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# RICH IN HISTORY

A Toronto man sold his house 30 years ago and bought a century-old, 18-room railway hotel in Barbados. Today, it's one of the world's highest-ranking beachfront resorts and private residences in the Caribbean

Story | Leslie Yip



大家或許都取笑過天氣報告的準確性，可是今年的預測似乎非常準，打從十月開始已經持續寒冷。因此我格外珍惜現狀：頂頭是和熙的陽光、腳下是微溫的粉紅細沙、手上拿著醉人的林酒賓治、還有輕拂過臉上的一抹加勒比海風。

我正身處巴巴多斯(Barbados)的Crane Beach。USA Today日報把它捧為「加勒比最佳沙灘」，BBC稱之為「死前50個必到地方」之一，它更在CNN的「全球百大沙灘」中排名23。而我則完全沉醉在這裡的美與歷史，原來250年前，這裡是女士專用的沙灘。

18世紀時，女性不可隨便在公眾地方游泳，但到了1769年，到沙灘游泳成為熱潮，於是有人在懸崖邊修築階梯通往海邊，開闢隱密的沙灘。那些梯級現時仍然可見。

## 加勒比最古老酒店

屹立在懸崖上的莊園Marine Villa就在那個時候興建。

This is a much-needed escape from the cold.

We may like to mock the general inaccuracy of our weather forecasts, but they seem to have nailed it this year—the cold has been unrelenting since October—which is why I am extra appreciative of the sun warming up my bones, my toes sinking into warm, pink powder sand, a rum punch in my hand and a Caribbean breeze in my face.

I am at Crane Beach in Barbados—touted as the Best Caribbean Beach by USA Today, Top 50 Places to Go Before You Die by the BBC and No. 23 in Top 100 Beaches of the World by CNN—and I am basking in its beauty and history. Who knew this used to be a ladies-only beach more than two centuries ago?

It was considered improper for ladies to be seen bathing in public in the 18th century, but sea bathing had become so popular by 1769 that a discreet bathing place was constructed here by cutting steps into the sea cliff. The stairs can still be seen today.

Crane Beach has been named one of the world's top beaches by many destination guides. The six-kilometre beach is famous for its clear turquoise waters, fine pink coral sand and dramatic 80-foot cliffs that surround it. A glass-front elevator takes guests from the resort to the beach.

Crane Beach 曾被多本旅遊刊物評為「全球最佳沙灘」之一。沙灘全長6公里，清澈混綠的海水、幼細的粉紅珊瑚沙及80呎高的巨型懸崖都是沙灘的特色。酒店住客可乘坐玻璃電梯直達沙灘。

Crane Beach has been named one of the world's top beaches by many destination guides. The six-kilometre beach is famous for its clear turquoise waters, fine pink coral sand and dramatic 80-foot cliffs that surround it. A glass-front elevator takes guests from the resort to the beach.



坐落於蜿蜒起伏的大西洋海岸，豪華度假酒店讓你沉醉於島上的文化與歷史。  
Nestled along the rugged Atlantic coast of Barbados is a luxurious resort that celebrates the history and culture of the island.

後來，當地建造了鐵路貫穿東岸及巴巴多斯首都Bridgetown，工程師Donald Simpson遂於1886年把莊園擴建並改建成酒店。清涼的海風、溫和的氣候及能夠在海中暢泳，令酒店成為當時上流社會的避世天堂。鐵路過了44年便停駛，但沙灘仍在，30年前，一名多倫多男子Paul Doyle把房屋賣掉，跑到巴巴多斯東部購下這幢有百年歷史、擁有18個房間的鐵道酒店。時至今日，酒店已成為全球其中一間排名最高的海灘度假酒店及私人住所，據說是加勒比仍然營運的酒店中最古老的一間。

Doyle細說他如何成為酒店大亨。「我以一個十分好的價錢購入酒店。那時是1988年，我正從事保險業。當我對銀行顧問表示正計劃前往巴巴多斯定居，他便說當地有一間海邊酒店正在出售。雖說是酒店，其實只是建於40公頃草地上的一家老房子，但我對它一見鍾情，於是便賣了多倫多的房子，以低價買入酒店。」

昔日的老房子搖身一變成為今日的度假酒店。酒店儼如一個典型的巴巴多斯村落，裡面有雜貨店、咖啡室、酒吧、5間餐廳及林立的商舖。宴會廳及會議廳更同時是市政廳。7座獨立莊園環繞中央村莊而建，提供252間套房，外圍是私人住宅。這樣的一家酒店市值至少數千萬。你可能會想，他口中的「好價」究竟是多少錢？好奇心驅使，趁著當晚跟Doyle在酒店內的Zen Restaurant品嘗壽司（餐廳被Zagat評為「巴巴多斯最佳壽司店」），我冒昧地向他問了這個問題。



建於18世紀的Marine Villa至今仍然營業。住客看到的景致跟250年前無異。  
The original 18th-century Marine Villa is still in operation. Guests can enjoy the same view as 250 years ago.

