure speed, but agility, veracity and adeptness, which are all skills that ladies are practised at, according to Viviane, who adds: "The Rally of Princesses is the only regularity race devoted to women and to vintage cars in the world. It is the feminine auto event that combines sportsmanship and elegance and it certainly not to be missed!"

There are two team categories in the race: 100% women or mixed, with a male navigator. The participants, who are competing to win more than 70,000 euros in prizes, must drive five daily stages of 350km per day and take part in three racetrack competitions: La Chatre, Charade and Ales.

This year's 8th Rally des Princesses runs from 27 May until 1 June. For adventures, wild scenery, and fabulous old cars, contact +33 (0)1 56 05 05 26 or log on to www.zaniroli.com //

Pour Les Femmes: Speed Queens - Divas in Rally Driving





Bastide in Grasse

With beautiful open views and surrounded by cypresses and olive groves, an exclusive, historical property dating back to the 17th century.

An authentic property dating back to the 17th century, ideally positioned in the heart of the Golden Triangle, in the foothills just south-east of the perfume town of Grasse. The bastide is situated about 20 minutes from the international airport of Nice and some 15 minutes from Cannes, perfect for enjoying the calm of the Provençal countryside or the sophistication of the famous Croisette and ringed by numerous picturesque villages.

This traditional stone mansion, entirely renovated using superior and authentic materials, has been decorated with great taste to provide two outstanding master suites, three guest suites and two further bedrooms and bathrooms, a vast reception room, dining room and fully equipped kitchen with breakfast room.

With beautiful open views and surrounded by cypresses and olive groves, the gently sloping grounds extend to 2.5 acres and include a generous sized swimming pool with extensive terraces and garage for six cars.

Ref: 1062 Price: € 4 500 500
 Living Area : 750 m² Rooms : 11 Bedrooms : 7 Bathrooms : 7
 Terrace : Yes Land Area : 10000 m² Parking : Yes Garage : Yes
 Swimming Pool : Yes Environment : Countryside



Provençal Estate in Salernes

This property has been entirely restored and boasts a paddock for horses and an olive grove with more than 1000 trees.



Located midway between the two international airports of Marseille and Nice in the rambling countryside behind St Tropez, this outstanding, 55 hectares private residential Domaine comprises a number of authentic Provençal farmhouses creating the effect of a genuine hamlet.

The property has been entirely restored and boasts an enormous solar heated swimming pool, pool house with fully-equipped kitchen, heated greenhouse, vegetable garden, flower garden, paddock for horses and an olive grove with more than 1000 trees capable of providing an important volume of high quality olive oil. The main house has four bedrooms including master bedroom suite with bathroom, dressing room and sauna. There is a truly charming country kitchen with fireplace, dining room, two additional reception rooms and a study.

Guest house 1: includes living room, kitchen and a spacious one-bedroom suite on the first floor.
 Guest house 2: is an attractive farmhouse providing a studio with fireplace and is located on the top of the hill with extraordinary views over the countryside. There is a summer kitchen with covered, shady terrace and barbecue.

Ref: 1312 Price: € 3 460 000
 Living Area : 500 m² Rooms : 16 Bedrooms : 9 Bathrooms : 3
 Land Area : 550000 m² Swimming Pool : Yes
 Environment : Countryside



Bastide in Aix-en-Provence

Nestled in 21 acres of agricultural land which has been cultivated throughout the centuries with orchards, vines and paddocks.

This magnificent Bastide, or country mansion, is situated in the heart of Provence near the Luberon Hills and only ten minutes from the historic city of Aix-en-Provence.

Its origins go back to the 17th century and it remains a traditional and attractive Provencal estate. Nestled in 21 acres of agricultural land which has been cultivated throughout the centuries with orchards, vines and paddocks.

There is a large reception room of 125m², with large fireplaces in all rooms while oil-fired central heating has recently been installed. Each spacious bedroom has an ensuite bathroom and the children's bedrooms have attractive beamed ceilings. There is a 10m x 15m swimming pool with a fountain in the garden together with an independent studio for a caretaker.

Ref: 1341 Price: € 2 950 000
 Living Area : 900 m² Rooms : 12 Bedrooms : 9
 Land Area : 21000 m² Swimming Pool : Yes Tennis court : Yes
 Environment : Countryside



Interiors: How shabby chic means business for brocantes



French antiques have never been more popular, with thousands of dealers from across the world descending on the famous antiques market at Isle-sur-la-Sorgue each year. Ironically, many of the hand-picked artefacts find themselves back in Provence weeks later in the holiday homes of expats. Emily Compston investigates.

There is something lonely about an abandoned chair.

Which is why, on a sunny day at the brocante market in Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, in the south of France, a whole set of shabby dining room chairs,

their stuffing ratty and protruding from their faded upholstered seats resemble an outing from the local orphanage.

Fortunately here, thanks to an enduring legacy of rummaging and bargain-hunting, someone will adopt these poor, neglected chairs and before long they could find themselves restored to splendour and taking pride of place at a villa on the Cap d'Antibes. 🐾

Photograph,
Nicholas Monu

Interiors: How shabby chic means business for brocantes



Interiors: How shabby chic means business for brocantes

But before they settle in the stunning confines of their new home, the chairs will more often than not find themselves wrapped in protective casing and shipped abroad where they will sit in a showroom before being selected by a customer wanting to furnish his new property on the French Riviera. A quick re-wrap and the chairs are back over the Channel before anyone has so much as sat on them.

Such is the demand for French antiques that English antique dealers like Stuart Lewis make regular trips to the historical town of Isle-sur-la-Sorgue to hunt out furniture for their clients.

It is also not uncommon to see whole crates of items being loaded up for transportation to the United States, such is the allure of the Provençal antiques fair.

