



PIOTR REDLINSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**BETWEEN THE LINES** New York's literary nightlife includes poetry slams, bars for book-lovers and a library-themed hotel. Above, people await a reading at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. TRAVEL, PAGE 1

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### Reinventing Luxury Retail For a New Manhattan

Barneys, an icon of New York's high-end retail scene now owned by a hedge fund manager, is trying to envision the shopping experience of the future. PAGE 30

### Drama on the High Seas

Thom Beers has built an empire on the misadventures of working stiffs with reality shows like Discovery's "Deadliest Catch." PAGE 26

## TRAVEL

### A Ritz in Puerto Rico Ups the Ante

The Ritz-Carlton opened a posh \$342 million hotel on Dorado Beach, hoping to attract high-rollers to a spot that once catered to Old Hollywood stars and Rockefellers. PAGE 1

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Anchovy aficionados flock to the Black Sea between mid-autumn and February for the high season of the prized fish. PAGE 4

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Well-trained health care workers can do some jobs as well or better, and for much less money. SUNDAY REVIEW, PAGE 10

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The United States can make money and help the planet by selling gas to other countries. The export restrictions have become anachronistic. SUNDAY REVIEW, PAGE 10

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**"All of**  
We need to  
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## OP-ED

### Thomas L. Friedman

Will Egyptian demands for democracy, or will Muslim Brotherhood everything? SUNDAY REVIEW

### Maureen Dowd

The bad news: In this abyss, there is no horizon. SUNDAY REVIEW

### Nicholas D. Kristof

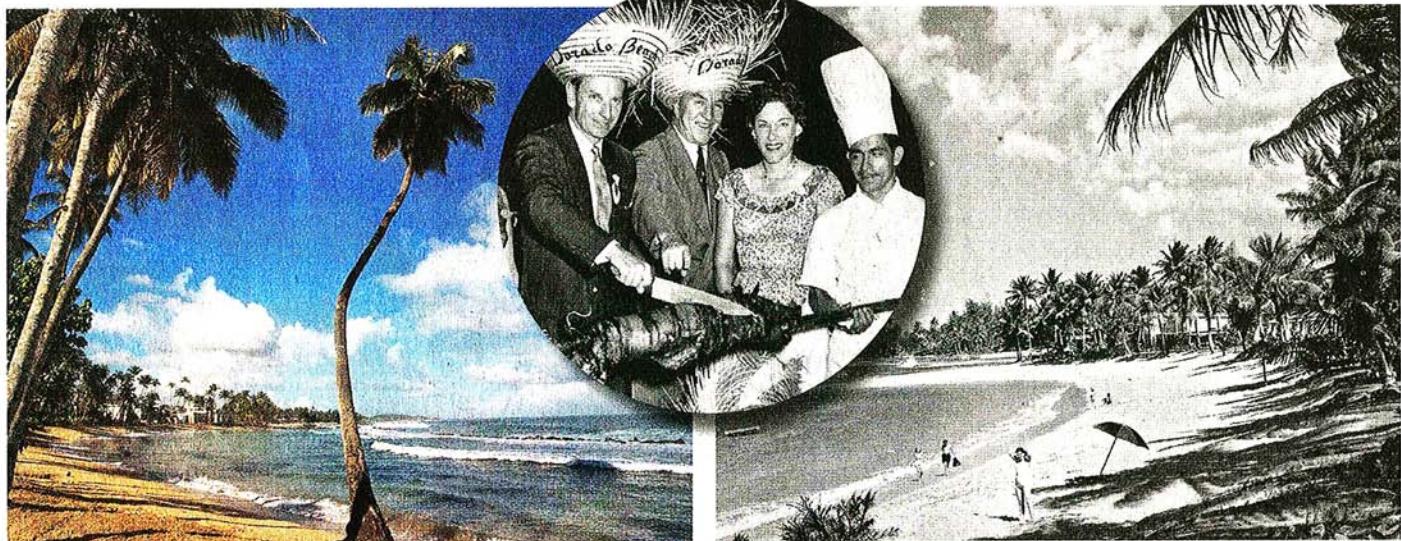
We even regular makers don't have to stand up to the legislation. SUNDAY REVIEW

### Ross Douthat

The illusion of safety can hide a dark people wherever and alone. SUNDAY REVIEW

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## Upping the Ante in Puerto Rico



LAURA MAGRUDER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES (LEFT); THE ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER (MIDDLE AND RIGHT)

FROM LEFT The Dorado Beach Ritz-Carlton Reserve; Laurance S. Rockefeller, with knife, built a hotel there in 1958; the beach in those days.

