

# History

A speck in the remote mid-Atlantic, Bermuda was well outside early migration routes and remained unsettled before its discovery by European explorers.

Bermuda takes its name from Spanish sea captain Juan de Bermúdez, who sighted the islands around 1503. The Spanish, in search of gold in the Americas, took no interest in colonizing the sparse island chain. In fact, there is no indication that the Spanish ever deliberately landed on Bermuda in the 16th century, although misadventures at sea cast them ashore at least a few times.

Spanish galleons sailing between Cuba and Spain commonly set a course north past Florida and then east out to sea. Although the extensive reefs surrounding Bermuda posed a potential hazard to their ships, there were no other islands in the mid-Atlantic that sea captains could use to take bearings, so Bermuda became a vital navigational landmark. Once Bermuda was spotted, the ship's course could be reset east-northeast to follow a straight line to the Azores and Spain.

In fair weather, sailing past Bermuda was usually uneventful. However, powerful storms occasionally swept ships off their intended course and onto Bermuda's shallow reefs. Scores of Spanish ships, their hulls loaded with bullion, never completed their journey home from the New World. Today you can see some of the gold booty recovered from the wrecks at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (p63).

The treacherous reefs gained such a reputation among mariners that by the mid-16th century Bermuda was appearing on Spanish charts with the nickname 'Islas Demonios,' or 'Isles of Devils.'

## EARLY SETTLERS

On June 2, 1609, Admiral Sir George Somers of the Virginia Company set sail from England with nine ships carrying supplies and colonists to the recently established British settlement at Jamestown, Virginia.

Somers, who was in command of the flagship *Sea Venture*, got caught in a fierce storm and lost contact with the rest of his fleet. The *Sea Venture*, badly damaged by the storm, shipwrecked on a reef three-quarters of a mile off Bermuda's eastern shore. Using skiffs, all 150 people on board managed to safely come ashore.

The castaways salvaged wreckage from the *Sea Venture* and began construction of two new ships. Aware of the gloomy Spanish accounts of the island, the shipwrecked Brits expected the worst, but instead found Bermuda surprisingly agreeable. Native cedar trees provided timber for the new ships, palmetto palms supplied thatch for shelters and the abundant nearshore fish proved easy to catch.

In 1610, the two new ships, the *Deliverance* and the *Patience*, set sail to continue the journey to Jamestown, leaving a couple of men behind on Bermuda to establish an English claim.

Back in England, the officers of the Virginia Company took a keen interest in reports on the island's suitability for colonization. The fact

Bermuda is the oldest continually inhabited English settlement in the New World.

Although the name failed to stick, the British christened the islands the Somers Islands in honor of the English admiral who shipwrecked here.

## TIMELINE 1503

Bermuda is first sighted by Spanish explorer Juan de Bermúdez

## 1609

Admiral George Somers shipwrecks on Bermuda's shoals with 150 passengers and spends the rest of the year on the island

that Bermuda was uninhabited weighed heavily in its favor, especially in light of the Indian sieges that decimated the Jamestown settlement. The Virginia Company amended its charter to include Bermuda in its New World holdings, and organized a party of 60 settlers to establish a permanent colony there.

The settlers landed on Bermuda in 1612, led by Governor Richard Moore, an able carpenter who went about building the village of St George. In 1620, the parliamentary State House (p75), which can still be seen today, began to hold meetings of the colonial legislature.

Bermuda was divided into parishes, each named for a stockholder of the Virginia Company, and plots of land were leased to settlers. Crops were planted, but agriculture was limited by the shallowness of the topsoil and the reliance upon rainwater as the sole water source. In the end, Bermuda became reliant upon food imports from the American colonies to augment its meager harvests.

The Virginia Company ruled Bermuda like a fiefdom, telling people what crops to grow, monopolizing trade and forcing those who violated their rules into indentured servitude. Over time, the settlers grew weary of the restrictions and took their case to London, where they successfully sued to have the charter rescinded in 1684. Bermuda was then ruled as a British crown colony in much the same vein as the American colonies.

Slavery, the norm on British colonies, was introduced to Bermuda in 1616. Although the vast majority of slaves came from Africa, there were also Mahican Indians taken from the American colonies. The Atlantic crossings were so brutally inhumane that many of the slaves, chained in the ships' suffocating hulls, died en route.

The dehumanizing conditions continued after arrival, permeating every aspect of life and even following into death. Slaves were buried in their own part of the cemetery, away from whites, and you can still see walls separating the two as you stroll around old churchyards such as St Peter's (p73) in the Town of St George.

Degrading as the conditions were, they were not as horrendous as in other New World colonies. Most of the slaves in Bermuda did not end up toiling in sweltering fields, but were put to work as servants, construction workers and sailors. Some became skilled tradespeople and were able to pass their skills on to their children, assuring them opportunities in the trades long after the end of slavery.

By the early 1800s, the antislavery movement was gaining widespread support. The British Parliament passed legislation in 1807 that outlawed

In the 17th century, Bermudians ran a sea-salt business in the Turks Islands, with nearly 1000 Bermudian colonists and slaves working 900 miles from home.

Slavery was abolished in Bermuda 31 years earlier than in the United States of America.

### SINK OR HANG

The witchcraft hysteria that swept Europe and America in the 17th century hit Bermuda as well. The first death sentence imposed upon a 'witch' in Bermuda was in 1651, when a woman accused of evildoing was given a 'trial' in which her feet and hands were tied and she was thrown into the ocean.

The fact that the woman managed to float 'confirmed' she was indeed a witch, and she was subsequently hanged. Bermudians continued searching for witches in their midst until the hysteria ended in the 1690s.

### THE ONION PATCH

Onions were first planted in Bermuda in 1616, though large-scale cultivation did not start until the 1830s. By the late 19th century, exported Bermuda onions had become so well known, particularly in New York markets, that Bermuda was nicknamed the 'Onion Patch' and Bermudians themselves were sometimes lightheartedly referred to as 'Onions.'

The onion biz ground to a halt as competition from 'Bermuda onions' grown in Texas swamped North American markets in the early 1900s. And a loss of Bermuda farmland to growing numbers of homes and hotels sealed the demise of onion exports. Indeed, there are indications that as early as 1908, Bermuda was importing the famed 'Bermuda onions' from Texas!

the sale of slaves, and phased out slavery itself over a broader period. By 1834 all slaves in Bermuda were emancipated.

### BRITISH-US INFLUENCES

Historically, Bermuda was often put in a tight spot as it struggled to balance its close trade relationship with America against its political bonds with Britain.

During the War of 1812, the British Navy used Bermuda as a base to launch the Chesapeake Bay Campaign that torched the US White House and much of Washington DC. The Americans took revenge where they could. Under the rules of war practiced during the period, American ships were free to confiscate the cargo of any ship flying the British flag. Bermuda provided lucrative booty for American privateers, who made an easy catch of Bermuda's merchant fleet, devastating the island's trade-dependent economy.

The US Civil War (1861-65), on the other hand, provided a boon for Bermuda, which was thrust into the lucrative role as a center for blockade-runners. The Confederacy depended upon the sale of cotton to England's clothing mills to finance its rebellion, but had become forced to employ small, fast vessels to outrun the gunboats of the northern navy. These vessels could not handle transatlantic shipping, so Bermuda became an intermediate port. The Town of St George enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, its waterside warehouses overflowing with goods, its shops and taverns catering to mariners carrying fat wads of cash. Traders made fortunes until the northern forces became victorious in 1865 and Bermuda, which had sided with the south, saw its shipping industry all but collapse.

During WWII, Bermuda's strategic mid-Atlantic location made it a center for Allied military and intelligence operations. It was a port for Britain's Royal Navy, which patrolled the Atlantic for German submarines that threatened vital US-UK shipping lanes. The USA also established a substantial presence in Bermuda, most notably with the construction of an air base on St David's Island. The base, some 1040 acres in all, was so large it added 1.25 sq miles to the island in the form of reclaimed land, boosting Bermuda's total landmass by more than 5%.

### POSTWAR CHANGES

In the wake of WWII, many of the old colonial assumptions that prevailed in the British Empire were called into question. In Bermuda, long-held

*Rogues & Runners: Bermuda and the American Civil War* by the Bermuda National Trust provides a colorful account of St George's heyday, complete with period photos.

Fascinating historical documents, photographs and period maps can be found at [www.rootsweb.com/~bmuwgv/bermuda.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/~bmuwgv/bermuda.htm).

1612

The first permanent English settlers arrive on Bermuda and begin building the Town of St George

1616

The first slaves are brought to Bermuda

1812

Bermuda serves as a base for the British attack on Washington DC in the War of 1812

1834

Slavery is abolished and blacks on Bermuda are emancipated

political and economic preferences given to white males, at the expense of women and blacks, came under fire.

Although blacks were granted the right to vote in the 19th century, franchise qualifications kept them from achieving significant political power. Indeed, in the 100 years between emancipation and WWII, only a dozen blacks were elected to parliament. Women, on the other hand, were completely blocked from the political arena until 1944, when they got the right to vote. Even then, voter registration for both sexes was restricted to property owners, leaving fewer than 3000 Bermudians eligible to vote.

Blacks in Bermuda faced policies of segregation similar to those in the USA – with the exception that Bermudian blacks were well entrenched in the trades. In the 1950s, buoyed by their clout in the trade movement, black Bermudians began to emerge as a political and social power to be reckoned with.

In 1959, intent on putting an end to segregation, blacks boycotted movie theaters and restaurants, forcing those businesses to accept integration. Under pressure, hotels and other businesses that had practiced discriminatory hiring began to open job opportunities to blacks.

In 1960, a grassroots movement called the Committee for Universal Suffrage started a campaign to extend voting rights to the 75% of the adult population that didn't own 'qualifying property.' Conservatives, unable to block the movement, settled for an amendment to the legislation giving property owners the right to cast two votes. Still, in the 1963 general election, every adult Bermudian could finally vote.

Before universal suffrage was introduced, Bermuda's political arena so narrowly represented the interest of white landowners that it was free of political parties and rival platforms. In 1963, the first political party in Bermuda, the Progressive Labour Party (PLP), formed to represent the interests of nonwhite Bermudians.