Stuart, whose Essex-based Dejavu Antiques business specialises in French 18th and 19th Century objects, says: "I have three clients at present who are setting up a chambres d'hotes and they want to furnish them authentically. I am helping them equip their entire houses.

"Antiques generally serve only 20 per cent of the furniture trade and many people now, particularly the younger generation are looking for a contemporary look. French furniture gels very well with it. How often now do you see a century-old bed or chest of drawers that has been painted in a very modern setting in a magazine."

The throngs of people who flock to Isle-sur-la-Sorgue twice a year for the bi-annual International Antiques Fair would suggest that Stuart is not alone in his love for shabby-chic. There, hundreds of interior designers jostle for space with dealers, collectors and keen antique amateurs to soak up the festive atmosphere.

This picturesque town, around 20 miles east of Avignon in the Vaucluse department, is now home to the largest flea market outside of Paris.

The former industrial town has

cleverly reinvented itself to become a haven for antique dealers. More than 250 tradesmen are based in Isle-sur-la-Sorgue permanently, although that number swells to more than 1,000 when the international market comes to town. Throw into the melange an array of jugglers, musicians and traditional Provençal stallholders selling anything from cheese to terracotta cookware and you have a riot of the old and new.

The first antique fair in Isle-sur-la-Sorgue was held on Assumption Day, August 15th 1966. It was the brainchild of local dealer Rene Legier who invited more than 2,000 craftsmen and artists to the town to display their wares on the banks of the river. Little did he know that the small market he organised would grow to become such a phenomenon.

"while on a nearby street a Parisian dealer lays out what appears to be the entire contents of his store: 1920's café tables and chairs, a slightly rusty jelly mould shaped like a rabbit and dozens of old printers' alphabet blocks.."

Today it is probably the third most important antique centre in the world after London and Paris and Isle-sur-la-Sorgue literally bursts at the seam every Easter and the weekend around Assumption Day when the international fairs take place.

The town is known locally as the 'Venice of Provence' because of a maze of canals fuelled by the raging Sorgue which run through it. The twisting, turning streets which hug the contours

of the river lend themselves perfectly to retailers, who congregate in different areas of the town according to the kind of antiques in which they specialise. There are effectively seven separate 'dealers' villages within Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, with two new spaces specifically created to cater for the growing trade.

In the Village des Antiquaires de la Gare old enamel shop signs sit side by side with tatty armoires, their paint peeling and feet chipped, while on a nearby street a Parisian dealer lays out what appears to be the entire contents of his store: 1920's café tables and chairs, a slightly rusty jelly mould shaped like a rabbit and dozens of old printers' alphabet blocks whose patina looks suspiciously distressed but which would look charming in a child's bedroom nevertheless.

Meanwhile, a stone's throw away at the La Quai de la Gare arcade, more upmarket fare can be found such as fine bone china, highly decorative plaster mirrors and a Baroque chaise longue which whispers of a decadent past.

"It's a very, very pretty little town," says Frances Hendry, who for more than 15 years has worked as an interior designer on the French Riviera. "There's so much to see that you can either go with a strategy, with a fixed idea of what you want to buy, or just see what you like. I have bought pieces before and held on to them, because I liked them, and then later when the right client or house has come along I've used that piece.

"The light down here lends itself perfectly to distressed-looking pieces. People don't want rooms full of antiques. What they like is a mix of old and new," explains Frances, who assists Carlton International clients with the renovation of their homes. She adds: "A dark dining room table, teamed with distressed chairs can make a much more interesting look."

The choice is impressive, as are the price tags. Costs are often considerably marked up and amateurs must be aware of replica artefacts being passed off as bone fide objects.

Certified members of the Compagnie d'Experts Francais en Antiquites make every effort to govern the quality and authenticity of the antiques on offer and only those meeting the necessary standards can be displayed. These experts are also on hand during the weekend to advise shoppers on the value of any items they might have their eye on.

But undoubtedly some inauthentic pieces do slip through the net. One seasoned dealer not to be fooled, however, is Monsieur Rebuffel, who has combed the local area for authentic pieces of art for many years. With his eye for the genuine article, he has a long list of clients who come to his store in Nice, on the Cote d'Azur, to pick up quality French antiques which he himself has sourced.

He says: "I sell a lot of chairs, commodes, tables etc. They have a decorative quality but they are practical pieces. Most of my clients are foreigners. They come to my shop from all over to either furnish their second homes or to ship pieces back home."

In an age when we are all too aware of consumerism and the need to preserve our natural resources it is perhaps heartening to know that so much is being reused and restored.

And those lonely chairs, barely recognisable with their seats covered in Liberty-print fabric, now look totally at home around a large wooden table in the kitchen of the villa overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. //



Farmhouse in Peymeinade

Located in a small, private domaine just west of the perfume town of Grasse, near the villages of Le Tignet and Peymeinade.



This charming stone-built property dating from the 18th century is located in a small, private domaine just west of the perfume town of Grasse, near the villages of Le Tignet and Peymeinade. It enjoys 1.5 acres of level, landscaped gardens with attractive countryside views.

The villa has been recently renovated with great taste using superior materials. It comprises of five bedrooms and an extraordinary 110 m² living room. In the grounds there is a small independent caretaker's cottage, swimming pool with particularly well equipped pool-house, and garage.



