

Getting Started

This island does a stellar job of luring people to its shores and making the experience as easy as possible. Few visitors coming here need to bother with visas, and some don't even need to have valid passports (see p151 for details). Matter of fact, Bermuda is a popular last-minute getaway spot for many Americans.

Bermuda is an upmarket destination and would be a challenge for travelers on a very tight budget – there are no hostels, campgrounds or other facilities geared to backpackers. But even though food and accommodations prices are higher than in most other destinations, the bottom line won't necessarily strain your credit card limit. The average stay in Bermuda is five to seven days and airfares from the USA and Canada – the departure points of more than 90% of all visitors – are generally low, so the total cost of a vacation in this piece of paradise may actually compare favorably with other vacation options.

WHEN TO GO

Thanks to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, Bermuda enjoys a mild, agreeable climate all year round. In terms of tourism the island has two seasons. The 'summer season' refers to the months of April through October, when Bermuda enjoys its warmest air and water temperatures and sees perfect conditions for swimming, snorkeling and diving. It's also the most vibrant time on the island, with a lively hotel scene, greater entertainment options and more visitors milling about. In the warmest months, July to September, the average high temperature is 85°F and the average low is 75°F. Midsummer is also the muggiest time of the year, and if you're not used to high humidity (which averages 84% in August) it can be a bit uncomfortable – though jumping in the pool will certainly cool things off.

One caveat for summer: it's also the hurricane season, particularly the months from August through October. Although Bermuda lies outside the main hurricane track that wracks the Caribbean, it does occasionally get whapped, most famously in 2003 when Hurricane Fabian gave the island's south coast a direct hit, taking more than a few roofs with it. So watch the forecast – www.weather.bm is a great resource for storm-watching.

See the Climate Chart (p142) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Sunblock and good sunglasses to handle those dazzling pink sands
- A bathing suit, packed into your carry-on bag – if your luggage doesn't make it, you can still spend the first afternoon in the water
- A tie, and perhaps even a jacket, for men who want to dine at the island's fanciest digs
- A good pair of walking shoes for thoroughly exploring the streets of St George and Hamilton
- Some coffee and a few food staples, allowing self-caterers to put off a trek to one of Bermuda's pricey grocery stores on arrival
- A bungee cord to strap down a small bag in the basket of your moped, securing it from wind and the hands of a potential drive-by thief
- Your own snorkel, mask and fins if you plan to do much snorkeling
- Dive certification cards and logbooks for those who want to plunge deeper

The ‘winter season’ is from November to March, when daytime highs average around 70°F. This time of year is too chilly for swimming and many water-activity companies suspend operations for at least part of the season. Winter temperatures are a delight, however, for playing golf or tennis, hiking and general sightseeing. Also on the plus side, there are fewer visitors to compete with – actually no cruise ship visitors at all – so getting a table at your favorite restaurant will be a lot easier. And most hotels drop their rates in winter, so you can find tempting deals, even at the nicest resorts. If you want to time your visit with specific events, take a look at the Festivals & Events section (p144).

COSTS & MONEY

No doubt about it, Bermuda is an expensive destination. The island’s high cost of living is reflected in everything, including accommodations. Once service charges and taxes are added to the tariff, there are barely a handful of places to stay in Bermuda where travelers can squeak by for \$100 a night. At the midrange there are several attractive choices hovering around \$200, and opting for a cushy resort will easily run to twice that.

If you plan to stay seven days or less, look into package tours that include both airfare and hotel, as they often work out more cheaply than buying the airfare and paying for the hotel separately. Although it’s not heavily advertised, many tour operators can also create individualized ‘package tours’ for stays of longer than seven days – so even if you’re staying for a couple of weeks, this may be an option to explore.

Most of the food consumed in Bermuda is imported, and prices are generally about 50% higher than those in the USA. Travelers lunching at local eateries and self-preparing most other meals in their guesthouse kitchen might get by for around \$35 a day, while those opting to eat at resorts should expect to average close to \$100 a day for meals. Families traveling together will fare best by getting an apartment-style place with a full kitchen – lunch deals abound in Bermuda, so eating out in the day is economical but you’ll save a bundle by having breakfast and dinner at home.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Several books about Bermuda offer a good read while providing insights to the island. The following are recommended. If you don’t get a chance to grab one of them before you get on the plane, they can be picked up at bookstores in Bermuda after you arrive.

The Last Pink Bits by Harry Ritchie is a lighthearted, insightful account of Ritchie’s recent travels in Bermuda and other scattered outposts that comprise the last remnants of the once-formidable British empire. A fun read.

Tracey Caswell, a transplanted Canadian, puts her advice for newcomers in *Tea with Tracey*, and it’s an amusing read for visitors too. Get the scoop on lizards, etiquette and scooters from an insider’s perspective.