The PLP won support from newly enfranchised voters and captured six house seats in 1963. Many of the remaining independent members, wary of the potential bloc vote that the PLP could cast, united to form a counter party, the United Bermuda Party (UBP), which appealed to businesspeople.

#### TWAIN AND THE PRINCESS

Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria and wife of the Governor General of Canada, is credited with putting Bermuda on the map for North American tourists. Anxious to escape cold Canadian winters, the princess paid an extended visit to Bermuda in 1883. The press took note of her stay, and journalists, including perennial traveler Mark Twain, followed in her wake. In 1884, Bermuda's first seaside resort – named, not surprisingly, the Princess Hotel – opened in Hamilton.

In his golden years, Twain himself became a frequent traveler to Bermuda, making annual journeys to the island. It was, in fact, the last place he ever visited; Twain set sail from Bermuda just nine days before his death in 1910.

By the early 20th century, Bermuda was becoming a trendy winter destination for 'snow birds,' who flocked aboard steamers sailing from New York. The winter crossing, when stormy Atlantic seas are common, was rough enough that Twain compared his journey to 'going through hell' in order to reach paradise.

Duncan McDonald's *Another World? Bermuda and the Rise of Modern Tourism* provides a vivid understanding of how Bermuda came to be the hospitable sanctuary it is today.

The most comprehensive and authoritative history book on Bermuda is *The Story of Bermuda and Her People*, by William S Zuill – and it's a good read too.

#### COME AND GONE

In March 1941, British authorities intent on having the USA develop Allied bases on Bermuda signed a 99-year lease giving the US military a substantial chunk of Bermudian real estate. Bermudians, who were not privy to the negotiations, were so taken aback by the lengthy term of the lease and the magnitude of territory involved that rumors Bermuda was on the verge of being taken over as a US possession ran wild.

While the USA had no intention of laying claim to Bermuda, its presence did bring rapid change to the sleepy colony. Scores of Bermudians found work on military construction projects, including the building of Bermuda's first airport. The US military introduced the widespread use of motor vehicles, which had previously been forbidden from Bermuda's streets. After the war, the airport opened to civilian traffic (yes, it's the very airport you land at today), giving islanders easy access to the US East Coast and opening Bermuda up as a weekend getaway for American tourists.

With the end of the Cold War, US bases in Bermuda no longer filled any legitimate military need. In September 1995, the USA ended its military presence in Bermuda, returning 1330 acres, some 10% of Bermuda's total landmass, to the island government.

Under encouragement from Britain, the UBP, PLP and independent parliamentary members joined together to produce a constitution, which took effect in 1968. The new constitution provided for full internal self-government on domestic matters from health to immigration, leaving control of security, defense and diplomatic affairs to the crown.

#### QUESTION OF INDEPENDENCE

After hammering out a constitution, independence from Britain became the dominant issue in island politics. Both political parties took at least tepid stances supporting independence but in August 1995, when it was finally put to a vote, a mere 25% of Bermudians voted in favor of breaking ties with Britain. In the end many Bermudians were apprehensive about the potential costs of independence.

Bermuda's long history of political and social conservatism undoubtedly played a role in the vote. Employment concerns also weighed into the decision to stick with the status quo, as many of the foreign companies operating in Bermuda let it be known they found security in the current system of British law.

With its absence of corporate taxes, Bermuda lures an ever-growing number of overseas financial operations to its shores. Over 300 international companies maintain at least a limited physical presence in Bermuda, including mutual funds services, investment holding firms and companies specializing in reinsurance, a type of insurance that protects conventional insurers against natural disasters. Among them are such heavyweights as Tyco, XL Capital and ACE Insurance. In addition, some 13,000 international businesses have no presence on the island but are registered in Bermuda, mostly to gain shelter from tax authorities and regulators elsewhere.

Bermuda is one of just a handful of remaining British overseas dependencies that include scattered outposts like the Falkland Islands and volcano-ravaged Montserrat.

In 2000, Unesco designated the historic Town of St George as a World Heritage site.

1884

The first seaside resort – the Princess Hotel – opens for visitors

1941

Bermuda becomes a key military base for American forces patrolling against German U-boats in the Atlantic

1963

For the first time all adult Bermudians have the right to vote

1995

Bermudians resoundingly vote against independence from Britain

# The Culture

## THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Bermudians are generally quite conservative and pride themselves on old traditions. They like to make conversation on many contemporary topics, and will play the devil's advocate, but in the end they don't embrace abrupt changes. Perhaps nothing personifies this attitudes more than the vote about independence from Britain. In the years leading up to the vote, political leaders voiced support for independence and talk on the street leaned the same way, but when people finally slipped into the privacy of the voting booths 75% of them voted to keep things the way they were.

Traditional British influences permeate many aspects of society. Politicians and judges still wear powdered wigs, bobbies direct traffic, afternoon tea is a ritual and a pint of ale at the local pub is a common way to cap off a day's work. Cricket is Bermuda's most popular sport. Fashion and manners, not surprisingly, remain conservatively British.

But there is a distinct island flavor to it all. There's a friendliness and warmth to people. They will readily strike up a conversation with a stranger on the bus. And they're not rushed...as a matter of fact, getting there in a good mood is more important than getting there on time. Indeed, some Western businesspeople in Bermuda have recently coined the term 'Bermuda time' to mean 15 minutes later than the appointed time.

## LIFESTYLE

Things do change in Bermuda, though ever so slowly. Families are getting smaller; the average size of a household has dropped from three people in 1980 to just 2½ people today. Because of spiraling housing costs, people don't leave home at a young age, and it's not uncommon for 30-year-olds to still be living with their parents.

Religion plays an important role in Bermudians' lives, and three out of four people opt to marry in the church. Still, marriage is not as universal as it's been in the past and some 40% of children are now born out of wedlock. Partly as a response to what some islanders see as a slip in moral values, fundamentalist religious sects are winning over members from more liberal churches.

The head of state is Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. She appoints a governor to represent her in Bermuda, but the role is largely symbolic.

Bermuda banned automobiles in 1906 after a mufferless car spooked several horses, and it managed without them until 1946 when automobile ownership was finally legalized.

## DOS & DON'TS

- Do be polite. Courtesy goes a long way in Bermuda. Never stop someone on the street for directions without first greeting them with 'good morning' or 'good afternoon.' Even ordering a drink from a bar should be prefaced with a friendly greeting.
- Don't wear bathing suits or skimpy beachwear any place other than the beach or swimming pool. Nude and partially nude (topless for women) bathing are not permitted anywhere in Bermuda.
- Don't be impatient. Things go a bit slower in Bermuda and people don't like being prodded. Be abrupt with the waiter and instead of your food arriving quicker, it may take even longer to arrive.
- Do tip the taxi driver. A 15% service charge is added to the bill at some restaurants, but if it's not, that's an appropriate tip to leave.
- Don't leave the water running. Most of Bermuda's household water comes from rain catchments, and it's scarce, so residents are very sensitive to conservation attitudes.

## BERMEWJAN CHINWAG

Bermudians speak English with a local lilt that resembles that of some Caribbean islanders, and with a predominantly British accent.

Bermudian slang is colorful, lively and gives an interesting glimpse into the way folks relate to everyday friends and family. Its use is still common among islanders even though it's not nearly as widespread today as it was in decades past, in part due to the pervasive influence of overseas media, particularly American TV. Don't expect to hear much slang in formal settings, such as at the hotel front desk or in shops and restaurants, where polite proper English is the norm. Walk by a construction site where workers are chatting among themselves, however, and the conversation will inevitably be peppered with bits of the local vernacular.

With Bermudian slang you'll find a few distinct peculiarities. The interchange of 'w' for 'v' is not uncommon, so that 'welcome' is often pronounced as 'velcome.' Sometimes 'ing' is shortened to 'in' ('wedding' thus becomes 'veddin') and the ending 'th' is sometimes spoken as 'f' ('with' becomes 'vif').

'Um, um' at the start of a sentence is used a delay tactic, like 'uh... ' or 'let me see.'

Common island expressions include:

**ace boy** best buddy; used when talking about a good friend  
**axe** to ask, such as 'axe and I'll tell you'  
**back of town** also known as de block; the northern back streets of the City of Hamilton, around Court St  
**baillin** bathing suit  
**Bermewjan** Bermudian  
**black** short for the island-made Gosling's Black Seal Rum  
**black and coke** a drink made of Gosling's Black Seal Rum and Coca-Cola  
**blinds** a pair of sunglasses  
**boss** form of addressing friends, as in 'hey, boss, what's up?'  
**burr** beer  
**byes an gals** boys and girls  
**chinwag** chat, have a conversation, gossip  
**chyl-up** knock up, or get your girlfriend pregnant  
**crucial** couldn't be better, excellent  
**de Rock** the Rock (referring to all of Bermuda)  
**daddy and mummy** one's parents

**ease me up** give me a break  
**full hot** drunk. And then there's half hot, meaning just a little drunk  
**get hot** going out to tie one on, get drunk  
**going tawn** going to town (meaning going to the City of Hamilton)  
**greeze** food, quick eats, as in 'I'm going out for some greeze'  
**gribble** to be cranky or ornery, as in 'why you so gribble?'  
**gumvit** Bermuda's government  
**have an attitude** in a bad mood  
**how you sound** what's wrong?  
**missin** daydreamin', not paying attention  
**shrew** having intercourse, going all the way; sometimes 'shrew de trees'  
**took licks** got banged up in a fight  
**vexed** pissed off  
**waxed** angry; another term for vexed  
**woffless** totally without merit

Bermudians tend to be conservative on social issues and tolerance for alternative lifestyles has never been widespread – simply put, Bermuda is not the most comfortable place to be a firebrand radical, embrace a hippie lifestyle, espouse atheism, or be openly gay, for that matter. Perhaps this is in part because the population is so small that anything different sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb.

A mild undertone of chauvinism still exists in some circles but women have made great strides in the workplace and in political arenas. Some make it all the way to the top to be CEOs, but as a group they are still underrepresented.

Bermuda's workplace is fully racially integrated, but some refer to it as a 'nine to five' integration, noting that many folks, particularly in the older generation, tend to socialize with people of their own race.

