

36 Hours Bermuda



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL NAGLE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

FROM LEFT Newstead Belmont Hills Resort is a popular spot for happy hour; Opus Café & Lounge; meals with a view at Mickey's Beach Bistro; and a coral-covered boiler from a shipwreck.

By DAVID LAHUTA

BERMUDA has lots to celebrate in 2009. Four hundred years ago, an English sailing vessel was shipwrecked on this mid-Atlantic archipelago, giving birth to the island nation of Bermuda, one that is now in full-swing party mode. With regattas decked out in Christmas lights, folk dance performances and star-studded music festivals (Quincy Jones and John Legend anyone?), it's a gala four centuries in the making. Yes, the quirky charms are still there — men in namesake shorts and knee-high socks, pink sand beaches, folks zipping around on scooters — but with 400 years of maturity, Bermuda wouldn't have it any other way.

Friday

4 p.m.

① Tea in Shorts

In a country with a Union Jack on its flag, it's no surprise that many British traditions endure. Tuck in for tea at Heritage Court (76 Pitts Bay Road; 441-295-3000; www.fairmont.com/hamilton), a white-tablecloth dining room in the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, a 124-year-old hotel where guests nibble on cucumber sandwiches, petits fours, and fresh baked apricot and fig scones served with kumquat jam and Devonshire clotted cream (34 dollars; Bermuda dollars are pegged to the U.S. dollar, and both are widely accepted).

6 p.m.

② Happiest Hour

Bermudans are serious about Friday happy hour, when the island clocks out and rum-punches in for the weekend. Well-dressed locals make their way to the Newstead Belmont Hills Golf Resort & Spa (27 Harbour Road; 441-236-6060; www.newsteadbelmonthills.com), which hosts a weekly outdoor fiesta, live band and all, on its harbor front patio. Try a dark 'n' stormy: rum and Bermuda stone ginger beer.

9 p.m.

③ Fish on Front Street

Most guests at Port O Call (87 Front Street; 441-295-5373; www.portocall.bm) stick to the specials — fresh local fish simply pan-seared and served with



a citrus vinaigrette. From September through March, try the spiny lobster, split, and finished on the grill. After a recent renovation, this Front Street favorite is looking smarter than ever with half-moon banquettes, wood-paneled walls and a granite-topped bar jammed with island power brokers. Dinner for two, about \$70 not including wine.

Saturday

8 a.m.

④ Dive a Wreck

When Peter Benchley was researching his novel "The Deep," he found inspiration underwater from the Constellation, a four-masted schooner that sank off Bermuda in 1943. Even neophytes can explore the well-preserved wreck in a mere 30 feet of water with an introductory dive given by Bluewater Divers & Watersports (Robinson's Marina, Somerset Bridge; 441-234-1034; www.dive-bermuda.com; \$165). In a great two-for-

one deal, about 50 feet from the Constellation is the wreck of the Montana, an English steamer that sank 80 years earlier. Spot pieces of its cargo like shattered china, glass bottles, even a pool table, among thick schools of damselfish, grouper and barracuda.

1 p.m.

⑤ Chowder Showdown

It's hard to find a restaurant that doesn't serve Bermuda fish chowder, a spicy seafood-and-vegetable stew traditionally eaten with a dash of Gosling's Black Seal rum and Outerbridge's Original Sherry Pepper sauce. Two of the island's favorites, both in Hamilton, are the Hog Penny Restaurant & Pub (5 Burnaby Hill; 441-292-2534; www.hogpennypub.com; \$6.50), a classic English pub, and the Lobster Pot (6 Bermudiana Road; 441-292-6898; www.bermuda.com/lobsterpot; \$6.75), a nautically themed cafe with a new out-

door patio. When you're done, catch some rays at sweeping Elbow Beach, minutes away in Paget Parish.

3 p.m.

⑥ Island Artists

The arts community was abuzz when the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art (183 South Road; 441-236-2950; www.bermudamasterworks.com) opened at the Bermuda Botanical Gardens last spring to show its collection of island-inspired paintings, including works by Georgia O'Keeffe and Mardsen Hartley. Its latest exhibition, "We Are Sailing," examines Bermuda's connection with the sea, and includes Winslow Homer's watercolor "S.S. Trinidad."

4 p.m.

