



Hettie and Dion, Australians in Brittany.

Elaine Hettie and Dion, thank you very much for agreeing to talk to us.

Hettie. That's OK.

Elaine. So first of all can we start....why Brittany?

Hettie. Well we were looking at.... we live on a boat in Australia. After 12 years of living on a boat we thought we'd like to do something else, and 12 years in the sun is a long time when you've got skin cancers and things because it's far North Queensland so the tropical sun is very strong. So we were just musing on the internet about where we'd like to live when we can't live on the boat anymore and we looked at France because we both like history and then Brittany kept coming up as very, very reasonably priced. Every time I put in a search Brittany came up. So, uh, we, we didn't have a house in Australia. I started to research even more and the..., yeah we picked Brittany as the place that we would search for and find, you know.

Elaine. That's a very good reason.

Hettie. Yes, the countryside is lovely. We had both been to France before but as tourists so it is a bit different coming here to live. But we do love the countryside, and it is green and nice. Australia has green parts. I mean we live in the tropics, so obviously there's big plants and insects and things like that but here it is a much muted green, you know.

Elaine. Dare I mention the word 'paperwork'?

Dion. Lots of paperwork.

Hettie. Lots and lots of paperwork.

Dion. Yeah. It was, uh, it was difficult to buy the house from Australia but you know you can manage it if you get all the right paperwork together. So it wasn't a problem. When we purchased the house we weren't even sure that we could stay here. We were hoping to be able to stay here. But we didn't want..., because it was our first foray into French real estate, we didn't want to spend a lot of money either.

So we ended up with this house, which is comfortable, doesn't leak, it's a bit quirky but

Hettie. It was tricky buying a house over the Internet. I mean what we did was like a campaign. We spent 17 days here a couple of years ago, hired a car, did 4000 km and saw heaps of houses every day. We had appointments all over Brittany. That gave us a feel for the country and it was in March so it was cool and we had sunny days and we had not so many rainy days but people kept asking us 'oh do you like the rain then because you're gonna come and live in Brittany?'

But once we had seen all the houses we went back and we had to make a decision and that's when all the paperwork started because we had to actually buy the house via the Internet. We employed a mortgage broker because we got a mortgage for the house, so they spoke French and English and that really helped. But Google translate is fantastic and if you've got Gmail that's translate as well so we managed all that via the internet. So, you know, although we saw the house in person all the paperwork was done over the, over the net.

Elaine. I understand that you actually at the moment haven't got a car so you've not been able to explore as much as you might like.

Hettie. Well we did explore when we did that 4000km, we went everywhere; St Malo and just La Rochelle and everywhere. But we're not buying a car until we are certain we can stay. We just yesterday, oh no, the day before we went to St Brieuc and we got our first renewal so we've had two years here and the government think we are OK.

Elaine. If you were to describe Brittany to friends back home in Australia how would you describe it ?

Hettie. Well I think when I talk to people back home I always say it is like stepping back in time. People are very friendly, very polite. Everything is.... in the village we're in it's clean, and neat and it is almost like living in a retirement home, because the village is dying. There are young

people obviously. Friday night we have one-boy racer on a 125, that's it you know.....

Elaine. Just to remind you there are kids around.

Hettie. Yeah and we've got next-door neighbours with young kids. But on the whole, everyone is around our age or older so there is a sensibility that you are living in a very nice environment because there isn't any of that rabble that you see in the big cities or in Paris or anywhere like that. Like there's hardly any graffiti anywhere or there's no rubbish on the ground. There might be dog - barkers' nests everywhere but...

Elaine. So what are your future plans? Are you going to....well you've bought a house so you obviously aren't going far.

Hettie. Well we're hoping to stay here permanently. Well that's our plan, but we do have a boat in far North Queensland Australia. If we could sail here we would, but I think it's.... the world is just becoming a little bit too dangerous for that sort of thing. And that's another reason why we came here. I mean, Australia is very safe where we are. But we like the history and this is kind of our last chance to come and see things and experience living in Europe.

Elaine. Thank you very much

Hettie. Thanks.

Dion. Thank you.

