An aerial photograph showing a lush green golf course with several sand traps and a winding path. In the foreground, a rugged, rocky coastline meets the sea, with a small sandy beach and white waves crashing against the shore. The water is a vibrant turquoise color.

Bermuda's gorgeous vistas make for great golfing.

# Bermuda

B O U N D



BY GREG RIENZI

## WITH ITS PINK BEACHES, RICH CULTURAL HISTORY AND TEMPERATE CLIMATE, THIS BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORY CAN'T HELP BUT HOOK TOURISTS IN.



**Each weekday** morning for the past several decades, Johnny Barnes has stood at the Crow Lane roundabout one mile east of downtown Hamilton, Bermuda, waving and blowing kisses at drivers and pedestrians. Affectionately known as “Mr. Feel Good,” or “The Happy Man,” he’s arguably one of Bermuda’s most famous citizens.

A local sculptor captured Barnes’

smiling spirit in bronze in 1998 and today the life-size statue overlooks the entrance of East Broadway in the island’s capital city.

Barnes represents an extreme example of Bermuda’s most abundant natural resource—hospitality. “We have, or so they say, the most courteous people on Earth,” says Dr. Edward Harris, executive director of the National Museum of Bermuda. The locals, Harris says, take their well wishes and greetings very seriously, and so should visitors to the friendly little island that has been drawing tourists since Queen Victoria’s reign.

Thousands each year come for the turquoise waters, smooth pink sand beaches, world-class golf, deep-sea fishing, water sports, museums, horseback riding—and handsome limestone buildings.

Commonly mislabeled part of the Caribbean, Bermuda sits 650 miles east of Cape Hatteras, N.C., and more than 900 miles north of the Bahamas. Bermuda, which from the air resembles a fishhook, stretches 21.6

miles and consists of nine parishes and 181 islands and islets surrounded by a 200-square-mile coral reef plateau.

Ask the locals to describe their home and they’ll use terms like clean, safe and civilized. The country’s strict, long-standing environmental laws and limited car use—you can’t rent a car on the island—have preserved Bermuda’s natural beauty. The island also has a thriving cultural history.

Bermuda was discovered in 1505 by Spanish navigator Juan de Bermúdez, who claimed the area for the Spanish Empire. Mostly vacant the next 100 years, Bermuda was first settled in 1609 by shipwrecked English colonists headed for Jamestown, Va. Three years later, the Virginia Company organized 60 settlers to establish a permanent colony on the islands.

The Virginia Company, and later the Bermuda Company, ran the islands for decades with a firm hand. The settlers would eventually sue to have the company’s charter rescinded and in 1684 Bermuda became a British crown colony with its own parliamentary rule. (Bermuda, in fact, is the oldest British Colony and has the second oldest parliamentary democracy, after England, in the world.)

Bermuda’s current 64,500 inhabitants are primarily descendants of slaves from the West Indies and West Africa, English settlers, Irish adventurers, exiled North American Indian prisoners and Portuguese immigrants.

Tourism to the island developed in the late 19th century. Mark Twain and Woodrow Wilson frequented Bermuda, known as a place of rest and cultured leisure. The island today draws the likes of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Beyonce, actor Michael Douglas,



Tobacco Bay, sheltered by limestone rock, offers a showcase of tropical fish for snorkelers; the historic town of St. George is a favorite destination for shoppers.

## In Short

Stroll through the business district of downtown Hamilton, Bermuda, on a weekday and you'll see plenty of male office workers in blazer, tie, dress shirt—and neatly pressed shorts falling just above the knee. The trademark “Bermuda shorts” evolved into common work attire after World War II, when a clothing shortage beset the island. Several prominent Bermuda bank owners looked to the shorts-clad British military for inspiration. While the first Bermuda shorts were made of itchy gray flannel, subsequent versions have become more fashionable—and more comfortable.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

While relatively small, Bermuda sports plenty of places to visit and things to do. Must-see stops at the western end of the island (the “barb” of the fishhook) include the Royal Naval Dockyard, the former naval base on Ireland Island that now is home to the National Museum of Bermuda and Dolphin Quest (offering personal encounters with the beautiful creatures), as well as the Dockyard Glassworks and Bermuda Rum Cake Factory; these occupy opposite ends of a cavernous room that once served as a repair yard for high-masted ships. The Dockyard is also a popular hub for restaurants and pubs, craft stores and galleries and the Clocktower Mall shopping center.

These attractions also make the Dockyard area a popular destination for the many cruise ships that tie up here during peak cruising season

(from April to mid-November). With some ships disembarking as many as 6,000 passengers and crew at a time, the streets can quickly get jammed and the restaurants and shops overwhelmed. Weekdays tend to be worst, but the weekends—when the big ships are in transit to and from the East Coast of the U.S.—bring some respite from the crowds.

