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# House Beautiful

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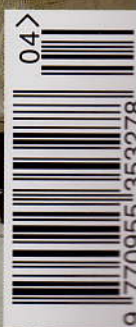
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### See inside 5 DREAM HOMES

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SMALL  
SPACE  
STYLE



# 'Oysters taste better in the garden of our fisherman's cottage'

Fun holidays in a French resort prompted this family to invest in a second home



PROPERTY  
DETAILS

**Type of house** Two-bedroom terraced cottage  
**Location** St Martin, Ile de Rey, France  
**Purchase price** Around £265,000  
**Money spent** Around £10,000  
**What it's worth now** Around £340,000

**JENNY ROGERS, 45**, a translator originally from Hertfordshire, and husband **Paul-Henri Sohler, 46**, a manager for an industrial foam manufacturer, share their home on Ile de Rey, France, with sons **William, 14**, and **Benjamin, 10**. Jenny describes their life by the sea

Every day I'm struck by how lucky I am to have such a wonderful life, here in France. My favourite way to start the day is with a ride along the beach on a horse from the local stables. The beach is about a mile away and early in the morning it's nearly deserted. Later, Paul-Henri and I usually wander down to the indoor market to buy oysters, which we carry home and eat in our courtyard garden, washed down with a bottle of wine. The Maison de Pecheur (Fisherman's Cottage) is our second home and we spend most weekends here out of season, as well as two weeks in summer. It is on the island of Ile de Rey, which lies just off the coast between Nantes and Bordeaux. For the rest of the year we live amidst the Bordeaux region's vineyards, just outside St Emilion. We've been married for 16 years now. Paul-Henri is French

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Top Jenny enjoys morning coffee in the courtyard

Above The red on the beams is picked up again in the sideboard from a local brocanteur (antique shop)

Right Paul-Henri and the boys at the nearby seafont

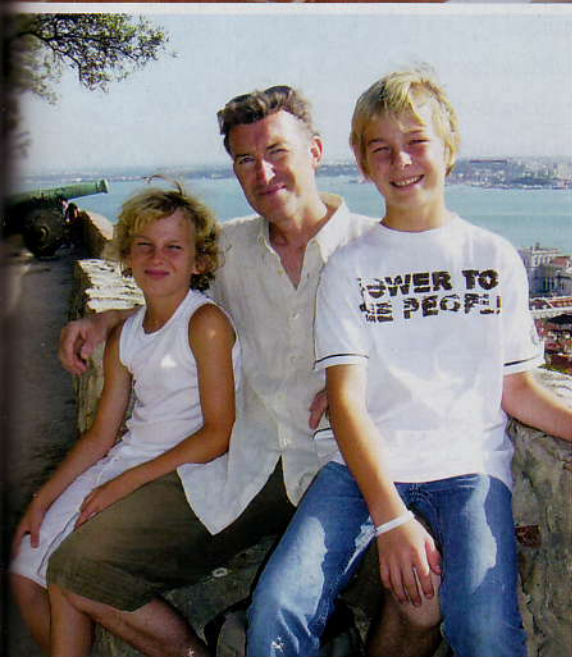
Far right A painting by local artist Michèle Faliu hangs behind the sofa

Left Both bedroom doors are labelled with brass 'cabin' plates from a ship



TEXT: ALAN O'KELLY; PHOTOGRAPHS: TONY TIMMINGTON







and we lived in Germany and Switzerland before settling in France for good when his job was transferred here.

When the children were small, we used to visit the island at the weekend and enjoyed cycling and playing football on the beach. The more time we spent here, the more we loved it, so we looked for a place to buy. There has been a port at St Martin, on the Ile de Rey, since the 17th century, but no one is certain when the fishermen's cottages were built. We do know that they are extremely old and the walls are very solid.

The sale was completed at the end of July 2006, without the place having been surveyed. The French believe that if a house has stood for hundreds of years, it's probably sound! We were happy to go along with that. Although no structural changes were necessary, I wanted

**Right** The living room is full of coastal-themed furniture and accessories. The coffee table is actually a dockside cable reel and a nautical picture hangs above the table. Antique wooden furniture makes the room a cosy space where the family can enjoy a relaxing breakfast

**Below left** Abstract paintings framed with nautical rope by local artist Michèle Faliu hang above the stairs, adding colour to the neutral interior of the cottage

## My most treasured possession

'The coffee table was already here when we moved into the cottage. It was probably a dockside cable reel, because it has thick ship's cord around it. A lick of white paint has given it a new lease of life. It has become the cornerstone of our living room and it inspired our nautical design for the cottage interior.'



to put my mark on the place, so I painted the walls and searched for furniture. The cottage had already been refurbished and the bathroom and kitchen are modern, yet they suit the style of the house. In fact, the kitchen is larger than you'd expect in such a small cottage.

