

A bite of Bermuda

Bermuda's tourism industry enjoyed an unexpected boost during the pandemic, bringing with it some exciting new hotel and restaurant openings. Qin Xie reports

Horseshoe Bay
Beach, Bermuda

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Brockgardner

bermuda can be hard to place. Not because I want to shoehorn in a joke about the Bermuda Triangle here – although it's hard to visit the archipelago without doing so – but rather, because it's so unique.

A lot comes down to the islands' location in the middle of the Atlantic. Lying 600 miles off the coast of North Carolina, this British Overseas Territory is just too far away from its nearest neighbour to fall neatly into North America.

Nor does it quite fit into the Caribbean for the same reason, even though its powder-soft sandy beaches, cerulean blue waters and sub-tropical climate make it easy to confuse with any number of islands in the region – Bahamas, Barbados and Barbuda to name a few.

FOOD AND DRINK

Bermuda's isolated position turned out to be a boon for its tourism industry during the pandemic.

When borders were closed between the US and the ➤



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Aerial view of Bermuda; Cooper's Island Nature Reserve; Hamilton, capital of Bermuda

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Brookgardener, Darryl Brooks; Bermuda Tourism Authority/Ciara Eve, Rohan Shastri

UK, business travellers and well-heeled holidaymakers convened in Bermuda, either to wait out the 14 days needed to enter the US or to work in paradise. In fact, the regularity of journeys like these kept some occupancy rates at near 75% when hotels in other parts of the world were forced to close.

And of course, there are the many wealthy residents; Bermuda has one of the highest GDPs per capita in the world and counts billionaire former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg among its flock. All of this means, now that tourists are finally returning in their droves, there are a lot of new places to eat and drink – as I recently discovered on a whirlwind tour of the islands.

One of the hottest places to be is The Tasting Room, a new wine shop and bar where you can sample about 40 wines dispensed from its enomatic machines. These

temperature-controlled devices keep bottles in top condition, automatically dispensing tasters or full servings at the touch of a button, so you end up with the perfect drink every time.

Locals also love Huckleberry – a nod to Mark Twain, who loved holidaying in Bermuda – where *cronuts* (croissant doughnut), *croclair* (croissant éclair) and *cruffin* (croissant muffin) have all landed with a Bermudian twist. The cronut takes its flavour cues from the rum swizzle, a fruity punch that's the drink of choice for many Bermudians.

NEW OPENINGS

More openings are on the way from the many luxury hotels across the islands. The whimsical Cambridge Beaches, known for its traditional cottage-style accommodation, is going through a major design update ahead of its centenary next

year – think shades of coral pink and avocado green with modern rattan furniture and bold prints – as well as a restaurant refresh.

The opening of Sunken Harbor Club this summer is the highlight; it's a new outpost for the celebrated New York bar, but the food on offer here will be an adventurous take on Bermudian classics.

The Hamilton Princess, another Bermuda stalwart, has recently updated its food and beverage offering, too. A cafe and gelateria have just opened but they are also launching a flagship restaurant. The details are all still very hush-hush but it's expected to be a celebrity chef.

There's also its sister property, Fairmont Southampton, which is currently undergoing a complete renovation. It's due to reopen in 2023, boosting the number of rooms on the more affordable end of the market by almost 600. ➤

ASK THE expert

"I have visited Bermuda about 20 times, and every time I go I discover or experience new things. Its culture is an interesting mix of British, Caribbean and American influences and it suits the pockets of those who holiday in places like Dubai, the Maldives and sophisticated Mediterranean destinations. For active first-time visitors, I recommend walking along the south coast beaches and cliff paths that stretch from Horseshoe Bay to Warwick Long Bay. A cycle along the old Railway Trail takes you past many hidden coves, forts and gardens that aren't always visible from the road."

