

A STABLE LIFE

Rachel Johnston tacks up and hacks out at three impressive equestrian homes



46 hectares: Deux-Sèvres, €840,000

Whoa there, not so fast! There's a lot to consider if you're moving horses as well as yourself across the Channel. Thankfully, France is full of properties already set up with equestrian facilities and ample grazing land and, while temperature is a consideration for our hooved companions, not all suitable homes mean sacrificing your dream of chasing the sun.

This peaceful property near the village of Sauzé-Vaussais will be a strong contender for any serious horse owner or breeder. In the same family for three generations and currently managed by a former international showjumper, it boasts 33 stables – some indoor and some out – and a whopping 115 acres of well-drained, grassed paddocks, arable land and woodland. There are several large barns for hay and straw storage, one of which has been transformed into an indoor schooling ring, plus a further arena of 4,000m² and a dedicated horse-washing facility.

The principal house forms one side of a large courtyard and has five bedrooms and a galleried, marble-floored living and dining room. One end of the house could be converted into an independent apartment and a separate three-bedroom cottage is ripe for renovation. Under the house is a vaulted wine cellar and the terrace, with heated pool, is blissful.

allez-francais.com



13 hectares: Lot, €693,000

Having top-notch facilities for your horses is one thing, but what about entertaining like-minded friends and acquaintances? This property, 10km from picturesque Puy-l'Évêque, has its own club house with corner kitchen and bar, ideal for catering and hobnobbing after equine events.

The 10-stable block has been newly built and a *manège* of 960m² is on-site too, plus staff accommodation if you're going to need a helping hand.

The 32 acres include plenty of fenced paddocks plus, interestingly, a small truffle plantation, and there are panoramic countryside views from the 11x5m swimming pool.

The fully restored house has retained its character features and offers plenty of spacious rooms on the ground floor, several of which – including two guest bedrooms – lead out to the veranda and garden. The master bedroom is housed within the attached *pigeonnier*, with attractive parquet flooring, exposed beams and an en-suite shower room. Accommodation isn't limited though – a separate stone barn contains another bedroom, and there are two further suites to be finished in other outbuildings.

my-french-house.com



5.5 hectares: Hérault, €399,000

They say two acres (0.8 hectares) provides enough grazing for one horse, so even at this smaller set-up in sunny Languedoc you can afford to keep six or seven. The land is *garrigue*, a type of low, soft-leaved Mediterranean scrubland also ideal for other livestock such as goats, and there are outbuildings suited to chickens – perfect if you have a whole menagerie. Each of the six modern, well-maintained stables has an automatic water supply and there is room to extend within the same building, either for further horse homes or a *gîte*. One of the two riding arenas is of international contest size, with the other even larger.

The pretty five-bedroom house requires no work – though the attic space could be adapted to create further bedrooms – and is a haven of peace, surrounded by terraces for all-day sunshine. It also boasts its own water source. Bédarioux, a 10-minute drive away, is a lively market town with all amenities as well as several schools, and Montpellier can be reached in an hour via the A75. At the heart of the Parc Naturel du Haut Languedoc, there's no shortage of beautiful surroundings for exercising your horses, but if they enjoy dipping their hooves in the water, try nearby Lake Salagou – and pack a fishing line too.

leggettfrance.com

