

MAKING UP SNOW DAYS? WHY BOTHER / THE HOUSING MARKET SPRINGS BACK / A HOT STREAK FOR CUPID

Globe Magazine

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SPRING TRAVEL

BEST OF BERMUDA

Find your paradise two hours from Boston



HOW I CONQUERED THE MOUSE

Lessons from a
Disney vacation
gone high tech

ELITE FLEET

Newport
hosts 12 days
of sailing
excitement

**JOBSON COVE
ON BERMUDA'S
SOUTH SHORE**



SPRING TRAVEL

BERMUDA'S BEST

**A SURPRISINGLY
SHORT HOP FROM
BOSTON, THIS
FRIENDLY LITTLE
ISLAND HAS PLENTY
OF SUPERLATIVES
TO KEEP YOU BUSY—
ALL SERVED WITH A
BRITISH ACCENT.**

BY ELIZABETH GEHRMAN

urope surrounded by pink sand beaches and sparkling turquoise waters: That's how many visitors describe two-trips-in-one Bermuda, a tiny, subtropical British territory just a two-hour flight from Boston. It has no high-rise hotels or condos crowding the beaches, none of the grinding poverty seen on some Caribbean islands, and little crime (though I can say from experience, you should always lock your rental scooter). What it does have is serenity, sophistication, natural beauty, and a fascinating history.

About 700 miles out to sea, Bermuda — often called simply “the island” (though there are actually 138 of them) — was known to early European sailors as the Devil's Isle because of the terrifying sounds coming from seabirds that nested there in the hundreds of thousands. But in 1609, after the English ship *Sea Venture* ran aground on its reefs en route to Virginia's struggling Jamestown Colony — inspiring Shakespeare's *The Tempest* — Bermuda was discovered to be “one of the sweetest Paradises that be upon earth,” in the words of one castaway.

Shaped like a fish hook, the country is only 21 square miles, about a fifth the size of Martha's Vineyard, and has the third highest population density on earth, at approximately 65,000 people. It's pretty easy to navigate, since there are only three main roads — North Shore Road, South Road, and Middle Road — with the capital city, Hamilton, in the center of the island. Traveling east from there, you'll find picturesque Flatt's Village, home to the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum, and Zoo; the historic town of St. George's; and St. David's Island, which has been largely taken over by the airport. Westerly lie the South Shore beaches and, at the very tip of the fish hook, the Royal Naval Dockyard, known simply as Dockyard. April, when temperatures get up to 70 or so, is considered a “shoulder” month to the tourist season, which runs from May till October, so room prices are a little lower, though of course water temps are, too, hovering around 69, some 15 degrees cooler than in August.

In a story of “bests,” it's only fair that we begin with Bermuda's best overall asset: its people. They will always greet you with a “good day” and go out of their way to help you, especially if you show a genuine interest in their culture. If you ask someone where to dine, don't be surprised if he or she offers to meet you for drinks beforehand; if you're looking for directions, you're likely to get a ride instead. If you somehow manage to be having a bad day in Bermuda, you may even receive a hug from the young woman renting you a motorbike. It has happened.

Here's where to start with the rest of the bests.

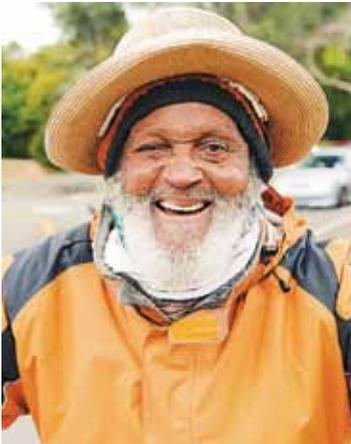
Facing page:
Warwick Long Bay is just one of the spectacular beaches on Bermuda's South Shore. Right: Manning a snow cone stand outside the capital of Hamilton.



SPRING TRAVEL

St. Peter's Church, in the colonial town of St. George's, was founded in 1612, three years after the wreck of the *Sea Venture* brought Europeans to Bermuda's shores.

