

atlantic oasis

Turquoise water, pink-sand beaches and a balmy climate are only a few hours away

by Doug Wallace

BERMUDA IS A POCKET WONDERLAND. It's so charming that even the bus routes marked by pink and blue poles dotted along the road look, to the untrained eye, like giant swizzle sticks. The fantasy-island feeling continues in the architecture: quaint, colourful houses are topped by white stepped roofs that look like they've been doused in icing sugar. And it's all set against a lush green landscape punctuated by bright subtropical flowers. The weather's wonderful (with

highs of 29 degrees) and the water's warm (30!). The off season is only from December to March, and it's still temperate then. But the best part is that it's only a three hour flight via Toronto. And don't be put off by its staid and clubby image — Bermuda has something for everyone. If you can pry yourself off the powder-fine beaches, there are groovy little bars, hip boutiques, myriad restaurants and gems of hotels to discover. >

REEFS HOTEL'S PRIVATE BEACH



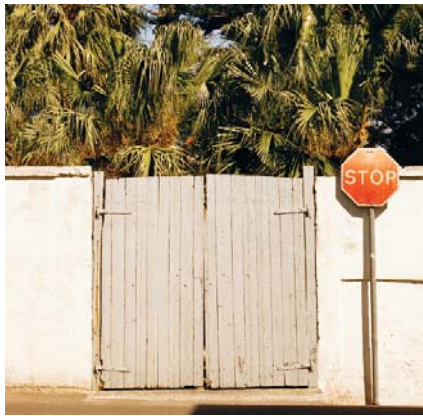
Checking In

The **Fairmont** in Southampton is the hub of the action on this part of the island with great golf, a superb steak restaurant and a fun beach club. 101 South Shore Rd., Southampton, fairmont.com/southampton. Rooms from \$206*.

Laid-back **Reefs Hotel & Club** consistently wins international accolades. Book a sunset dinner at Coconuts, its dramatic restaurant that's built into the cliffs. 56 South Shore Rd., Southampton, thereefs.com. Poolside rooms from \$397.

The colonial-style **Rosedon Hotel** is a step back in time and a perfect haven for afternoon tea. 61 Pitts Bay Rd., Hamilton, rosedon.com. Standard rooms from \$253.

9 Beaches, a seductive grouping of little cottages on stilts jutting out into the ocean, is getting a \$82 million facelift this year. It's set to reopen in May 2011. 4 Daniel's Head Rd., Sandys, 9beaches.com.



Five O'Clocktails

The **Opus Café & Lounge** turns into a sleek bar for smart cocktails at sundown, with the party crowd pouring in on Saturday night. 4 Bermudiana Rd., Hamilton, opus.bm. The locals like to hang out in the **Little Venice Restaurant & Wine Bar** in Little Venice. The only wine bar in Bermuda, it also has delicious tapas. 32 Bermudian Road, Hamilton, winebar.littlevenice.bm.

Dining Out

A newcomer is **The Dining Room**, nestled at the foot of Gibb's Hill Lighthouse. The menu is seasonal, with locally caught lobster and fish. 68 St. Anne's Road, Southampton, primaverarestaurant.com. **Splendido Bar & Restaurant**, located in an historic farmhouse, oozes old-world charm. The menu dazzles with its selection of freshly caught fish. 33 South Shore Rd., Paget, bermuda.com/hosted/splendido. **Beau Rivage** is the only French restaurant. The award-winning chef keeps the place busy — and on the list of all the concierge desks. 27 Harbour Rd., Paget, newsteadbelmonthills.com. **T. Bacci** sets the bar for Italian food on the island, with superb veal scallopini and lobster ravioli. Wait staff offer black napkins to people with dark pants — a first for us. At the **Fairmont Southampton**, fairmont.com/southampton. For proper coffee, homemade pastries and local atmosphere go to **Rock Island Coffee**. 48 Reid Street, Hamilton, rockisland.bm. >



Backpack 101



A knapsack shouldn't be a pain in your kid's back. Try these pointers:

CHOOSING

Pick a backpack that's lightweight, with wide, adjustable, padded shoulder straps and a waist strap. Look for one with dividers and pockets to distribute the contents.

PACKING

Only pack what's needed for the day. Fully loaded, the bag shouldn't weigh more than 10 to 15 percent of your child's weight.

LIFTING

Place the pack on a surface that's about waist height, then slip it on, one strap at a time. Kids should bend their knees to lift, using their arm and leg muscles, not their back.

WEARING

Adjust the straps so the pack fits snugly. Use both shoulder straps and the waist strap for stability.

For more tips on preventing backpack pain and strain, visit: www.chatelaine.com/backhealth



Exploring

Take the ferry to St. George's, where not much has changed in the last century, except for perhaps the plumbing. Check out **1. St. Peter's**, the oldest Anglican church in the Western hemisphere, which dates from 1612. Stop at the **Bermuda Perfumery**, renowned for its floral fragrances, as well as the **Unfinished Church**, which dates from the 1870s.

If you can dodge the docked cruise-shippers, wander around the **2. Royal Naval Dockyard** on the northwestern tip of the islands, and take in the **Keep**, the **Clocktower Mall** and the **Victualling Yard** where they used to prepare and store food for the military. Stop for a pint at the **Frog and Onion Pub**, within an 18th-century cooperage. thewestend.bm/dockyard.

Pack a picnic lunch, rent bicycles and head out on the **3. Railway Trail**; it meanders along the shoreline through unbeatable scenery. bermuda.com/visitors/guidedtours. **4.** Or for a loftier view, climb 185 steps up **Gibb's Hill Lighthouse**, built in 1846.

Take It Home

Bermuda's signature drink is the infamous **Dark 'n Stormy**. To keep it authentic make sure to pick up a bottle of Gosling's Black Seal Rum before you go (they've got plenty at the airport). Then grab a sturdy tumbler, pour in about 1.5 oz of dark rum, ginger beer to taste, a good squeeze of lime and lots of ice. It's one part fiery, one part refreshing.*



Rainy Day

Located in the Bermuda Botanical Gardens, **5. Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art** has a local focus, as well as a small but interesting collection of black-and-white drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe, who visited the island in 1933 to recuperate from a nervous breakdown. *183 South Rd., Paget, bermudamasterworks.com*. Even if it's not raining, the **Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute** is informative, interactive and fun, documenting the area's plentiful shipwrecks. The recovered treasure and shell collection in the lower level alone is worth the trip. *40 Crow Lane, Pembroke, buei.org*. Splurging on fabulous clothing is always more fun away from home. Bermuda's hippest boutique is **Atelierie**. The designers read like a condensed version of NYC's Meatpacking District, with Calypso, Rebecca Taylor and Paige Denim. *6 Dundonald Street, Hamilton, atelierie.com*.