⑦ Grab a Gift

For designer handbags and shiny baubles, bring your wallet to Hamilton, Bermuda's port capital. For authentic Bermudiana, however, head to quieter St. George, on the island's east end. The Book Cellar (Tucker House Basement, Water Street; 441-297-0448) specializes in historical, nautical and architectural books about Bermuda. Sniff handmade scents at the Bermuda Perfumery (5 Queen Street; 441-293-0627; www.bermuda-perfumery.com) housed in an 18th-century cottage with coral stone walls and exposed cedar beams. And buy authentic Bermuda shorts at the English Sports Shop (30 Water Street; 441-297-0142), where you'll find all colors of the rainbow (from \$39.95).

ONLINE: READERS' THOUGHTS

See a slide show of Bermuda. Also, share your suggestions on where to stay, where to eat and what to do.

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8 p.m.

⑧ Outdoors or In?

If it's dining with sea spray you're after, head to Mickey's Beach Bistro & Bar (60 South Shore Road; 441-236-9107; www.mandarinoriental.com/bermuda) an open-air restaurant at the Elbow Beach Hotel in Paget Parish, which serves pasta and seafood (dinner for two about \$60, not including wine). Prefer dining indoors? Sit near the window at Ocean Echo in the Reefs Hotel (56 South Shore Road; 441-238-0222; www.thereefs.com). Perched on a cliff in Southampton Parish, the restaurant features inventive spins on local favorites like Bermuda fish cake in black plum sauce (\$16.50) and pan-fried rockfish with apple beurre blanc (\$37.50).

11 p.m.

⑨ Martini Time

There are plenty of hotel bars for after-dinner cocktails. But for more local action, make your way to a tree-lined stretch of Hamilton known as restaurant row. There you'll find LV's (12 Bermudiana Road; 441-296-3330; www.lv.bm), with dim mood lighting, low-slung sofas and nooks for canoodling. When you're done checking out the handsome 30-something crowd, head next door to Opus Café & Lounge (4 Bermudiana Road; 441-292-3500; www.opus.bm) a thumping one-room cocktail bar that plays pop and R & B.

Sunday

7:30 a.m.

⑩ Water Hazards

Reopened in June following a \$14 million renovation, Port Royal (5 Port Royal Drive; 441-234-0974; www.portroyalgolf.bm; green fees, \$165) is arguably Bermuda's finest golf course, with water views from nearly every hole. Don't forget your camera on the 16th. The 235-yard, crescent-shaped par three hugs the coast with nothing but ocean between tee and pin.

11 a.m.

⑪ Go to Church

Church Bay, that is, a small cove with some of the island's prettiest snorkeling, with blue angels, parrotfish and thriving coral just 100 yards offshore. Rent gear from the dive shop at nearby Fairmont Southampton Hotel & Resort (101 South Shore Road; 441-238-2332; www.fairmont.com/southampton, \$20 for two hours). When you're done, avoid the cruise ship crowds at Horse-shoe Beach and head for quieter Warwick Long Bay. With over a half-mile stretch of fine pink sand, you're bound to find a slice to call your own.

THE BASICS

Several airlines fly nonstop from New York to Bermuda. A recent Web search found round-trip fares in October starting at \$308.

Tourists cannot rent cars on Bermuda, so take a \$30 (Bermuda and U.S. dollars, of equal value, are both accepted) taxi from the airport to Hamilton city, where a scooter can be rented. A reliable place is Smatt's Cycle Livery (74 Pitts Bay Road; 441-295-1180; www.smattscyclelivery.com) with rentals starting at \$80 for the first day, \$45 after. Rather not drive on the left? Con-

sider the bus, which departs Hamilton frequently and covers much of the island (\$3).

The elegant Fairmont Southampton (101 South Shore Road; 441-238-8000; www.fairmont.com/southampton) has amenities galore including a par three golf course, 31,000-square-foot Willow Stream spa and a free ferry to the Hamilton Princess, its sister property in Hamilton. Doubles from \$189. Reopened in spring 2008 as an all-suites hotel, Newstead Belmont Hills Golf Resort & Spa (27 Harbour Road; 441-236-

6060; www.newsteadbelmonthills.com) has tastefully decorated rooms with granite countertops, sisal rugs and harbor view balconies or patios. Doubles from \$290. Tucker's Point Hotel & Spa (60 Tucker's Point Club Drive; 866-604-3764; www.tuckerpoint.com) is Bermuda's newest resort, a luxurious east end retreat that opened in April with an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts and a trendy whitewashed beach club. Doubles from \$340.