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What you can buy for . . .

€1m A one-bedroom apartment located a short drive from Yacht Club Monaco

€5m A high-spec, four-bedroom family villa in Opio

€10m A six-bedroom home with a pool, tennis court and guest house in Mougins

Charlie Birkett's verdict . . .

Pros

Living near the coast and an hour from the nearest ski resort means there are times when you can enjoy the beach and the snow on the same weekend

Getting around is easy. Nice airport is still small enough to park outside but big enough to offer links to most major European business hubs

Cons

Too much "paperwork" – life in France revolves around documents and *attestations*

France has a reputation for fine dining but this is not always the case, certainly in the south of France

Antibes can be quiet in the winter

Favourite place The Monte-Carlo Beach hotel. The poolside restaurant is excellent and a great place for a business meeting

Best bar The American bar at the Hotel de Paris seems dated to youngsters but is still a very cool place

Best place for dinner Il Terrazzino is a very low-key, Italian restaurant but is always full of in-the-know locals

Monaco — Grégoire Bernardi

ce

plain sailing

Opio, in the mountains about an hour outside Monaco, with their two children, Louis, six, and Oliver, nine. The two boys were both born in Nice and went to French primary school before Oliver enrolled at the international school in Mougins. "It's really important as an expat, if you have young kids, to get them into proper French schools," says Birkett. "If they start young enough, they can pick up both languages easily. Today, my wife's French is better than mine, if I'm honest, but our children are completely fluent and there's no barrier to the culture for them . . . they have English friends and they have French friends and they just switch instantly."

Outside of work, Birkett enjoys skiing with the children and taking them up in

"The scariest things were not knowing the language and not really being sure if you had a job"

the hills around Opio on quad bikes, and, of course, sailing.

The idea for Y.CO came about after a few meetings with Wright in the early 2000s. "Being on yachts [for many years], we thought we had an idea of what the industry generally needed," says Birkett. "So after a few glasses of champagne one night we decided to set up Y.CO. We started in a tiny office on the start-finish straight [of the Monaco Grand Prix course] with about four members of staff." Today the company has six offices worldwide and employs 95 people, offering its clients chartering, yacht-building, refitting and management and support services for yachts measuring 24 metres up to 140 metres. Y.CO can supply the crew – including all

catering staff – recommend the best routes, restaurants and nightclubs, as well as take responsibility for all maintenance and regulations.

The company has recently teamed up with exclusive travel company Based on a True Story, which creates bespoke adventure holidays that can cost anything between £200,000 to £3m a week. "We're not just trying to sell yachts or charters," says Birkett, who maintains that, at the lower end, a yachting holiday is not much more expensive than other high-end family holiday at about €5,000-a-week per person. "We're all about trying to establish the experiences we had when we first went yachting; the same buzz – for us, it's all about having fun on the water."