BEST HISTORIC SITE St. George's, the oldest English town in the New World, was Bermuda's capital from the territory's founding in 1612 until 1815. Today it's a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most picturesque and charming parts of Bermuda, with 17th-century architecture, historic fortifications, shops, restaurants, cobblestone streets, five cool little museums, and a replica of the *Deliverance*, one of two ships built by the British castaways to continue their voyage. (St. George's Visitors Information Center, 441-297-0556; whc.unesco.org)



BEST LIVING LEGEND

Rain or shine since 1986, 91-year-old former bus driver Johnny Barnes has spent just about every weekday from 5 till 10 a.m. in Hamilton's Crow Lane roundabout blowing kisses to commuters and telling them he loves them. "Love is the greatest thing in the world," he says. "It's contagious. You don't have to pay for it." Brave Bermuda traffic and cross the street to say hello; if you get really lucky, Johnny might take your hands in his and say a little prayer on your behalf.

better with a glass of wine in hand.

BEST FISH SANDWICH The traditional Bermudian fish sandwich—deep-fried and served on raisin bread (trust me) with lettuce, tomato, tartar sauce, coleslaw, and perhaps a touch of hot sauce and some sauteed onions—is arguably the best fish sandwich anywhere. And with two locations, one in Hamilton and one in St. George's, family-run Art Mel's Spicy Dicy (441-297-3965) serves the country's undisputed ideal, stacked about 5 inches high, with nearly every component house-made. You can always expect a wait, but celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson has called Art Mel's food "perfection."

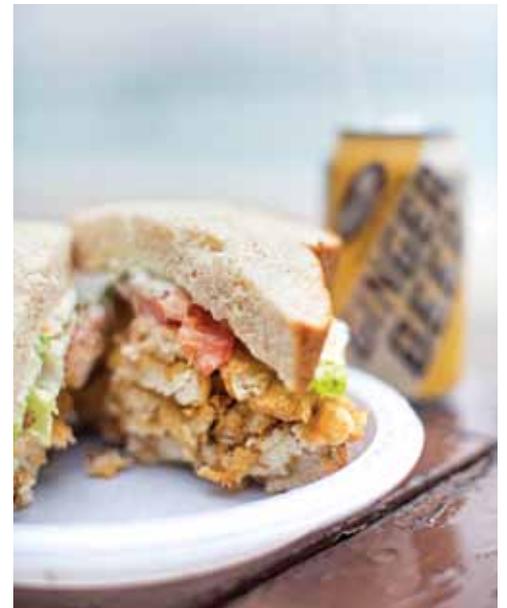
BEST BEACH Bermuda's South Shore holds the most spectacular beaches, with scrubby cliffs and dramatic rock formations breaking up the shoreline and churning the water on windy days. The most popular is Horseshoe Bay Beach, which can get crowded. But luckily it's only 1¼ miles by trail to the equally beautiful Warwick Long Bay Beach, and you'll pass numerous quieter coves, dunes, and bluffs along the way. At both, you can rent snorkel gear, chairs, and umbrellas and buy snacks in summer.

BEST NATURE RESERVE At 64 acres, Spittal Pond Nature Reserve in Smith's Parish (conservation.bm/spittal-pond) is Bermuda's largest, with diverse habitats from wetlands to forest. As Bermuda's only naturally occurring open water pond with water that's sometimes nearly fresh—depending on recent weather—it attracts wild ducks, herons, egrets, and dozens of other species, making it a paradise for bird-watchers. On a hilltop overlooking the South Shore lies a bronze replica of the original Portuguese Rock, which contained the first evidence of human habitation in Bermuda in the form of a carving dated 1543.

BEST CRUISE Every Friday in the summer the 70-foot motor catamaran *UberVida* (441-236-2222; ubervida.net) departs from Front Street in Hamilton for two 90-minute Sunset Mini Cocktail Cruises, starting at 6 and 8 p.m. The boat ride is free; you just pay for drinks—and the gorgeous Harbour Islands look even



Art Mel's Spicy Dicy serves what's been called the best fish sandwich on earth. Have it the Bermudian way with a Barritts ginger beer.





Winding trails in the 64-acre Spittal Pond Nature Reserve lead to picture-perfect views of the island's South Shore and the Atlantic.

