

Rent before you buy

How to make the letting system work for you

With legal fees and registration taxes averaging around 10 per cent on top of property prices, buying property is costly and not to be rushed into. Why not give yourself the time to find your perfect property by renting first?

In addition to RT advertisements, there are two particularly useful websites: www.fnaim.fr and www.seloger.com. The location link on both websites will display possible properties, unfurnished, if you fill in your requirements.

It is strongly recommended to get leases vetted by a qualified person/solicitor who understands them and can also ensure that any specially agreed clause is inserted. Check whether you are allowed to conduct a business from part of the property if that is your intention. Here are some basic points:

A three-year period for residential accommodation is the classic lease. *Le bailleur* is the proprietor, and the tenant, *le locataire* or *le preneur*.

Tenants should always inspect the property before signing the lease, as they will be asked to approve a legally

binding inspection report (*état des lieux*). If no inspection report is proposed insist on one. The tenant has to pay a deposit (*dépôt de garantie*) of not more than one month's rent, to cover possible breakages and damages, before moving in. At the end of a lease, a 'leaving' *état des lieux* is signed. The deposit is refunded within two months of the end of the lease if the leaving inspection report is identical to the original report. If there are repairs/replacements the tenant must pay any costs exceeding the deposit amount.

The three-year lease is extended automatically (*taut reconduction*) for another three years unless if the proprietor gives six months written notice that the lease will not be renewed, and by recorded delivery letter.

This can only occur if the proprietor needs vacant possession to lodge themselves or members of their immediate family or wishes to sell the property. If the property is going to be sold, the tenant has first option to buy after the proprietor's family which in this instance can include uncles, aunts, nephews, etc.

If you find the property you want

to buy while you are renting, or you want to rent elsewhere, you can terminate the lease at any time, simply by giving three months' written notice to the proprietor or their agent, again by recorded delivery letter. Only one month's written notice is required if employment is taken up elsewhere or you lose your employment or if you are over 60 and need to move into a care home on medical grounds.

Whilst rental rates are subject to free market conditions, once they are fixed by the lease agreement, they cannot be increased by more than the government's annual *Indice Référence de Loyer* (IRL) which follows the annual cost of living price index.

Tenants need to prove regular monthly income of at least three times the monthly rent or have a guarantor who can show that income, and who will co-sign the lease.

Fees paid to a proprietor's agent usually correspond to one month's rent, so tenants signing a lease through an agent have usually the equivalent of three months' rent before occupancy: the deposit, agent's fees (*honoraires*) and first month's rent.

Richard Whiting

Exceptional cuis

Strikingly simple but outstanding are stunning working spaces tha

For the proud owners of exceptional properties, the name Albalat denotes style, precision and excellence. Many satisfied foreign residents have commissioned kitchens and bathrooms from this Nice-based company:

Third generation, Bernard Albalat has acquired the professional experience and savoir-faire in the domain of luxurious kitchens. Specialists in top of the range models, Albalat helps you choose a style that suits your home or villa. Keeping abreast with evolving interior décor trends the superior quality of the materials blended with in vogue styling result in a spectacular space.

From a unique glass finish to modern chrome detail, the latest in design is on offer from leading brands such as Valcudine and Binova. For more modest budgets starting from 20,000 euros, the Italian brand, Brintempio, offers style at a reasonable price. They also stock a range of superior electrical goods, such as American fridges.

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