The average income is \$44,000 and the median household income is \$72,000. The middle class makes up about 50% of the population, and the rest is evenly divided between the wealthy and the lower class. Not

Traditional Bermudian weddings have two cakes. The bride's is a fruitcake decorated with silver leaf; the groom's is a pound cake with gold leaf.

**SHORT AND DAPPER**

You may have to stifle a giggle at your first sight of a businessman decked out in short pants and tall socks – with a bit of hairy knee showing through – but it's all very right and proper in Bermuda.

Unlike other places around the world where this nearly knee-length style of shorts is equated with casual wear, in Bermuda its namesake shorts are an element of formal dress for men. The rest of the outfit consists of knee socks, a dress shirt, a dapper tie and a smart-looking jacket – all essential parts of the whole. It's got to be put together with style, too. The shorts and jacket should be different colors – pink is a favorite hue – while the socks can complement either.

The shorts, incidentally, were inspired by British soldiers in tropical outposts such as India, who took to trimming the lower half of the legs off their trousers to make their uniforms more bearable in the heat. By the early 20th century, British soldiers stationed in Bermuda were wearing such shorts as standard uniform, and in the years that followed the more upscale Bermudian version began to make an appearance.

Today, Bermuda shorts are standard wear for male bankers, insurance executives, government officials and other conservatively dressed community leaders.

surprisingly, the wealthy tend to own waterfront property or live near the fanciest golf courses. Lower-class neighborhoods are found at the north side of the City of Hamilton but are also scattered around the island. Most people in Bermuda do live in those charming pastel houses you see everywhere – it's just that in the richer areas they're fancier, bigger (often mansion-like) and better maintained, while in the less well-to-do neighborhoods they are smaller, closer together and more likely to need a fresh coat of paint. There are no pockets of abject poverty in Bermuda, however, and no real ghettos. Travelers may run into the occasional panhandler, especially in Hamilton's 'back of town,' but it's not very common.

Bermudians find dignity in all sorts of work. Driving a taxicab is not a low-life job; as a matter of fact, it's not unusual to find a retired executive driving a cab part time. The trades are unionized, and organized labor has a lot of clout. And there's a distinctive Bermudian angle to how they go about their business. Bus drivers, for instance, may stage a partial-day strike if they're unhappy with contract negotiations but they'll typically wait until mid-morning to stop the buses and then resume their runs in time to pick up the children when school gets out for the day.

Drugs are considered the big spoiler in Bermudian society today and illegal drug use has been on a rapid rise. It's affected people's lives in a lot of ways; thefts and house burglaries, once rare, have increased significantly in recent years. And reports of violent crime among drug users and gang members are now common news items in the local papers.

**POPULATION**

Bermuda has no large urban centers. Nonetheless, as it has a limited amount of space, the population density is one of the world's highest. But the bottom line is, it's a small population. With just 62,000 residents, Bermuda would rank as a small town in most countries.

The population is fairly evenly scattered around the island, with 18% of all residents living in Pembroke Parish, which contains the City of Hamilton. The other eight parishes each contain approximately 8% to 14% of the total population.

Celebrities are paid scant attention in Bermuda. Islanders consider it rude to ask for autographs and totally uncouth to gawk.

More billionaires have second homes in Bermuda, per capita, than in any other place in the world.

**SPORTS**

No sport fires up passions more in Bermuda than the game of cricket. It's the primary spectator sport played between April and September, with matches taking place at cricket fields around the island every Sunday. Just turn to the sports section of any local paper for details and schedules.

Football (soccer) and rugby are the most popular spectator sports from September to April. Local competitions take place around the island every Sunday, with the biggest meets for both sports held at the National Sports Centre (p102) in Devonshire.

Bermudians also take a keen interest in major sailing events and golf tournaments; see p144 for more on major sporting events.

**MULTICULTURALISM**

Three-quarters of all people living on the island were born in Bermuda. Of those who are foreign-born, about 30% were born in the UK, 25% in the USA, 12% in the Azores or Portugal, 10% in Canada and 10% in the Caribbean.

Blacks, most of whom are the descendants of slaves, have been in the majority since colonial times and comprise 61% of the population. Most of the remainder of the population is white, but there's also a small minority that is of Native American descent. The races get along in relative harmony and workplaces are well integrated, though the top executive positions still go disproportionately to whites.

**MEDIA**

Bermuda has a free independent press. Local TV programming is limited, government-funded and careful not to offend any of its constituents. For instance, you'll seldom see anything critical of unions, and even an impromptu bus strike might go unreported on the nightly news.

**RELIGION**

The majority of islanders are Christian but there's a shift taking place from the established old-guard sects to more charismatic evangelical churches. The number of people affiliated with the Anglican church has dropped to 23% (from 45% in 1970), though it remains the largest denomination. This is followed by Roman Catholic at 15%, African Methodist Episcopal at 11% and Seventh-Day Adventist at 7%. Other houses of worship in Bermuda include Methodist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Pentecostal and Christian Science.

**WOMEN IN BERMUDA**

Considering Bermuda's conservative past, and the fact that women didn't even have the right to vote until 1944, Bermuda has made impressive strides in women's issues. Girls and boys have similar educational opportunities, with a level playing field when it comes to funding for sports and academic scholarships. Female executives are commonplace in both Bermudian and multinational companies. And they've made such an impact on the political front that two of Bermuda's last three governments have been led by female premiers.

**ARTS  
Dance**

Gombey dancing, unique to Bermuda, has roots in West African tribal music and also incorporates influences from Christian missionaries, the British military and, most visibly, Native Americans.

The Bermuda National Trust's website at [www.bnt.bm](http://www.bnt.bm) has information on the island's cultural heritage.

If you happen to be in Bermuda on Good Friday, you might be surprised to find the skies above the beaches teeming with colorful kites. Kite-flying is a traditional family activity on that day.

Bermudian law requires that a woman wear a cover-up over her bikini top when she's more than 25 yards from the beach.

A Gombey group traditionally consists of men and boys, referred to as a 'crowd.' The young boys are called 'warriors' and wear short capes and carry wooden tomahawks. Older boys are called 'Indians' and carry bows and arrows, and the head males, or 'chiefs,' wear long capes, carry whips and command the show. The capes of all the dancers are brightly colored and decorated with sequins, yarn fringe and trailing ribbons. Their tall headdresses are ornamented with glitter and peacock feathers. Long sleeves, gloves and masks cover dancers from head to toe.

Military influence can be found in the use of a fife, whistles and snare drums. To the uninitiated, the Gombey dancers may just look like wildly costumed characters acrobatically jumping to loud music, but in fact the dancing is choreographed to specific rhythms. Pantomimed segments often portray stories from the Bible, such as Daniel in the lion's den.

Gombey dancers traditionally take to the streets on Boxing Day and New Year's Day; when islanders hear the drums they pour out of their homes to watch the dances. These days, they are also frequent performers at festivals, including the City of Hamilton's Harbour Nights (p59), held each Wednesday in summer.

### Painting & Sculpture

Bermuda's pastel houses and gentle landscapes have long inspired both local and international artists. Among the more renowned artists who painted in Bermuda are Americans Georgia O'Keeffe, whose best-known island works depict banana flowers and banyan trees; Winslow Homer, who painted numerous Bermudian seaside scenes; and Andrew Wyeth, whose work focused on the people of Bermuda. The island's two main galleries – the Bermuda National Gallery (p51) and the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art (p106) – both have works by these artists.

One of Bermuda's best-known contemporary watercolorists is the late, prolific Alfred Birdsey, whose art still fills galleries both on the island and abroad. Two other well-known local watercolorists are Jill Amos Raine and Carole Holding.

Bermuda's most highly regarded contemporary sculptor is Desmond Fountain, who casts graceful, life-size figures of female nudes and playing children in bronze. His sculptures can be seen at Hamilton's city hall.

### Architecture

One of the first things to strike visitors upon arriving in Bermuda is the charming uniformity of the homes on the island – quaint cottages painted in pastel hues with stepped white roofs.

Although it may seem that the houses were designed solely for their pleasing aesthetics, their unique qualities are a consequence of local conditions, both in terms of available building material and the island's reliance upon rainwater.

Houses are built of local limestone. The roofs are cleverly designed to gather rainwater and direct it via angled stone gutters into a catchment tank that provides the residents with drinking water. The bleached-white color of the roofs is the result of their being painted with a limestone wash that acts as a water purifier. The appearance of these bright, textured roofs has earned them the nickname 'cake icing.'

The simplicity of the homes, free as they are of exterior embellishments, is necessitated by the smooth limestone surfaces. Jalousied wooden window shutters provide the main ornamental feature. One decorative indulgence is the 'eyebrow,' an inverted letter V above the windows of some homes.

The Masterworks Foundation's website at [www.masterworks.bm](http://www.masterworks.bm) has information on the arts.

*Bermuda's Architectural Heritage*, a series of beautifully illustrated volumes by the Bermuda National Trust, is the definitive look at the island's period buildings and the people responsible for them.

*Architecture – Bermuda* Style by David Raine provides a solid background to understanding the characteristics of Bermuda's unique style of building.

### THE SHAKESPEARE CONNECTION

When the first English castaways washed up on Bermuda's shores in July 1609, they may well have set the stage for William Shakespeare's final work, *The Tempest*. Shakespeare is thought to have begun work on that play in 1610, after the first reports of the *Sea Venture's* wreck in a tempestuous storm appeared in England.

It seems that Shakespeare, who knew several of the shareholders of the Virginia Company expedition, probably had a copy of the account entitled 'A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils' at his disposal when he wrote the play. Although the plot of *The Tempest* is not set in Bermuda, the description of the storm and shipwreck bear a close resemblance to the events surrounding the ill-fated *Sea Venture*. Indeed, in Act 1, Scene II, Shakespeare appears to make a direct reference to the islands with a mention of the 'still-vex'd Bermoothes.'

Keep an eye out too for the moongate, a round limestone gate thought to be of Chinese origin, often found at the entrance to Bermuda gardens. Passing through the moongate is traditionally said to bring good luck.

### Literature

Bermuda can claim ties to a number of significant 20th-century writers who either vacationed or lived on the island.

