The Connexion
French news and views

Chateau sales are booming in France since first Covid lockdown

An estimated 500 chateaux change hands each year and there are probably around 1,500 on the market most years

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'I have never seen anything like it before' says Patrice Besse, of Agence Patrice Besse on properties like the pictured Normandy hunting lodge on the market at €1.99million now attracting so much interest

Chateau sales are booming after years of a flat market.

Specialist estate agents say the rise in interest came during the first lockdown in spring last year and is continuing.

Patrice Besse, of Agence Patrice Besse, which specialises in historic building sales,

said: "I saw a 50% rise in business in 2020. Then, so far this year up to the start of June, I have seen a 100% rise in business on last year. I have never seen anything like it before."

"For some, it is a large house in a village, but we use the definition of a house in grounds of at least several hectares, historically referred to as 'the chateau' and with outbuildings and dependencies."

Buyers contacting Mr Besse fall into two categories: those who just want a house in the country and who are not daunted by the size and maintenance of a chateau, and those who buy a chateau with a professional project in mind.

"Luxury hotel projects are popular because of all the problems Paris hotels have had with the gilets jaunes and other protests where large parts of the city have been cut off," said Mr Besse.

Just 10km from the A20, this Limousin chateau with farm, park, mill and lake is €1.1million / © Patrice Besse

"People are convinced there is a market where clients will pay for expensive hotels in areas where they can be assured of peace and quiet if they want, while not being too far from Paris or other main attractions."

Other popular projects include seminar centres, cultural centres or museums.

All potential project buyers are looking for places not too far from large cities or

autoroutes, railways and airports.

By contrast, chateaux in deeply rural parts of France have started selling to both French and international buyers who intend to use them either as their main residence or as holiday homes.

"Almost all say they decided to take the step because of the lockdowns, and the need to have some space around them," said Mr Besse.

Demand is such that he has even seen bidding wars, with buyers keen to get the chateau they want. "That is something which has not happened for a long time.

"But it remains the exception for the moment – prices are still steady and not rising."

Some chateaux that have been on the agency's books for "a few years" have sold at the asking price and others which have just come in have sold quickly.

Haut-Anjou chateau with farm and parkland is €770,000 / © Patrice Besse

Prices can range from under €500,000 for properties in rural areas to several million euros for those with easy access to Paris or other large cities and towns.