



The Crimea was annexed to Russia in 1783 by Prince Potemkin for Catherine the Great. But it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that

*the Russian Riviera came into being,*

when Alexander II brought his family here. The frequent presence of the Imperial Family at Livadia made Yalta a fashionable place to be, and development soon followed. Alexander III's acquisition and development of the vineyards at Massandra

and Ai-Danil, and his purchase of the Massandra Palace as a second residence, further accelerated the growth of the peninsula. By the beginning of the twentieth century the palaces and parks of the Imperial Family lined the coast. Not all of the residents had blue blood; Anton Chekhov moved here for his health; the house he built is now a museum.

Our favourite palatial residence is the Alupka Palace of Count MS Vorontsov. It was built in 1828–1846 to the design of Edward Blore, an English architect whose bold, unusual design blends the starkness of Scottish Baronial on its landward side with Arabian fantasy facing the sea. The immense park around the palace similarly mixes the English romantic style with Eastern exoticism.