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NEWS >>

A slice of France at a bargain

closeup
french facts

- France is the world's most visited country with 75 million visits a year.
- The French consume an average of 60 litres of wine a person each year – more than any other country.
- People work 35 hours a week and have five weeks' annual leave.

THE mere mention of France evokes romantic images of a care-free lifestyle, fine wines, pastries and beautiful views.

So it is little surprise that French Desire, a website established by Sharon and David Stratford, has taken off.

The Bulimba couple launched the site to give "francophiles" tips for the best places to see and also help people navigate buying a slice of France.

Since launching their website on Bastille Day last year, they have been inundated with people joining their community.

More than 13,000 people visited the site and more than 750 people from Brisbane joined the French Desire community by attending film nights across the city, including a movie night where 200 people had wine and cheese and watched Russell Crowe's *A Year in Provence*.

The Stratfords own a house in Pouzauges, a village between Paris and Bordeaux.



■ Dream realised ... Sharon and David Stratford help people who are interested in French property. RW120524

"It took us about a year to buy the place," Mrs Stratford said. "Nothing happens in a hurry – it's very bureaucratic.

"It takes months for all the paperwork to be signed; we were going through the negotiations for a property for 3½ months before it fell through.

"Then we had to find another one and start all over again."

Mrs Stratford said the couple and their children visited the

French home once a year and rented it for the rest of the time.

The couple say tips on how others can have their own piece of France are among the most common questions asked at French Desire occasions.

Mrs Stratford said owning a home in France was not as unattainable as some may think, with thousands of properties available in France for less than \$100,000, with loans from

French banks at interest rates of only 4 per cent.

This Saturday, Bastille Day, the Stratfords are hosting an event to celebrate France's national day at East Brisbane's Cou Cou Lounge, full of French flair, including can-can dancers.

They are also holding an information night at Le Classic Restaurant on August 7.

■ Visit www.frenchdesire.com.
– Luke Royes

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