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RICH PICKINGS

Riche pickings from plantation-style villas

Mauritius is still the place to be, and some developments there really do offer sun, sand, sea and a return on investment. **Michelle Swart** reports back on a recent visit

THE much publicised IRS scheme, Villas Valriche, which is situated in Domaine de Bel Ombre on the south west coast of Mauritius, is spread over 106ha where 288 Mauritian plantation-style freehold villas are set on a hillside with spectacular views overlooking the golf course and Indian Ocean.

When this luxury residential estate was launched about two years ago, the land consisted of nothing but sugar cane surrounding a Peter Matkovich designed 18-hole championship golf course. Today, the sugar cane has been cleared and construction of the first villas in phase one is under way. There have, however, been some unavoidable construction delays, which means the villas will only be ready early next year. In fact 26 villas will be handed over to their owners by February, with a further 74 villas delivered during the rest of the year. The balance of the villas in phase one are expected to be complete in early 2011.

CEO Anton de Waal says that some of the construction delays have been due to the developer's stringent quality standards. "We have been fastidious in our requirements and are committed to delivering an outstanding product. Any aspect in construction, materials or finishes that we felt were not up to our standards, however small, has been reviewed and addressed. Getting the best results from the start is vital to the success of the development and we recognise the importance of delivering on our promises and achieving our purchasers' high expectations."

These expectations have been exceeded when it comes the interiors, if the show villa is anything to go by. Decked out by South African interior design company Robin's Nest, who are the interior design partners responsible for the interior spaces of this devel-



opment, it represented everything a property investment of this calibre should. Owners at Villas Valriche have three main concepts to choose from: contemporary, washed beach and mahogany, all of which can be customised around each main theme.

The interior design service is comprehensive as it allows the home owner to move into a fully furnished home, from plates in the cupboards, to flowers in vases and linen on the beds. The fact that there is an office in Mauritius means there is a team on site every day to ensure that the installation is taking place as planned.

Landscaping has also begun, with Cape Town-based Landscaping architecture company Plan-

ning Partners at the design helm. All the larger indigenous trees and shrubs along the river gorges and water courses of the golf course will be retained and where dense, selected indigenous plants will be thinned out and transplanted elsewhere on the estate.

In the open spaces under sugar cane, trees, shrubs and grasses will be planted to recreate the tropical feel. Roads will be lined with mature royal palms. More than 10 000 palms were cultivated especially for this project.

There are a number of different garden styles that owners can choose from. The gardens can be closed or open in rectilinear or informal styles with a choice between predominantly indigenous

or exotic varieties of plant. There will also be a dedicated nursery in Bel Ombre where home owners can purchase plants to further develop their gardens.

With controlled security access and state of the art communications, lifestyle offerings abound. Residents will be able to make use of a sports club that will be constructed consisting of a fully equipped gym, a swimming pool, tennis courts, croquette, boules and a children's playground.

Within a short golf cart ride away, a resident's Beach Club will be constructed with restaurants, bars, swimming pools and all water sports activities including skiing, sailing, snorkelling, fishing, kite and wind surfing. A craft and cultural market together with boutique-style shopping facilities is planned for the old converted "Bel Ombre" sugar cane factory.

Residents will have access to the adjacent 8 000ha Valriche Nature Reserve, from which the estate gets its name. This can be reached by cycling and walking trails, on horseback or by quad or mountain bikes.

Residents will receive membership to the Le Golf du Chateau Club which gives them access to the championship golf course and there is the possibility of a second championship golf course being built at a later stage.

Those looking at property here from an investment purpose will be pleased to know that the rental pool, to be operated by the developers, will allow for investment returns to the owner. Veranda Resorts has been appointed rental pool and facilities management company at Villas Valriche. Residents can be confident there is professional management company with extensive experience looking after their interests.

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