

Homes & Property Homes abroad

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THE Indian Ocean island of Mauritius is where the A list likes to holiday. More exclusive than the Caribbean – and certainly further off the beaten track – the 12-hour flight from London fails to deter the 100,000 Britons who visit each year.

When they get there, they find a tropical island a little under double the size of the Isle of Wight with turquoise seas, lush mountainous interiors and top hotels dripping with five-star add-ons. The typically tropical climate comes with cooling south-east trade winds and annual coastal temperatures range from 22C to 31C.

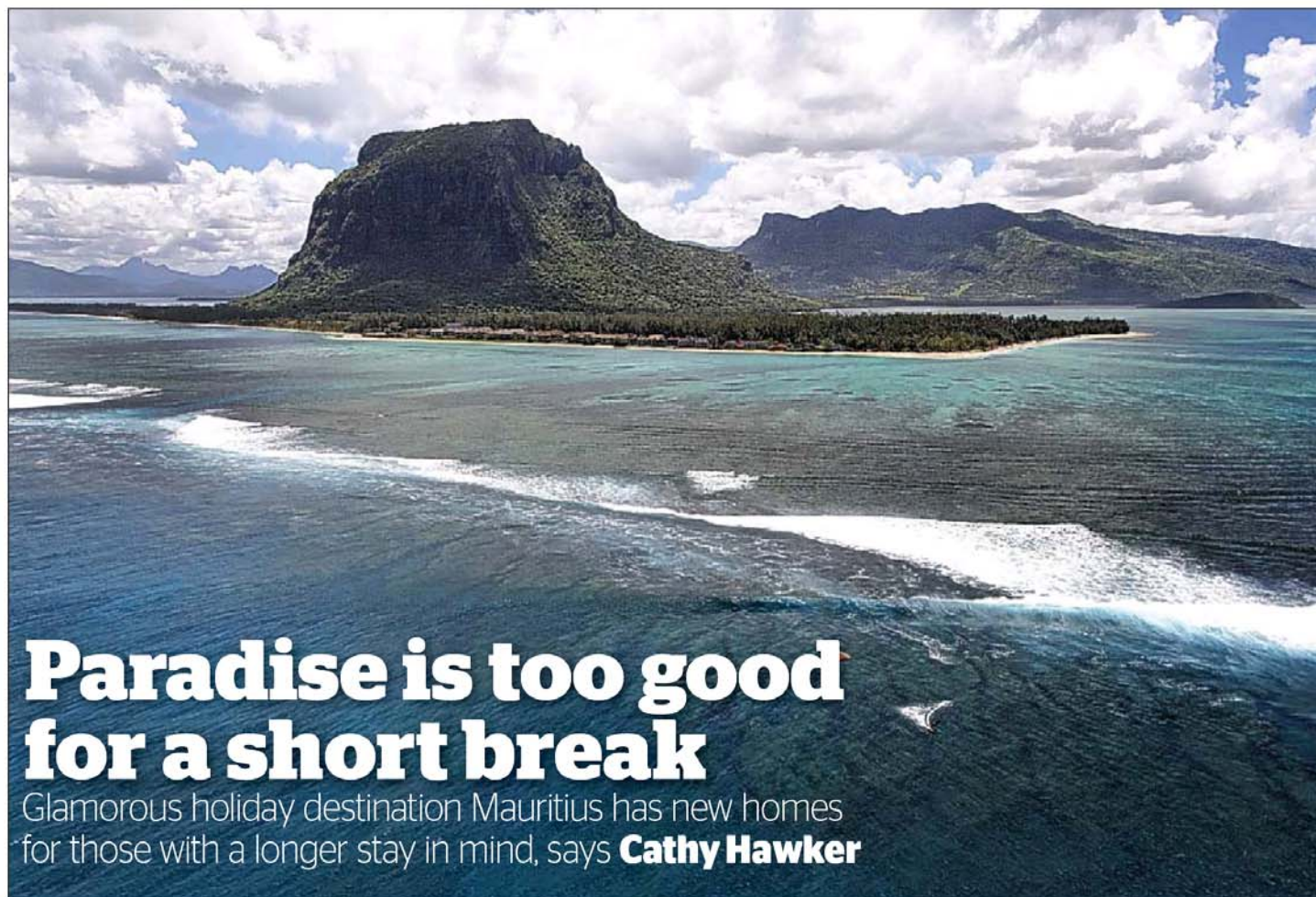
It's perfect for those who like to recline on soft, sandy beaches. But it's also an appealing option for active visitors with diving, hiking, watersports and six championship golf courses on offer.