By BROOKS BARNES

To reach Ritz-Carlton's newest and most opulent resort, you drive through a forest of coconut palms, swamp bloodwoods and flame of the woods flowering shrubs until the road ends at a wall of water. It's a fountain of a sort, and behind its soft gurgle stretches Dorado Beach, a \$342 million hotel built along three miles of toasty Caribbean sand. At the center of the resort, which was set to open Dec. 12, guests will find a labyrinthine infinity pool with a "bubble bed" in its center, a four-bedroom villa that rents for \$30,000 a night and a spa composed of 22 buildings that sprawl across five acres and includes treatment platforms built into treetops.

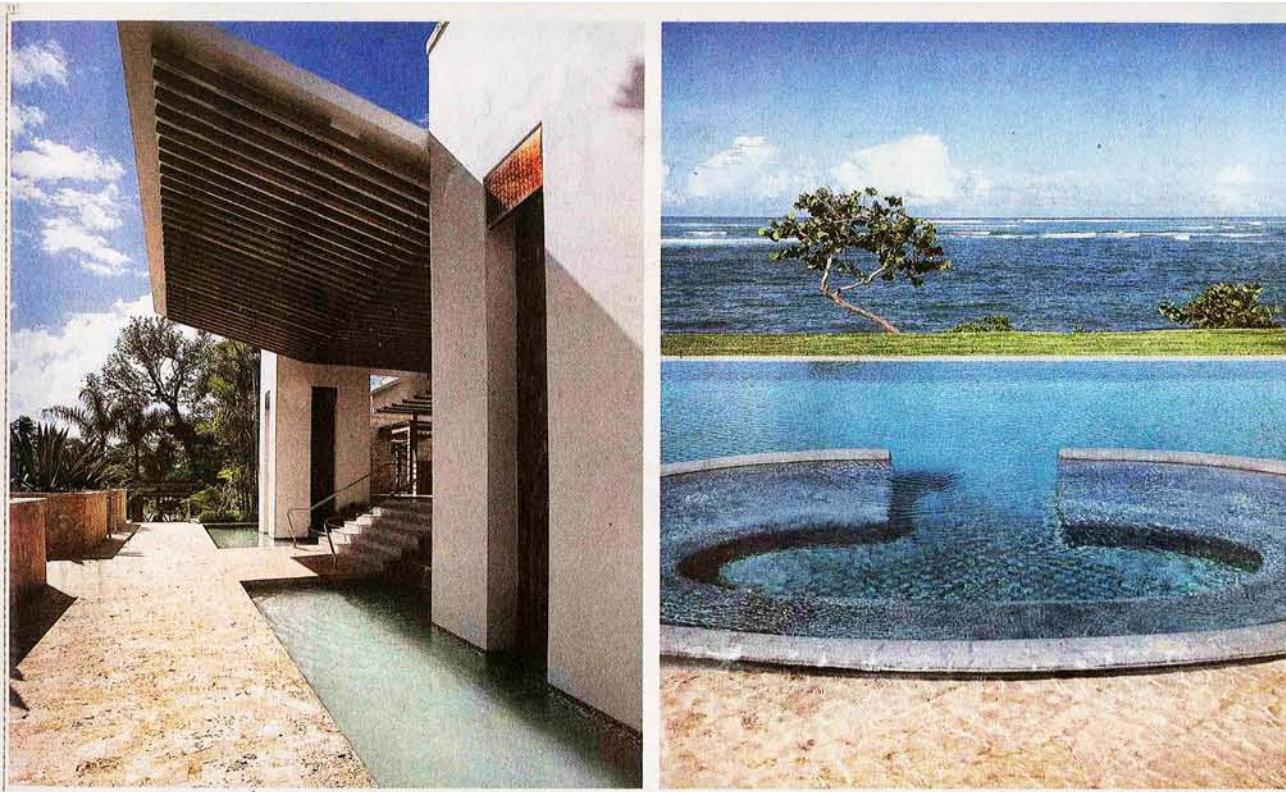
Can these kinds of over-the-top amenities make modern travelers — the status-conscious, ultra-wealthy kind — take a chance on Puerto Rico?

That is the hope. Resorts catering to 1 percenters pepper the Caribbean,

so Ritz-Carlton, which is using Dorado Beach to introduce its new super-high-end Reserve chain to North America, knew it needed a lot of wow to get noticed. But Dorado Beach, despite its luxury and a history featuring Laurance S. Rockefeller, Amelia Earhart and Old Hollywood stars, must also overcome one dominant and indelible fact: It is in a corner of the Caribbean that for decades has been more associated with grit than glamour.

