

海上乌托邦

Isle Dream About It

金庸笔下“桃花岛主黄药师”曾经只是小说里的人物，令人羡慕，却遥不可及，但在现今这个几乎每一寸土地都难逃开发的世界里，拥有一个暂时得以遁世的私人岛屿，并非天方夜谭。

每个人都有属于自己的“岛主梦”，如果真的有这样一个自由自在的所在，不同的人会有不同的建构方式，完全迥异于现实中千篇一律的人生。

成为岛主，因此不仅仅是一种财富的象征，更为了远离尘嚣，过上一种个人化的生活，进而与岛屿发生某种情感上的联系，实现自己理想中的桃花源、乌托邦。

In Louis Cha's Condor trilogy of novels, the fearsome swordsman Huang Yaoshi is the envy of the pugilistic world for being lord of Peach Blossom Island. This only goes to show that no man is an island, but everyone would love to own one.

Island ownership might have been an impossible and even unnecessary prospect in the past, but in today's world, where almost every stretch of inhabitable land has been visited by a bulldozer, the idea of presiding over your own plot of land that can never be resized for city development or have a highway built past your gate that you did not sign off on, can feed the mildest of Robinson Crusoe fantasies.

How liberating it must feel to have every say in its destiny? How interesting it would be to see how each person's island would turn out if we were all given a Peach Blossom Island to develop as we will?

TEXT 胡文雁 & LIM HUI SIN PHOTO ARIARA





长长的码头从洁白美丽的沙滩延伸至大海。

苏禄海上的翡翠

Green With Envy

英国籍夫妇查尔斯和卡丽买下菲律宾四座岛屿，除了把它们当做度假天堂，也视为未来回报高的投资。

TEXT 黄少伟 & LIM HUI SIN

舒服地躺在豪华帆船的甲板沙发，一边享受海风拂面的惬意，一边欣赏沿途景观，不知不觉过了大约4个小时，Ariara岛终于在眼前徐徐出现——犹如海面上的一块翡翠，海滩洁白如雪，一座长长的码头从沙滩延伸至大海，大伙儿从这里上了岸。

菲律宾有7000多座岛屿，隐藏在巴拉望省内的Ariara就好像是苏禄海（Sulu Sea）中的一块宝藏，没熟人带领的话，还真不好找。不知道英国籍岛主夫妇查尔斯和卡丽（Charles和Carrie McCulloch）当初是如何选中Ariara的。

一见钟情

查尔斯接受访问时说，这一切都是机缘巧合。“我当时乘坐飞机经过这片海域，从空中俯瞰，蔚蓝海水平清澈无比，大大小小的碧绿色岛屿星罗棋布，眼前美景让我赞叹不已，激起我想拥有一座岛的冲动。”



悬挂在用餐大厅的吊灯，散发出浓浓海岛风情。

心动不如行动，查尔斯决定亲自到巴拉望省视察。他租了一艘游艇，花了两个星期和一名熟悉当地海域的专家一起勘察了大约15座岛屿，最终决定买下Ariara和附近另外三座小岛。这是查尔斯在亚洲的第一项房地产投资。

查尔斯的背景相当特别——农业系毕业，在英国经营家族农场长达18年，然而他却对房地产

投资相当感兴趣，44岁那年进军房地产，已在英国完成至少10个房地产项目。他说：“我喜爱大自然，一直很想创造并拥有自己的私人岛屿天堂，完全不受任何人干扰。拥有私人岛屿是一种身份的象征，海岛作为一种，也一定会随着时间增值。”

Ariara面积50多公顷，是四个岛中的最大岛。岛主在岛上建造了一个豪华私人度假村，最多能接待17名游客。游客除了可以乘坐豪华帆船，也可以选择搭乘快艇或直升机更快地抵达Ariara。

度假村内有8栋宽敞的别墅，包括两栋丛林别墅、四栋沙滩别墅、一栋山庄套房和一朵北沙滩别墅，都配有私家阳台、花园和吊床。度假村由一支30人的团队管理，游客可以随心所欲，随时享用度假村的各种设施，包括风帆、潜水、划水、按摩，应有尽有。喜欢探险的人甚至还可

以坐小船到邻近的小岛探索。

卡丽受访时说：“我不喜欢酒店，觉得它们毫无生气，没有灵魂。我们一家人曾经住过非洲的度假屋，觉得业主成功地把家的感觉营造出来，一切都那么随性，非常舒服。我们想把那种氛围带到Ariara。