BEST DIVE SPOTS Bermuda's reef is the northernmost in the Atlantic, so it doesn't have the huge variety of colorful fish and coral you'll see in the Caribbean, but it still offers excellent diving. In spring, the fry are sometimes so thick at Eastern Blue Cut that you can't see through them; Warwick Long Bay's huge caverns, overhangs, and swim-throughs make for a beautiful underwater scene. And hundreds of ships have wrecked around the island; the most popular is the *Constellation*, a 1918 American schooner that went down in 1943, and the nearby *Montana*, a paddlewheel steamer sunk in 1863. Artifacts from the ships, which inspired Peter Benchley's 1976 book *The Deep*, still litter the bottom.

BEST DIVE BAR The original Swizzle Inn (441-293-1854; swizzleinn.com), in Bailey's Bay, is a Bermuda institution in a 1652 roadhouse with thousands of business cards and other reminders of visitors over the years and pitchers of rum swizzles for \$23.75.

BEST AFTERNOON TEA On Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. you can indulge your Anglophilia with scones, Earl Grey, whipped, unsweetened Chantilly cream sourced from the local dairy, and other local delicacies like Bermuda honey, rum syrup, and loquat jelly at Sweet P (\$32 for tea) in the garden of the Bermuda Perfumery (441-293-0627; bermuda-perfumery.com).

SPRING TRAVEL



ery.com) in St. George's. While you're there, pick up one of the **BEST SOUVENIRS**, an island-made Lili Bermuda fragrance, many of which are blended with Bermuda cedar.

BEST AFTERNOON TEE

The Mid Ocean Club (441-293-0330; themidoceanclubbermuda.com) in St. George's is often named Bermuda's best golf course, and it's certainly the most chichi, having hosted presidents and prime ministers. But locals tend to favor recently renovated, government-owned Port Royal (441-234-0974; www.portroyalgolf.bm) in Southampton Parish. At 6,842 yards, it's the longest course on the island and quite challenging, with Bermuda's always tricky winds and the famous cliff-side 16th hole, which once unhinged US Open champion Lucas Glover.

BEST DAY TRIP

Dockyard was a strategic military base for Great Britain from the War of 1812 through World War II and beyond. Today it is one of the most historic sites in Bermuda and a 24-acre playground for tourists, with restaurants, excursions, water sports, and a small shopping mall. Don't miss the Commissioner's House—part of the National Museum of Bermuda—with its professionally presented tale of Bermuda's history; whole-stairwell historical mural by local artist Graham Foster; and shipwreck artifacts, including a replica of the Tucker Cross, found in 1955 by diver Teddy Tucker at the 16th-century wreck of the *San Pedro*. (The actual cross was



BEST HAPPY HOUR

There are several good ones, but on Friday evenings you can't lose in Hamilton at Harry's (441-292-5533; pwbd.com/wp/harrys), always packed with locals. With a lovely patio, it's the perfect spot for a Dark 'n' Stormy, Bermuda's national drink.

At left: St. George's Stewart Hall is home to the Bermuda Perfumery and Sweet P's proper British tea.



Lined with shops, bustling Front Street runs along Hamilton Harbor.

The posh Fairmont Hamilton Princess is just completing a multimillion-dollar renovation.

stolen in 1975 and never recovered.) Dockyard has the country's highest concentration of working artists' studios, so it's easy to find a Bermuda-made gift for folks back home. Most of Dockyard (441-234-1709; thewestend.bm) is open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., later when the cruise ships are in port.

BEST ACCOMMODATIONS (LUXURY) For those who want to be in the thick of things, the island's oldest hotel, the Fairmont Hamilton Princess (800-257-7544; the-hamiltonprincess.com), can't be beat for location, history, and swankiness—and it's just finishing up a \$90 million renovation. If you'd rather spend your time relaxing by the surf, Elbow Beach in Paget (800-223-7434; elbowbeachbermuda.com) and Grotto Bay in Bailey's Bay (855-447-6886; www.grottobay.com) toward the eastern end of the island both offer gorgeous views, plenty of amenities, and fantastic on-site restaurants.



BEST ACCOMMODATIONS (BUDGET) Bermuda has many small inns and guesthouses, but you'll find the absolute lowest prices with island residents who rent out extra rooms or apartments. Most have kitchens, so you can save money by cooking at "home," and the owners are always informed locals who can help you get to know the island. Bermudarentals.com (416-232-2243) lists more than 100 places by location; prices range from \$85 a night for a single to \$1,500 for 14 guests.