Ref: 1316 Price: € 2 200 000
 Living Area : 250 m² Rooms : 7 Bedrooms : 5 Bathrooms : 3
 Balcony : Yes Terrace : Yes Land Area : 5000 m²
 Parking : Yes Garage : Yes Swimming Pool : Yes



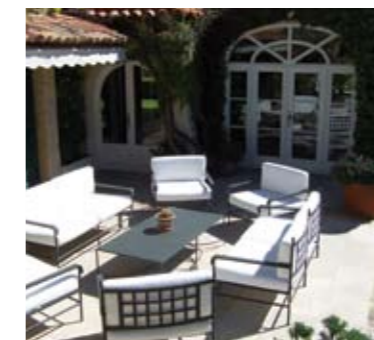
Authentic farmhouse in Fayence

Fayence is perched on the side of a hill between the sea and the mountains, and set in picturesque Provençal countryside.



This 19th century farmhouse is located in a very quiet area in the hilltop town of Fayence. The villa comprises of six bedrooms and a stunning swimming pool with superb pool-house.

There is also considerable potential for extending the property. Fayence is perched on the side of a hill between the sea and the mountains, and set in picturesque Provençal countryside, with charming old streets and warm and welcoming cafes emitting the aromas of Provence.



Ref: 1292 Price: € 1 500 000
 Living Area : 500 m² Rooms : 16 Bedrooms : 9 Bathrooms : 3
 Land Area : 550000 m² Swimming Pool : Yes
 Environment : Countryside



Farmhouse in Tournettes-Sur-Loup

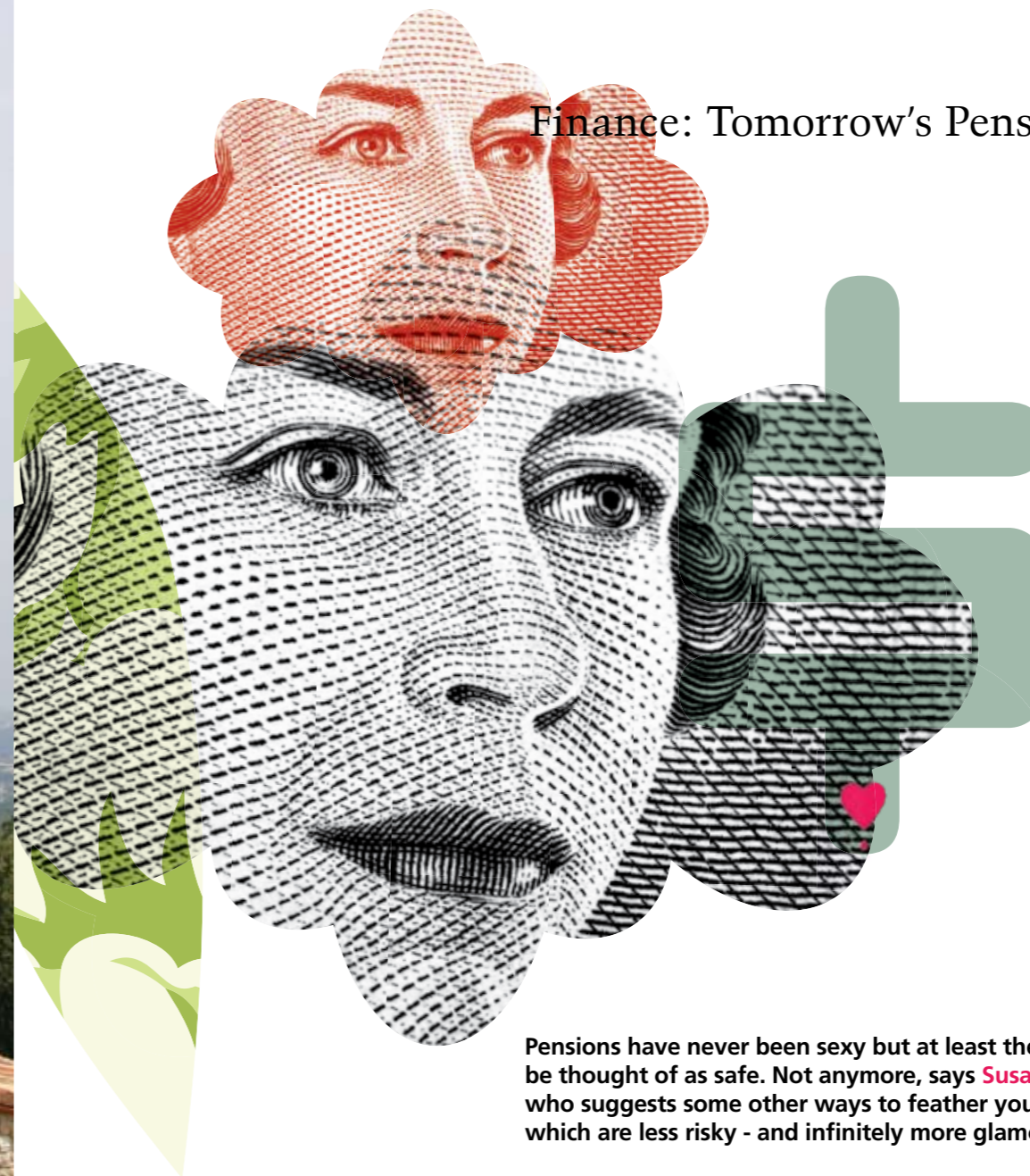
This former Templar chapel dominates the landscape with breathtakingly spectacular vistas of the sea and coastline.



Perhaps one of the most unusual properties available in the south of France, this former Templar chapel which dominates the landscape has breathtakingly spectacular vistas of the sea and coastline.

"Les Templiers" villa is located a few minutes from the picturesque hilltop village of Tournettes-sur-Loup, a stone's throw from the town of Vence and village of St Paul de Vence, and only 30 minutes from Nice International Airport. With a superb heated horizon swimming pool and nearly four acres of land, the property is currently undergoing complete renovation using only traditional materials. However its five bedrooms, a vast salon and cathedral eat-in kitchen have been completed to the highest contemporary finish.

