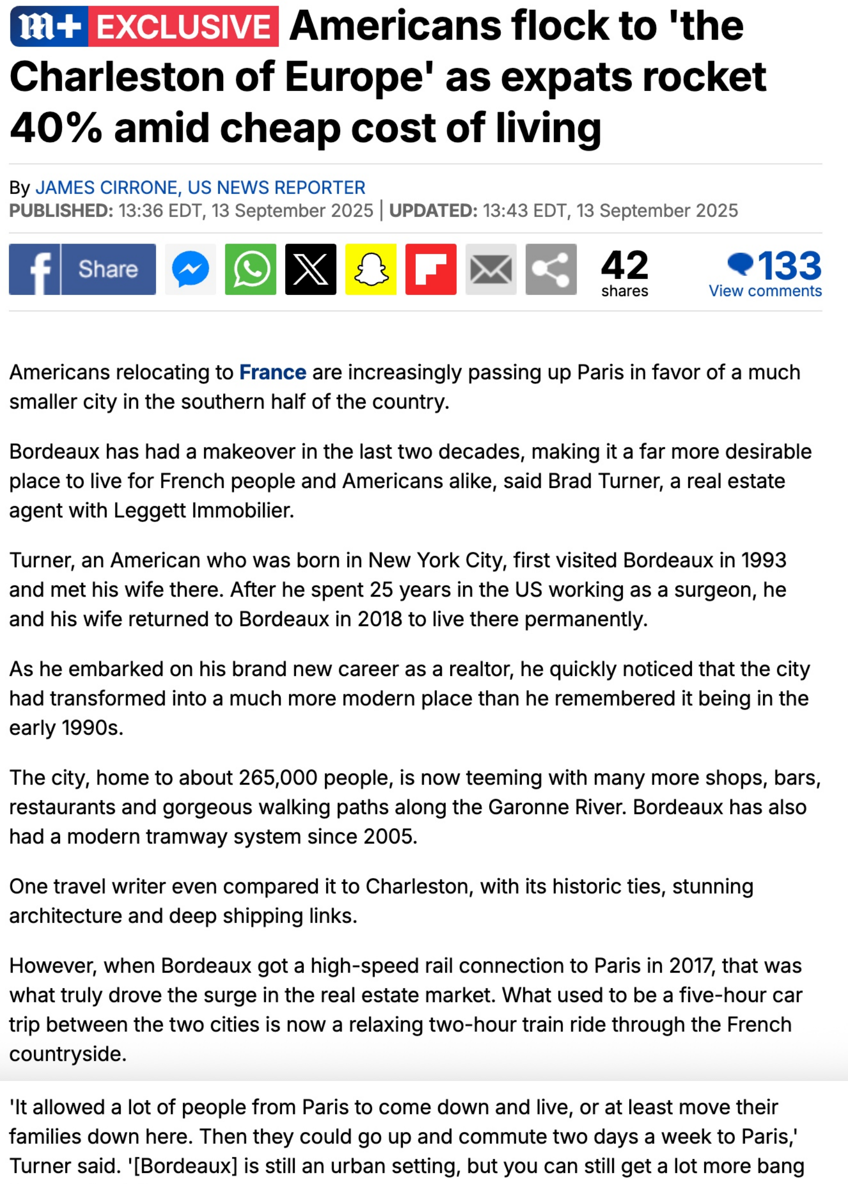

EXCLUSIVE Americans flock to 'the Charleston of Europe' as expats rocket 40% amid cheap cost of living

By JAMES CIRRONE, US NEWS REPORTER

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Americans relocating to **France** are increasingly passing up Paris in favor of a much smaller city in the southern half of the country.

Bordeaux has had a makeover in the last two decades, making it a far more desirable place to live for French people and Americans alike, said Brad Turner, a real estate agent with Leggett Immobilier.

Turner, an American who was born in New York City, first visited Bordeaux in 1993 and met his wife there. After he spent 25 years in the US working as a surgeon, he and his wife returned to Bordeaux in 2018 to live there permanently.