You'll gain a bit more breathing room as you head to the middle of the island and the city of Hamilton, which has been the capital of Bermuda since 1815. The beautiful port town attracts tourists for its shopping, bars, restaurants, the new Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute and charming pastel-colored Victorian buildings along Front Street. It also serves as Bermuda's main transportation hub, as both the central bus and ferry terminals are located here.

Moving eastward from Hamilton are the Bermuda Botanical Gardens;





St. George's town crier offers a hearty welcome to guests; visitors to the town won't want to miss St. Peter's Church, the oldest continuously operating Protestant church in the Western Hemisphere.

the Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo; the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, an art gallery that contains Bermuda-inspired works by such greats as Georgia O'Keeffe and Winslow Homer; and the popular Crystal Caves and its dramatically illuminated crystal stalactites and stalagmites formed 30 million years ago. The cave's clear, azure blue lake offers breathtaking views of formations on the water's bottom some 55 feet below.

Venture to the east end of the island

(the eye of the hook) to walk the streets of St. George's, the oldest, and most historic part of Bermuda. With most of its buildings constructed in the 17th and 19th centuries, the town has narrow streets lined with period style lights. King's Square, at the center, features replica stocks and a ducking stool—which once served to dump gossiping women into the harbor. St. George's is also home to St. Peter's, the oldest continuously operating Protestant church in the western hemisphere.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with just spending the day on the island's famed pink beaches, which owe their hue to a combination of crushed coral, calcium carbonate and the shells of tiny single-celled animals called Foraminifera.

Bermuda has a year-round mild, subtropical climate with temperatures ranging from 68 to 84 degrees F (20 to 28.8 C). The high season lasts from April to October, but several water-related activities don't kick into gear until late May. Many who visit from November to

## Snorkeling the Day Away

Subtropical Bermuda lies well north of the Caribbean—yet still offers a vast array of coral reefs and other undersea life. The views beneath the gin-clear water are not to be missed.

The best places to snorkel reside off of the island's public beaches. Many beachfront hotels will lend/rent fins, masks and snorkels, and advise you on the best sites in the area. The waters are home to a multitude of sea life including gray snapper, blue striped grunt, hogfish, porcupine puffer, moray eels, angelfish and squirrelfish.

Snorkel aficionados favor Church Bay, located on the south shore, west of the Fairmont Southampton Princess Golf Club and Gibbs

Hill Lighthouse. The well-protected cove was carved out of coral cliffs and features snug little nooks, making it an ideal haven for fish to hide from larger predators.

Another favorite snorkel destination is John Smith's Bay, located on the south shore and to the east of the Spittal Pond Nature Reserve and Watch Hill Park (and close to the Devil's Hole Aquarium).

If you're staying at a hotel near the airport, head to Tobacco Bay, north of St. George's Golf Club. The bay is sheltered by unusual Daliesque limestone rock formations and provides a perfect spot to view colorful tropical fish like parrotfish and sergeant majors.

An enjoyable, but small,

snorkeling spot is West Whale Bay, which lies along the south shore at the west end of Southampton, west of the Port Royal Golf Course. In addition to good snorkeling conditions, the beach also serves as a great location to see migrating humpback whales (March and April).

Snorkeling can be done year-round in Bermuda but is best from May to October. During November to March, the water temperature can dip close to 60 degrees F (15.5 degrees C) and warrants a wet suit for extended time in the water.

Some of the best sites are accessible only by boat, but there are plenty of tour companies to oblige.

The adventurous, seaworthy and island savvy can rent a

small boat, even one with a glass bottom. The rental company can advise where to go and not to go. But keep in mind that navigating in sometimes choppy Atlantic waters full of reefs is no row in the bathtub. There's a reason why the waters surrounding Bermuda are full of wrecks. —GR



Snorkel Park at the western end of Bermuda.

## The Bermuda Triangle: Fact or Fiction

**No urban legend fascinates** quite like the Bermuda Triangle. The area also known as the “Devil’s Triangle,” has populated TV and Hollywood plots for decades with tales of disappearing ships, planes and whatever unfortunate vessel falls into its mysterious grip.

Yet when subject to scrutiny, little passes the smell test—even the triangle’s very existence.

By most accounts, the Bermuda Triangle is located off the southeastern coast of the United States, an area bounded by Bermuda, Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico. It covers roughly 500,000 square miles. The U.S. Board of Geographic Names does not recognize the Bermuda Triangle as an official name, although maps of the general area are widely available.

Unusual features have been attributed to this part of the world since the days

and the 14 crew members were never seen again.