Ref: 400 Price: € 2 800 000
 Living Area : 250 m² Rooms : 12 Bedrooms : 5 Bathrooms : 5
 Land Area : 13000 m² Swimming Pool : Yes
 Environment : Countryside



Pensions have never been sexy but at least they used to be thought of as safe. Not anymore, says Susan Emmett, who suggests some other ways to feather your nest which are less risky - and infinitely more glamorous.

Almost two out of three people in the UK are considering other ways of financially planning for their future as disenchantment with pensions grows, according to recent research by Aon Consulting, a pensions consulting firm.

The study found that while property was the most popular alternative investment, art and antiques, classic cars, wine and celebrity memorabilia were also high on the list. Obviously the value of any investment can fall as well as rise. But at least these you can drink, enjoy and brag about before you retire. Here is how to make it work:

Wine

Wine can make you rich as well as drunk. Previously regarded as stuffy and impenetrable there are great opportunities for even the most sober investor. Prices are being pushed up by increasingly wealthy Russians, Chinese and Japanese for whom investing in wine is regarded as a status symbol. Pick up tomorrow's must-drink vintage and your returns could be worth a toast or two.

Chateau Lafite 1996, for example,

originally cost €1,470 a case when it was first sold. But the price rose to €2,940 by 2005 and is now worth €5,886. No wonder interest in wine as an investment has doubled in the last two years.

Better still, you need not spend a fortune to start investing. You can put in €250 or €250,000, although seasoned merchants Berry Bros & Rudd, suggest that €7,500 is a realistic starting point for anybody wanting a serious return.

Red Bordeaux is still the safest bet. But don't opt blindly for the big names. As a rule of thumb, buying wine from a good vintage is better than opting for a poor year from a famous winemaker. Today Burgundy and the Rhone Valley, along with Italy, Spain and California all contain wines that can fetch prices as high as the top Bordeaux.

For more information on investing in wine contact Berry's Fine Wine Department on: +44 (0)1256 340 123 or finewine@bbr.com. See also www.bbr.com/finewine

Fine Art

As an investment, art is probably less reliable than a weekend in Las

Vegas, if a lot more classy. With no intrinsic worth, the value of art is entirely subject to the whims of trends and tastes. What one generation sees as beautiful and valuable another might discard as an eyesore.

However, despite all the wealth warnings, investing in art has become immensely popular. You do not need millions to spend on a Manet. At the Armory Art Show in New York, considered by many to be the world's top art exhibition, you still find price tags with fewer noughts. The Affordable Art Fair, which takes place in London, New York, Melbourne and Sydney gives collectors even a better chance. All works are for sale for under €4,500. Buy what you like. Just remember that the value of a piece will not rise on aesthetics alone. If an artist has made an impression on the art world before the age of 35, his work will stand a greater chance of rising in value.

To help you track down your pieces of art, look at: www.thearmoryshow.com and www.affordableartfair.co.uk

Antiques

Making money from antiques is not as simple as going to a flea market and buying car loads of old stuff. The most successful collectors are the ones who have a passion for a particular period and style and stick with it. Whether your love is for chairs or porcelain vases, you will reap larger financial rewards if you own a set of similar pieces rather than one solitary item.

Go for well-crafted original pieces in good repair. The better the condition of the piece, the higher its value. Toys that are still in their boxes, for example, can fetch double or more than ones that have been played with.

As with art, fashion and taste can play a large part in the pricing of antiques. The trick is to spot something that is unloved now but could become popular in the future. 🐾

"a book with a well preserved dust jacket could easily reach five figures. For example, a pristine copy of Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale* was recently sold for €36,800 while a signed first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* went for a staggering €147,000."

Useful sites include: the BBC's www.bbc.co.uk/antiques and the Internet Antiques Guide, www.iantiquesguide.com.

Books

It's doubtful you'll be able to retire on the contents of your library, but if you pick the right books in the right condition your favourite past-time could make you some money for a rainy day.

Experts say first-edition books published between 1900 and 1995 are probably amongst the safest tomes to collect. To identify a bone fide first edition look for a single date on the title page. Contrary to what some prices might suggest, a first edition is a book that was included in the very first print run and not the first copy off the press.

Condition is crucial and can greatly affect the book's value, however rare. Coveted copies with missing pages will be rendered worthless while a book with a well preserved dust jacket could easily reach five figures. For example, a pristine copy of Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale* was recently sold for €36,800 while a signed first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* went for a staggering €147,000.

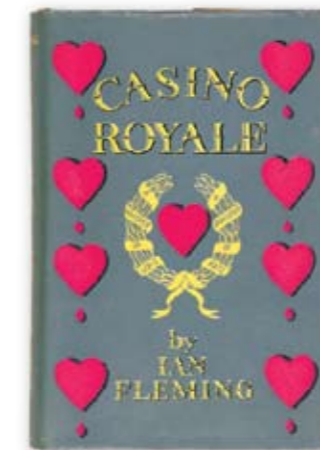
For more information check out Adrian Harrington's collections at

with art, the celebrity memorabilia market is prone to changes in fashion and some well known faces have a very short shelf life. When hunting out autographs be sure to follow the three golden rules:

- 1: A full size signed photograph or poster will be worth more than a signature scribbled on a scrap of paper.
- 2: Pen is more valuable than pencil.
- 3: Personal messages from the celebrity normally bring down the price of an autograph, as they will be harder to sell on.

Experts also believe that as many as seven out of every ten autographs are not the genuine article, making it imperative that you check the authenticity of the signature before you buy it.

The internet is awash with websites dedicated to selling sporting and celebrity memorabilia with one of Europe's leading sites being www.famousretail.com.



