

Hamilton Parish

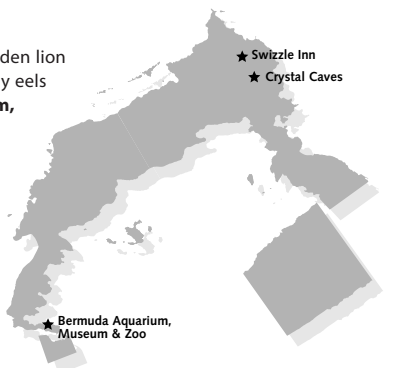


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HIGHLIGHTS

- Come eye-to-eye with golden lion tamarins and toothy moray eels at the **Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo** (p90)
- Join the crowd over a heady rum drink at the **Swizzle Inn** (p89)
- Walk deep into the bowels of **Crystal Caves** (opposite), a subterranean world of stalactites and stalagmites



■ POPULATION: 5270

■ AREA: 1.86 SQ MILES

Water views abound in this parish, which wraps around scenic Harrington Sound. Bermuda's largest inland body of water, the sound is bordered to the south by Bermuda's most exclusive golf course, to the north by Bailey's Bay and to the west by Flatts Village. Peppered around the rest of the sound are fine upscale homes in enviable settings.

On the surface Harrington Sound has the appearance of a calm lake, but it is in fact a saltwater bay, connected to the sea by a narrow inlet at Flatts. In the village of Flatts, you'll find the island's most-visited sightseeing attraction. Environmentally distinguished and superbly presented, the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo should make it onto any itinerary, doubly so for those with kids. The village's quirky railway museum can also be fun.

The parish's second village, Bailey's Bay, is a geographic wonder potholed with grand limestone caves and caverns. Virtually every place in Bailey's Bay seems to center around them. A trail through the village's Blue Hole Park winds along a series of caverns; the Grotto Bay Hotel has two awesome caves right on its grounds; and if you want to see the champion of them all, there's mammoth Crystal Caves which can be visited on a guided tour.

Beaches are few in the parish, but Shelly Bay Park is a popular family spot as the waters are shallow and there is a cool playground and decent snorkeling. Kayaking, sailing and diving are all available at the Grotto Bay Hotel. Or for a uniquely Bermudian underwater adventure, consider a helmet dive with Bermuda Bell Diving in Flatts.

BAILEY'S BAY

Bailey's Bay, the tiny village on the north-eastern side of Hamilton Parish, offers an enjoyable little walking trail and an abundance of caves and water-filled grottoes. It also has an attractive beachside resort, a popular pub and one of Bermuda's most traditional restaurants. The village is easy to explore as all of Bailey's Bay's sights – Crystal Caves, Grotto Bay Beach Hotel and Blue Hole Park – are within walking distance of one another.

Information

The postage stamp-sized **Bailey's Bay Post Office** (☎ 293-2305; cnr Blue Hole Hill & Wilkinson Ave) closes for lunch from 11:30am to 1pm.

