

Belle Epoque style enters the 21 century

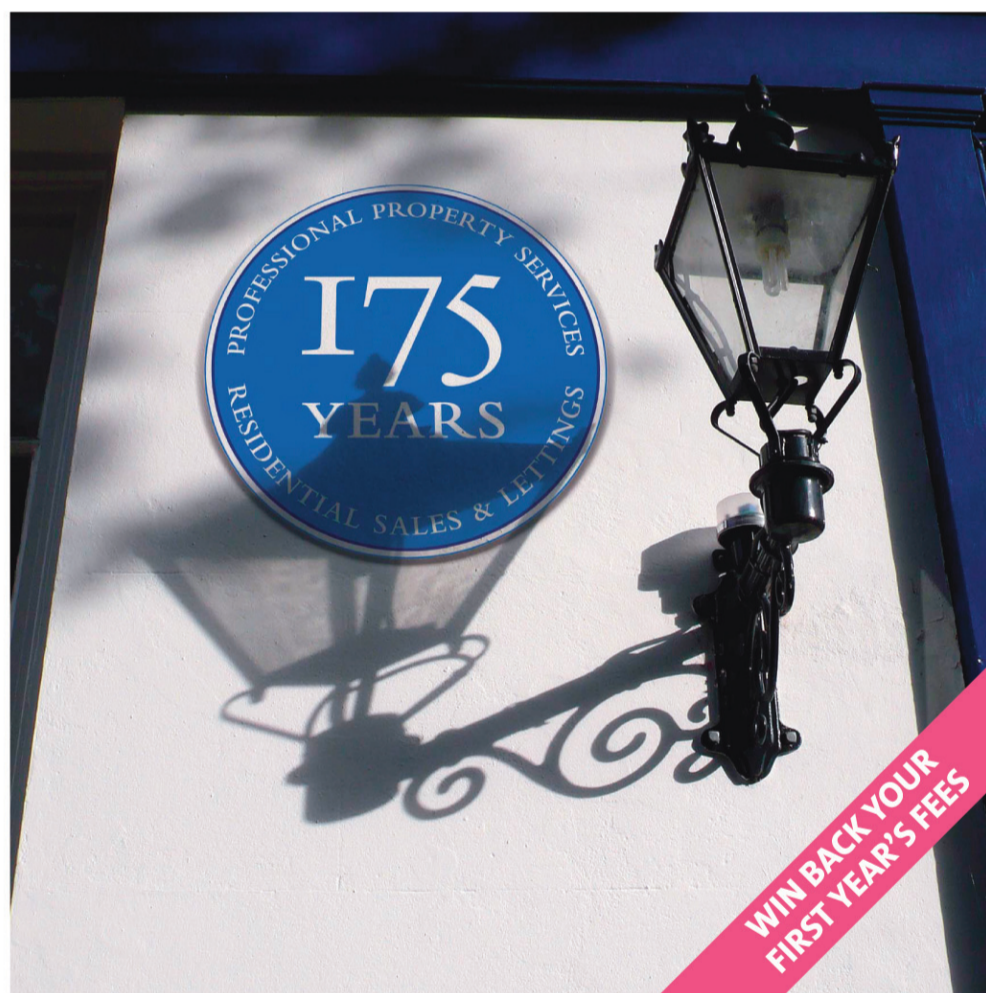
A stunning new Swiss development should appeal to those looking at relocating overseas, discovers **Judith Baker**

AT the turn of the last century a visit to the imposing Mont Pelerin Palace in the Swiss Alps was a favourite pastime among wealthy travellers. They arrived by train to the

quiet commune of Chardonne before ascending by funicular to the elegant hotel, enjoying the famous local Chareennes wine and mingling with New York socialites, Russian aristocrats and the

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likes of author Victor Hugo and the composer Tchaikovsky. More recently, Pierre Cardin was among the guests.

Now present day lovers of the high life are expected to recreate those glamorous times. The former L'Hôtel du Parc, Le Mont-Pèlerin, in the canton of Vaud, has been purchased by Swiss Development Group and is being converted into 24 luxury private hotel-residences. SDG wants to restore the building to its former Belle Epoque glory and claims it is the first branded hotel-residence to go on sale in Switzerland.

So will the first branded hotel-residence to go on sale in Switzerland recreate an opulent Belle Époque lifestyle for its residents? Well, the funicular is still there as is the clean air and breathtaking views over the UNESCO protected vineyards of the Lavaux and the shores of Lake Geneva. The property itself is to be renamed Du Parc-Kempinski Private Residences and will feature lifestyle facilities including five star hotel services provided by Le Mirador Kempinski Mont-Pèlerin and international concierge services from Quintessentially. Davidoff will be involved in creating the cigar lounge, and the 670 sq m spa will be Givenchy-branded. Other strategic partners include architect and interior design firms BBG-BBGM, and landscape architect EDSA.

Planning permission has been applied for the development of 12 smaller apartments to accommodate visitors or staff. SDG claims the development, which has 24 apartments, will offer a standard of living never before seen in Switzerland. Described as "beyond luxury" the apartments range from £3 to £11m. Each residence will be equipped with cutting-edge appliances, technology and sumptuous furnishings provided by The Luxury Living group, which produces and distributes Fendi Casa and Kenzo Maison's home collections.

The majority of future residents are expected to be wealthy Swiss nationals looking for a main or second property and EU citizens wishing to live in

Switzerland. Nick Barnes of Knight Frank, which is marketing the properties, said that Switzerland's affluent economy and tax advantages make it attractive to foreigners. The Lex Koller rule, which restricts the purchase of Swiss property by non-residents, is still in place but is due to change shortly, which should make it easier for foreign buyers to get a foot on the Swiss property ladder. James Price, head of international residential development at Knight Frank, says: "There is a sense that new tax rates for higher income earners in the UK may affect top end London property and we expect to see properties in locations such as Switzerland attracting high level of interest" - the Swiss housing market is grounded in the stability of the country's economic and political systems with the Swiss franc recognised worldwide as one of the most reliable currencies.

Du Parc Kempinski Private Residences is located in the hills above Vevey, an iconic lake-side town. The opulence of the development sits happily beside the old world Swiss charm of the surrounding area, with its traditional vineyards, cows with bells and the picturesque old towns filled with quaint chocolatiers and pretty shops.

Despite its remote quality, the development is an hour's from Geneva International Airport, or 30 minutes from the private airports of Lausanne Blecherette and Bex; Zurich Airport is three hours away. From the site easy access to main motorways allows skiers to reach the mountain resorts of Verbier, Gstaad, and Zermatt within an hour, door to door.

Swiss Development Group was created in 2007 to invest in and develop high luxury landmark real estate projects. The investment for the redevelopment of Du Parc is currently valued at CHF 120m excluding the CHF 18m purchase price for the property. Funding comes from private and institutional investors including local Swiss banks.

www.sdg.ch, www.du-parc.ch