



### *Vanessa's choice of Brittany*

Elaine: Well, Vanessa, thanks very much for taking time to come down here today to talk to us. Obviously, you're a very much travelled lady due to your military background, but when, and how, did you discover Brittany?

Vanessa: I originally discovered Brittany by watching documentaries on German television, and I saw the beauty of it and had difficulty understanding the names because they were being pronounced in German. So, I would get a map and try and find where they were and during my two weeks' annual vacation each year I would spend a week travelling through Brittany to the various places that I'd seen on the documentaries. So, that's how I first discovered Brittany. I would always stay, for some reason, in Erquy, where I live now at an hotel on the beach because that's what you do when you're a tourist and I would just travel throughout Brittany using the hotel as a springboard, if you will, and just enjoy the week travelling to various sites throughout the area that I knew to go to.

Elaine: So when did you actually buy your house in Erquy, having, sort of, explored other areas?

Vanessa: I started exploring Brittany in about 1990 and then about 1996 I was travelling and I had my mother with me and we were in Erquy and we were at the Port having a Kir Royale and she said "Let's walk in through town" and I thought "There's a town here?" 'cos I just knew there was a beach. So we walked through town and we started looking in some of the Realtor windows and my mother said ...

Elaine: That's Estate Agents for our ...

Vanessa: Yes. And she said "You could afford a house here." And, being a civil servant at the time, I told her, I said "No, I can't" and she explained to me how I could and in 1997 I bought my house in Erquy

Elaine: And that was in 1997?

Vanessa: Yes

Elaine: Right, OK. But you were still at that point just visiting.

Vanessa: Yes. I was still working full-time in Germany and pretty much the end of each August or early September I would come and spend two weeks at the house.

Elaine: It was when you retired, I believe in, was it, 2017... 2017 - yes. ...that you decided to become a resident.

Vanessa: I moved here permanently.. yes.

Elaine: Permanently

Vanessa: Permanently



Elaine: Did you have any problems with all the paperwork that often ensues?

Vanessa: No. Surprisingly, I didn't and I think a lot of it is due to a lady that I discovered while reading through the Central Brittany Journal by the name of Marie Geursey??? and she has a business helping, typically I would say, English people, but, being an American she thought "Well, sure, I'll help you, too" and she was very instrumental in helping me organise paperwork; going to appointments, so I had minimal problems at all. I think the most difficulty I had was waiting to see if the paperwork was going to go through the process or whether it was going to come back. But everything went fine.

Elaine: Fantastic! It's very lucky because it can happen that if you don't have the right paperwork you can be sent away again and then you must come back. So I understand also that you're very actively involved here, which many of us hope to be on retirement, so tell us about these activities.

Vanessa: Well, I'm trying to integrate more and more. Having lived in Germany for 36 years I speak very good German and I'm learning French so I go to my weekly French classes and in the afternoon of the same day I go 40 minutes in the opposite direction from my house where I facilitate a conversation group for French adults at the Intermediate level, I would say. And that's a lot of fun, so we're teaching each other English and French at the same time while having fun doing it. I'm also trying to do some volunteer work with ???? so I'm going to be getting with the social welfare assistant, I believe she is, in Erquy to see if I can get something going with that. We have a 'Franglaise' group in Erquy twice a month that I'm a part of and I also, because one of my passions is cooking, I go to a monthly cooking demonstration in Erquy so not only do I get to learn how to cook wonderful French recipes, I'm learning more French because if I don't get that right I'm not eating very good food.

Elaine: That's incredible. So, basically, you're probably wondering how you ever had the time to work, because every day seems to have some sort of, like, somewhere you've got to go; somewhere you need to be; something that you're involved with.

Vanessa: I think having a routine; having a schedule helps. Because if not, I would just be all a-gagging around the house.

Elaine: Um - future plans. Is it going to be Brittany forever?

Vanessa: Brittany forever. Yes. I have a French background. My, my paternal grandmother came from Canada. My paternal great-grandmother came from somewhere outside of Paris so, I think I'm here for the long-haul.

Elaine: It's in your blood.

Vanessa: It's in my blood.

Elaine: It's in your blood and you're destined to be here.

Vanessa: I think so.

Elaine: Well, I wish you the very best of luck....

Vanessa: Thank you.

Elaine: ...in whatever you're doing and I think many of us, once we've found the charm and the peace, really, and the pace of life, um, decide "Yes." This is where I'll be.

Vanessa: Yes - and I truly think that the key to being able to say "Yes - this is where I want to be" is to get out and to get involved, even if you don't speak much French. If you try I find the people to be very, very charming and willing to give and take with the language.

Elaine: It's like passing people when you walk up the road and 'Bonjour.'

Vanessa: Exactly - just start small.