Sights

CRYSTAL CAVES

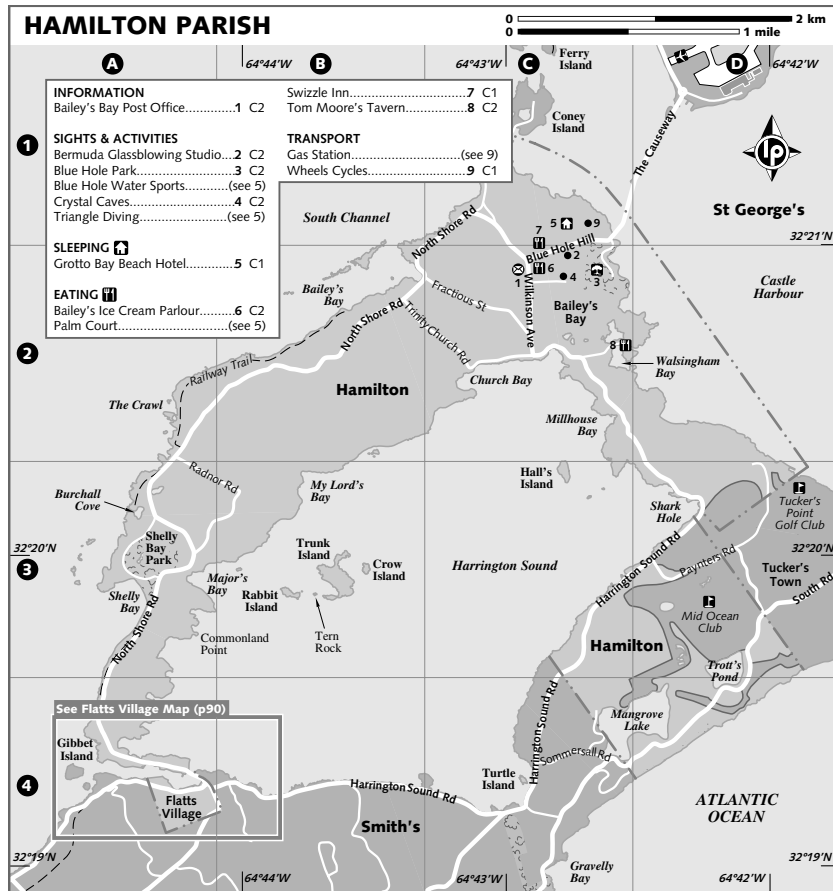
The most spectacular of the area's numerous caves is **Crystal Cave** (☎ 293-0640; Crystal Cave Rd; adult/child \$12/7; 🕒 9:30am-5:30pm May-Sep, to 4:30pm Oct-Apr), with its thousands of crystal-like stalactites hanging above a greenish-blue pond.

Despite its enormous size, this huge subterranean cavern wasn't even discovered until 1907 when two boys, intent on retrieving a stray cricket ball, dropped a rope through a hole in the ground, shimmied down and found themselves inside.

Today a series of 82 steps leads visitors 120ft below the surface, past stalactites and stalagmites and onto a pontoon walkway spanning the pond that fills the cave floor. The water, which reaches a depth of 55ft, is crystal clear and free of marine life and vegetation.

The tour guide provides commentary on the geological origins of the caves and points out odd formations that resemble profiles, including an amazing likeness of the Manhattan skyline. All in all, it's an enjoyable little excursion that takes about 20 minutes.

If you're absolutely fanatical about caves, there's another one on the property, **Fantasy Cave**, that you can visit for an additional \$6, but it's not nearly as interesting as Crystal. The caves are a few minutes' walk from the nearest bus stop on Wilkinson Ave.



BLUE HOLE PARK

You'd never realize this **nature reserve** (Blue Hole Hill; admission free; ☞ sunrise-sunset) was there if you hadn't already been told about it. Hidden at the south side of the road just before the causeway, this 12-acre reserve has a veritable treasure trove of limestone caverns and ponds. The main trail passes several very short spur paths that lead to marked sights. It's fun and easy to explore and the whole walk takes only 20 minutes for the roundtrip.

The trail begins along a paved service road at the west side of the reserve parking lot and almost immediately leads to a **bird-viewing platform** overlooking a small pond frequented by ducks and herons. Two minutes further along the trail, a 40ft side path

leads to **Causeway Cave**, a fern-draped open limestone cavern. Get back on the main trail and continue east to a clearing. Bear left here to find a couple of small coastal caves, or bear right to reach a deck overlooking the **Blue Grotto**, a pretty pond-like sunken cave.

BERMUDA GLASSBLOWING STUDIO

This **studio** (☎ 293-2234; 16 Blue Hole Hill; ☞ 10:30am-4:30pm Tue-Sat) is a little glassblowing workshop that produces decorative glassware, including flower vases, serving bowls, paperweights, Christmas tree ornaments and those ever-popular miniature tree frog figurines. The items are sold on site at moderate prices.