As he embarked on his brand new career as a realtor, he quickly noticed that the city had transformed into a much more modern place than he remembered it being in the early 1990s.

The city, home to about 265,000 people, is now teeming with many more shops, bars, restaurants and gorgeous walking paths along the Garonne River. Bordeaux has also had a modern tramway system since 2005.

One travel writer even compared it to Charleston, with its historic ties, stunning architecture and deep shipping links.

However, when Bordeaux got a high-speed rail connection to Paris in 2017, that was what truly drove the surge in the real estate market. What used to be a five-hour car trip between the two cities is now a relaxing two-hour train ride through the French countryside.

'It allowed a lot of people from Paris to come down and live, or at least move their families down here. Then they could go up and commute two days a week to Paris,' Turner said. '[Bordeaux] is still an urban setting, but you can still get a lot more bang for your buck.'

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Pictured: The skyline of Bordeaux just before sunset. Americans curious about living in Europe are increasingly choosing the southern French city as their new home

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That's according to real estate agent Brad Turner (pictured), who told Daily Mail 40 percent more Americans have bought homes in Bordeaux this year than in 2022

About 40 percent more Americans have bought homes in Bordeaux this year than in 2022, according to internal data from Leggett Immobilier, a firm that has gained notoriety for its expertise in helping international clients find a home in France.

'Americans right now are our second largest nationality after French buyers here in France. So they've actually surpassed the British...in the last couple years,' Turner said.

Americans are feeling compelled to move to Bordeaux for its high quality of life, mild climate and stellar food, he said.

He also described the city as a 'wine mecca', with vineyards in the region producing the world's most renowned Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blends.

It is also remarkably close to many other places people might want to visit. It's an hour from the ocean, a two-hour train ride over the border to Spain and about four hours by car to the Pyrenees Mountains.

And although the city has modernized, Turner insists that it has 'preserved its authenticity' while also appealing to present-day needs.

'It's a walkable city. We're right on a river. We get large cruise ships coming down here and stopping with passengers, so you can tell it's obviously desirable,' he said.

Bordeaux was where 37-year-old Crystal Rose Napolitano chose to settle in October 2024 after living a harried lifestyle in **New York City** for eight years.

'For me, Bordeaux is like Disneyland, and life here is just like Disneyland. It's the perfect sized city,' she said. 'The city moves at at the perfect pace for me after New York.'

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Crystal Rose Napolitano, a 37-year-old American, moved to Bordeaux last October after living in New York City for eight years (Pictured: Napolitano poses on the Water Mirror, a famous landmark in the city)

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The Water Mirror, Miroir d'eau in French, was built in 2006. It is a shallow reflecting pool right next to the Garonne River

Napolitano first fell in love with Bordeaux in 2010, when she moved there as part of a nine-month program to teach English.

She didn't have a visa to stay long term, so she returned to the US in 2011. She spent the next 13 years pursuing her Italian citizenship through her family's heritage, just so she could return to the city she loved.

Last January, she finally got her Italian passport, enabling her to travel freely throughout the **European Union**.

Now, she rents a home in Bordeaux owned by a friend she made back in 2010 when she was living there as a college student.

The property has a garden, which is typical of homes on the outskirts. Though, she said she's only a 10-minute bike ride from the city center.

There's no shortage of things to do, she said, mentioning that she and her friends frequently go out to bars, watch rugby games, have picnics along the river or host barbecues at her place.

That's a stark contrast from what she was used to in New York — not seeing her friends for months on end because she was just so busy and tired.

'People are always running to the next thing, next job, the next audition,' she said of the Big Apple. 'There's always all of these stressors.'

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Pictured: The Basilica of St. Michael, Basilique Saint-Michel in French, was built between the 14th and 16th centuries. It remains an iconic part of the Bordeaux cityscape

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Bordeaux is known for its many scenic river walks, where residents and tourists alike go to unwind and have picnics

Bordeaux, on the other hand, is a city 'built around pleasure', she said.

