

A Second Home in France

By Chris Webb (English translation)

My wife and I owned a two room apartment at Veules-les-Roses, on the coast near Dieppe and thoroughly appreciated the frequent times we were able to stay in France. Unfortunately, it was too small to entertain family and friends and after ten years we decide to look for something larger.

We spent two enjoyable years visiting destinations near to the coast from Les Sables-d'Olonne in the Vendee, round to Dunkerque in the Nord. After staying at such delightful places as St-Vaast-la-Hougue, we finally decided upon Calais. Not an obvious choice.

As we had friends with holiday homes in France who did not get to visit them as frequently as they wished, we decided that accessibility was a priority. As a teacher, I had the opportunity of spending half term breaks and the longer holidays in France, but I also wanted to go there for weekends whenever possible. Living in Surrey, near to the M25 we had easy access by motorway to the Channel Tunnel at Folkestone.

Eventually, we found a delightful cottage, fifteen minutes from the Tunnel, on the towpath of the canal, halfway between Calais and St-Omer, away from the problems of desperate immigrants trying to get to England. Once a fortnight, we would finish work on a Friday and three hours after leaving home we would be enjoying a glass of wine in front of our own log fire. Typically, on a Saturday we would either go to the large market at St-Omer or visit the stalls on the dock at Calais, where the fish were so fresh they would flip over in front of you. On Sunday, we would go to our favourite restaurant at Graveline before preparing the log fire, ready for our next visit. By 8pm we were back to the Tunnel, gaining an hour with the time difference and refreshed for the week ahead.