

graph

International Buy at The Brando

Holiday like Pippa
and the Obamas
page 4



Advice Property Doctors

Fixing up your garden
can be done at low cost
page 7



Hotspots Homes for library lovers

For when a tiny book
nook just won't cut it
page 5

PROPERTY





Buy on Brando's secret hideaway

Holiday like Barack Obama and Pippa Middleton by owning a villa on the actor's island, says *Liz Rowlinson*

Tetiaroa, an atoll about 45 miles north of Tahiti, is about as remote as you can get. Perhaps this is why, after glimpsing the coconut tree-fringed white sand beaches and vivid turquoise lagoon while filming *Mutiny on the Bounty*, Marlon Brando decided to buy it.

Fifty years later, the French Polynesian island rose to prominence when it hosted a post-presidential Barack Obama, there to write his memoir, and later, honeymooning couple Pippa Middleton and James Matthews. But you don't have to be

'Marlon Brando dreamt of creating an island retreat that could look after itself'

Hollywood, political or sororal royalty to relax like the stars. You can now purchase your own piece of South Pacific paradise.

When Brando fell for the secluded spot, it was an untouched utopia; a warm aquamarine lagoon 4.5 miles wide, completely protected by a necklace of 12 motus (coral islets). Brando's son Miko recalls of his first visit to the atoll: "All you could hear was the big thumping sound of coconuts falling from a tree."

Tetiaroa was once the summer residence of the former chiefs and kings of Tahiti, although its first European visitors were three deserters

Hideaway: villas at The Brando, the French Polynesian luxury eco-resort, main and right, are available to buy for €6 million



of €4,000 (£3,620) per night in high season.

Bailey pioneered the first seawater-powered air conditioning system at the InterContinental Resort in Bora Bora. Using a similar model of sustainable technology, with solar panels and Tahitian coconut oil providing other electricity, The Brando offers 35 villas camouflaged among the trees, restaurants serving Polynesian and French cuisine, a spa, lagoon-view bar, tennis court and fitness centre. There is room for only 80 guests and 220 staff, creating an entirely different experience from being 150 miles away in Bora Bora, with its multiple resorts of over-water bungalows and a population of 8,800.

As the hotel's occupancy is doubling each year, the resort is preparing to launch the sale of 21 private lagoon-front residences, on the east side for greater protection from hurricanes.

The 6,000 sq ft villas, with three or four bedrooms, are Polynesian in style and are built from the very trees that hide them away from prying eyes (ironwood, coconut and the palm-like Pandanus), yet inside enjoy the latest technologies and comforts.

Enjoying around 185ft of private beachfront each, the villas will have large decks, an infinity pool and a barbecue area within their 1.2 acre plots. The first show home will be ready in the spring, and they cost €6 million (0068 9408 65153; thebrando.com).

There are upkeep costs, too: homeowner fees of €100 a month, a conservation fee of €200, plus pay-as-you-use utility costs and service charges. "You can pay a service charge of €750 a month to mothball your unit and we will look after it, or you can put it into the hotel rental pool," says Stanley.

"Nearly all prospective buyers have asked about the rental scheme, where income is split 50/50 between hotel and owner."

Who are these buyers? Some of the interest will come from hotel guests who don't want to leave, says Silvio Bion, general manager of The Brando: "Guests come for three nights and then realise it is far too short and stay on longer." There have been guests from Russia, South America and Saudi Arabia, he says, although figures from the Tahitian Tourist Board show that the biggest markets for French Polynesia are North America, France and Asia.

The UK is tenth highest for visitor arrivals, although enquiries for French Polynesia went up 30 per cent after Pippa's honeymoon, according to Kayak, the travel search engine. There's been high interest from Los Angeles, which has direct flights to Tahiti. Onetahi is then a 20-minute private flight away.

The security of the investment appeals, says Stanley. "Tetiarioa is an overseas territory of France, and the stable and well-established purchase system of property is a plus," he says. "French Polynesia is one of the safest and most secure places in the world to reside, too." He adds that Bailey's 100-year lease on Tetiarioa is being extended by another 100 years, and residency rights will be "routinely granted" with villa ownership.

"It won't suit people who want a golf course or jet ski [which are not allowed] and Europeans will find it easier to reach the Maldives. Yet I have travelled all over the world and there's a special magic to this island," says Stanley. As Marlon Brando once said of his favourite retreat: "My mind is always soothed when I imagine myself sitting on my South Sea island." Time will tell if more investors fall under Tetiarioa's spell.

from the HMS Bounty in 1789. In 1966, Tahiti's government granted Brando a 99-year lease to the island and he built a dozen rustic thatched-roof cottages on Onetahi (the south-west motu of 193 acres) where he hosted friends such as Robert De Niro and Quincy Jones – as well as student groups.

"Marlon Brando was a leading advocate of sustainability before it was even in vogue," says Stanley Rowland, chairman of the Tetiarioa Society, a non-profit organisation set up to protect the islands' culture and ecosystems. "He was a passionate environmentalist who built a laboratory protecting sea birds and turtles, and he dreamt of creating an island retreat that could look after itself."

Brando, who also owned homes in the Hollywood Hills, enjoyed almost three decades of withdrawing from the world to Tetiarioa. Shortly after his death in 2004, the hotel developer Richard H Bailey – of the Pacific Beachcomber Group, French Polynesia's largest resort operator – acquired Tetiarioa. Ten years later, the luxury all-inclusive hotel The Brando opened, offering "carefree luxury in the midst of pristine nature" – asking the small price

A-list: Pippa Middleton and James Matthews, below, spent part of their honeymoon at The Brando on Tetiarioa

