

Rio's grand designs

Talking exclusively to Andrea Watson about his new investment in beautiful Morocco is **RIO FERDINAND**

DESPITE a very different result in the Champions League, Rio Ferdinand and John Terry have plenty in common when it comes to building a property portfolio.

Both have invested in the Mediterranean coast of Morocco through New Era Overseas, a company that specialises in advising the world's sporting elite.

Le Jardin des Fleurs, one of the recommended developments where the Manchester United and Chelsea players have bought villas, is the result of King Mohammed VI's Vision 2010 scheme to transform the unknown and unexploited coastline of Morocco into a major holiday destination.

Le Jardin des Fleurs, which forms part of the Mediterranean-Saïdia project, is one of five major resorts being built.

It is set on 6km of coastline, with 3,000 residential properties, 11 hotels, three 18-hole golf courses, and a marina that will put Spain's Puerto Banus in the shade.

The apartments, penthouses, townhouses and villas are within walking distance of the harbour, beach and shopping centres, and will be set in a landscaped park with swimming pools and a clubhouse. The villas are on an island surrounded by one of the three golf courses.

All the properties will be built to European standards and come with a 10-year construction guarantee.

Rio Ferdinand, who has acquired two riad-style villas, was drawn to



HIGH STANDARDS: A typical property at Le Jardin des Fleurs and (inset) the scheme's clubhouse area

Morocco after several visits to Marrakech, Casablanca and the Mediterranean coast.

He said: "What struck me was the friendliness of the people and vibrant culture. The food – an important part of my life – is great and the beaches are beautiful."

"Morocco is setting out to rival Spain, which is just 90 kms across the sea, as a destination."

Rio decided to buy in Le Jardin des Fleurs after other Manchester United team-mates got involved.

Other players he mentioned as

required for the perfect family holiday and will appeal to many types of buyers."

Rio admitted that the area is still an emerging market but, with a new airport being built 40 minutes from the resort and direct flights from the UK, investment potential remains strong.

He added: "As an investment, it's a winner. The Mediterranean-Saïdia project is backed by the King of Morocco – you can't get a better endorsement than that."

Rio believes it is a good time to get involved, comparing the regeneration programme in Morocco to schemes that have boosted property prices in previously unfashionable areas of the UK.

Inevitably, talk is rife of a soccer school eventually being built as part of the facilities at Le Jardin des Fleurs.

"It's a natural reaction," revealed Rio, who said of other properties in his portfolio:

"Some are solely investments but there are a couple I'll be using when I've finished my football career."

Prices at Le Jardin des Fleurs range from £300,000 to £500,000 for a frontline golf villa at Le Village des Amis.

Townhouses and apartments at nearby Le Village de Sport range from £160,000, while villas

cost from £260,000 to £450,000.

Fifteen airlines are reported to be planning to start flights from the UK to Oujda, the capital of eastern Morocco, with the first direct flight planned for this summer.

INFORMATION:

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WHAT'S NEW ON THE MARKET - Near and Far



SWITZERLAND

● **NON-DOMS** and others drawn to the quality of life in Switzerland have the chance to acquire an apartment in a converted hotel, La Soldanelle, in the unspoilt village of Chateau d'Oex.

La Soldanelle consists of 21 one, two and three-bedroom apartments plus one three-bedroom duplex. Luxury features include a concierge service, sauna and pool. Overseas Homesearch is

quoting starting prices of CHF570,000 (approximately £255,000).

INFORMATION: Overseas Homesearch: 0800 652 0769/
www.overseashomesearch.co.uk



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

● A **NEW** Abu Dhabi-based real estate venture is targeting the high-end property market with radically different homes. The first project, Nurai, an iconic resort development on an

island, has just been launched. Futuristic green-roofed water villas, like the one pictured here, start at €18million. Nurai will include a luxury hotel with 60 suites, 31 beachfront estates and 50

water villas. Island amenities will include three restaurants, multiple lounges, private helipad and marina.

INFORMATION:
www.zawya.com