Peter Benchley, who has a second home in Bermuda and helped establish the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (p63), wrote his first blockbuster, *Jaws*, while in Bermuda. He found a setting for a second novel, *The Deep*, while diving in Bermuda with treasure hunter Teddy Tucker, who became the inspiration for the novel's main character. Benchley also used Bermuda for the setting of his suspense novel *Beast*.

James Thurber (1894–1961), author and cartoonist for the *New Yorker* magazine, wrote the fairy tale *The 13 Clocks* and other stories during long stays on the island. He was a frequent contributor to *The Bermudian* magazine.

Nobel prize-winner Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953), who had a place in Warwick Parish, wrote a number of works while in Bermuda, including *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Strange Interlude*.

Munro Leaf (1905–76), an author and illustrator of books for children, had a home in Somerset. He wrote *The Story of Ferdinand*, about a Spanish bull, while living in Bermuda in the 1930s.

Filmed and set in Bermuda, Peter Benchley's movie *The Deep* (1977), starring Jacqueline Bisset and Nick Nolte, has some great underwater photography and weaves a suspenseful tale about dangerous treasure pillaged from a sunken ship.

# Environment

## THE LAND

Sitting by itself in the isolated North Atlantic, Bermuda enjoys a wide berth from its neighbors. The nearest lies 570 miles away at Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. And even though many people unfamiliar with Bermuda often mistakenly connect it with the Caribbean, nearly a thousand miles of ocean separate Bermuda from its tropical Caribbean neighbors to the south.

Bermuda is composed of a cluster of some 150 small islands, which collectively total just 21 sq miles in area. The eight largest islands – St George’s Island, St David’s Island, Bermuda Island (or the ‘main island’), Somerset Island, Watford Island, Boaz Island, Ireland Island North and Ireland Island South – are connected by causeways and bridges so that they form a continuous fishhook-shaped land that stretches 22 miles in length. In contrast, its width averages less than a mile across, and at its widest it barely reaches two miles. Together these eight connected principal islands contain more than 95% of Bermuda’s landmass.

It’s an amazingly small place. No matter where you start from you could walk across the width of Bermuda in less than an hour and with an early start you could trek from one end of the island cluster to the other in a day.

Bermudians tend to treat the connected islands as a single geographic entity and commonly refer to Bermuda simply as ‘the island.’ Only about a dozen of Bermuda’s other tiny islands are inhabited. Most of the uninhabited islands are little more than rocks, and some are so small that there’s not a general agreement, even among government departments, as to the exact number of islands in the colony!

Formed about 100 million years ago by a now-extinct underwater volcano, the islands are the uppermost tips of a pyramid-shaped mountain mass whose base extends 12,000ft from the sea floor.

The islands have a limestone cap, which is composed of coral deposits and the bodies of billions of shell-bearing creatures that gradually built up around the edges of the submerged volcanic peaks. From a combination of accumulating deposits and lowering sea levels, the mountaintops eventually emerged as islands and gave rise to the fringing coral reefs that surround them. Over time the action of the surf has pounded the limestone shells and coral into grains of sand that have amassed in the numerous bays and coves along the shoreline, giving Bermuda a generous string of sandy beaches.

Bermuda has a mildly undulating terrain, with its highest point reaching just 259ft.

### IN THE PINK

Bermuda’s sand is made up of particles of coral, marine invertebrates and various shells, but it takes its distinctive light pink hue from the bodies of one particular sea creature, a member of the order *Foraminifera*. A marine protozoan abundant on Bermudian reefs, foraminifers have hard, tiny shells that wash up on shore after the animal within the shell dies. These pink shell fragments provide the dominant color in what would otherwise be a less-distinctive confetti of bleached white coral and ivory-colored calcium carbonate shells.

Bermuda is closer geographically to chilly Nova Scotia than it is to the tropical Caribbean.

The island has one of the world’s highest concentrations of limestone caves.

## WILDLIFE

Because of its remoteness, Bermuda’s land was only lightly colonized by animals. Its most abundant wildlife has always been creatures that fly and creatures that live in the sea.

### Animals

Bermuda has no native land mammals. The endemic Bermuda rock lizard (*Eumeces longirostris*), a brown skink, was the only nonmarine land animal in Bermuda prior to human contact. Critically endangered, it fares poorly in altered environments and is now largely restricted to remote coastal cliffs and uninhabited islands.

You will, however, see many colorful introduced lizards scurrying about. Most predominant are the Jamaican anole (*Anolis grahami*), which puffs out a showy orange throat sac as a territorial warning; the Warwick lizard (*A. leachii*), a foot-long lizard with golden eye rings; and the Somerset lizard (*A. roquet*), identifiable by its black eye patches. Enjoy them and get as close as you like – all of the lizard species are harmless. And there are no snakes, poisonous or otherwise, in Bermuda.

Despite those loud nocturnal peeps, Bermudians are fond of their whistling tree frogs. There are two species: *Eleutherodactylus johnstonei*, which is about 1in long, and the slightly larger but less common *E. gossei*. Both are brown, live in trees close to the ground and were introduced to Bermuda near the end of the 19th century. The frogs create a musical chorus of loud, bell-like whistles that fill the night from April to November, as long as the night temperature is above 68°F. Because of their size and habitat you’re unlikely to ever see one, but they are immortalized on earrings and trinkets sold in nearly every shop on the island.

The giant toad (*Bufo marinus*), imported from Guyana in 1875 to control cockroaches, is more visible but unfortunately it’s most often seen squashed flat on the road, hence its local nickname ‘road toad.’

### BIRDS

Land birds made an easy catch for the early English colonists and now only a single endemic species survives: chick of the village (*Vireo griseus*), a subspecies of the white-eyed vireo. This small olive and yellowish bird that has spectaclelike circles around its eyes has shorter wings than its continental counterparts, having lost its need to fly long distances. The vireo can be spotted in parks and wooded areas.

Of the introduced species now common to Bermuda, the most conspicuous is the kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), a noisy yellow-breasted flycatcher often spotted on hotel grounds. The kiskadee was introduced from Trinidad in 1957 in hopes of bringing the lizard population down so that beetles introduced to prey on cedar-scale insects would have a better chance of getting established.

Other common land bird species include starlings, sparrows, European goldfinches, catbirds and mourning doves. Two other birds, the northern cardinal and the eastern bluebird, suffered declines with the loss of cedar habitat and increased competition from kiskadees, but are on the comeback thanks to conservation efforts.

Although Bermuda’s resident species may be limited, the island hosts a great variety of migrant birds. The checklist of some 350 birds includes three dozen warblers, numerous shorebirds, and herons and ducks.

Although it’s a migrant, many Bermudians consider the white-tailed tropicbird, known in Bermuda as the longtail, to be their national bird. The longtail’s arrival is always a welcome harbinger of spring. They nest

The Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo’s website at [www.bamz.org](http://www.bamz.org) has lots of information on island conservation issues.

The Bermuda Audubon Society’s website at [www.audubon.bm](http://www.audubon.bm) has loads of information on the island’s nature reserves, best birding spots and the like.

in the cliffs around the island and can be seen gracefully swooping and gliding along the shore from March to October. In addition, sandhill cranes and a number of other exotic birds, such as the Pacific fairy tern, make the occasional visit.

In spring, storm petrels, jaegers, terns and four species of shearwaters pass by, often in flocks that number in the thousands. The peak of the spring seabird migration occurs in May and June.

Still, fall is the most varied time for sighting birds, with the migrations reaching their peak in October. At that point, most of the shorebirds and herons and some of the land birds, ducks and coots have arrived. Among the more interesting birds spotted during the fall migration are ospreys, ring-necked ducks, double-crested cormorants, eastern wood peewees, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks.

### MARINE LIFE

The waters surrounding Bermuda harbor an astonishing variety of marine life. Because Bermuda is so far north, it may amaze some visitors to find that many of the tropical fish common to the Caribbean can also be spotted in Bermuda. The waters radiate with scores of brilliant species including rainbow parrotfish, clown wrasses and elegant butterflyfish.

The key to all this marine life is Bermuda's coral formations, which grow in the clear shallow waters surrounding the islands. These are the northernmost corals found in the Atlantic and owe their existence to the warm ocean currents carried north by the Gulf Stream. In all, Bermuda has nearly 50 species of coral running the gamut from hard brain coral to wavering sea fans and other soft corals.

In addition to all those pretty fish, Bermuda's coral reefs also harbor menacing-looking creatures, including green moray eels that grow up to 10ft long. Although moray eels may provide a bit of a shock to snorkelers who suddenly come upon them, typically they are not aggressive, and the intimidating mouth-chomping motions they make are not meant for defense but are simply a breathing mechanism that pumps water across their gills. Three other species of eels are found in Bermuda's waters: the speckled moray, brown moray and conger eel.

Bermuda's waters also hold brittle stars, sea horses, sea spiders, sea cucumbers, sea hares, sea anemones, sea urchins, squid, conchs, slipper lobsters and spiny lobsters.

Red land crabs, active along the shoreline at night, make telltale burrows in dunes above the beach, particularly along the south shore. The females release their larvae into the ocean at least once each summer, often on nights following the full moon.

Humpback whales, migrating north from the Caribbean, can sometimes be seen off the south shore in March and April, and dolphins and porpoises are sometimes found in deeper waters as well. Green sea turtles, hawksbill turtles, loggerhead turtles and leatherback turtles are occasionally spotted near the reefs.

A great place to go for an introduction to Bermuda's marine life is the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo (p90) in Flatts Village, where you'll find tanks identifying nearly 200 species of fish and coral.

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

Hundreds of miles from the nearest landmass, Bermuda's flora and fauna evolved in an isolated environment with limited competition and few predators. Consequently, when the first human settlers arrived on the scene 400 years ago, they had a devastating impact.

Free-roaming pigs, believed to have been left by passing sailors in the 16th century, and rats, cats and dogs introduced by the first permanent settlers in the 17th century, spelled havoc for many species of endemic plants as well as ground-nesting birds. Other species met their demise through the direct action of humans.

