



**L**ong stretches of pink-sand beaches divided by magnificent cliffs and caves, charming winding streets lined with tidy pastel cottages, meticulously manicured flowering gardens, wildly costumed African goombay dancers, businessmen in shorts and knee socks, cricket, and English afternoon tea – welcome to Bermuda!

*by Glenn Swift*

# BERMUDA

*Last Jewel of the Empire*

## LOCATION

Often mistakenly associated with the Caribbean (nearly 1,000 miles to the south), Bermuda lies in the North Atlantic, 570 miles off the coast of North Carolina. The “island,” as locals refer to it, is in actuality a cluster of more than 150 islands, the eight largest of which are connected by a series of causeways and bridges forming a continuous fishhook-shaped land area that stretches 22 miles in length. Its remoteness and northerly locale has helped to make Bermuda unique in many respects.

Warmed by the waters of the Gulf Stream, Bermuda is a subtropical island that enjoys a mild climate throughout the year. In the summer, the temperature rarely rises above 85 F and there’s nearly always a cool breeze in the evening. Local water temperatures during this time of the year often run as high as 86 F – warmer than many inshore Caribbean waters. As for those “chilly” months (December through April), average daily temperatures are still a very comfortable 65 F. There is no rainy season, and when it does rain, the skies tend to clear quickly.

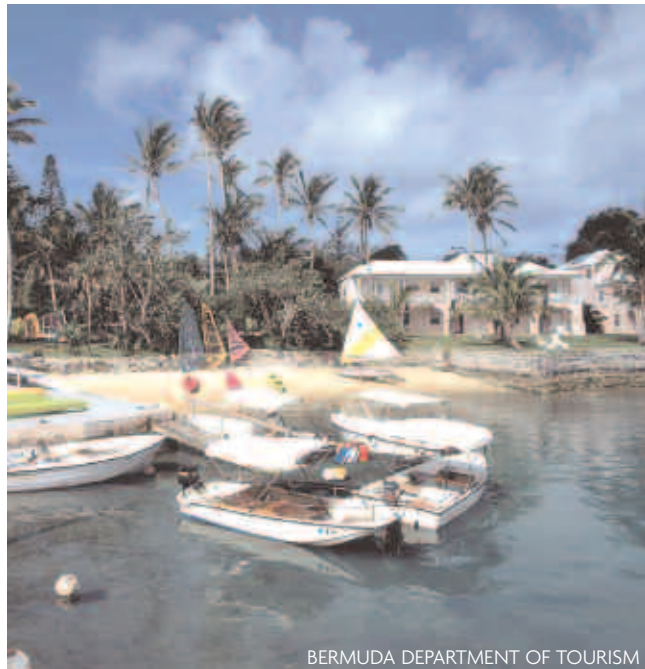
Bermuda’s remote location has enabled it to retain a very distinct island culture, one that is considerably different from that of the North American mainland or its Caribbean neighbors to the south. Formed around 100 million years ago by an underwater volcano (don’t worry, it’s now extinct), the islands are the uppermost peaks of a pyramid-shaped mountain mass whose base extends 2.5 miles from the ocean floor.

## HISTORY

The islands remained undiscovered until a Spanish sea captain, Juan de Bermudez, sighted the uninhabited islands around 1503. More interested in gold and plunder than he was in exploring islands, Bermudez took little interest in the barren island chain. In fact, other than providing a tempo-

rary haven for shipwrecked Spanish sailors, the islands remained uninhabited for over a century after their discovery. Nevertheless, Bermuda became a landmark for Spanish sea captains who would reset their course, immediately after spotting the rocky islets, to follow a straight line for the Azores and Spain. During this time, Bermuda’s treacherous reefs gained an ominous reputation among mariners, and by the mid-16th century, the islands began appearing on Spanish maps as “Islas Demonios,” or “Isles of Devils.”

Suddenly, at the dawn of the 17th century, a mere twist of fate would change the course of Bermudian history forever. On June 2, 1609, an English ship, *Sea Venture*, headed for Jamestown, VA, was blown off course during a fierce storm and was ship-



BERMUDA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

*The warm, crystal-clear waters of Bermuda make boating and swimming the most popular water activities.*

wrecked on a reef three-quarters of a mile off the eastern shore of Bermuda. Miraculously, all 150 people onboard made it safely ashore (near present-day Fort St. Catherine). All wasn’t lost, for the castaways salvaged much of the wreckage from the *Sea Venture* and used timber from native cedar trees to construct two new ships; a year later, *Deliverance* and *Patience* made their way to Jamestown. It would not be long, however, before the English would return. A 400-year relationship with Great Britain had begun.