Mark Twain and the Happy Island is a vivid account of Bermuda, through the eyes of Twain, conveyed by Elizabeth Wallace, who kicked around the island with America’s foremost traveler.

For an escape into pure fiction, pick up *Bermuda Grass* by Keith Miles. A golf course architect goes to Bermuda to lay out the greens and gets involved in a web of sex, murder and mystery.

Bermuda Triangle Mystery Solved, by Lawrence David Kusche, provides an interesting read for those fascinated with the mysteries of vanished ships and planes in the world’s spookiest quadrant.

LONELY PLANET INDEX

Liter of gas \$1.45

Liter of bottled water \$1.20

Pint of lager in pub \$5

Souvenir T-shirt \$18

Ice cream cone \$3

HOW MUCH?

Bowl of fish chowder \$5

One day of motor-scooter rental \$70

Cup of tea at teatime \$3

Average one night at B&B \$160

Glass-bottom-boat cruise \$50

TOP FIVES

Pampering Hotels

Bermuda enjoys a well-earned reputation for cozy little hotels and cottage colonies that coddle guests in style. The Royal Palms is a Victorian-era delight on the outskirts of the City of Hamilton. The other four places are intimate seaside gems sporting their own private beaches.

- Cambridge Beaches (p133), Sandys Parish
- Pompano Beach Club (p124), Southampton Parish
- Ariel Sands Beach Club (p101), Devonshire Parish
- Pink Beach Club & Cottages (p97), Smith’s Parish
- Royal Palms Hotel (p66), Pembroke Parish

Festivals & Events

Bermuda may be small but it loves a party. The island offers a plethora of events throughout the year, some centering around sailing, some rooted in the island’s culture and history, and others just plain fun. See the Festivals & Events section (p144) for a look at it all.

- Cup Match (p145), August
- Bermuda Music Festival (p145), October
- Bermuda Culinary Arts Festival (p145), November
- Peppercorn Ceremony (p144), April
- International Race Weekend (p144), January

Top Sightseeing Attractions

Whether you’re looking to immerse yourself in a thoroughly colonial setting, want to spend the day at one of the world’s most beautiful beaches or are ready to stroll about lovely gardens, it’s all close at hand.

- Town of St George (p71)
- Royal Naval Dockyard (p134)
- Horseshoe Bay (p120)
- Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo (p90)
- Bermuda Botanical Gardens (p104)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Bermuda Department of Tourism (www.bermudatourism.com) Official government site with downloadable brochures.

Bermuda Online (www.bermuda-online.org) Comprehensive information on scores of subjects about Bermuda.

Government of Bermuda (www.gov.bm) Connects to government departments and official topics.

Limey in Bermuda (www.limeyinbermuda.com) Run by an expat Brit, this opinionated site delves into all things Bermudian.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Online guide with up-to-date topics and the Thorn Tree forum where you can ask other travelers what they think.

Royal Gazette (www.theroyalgazette.com) Local news online from Bermuda’s top newspaper, including upcoming events and a searchable archive.

TAILORED TRIPS

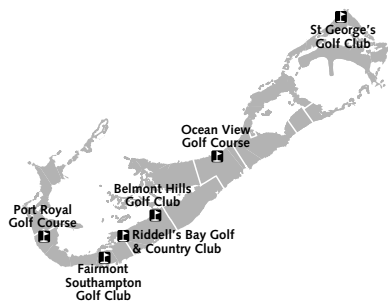
SNORKELING BERMUDA

Bermuda has three snorkeling beaches, all of which conveniently have concession stands where you can rent snorkel gear. On the western side, **Bermuda Snorkel Park** (p137) sits beneath the towering fortress walls of the Royal Naval Dockyard and not only teems with colorful fish but also has colonial-era cannons dotting its sea floor. **Church Bay** (p122) in Southampton Parish is a beauty with a nearshore coral reef that attracts large rainbow parrotfish. **Tobacco Bay** (p81) shores up the snorkeling scene on the eastern end of Bermuda with pinnacle-like formations and coral gardens. Now that you've gotten your toes wet and your interest in the deep piqued, consider one of these uniquely Bermudian experiences: don a helmet instead of a mask and take a walk on the sea floor with a **helmet dive** (p39) or join one of the **snorkeling cruises** (p40) from Hamilton or St George that sail out to shallow shipwrecks.



HITTING THE GREENS

Bermuda's a golfer's paradise and you could easily spend your whole vacation on the greens. All of the courses have interesting topography and water views. A great place to start is **St George's Golf Club** (p76), where the scenery is often compared to California's famous Pebble Beach. **Ocean View Golf Course** (p101) lives up to its billing for views and is a fun, quick course popular with islanders. Next, test your skills with Bermuda's toughest opening hole at **Belmont Hills Golf Club** (p115). Also highly rated is nearby **Riddell's Bay Golf & Country Club** (p115), with snug fairways that require precision shots. Now you've earned a relaxing day on the gently sloping greens of the **Fairmont Southampton Golf Club** (p123), with short fairways that are a putter's dream. Finish off at the island's most popular course, the **Port Royal Golf Course** (p123), a Robert Trent Jones beauty with dramatic cliffside holes.