One bird that offers a haunting testimony to species devastation is the Bermuda petrel, or cahow (*Pterodroma cahow*). These quail-size seabirds were abundant when the first settlers landed, but they had no natural fear of people. Diego Ramirez, the Spanish captain who spent three weeks in Bermuda in 1603, noted that his men were able to make a ready catch of thousands of the plump little birds. When the English arrived six years later, they too developed an appetite for the cahow. The birds made such an easy take – indeed, they would even land on the colonists' arms – that they all but disappeared within a few decades.

Biologists were astounded when after three centuries without sightings, the cahow, which was officially listed as extinct, was rediscovered in 1951. Subsequent research identified 20 nesting pairs of the birds on four small uninhabited Castle Harbour islets. Although environmentalists were initially encouraged, the islands were found to be a marginal habitat for the ground-nesting birds, as rats preyed upon their eggs and the soil was so eroded that it was no longer sufficient for digging nests in. The cahows had adapted by nesting in natural holes in the cliffs, but they had to compete for these nesting sites with the more aggressive longtails. Because the longtails nested later in the season, the cahows were sometimes forced to abandon their nests before they had a chance to rear their chicks.

To create more favorable odds for survival, special baffles were installed in the opening of the cahows' cliffside nesting holes, reducing the size of the entrance to prevent the larger longtails from entering. In addition, naturalists created artificial nesting burrows, hollowed into the islands' rocky surfaces and roofed with concrete, in the hopes of returning the cahows to ground-level burrows and reducing competition with the longtails. In conjunction with these efforts, rats and other predatory mammals were eradicated from the four islets where the cahows nest.

The cahow, which lays only a single egg each year, is making a slow, precarious comeback. There are currently an estimated 70 nesting pairs of cahows, and they are still one of the rarest kinds of seabirds in the world.

### ROOTS OF THE BOTANICAL GARDEN

The rhizomes of the arrowroot plant (*Maranta arundinacea*) yield a nutritious, easily digestible starch that's an ideal thickener for gravies and puddings. In modern times, less-expensive cornstarch has largely replaced arrowroot in the kitchen, but in days past, arrowroot was a leading Bermudian export.

One of the largest arrowroot factories in Bermuda was built by Henry James Tucker, the mayor of Hamilton in the mid-19th century. Tucker lived in Camden (p107), a plantation house at the current Bermuda Botanical Gardens (p104), and the arrowroot factory, where the starch was soaked from the plants and dried in the sun, was built at the back of the house. The arrowroot starch he produced was prized in both England and America for its superior quality.

Although arrowroot starch is no longer produced in Bermuda, Tucker's arrowroot factory still stands, and has been renovated with its original works spruced up and part of the building turned into the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art (p106).

Bermuda enjoys the most northerly coral reefs in the world.

*Bermuda's Marine Life* by Wolfgang Sterrer, the former director of the Bermuda Biological Station for Research, is the authoritative tome on everything that wiggles in the sea. It has lots of dazzling color photos.

*Bermuda Petrel: The Bird That Would Not Die* by Francine Jacobs gives a fascinating account of the comeback of the cahow, the bird that went unseen for centuries.

Bermuda lays claim to being one of the most isolated places in the world.



## Plants

Bermuda, with its subtropical frost-free climate, is abloom with colorful flowers year-round. Since temperatures usually stay within the range of 50°F to 90°F, tropical plants imported from the West Indies thrive here, and so do many of the flowers found in temperate climates.

In all, about a thousand different flowering plants can be found in Bermuda. Some of the more common are bougainvillea, hibiscus, oleander, morning glory (called 'bluebell' in Bermuda), poinsettia, nasturtium, passion flower and bird-of-paradise. Old-style roses – including multi-flora, tea and bourbon varieties – have remained popular since the 1700s and can be seen in gardens all around the island.

One of the few endemic flowers is the Bermudian (*Sisyrinchium bermudiana*), a tiny blue-purple iris with a yellow center and grasslike leaves, which resembles the blue-eyed grass of North America. It blooms from mid-April to late May. Also keep an eye out for prickly pear cactus, which produces Bermuda's only native fruit and can be found near the seaside forts in St George's.

The endemic Bermuda cedar (*Juniperus bermudiana*) was the most predominant tree on the island until 1942, when a scale insect was accidentally introduced and an epidemic spread like wildfire. Within a decade, more than 95% of the island's cedar trees had succumbed to the blight.

Biological controls, including the release of insects that prey upon the scale insect, were introduced in an attempt to stop the devastation. Over time, those Bermuda cedars that did survive developed a resistance to the scale insect. Seeds from these healthy surviving trees have been intensely propagated in recent years as part of a community-wide campaign to bring the cedar back from near-extinction, and the trees once again dot the landscape throughout the island.

For a close-up view of Bermuda's varied flora, the Bermuda Botanical Gardens (p104) in Paget is a great place to start – there you'll find the widest variety of both native and introduced species.

## NATIONAL PARKS

The island was a latecomer in developing a public park system and consequently there are no grand government-owned parks. But considering Bermuda's scarcity of open space, the government's done an admirable job since 1986, when legislation was enacted establishing a national parks system to protect, maintain and enhance the natural and historic character of environmentally sensitive areas.

Bermuda now has dozens of parks and nature reserves, collectively accounting for nearly 1000 acres. All together nearly 10% of Bermuda's land is set aside as parkland and nature reserves.

Although none of the parks are extensive, a handful of properties – most notably Spittal Pond Nature Reserve, the Bermuda Botanical Gardens and South Shore Park – are large enough to provide an hour or so of uninterrupted walking.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Despite great strides forward in recent years, the island's environment is still troubled by past mistakes and present pressures. Bermuda is small with limited resources and a relatively high population density. Those conditions, along with the need to accommodate half a million visitors every year, inevitably cause stress on the environment.

In the waters surrounding Bermuda, overfishing practices have already decimated many reef-fish species, scallops and other edible marine life.

The Nassau grouper, for example, which was once the mainstay of the island fishing industry, has been fished to commercial extinction. Turtle hunting, still prevalent until the 1960s, was responsible for wiping out Bermuda's entire nesting green sea turtle population.

In the past few decades islanders have become keenly aware of environmental issues, and have taken many steps to turn the decline around, ranging from introducing natural history into the school curriculum to enacting strict regulations protecting marine life.

Bermuda's marine environment is now one of the most carefully safeguarded in the world. The 1966 Coral Reef Preserves Act set up marine preserves that protect plants and fish in substantial tracts of Bermuda's reef waters. Subsequent marine protection orders have extended coverage to other environmentally sensitive areas by restricting fishing, spearfishing and the taking of lobsters.

Other programs to restore native fauna are also making headway. To the delight of bird-watchers, the yellow-crowned night heron has been successfully brought back and is now a common sight in marshy areas. The cahow, an endemic seabird once thought to be extinct, is on the comeback, and a concerted effort in setting up islandwide nesting boxes has once again made the eastern bluebird a part of the landscape.

In terms of environmental aesthetics, Bermuda has long been in the vanguard – it remains totally free of polluting heavy industry and does not allow billboards or neon signs. The use of public buses and ferries is encouraged, and the ownership of cars is strictly limited. Only one automobile is permitted per household – regardless of the number of drivers in the family! Bermudians have been known to concoct creative schemes to circumvent the spirit, if not the letter, of the law – such as dividing a home into two separate apartments – but that only stands as testimony to how effective the law actually is.

Although open space is at a premium, Bermuda nonetheless maintains a growing number of parks and nature reserves and is making efforts to restore some of the unpopulated islands, particularly Nonsuch Island, to their precolonial ecology.

The island's two most influential private preservation groups – the Bermuda National Trust and the Bermuda Audubon Society – have joined forces to buy up tracts of some of the most environmentally sensitive land on Bermuda. Two of their recent projects, in what's now dubbed the 'Buy Back Bermuda' campaign, have been the purchase and establishment of Warwick Pond and Paget Marsh nature reserves, preserving two of the finest birding areas on the island.

Island roads are so narrow that the Volkswagen Beetle is banned in Bermuda because its chassis is too wide.

Bermuda has 2992 people per square mile, a population density more than three times greater than Japan's.

# Outdoor Activities

## HIKING

Bermuda's numerous parks and nature reserves provide plenty of opportunities for short walks. The best hiking destinations are the areas with the greatest acreage, most notably Spittal Pond Nature Reserve (p95) in Smith's Parish and South Shore Park (p122) in Southampton and Warwick Parishes.

## Railway Trail

In land-scarce Bermuda, the longest walking trails aren't found in government parks and nature reserves, but are along the now-buried tracks that once carried Bermuda's narrow-gauge railway. The railway, which began operations in 1931, never gained in popularity, and the last train was retired in 1947. After that, most of the track was simply abandoned, though a few sections were lost to modernization – most notably a 3-mile stretch around the City of Hamilton that was widened into roadway.

In 1984 the government, realizing what a unique opportunity they had, set aside the remaining sections of the old rail line for foot and bridle paths. In all, these encompass some 21 miles of trail, from Somerset Village at the West End of Bermuda to St George's at the East End.

The Railway Trail is not a single continuous route; there is a significant break between Paget and Devonshire Parishes, as well as shorter breaks here and there where hikers briefly have to walk along a vehicle road until the Railway Trail starts up again. Some sections are open only to hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders, but other parts are open to scooters as well.

The government publishes a nice pocket-size booklet, *Bermuda East to West*, which details all seven sections of the trail, complete with maps and tidbits about nature and interesting historical points encountered along each section. The free booklet can be picked up at tourist offices in Bermuda.

The Railway Trail makes a traffic-safe route for joggers. Joggers should use caution when running in other areas, as many Bermudian roads are narrow, with heavy traffic, no sidewalks and the occasional blind curve.

## Organized Walks

The **Rock Ramblers** (☎ 238-3438), a local eco-heritage group, meets for an interpretive walkabout on the first Sunday of each month. Visitors are

If you want to take a good companion along on the trail, pick up a copy of *Hiking Bermuda* by Cecile and Stephen Davidson, which details 20 of the best nature walks and trails on the island.

### BERMUDA INTERNATIONAL RACE WEEKEND

The big running event of the year is the Bermuda International Race Weekend, held annually on the second weekend of January. It centers around the running of two races on the Sunday: the Bermuda International Marathon, a 13-mile looped route, run twice, that begins on Front St in Hamilton; and the Bermuda International Half-Marathon, held concurrently but covering only one loop of the course.