## THE OLDEST OPERATING HOTEL IN THE CARIBBEAN

Perched atop the cliff is the Marine Villa, a mansion built around the same time. It was enlarged and converted into a hotel by civil engineer Donald Simpson in 1886, when a railway ran along the eastern coast to Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. It became a favourite hideaway for some of the world's elite, who were attracted by the cool sea breeze, the temperate climate and the regenerative benefits of sea bathing.

The railroad ran for only 44 years and has since retired, but The Crane still stands—it is reportedly the oldest continuously operating resort in the Caribbean—and it is now owned by Paul Doyle, a fellow Canadian.

### 'I BOUGHT IT FOR A VERY GOOD PRICE'

"It was in 1988, and I was working in the insurance sector," says Doyle, recounting the story of how he became a hotelier. "When I told my banker that I was going to Barbados, he told me about this little seaside hotel that was up for sale. It was just an old house sitting on 40 acres of undeveloped grassland, but I fell in love with it; so I sold my Toronto home and bought it for a very good price."

Nowadays, the resort is a lot more than one old house. In fact, it resembles a typical Barbadian village. There is a general store, a cafe, a bar, five restaurants and a handful of shops. There is even a town hall, where the ballroom and conference centre are located.

A total of 252 suites are housed in seven separate "mansions" clustered around the central village, and more private residences surround the village. It must be worth tens of millions of dollars.



Crane是鶴的英文名稱，外型優雅，酒店內到處可見其雕塑。不過酒店名字是以位於懸崖上的起重機(英文名同為Crane)來命名，18世紀時，人們就是利用起重機從貨船起卸貨物。

Sculptures of the elegant crane bird can be found throughout the resort, but the name actually comes from a mechanical crane situated at the top of the cliff, which was used for raising and lowering cargo from ships sailing into the natural harbour in the 18th century.

Doyle答道：「\$260萬。那時多倫多的房子賣了60萬，餘額便向銀行貸款。」因為資金不多，要把只有18間客房的酒店改建成頂級度假酒店，他必須要絞盡腦汁。

「一個早上，一位客人跟我說他希望每年都可以回來Crane度假，於是我建議他購買部分時間擁有權。因為是私人出售，不牽涉昂貴的市場推廣費用，我提出的價格是市價的一半。他即時買了4星期，下午又帶了另一對夫婦來買了4星期。」之後的發展大家都猜得到。

解決了資金的問題，下一個挑戰是如何付諸實行。Doyle曾考慮走中價路線擴大客路，不過他的客人卻希望把酒店打造成寧謐的度假地點，而不是像巴巴多斯南部的派對城市。於是，他決心打造一個「最美好的地方」，同時保留當地的歷史傳統。

為了呈現當地特色，他走遍全島拍照，以鏡頭紀錄一些具代表性的歷史建築並嘗試在酒店村莊內複製。他堅持採用優質物料，雖然成本高，他卻認為合理：「以淋浴間為例，設計師想用每扇\$1,000的加厚玻璃門。聽起來很貴，但以客人在酒店住一星期來計算，那道門的成本是五十分之一，即少於\$20，過了頭一年之後，成本基本上是零。我就是抱著這個理念來設計，令每一間客房都極盡奢華。」



來自多倫多的Paul Doyle跟我們分享了如何在30年間，把Crane由只有18間客房的酒店改建成AAA四鑽評級的豪華度假酒店。

Originally from Toronto, Paul Doyle shares his story on how he transformed The Crane from an 18-room hotel into a world-class AAA four-diamond luxury resort in 30 years.



酒店內的Zen Restaurant主打亞洲美食，它被Zagat評為「巴巴多斯最佳食府」第一位。酒店亦有意大利餐廳、提供當地美食的沙灘小屋、海濱餐廳以及由18世紀馬車屋改建而成的池畔餐廳。

The resort's Asian-themed Zen Restaurant is rated the No. 1 dining experience in Barbados by Zagat. There is also an elegant Italian restaurant, a Bajan beach shack, a sea-front restaurant and a pool-side eatery that is actually a converted 18th-century carriage house.

