



Britons' French house hunts soar after law passed relaxing limit on second home owners' stays

Move that property experts say could open doors to similar changes in Spain and other countries faces its final hurdle this week

Henry Samuel IN PARIS

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The number of Britons house-hunting in France has surged six-fold since a law granting second home owners from the UK an “automatic” right to remain in the country for six months was passed.

The law, passed in December as an amendment to an immigration bill, has not yet been enacted and faces a final, crucial hurdle when it is vetted by the country’s Constitutional Council on Thursday.

However, data from the UK-based international property portal Kyero showed that in the three weeks after the Dec 21 passing of the bill, there was a 582 per cent increase in Britons enquiring about French properties on the site.

Louise Dell, the portal’s co-founder, said: “Significant pent-up demand has developed in the international market amongst British buyers whilst people have been awaiting news of potential changes to residency rules, and it seems that the floodgates are now opening.”

The highest number of enquiries was for the Alpes-Maritimes area in southeastern France, accounting for 24 per cent of searches, followed by Charente and Haute-Vienne.



Property in Villefranche-sur-Mer on the French Riviera could become even more attractive if the law clears its final hurdle
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“With Spain also pushing for similar changes, we anticipate that 2024 could be a significant year for international property transactions,” said Ms Dell.

Joanna Leggett, of Leggett Immobilier, said organic traffic on their portal was up 44 per cent in the past month with enquiries from new British clients up 16 per cent.

Natalie Leggett, a sales support director, added: “A lot of clients who had just been looking and enquiring but not doing anything else have now been activated.” She said she had also seen a bigger uptake in viewings.

“Another thing we have noticed is that vendors, who were going to sell and go back because of this 90-day rule, are now not selling,” said Joanna Leggett.

Thousands of Britons had been campaigning for the amendment of existing regulations that restrict them to 90 days in the Schengen area, including France, in every 180-day period.



Brittany is a popular area for British househunters seeking a second home | CREDIT: MAREMAGNUM/CORBIS DOCUMENTARY RF

Many argued the post-Brexit system was unfair because French citizens were allowed to stay in the UK for up to six months without a visa, whether they owned a property or not.

The only way second home owners can currently use their French property for more than 90 days is to apply for a long-stay visa, a lengthy, complicated and expensive process that has to be undertaken anew each year.

The Constitutional Council, which is expected to make its decision on Thursday afternoon, could either rubber-stamp the bill including the amendment without question, declare it contrary to the Constitution, or declare certain articles unconstitutional.