

# Chateau Heaven

With Sarah Francis

## A Remarkable Retreat

**D**iscreetly concealed behind elegant gates on the borders of the Dordogne and Lot et Garonne is one of the most attractive, authentic and beautifully maintained Châteaux I have ever seen. Near one of the charming bastide towns of the region, the property is just 20 minutes from Bergerac with its airport, and Bordeaux - now a world heritage UNESCO site - an easy 120 kilometre drive away with its international airport, shops, restaurants and surrounding vineyards.

At the end of a tree lined driveway, bordered by a pretty orchard, the drive sweeps into the attractive gravelled Cour d'Honneur and there, revealed in all its beauty, is the most gorgeous Château. The sunlight dancing on the white stone walls of the towers and facades; the windows framed with pretty blue shutters. To one side, mature trees cast dappled shadows across the drive, observed by a neat row of sombre dormer windows with carved stone surrounds set into the tiled roof of the main façade.

Ahead is the XVIIth Century wing, a round tower at each corner. To the right is the main wing, in the style of an XVIIIth Century Chartreuse with a Pavilion on two storeys at either end. Opposite, the row of stone outbuildings features a charming ancient porch with an original XIXth Century clock, complete with its original mechanism. Beyond lies a grassy courtyard with a salt water swimming pool at its centre, surrounded by buildings including garaging, original prune and bread ovens, four stables, two stalls and a tack room. There is a two bedroomed caretaker's cottage, and a three bedroom guest house with garage. For those wishing to ride, there are bridle paths throughout the park and woodland, as well as two paddocks with water points and a wooden shelter.

The Château has been sympathetically and carefully restored, retaining its authenticity. Everywhere you look there is beauty and

harmony. A short flight of stone steps leads into the central entrance hall, with a gallery to either side with windows onto the Cour d'Honneur. To the south of the hall, French windows open onto beautiful lawns, edged with lavender bushes. To one side, the main salon has beautiful decorative plaster moulding, a white marble fireplace, attractive low wood panelling, a parquet floor and French windows to the south. On the other is the dining room with a dark grey marble fireplace, panelling, parquet floor and French windows. Both rooms have high ceilings and are beautifully decorated, as is the entire house. The 1,400m<sup>2</sup> of living space includes 10 bedrooms and seven bathrooms, an additional salon and dining room, two kitchens, a butler's pantry, cellars and a parental suite and library. On the upper floors every room has a beautiful outlook. One of the bedrooms has lovely 'trompe l'oeil' decoration. There are two staircases, one with carved wooden banisters, the other a wooden spiral staircase. The décor is charming and in keeping with the period. On the first floor there is also a chapel.

The external shutters are painted in the traditional 'Bleu de Lectoure, a soft blue originating from woad first used in the XIVth Century.

One of the oldest families of French nobility in the area owned the Chateau from the start of the XVIIIth Century, until the First World War. Included amongst them was a General - the first aide de camp of General Mac-Mahon whom he served until he left the Presidency of the Republic. The glorious park was designed in the XIXth Century by a German Countess - wife of the very same General.

It contains a remarkable array of species and varieties including Cedar, horse chestnut, quercus, Italian Cypress, yew, elm, maple, catalpas and a large number of ancient boxwood balls and hedging as well as a palm grove. More than 300 different roses are to be found, many of them old-fashioned varieties.



In the woods St John's Wort, blue and white periwinkles and black truffles are to be found under the oaks. Near the house is a boxwood maze as well as a herb and kitchen garden, an orangery and a walnut grove. The orchards have plum, apple, cherry and fig trees. Three wells linked to the automatic watering system covering the two hectares of grounds ensure the park, selected to feature in the 'Remarkable Gardens of France', remains lush and green whatever the weather. It is said that at the end of the XIXth Century, the Emperor of Germany made a private visit to the Château, maybe to admire the idyllic setting created by the Countess - but we shall never know.

**Video and additional images on [www.sifex.co.uk](http://www.sifex.co.uk) or contact Sifex on [info@sifex.co.uk](mailto:info@sifex.co.uk)**