African slaves had been introduced as early as 1616, but the lack of labor-intensive agriculture (i.e., tobacco, rice and sugarcane) in the colony meant that few slaves ended up toiling in sweltering fields, as was the case in other parts of the New World. Although it is undoubtedly true that all forms of human bondage are inherently evil, conditions were not as brutally degrading as elsewhere. Most slaves were put to work as servants, construction workers, sailors and fishermen. Some even became expert craftsmen who passed their skills on to successive generations. Over time, Bermuda gradually evolved from a struggling agricultural hinterland into a successful port.

*The subtropical climate, powder-blue skies and pink-sand beaches provide Bermuda with a sunny disposition.*

The American Civil War (1861–1865) produced an economic boom for Bermuda as it was thrust into the highly profitable role of serving as a center for Confederate blockade runners. Because Rebel vessels needed to be small and fast to outrun the U.S. Navy, the Confederates were forced to use Bermuda and the Bahamas as staging areas to purchase desperately needed guns and ammunition. The exorbitant profits racked up by the islanders, who served as middlemen for British industrialists, gave Bermuda a level of unprecedented prosperity. The boom was short-lived, however, and with the fall of the Confederacy, the Bermudian shipping industry suffered a near collapse.

Two decades later, a new industry – tourism – would spring forth and breathe new life into the depressed Bermudian economy. In 1883, Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria and wife of the governor general of Canada, paid an extended visit to the island. Tired of the long, cold Canadian winters, the princess found the Bermudian climate much to her liking. The British and American press took note of her story, and within months, many notables, including Mark Twain, followed in her path. Crossing the stormy Atlantic in winter was no easy task in the late 19th century, and Twain cleverly described the journey as “going through hell in order to reach paradise.”

By the early 20th century, Bermuda had become a popular and fashionable resort for the well-heeled, with steamers crossing regularly from New York to Hamilton. As more and more Yankee “snowbirds” visited the island, the influence of the United States became increasingly significant. Not long afterward, however, geopolitical forces on a global scale placed Bermuda at the center of the world stage.

In order to thwart the formidable Nazi U-boat assault that threatened to strangle Britain’s overseas lifeline in the early years of World War II, the Royal Navy turned Bermuda into a major center of operations. The Fairmont Hamilton Princess Hotel, the largest on the island, became a hub for British intelligence, with more than 1,000 operatives working secretly in the basement monitoring Nazi communiqués

and fleet movements. A short time later, the United States established a sizeable military presence in Bermuda during the war when it constructed an air base on St. David’s Island.

Since the early 1970s, a number of new hotels and golf courses have been constructed, elevating Bermuda to a level of sophistication seldom rivaled by the islands of the Caribbean. As for the independence issue, a referendum was held in August 1995 and it was overwhelmingly defeated. Barely 25 percent of the island’s electorate voted for separation. Although the issue is still bandied about, it appears that Bermuda will remain associated with Britain for the foreseeable future. With a standard of living far exceeding that of anywhere in the Caribbean, and on a par with that of the United States, the current political relationship appears to give the island the best of both worlds. Bermudians enjoy complete self-government under the Constitution of 1968, with only diplomatic and defense matters under the protective hand of the United Kingdom.