“我们提供的不是一般酒店或者度假村的服务。我们让游客享有私人岛上的隐私，他们可以根据自己的步调做事，选择要吃什么，要喝什么，音乐要开多大声等。我们的员工会满足他们所有的需求，”查尔斯喝着手中的鸡尾酒侃侃而谈。“新加坡、香港和中国很靠近Ariara，我想会有很多人被我们的私人岛概念所吸引，特地前来游玩。”

漫长的开发

为了建造心仪的人间乐土，查尔斯夫妇可说是煞费心思，从2005年启动发展计划至2011年正式开门营业，整个过程耗时6年。

“除了必须向20多个不同政府机构提出申请，另一个大问题便是当地建筑材料的品质。”查尔斯解释：“例如当地的水泥质量很差，我必须购买水泥机自己制作水泥。我还特地训练了一批员工专门为度假村制作家具、门窗等，几乎所有东西都是在岛上制造的，这是保持品质的唯一方法。”

负责室内装潢的卡丽把记者带到一栋别墅介绍：“我们尽量使用当地建材和工匠来帮助我们建造度假村。例如所有的窗帘、椅套都由当地妇女亲手制作；橱柜和家具也是我们的木工在接受训练后，精心设计出来的。”

查尔斯夫妇的运作方式让当地居民学会了一技之长，也为当地经济作出了一定的贡献。查尔斯说：“当地市长希望通过旅游业提供就业

机会。我们的计划假如对当地人无益，便不能进行下去。在这里，我们是外国人，能协助他们发展，缩小彼此的距离，我觉得是一件好事。”

卡丽补充：“我们给当地人新的技能和新的未来。捕鱼是短暂的，一旦没有鱼就无法讨生活；旅游业则能提供长期工作。能回馈当地让我感到比较舒服，我觉得我为他们做了一些事，这刚好把钱直接交给当地政府。”

Ariara的经营除了讲究品质也注重环保。工人在施工时尽量减少树木砍伐，度假村也设有污水处理系统，过滤后的污水可安全排放进泥土，所有塑料废物也都运到本岛处理。查尔斯还向当地政府申请把Ariara周围80多公顷的海域划为海洋自然保护区，禁止在区内捕鱼及破坏珊瑚礁，让这片保护区成为小鱼儿的繁殖地。

虽然花了许多心血把Ariara建立起来，查尔斯认为只要价钱合理，他还是愿意出售爱岛。他望向远处的小岛笑说：“父亲曾经跟我说，每样东西都有一个价钱。假如有人出的价钱合理，这是一件好事，因为能赚到利润总不会错，哈哈！”他透露Ariara目前大约值1200万美元，他并愿意利用自己的员工、技术和经验帮助其他人发展手上的另外三个小岛。

查尔斯对亚洲的私人岛屿发展前景充满期待：“亚洲人目前还不是很熟悉私人岛的概念，不过随着世界财富往亚洲转移，以及中国和印度崛起，我相信会有更多亚洲人能体会拥有私人岛屿的价值。”

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从泳池可以看到蔚蓝的苏禄海，风光明媚。



Charles and Carrie McCulloch

It took about four hours – which just fly by when all you do is lounge on the deck of a luxury tri-maran and soak in the sun – before the island of Ariara appeared before us. Its verdant green hue glowed like an emerald ringed with diamonds that was its glistening white beach. A dock stretched out into the sea from the beach and this is where we disembarked.

The Philippines is made up of more than 7,000 islands and Ariara is one of its little-known treasures. It is nestled in the Palawan province in the Sulu Sea, in a corner that would be near impossible to find without a guide. Bought over by British couple Charles and Carrie McCulloch a few years ago, we wondered how they even chance upon it.

Love At First Sight

Charles says it was by pure chance. “When I was in a plane flying above the sea, I saw how clear and blue it was, with all the aquamarine islands big and small dotting the sea like stars, and I was really taken in by the beauty – it made me want to own an island!”

Back on land, Charles embarked on the dream mission he conceived in the skies. He rented a yacht and spent two weeks exploring 15 islands in the Palawan archipelago with an expert of the area before deciding on Ariara and another three islands nearby. This was Charles’ first real-estate venture in Asia.

The agriculture graduate made his first foray into real estate investment at age 44, after running his family farm in England for 18 years. He had completed 10 property developments in Britain.

专题故事FEATURE STORY :



Ariara's lodge, the meeting place for its guests.

"I love nature and I've always wanted to build and own my own island paradise, away from it all," he says. "Having a private island is a status symbol; islands are also a very limited resource and will definitely appreciate in value with time."

At 50 hectares, Ariara is the largest of the four islands the McCullochs acquired and can be accessed by luxury tri-maran, speed boat and helicopter. On the island, the couple built a private luxury resort comprising eight airy villas and suites for up to 17 guests. Each villa is like a self-contained home complete with its own private terrace, garden and hammock.