Rare Books, in Kensington, London (www.harringtonbooks.co.uk) or First State Books (www.firststatebooks.com). Also useful are Abebooks.com and Alibris.com both with thousands of literary gems for sale.

Celebrity memorabilia (also known as autograph hunting)

It used to be the epitome of uncool, but now autograph hunting is anything but. With the public's insatiable appetite for anything to do with 'celebs', selling a poster inscribed with a famous signature or a dirty shirt off the back of a sporting legend has become big business. Almost one in three people in the UK consider investing in celebrity memorabilia.

Top of the table for anything once belonging to a celebrity is currently a Beatles autograph. Dealers now offer investment-standard portfolios and a full set of Beatles signatures are currently reaching tens of thousands of euros. But groupies beware. As

Classic cars

There are more secure ways of turning a profit than investing in a 25 year old heap of metal although few of them are as fun. Jaguar, Aston Martin and Bugatti sound a lot more entertaining than a Self-Invested Personal Pension (Sipp) or a retirement plan 401K. And unlike brand new cars which depreciate as soon as you drive away from the forecourt, unique classic cars tend to rise in value.

Although the classic car market suffered a setback in the early 1990s (along with so much else), demand for rare motors is gaining speed. Buyers with ready cash will happily spend two and a half million dollars for the kudos of owning a 1962 Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato. Only 19 of the original 20 remain.

But investors looking for a one-off need not spend as much. Del Boy's three-wheeler van from the BBC sitcom *Only Fools and Horses* recently fetched €65,000 at a London auction. The Reliant Regal sold for more than twice the €29,500 estimate to a collector who wanted it for its iconic value. Whether he made a sound investment is anybody's guess.

Real Estate

Few investments are as safe as houses. At least, that is how most people feel about sinking money into real estate. No wonder property is fast becoming the linchpin of many investors' pension plans. Bricks and mortar offer not only the possibility of chunky capital gain, it can also provide a steady income and a roof over our heads.

Yet picking the right home in the right place has never been more important. Although talk of a major property crash never materialised, many agree that house prices are looking over-extended in more developed countries. Investors looking for double digit growth are flocking to the emerging markets of Eastern Europe. Croatia, Bulgaria and Moscow are hot favourites. Cyprus, Turkey, Morocco, Thailand and South Africa are also touted as good bets in investor circles while a stream of new development in north east Brazil has many reconsidering South America.

That said, the mature markets of southern Europe remain popular, especially with those seeking to combine business and pleasure. Italy, France and Spain are enjoying slow yet steady growth largely boosted by owner-occupiers and holiday home seekers. The plan is simple: invest for retirement in the place where you intend to spend it. //



Fifteenth century olive oil mill

This exceptional, authentic 15th century olive oil mill has been entirely restored with great taste, providing modern facilities while maintaining the original charm and features.

Located in Callian, this exceptional, authentic 15th century olive oil mill has been entirely restored with great taste, providing modern facilities while maintaining the original charm and features. With 15 acres of level and gently sloping land planted with numerous fruit trees and olive groves, the property comprises of a 6000sq ft main residence, with elegant swimming pool, sauna and tennis court together with a guest house and two small ruins suitable for renovation.

Callian is a wonderful village in which to wander, order a coffee in the square by the waterfall, or take in the great views from the esplanade of the surrounding mountains. The perched village is just a few minutes from Fayence, which is well known for its gliding centre where international competitions are held. Not far away is the Four Seasons Terre Blanche Hotel and championship golf course, which has just opened a stunning new spa.

Ref: 1196 Price: €3.200 000
Living Area : 600 m² Rooms :10 Bedrooms : 6 Bathrooms :6
Terrace : Yes Land Area : 64952 m² Garage : Yes
Swimming Pool :Yes Tennis court : Yes Environment : Countryside



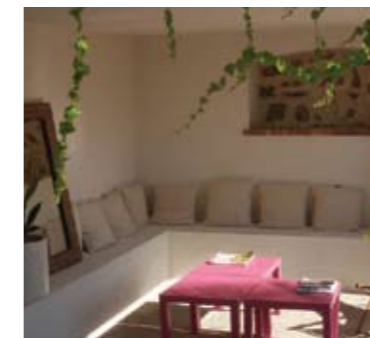
Provençal cottage in Mougins

On a quiet, private residential estate, this lovely Provençal cottage has panoramic sea views over the Bay of Cannes.

On a quiet, private residential estate, this lovely Provençal cottage has been totally renovated with great taste. It has panoramic sea views over the Bay of Cannes and is a walkable distance to the old and charming village of Mougins, renowned for its boutiques and restaurants.

It comprises of four spacious bedrooms, a sunny reception room and pretty Provençal garden with swimming pool, pool house, double garage, automatic watering system, alarm and reversible air-conditioning.

Ref: 1243 Price: €1.700 000
Living Area : 250 m² Rooms :5 Bedrooms :4 Bathrooms :3
Terrace : Yes Land Area : 1500 m²
Garage : Yes Swimming Pool : Yes





