

There's a certain fairytale charm to the main bedroom with its four-poster iron bed, chandelier and wonderful antique mirror over the ornate fireplace, both of which were bought locally

Brenda likes furniture to have an aged feel and show its history

rooms with the help of my daughter Amanda. We both love visiting antiques markets so a lot of the furniture is from around here. Amanda even takes things back for her shop Decorative Country Living in the UK. John and I also put in a swimming pool and turned the laundry room into a changing room. We do still have one large job to tackle and that's installing central heating. We've been getting by using log fires and electric radiators.

What's village life like?

We've been made to feel so welcome here, but I did ask a local woman recently how she felt about so many English people moving in – six English families now have homes in the village – and she replied, "You buy the houses we don't want!" Apparently, they prefer modern houses that are easier to maintain. Throughout the summer there are endless fairs and festivals and every year there is a party for the villagers, where the women bring cakes and the men bring wine. In August they celebrate the Day of Assumption

The shells in the bathroom are from the Il de Ré, an island off the west coast of France, which John and Brenda visit with their grandchildren



and decorate the place with flags and lights and set up stalls selling food and antiques – it's wonderful.

What do you enjoy most about living in France?

I've always loved the French way of life and their priorities – family and food! I think we could learn a lot from them. The local markets still thrive alongside the out-of-town supermarkets, so food is fresh and you can buy almost anything at them! The Charente river also runs through the village, which is perfect for John, who loves his boats. ■



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The exposed beams in the attic guest room are a little low, but add a huge amount of character to the room
Bench, Decorative Country Living