From the front of the store you can get a glimpse of the craftspeople blowing glass

in the back room; or pay \$3 to go back and watch the process up close.

Activities

WATER SPORTS

Triangle Diving (☎ 293-7319; www.trianglediving.com; 11 Blue Hole Hill; 1-/2-tank dives \$70/90; ☞ 9am-5pm) at the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel offers a full menu of diving, from night dives to daytime wreck and reef dives. If you're a novice they can take you underwater as well, with a 'Discover Scuba' half-day course (\$120) that gives you all the basics followed by an afternoon dive. Snorkelers can go out with divers to wreck and reef dives for \$30, or join a tour geared specifically for snorkelers for \$45.

Blue Hole Water Sports (☎ 293-2915; 11 Blue Hole Hill; s/d kayaks \$15/20; ☞ 9am-5pm) at the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel has a wide range of water sport rentals, including Sunfish sailboats (\$25). It is all set up right on the hotel's beach, which has decent snorkeling, and you can rent snorkel sets for \$6/\$18 per hour/day. If the wind's up, you can also come here to rent windsurfing gear (\$25) and windsurf right in front of the hotel. The windsurfing, kayak and sailboat rentals are all by the hour; if you want to go longer, add on \$10 for each additional hour.

TENNIS

Grotto Bay Beach Hotel (☎ 293-8333; 11 Blue Hole Hill; per court per hr \$12; ☞ 7am-11pm) has four Plexi-pave cork-based courts open to the public. Grotto Bay offers full wheelchair access to the courts, not only for spectator viewing

but for wheelchair tennis as well. The courts are lit for night use, racquets can be rented for \$4 a day and lessons are available.

Sleeping

Grotto Bay Beach Hotel (☎ 293-8333, in the USA ☎ 800-582-3190, in Canada ☎ 800-463-3190; www.grotto bay.com; 11 Blue Hole Hill; winter/summer from \$155/270; ☞ ☞ ☞) This place has a lot going for it: the grounds are spacious, there's a sandy beach, and it is a relaxed, smaller resort hotel. It's right on a bus stop, making it convenient to hop on a bus to either the City of Hamilton or the Town of St George. It boasts full resort facilities, including tennis courts, a water-sports center and even a sunken wreck to snorkel. All 201 rooms front the ocean, but ask for one on an upper floor for the best view.

Eating

Swizzle Inn (☎ 293-1854; 3 Blue Hole Hill; lunch \$7-15, dinner \$10-27; ☞ 11am-1am; ☞) With its motto – 'Swizzle Inn, Stagger Out' – this lively place lays claim to Bermuda's most highly touted rum swizzle. It packs a crowd of tourists and locals alike. In addition to those heady drinks, Swizzle serves up solid pub grub such as shepherd's pie or bangers and mash as well as thick steaks and specialty salads. There's both indoor and patio dining.

Bailey's Ice Cream Parlour (☎ 293-9333; Blue Hole Hill; cones from \$2.60, other items \$3-7; ☞ 11:30am-6:30pm; ☞ ☞) Opposite the Swizzle Inn, this cheery place serves up all-natural frozen treats and simple salads and sandwiches. Go island-style with the mango-passion sorbet or, for a rich and tangy indulgence, try a scoop of the rum-and-ginger ice cream – both made right on the premises.

Tom Moore's Tavern (☎ 293-8020; Walsingham Rd off Harrington Sound Rd; appetizers \$12-19, mains \$27-34; ☞ dinner; ☞ ☞) This secluded waterfront tavern, Bermuda's oldest eating house, dates to 1652. A favorite for fine dining, it takes its name from the Irish poet who lived here in 1804. Meals are served in several atmospheric rooms. The award-winning menu is continental with a French accent, filled with the likes of foie gras, quail in puff pastry and rack of lamb. Jackets are suggested.