Activities begin Friday evening on Front St in Hamilton with children's competitions and a series of mile-long invitational races for elite runners and local celebrities. The evening is capped off with music by the Bermuda Regiment Band.

Saturday's event is the 10K Run & Charity Walk, a 10km race and a concurrent noncompetitive walk along the north shore starting at the National Sports Centre in Devonshire.

Entry fees are \$40 for the marathon and a bit less for the other events. Information and an entry form can be obtained from the **Bermuda Marathon Committee** ([www.bermudatracknfield.com](http://www.bermudatracknfield.com)).

welcome and it's a great way to meet islanders and learn more about Bermuda's ecology and culture. There's no charge, though donations are appreciated and go to help environmental causes. Locations change; look for the schedule in the 'Calendar' section of the *Royal Gazette*.

Tim Rogers of **Bermuda Lectures and Tours** (☎ 234-4082; adult/child \$15/10) leads informative walking tours at various locations around the island. The tours, which focus on architecture and history, typically begin at 10am, last 1½ hours and cover about 2 miles. Private tours can also be arranged with Tim Rogers.

## BIRDWATCHING

Bermuda can be a delight for birders, though timing is key. With just 22 species of resident birds nesting in Bermuda, the peak birdwatching seasons are during the spring and fall migrations. During those periods more than 200 species of migratory birds wing their way to Bermuda, including numerous species of warblers, herons, sandpipers, stilts and seabirds.

One of the finest all-around birdwatching sites is Spittal Pond (p95), Bermuda's largest nature reserve. Paget Marsh (p106) offers unsurpassed opportunities to see herons up close. With its wooded margins and vast mud flats, Warwick Pond Nature Reserve (p113) is the ideal place to spot both woodland birds and waders. Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve (p132) is another prime locale for sighting shorebirds and ducks.

*A Checklist and Guide to the Birds of Bermuda*, by David B Wingate, has species descriptions and charts on the seasonal distribution and abundance of birds.

For more information on birdlife in Bermuda, see p29.

## TENNIS

Bermuda has scores of tennis courts, some at hotels and available only to their guests, and others open to the general public. If you plan to play much tennis, you might want to bring your own equipment; however, most places that have tennis courts also rent racquets and sell tennis balls. Lessons are available at many resort facilities. On all courts in Bermuda, proper tennis attire is preferred (tennis shoes and whites), and on some it is mandatory.

Fees are typically charged on a per-hour, per-person basis, ranging from \$8 to \$12.

Tennis courts open to the public can be found at WER Joell Tennis Stadium (p66) in Pembroke Parish, north of the City of Hamilton; Grotto Bay Beach Hotel (p89) in Hamilton Parish; Elbow Beach Hotel and Horizons & Cottages in Paget (p108); Port Royal Tennis Club and the Fairmont Southampton hotel, both in Southampton (p124); and Wil-lowbank Hotel (p133) in Sandys.

The private **Coral Beach & Tennis Club** (☎ 236-2233) in Paget, which has clay courts and is considered the island's top tennis facility, is open only to members or by introduction from a member.

### TENNIS, ANYONE?

The game of tennis, which originated in England in 1872, was played for the first time in the Western Hemisphere in 1873 at the Bermuda home of Sir Brownlow Gray, the island's chief justice.

Mary Outerbridge, a guest at the Gray home, was so enthralled by the game that she carried a pair of racquets with her on a trip from Bermuda to New York. She is credited with introducing tennis to the USA, in 1874.

The best book on the market for birders is *A Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda*, by Andrew Dobson, which has more than 2000 photos and lots of details on where and when to see each species.

Schedules and information on tennis tournaments are available from the **Bermuda Lawn Tennis Association** (☎ 296-0834; www.blta.bm).

## GOLF

With scenic ocean vistas on nearly every green, golfing just doesn't get much better than this. In all, Bermuda has eight golf courses, each with its own distinct character.

Of course, each is still thoroughly Bermudian, so you'll need to maintain a certain air of propriety. All of the courses require 'proper golf attire,' which means shirts must have collars and shorts must be Bermuda-length (to the knees); jeans, cutoff pants and sleeveless shirts are not allowed. So sharpen up and look your natty best!

Five of Bermuda's courses are public and three are private. What are they like? The Fairmont Southampton Golf Club (p123) has short fairways with heavily bunkered greens that require skillful iron work, rather than sheer power. Pick a day with calm weather, though, because the winds can get blustery on this hillside resort course. The nearby Belmont Hills Golf Club (p115), completely redesigned in 2003, offers a challenging run for the money with slender fairways, blind second shots and multi-tiered greens.

The Ocean View Golf Course (p101), the closest course to the City of Hamilton, is a local favorite, especially with city folks taking a workday break to sneak in a quick round. The tamest of all Bermuda's greens, it's only nine holes but can be played as 18. Ocean View is a government-run course, as are two beautiful Robert Trent Jones-designed courses: Port Royal Golf Course (p123) in Southampton, on the western end of the island, and St George's Golf Club (p76), on the eastern end. Port Royal is a jewel with stunning views, challenging tees and cliff-side holes that help rank it among the best public golf courses in the world. St George's, one of the few golf courses anywhere that can boast being within the boundaries of a World Heritage site, offers panoramic views of old Fort St Catherine and the turquoise seas beyond.

Bermuda's three other courses are private members clubs with restricted access to nonmembers. Riddell's Bay Golf & Country Club (p115), Bermuda's oldest course (1922), sits on its own narrow peninsula with breathtaking views and tight fairways that demand a sharp eye and a steady swing. It has some set times each week when nonmembers are allowed to play.

Bermuda's newest championship course, Tucker's Point Golf Club (p85), allows nonmembers to make reservations within 48 hours of their desired tee time on a space-available basis. It features greens with Tiff Eagle Bermuda grass, challenging contours and enough hazards to keep it interesting for the most skillful of golfers.

Bermuda's top-ranked course, the Mid Ocean Golf Club (p85), is also the most exclusive and the most difficult to get onto. Still, hotel concierges can sometimes make arrangements (being famous would help), so you may get lucky and get your chance to play a round behind Ross Perot.

Tee-time reservations for the government-run courses – Ocean View, Port Royal and St George's – can be arranged through an automated reservation system (☎ 234-4653) up to a year in advance. Reservations for the other courses are made directly.

Lessons are available at all courses, with the cost varying from \$40 to \$55 per half-hour. Bring a good supply of golf balls, but if you run short, they can be purchased at the courses for \$40 to \$60 a dozen.

Bermuda has more golf courses, per square mile, than anywhere else in the world.

Full-set club rentals cost from \$25 to \$40; left-handed and right-handed sets for both men and women are available at all courses. If you're thinking about bringing your own clubs to Bermuda, keep in mind this isn't a place where you can rent a car and toss them in the back, and they won't fit on scooters or buses, so you'll need to plan for a taxi between the golf courses and your hotel.

Golf tournaments, generally held from September to June, are open to both islanders and visiting golfers and are listed on p144. For more information, contact the **Bermuda Golf Association** (☎ 295-9972; www.bermudagolf.org).

## HORSEBACK RIDING

For a different way to see the more remote south shore beaches, consider a horseback ride. The best time is in the early morning, before any beachgoers have arrived, as there's an almost meditative serenity along the trail.

You can't hire a horse to go off on your own in Bermuda, but Spice-lands Riding Centre (p115) in Warwick offers guided rides along the scenic trails in South Shore Park.

## BEACHES & SWIMMING

Bermuda abounds in beautiful pink-sand beaches. Matter of fact, there are so many of them that most high-end hotels have their own little private strand just for their guests. But fret not, there are more than enough public beaches to keep any beachgoer enthralled.

Beaches can be found all around the island but the finest run is unquestionably at South Shore Park, a 1.5-mile-long coastal park that encompasses a string of secluded coves sandwiched between two glorious bookend beaches. Its eastern boundary begins in Warwick Parish with the expansive Warwick Long Bay (p113), a half-mile-long unbroken stretch of pink sand, and the western boundary runs just beyond picturesque Horseshoe Bay (p120) in Southampton Parish. The coastal South Shore Park Trail (p122) links the beaches, making exploring fun and easy. No matter where you're staying in Bermuda, consider including an outing here in your plans.

Other notable beaches include Elbow Beach (p106) in Paget Parish, a beautiful mile-long strand that's a favorite with beachgoers from the City of Hamilton; John Smith's Bay (p96) in Smith's Parish, which often has calm waters when westerly winds kick up the surf elsewhere around the island; and Shelly Bay Beach (p87) in Hamilton Parish, which is a favorite with families because of its shallow waters and playground facilities.

In the tourist season, lifeguards are stationed at Horseshoe Bay in Southampton Parish and John Smith's Bay in Smith's Parish.

No beaches in Bermuda – even the secluded ones – allow nude or seminude sunbathing.

## DIVING

Everyone knows Bermuda abounds with shipwrecks but many people are surprised to discover the waters here also harbor splendid coral. Despite its islands' northerly location, the combination of shallow water and warm ocean currents support a thriving reef system. Bermuda boasts 24 species of hard coral, including brain coral and tree coral, and another two dozen species of soft coral, including wavering sea fans and sea whips.

Although hundreds of miles of cool water separate Bermuda from the Caribbean, many species of tropical fish common to the Caribbean can also be found feeding among the corals in Bermuda. Some of the more

Be aware that the stinging Portuguese man-of-war (p143) is sometimes found in Bermuda's waters from March to July.

As a rule, Bermudians take their first swim of the year on Bermuda Day, May 24.

colorful fish you can expect to see include the clown wrasse, queen angelfish, rainbow parrotfish, spotted puffer, foureye butterflyfish, blue tang, orange spotted filefish and green moray eel.

There are five dive operations in Bermuda: Blue Water Divers (p107) at the Elbow Beach Hotel and at Robinson's Marina (p132); Fantasea Bermuda (p53) in the City of Hamilton and at Wyndham Bermuda Resort (p123); Triangle Diving (p89) at the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel; Dive Bermuda (p123) at the Fairmont Southampton; and Deep Blue Dive (p66) in Pembroke Parish. All are good reputable operations, and three of them – Fantasea, Dive Bermuda and Blue Water Divers – have been awarded the PADI 5-star rating.