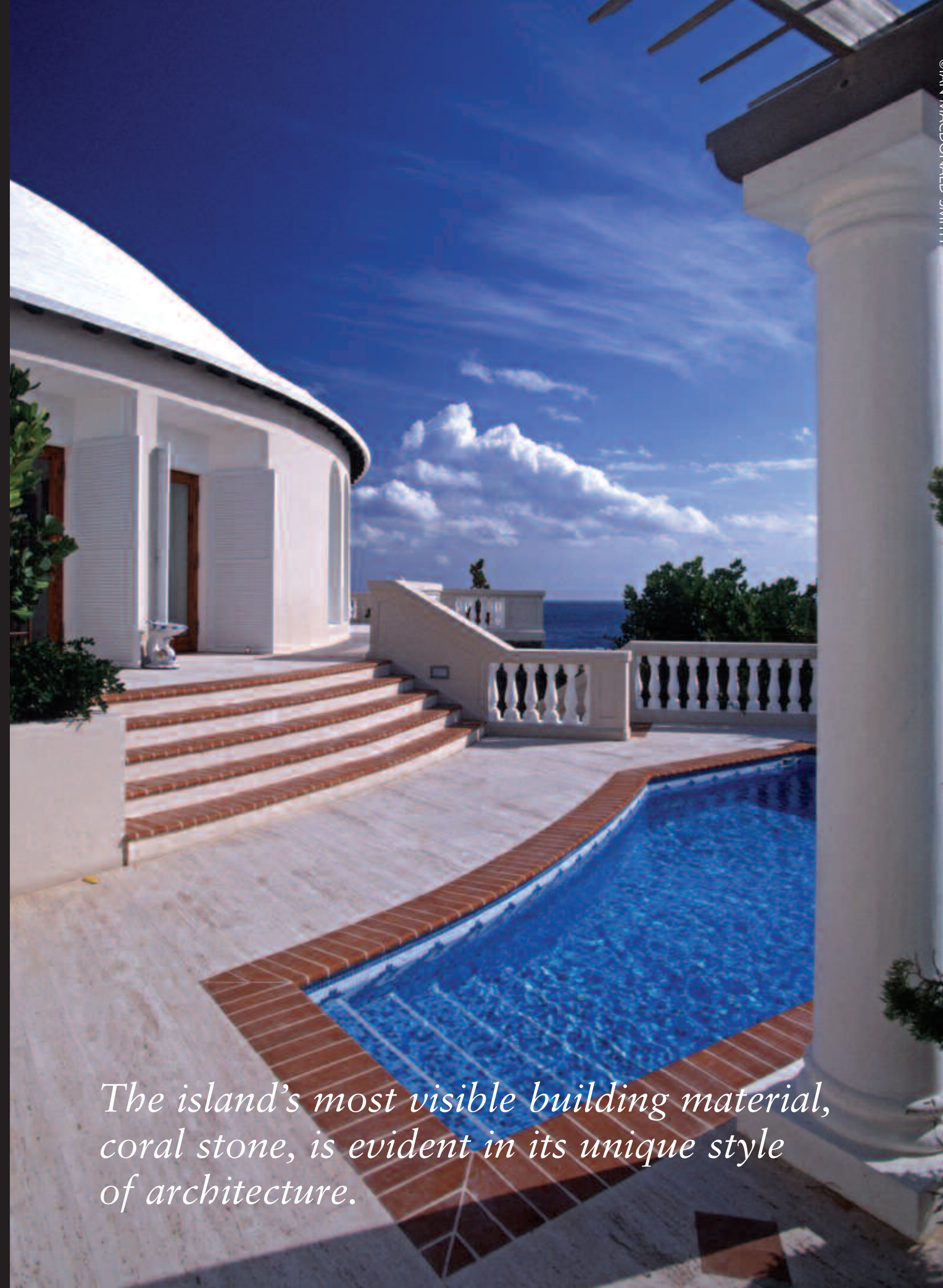
A recent United Bermuda Party (UBP) leader, after being confronted with the “I” word by an inquiring journalist, coined what has become the party’s official slogan on the issue: “Independence From What?” Indeed, few would argue that the numerous for-



*Bermuda’s more than 80 restaurants provide enough variety to satisfy even the most finicky of appetites.*

mer British colonies in the Caribbean that have chosen the path of independence have become models for social and economic progress.

Today, Bermuda remains what it has been for so very long – a unique blend of British, African, American and island cultures. Its uncommonly rich history, developed since its settlement four centuries ago, is evident everywhere and can be enjoyed with relative ease. With a multitude of museums, historic sites, world-class golf courses, elegant hotels, gorgeous beaches, and extraordinary flora and fauna, Bermuda is nothing short of magnificent. A gem lying in the middle of the ocean, Bermuda may well be the last jewel of the Empire.



*The island’s most visible building material, coral stone, is evident in its unique style of architecture.*

## WATER ACTIVITIES

Although there are a number of airlines with direct flights to Bermuda, boating is undoubtedly the most pleasurable method of reaching this island paradise. So, for those who wish to take their own boats from the U.S. mainland, Somers Wharf and Hunter's Wharf offer excellent anchorage for yachts at the north side of Ordnance Island (free of charge on a first-come, first-served basis). The Dockyard Marina, located at the Royal Naval Dockyard, and the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club, offer first-class dockage, but reservations are needed. An excellent source for navigational information is [www.bermuda.com/yachts](http://www.bermuda.com/yachts).