True, the "Island of Enchantment," as Puerto Rican tourism officials market their home, has improved its reputation in recent years, helped by the Navy's decision to end bombing exercises on Vieques and the arrival of a St. Regis resort east of San Juan in 2010. But among the moneyed guests that Dorado Beach hopes to attract — rooms start at \$1,499 a night — Puerto Rico still ranks low on the must-visit list, according to travel agents who specialize in the Caribbean. "We still need to get rid of the 'West Side Story'

*Continued on Page 8*



FROM LEFT An entrance to the Dorado Beach Ritz-Carlton Reserve property in Puerto Rico; pool at Su Casa, once the home of Clara Livingston, who owned a plantation on the property.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURA MAGRUDER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## A Ritz Ups the Ante in Puerto Rico

From Page 1

image." Friedel Stubbe, a Dorado Beach developer, told me bluntly. "It's not nice to say, but it's true."

Ritz-Carlton has some image issues of its own. The chain without question still commands respect among affluent travelers, travel agents say. But some fans worry that Marriott International, which fully took over Ritz-Carlton in 1998, has watered down the brand by opening hotels that are more utilitarian than special, like one in Los Angeles where Ritz-Carlton and Marriott share an unattractive downtown complex. The Reserve brand, designed to be a chain of 20 resorts, is meant to plant Ritz-Carlton's blue flag at the tippy top of the travel market, which is starting to boom again following four years of recession. Dorado Beach joins a Reserve property in Krabi, Thailand, which opened in 2009. Herve Humler, Ritz-Carlton's president and chief operations officer, says Reserve resorts are in the works for Oman, Morocco and Mexico.

To make Dorado Beach a success, Ritz-Carlton is leaning hard on the property's past as a playground for the rich and famous. We're not talking about the recent past, when a Hyatt-owned hotel on the property fell so badly into disrepair that in 2006 it was closed, boarded up and ultimately demolished. Rather, the era Ritz-Carlton is trying to conjure started in 1920s, when Dorado Beach was still a grapefruit and coconut plantation owned by a woman named Clara Livingston.

Ms. Livingston, known for carrying a pistol and doting on her two Great Danes, Simba and Chang-Chang, lived alone on the plantation, running it from Su Casa, a 6,000-square-foot Spanish colonial hacienda overlooking the ocean.

A love of airplanes (she served as a commander of the Puerto Rican branch of the Civil Air Patrol at one point) brought her into contact with Amelia Earhart, who became a friend and stayed at Su Casa days before disappearing over the Pacific Ocean in 1937.

Caribbean Property Group, which owns Dorado Beach with Mr. Stubbe's and brought it in Ritz-Carlton to operate it, spent \$2 million to refurbish Su Casa, now the villa that rents for \$30,000 a night. (Hyatt, if you can imagine, used it as a headquarters for its kids' club.) The house, with its sweeping double



ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER

*Leaning hard on a property's past to lure the well-heeled.*

stairway and clay-tiled roof, is decorated with some of Ms. Livingston's original antiques, which were tracked down in the Long Island garage of a former employee by Eric Christensen, Dorado Beach's chief executive.

In 1958, Ms. Livingston sold her plantation to Laurance S. Rockefeller, who built a midcentury-modern hotel, naming it Dorado Beach. When Cuba became a no-go in the early 1960s and Puerto Rico became the new go-to, Dorado Beach was ready and waiting, attracting stars like Joan Crawford, Elizabeth Taylor and Ava Gardner, who once stayed for a month. (Ms. Crawford demanded that her room be repainted pink; the hotel complied and she sent a thank-you note after returning to Hollywood, gushing about "the most magnificent stretch of beach I have ever seen.") Other notable guests included postwar presidents like John F. Kennedy and Dwight Eisenhower.

Hotels often tie themselves in knots spinning yarns about history as they seek to convince guests that they are staying somewhere special, but Ritz-Carlton isn't overreaching by positioning Dorado Beach as a former society hot spot — "recapturing the magic and essence of that legendary Rockefeller era," as its public relations chief put it in an e-mail.

Still, will history combined with modern luxury be enough? Even as a comonomer, I found myself a little embarrassed to tell people where I was going when I headed there in late October. "The Caribbean," I'd say. "St. Barts?" was one common reply. "No, not quite



GOAL WAS TO MUDGE RITZ-CARLTON OUT OF ITS COMFORT ZONE. "I want people saying, 'I can't believe they have this beach bar at a Ritz,'" Mr. Lipschutz said.

Every once in a while, though, a piece of the area's less illustrious past comes into view. Literally. A drive on that nature trail in an electric golf cart (no cars are allowed at the resort after arrival) takes you past a muddy golf course closed for repairs. And lurking about a mile down the shore is the ghost of Cerromar, a 1970s-era lower-end companion to Dorado Beach that sits closed, a forlorn reminder that the glamour of the Rockefeller years here ended long ago. (The Pritzker family bought Dorado and Cerromar in 1985 and added the hotels to their Hyatt chain.)

