



Main picture and above: this \$5.3m villa in the desirable Joá area is available through Rio Exclusive.

THE RIO DEAL

With all eyes on Brazil's most famous city as it prepares to host the World Cup and the Olympics, ambitious property developers are bringing back a luxury benchmark not seen for decades, says Sue Chester.



The 2014 World Cup Brazil and the 2016 Rio Olympics have galvanised speculators in a gold rush on neglected Rio property, abandoned during what locals – known as Cariocas – call the “lost decades”. When the capital was shifted to Brasilia in 1960, Rio’s economy gradually declined. Then, in the 1980s, the São Paulo stock exchange overtook Rio’s; the former became Brazil’s financial hub while the latter experienced a mass exodus of companies, and the last nail in the coffin was set. The Marvellous City’s halo slipped further as drug barons moved into the slums, causing violence to spill over into the city streets and “lost bullets” to threaten middle-class living rooms and hotel bedrooms.

However, the tropical forest, lagoons, beaches and aquamarine sea laid out against a unique mountain silhouette lost not an ounce of their allure. Add Brazilian va-va-voom, and you’ve got a heady mix of Latin cool that now equals unrivalled high-end real-estate glamour.

Frederico Judice Araujo, a partner in Judice & Araujo Imóveis, a Christie’s real-estate affiliate in Rio, says, “Since 2007, when the World Cup was awarded to Brazil, followed by the Olympics in 2009, property values have increased by 100 to 150 per cent, depending on the area.” Judice Araujo believes the perfect storm has swept