Snapshot

Not surprisingly, weather has become a big topic on the island since Hurricane Fabian smashed into Bermuda in August 2003, killing four people and causing a whopping \$300 million in damage. An entire wing of the Wyndham Beach Resort was swept into the sea and the roof of the exclusive Fairmont Southampton blew right off. Homes suffered similar damage, especially along the storm-battered south shore. The whole thing took Bermudians by surprise, since a storm of this size hadn't hit the island in 75 years.

It took more than a year to get things back in order but physical signs of damage are now relatively few. The way islanders think, however, has markedly changed. If you're in Bermuda during the hurricane season, expect to hear plenty of talk about storms. Islanders have become big storm-watchers, and many can tell you the exact locations of hurricanes sweeping across distant places in the Atlantic. From June to October the most-watched channel on TV is the Bermuda weather station, which now broadcasts 24 hours a day!

On the political front, in 2004 Alex Scott, who leads the ruling Progressive Labour Party (PLP), officially reopened the dialogue on the topic of independence from Britain. Since then there's been some discussion on the pros and cons, but little on any specific approach to breaking ties with the crown. It makes for interesting chatter over coffee at the lunch counter, but polls indicate the majority of islanders are currently against independence, and many would actually favor even closer ties to Britain.

Overseas financial institutions that operate out of Bermuda because of tax opportunities have become a backbone of the economy and now provide many of the best-paying jobs on the island. They pump so much money into the island that Bermuda now has an astounding \$3.75 billion GDP.

However, for working-class people not plugged into the hottest sector of the economy there are downsides. Housing prices have soared to the point where the average single-family home sells for almost a million dollars, and many people are forced to take second jobs just to keep pace. In response to the tight housing market, several of the island's smaller hotels have closed and are being converted to condos, and locals say they're worried that tourism, once the leading sector of the economy, will spiral downhill as a consequence. Of course, for those who manage to trade in a job waiting tables for a high salary as an insurance actuary, the switch from a service economy to a white-collar one doesn't seem like such a bad thing.

On a lighter note there's cricket (the game, not the bug!), which sweeps the island every summer. At the height of it all during the August Cup Match (p133), don't expect to hear anything but cricket buzz – the fervor is so gripping that work is suspended for two days, while everyone dons their team colors and heads to the match.

FAST FACTS

Population: 62,000
 Percentage of blacks/
 whites: 61/39
 Annual number of
 tourists: 465,000
 Unemployment: 3%
 Inflation: 3.4%
 GDP: \$3.75 billion
 Motor vehicles per sq
 mile: 2222
 Number of
 medal-winning
 Olympians: 1
 Golf courses per sq
 mile: 0.39
 Highest/lowest
 temperature (°F) on
 record: 91/44

The Authors



NED FRIARY & GLENDA BENDURE

Ned and Glenda love traveling to islands and have written several guidebooks covering widely scattered island destinations, from the well-trodden Caribbean to remote Micronesia. Still, among the scores of islands they've explored, there are few they look forward to returning to more than Bermuda. They were first turned on to the island by a friend who had spent several years there working with the Bermuda News Bureau – his stories of island hospitality whetted their appetite, and Bermuda pole-vaulted to the top of their 'next trip' list. They've been to the island several times since, exploring it from top to bottom. They're the authors of the first two editions of Lonely Planet's *Bermuda*, as well as several newspaper stories on this delightful destination for the *Cape Cod Times*.



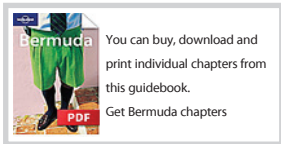
Our Favorite Trip

We typically head first to the Town of St George (p71) – it's so solidly historic that it's easy to imagine you're on the set of a colonial-era movie. Our favorite green retreats in the midst of suburbia are Paget Marsh (p106) and Spittal Pond (p95). Best of all are those powdery pink beaches – we love to take a morning walk along South Shore Park Trail (p122) between Horseshoe Bay and Warwick Long Bay, stopping to swim at a secluded cove along the way. And we always spend some time snorkeling, following those tropical fish around. A day of sightseeing in the City of Hamilton (p46) invariably ends with a dark 'n' stormy on one of those restaurant balconies overlooking the harbor.



CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

David Goldberg, MD, wrote the Health chapter (p159). He completed his training in internal medicine and infectious diseases at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, where he has also served as voluntary faculty. At present he is an infectious diseases specialist in Scarsdale, New York, and the editor-in-chief of the website MDTravelHealth.com.



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