'Here, we have time to see each other, and I get to invest in my relationships, and we have barbecues in the garden, and we have time to be close friends and show up for each other at the drop of a hat,' Napolitano said.

She has a group of expat friends that she is extremely close with. She said she can suggest making plans to hang out the day of and 'eight people will show up'.

'Your relationships become more of your daily life, rather than, 'Oh, can I fit this into my crazy schedule?'' she said.

Bordeaux's tight-knit culture also comes with a dramatically lower cost of living than New York — or even Paris for that matter.

'It's very affordable. It has some Parisian charm without the Parisian price tag,' she said.

Nothing exemplifies that more than how cheap wine is in Bordeaux, since it is quite literally surrounded by vineyards.

When asked if it was really true that you can get a good bottle of wine in Bordeaux for €10, Napolitano said you can get an 'extraordinary' bottle for that price. 'You can get a good bottle for six,' she added.

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Bordeaux, for all its modernization efforts, is still an ancient city. Americans who are interested in moving there may have to give up certain creature comforts common in the United States

Napolitano also offered advice for young Americans thinking about moving to Bordeaux.

'I would say it might be hard to find a job unless you work in wine or tourism, because that's where a lot of the jobs are here,' she said. 'I would maybe come with some remote work to get you started.'

Napolitano is a sexologist by trade. She has Zoom sessions with couples, mainly in New York City, to help them improve their sex lives and their relationships.

She also has recently begun a **new social media endeavor** to teach people about landmarks in Bordeaux.

Her long-term goal is to buy a home in the city and stay there for the long haul.

Most of Turner's prospective American buyers do not fit Napolitano's profile, with most of them being close to retirement or already retired.

'I do periodically get families, but not so frequently,' he said. 'It's a much bigger leap to bring a family out than it is to buy a property out here that could potentially be your second residence, or could potentially be your retirement home after a few years.'

American buyers often have unrealistic demands that Turner has to gently talk them out of.

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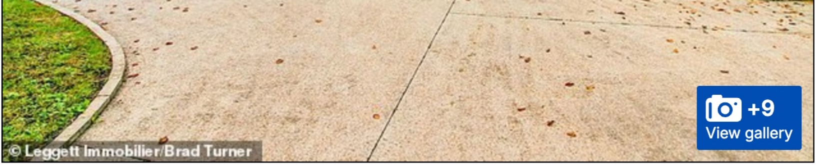
One of Turner's most recent listings is a striking 2,800-square-foot home that was built in the 19th century and is 30 minutes outside the city. It hit the market for €949,500 ($1.1 million)



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Another listing of his is a 3,200-square-foot home minutes from the center of Bordeaux. The two-story, stone constructed house comes with a pool, a pool house and a summer kitchen, all for the price of €1.3 million ($1.6 million)

He said they all want homes that have an equal number of bathrooms and bedrooms, something that is rarely achieved in an extremely old city. Many residences with multiple bedrooms have a single bathroom.

Air conditioning is another ask that can often be hard to come by depending on the type of building and the location.

One thing that shocks Americans is the lack of uniformity in the neighborhoods, Turner said.

He explained that many people who own homes in Bordeaux don't maintain their properties to the level of meticulousness often found in American suburbs.

The things his clients complain about range from their neighbors letting their grass get too high to leaving a cement mixer they use for their construction business in their front yard for all to see.

It's also important to recognize that most apartments Bordeaux are three or four-story walkups with no elevators whatsoever.

One of Turner's most recent listings is a striking 2,800-square-foot home that was built in the 19th century and is 30 minutes outside the city.

The four-bed, four bath house has unobstructed views of the Garonne River and hit the market for €949,500 ($1.1 million).

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The two-story, stone-constructed house comes with a pool, a pool house and a summer kitchen, all for the price of €1.3 million ($1.6 million).