One must wonder: how much did he mean when he said “a very good price”? I know it is rude to ask, but my curiosity got the better of me, so over sushi dinner at the resort's Zen Restaurant (rated No. 1 in Barbados by Zagat), I popped the question.

“It was \$2.6 million then,” he tells me. “I covered the first \$600,000 by selling my house in Toronto; the bank loaned me the balance.”

Because he did not come in with a lot of money, he needed ingenuity to get some funds to transform the single 18-room hotel into a world-class resort.

“One morning, a guest came to me saying that he would love to return to The Crane every year. So I suggested he take a fractional ownership. Since it was an owner-to-guest direct sale, there was no expensive marketing overhead; so I was able to offer it to him at half of what would be the market price. He bought four weeks on the spot, and later that afternoon, he brought another couple, who bought another four weeks.”

The rest is history.

Armed with money to expand, the next challenge was to decide how. Doyle considered going mid-market for the biggest appeal, but his guests told him they wanted the property to be a peaceful getaway, not another party town like south Barbados. So, he revised his design criteria and set his mind to create “the nicest place it can be”, all the while respecting the history of the place and Barbados itself.

To ensure authenticity, he went around the island and took photos of iconic historic buildings and tried to replicate them in the village. Quality mattered, and he found a way to justify the extra expenditures. “Take the walk-in shower doors,” says Doyle. “My designers wanted to use this extra thick glass, which costs \$1,000 per door. It may seem expensive, but for a guest who will be staying here for a week, it works out to be less than 1/50th of the price in the first year for that stay, so less than \$20, and then it will practically be free starting the next year. Keeping this mentality in mind, I have been able to design every guest suite with the utmost luxury.”

## 珊瑚到處可見

客房的設計靈感來自原來的古老酒店，包括高樓底、間隔寬敞、四柱式大床、托盤形天花、黑色古董傢私及招牌的珊瑚石牆。

珊瑚在巴巴多斯的地位舉足輕重，離岸約4公里的珊瑚礁，據說是加勒比海最健康的珊瑚礁。它為成千上萬、色彩繽紛的熱帶魚提供棲息之所，同時吸引了來自世界各地的潛水愛好者。

島嶼基本上建立於珊瑚之上。有別於其他加勒比海島嶼，巴巴多斯並非由火山活動形成，而是由珊瑚形成，島上85%的面積被24至30米厚的珊瑚岩石覆蓋。珊瑚能潔淨地下水，讓島民扭開水龍頭便有純淨的天然泉水可用。它同時是傳統的建築材料，在Marine Villa，可看到17世紀和18世紀珊瑚石牆並列的有趣情景：前者粗獷地堆砌出來，後者則砌成整齊方塊，井井有條。為了向傳統致敬，酒店差不多每一間套房都可找到珊瑚石牆。

## 巴巴多斯東部一百分百小島風情

酒店位處的東岸讓你體驗巴巴多斯傳統的一面。有別於夜夜笙歌的南岸及浮誇的西岸，大西洋海岸這一帶是滿滿的文化及傳統氣息。事實上，早於殖民地時期，東岸島嶼是最先發展旅遊業的地區，這裡溫和的氣候吸引了當時的歐洲貴族。

## A CORAL PARADISE

Many of the elements in the guest rooms are inspired by the original historic hotel, including the high ceiling, a spacious layout, the four-poster bed, the “timber-tray” ceilings, dark antique reproduction furniture pieces and the signature coral stone walls.

The coral is significant to Barbados because its barrier reefs, located approximately four kilometres from shore, are said to be one of the healthiest in the Caribbean. They provide the habitat for thousands of multi-coloured tropical fish, attracting divers from all over the world.

Moreover, the coral is literally the foundation of the island—Barbados is not volcanic like most other Caribbean islands, but of coral origin. Eighty-five per cent of the island’s surface consists of coralline limestone, 24 to 30 metres thick. It purifies the groundwater so islanders have access to clean, natural spring water straight out of their taps.

It is also a traditional building material. In the Marine Villa, you can find an interesting juxtaposition of the original 17th-century stacked rubble coral walls to the neatly hewn blocks of the 18th century. To pay homage to this tradition, you can find a coral stone wall in almost every suite at The Crane.

[thecrane.com](http://thecrane.com)

寬敞的客房保留了很多原來Marine Villa的設計元素。所以地下層的套房行出露台就是泳池，而高層套房則可享用私人樓頂平台及泳池。

Many elements of the spacious guest suites pay homage to the original Marine Villa. All ground-floor suites have swim-out pools, while top-floor units have a private rooftop patio and pool.





Bethesda沙灘提供世界級的滑浪體驗。  
World-class surfing at Bethesda Beach.