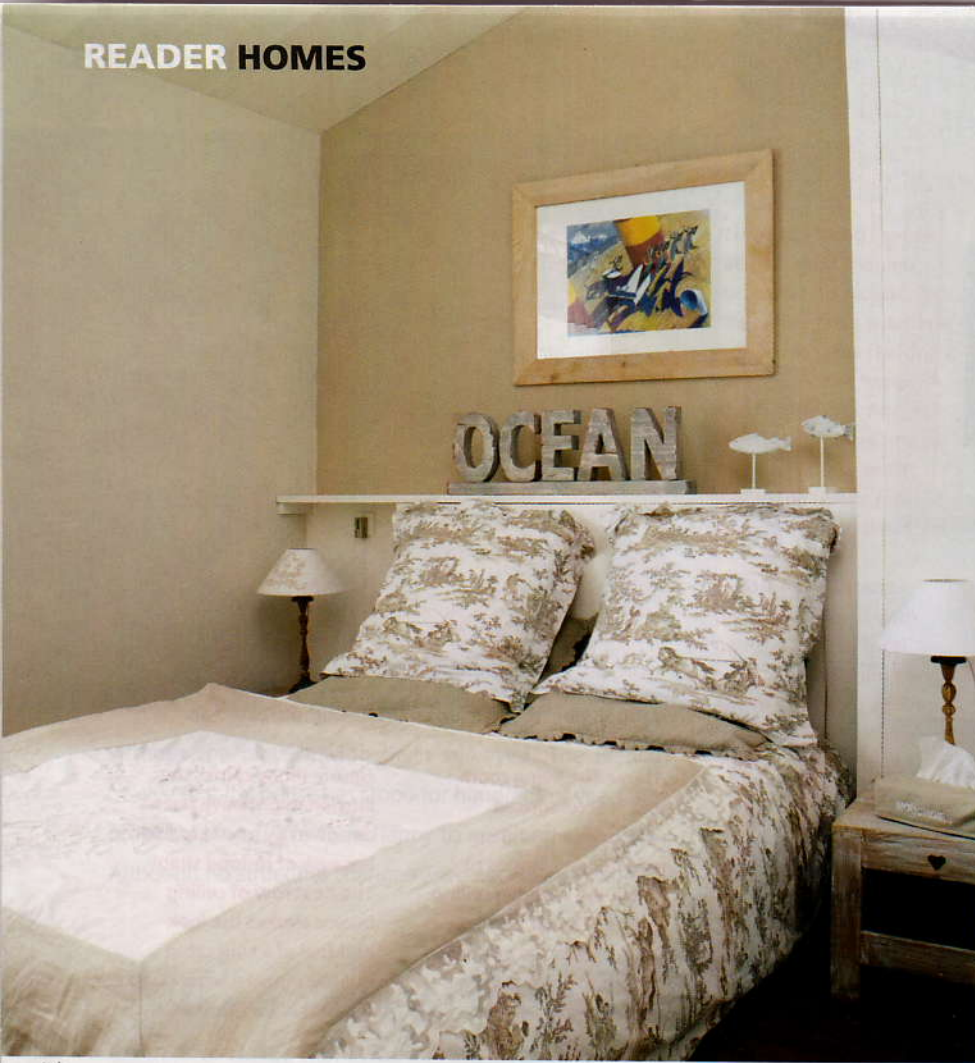
In this area, there are strict rules on the colours that can be used on house exteriors; wooden shutters painted muted grey, green or blue are acceptable but not bold tones. On the inside, however, there are no such restrictions and a previous owner had painted the ceiling beams red. To match the beams and balance their effect, I've added touches of red with cushions and fabrics.

Paul-Henri and I share the same taste and we decided that he would look after the courtyard while I would focus on the decorating. We used a nautical theme throughout the cottage including pictures of boats with borders of threaded ropes and porthole mirrors, as well as our coffee table made from a dockside cabin reel. It all seems to suit






## READER HOMES



the location of the cottage – we even have a lifebelt hanging on the wall of the courtyard garden.

This would once have been a simple, working man's cottage and though small, it's cosy. With wooden furniture and comfortable sofas there's something inviting about the interior. We spend as much time here as we can and rent it out to tourists the rest of the year. We're delighted with our island home and hope to be here for a good deal longer. 

● To find out more about holiday letting at Maison de Pecheur, call Jenny Rogers on 00 33 679 804 607 or visit [holidaylettings.co.uk](http://holidaylettings.co.uk)

**Above** In the main bedroom the 'Ocean' sign from a local interiors shop brings the nautical theme upstairs. Find similar letters at Morello Living

**Top right** The pine cupboard in this bedroom has a rustic, stripped pine door

**Right** Bunk beds maximise sleeping space in the compact children's bedroom

**Left** A porthole-shaped mirror gives a maritime look to the bathroom

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE 'WHERE TO BUY' PAGE AT BACK OF ISSUE



## JENNY'S GUIDE TO BUYING

- A good agent will hold your hand through the whole transaction, which has two stages. First, a binding contract (*Compromis de Vente*) is drawn up, where the buyer pays a deposit to secure the property. During the next six to eight weeks, rigorous checks are completed, before the final contract (*Acte de Vente*) is signed.
- **Do your sums. Don't forget to take residential tax (*taxe d'habitation*) and property tax (*taxe foncière*) into account. On this property, for instance, both taxes cost around 500 euros per annum. Estate agents' fees are around five to six per cent of the sale price. The fee of the *Notaire* (French solicitor) is about six per cent of the purchase price, including stamp duty.**