Cyclones can bring heavy rain in January and February, while the peak season is May to December.

Now Mauritius has plans for homeowners with a longer stay in mind with the launch of a new-build £45million 950-pupil primary and senior school, to be operated – but not owned – by British private school Wellington College.

Mauritius opened its doors to foreign buyers in 2002 hoping that a business-minded government and favourable tax regime would entice homeowners away from the Caribbean.

Foreigners can only buy property through the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) on government-approved high-end resorts and in return receive automatic Mauritian residency.



Paradise is too good for a short break

Glamorous holiday destination Mauritius has new homes for those with a longer stay in mind, says **Cathy Hawker**

'We aim to create a community-focused village where Mauritians and visitors live year-round'

FIVE-STAR VALUE ON THE NORTH-EAST COAST

There are now six IRS projects spread around the Mauritius coastline with an average house price of £1 million. So Azuri, a newly launched off-plan project priced from £314,450 on the flat north-east coast, aims to stand out as the value choice on this island.

"Most IRS schemes are high-security golf estates used only as second homes," says Murray Adair, chief executive at Azuri. "We aim to create a community-focused village where Mauritians and visitors live year-round. Azuri will have shops, restaurants, two hotels and a school."

There will be 272 apartments and townhouses, with 169 freehold IRS residences facing a mile of coastline, and the other 103 properties available only to Mauritians. Prices for IRS homes range from £314,450 for a three-bedroom 1,937sq ft apartment to

£512,550 for a four-bedroom townhouse with roof terrace.

All property includes a mooring at the on-site boat club and while Azuri will not have a golf course, owners have access to the impressive course at nearby Le Touessrok, one of Mauritius's top hotels, for £315. An optional rental pool provides a guaranteed five per cent annual return for three years with five weeks personal use.

Construction is due to start next year with completion expected by August 2013. To date, 38 units have sold, mainly to French and South African buyers.

Mauritius has a strong, diversified economy reliant on tourism, textiles, agriculture and manufacturing. The island is one of Africa's success stories: the World Bank put it in pole position for ease of doing business in Africa, while four per cent annual growth is forecast for the next five years.

QUIET LIFE IN THE SOUTH

Narrow roads and slow lorries mean driving around Mauritius can take time. The capital Port Louis and main tourist town of Grand Baie are in the north, a good hour from the quieter, less-developed south coast.

In the south, 40 minutes from the

Tempting temperatures: Mauritius has a tropical climate with cooling trade winds

From £415,000: Villas Valriche (below left), where 288 plantation-style villas are planned overlooking the Indian Ocean

From £314,450: Azuri will have 272 apartments and townhouses completed by August 2013

airport, **Villas Valriche** is an IRS project on 525 acres of a former sugar plantation based around an 18-hole golf course. Handsome, two-bedroom, plantation-style villas start from £415,000 up to four bedrooms from £478,000, with a rental pool managed by a local hotel operator. More than 120 of 288 planned villas are completed on green slopes overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Villas Valriche recently released the first land plots for sale at £220,100. Owners have five years to build their villa, during which they receive 21 days free accommodation in a similar villa from the rental pool.

These new lower sales prices and alternative ways of investing are all acknowledgements of the increased demand for more compact, affordable properties, says Alex Upson of selling agents Cluttons Resorts.

CONTACTS AND FACT FILE

- Azuri, through Hamptons International (hamptons-int.com; 020 7963 0614).
- Villas Valriche, through Cluttons (cluttonsresorts.com; 020 7584 3050).
- Air Mauritius flies six times a week from Heathrow to Mauritius. From £725, including taxes (airmauritius.com).



Perfect penthouse based in exclusive community

Azuri allure: Mark and Leoni Richards were attracted by the good value

MARK and Leoni Richards paid £396,200 for an off-plan penthouse at Azuri and hope to move in by September 2013. As foreigners, it is one of the few resorts on Mauritius where they can own property.

"The value was attractive as Azuri is roughly half the price of other IRS projects," says Mark, 53, an accountant. "It is also right on the beach which is rare and as we live and work in Mauritius, the idea of year-round community with an international school appealed."

The couple met in Bournemouth where Leoni was chief executive furniture company Bo Concepts moving to Mauritius in 2009 to set up a brand communications company. "Mauritius is an easy environment to do business, friendly to foreign investment," says Mark. "It's also a wonderful place to live."

■ Azuri, through Hamptons International (hamptons-int.com 020 7963 0614).

