

**Sept 2008**

## **Gites Question**

Advice re the purchase of a Gite complex or a home with outbuildings to convert to gites:

There are several points that you should be aware of when searching for a property to make into a gite complex.

If the property you are buying has separate outbuildings, barns etc that perhaps were used for housing animals you will need to obtain a 'certificat d'urbanism' which would give you the right to convert them into homes. If they haven't already been obtained then you can make your purchase subject to obtaining this permission. If the outbuildings adjoin the house then the certificate d'urbanism may not be necessary but it is worth checking.

Gites were originally found on farms where the farmer's wife would rent out separate accommodation to earn a little pocket money. Since then some of the gite complexes have become quite luxurious and you will need to ascertain what standard of accommodation is likely to be in demand in the area you are looking.

It can be a very expensive proposition to convert outbuildings to suitable living accommodation and you need to look at the costings carefully before proceeding in order to be sure that you will not run out of money before completing the project. Bear in mind that if you want renters all year round, you will have to put in some form of heating and perhaps a fireplace would make it even more welcoming. If you are able to put in a swimming pool it will definitely help with rentals if you are in the Southern half of France and even in the North it would help and you could possibly have it covered for the winters.

Remember if you are moving out to France that you won't be receiving any income from the property during the renovations and when they are complete you will have to spend some money to advertise and market the gites so that you need to be able to support yourselves during this period as well as be in a position to buy all the materials you require.

In some cases it might be better to pay a little more for a property that already has converted gites that perhaps just need a little updating.

Buying an up and running complex also means that you may get some repeat business so that you immediately have some income which would allow you to perhaps improve the buildings.

When viewing properties bear in mind that you want the property to appeal to potential renters so that something that is photogenic and in a situation that will be popular with people looking for somewhere to spend their holidays ie near to villages and towns with restaurants, cafes and shops as well as possibly tourist attractions and festivals at certain times of year. Being in close proximity to tennis, golf clubs, fishing and walking areas is also a draw to potential clients.

If you are not too far off the beaten track you might get last minute bookings from passers by which could add to your income. Being within reasonable distance of airports, TGV stations and good motorways is going to make it more likely that people will pick your property to rent.

It is a good idea to check with the tourist office in the areas you are looking in to find out if there is a demand for gite accommodation in the area and get an idea of what rentals you can achieve and for how many weeks a year so that you are in a better position to calculate your possible income and expenditure. You will of course be able to advertise your properties in the UK through various magazines and websites and perhaps before you decide on which area it might be a good idea to have a look at what is on offer and what rentals they are achieving in each area so that you can make a more educated decision as to where to look.