Once you book the island, it's all yours for the length of your stay – no guessing who the stranger is at the next table at breakfast. This means rates, which start from US\$295 (S\$372) per person per night for a group of 17, go up if you bring fewer guests – but to many, that is a small price to pay for feeling like

Robinson Crusoe on his own island paradise. With no timetables, guests eat, sleep and unwind as they choose, aided by a team of 30 staff who will take meal requests, order dive boats, arrange a massage or fix a bulb – whenever they are needed.

Sitting in the lodge of the resort during our interview, Carrie says: "I find hotels sterile and soulless. I don't want to sign for things, have fixed meals, limit my activities based on other people's agenda. We once stayed in a lodge in the Zambian side of Victoria Falls and felt that the owner really succeeded in creating the feeling of home – everything was so relaxed and comfortable. We wanted to bring this atmosphere to Ariara."

"What we are providing is not the usual hotel or holiday resort service," adds Charles, with cocktail in hand. "We let our guests enjoy the privacy of being on a private island; they can do things at their own pace – choose what to eat, what to drink, how loud the music should be."

Going Local

To create their paradise on earth, the McCullochs spared no effort. From when the development plan was first drawn up in 2005 to opening officially for business last year, six years were poured into the project.

"Besides submitting applications to more than 20 different government organisations, the other big problem was the quality of the local construction material," Charles explains. "For example, the local cement was of very poor quality and I had to buy a cement mixer to make my own cement. I also had to train a group of workers to make the furniture, doorways, windows, etc. Almost everything was made on the island; this was the only way we could maintain quality standards."

Carrie, who took charge of the interior décor, brought us to one of the villas for a show and tell. "We tried as much as possible to use local materials and craftsmen to build the resort," she says. "For instance, all the curtains and upholstery were handmade by the local women; the cupboards and furniture were also designed by our carpenters after training."

The McCullochs have made it work in a way that enabled the local residents to learn a skill. Says Charles: "The mayor hoped to create employment through tourism; if our plan did not benefit the local community, it would not have been able to continue. We are foreigners here, so it's a good thing to be able to help them develop and close the gap between them and us."

Carrie feels this would benefit the local economy in the long-term. "We brought a new skill set and a new future to the locals. Fishing is short-term; once the fish runs out, you can't carry on; tourism can provide long-term work. To be able to give back to the local community makes me more comfortable, I feel like I have done something for them, this is better than giving the money directly to the local government."

While quality is key at Ariara, sustainability is just as important. During construction, workers tried to minimise the chopping down of trees; there is a sewage treatment system in the resort which handles the sewage and filters the resulting fluids before releasing them into the ground; and all plastic waste is transported to the mainland for disposal.

Charles has also put in an application with the local authorities to gazette the 80 hectares of sea around Ariara as a marine reserve, where fishing and destruction of coral will be banned, so that "the reserve can be turned into a breeding ground for little fishes".

Despite all the time, effort, and money he has poured into building up Ariara, Charles feels he could part with it for the right price. Looking out across to another island in the horizon, he says, laughing: "My father once told me everything should always be for sale. If someone offers the right price, it is good because it is never wrong to take a profit."

He estimates that Ariara is currently worth about US\$12 million and would not reveal how much was paid for the island or its development.

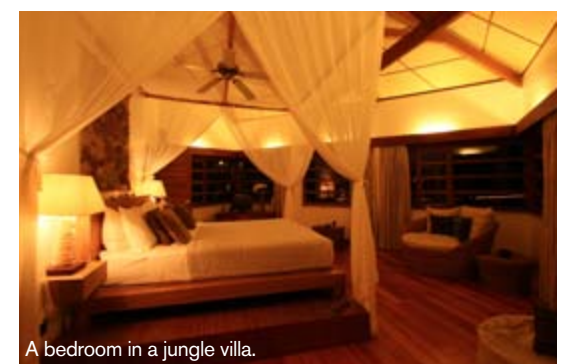
As he nurtures the thought of channelling his workers, skills and experience into developing the other three islands in his portfolio, Charles feels optimistic that private islands will catch on in Asia, starting with visitorship, then ownership.

"Singapore, Hong Kong and China are all very near to Ariara and I think that many people will be attracted by our private island concept and come specially for a visit," he says. "Asians are not very familiar with the concept of private islands yet, but as global wealth all move to Asia and also with the rise of China and India, I believe that more Asians will appreciate the value of owning a private island."

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A bedroom in a jungle villa.