Palm Court (☎ 293-8333; 11 Blue Hole Hill; appetizers \$6-12, mains \$20-27; ☞ dinner; ☞ ☞) The Grotto Bay Beach Hotel's dinner restaurant combines an ocean view, tropical decor and

THE NAME GAME

As you travel around Bermuda you might begin to notice something unusual about people's homes. House numbers are quite scarce, and in their place there's often a decorative nameplate with a single quirky word. Bermudians commonly name, rather than number, their houses. But these aren't common names. If you begin to detect a pattern, but can't quite crack it, here's the scoop: when a couple moves in to a new home, they commonly take the first syllable of each of their names and put them together. So, for instance, Sylvia and Dennis might name their house Syl den, and William and Barbara might christen their home Wilbar.

island flavors. Appetizers include Bermuda chowder, salads and codfish bites, while the main course focuses on steak and seafood. The catch of the day is always a good bet.

Entertainment

Swizzle Inn (☎ 293-1854; 3 Blue Hole Hill; ☎ 11am-1am; ☒) This is the place! The bar stays open until 1am every night of the week, and in summer there's music and dancing from 9pm till closing. Wednesday is set aside for karaoke; at other times it's a mix of jazz, folk, country and reggae. There's also billiards, darts and sports on TV.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Both the northern (bus Nos 10 and 11) and the southern (bus Nos 1 and 3) bus routes around Harrington Sound converge at Bailey's Bay, making the village easy to reach on any bus traveling between the City of Hamilton (\$4.50, 30 minutes) and the Town of St George (\$3, 20 minutes). At least one of these buses operates every 15 minutes from 6:45am to 7pm; bus No 11 provides evening service once an hour until 11:45pm (10:45pm on Sunday). For more information on public buses, including passes, see the Transport (p155) section in the back of the book.

MOTOR SCOOTER

Scooter rentals (p157) are available at **Wheels Cycles** (☎ 293-2378; 17 Blue Hole Hill), at the gas station east of the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel.

FLATTS VILLAGE

The village of Flatts surrounds scenic Flatts Inlet and is home to one of the island's premier attractions – the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo.

In times past, Flatts had a reputation as a smugglers' haven, and Gibbet Island, the islet off Flatts, was once used for the execution of islanders accused of witchcraft. Today, Flatts' yacht-filled harbor shows little trace of that more sordid past. The bridge that crosses over the inlet is a good vantage point for views of the harbor and of the rapidly moving tidal waters that rush through the inlet to and from Harrington Sound.

Information

There's an **ATM** (6 North Shore Rd) next to Four Star Pizza and a **post office** (☎ 292-0741; 65 Middle Rd) not too far from the village center.

Sights

BERMUDA AQUARIUM, MUSEUM & ZOO

Bermuda's premier natural attraction, the **Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo** (BAMZ; ☎ 293-2727; www.bamz.org; 40 North Shore Rd; adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 9am-5pm), wraps three superb sights under a single roof. It's a blast for kids of any age.

It goes a lot deeper than just great visuals, as the BAMZ has won international recognition for its work in species preservation and for its efforts to increase awareness of pressing environmental issues.

Start at the **aquarium** where a dazzling array of tanks, each arranged to show a microcosm

OLD RATTLE & SHAKE

During the 1920s, British administrators in Bermuda decided that the island was ripe for a rail system. Locals, who were skeptical of the proposal, gave only tepid support, so the government turned to investors in England to provide the funding.

The complications in executing the project were great. People on land-scarce Bermuda didn't want to give up their property, so the railroad had to be erected largely along the coast, making it less than central. Then there were the engineering challenges: some 33 trestle bridges, half of them over water, had to be constructed along the 21 miles of track. By the time the first train left the station in 1931, the cost of the project had reached a lofty UK£1,000,000, making it one of the most expensive railways, on a per-mile basis, ever built.

The railway never caught on among islanders and quickly became a financial albatross. The reasons were numerous; the placement of the stations wasn't ideal and many people preferred to continue traveling by ferry. Still, most significant of all was the impact of WWII, which introduced the private automobile to Bermudian roads, and also made it difficult for railway operators to obtain spare parts and maintain equipment.