當地98%的海岸線都屬國家公園範圍，可盡情欣賞海岸線美景。想返璞歸真，寧逸的Bath Beach最適合野餐，而Bethesda beach蔚為奇觀的岩石地貌，則是攝影愛好者的天堂。景色有點像紐賓士域省的「花瓶島」，但岩石數目更多。沙灘更是世界知名的滑浪勝地，有「湯碗」的綽號。

如果恰巧在星期三或星期日到訪，不要錯過Atlantis Historic Inn的自助餐。酒店位於Tent Bay一個小小的漁港，跟Crane一樣在1800年代是一間鐵路酒店。自助餐提供一系列巴巴多斯及加勒比美食如炸南瓜條、魚餅、原隻烤豬、烤魚、咖哩羊及當地甜品包括椰子麵包及麵包牛油布丁等。當中我最喜歡爇肉及香椒雜燴pepperpot。

## EAST BARBADOS—A TRUE ISLAND EXPERIENCE

The east coast location of the resort serves as a perfect springboard to explore a more authentic side of Barbados. Unlike the intensively developed party town in the south and the glitzy “platinum” west, the Atlantic coast is culturally rich and authentic. In fact, this is where the island’s tourism industry began in the colonial era, when Europe’s elite came to enjoy the fine weather.

Ninety-eight per cent of the coastline is designated as a national park, and this is where you can enjoy the seascape in all its glory. The peaceful Bath Beach is an idyllic setting for a picnic, while the picturesque Bethesda Beach is a must for budding photographers—numerous breathtaking rock formations line miles of untouched, windswept coastline. They are similar to the “Flower Pot” we have in New Brunswick, but more numerous in number. Nicknamed the “Soup Bowl”, the beach is world famous for its surfing conditions.

If you are visiting on a Wednesday or a Sunday, be sure to check out the famous buffet at the Atlantis Historic Inn in the quaint fishing village of Tent Bay. Dating from the 1800s, it was once a railway hotel like The Crane. The buffet includes an array of Bajan and Caribbean appetizers, like pumpkin fritters and fish cakes, whole roasted pig, grilled fish and Madras curry goat; local desserts include coconut bread and bread-and-butter pudding. My favourite was the “Pepperpot”, a savoury medley of braised meats with aromatic peppers.

[atlantishotelbarbados.com](http://atlantishotelbarbados.com)



鍋爐室、釀酒廠、四周的園林及果園都是St. Nicholas莊園的參觀重點。不要錯過在小教堂放映的短片，由莊園主人的父親親自製作，介紹1930年代島上的生活點滴。

A visit to St. Nicholas Abbey includes the boiling house, the distillery, the surrounding gardens and the orchards. Don't miss the film viewing at the property's chapel, made by the owner's father. It provides a fascinating glimpse of island life in the 1930s.



St. Nicholas莊園內這張大班椅於1936年製造，備有可調校書桌、書架、閱讀照明、靠背及腳凳，是無比方便的神級設計。

The 1936 Gentleman's Chair at St. Nicholas Abbey. It has built-in adjustable tables, a book holder, a reading lamp and a footrest. Every creature-comfort is at your fingertips.

飯後可順道參觀已有350年歷史的St. Nicholas莊園，屬詹姆士一世時期興建的莊園，同類型建築在西半球只剩下三間，它是其中之一。莊園保留很多有趣的舊物供參觀。之後，可前往釀酒廠了解釀酒的製作過程，並試飲一些特別的陳年釀酒。小朋友可於花園及香料園玩耍，以及教鸚鵡Lance講「hello」。

臨離開前別忘了到Morgan Lewis磨坊欣賞無敵海景。想體驗小島風情，同時投入於大自然及歷史當中，這裡絕對是不二之選。

查詢更多巴巴多斯的旅遊資訊，可瀏覽網址 [visitbarbados.com](http://visitbarbados.com)。

St. Nicholas Abbey makes for a wonderful after-lunch visit. Built 350 years ago, it is a historic plantation house, one of only three remaining Jacobean mansions in the Western Hemisphere. Besides looking at the well-preserved artifacts inside the house, you can also learn about rum production at the distillery and, of course, taste some special-aged rum. The little ones will enjoy the flower and herb garden, and trying to make Lance the parrot say, "Hello".

[stnicholasabbey.com](http://stnicholasabbey.com)

Before you leave, pause at the Morgan Lewis sugar mill for a panoramic view of the wild sea coast. If you are dreaming of an island escape that lets you connect to nature and history, this is the right place for you.

For more info, go to [visitbarbados.com](http://visitbarbados.com). 📍