



*Hérault is a departement which offers a great variety of lifestyles: professionals, retired people, or foreigners looking for a second home will find what they are looking for, as well as the sun, at prices which are the most accessible on the Mediterranean coast.*

- **The appeal of Montpellier**
- **Openings in Béziers**
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#### **The appeal of Montpellier**

Hérault is without doubt an excellent compromise when looking for a mild, temperate climate, with the seaside nearby and the desire to blend together both one's personal and professional life. In fact, Montpellier, the administrative centre of the departement, is very dynamic economically, especially in the service sector. *'The first thing that we ask our clients is: what is your profession? That has a big influence on the the place to live'*, explains Christine Caudroit, from Agence Cassiopée. In this way, executives and very young retired people interested in a variety of activities willingly go to the Hérault capital or the inner suburbs: *'Montpellier is really THE big town in the departement,'* confides Samuel Caux, from Montpellier Immobilier. *'It has grown a lot in recent years, and some very beautiful buildings and facilities have been built. But this has had an effect on the local property taxes ...'* The property taxes, as well as property prices are amongst the highest in the departement. *'We are at about € 3,000 the square metre,'* adds Samuel Caux. In Montpellier, the universities and research centres attract a lot of people, both from the region and further afield. *'It is rare to come across someone who is really from Montpellier. The town has become truly cosmopolitan.'*



#### **Openings in Béziers**

Apart from Montpellier, there are great opportunities for work in the region of Béziers, which remains much more accessible in terms of prices (see our article on Béziers). The town has a strong wine making heritage, which has had its effect with the lovely private mansions that were built, but the town has stayed in the background until now. This is a

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trend that is beginning to change, as Annelise Bosshard, from the Ab Real Estate Agency explains : *'Béziers is really booming. There is a lot of work going on at the moment and a lot of upcoming projects'*. The A75 motorway from Paris, the Montpellier /Toulouse / Barcelona high speed train, which will stop in the town, plus a nearby airport with increased flights abroad will certainly be assets for a town which, as Annelise Bosshard points out, *'is still the least expensive in the departement'*. Laurent Calvet, from Agence Calvet, adds that *'an apartment changes hands for between € 1,000 and € 2,000 the square metre, depending on its location; a new property for around € 2,500 the square metre'*. In addition, it is worth noting that Béziers is very close to the sea (ten minutes by car in the low season)

### The peaceful back country



If you are looking for a lovely second home in a quiet setting, then the back country is the place for you! Going towards the north, the countryside becomes greener and wilder, and is a much more peaceful place to live. Caves, rolling countryside, forests and lakes mark the landscape, with the influence of the Cévennes, which are nearby, and the Regional Country Park of the Haut-Languedoc. This part of the departement is certainly more isolated, but the advantage is that the prices are very reasonable. *'A village house with small garden changes hands for around € 180,000,'* confides Béatrice Stefanoni, from the Immobilier Campagne agency. The main demand is for character houses in stone, with some land. These are so much sought after that it is rare to find one on the market. Among the traditional houses in Hérault, is the winegrower's house, built over a big barn which previously held the wine casks. There is generally a terrace and, possibly, a small garden. There are also the *'maisons de maître'*, bigger, higher class properties, built in cut stone, with very nice floors and fireplaces... They are set out around a ground floor

hallway from which staircases lead off to the other floors. *'Foreigners have invested a lot in the back country these last few years, in buying old houses to renovate'*, explains Christine Caudroit, from the Cassiopée agency. People from the north of Europe are still fond of this type of property. Many requests come from the English, Danish, Dutch, Belgians or Germans. Failing this, then more modern properties are available: *'the villas in the Languedoc, with terrace and traditional windows and doorways, as well as typical architectural features, like double or triple 'genoises', those little tiles that overlay one another at the edge of the roof and overhang a little'*, explains Laurent Calvet, from the Calvet agency. Christine Caudroit admits that, in the back country, apart from really exceptional properties, *'most sales do not go over € 300,000.'*

### And the coast?

The Hérault coastline is much less visited than the Var coastal areas, for example. This is probably because the beaches are more classical in Var, without the cliffs and creeks of Hérault. Nevertheless, demand is stable in this area, which justifies the prices, which are high when compared with the departement. *'Carnon and Palavas-les-Flots are not very lively in the winter. A lot of residents from Montpellier have second homes there'*, explains Samuel Caux, from Montpellier Immobilier. However, both pilots and business men choose this area for their main home, because Montpellier Airport is very close at hand. As for La Grande Motte, well known for its distinctive, pyramid shaped, sixties buildings (white pyramids with rounded balconies), it has become a town in its own right, with its own rhythm throughout the year. *'The town has become so lively that students from Montpellier even rent their apartments there now'*, continues Samuel Caux. The expert also says that *'an apartment with a view of the sea can go up to € 5,000 or € 6,000 per square metre when sold. And they sell at that price!'* Going along the coast towards Béziers, we come across Sète and Agde, around the Etang de Thau (a lagoon) a local centre for oysters and mussels. *'We can add around € 50 to € 70,000 for an equivalent property in the back country'*, comments Christine Caudroit, from Agence Cassiopée. We should also mention Balaruc, Frontignan and Valras Plage, which are some of the other places to know about



on the coast. Prices vary from one village to another, but keep in mind a budget of at least € 2,000 per square metre.

Adeline Pasteur

## Getting there



### **By motorway**

From Paris on the A6, then the A9, which goes across the Languedoc from east to west, from Nîmes to Béziers.

Or via the A75 which crosses the Massif Central, from Clermont Ferrand to Pézenas and soon Béziers.

### **By train**

The high speed train serves the stations of Montpellier, Agde, Sète and Béziers. Access by high speed train from Lille (5:30 am), Paris (10 trains daily - around 3 hours 30 minutes), Marseille (2 hours), Lyon (2 hours), Valence (1 hour).

### **By plane**

Montpellier Mediterranean Airport has flights to Bastia, Clermont-Ferrand, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Marseille, Nantes, Paris Orly,

Paris Roissy Charles de Gaulle and Rennes : <http://www.montpellier aeroport.fr/>

Béziers Cap d'Agde Airport runs flights for the low cost RyanAir and the Danish company AirBorne, which operate flights to Bristol and London (GB), Dusseldorf (Germany) and Odense (Denmark): <http://www.beziers.aeroport.fr>

### **By sea**

The seaport of Sète has regular links to Morocco and Tunisia. The ports of Palavas les Flots, Frontignan, La Grande-Motte et the Cap d'Agde have facilities for holiday makers.



## Thanks to our experts

### **Laurent Calvet, the Calvet agency, Béziers.**



*'The most accessible area, in terms of prices, is the west of the departement, to the north of Béziers. Foreigners also buy a lot in the north.'*

### **Béatrice Stefanoni, Immobilier Campagne, Ganges.**



*'We are in the north of the departement, half an hour from Montpellier. People who cannot afford to buy a property in the town willingly come here.'*

### **Christine Caudroit, Cassiopée, Lamalou-les-bains**

*'Lamalou is a village which developed at the beginning of the 20th century with the spas, very popular with the Parisians. There are some very beautiful quality houses there.'*

### **Samuel Caux, Montpellier Immobilier, Montpellier.**



*'The type of property that are to be found the most in Montpellier are apartments between 40 and 75 square*



metres. The developers have invested heavily in building this type of property, to meet the demand of the university personnel and students.'

**Annelise Bosshard, Ab Real Estate, Saint-Geniès-de-Fontedit.**



*'The climate is mild and there is the sea in Hérault, where prices are more affordable than on the Côte d'Azur or Provence.'*