By 1946, Bermuda's little railroad, which by then had been dubbed 'old rattle and shake,' was in such dire straits that the government took it over from its private owners. Passenger counts continued to drop, and on December 31, 1947, the train made its last run.

The engines and cars were packed up and shipped off to British Guiana the next year. After that, most of the track was simply forgotten, though a few miles of it that ran through urban areas were buried to create automobile roads. In 1984 the government set aside the remaining sections of the old railway route for foot and bridle paths, and today the Railway Trail is the most extensive trail in Bermuda, thanks to the follies of the past.

of Bermuda's underwater ecosystem, displays some 200 species of fish and corals. This is an ideal place to identify some of the colorful tropical fish you've seen while snorkeling or taking a glass-bottom boat cruise. Labels on the tanks identify brilliant wrasses, rainbow parrotfish, spotted pufferfish, jazzy trumpetfish and toothy moray eels, among others.

The 140,000-gallon 'North Rock' tank, the aquarium's centerpiece, contains a slice of a reef complete with brilliant corals and circling sharks and barracuda. Another mammoth fish in the tank is the Nassau grouper, which was once common in Bermuda's waters, but now fished to commercial extinction.

The **zoo's** design replicates a natural habitat as closely as possible while bringing visitors up close to the creatures on display. The fantastic 'Islands of the Caribbean,' a netted walk-through exhibit covering one side of the property, is the nearest thing to a cage-free zoo. Enter the double screen doors and find yourself on a winding path with golden lion tamarins scurrying by, a two-toed sloth hanging from a tree above and brilliant scarlet ibis winging about.

Almost as much fun is 'Islands of Australasia,' another walk-through exhibit that brings you eye-to-eye with wallabies, tree

kangaroos, a monitor lizard and various nocturnal creatures – though in this one a glass enclosure separates you from the animals.

For those who like the tactile approach, don't miss 'Local Tails,' with its touch pool, and of special interest to young children is the 'Discovery Room' with its hands-on displays and games.

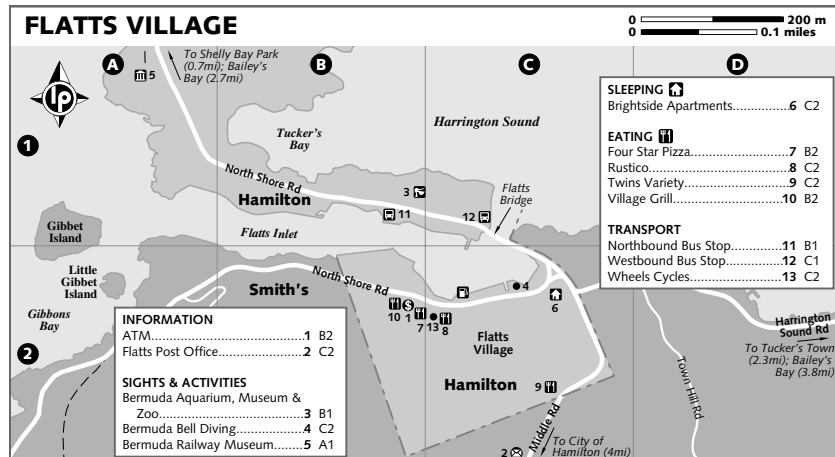
Other oohs and ahhs: catch the flock of rosy flamingos; peek into the alligator pen; and get up close to the Galápagos tortoises. The Bermuda Zoo, incidentally, was the first to breed these giant turtles in captivity and many of the tortoises you see here have offspring in North American and UK zoos.

Although it's hard to compete with all the action elsewhere on the grounds, the renovated **natural history museum** does a fine job of bringing the island's geological origins and diverse ecology alive through interactive displays. Be sure to give it at least a peek.

Allow yourself two to three hours to take in all the sights here. The entire facility, including exhibits and restrooms, is wheelchair accessible.