///Ref 053



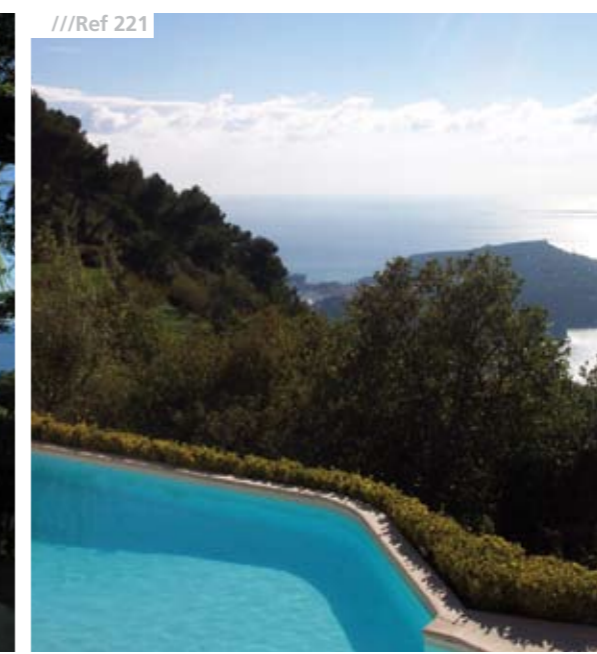
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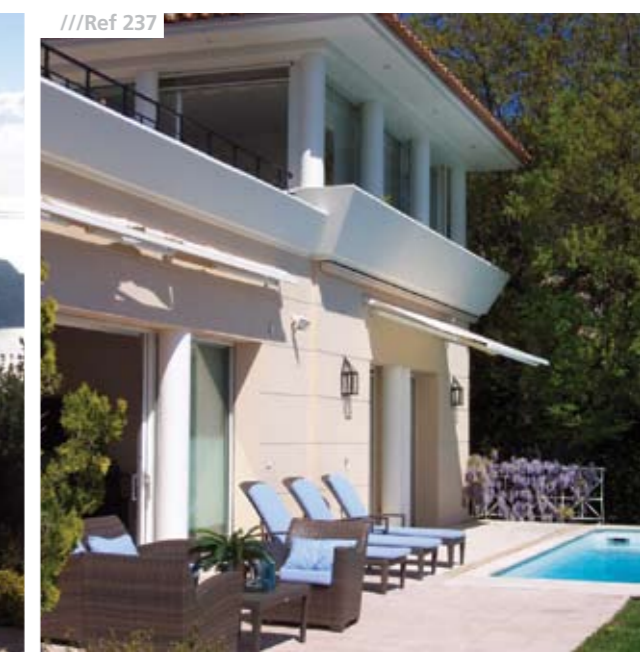
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Provençal Mas in Grasse

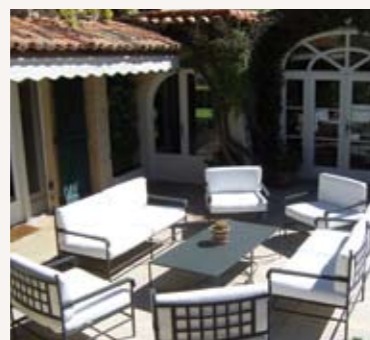
This old Mas Provençal built at the end of the 18th century offers charming views over Mougins and the Grasse mountains.

Situated close to Grasse in a peaceful setting within a 15-minute drive to Cannes and the famous Croisette, this lovely character property set in 15 000 m² of grounds with pines and olive trees comprises of a main house, a guest house, and a pool house. Built at the end of the 18th century, the property enjoys splendid views over Mougins and the Grasse mountains and features lovely terraces surrounding the swimming pool.

The main house is composed of four bedrooms, four bathrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, summer dining room, library and laundry room. There is also a caretaker's apartment with sitting room, kitchen, bedroom and shower room. The guest house comprises of a sitting room, kitchen, two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

There is a heated pool with jet stream as well as a sauna, jacuzzi, shower and toilet in the pool house. The property also boasts a wine cellar, garage and utility room.

Ref: 1129 Price: € 2 950 500
 Living Area : 500 m² Rooms : 12 Bedrooms : 6 Terrace : Yes
 Land Area : 15000 m² Parking : Yes Garage : Yes
 Swimming Pool : Yes



Cote d'Azur: At Home In All Seasons

Holiday Villa Rentals

Renowned the world over for its exciting seaside resorts, exclusive boutiques, cafés, bars, beaches, Casinos, nightspots, restaurants and year round glamorous events.

No other destination offers so great a combination of advantages. Superlative sea sports facilities, Marinas and Golf courses in abundance, the arts, museums, jazz festivals, theatre and opera. A seemingly endless choice of scenery and sights to discover, the coast is peppered with amazing mediaeval hilltop villages, picturesque Provençal market places, cobbled streets, an ever changing landscape and stunning vistas to the sea.

This is the south of France you've been dreaming of.

A small selection of wonderful holiday rental homes with swimming pools from our portfolio.

Ref 278: Tourettes sur Loup: 5 bedrooms, wonderful views, super pool, old world charm and modern facilities.

Ref 285: Grasse: 5 bedrooms, authentic and elegant country house, great pool and gardens. 20 minutes from Cannes.

Ref 293: Antibes: 6 bedrooms, charming Provençal home, sea views, five minutes from beaches, marina and market.

Ref 053: Cannes/Golfe Juan: 7 bedrooms, elegance and charm, guest suites, privacy and quiet, heated pool, stunning views.

Ref 221: Villefranche: 4 bedrooms, modern home, breathtaking views over Cap Ferrat, 20 minutes Monaco.

Ref 237: Super Cannes: 4 bedrooms, immaculate contemporary villa with superb sea views in prime location.

Pour les Hommes: A gastronomic guide to the 2007 Rugby World Cup



The names of the venues drip off the tongue – Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes, St Etienne, Lens. All serious destinations for serious revelry and the perfect excuse for a gastronomic tour de France.

"Rugby World Cup 2007 will offer an irresistible mix of world-class rugby and the unique colourful regional experiences that only France

Rugby fans are a simple bunch. Give them good food, plenty of drink and bags of bonhomie and they're as happy as a prop forward up to his cauliflower ears in mud. So when this year's contest kicks off in France, one of the gourmet and wine capitals of the world, it will be a match made in heaven, writes **Rob Hodgetts**.

can offer," says Syd Millar, chairman of the International Rugby Board. Former Scotland captain Gavin Hastings adds: "The French are very passionate about their rugby and the whole country will get behind the event. They'll treat rugby supporters with a great deal of friendship and open arms. A lot of people will be surprised by the warmth of the welcome they'll get. There's a

tremendous rugby culture, particularly in the south."

