

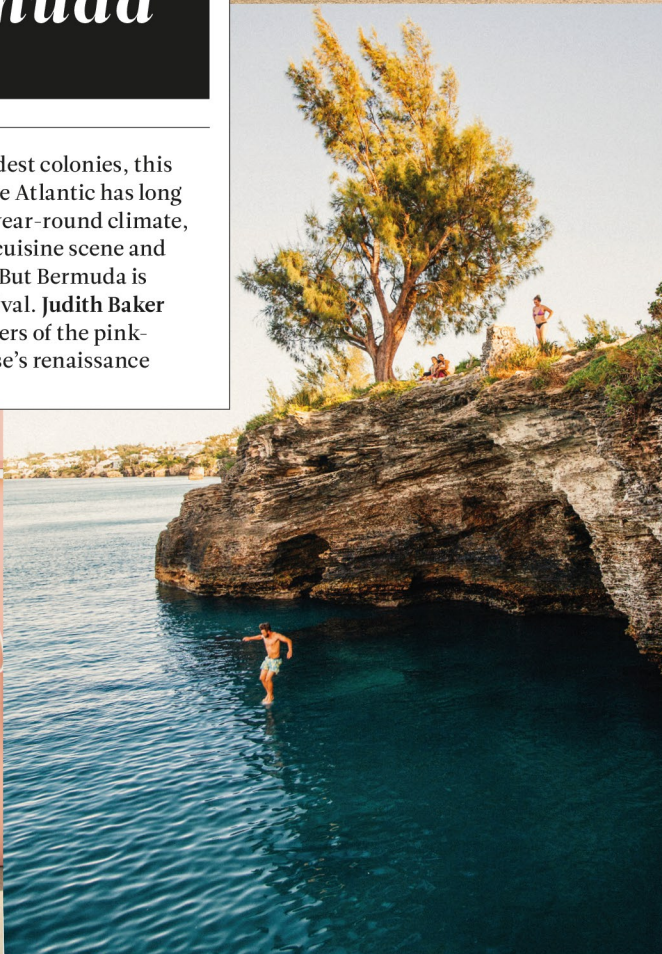


DEEP DIVE



Bermuda

One of Britain's oldest colonies, this 21-mile island in the Atlantic has long been known for its year-round climate, white tablecloth cuisine scene and historic towns. But Bermuda is undergoing a revival. **Judith Baker** meets the pioneers of the pink-beached paradise's renaissance



Photographs: Cedric Angeles; Rolly Durly

ROSE-TINTED SPECTACLES

Glorious pink-sand beach. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Marcus Samuelsson's jerk pork belly with quail egg and fava beans; scooting through St George's; cliff jumping at Admiralty House Park on North Shore; chef Marcus Samuelsson

Travellers have long loved Bermuda. But its infamous triangle aside, so far it's had a sedate and somewhat retro reputation. However, with British Airways operating direct flights from London for the first time in 30 years, as well as a slew of chic new hotels, shops and restaurants opening, it's being freshly discovered by a younger, Millennial crowd.

These new travellers – who made up 18 per cent of the island's visitors in the first part of 2021 – have been drawn in by Bermuda's authentic cuisine, conservation initiatives, festivals, art and culture trails. They want to spin around the sites in Twizy eco-friendly electric rental cars, or circle the island on Jet Ski safaris to discover Bermuda's Barrier Reef.

Capital Hamilton exudes contemporary energy. Restaurant Marcus from hip New York based chef Marcus Samuelsson (of Red Rooster fame) is attracting attention, while a new marina aimed at the superyacht crowd is open at The Hamilton Princess, whose impressive art gallery includes works by Warhol and Hockney (another gallery is due to open in St George's).

St George's, one of the earliest English

settlements in the New World and a Unesco World Heritage Site, has always attracted history hunters to its twisting alleyways and Anglican chapels. But these days, amid the historic sites, you'll also find unusual artisan shops selling handmade jewellery inspired by the sea and bars such as the lively Gombey's. Lili Bermuda, housed in 18th-century Stewart Hall, makes perfumes from local flowers and offers free tours and workshops where you can create your own signature scent.

Since 2019 the island has held a Pride event aimed at creating a safe public space for the LGBTQ community, and other festivals include the annual National Heroes Day parade and carnival, where revellers party through the streets.

The island's new vibe means there's much more to discover in Bermuda than sundowners and afternoon tea, while its unpacked beaches and quiet bays make it perfect for those seeking space. Open-air activities abound, from award-winning golf courses to walking the old railway trail with just the ubiquitous yellow kiskadee bird for company. Here three local experts give three more very good reasons why Bermuda is buzzing right now.



WELDON WADE ON DIVING

The first and only Bermudian certified freediver, SCUBA diver and closed-circuit rebreather diver not only teaches tourists and locals to snorkel and freedive but promotes the conservation of the ocean's fragile eco-system. He is founder of the Guardians of the Reef conservation organisation and several other ocean focused projects.

