

Arabian Property

16-22 November

TALK | MAURITIUS

Money-making Mauritius

Known as a luxury holiday destination famed for its turquoise waters and palm-fringed beaches, Mauritius is now looking to attract a new wave of property investor with its Integrated Resort Scheme. Here Phil Agius, Managing Director of PURE International - the independent sales and marketing company specialising in homes within unique environments - explains how the new system operates, and looks at the real estate opportunities on offer in this Indian Ocean paradise.

The most accessible of the Indian Ocean islands, Mauritius lies almost 1,000 km east of Madagascar. Providing a welcome like no other, it embraces its African, Indian, British and French influences to create a unique and captivating personality that has resulted in its position as one of the world's leading luxury travel destinations.

Earning success

But the island offers much more than an average holiday destination. Mauritius is politically and economically stable, and its government has edged ahead of the competition as a result of sound and strategic planning that has raised GDP, lowered unemployment and attracted not just holiday makers and hotel operators, but financial institutions and commercial operations.

Last month, The Economist referred to Mauritius as an "isolated island that continues to reinvent itself and confound the sceptics," praising its economic



foresight, highlighting its continued rise in GDP, and spotlighting its global ranking in the World Bank's ease of doing business ratings. At 24th, it forges ahead of Germany, France and every other African nation by

services.

One such measure is the recently introduced Integrated Resorts Scheme (IRS), which for the first time allows foreigners to acquire full freehold ownership of luxury villas in approved IRS

rapid connections with the rest of the world. This will also undoubtedly assist those homeowners who wish to operate in a global business environment.

Furthermore, with handsome investment returns anticipated from both rental yields and capital growth, the IRS scheme delivers a truly attractive way for investors to really enjoy their money with total peace of mind. For example, the bank through which the buyer's mortgage bond is financed will guarantee completion of the villa in the unlikely event that the development company is unable to complete construction.

The IRS project approval and ongoing monitoring process is vigorous to ensure villas sold to the foreign investment fraternity are built to satisfy the international standards, with world-class amenities and facilities.

The acquisition of a residential villa by an overseas purchaser under the IRS will allow the foreigner and their

The economist referred to Mauritius as an isolated island that continues to reinvent itself

some considerable margin.

This success has been earned. The past decade witnessed a decline of the Mauritian sugar and textile industries due to the relaxing of European Union quotas and competition from emerging markets, in particular China and the Far East. To counter this, the Mauritian Government introduced a number of strategic policy interventions to support the sustainable growth and contribution to GDP of developing sectors such as tourism, financial and professional

projects. By investing money offshore into the strongly emerging property market through IRS luxury developments, Gulf investors can enjoy a number of benefits. In addition to the wonderful tropical lifestyle, there are taxation advantages and favourable double taxation agreements. There is a buoyant financial community with over 400 established banking and financial services providers, which explains the need for the excellent communications facilities that exist there, providing

Arabian Property

16-22 November

MAURITIUS | TALK



family to reside in Mauritius for as long as they retain ownership. A minimum investment US\$500,000 is required for the acquisition of freehold immovable property, inclusive of land and the maximum extent of the land is limited to 0.5276 hectares. Villas can be acquired either off-plan or during the construction phase.

Under the IRS regulations, any of the following will qualify to acquire property:

A non-citizen of Mauritius (including his or her spouse and dependants.)

A foreign company registered under the Companies Act of 2001.

A citizen of Mauritius.

Who is eligible?

The process is fairly straightforward. A person who intends to acquire property under the Scheme and who is a non-citizen must apply for the status of residency, in accordance with the Immigration Regulations

of 1973, in respect of themselves, their spouse and dependants. When the application is approved, a residency permit is granted in association with the transfer of the full title ownership of the land to the investor. The residency permit does not allow for Mauritian citizenship, but it does give an owner the right to live and work in Mauritius while they own property within an approved IRS, and to come and go as they please.

Property Spotlight - Villas Valriche

Villas Valriche, one of the newest and most exciting IRS approved developments, is a luxury residential estate consisting of 288 Mauritian Plantation-style detached freehold villas with shingle roofs, set in approximately 106 hectares of lush landscaped grounds. The estate surrounds the recently completed Peter Matkovich designed, 18-hole championship golf course, which is set in a further 104 hectares.

The estate was named after the neighbouring Valriche Nature Reserve, the world-renowned ecological park home to a stunning array of native wildlife. The spacious, private villas were designed by the well-known local architect Jean-Francois Adam; there are four different styles to choose from in 22 layouts and a wide range of optional extras to suit all preferences. The villa designs offer single and double storey configurations, with two-bedroom villas of 230m² up to three or four bedroom villas in excess of 450m². The plots vary in size from 700m² to over 2,000m² and nearly all have uninterrupted panoramic golf course and sea views.

Built to a high specification and with excellent quality finishes, the villas will all have infinity pools; large verandas; air conditioned bedrooms; state-of-the-art communications and landscaped tropical gardens. A wide range of options and interior design packages are available. Each villa will use up-to-date technology for modern living and will be interior designed and finished to a very high standard, all offering air-conditioned bedrooms, an infinity swimming pool, an expansive veranda and a private, beautifully landscaped tropical garden. For those buyers who wish to rent out their villa and receive a return on their investment, a rental pool will be operated by the developer.

Residents will be able to enjoy numerous activities at both the Sports Club and the Beach Club.

The Sports Club will include a fully equipped gym, tennis court, a swimming pool and a children's playground. The Beach Club offers swimming pools, water sports, restaurants and bars and also gives residents access to the beach. In addition, fine dining experiences can be enjoyed at the elegant 'Bel Ombre Chateau' restaurant. There are also plans to establish a world-class spa on the estate.

On completion

As the golf course is attached to the estate, villa owners automatically become members of the exclusive 'Le Golf du Chateau' Club. This championship course ensures an enjoyable golfing experience on a world-class layout. Beginners, or those who want to practice their short game, are catered for with the 9-hole par three course, the only one of its kind on the island. The Club House is able to provide light meals and refreshments and is equipped with a Pro Shop for all golfing requirements. Should home-owners require golf lessons, there is a PGA instructor available, as well as a full driving range facility.

Pricing for the villas within Valriche Estate start at US\$950,000.

Construction of the first villas commenced in March 2008 and the entire 130 villas in Phase one should be completed mid-to-end 2009. Infrastructure in phase two will overlap phase one. All construction should be complete by late 2010 to mid-2011.