An estimated two million spectators will attend the 48 matches between 7 September and 20 October. While most of these games will be held in France, a number of matches are also being held in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium, in Wales, and Edinburgh's Murrayfield, in Scotland.

A further four billion people in 200 countries are expected to tune in to watch the games on television, which will finish in a nail-biting finale in Paris's world famous Stade de France.

Below is a fascinating fact guide to help fans find their way around the rugby hot spots - and top watering holes - of France. //

PARIS 1

Stade de France (capacity: 80,000)

Parc des Princes (capacity 47,870)

France v Argentina (SF); South Africa v Samoa (PP); England v South Africa (SF); Italy v repechage (PP);

France v Ireland (SF); England v Tonga (PP); Ireland v Argentina (PP) plus one quarter-final, two semi-finals and final (all SF) and third-place play-off (PP).

One of the world's most enticing cities with myriad methods of post-match debauchery, from Montmartre strip joints to fine-dining restaurants of famous chefs such as Alain Ducasse (Plaza Athenee +33 (0) 1 53 67 65 00) or Helen Darroze (Restaurant Helen Darroze +33 (0)1 42 22 00 11).

For a novel approach to a night on the town, try Footsie (+33 (0)1 42 60 07 20), where bar prices rise and fall depending on demand. www.parisinfo.com

"bar prices rise and fall depending on demand"

LENS 2

Stadium Felix-Bollaert (capacity: 41,400)

England v USA; South Africa v Tonga; Georgia v Namibia

The industrial north east is the heart of French beer country and home to a host of small-scale breweries.

Put hairs on your chest with a slurp of the leg-bucklingly strong Biere des Templiers (8.5%) from the Saint Sylvestre brewery (www.brasserie-st-sylvestre.com).

By 2009 the unremarkable town will boast another feather to its cap. Lens is to be the location of the Louvre II; an annex to the famous Louvre in Paris. www.tourisme-lenslievin.fr

"home to a host of small-scale breweries"

MONTPELLIER 3

La Mosson (capacity: 33,650)

USA v Tonga; Samoa v Tonga; Australia v Fiji; South Africa v USA

A Mediterranean climate and massive student population makes Montpellier one of France's liveliest cities. The Place de la Comedie will be the focus of all the fun and a melting pot of nations. Drop in at the convivial Grand Cafe Richie (+33 (0)4 67 54 71 44) for a demi after the match, the essential pavement terrace for people-watching for more than 100 years.

Alternatively, visit the famous vineyards of Chateaufort-du-Pape a stone's throw away, which produces some of the best red wine in France. www.ot-montpellier.fr

"some of the best red wine in France"

MARSEILLE 4

Velodrome (capacity: 59,500)

New Zealand v Italy; Italy v Romania; Argentina v Namibia; France v Georgia, plus two quarter-finals.

Head to the old harbour in France's second city for Marseille icons bouillabaisse, pastis and petanque. That's fish stew, aniseed hooch and bowls to you and me. For more wonderful seafood go to L'Epusette (+33 (0)4 91 52 17 82), north of the old town on a craggy stone point, where local wonder-chef Guillaume Sourrieu wields his magic.

The vibrant Provençal port city hosts a double quarter-final weekend on 6/7 October, with England, Australia, South Africa and Wales tipped to feature.

To watch both matches with England's 2003 World Cup-winning captain Martin Johnson, fork out 2,938 euros with Gullivers Sports Travel (www.gulliversports.co.uk), staying on the cruise ship Club Med 2. www.marseille-tourisme.com

"where local wonder-chef Guillaume Sourrieu wields his magic"

Pour les Hommes: A gastronomic guide to the 2007 Rugby World Cup

SAINT-ETIENNE 5

Geoffroy-Guichard stadium (capacity: 35,650)

Scotland v repechage; Samoa v USA; Scotland v Italy

Etienne is the patron of happy people, so to make sure you get in the right spirits seek out the Place des Peuples, which is set to come alive with the wail of bagpipes from Scotland's travelling tartan army. Or for those of you who prefer something quieter the Picadilly, tucked away in a small, romantic square, is very popular (+33 (0)4 77 32 55 14).

If you crave culture head to the Musee of d'Art Moderne, which boasts one of the finest collections of Modern Art in the world, surpassed only by the equivalent museum in Paris and New York. The city is also handy for the delights of Lyon and the vineyards of the southern Rhone valley, and well-placed to gorge on "black diamonds" from the nearby Drome region, France's biggest truffle hotspot. www.tourisme-st-etienne.com

"set to come alive with the wail of bagpipes from Scotland's travelling tartan army"

LYON 6

Stade Gerland (capacity: 41,100)

Australia v Japan; Argentina v Georgia; New Zealand v repechage

The capital of French gastronomy. Dine on hearty sausage-based dishes in an old-town bistro. Or treat yourself at the three Michelin-starred restaurant of top chef Paul Bocuse (Paul Bocuse +33 (0)4 72 42 90 90).