Bermuda is a paradise for divers, with 300 wrecks making it the shipwreck capital of the Atlantic. Top places to dive are the *Hermes* wreck, purposely sunk in 1985 as an attraction for divers, so not as damaged as older wrecks. The *Marie Celeste* is a Civil War blockade runner that sank in 1864 and the *Cristobal Colon* is a 499ft Spanish ship that hit a coral reef on the North Shore in 1936. Apart from wrecks, there are tunnels and catacombs around the island, so diving is safe and satisfying for both beginners and experienced SCUBA divers. There's an amazing catacomb area off Elbow Beach and there's no need to be an expert to enjoy the ocean. Church Bay, Tobacco Bay and John Smith's Bay are great places to explore with just a mask, fins and snorkel. Snorkelling is more accessible for many people and the reef along our south shore is very close to the beach. You can even put eyes on a couple of cool wrecks swimming from the shore.

In the work I do with the community both locally and across the region, I not only showcase the wonders that can be seen, felt and experienced under water but communicate how ocean health and human health are connected, and how the ocean is our life support system. The key to ocean protection is creating a human connection.

Visitors these days are just as interested in nature and its conservation as they are in cocktails and relaxation. Visiting SCUBA divers are invited to join the lionfish containment effort. The invasive species has the potential to harm reef ecosystems, and local dive shops offer an Invasive Lionfish PADI Speciality that provides both theory and practical instruction. Voluntourism is something we are working on as a community in Bermuda. ☺

KEITH DE SHIELDS ON CUISINE

As chef at Cambridge Beaches Resort, De Shields has his hands full preparing gourmet dishes for guests at the resort's high-end restaurant, Tamarisk, but he says there's an emerging trend for less formal dining.

BUEI Harbourfront is a favourite of younger hip folk who consider themselves foodies. It is located at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI) and has great views and a sushi bar with specialities including tuna tartare and fish carpaccio.

Interesting local places include Woody's and The Spot in Hamilton. The Spot has been a favourite local diner for decades, serving classic Bermudian food. You can expect to eat shark hash, conch stew, pawpaw casserole and johnny bread there.

Rock Island in Hamilton is the place where upmarket folks love to hang and be seen and the chefs do really cool specials. Personally, Wahoo's in St George's is my go-to place when I have family and friends visiting. It's one of the island's top gathering places, and its speciality is local spiny lobster.

With influences from Portugal, Africa and North America, Bermudian cuisine is full of flavour, whether served in smart restaurants or rustic cafés. My favourite dish? Spicy grilled shrimps with mango salsa and hibiscus sorbet.



Photographs: Meredith Andrews; Cedric Angeles

Pleasure island

WATER'S EDGE

Riding on Horseshoe Bay. Left, from top: diver Weldon Wade; blackened rock fish dish by Marcus Samuelsson; chef Keith De Shields





STAY

The St Regis Bermuda Resort

St Regis opened this year in St Catherine's Beach, St George's, and is Marriott's first luxury brand hotel on the island. All of its 120 glamorous rooms have a private balcony, and a casino is planned.

marriott.com

The Reefs Resort and Club

One of Bermuda's best-loved hotels has been owned by the Dodwell family since 1947. An elegant, intimate 60-room hideaway on the South Shore, it has panoramic views, beachfront rooms and an award-winning spa.

thereefs.com

The Hamilton Princess

Known as The Pink Palace, the historic Hamilton Princess in the heart of the capital encapsulates much of Bermuda's old-world glamour. Sip a Dark & Stormy in the iconic 1609 restaurant.

thehamiltonprincess.com

The Loren at Pink Beach

The Loren at Pink Beach is an edgy addition to the Bermuda hotel scene.

The contemporary property has glass walls that showcase the ocean and large, sophisticated rooms with private balconies.

thelorenhotel.com

Rosewood Bermuda

The luxury hotel on the stunning Castle Harbour offers a range of lovely experiences, including a perfumery masterclass, meditation and a 'beekeeper' body therapy at the spa.

rosewoodhotels.com



AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

September, 27°C; October, 25°C; November, 22°C; December, 20°C



GETTING THERE

British Airways flies several times a week to LF Wade International Airport, Hamilton, Bermuda, from London Heathrow and London Gatwick airports. Flight time: 7 hours, 20 minutes

ba.com/bermuda

KRISTIN WHITE ON CULTURE

Describing herself as a storyteller, activist, blogger and writer, White's roles stem from her passion for equality and community development. Along with crafts and gifts, her shop, Long Story Short, sells books focusing on women of colour as well as LGBTQ writers, and is the base for her cultural tours.

Travellers have become more conscious and want to connect authentically with the people and places they visit. I offer history tours, telling the stories of people of African descent on the island, with foodie events, and multi-day itineraries rooted in Bermuda culture. We are this tiny rock in the middle of the Atlantic, but our people have been a part of major world events for over 400 years. Guests on my tours are amazed by the history, and, by meeting local entrepreneurs, eating our food and learning about how we celebrate special occasions, they appreciate the opportunity to not just visit Bermuda but truly experience life here. When I'm curating a trip, I include cultural events – we go to see local musicians, meet artists and connect with other creatives.

Bermuda was the first English colony to be part of the transatlantic slave trade, starting in 1616. The African Diaspora Heritage Trail is a series of sites and buildings across the island that tells the stories of people of African descent, tracing our history from slavery to emancipation to leadership. My history tour visits several of these sites, including Tucker House, once home to Joseph Rainey, a freed slave from South Carolina who fled to Bermuda during the height of conflict in the USA.



MAKING HISTORY

St Peter's Church, St George's. Above: tour guide Kristin White