Although dive shops operate year-round, the most popular season is from May to October, when the water temperatures are a comfortable 75°F to 86°F. From November to April, water temperatures range from 65°F to 71°F and full wet suits are de rigueur. Although the water is chilly, one plus of winter diving is the excellent visibility, reaching up to 200ft, compared with about 100ft in the warmer summer months.

Most dive operations take a break in winter (generally two to four weeks in January or February), when things are slower. Because these breaks vary by operation and year, it's a good idea to make reservations well in advance if you're planning to dive in the winter.

### Wreck Dives

Bermuda is a wreck diver's dream, its treacherous reefs scattered with three centuries of shipwrecks. Because the reefs are relatively shallow, many wreck dives are suitable for both novice and intermediate-level divers. And since most wrecks are on the reef, a wreck dive in Bermuda typically doubles as a reef dive. Keep in mind that you should never dive inside a shipwreck unless you have specialized training and are under the supervision of a qualified wreck- and antiquity-diving expert.

The *Constellation*, a four-masted schooner that provided the inspiration for the *Goliath* in Peter Benchley's novel *The Deep*, is a favorite among wreck divers. The ship, which is now widely scattered along the ocean floor at a depth of only 30ft, was en route from New York to Venezuela when it diverted to Bermuda for mechanical repairs in 1943. On the approach to the island, just 7 miles northwest of the Royal Naval Dockyard, a current carried the 192ft schooner into the reef, where – laden with a cargo of cement – it sank into a watery grave.

In shallow water, less than 20yd from the *Constellation*, sits the wreck of the *Nola*, also referred to in Bermuda as the *Montana*, one of its aliases. The 236ft paddle steamer was built in England to serve as a blockade-runner during the US Civil War. Launched in 1863, it made it only as far as Bermuda, where it sank on the reef during its maiden voyage to the Confederate South. Some sections of the ship, including the paddle wheels, remain intact and are readily visible even from a glass-bottom boat.

The *Cristobal Colon*, a 500ft Spanish luxury liner that went aground in 1936, is the largest ship ever to wreck in Bermudian waters. Because the cruise ship grounded on the reef, rather than sinking, it was an easy target for pilferers. Although the authorities salvaged items during the day, scores of other islanders came aboard after nightfall and made off with everything from chandeliers to plumbing fixtures.

In 1937 the 250ft Norwegian cargo ship *Aristo* sighted the still-intact *Cristobal Colon* in a position that made it appear to be sailing straight up through the reef, and the captain set his course to follow. By the time he recognized his error, the *Aristo* had a lethal gash in its hull.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Dive sites tend to be located where the reefs display the most beautiful corals and sponges. It takes only a moment – an inadvertently placed hand or knee, or a careless brush or kick with a fin – to destroy this fragile, living part of our delicate ecosystem. You can help preserve the ecology and beauty of the reefs by following certain basic guidelines while diving:

- Never drop boat anchors onto a coral reef, and take care not to ground boats on coral.
- Respect the integrity of shipwrecks, which are marine archaeological sites that are protected from looting by law.
- Practice and maintain proper buoyancy control, and avoid over-weighting. Be aware that buoyancy can change over the period of an extended trip, and adjust your weight as required. Use your weight belt and tank position to maintain a horizontal position.
- Avoid touching living marine organisms with your body and equipment. Coral polyps can be damaged by even the gentlest contact. Never stand on or touch living coral. If you must hold on to the reef, touch only exposed rock or dead coral.
- Take great care in underwater caves. Spend as little time within them as possible, as your air bubbles can damage fragile organisms. Divers should take turns inspecting the interiors of small caves or under ledges to lessen the chances of damaging contact.
- Be conscious of your fins. Even without contact, the surge from heavy fin strokes near the reef can do damage. When treading water in shallow reef areas, take care not to kick up clouds of sand, which can easily smother the delicate reef organisms.
- Secure gauges, computer consoles and the octopus regulator so they're not dangling – they are like miniature wrecking balls to a reef.
- Resist the temptation to collect or buy coral or shells. Aside from the ecological damage, taking home marine souvenirs depletes the beauty of a site and spoils other divers' enjoyment.
- Ensure that you take home all your trash and any litter you may find as well. Plastics in particular pose a serious threat to marine life.
- Resist the temptation to feed fish. You may disturb their normal eating habits, encourage aggressive behavior or feed them food that is detrimental to their health.
- Minimize your disturbance of marine animals. Don't ride on the backs of turtles, as this can cause them great anxiety.

During WWII the US military used the *Cristobal Colon* as a target ship, literally blowing the vessel in two, with one half settling on either side of the reef. The *Aristo*, on the other hand, stands intact, its forward deck still holding a fire truck and other cargo that it was carrying to Bermuda. Both boats sit in about 50ft of water.

In the same general area is the *Taunton*, a 228ft freighter that sank, weighed down with a load of American coal, as it arrived in Bermuda in 1920. Just 20ft beneath the surface, it's a good wreck dive for novices.

One of the newest and most intact of the shipwrecks is the *Hermes*, a 165ft freighter that was built during WWII. In the early 1980s, after the *Hermes* was abandoned in Bermuda, the government decided to scuttle the boat and turn it into a dive site. First they stripped the hatches and other potential hazards so that it could be used safely for penetration dives, and then they towed it out to sea. The boat sits upright in 80ft of water about a mile south of Warwick Long Bay.

### Helmet Diving

Find diving a bit daunting but still dream of walking along the ocean floor? Then you're in the right place. Bermuda's helmet dive operations

One of the most valuable artifacts ever recovered from a Spanish galleon, a gold cross studded with emeralds, was found off Bermuda in 1955 but stolen 20 years later just before Queen Elizabeth II arrived to inaugurate the museum it was to be displayed in.

provide visitors the chance to jump below the surface of the water without mastering any diving skills. In fact, you don't even have to know how to swim and children as young as five years can join.

Participants don a headpiece, called a helmet, that has a clear face plate and works on a similar premise to a glass held upside-down in water. The helmet rests atop one's shoulders and is connected to a hose that pumps in fresh air from the boat above. The 'dive,' which lasts about 30 minutes, occurs at the sandy edge of the reef in about 10ft of water, allowing fish to be viewed up close.

Up to 30 people can go out with the boat, but generally only six people go underwater at any one time. The entire outing lasts about 3½ hours. There's a shower on the boat, and wet suits are provided when the water temperature drops below 80°F.

Two companies in Bermuda, one on either end of the island, offer helmet diving daily from April to November.

Greg Hartley's Under Sea Adventure (p132) departs from Sandys Parish and has the advantage of going a bit further offshore, where the water tends to be clearer. Bermuda Bell Diving (p92) departs from Flatts Inlet in Smith's Parish.

## SNORKELING

Snorkeling, like swimming and diving, is far more popular in the summer months, when the waters are at their warmest.

For excellent snorkeling right from the beach, head to Church Bay (p122) in Southampton Parish or Tobacco Bay (p81) in St George's Parish, near of the Town of St George. A bit less spectacular but very convenient is the Bermuda Snorkel Park (p137) at the Royal Naval Dockyard. Snorkel sets can be rented beachside at all three of these locations as well as at dive shops and resort beach huts.

There are many other beaches where you'll find coastal outcrops that harbor colorful fish – essentially any rocky shoreline in calm waters is a potential snorkeling site.

Still, the very best and most pristine snorkeling spots are too far offshore to be reached without a boat. So if you really want a dazzling underwater experience take a snorkeling cruise. Another plus is that snorkel cruises typically include a visit to a shipwreck – an easy task, since most of Bermuda's many wrecks crashed along coral reefs.

Although dive companies will take snorkelers along to snorkel above the reefs while the divers are beneath the surface, you're better off taking a cruise designed specifically for snorkelers. These head to shallow reefs where you can easily view the fish from the surface, rather than peering down at coral through 20ft to 40ft of water, which commonly happens when you go out with divers.

Most of the snorkeling cruises are combination sightseeing tours; some use glass-bottom boats. All include complimentary use of snorkeling equipment and a bit of instruction for first-time snorkelers.

The main snorkeling season is from May to October. Some tours begin as early as April and continue into November, but they only operate if they have enough customers to make it worthwhile – so the farther from summer, the fewer the outings offered. It's best to make reservations at least a day in advance to secure your place during busy times and to let operators know they have customers during slow periods.

Snorkeling cruises generally last 3½ to four hours. However, if you're going along primarily for the snorkeling, it's a good idea to ask how long will be spent in the water, as this can vary among tour companies.

## FISHING

If you're a fisher, Bermuda offers year-round action but conditions are generally best from May through November.

Game fish found in deeper waters include Atlantic blue marlin, white marlin, blackfin tuna, yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, dolphinfish (not the marine mammal), wahoo, great barracuda, almaco jack and rainbow runner.

In the interest of Bermuda's conservation efforts, sport fishers are encouraged to tag and release game fish, particularly marlin and other billfish, unless they're being taken for food.

Boat charters are available for deep-sea fishing by either the half-day or full day. Rates vary according to the size of the boat, trip location, number of people on board etc. To charter the whole boat, expect to pay about \$700 for a half-day, \$1000 for a full day. Individuals who join up with a group typically pay \$100 for a half-day, \$150 for a full day. Prices include all fishing equipment; lunch and beverages are not included. Charter boats can be booked through **Bermuda Sports Fishing Association** (☎ 295-2370) or **St George Game Fishing & Cruising Association** (☎ 297-8093).

Those who want to try their luck at fishing from shore can rent rods, reels and tackle from Windjammer Watersports (p137) and Somerset Bridge Water Sports (p133), both in Sandys Parish. No licenses or fees are required to fish from shore; catches can typically include gray snapper, great barracuda, bonefish and pompano.

## KAYAKING

This is the perfect way to break away from the beach scene and see Bermuda's varied coastline from a whole new angle. You can paddle along peaceful mangrove-lined shorelines, visit nearshore islands or make your own outing. Most places that rent kayaks have singles and also doubles in case you want to make it a romantic outing with your sweetheart.