As for sporting enthusiasts, dinghy races (held on alternate weekends from mid-May to mid-September) are a favorite spectator sport in Bermuda. But perhaps the biggest event of all with regard to boating in Bermuda, however, is the Newport Bermuda Race. Begun in 1906 and held in even years since then, this gala competition is sponsored by the Cruising Club of America and the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. It is considered the pinnacle in ocean sailboat racing. The next race is scheduled to begin off Newport, RI, on June 16, 2006.

With some of the most beautiful waters in the world, Bermuda is a boater's paradise. There are a number of charter companies on the island that offer daily cruises lasting from three to eight hours. Those who prefer to strike out on their own can do so easily by renting a powerboat without a skipper. Boating excursions should be arranged early on, however, due to their extreme popularity.

With hundreds of shipwrecks scattered among Bermuda's magnificent coral reefs (the most northerly coral reefs in the Western Hemisphere), diving in Bermuda is nothing short of

extraordinary. For those who wish to discover the island's undersea treasures, several companies, and the major hotels, can arrange snorkeling trips, as well as single- and/or double-tank dives. Be sure to ask about the reef at Elbow Beach – a local favorite! For those non-swimmers interested in seeing the underwater world around Bermuda, helmet diving is the alternative to scuba diving or snorkeling. Young children can even partake in the action since helmet divers are given brass helmets to wear as they descend 10 to 15 feet below the boat. Air is continuously pumped to the divers' helmets from the boat above. With helmet diving, there's no need to even remove your glasses or contact lenses.

The crystal-clear water surrounding Bermuda is rich with game fish, especially during the prime fishing season (May through November). There are more than 20 charter fishing boats operating out of Bermuda, and a number of world-class records, in a wide cross-section of test-line categories, have been set from their decks – a testament to the skill and experience of the local guides. There is also an annual game-fishing tournament – the Bermuda Big Game Classic – sponsored by the Bermuda Department of Tourism. The tournament is held in July and no entry fee or license is required to participate.

For contact information and a listing of specific companies to aid you with your boating, fishing and diving plans, visit [www.bermudawatersports.com](http://www.bermudawatersports.com) or [www.bermudafishing.com](http://www.bermudafishing.com). Another prime source of information is the Bermuda Department of Tourism (BDT), which operates at 675 Third Ave., 20th Floor, New York, NY 10017. Their courteous staff can be reached by calling (800) 223-6106 or by visiting [www.bermudatourism.com](http://www.bermudatourism.com). Upon request, the BDT can provide a complete packet of visitor information with regard to accommodations, activities, seasonal events and much more. ↴

### BASIC FACTS

**Area:** Approximately 30 square miles (one-third the size of Washington, D.C.)

**Population:** 65,000

**Government:** Self-governing, overseas territory of the United Kingdom

**Capital:** Hamilton – the island's political and commercial hub

**Currency:** Bermudian Dollar (BMD) – equivalent to the U.S. Dollar

### WHERE TO STAY

Bermuda has five first-class hotels: the Elbow Beach Club Resort, the Grotto Bay Resort, The Fairmont Hamilton Princess Hotel, the Wyndham Bermuda Resort & Spa, and the Fairmont Southampton Princess Hotel.

### HOW TO GET THERE

There are regularly scheduled direct flights to Bermuda on a number of airlines (American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Delta, US Airways, Air Canada and British Airways) from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Travelers

arriving from all other places must connect through one of these three countries.

Bermuda is also a popular cruise-line destination with Celebrity Cruises, Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean all visiting the island throughout the year.

### DOCUMENTATION

U.S. citizens must have either a valid U.S. passport or a photo identification (i.e., driver's license).

### SHOPPING

Bermuda offers a wide variety of high-quality items from a number of European countries. The best selections and prices are generally found on items imported from the United Kingdom. Please keep in mind, however, that Bermuda is not a duty-free port and that prices are often as expensive, if not more, than in the United States.

### ENTERTAINMENT

Bermuda has a number of establishments featuring live music ranging from ballroom dancing to reggae.

*The truly unique items that are the hallmark of Bermuda can be found in the many historical landmark shops.*