Dominic Hodson,
Purely Bermuda



3 OTHER PLACES TO STAY



Rosewood Bermuda

Set on a sprawling estate, this luxury hotel manages to feel incredibly intimate thanks to the hidden gardens dotted around the property. All of its spacious rooms offer harbour views. B&B starts from \$1,290 per night. rosewoodhotels.com



St Regis Bermuda

A new opening next to Fort St Catherine, designers made the most of the pristine seafront location with floor-to-ceiling windows. B&B starts from \$499 a night. marriott.com



Hamilton Princess

Dubbed the Pink Palace, this waterfront resort has an expansive contemporary art collection including Banksy and Damien Hirst. A separate beach club offers overwater hammocks. Rooms from \$428, including breakfast. thehamiltonprincess.com



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Colourful shops in Bermuda; fish sandwich; Bermuda fish and tomato soup; lobster lunch at Lost in the Triangle

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Darryl Brooks, Sergii Koval; Burnt House Productions; Bermuda Tourism Authority/Rohan Shastri



“I tried everything from wild spinach and fennel to poor man’s pepper and allspice in the space of five minutes

Not that there isn’t plenty of choice already, of course. By virtue of its location and popularity with well-heeled travellers, international fare is readily available at just about every restaurant.

Often, you’ll find sushi menus alongside steaks and pasta, and at upscale spots such as Blu and Aurora, they’re served with views to die for. Many hotels have their own private beaches where you can lounge in overwater hammocks or snorkel before sitting down to a meal on that famous pink sand.

LOCAL FLAVOUR

For something more Bermudian, you can’t go wrong with local eateries like Wahoo and Lost In The Triangle. Traditional dishes such as the fish sandwich – fried fish in raisin bread, topped with coleslaw and tartar sauce – or a fish chowder are some of the most popular options. It’s just as easy to whizz your way around the islands in a Twizy – a two-seater electric vehicle – and stop at any one of the public beaches for a cocktail and a snack.

I particularly loved the foraging tours led by Doreen Williams-James. Over the space of three hours, she’ll take you on a selection of walks to some of the most gorgeous corners of Bermuda and teach you about the island’s edible herbs and flowers, before serving up a small feast featuring the plants she’s found.

The range of tours is imaginatively extensive, taking in wheelchair and pushchair-friendly wild herbal ➤

NEED TO KNOW

- ✿ BA has direct flights with flight time of 7h 15m; there’s a four-hour time difference.
- ✿ The Bermudian dollar is the official currency here but US dollars are accepted across the island.
- ✿ Summers are warm (up to 30C) and winters are mild (down to 15C) making it a year-round destination.
- ✿ The southern shore has natural reefs for snorkelling and there are hundreds of shipwrecks for more experienced divers.
- ✿ Grotto Bay Hotel has two caves – one for its spa and another to swim in.



FROM LEFT: Woody's restaurant; Wahoo's Bistro & Patio

PICTURES: Geminii Photography/Bryant Richards; Bermuda Tourism Authority/Rohan Shastri

tours as well as wild herbal remedy classes. On my tour in Cooper's Island Nature Reserve, a near-pristine woodland area by the coast, I tried everything from wild spinach and fennel to poor man's pepper and allspice in the space of about five minutes. Some of these were found right by the side of the road.

That's the other thing about Bermuda – it might be small and, for some, obscure, but it's easy to find a bit of everything when you visit this remote archipelago, out in the Atlantic. No wonder Mark Twain said – after many summers spent in Bermuda – “you go to heaven if you want to, I'd rather stay here.” **TV**

BOOK IT

Purely Bermuda offers a seven-night holiday in July for two adults, staying in a Fairmont Luxury Room at Hamilton Princess, for £2,659 per person (or £2,244 per person in October). It includes a full breakfast, British Airways flights from Heathrow, round-trip private airport transfers in Bermuda and all mandatory taxes, fees and gratuities. purelybermuda.co.uk

ALWAYS INCLUDED:

- Unlimited À La Carte Dining
- Endless Drinks
- 24-hour Room Service
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