Singles typically cost \$15 to \$20 an hour and doubles \$20 to \$30 an hour, but you can often get steep discounts for longer rental periods; for instance, a four-hour rental typically costs just a bit more than double a one-hour rental. Kayaks can be rented at various seaside locales around the island and in most cases you can just hop in and paddle away.

Among the kayak rental operations are Fantasea Bermuda (p53) in the City of Hamilton and at the Wyndham Bermuda Resort (p123); Blue Hole Water Sports (p89) at Grotto Bay Beach Hotel; Blue Water Watersports (p107) at the Elbow Beach Hotel; Somerset Bridge Water Sports (p133) at Robinson's Marina; Pompano Beach Club Watersports Center (p123) in Southampton; Windjammer Watersports (p137) at the Royal Naval Dockyard; and the Bermuda Snorkel Park (p137), also at the Royal Naval Dockyard.

And if you don't want to set off on your own, you can join a kayak tour. Three companies offer three distinct tours and each one of them begins with a quick lesson in kayaking skills, so they're open to novices and experienced paddlers alike. Fantasea Bermuda offers an eco-oriented tour that visits remote areas and unpopulated islands. Blue Water Watersports provides a kayak tour that includes snorkeling over a reef and shipwrecks. Kayak Bermuda (p77) in the Town of St George paddles past small islands and makes time for swimming and sunbathing on the beach.

## SAILING

If you know how to handle a small sailboat and want to head off on your own, there are several options. Rentals are available at Blue Hole Water

The highly prized marlin, a spectacular fighting fish with a long swordlike bill, is most prevalent from June through August.

Although no one is likely to rent you one, a quirky local favorite is the Bermuda dinghy, a 14ft sailboat handcrafted of Bermuda cedar, driven by oversized sails and infamous for its tendency to capsize.

Sports (p89) at Grotto Bay Beach Hotel in Hamilton Parish; Blue Water Watersports (p107) at the Elbow Beach Hotel and at Rance's Boatyard (p107), both in Paget; Pompano Beach Club Watersports Centre (p123) in Southampton; and Windjammer Watersports (p137) at the Royal Naval Dockyard.

### **SIGHTSEEING CRUISES**

If you've only seen Bermuda from land, you've only seen half of what it has to offer. Take a cruise to get a whole new angle on its beautiful coastline. Opt for a cruise boat that has a glass bottom and you'll be able to view coral and fish – even shallow shipwrecks. A variety of trips depart from the City of Hamilton (p53) and the Town of St George (p77).

# Food & Drink

Bermuda being surrounded by water, it's no surprise that the lion's share of its cuisine revolves around seafood. Whether it's diced into traditional fare, grilled with a daub of fruit salsa or sliced into sashimi – expect to see plenty of fish.

## STAPLES & SPECIALTIES

Don't leave the island without trying Bermuda fish chowder, a tangy red concoction made with fresh fish, typically rockfish or snapper, and flavored with local black rum and sherry peppers sauce. Don't be surprised if you see an eye staring back at you as you dig your spoon into the bowl, since the traditional way to cook chowder includes the heads.

The most common side dish served with Bermudian-style meals is peas 'n' rice. Portuguese immigrants introduced Portuguese bean soup to Bermuda in the mid-19th century and this steamy treat of spicy *liguicia* and red beans has been a staple ever since. Other popular everyday foods include johnnycakes, which are cornmeal griddle cakes, and codfish cakes, a savory grilled patty made of mashed codfish, potatoes and a pinch of curry. You can order codfish cakes on their own, but the most popular way to enjoy them is in a bun as a quick lunchtime sandwich.

Bermudians also love thick slabs of fresh fish. Fish sandwiches, made of fried fish fillets, are as popular here as hamburgers are elsewhere.

The most traditional meal is the Sunday codfish breakfast, a huge affair to linger over, which consists of codfish, eggs, boiled Irish potatoes, bananas and avocado, with a sauce of onions and tomatoes. Although it's most commonly served up in homes, there are a handful of local restaurants that offer this meal as well.

## DRINKS

### Nonalcoholic Drinks

As might be expected with their English heritage, a lot of Bermudians fancy a cup of tea, especially as a midafternoon break served with finger sandwiches and pastries. If you're a coffee drinker, fret not, as coffee is readily available as well.

Ginger beer is a distinctively Bermudian carbonated soft drink brewed right on the island. Don't confuse it with the pale ginger ale found elsewhere – this is a tangy, full-bodied ginger drink with a kick.

Bottled water, both generic spring water and the carbonated variety, is readily available at grocery stores throughout the island.

### Alcoholic Drinks

Gosling Brothers, one of Bermuda's oldest companies, has been blending spirits on the island since the 1860s. Their cornerstone product is Gosling's

Everyone's favorite cookbook is *Bermudian Cookery*, by the Bermuda Junior Service League, which has recipes for a wide variety of tasty local dishes.

Island-caught lobsters are available in Bermudian restaurants from September to March only – order a lobster at any other time and it's flown in from Maine.

### TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

Bermuda has a couple of unique dishes. Its shark hash, which makes its way onto island menus, is made of chopped-up shark bits mixed with potatoes and pan fried. Less common these days but big in colonial times was rockfish maw, made from the stomach of a rockfish stuffed with spicy pork and vegetables. For a refreshing light drink, try shandy, a mixture of nonalcoholic Bermuda ginger beer and alcoholic lager beer that can be ordered in any pub.

Black Seal Rum, a dark rum which, until World War I, was sold from the barrel using recycled wine bottles, the cork sealed with black wax – hence the name. If you pick up a bottle of Black Seal, take note that these days it comes in standard 80 proof as well as a fire-breathing 151 proof.

If you really want to tingle your tastebuds, order up a dark 'n' stormy, a two-to-one mix of carbonated ginger beer with Black Seal Rum – it's so popular among locals it's sometimes dubbed Bermuda's national drink.

Black Seal Rum is also the main ingredient in Bermuda's famous rum swizzle, which is far and away the favored drink of island visitors.

Gosling produces three liqueurs as well: Bermuda Gold, Bermuda Banana Liqueur and Bermuda Coconut Rum. The one that gets the most attention is Bermuda Gold, which is made from loquats and comparable to an apricot brandy. It's commonly served straight on ice, with a twist of lemon (called a shipwreck) or with orange juice (a royal blossom).

## CELEBRATIONS

On Good Friday virtually every family sits down to a breakfast of codfish cakes accompanied by sticky-sweet hot cross buns.

For traditional Christmas fare there's cassava pie, made with a cake-like batter that contains the grated root of the cassava plant, stuffed with a meat filling and baked. The cassava bears special significance to Bermudians, as it's credited with having helped the early settlers get through periods of famine.

## WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Bermuda is a diner's delight. At the more moderate end, there are simple eateries dishing out good local food and places with full menus of English pub-grub fare spiced up with Bermudian specialties like fish chowder. Of course, Bermuda has excellent fine-dining options, ranging from waterview seafood restaurants to classic jacket-and-tie establishments in historic settings. And naturally there are all sorts of international foods as well – you're never far from an Italian restaurant in Bermuda, and Japanese sushi made from fresh local fish is all the rage.

If you're looking to mingle with the locals over solid Bermudian fare, veer away from hotel restaurants as well as those areas smack in line with the cruise ship gangplanks. Look instead for backstreet holes-in-the-wall and stand-alone diners where working-class folks pile in at lunch. Try such favorites as the Spot (p56) or Dorothy's Coffee Shop (p58) in the City of Hamilton, Angeline's Coffee Shop (p78) in the Town of St George, Monty's Restaurant (p68) in Pembroke, Island Cuisine (p125) in Southampton and New Traditions (p133) in Sandys.

## VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Bermuda has no purely vegetarian restaurants, but the island shouldn't prove too difficult for vegetarians, as there are plenty of cafés serving

Go to [www.blackseal.com](http://www.blackseal.com) to find tantalizing recipes with island flavor.

With the exception of a sole KFC in the City of Hamilton, there are no fast-food-chain eateries anywhere in Bermuda.

### BERMUDA'S TOP FIVE

- **Black Horse Tavern** (p84; St David's Island) Superb local seafood, super local ambience
- **Hog Penny** (p56; City of Hamilton) Traditional pub setting, great Bermuda fish chowder
- **Aggie's Garden** (p68; Pembroke Parish) Cozy café serving homemade, organic, island-grown food
- **Fourways Inn** (p110; Paget Parish) Manor house setting; creative food and service to match
- **Cafe Gio** (p77; Town of St George) Excellent fusion cuisine with a water view

good salads, and many restaurants have vegetarian options among their main courses.

Vegetarians won't go wrong heading to Aggie's Garden (p68) in Pembroke or Paradiso Cafe (p57) in the City of Hamilton. Supermarkets for self-catering are found all around the island and most have delis with some vegetarian offerings; especially notable are the Marketplace (p58) in the City of Hamilton and Miles Market (p68) in Pembroke, both of which have outstanding takeout buffets where you can pile your plate high with fresh salads and hot veggie dishes.

## HABITS & CUSTOMS

Bermuda is very Western in its eating customs, with three meals a day. Meal times are similar to those in the USA, with the evening meal being the largest. The usual restaurant tip is 15%, which most restaurants automatically add to the bill – if not, add the tip yourself.

When it comes to fine dining, Bermuda remains somewhat traditional – not to the degree it used to be, but a few top-end restaurants still require a jacket and tie at dinnertime for men. Smoking is not banned from most of Bermuda's restaurants, but more and more eateries have set aside non-smoking sections and a few have gone totally smoke-free.

*In Tastes of Bermuda*, food writer Ed Bottone shares some of his favorite dishes and gives you the scoop on what's cookin' in local restaurants.

### BERMUDA RUM SWIZZLE

Although every Bermudian bartender has his or her own twist, the basic rum swizzle starts out like this: mix 4oz of dark rum with 3oz of pineapple juice, 3oz of orange juice, 1oz of grenadine or other sugar syrup, the juice from one fresh lemon and a couple of dashes of Angostura biters. Put it all in a container with crushed ice, shake it until there's a head, pour into a pair of tall glasses and garnish them with slivers of orange. If you prefer, you can substitute a lime for the lemon.

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