BERMUDA RAILWAY MUSEUM

Housed in a building that once served as a railway station, this little **museum** (☎ 293-1774;



37 North Shore Rd; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri) has an audio presentation, a collection of period photos and a few other items relating to Bermuda's railroad, but it's largely a curiosity shop with consignment antiques such as old bottles, porcelain, and oil lamps. You can also buy a reprinted map (\$5) that shows Bermuda's former rail routes and details the rail's curious history.

The railway museum is a 10-minute walk north of the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo, but consider taking the northbound bus (just one stop), which stops in front of both sites, as the busy road is narrow and without sidewalks.

Activities

HIKING

If you're up for a hike, one section of the old **Railway Trail** (p34) starts, not surprisingly, right at the grounds of the Bermuda Railway Museum. You can follow it northeast for 3 miles to the east end of Hamilton Parish, passing the beach at Shelly Bay and scenic coastal areas along Bailey's Bay.

HELMET DIVING

Bermuda Bell Diving (☎ 292-4434; North Shore Rd; dives \$60; ☎ departures 10am & 2pm Apr-Nov) offers one of the more unusual water experiences, allowing visitors to don a helmet with an air hose and walk around underwater past shallow coral reefs. You don't even need to know how to swim, as you're actually walking on the sea floor, and not swimming. For someone who has never seen beneath the surface of the water, it's a real thrill.

Sleeping

Brightside Apartments (☎ 292-8410; www.bermuda.com/brightside; 38 North Shore Rd; r \$100, 1-1/2-bed-room apt from \$140/200; ☎ ☎ ☎) Garden-like grounds, picturesque water views of Flatts Inlet and friendly management await at this family-run place. Rates are the same year-round, which makes it a particularly good deal in summer. Select from a basic room with a microwave and refrigerator, or apartment units with full kitchens.

Eating

Rustico (☎ 295-5212; 8 North Shore Rd; lunch \$9-14, dinner \$12-26; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎) This reasonably-priced restaurant does it all. It's family-style with Italian decor and a menu to match. The

kids can order sandwiches and pizza while hungry adults can opt for hearty steaks and seafood. Plenty of tasty pastas as well.

Village Grill (☎ 296-3634; 4 North Shore Rd; mains \$5-15; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun; ☎) Flatts' only breakfast option, the Village Grill serves up omelettes and pancakes in the morning, and awesome grilled chicken sandwiches, big burgers and old-fashioned codfish cakes at other times.

Four Star Pizza (☎ 292-9111; 6 North Shore Rd; pizza \$13-28; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun; ☎ ☎) If you just want American-style pizza or some spicy honey-mustard chicken wings, head here. You can eat in, take out or have it delivered.

Twins Variety (☎ 292-4583; 5 Middle Rd; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat) This is the most convenient place to pick up groceries.

Shopping

Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo (BAMZ; ☎ 293-2727; www.bamz.org; 40 North Shore Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) The well-stocked gift shop here is the perfect place to pick up cheery souvenirs while supporting island conservation efforts. Among the many items you'll find are quality environmentally-themed T-shirts, stuffed animals, nature books and waterproof fish ID cards that are handy for snorkeling.

Getting There & Around

BUS

From the City of Hamilton, bus No 3 goes to Flatts via Middle Rd, and bus Nos 10 and 11 run to Flatts via North Shore Rd. Traveling east from Flatts, bus Nos 10 and 11 continue through the north side of Hamilton Parish along the north shore, and Bus No 3 goes along the south side of Harrington Sound. All three buses go on to Bailey's Bay and the Town of St George.

At least one of these buses connects Flatts with both Hamilton (\$3, 20 minutes) and St George (\$4.50, 30 minutes) every 15 minutes from 6:45am to 7pm; bus No 11 provides evening service once an hour until 11:45pm (10:45pm on Sunday). For more information on public buses, including passes, see p155.

MOTOR SCOOTER

Scooters can be rented at **Wheels Cycles** (☎ 292-0388; 6 North Shore Rd) in the back of Four Star Pizza.

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