New-world wine buffs following the All Blacks, Wallabies or Pumas should head north into the famed vineyards of Beaujolais and Burgundy. And for the ultimate in luxury, book a suite at the 13th century Chateau de Bagnols in Beaujolais (www.bagnols.com), regarded by many as the finest vineyard chateau hotel in the world. www.lyon-france.com

"the finest vineyard chateau hotel in the world"

TOULOUSE 7

Stadium municipal (capacity: 35,700)

Japan v Fiji; France v Namibia; Romania v repechage; New Zealand v Romania

A trip to France's oval-ball heartland should be made compulsory to further your rugby education. Feast on cassoulet, a stew of white beans, tomatoes, sausage and duck in La Ville Rose. Or try the famous (but controversial) foie gras – force-fed goose or duck liver pate. Wash it down with sweet Sauternes wine. Alternatively, pubs are all the rage here with a wide variety to choose from including the Dubliner's, Mulligan's, Petit London and the Melting Pot. www.ot-toulouse.fr

"should be compulsory to further your rugby education"

BORDEAUX 8

Stade Chaban Delmas (capacity: 34,440)

Ireland v Namibia; Ireland v Georgia; Canada v Japan; Australia v Canada

Claret is king here and it would be a dereliction of duty not to visit a vineyard or three - the area boasts some of the world's most famous wines, such as Chateau Lafite-Rothschild, Chateau Margaux and Chateau Latour.

The Maison du Vin in Bordeaux (+33 (0)5 56 00 22 66) gives information on wine tours. If wine isn't your tippie, try Calle Ocho (+33 (0)5 56 48 08 68), one of the hippest addresses in Bordeaux where rum-laced drinks and Cuban cigars are in abundance.

And for the Aussies amongst you, grap a 'stubbie' at The Down Under (+33 (0)5 56 94 52 48) where Fosters is the pint of choice. The bar also has large-screen TVs on which it will show all matches for those of you who haven't managed to buy tickets to the games. www.bordeaux-tourisme.com

"one of the hippest addresses in Bordeaux where rum-laced drinks are in abundance"

NANTES 9

La Beaujoire (capacity: 38,100)

Wales v Canada; England v Samoa; Wales v Fiji

Nantes is considered one of the most desirable places in France to live, and it's easy to see why.

For après-rugby on the banks of the Loire, head for the medieval centre around Place St Croix. Glug wines from Muscadet, Saumur and Vouvray, or tip back the world-renowned sauvignon blancs of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fume further upstream.

Or for something a bit different look for La Maison (+33 (0)2 40 37 04 12), a bar set in a mock-up of a 1970s house, where you can sip cocktails in the bathroom's two-seater tub. www.nantes-tourisme.com

"where you can sip cocktails in the bathroom's two-seater tub"

For more information on the Rugby World Cup check out www.rugbyworldcup.com or www.france2007.fr

REAL estate negotiators are amongst the most hated professions around – and now we know why. Alex Sutcliffe found that it was all beautiful houses, fascinating people and long lunches on a sun-drenched terrace for Carlton International sales manager Gerard Appels, which is enough to make anyone envious.

On a good morning I sleep until 7:30, but more often than not my eight month old daughter, Juna, wakes me at around four. When my wife Isabelle was pregnant we spent an evening looking at girls' names on the Internet and chose five each out of around 10,000. Juna was on both our lists, so it was an easy decision. It's a French name, it means 'young'. My wife's seven year old son, Luca, stays with us every other week, so when he's here I take him to school for 8:30 and then head to the office in Valbonne.

I've been selling houses in my head since I was five. I'd study real estate magazines and try to guess how much a property was worth; I'd walk into a house and immediately start looking at the way it had been built. I'm from Amsterdam originally, but I've known and loved the south of France for years and always dreamt about coming here to sell houses. I gave myself six months

"I'm also afraid of birds – once we showed up and the vendor thought it was funny to open the door with a chicken under his arm. I had to sit in the car until he'd taken it away."

initially and five years on I'm married to a French girl and have my baby daughter, so I'm not going anywhere.

My goal is one sale a month. I worked for four years in a small agency, averaging around 15 visits a day. The difference now is that I work the clients; before I worked the houses. You can't have a relationship with a house. When you have a relationship with the client you know exactly what he wants and you only have to visit 4 or 5 places; I don't like being a cab driver and taking him to 25.

At Carlton we pay a lot of attention to the client. Before any visits I spend hours really trying to understand the type of property they're after – then I show them something completely different. People come in having seen a picture of a beautiful old stone property but they don't realise it's only got small rooms or windows and none of the luxury of a new property. If you take them to a villa with really big, bright windows, then often they turn around completely.

I have quite a few client lunches; I prefer them to be somewhere quiet, like the restaurant at the Golf course in Valbonne, which has a nice terrace. In the Var I always go to Le Bois de Callian, which has lovely views across the Lac St Cassien.

Every visit I try to make my clients laugh – it breaks the ice and they remember me for it. I'm colour blind so I can never tell the difference between blue or green shutters, for example. I'm also afraid of birds – once we showed up and the vendor thought it was funny to open the door with a chicken under his arm. I had to sit in the car until he'd taken it away. Now that client remembers me as the guy who's afraid of chickens.

My day doesn't end at a set time, but once it's dark I don't visit houses. Weekends are flexible too. If I've shown a property on a Saturday and the client calls asking to see it again the next day, that doesn't bother me at all. Fortunately I have a very understanding wife.



I haven't had any famous clients yet, though I did once get chatting to Ruud van Nistelrooy in a restaurant, and when he said how much he liked the area I gave him my card, plus a few more for his team mates. I have a lot of friends with restaurants who work my cards for me, so I just have to go for dinner once in a while to pick up more contacts.

Isabelle's a great cook, so when I come home she'll be cooking and I'll have a beer and we'll talk about our days. My own dream house would have a big kitchen and a big table; the kitchen's a real family room for us, what with Luca doing his homework and Juna in her playpen. We tend to spend most evenings there together as a family.

Sometimes after dinner I'll carry on working, but I hate computers as they seem to break the minute I touch them.

I'm better with clients. I prefer being out making contacts and working the phone – that's my strong point. My philosophy in life is that you need to work your strong points and just find solutions for the weak ones. //

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