Lt. Charles Taylor led the assignment to fly bombing practice runs over Hen and Chickens Shoals, south of the Grand Bahamas. Taylor got lost shortly after one run and had to rely on compasses, which apparently malfunctioned. The planes flew blind for hours and eventually, when fuel ran out, ditched at sea. The 10,000-pound planes would have sunk fast, and the crews had little chance to survive in the cold, choppy water.

A massive land and sea search was mounted and, adding to the tragedy, one of the rescue planes disappeared along with its 13-man crew. A ship in the area reported seeing a huge fireball and oil slick at the exact time and place where the plane would have been.

The disappearance of Flight 19 was blamed on pilot

**The disappearance of Flight 19 was blamed on pilot error but the Navy later amended its report to “causes or reasons unknown.”**

of Christopher Columbus, who noted bizarre compass bearings in the area in his logs. In March 1918, the USS *Cyclops* disappeared in the triangle, likely sunk in an unexpected storm.

The modern-day legend dates to Dec. 5, 1945, when five U.S. Navy Avenger Torpedo Bomber planes took off from a base in Florida on a routine training mission, known as Flight 19. The planes

error but the Navy later amended its report to “causes or reasons unknown.”

Another well-known disappearance is the civilian tanker SS Marine *Sulphur Queen* that sank in February 1963 and was never found—although a life preserver and other floating artifacts were recovered.

Vincent Gaddis coined the term Bermuda Triangle in an August 1964 cover story



The “Devil’s Triangle” is bounded by Bermuda, Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

for *Argosy* magazine about the disappearance of Flight 19. The article spawned legions of mythmakers and triangle theorists who wanted to explain, and exploit, the area’s reportedly high incidence of unexplained disappearances of ships and aircraft.

The theories range from the straightforward to the supernatural. In no particular order, the disappearances were caused by sea monsters, giant squid, magnetic interference, pirates, a comet that splashed down in the water more than 1,000 years ago, a time vortex, extraterrestrials and even ocean flatulence—the sudden spewing of great quantities of trapped methane.

But according to scientists, the real culprits are

likely Mother Nature, reefs and human error. The area, which features a swift-moving Gulf Stream, is prone to hurricanes and also home to some of the deepest marine trenches in the Atlantic.

Dr. Edward Harris, executive director of the National Museum of Bermuda, said that while Bermuda certainly sports a “heritage of hundreds of shipwrecks,” nobody has ever provided real proof that its waters and the rest of the “triangle” are more turbulent than any other area of the Atlantic.

“Cape Hatteras has probably claimed more ships,” Harris says. “It’s a nice story, the Bermuda Triangle. I wish I had written it. I would have made a fortune off the film rights.” —GR





Enjoying the view at Coconuts at The Reefs resort.

March go for the golf and spas.

The island is cricket mad and the local season runs from April to September, highlighted by Cup Match, a two-day national holiday in July that literally pits east islanders versus west and grinds the place to a halt.

Bermuda's currency is the Bermuda dollar, with 100 cents to the dollar. It is pegged to the U.S. dollar on a 1-to-1 basis, and both are equally acceptable at all establishments across the island.


Accommodations range from luxury resorts (some charging upward of \$700 per night) to more modest hotels (averaging \$200 per night) to intimate guest cottages and family-run inns. All incorporate the sophistication and hospitality unique to the Bermuda experience.

Bermuda has more than 150 restaurants, from the simple to the elegant. Favorite hot spots are the beachfront Coconuts at The Reefs resort, the Dining Room at Gibbs Hill Lighthouse and the Black Horse Tavern, a local favorite for Bermudian cuisine. A Bermuda visit isn't complete without a stop at the Swizzle Inn for the island's famous Rum Swizzle. You might also want to sample a Dark n Stormy, a highball-style cocktail that consists of Bermuda's own Gosling's dark rum and ginger beer over ice. Wherever you go, try the fish chowder and rum cakes.

Because virtually everything but fish must be flown in to the island, restaurant prices are higher than in the U.S.—closer to what you'd encounter in Europe (with the cost of dining at a mid-range restaurant ranging from \$20 to \$30 per person). Small, local restaurants offer a great chance to sample authentic local fare, and they tend to be cheaper (about \$15 per person). During peak season, restaurants across the island get very busy, so it's best to make reservations well in advance.

Without access to rental cars, visitors get around on motor scooters, bicycles, buses, ferries and horse-drawn carriages. There are taxis, but they can get pricey.

Harris, who was born and raised on Bermuda, says happily that his home has changed little over the years. "It's still a wonderful place to live, with lovely old houses, plenty of charm and a high quality of life," he says.

Johnny Barnes would agree—no doubt while wearing a wide, welcoming smile beneath his straw hat. 

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