

## House Hunting in ... Grand Est, France

International Real Estate

By ALISON GREGOR MAY 3, 2017



Patrice Besse

A CENTURIES-OLD STONE HOUSE IN GORZE, [FRANCE](#)**\$540,490**

This venerable stone house, with five bedrooms and 11 bathrooms, once served as a residence for canons of the church. It is two buildings, in fact, joined by a side wing with a turret, on a third of an acre in a small town near Metz, in the Grand Est region of northeastern France.

The three-story residence facing the quiet main street was built in the 18th century, while the two-story structure across the courtyard behind it was likely constructed in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Significant historical details remain, and the building is protected under historic monument regulations, so authorization is required for any alterations to its facade or roof. The home is 4,198 square feet, with an additional 754 square feet in an open-plan guesthouse that was converted from a garage. All the buildings were renovated in 2005 to add modern amenities, said Sylvie Besse, a spokeswoman with [Patrice Besse](#), the Paris-based agency with the listing.

The front door opens to a corridor with a large kitchen on the right and a dining area on the left. The kitchen, which is functional but wasn't updated during the renovation, has floors of pierre de Bourgogne, or Burgundy stone, as does the entire first floor, Ms. Besse said. A solid spiral stairway off the corridor, typical of 15th- and 16th-century architecture, leads to the two upper floors. On the second floor are two bedrooms with bathrooms; the third floor is a vast suite beneath the rafters, illuminated by three oculus windows and two skylights. The suite has a wood-burning stove and parquet floors, as do all the bedrooms. (Furniture — including antiques, some of them Art Deco — is not included in the home's asking price, but is negotiable.)

The spiral stairway in the turret also offers access to the second floor of the older building, which overlooks the courtyard. It has a spacious salon with parquet floors and a ceiling of exposed joists and large beams carved from rough timber. A fireplace with its original Renaissance mantelpiece is closed off, but could be opened up. Below is a small suite reached through the courtyard.

The lower level of the wing with the turret is used as a conservatory and has an old stone sink and a nonworking iron fireplace with a heavy stone mantel, which also could be made functional, Ms. Besse said. The guesthouse has a Godin stove and a roof terrace joined to the main house by an open gallery.

This home is in Gorze, a town of fewer than 1,300 residents in the [Lorraine Regional Natural Park](#), about a half-hour drive from downtown Metz. With a population of about 120,000, Metz has many entertainment options, including the theater, a sports center, ice skating and water activities. The [high-speed train](#) from Metz reaches Paris in about 90 minutes. The Lorraine high-speed train, which has a station about 30 minutes from Gorze, arrives at [Charles de Gaulle Airport](#) in just over an hour; another option for international flights is [Luxembourg Findel Airport](#), about an hour away.

**MARKET OVERVIEW**

The Grand Est region of northeastern France saw home prices fall by 10 to 15 percent in 2011, when the global economic crisis hit the real estate market there, said Laurent Furst, a consultant with the online real estate company [Safti](#).

But the region tends to be more stable than other parts of France, and there wasn't a great run-up in prices before the recession, said Christelle Schenck, the broker owner of [L'Emplacement Cabinet Immobilier](#), in Strasbourg. "Prices went down, down, down until 2013," Ms. Schenck said. "But now it's getting stable again."

In Lorraine, most of the higher-priced homes are near the border with Luxembourg, Mr. Furst said, as many residents commute into Luxembourg to work.

But in general, in Grand Est, "it is rare that a house price exceeds 500,000 euros," or about \$545,950, Ms. Besse said, except in Alsace, where prices are higher. Apartments sell for 1,500 to 2,500 euros a square meter (or about \$152 to \$253 a square foot), she said, and in nearby Nancy, luxury homes are priced around 800,000 to 900,000 euros (or about \$872,000 to \$981,000).

**WHO BUYS IN GRAND EST**

Foreigners who buy homes in Grand Est tend to be from Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium or Switzerland, Ms. Besse said. In Metz, where real estate is cheaper, many foreign buyers are from Luxembourg, Mr. Furst said. Nearby Strasbourg tends to be more multicultural, Ms. Schenck said, with buyers from [Britain](#), China and Eastern Europe.

**BUYING BASICS**

There are no restrictions on foreigners buying property in France. Home sales are handled by notaries, which typically charge about 2.5 percent of the sale price, brokers said.

Other closing costs include taxes and fees, which can run about 5 percent. Brokers' commissions, about 5 percent, are typically included in the home's asking price, Ms. Schenck said.

Most home buyers take out mortgages these days, she added, because interest rates are currently so low — anywhere from 0.9 percent to 1.5 percent. Foreigners can obtain mortgages, but banks will ask for a 20 percent down payment.

**WEBSITES**

Lorraine tourism: [tourisme-lorraine.fr](http://tourisme-lorraine.fr)

Metz tourism: [tourisme-metz.com](http://tourisme-metz.com)

Lorraine Regional Natural Park: [pnr-lorraine.com](http://pnr-lorraine.com)

**LANGUAGES AND CURRENCY**

French; euro (1 euro = \$1.09)

**TAXES AND FEES**

The annual property taxes on this home are 950 euros, or about \$1,035.

**CONTACT**

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