BEST LIVE MUSIC It's easy to make friends at the Hog Penny (441-292-2534; hogpennypub.com) in Hamilton, where local musicians play mostly pop and rock Wednesdays through Saturdays in summer. The food's good, too.

BEST DANCE CLUBS With a 3 a.m. closing time, you can always find a party in Bermuda. If you're at the Dockyard end of the island, Snorkel Park's Club Aqua (441-236-3100; snorkelparkbeach.com/club-aqua.html) is a popular outdoor spot with DJs and bands four days a week. In the East End, Gombey's Bar & Restaurant (441-293-5092) offers DJs, live reggae, jerk chicken, and a laid-back vibe.

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

 JetBlue (in summer only) and Delta offer nonstop **FLIGHTS** from Boston for \$400 and up in season. Delta offers lower fares in the winter. Once you're on the island, here's how to navigate it. (Visit gotobermuda.com/what-to-do/transportation for more.)

 **CABS** are expensive, starting at \$6.40 for the first mile and \$2.25 a mile thereafter. (American and Bermudian dollars—which are on a par—can be used anywhere on the island.) Add 25 percent to 50 percent, depending on the number of passengers, between midnight and 6 a.m. and on Sundays and holidays. Estimate fares to your destination at taxifarefinder.com.

 **BUS** fare is \$3 to \$4.50 each way, depending on where you're going, but three- and seven-day unlimited passes are available at the central terminal in Hamilton, visitors centers, and many hotels and guesthouses. Buses are reliable, but if you don't know the schedule, especially in the evening, you may be in for a long wait.

 Perhaps the most pleasant way to get around the island—and especially to cover long distances—is by **FERRY**, with four routes operating in Hamilton, St. George's, Dockyard, and points between, starting at \$4 a ride for adults.



 Independent types 18 and older will find traveling by **SCOOTER** (you can't rent a car here) most liberating. For inexperienced riders, it can be harrowing at first, but with a healthy dose of caution, you should be OK. I've used Oleander (five locations; the one in centrally located Paget is 441-236-5235; oleander-cycles.bm), which will deliver a bike to any location, and Smatt's (441-295-1180; smatts-cyclelivery.com), near the Fairmont Hamilton Princess and Southampton hotels; the bikes are similar and so are the prices—ranging from \$55 for a single-seat one-day rental to \$267 a week for a double.

Continued on Page 44

BERMUDA'S BEST

Continued from Page 31

In “town” (a.k.a. Hamilton), Cafe Cairo (441-295-5155) and, one door away, Cosmopolitan (441-705-2582) are good choices, because if you don't like one, you're bound to like the other.

BEST FINE DINING

There are so many great (if pricey) restaurants, it's impossible to pick just one. “It depends on what you want” is the universal answer when the question is posed to locals. Among those most often mentioned are four of my favorites: Tom Moore's Tavern (441-293-8020; tommoores.com), Waterlot Inn steakhouse (441-238-8000; fairmont.com/southampton-bermuda/dining/waterlotinn), Ascot's



BEST CRICKET

Bermuda may be the only country in the world that has declared two national holidays because so many people were skipping work to watch a sporting contest. Cup Match, in which archrivals Somerset and St. George's face off for two days of cricket, is a national obsession. The tourism department is trying to make the all-weekend party more accessible for visitors, but if you're bored by bat and ball, you might want to visit at a different time: Even Hamilton is deserted as workers revel. (July 30 and 31 this year in St. George's; bermudacupmatch.com)

(441-295-9644; ascots.bm), and Bolero (441-292-4507; bolerobrasserie.com). All serve contemporary cuisine with a European flair, and all require “smart” dress.

BEST PHOTO OP Strike a pose with a Mark Twain statue; there's one in front of the XL building in Hamilton and another at The Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art in Paget. The author traveled to Bermuda often, and on his last visit, in 1910, he wrote of the country, “You go to heaven if you want to—I'd druther stay here.” ■

Elizabeth Gehrman, a frequent contributor to the Globe Magazine, has visited Bermuda more than a dozen times since 2008. Send comments to magazine@globe.com.