"We'll get to Cerromar next," Mr. Christensen said.

Ritz-Carlton and Caribbean Property Group are making this "major, major bet on Puerto Rico," as Mr. Christensen put it, partly because they like the timing. Puerto Rico, they believe, is in the upswing. In San Juan, a 30-minute drive to the west, the airport is expected to get an upgrade and JetBlue has deemed it a "focus" of expansion, making travel to the island from the East Coast even easier. Two years ago, the Puerto Rican government introduced aggressive housing incentives — no property taxes for five years, no closing fees, no capital-gains taxes — to stoke high-end home sales.

Dorado Beach has benefited: 14 private residences at the hotel have already been sold, for \$2.5 million to \$7.5 million.

Mr. Lipschutz and Mr. Humler also contend that upscale travelers don't care as much as they used to about exotic, far-flung locations. With executives finding it harder and harder to carve out vacation time, accessibility is the new priority. "If people can't get there quickly, they aren't going," Mr. Lipschutz said.

Dorado Beach may even be able to succeed in rebuilding a bridge to Hollywood. The Puerto Rican government has adopted deep tax incentives aimed at luring movie production to the island, and it's working. "Runner, Runner," a coming crime thriller starring Ben Affleck and Justin Timberlake, shot near Dorado Beach recently. Indeed, a recent headline in *The Hollywood Reporter* put a wide smile on Ritz-Carlton's face: "Why Hollywood Loves Puerto Rico."

ABOVE LEFT Clara Livingston, left, and her friend Amelia Earhart.

ABOVE Dwight D. Eisenhower, at left, visits Dorado Beach.

that fancy," was my response. Turks and Caicos was usually their next guess. When I finally coughed up Puerto Rico as my destination, people tended to give me a sad look. "I hear drug-related crime there is spiking. Be careful!" one entertainment executive said cheerfully.

After spending two days hanging around the still-unfinished resort, which borders four golf courses, children's water park and an 11-mile nature path, I experienced a different kind of embarrassment: I had been too quick to judge Puerto Rico as a destination for true luxury. Even with 1,000 construction workers crawling over it — the guest rooms and spa were completed, but the rest of the hotel was still a work in progress — Dorado Beach was nothing short of jaw-dropping.

Outside the glass-walled Mi Casa restaurant, which will feature a menu by the Spanish chef José Andrés (known for Bazaar in Los Angeles), waves crashed dramatically against a rock break a few hundred feet offshore. In a reflection of Rockefeller's interest in the environment, the central part of the new hotel twists in an architecturally ambitious manner around dozens of mature trees; bridges link various

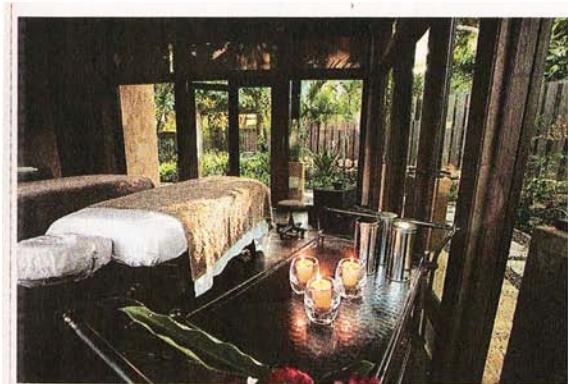
buildings and feature outdoor "hanging beds" — wide, flat swings billed as perfect spots for napping or reading. Striking contemporary art, like a monumental photograph of a woman floating underwater by Quintin Rivera Toro, decorates the walls.

Dorado Beach has 100 guest rooms and 41 one-bedroom suites spread across 11 two-story buildings. Although building code now requires large setbacks from the water, Puerto Rican authorities allowed developers to build the new hotel in the footprint of the demolished one so that every room is directly on the beach. Each ground-floor room has its own infinity pool and lawn, while second-floor rooms have rooftop pools. All rooms have outdoor showers. (Since the hotel wasn't yet open, I stayed at an adjacent condo in an area near where Ricky Martin and the golfer Chi Chi Rodriguez have homes.)

Aside from the ocean view, Dorado Beach's most striking feature may be its bar, which has a theatrical butterflied roof and a sand floor. The hotel's guests are meant to stow their Prada sandals and Gucci loafers in little cubbyholes. It may take some getting used to, conceded Mark Lipschutz, chief executive of Caribbean Property Group, but his



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FROM LEFT A massage room at the five-acre spa section of the resort; the living room of Su Casa, which rents for \$30,000 a night; most suites in the hotel have a private pool.