

BERMUDA

*A world away,
so near*

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Above: Visitors enjoying a round at Fairmont Southampton.

Below: Johnny Barnes wishes a daily good morning to all Hamilton commuters.



Anywhere else, Johnny Barnes would have long since been carted away. Then again, Bermuda is not like anywhere, and Johnny is as sane as anybody; most of us should pause and talk to him, we could regain some of our own sanity. Carrying his radio, this retired bus driver arrives at the traffic island, just outside downtown Hamilton every morning at four. He waves at every car and scooter that passes, and shouts, "Good Morning - I love you - Good morning." Indeed, they are his friends, Bermudians and visitors alike. He is now 87 and I suspect that there are few people in Bermuda who don't know him personally.

Bermuda is about as long a flight from here as a commute during a busy rush hour from Hamilton to Mississauga. It takes even less time to travel from one end of Bermuda to the other. Besides having no rush hour, Bermuda receives no snow. In fact, when we visited the Island last December, the average temperature was slightly below 20°C and I am told in summer it rarely goes over 26° - perfect golf vacation weather.

Visitors to the island cannot rent cars, there is a law against it, but you can rent scooters or bicycles and that is all you need. The bus service will connect travellers to every point in Bermuda and if

you are looking to visit an outlying area, a taxi or ferry ride is like a sightseeing tour.

For an island that looks somewhat like a fishhook that measures 33 kilometres from point to shank, Bermuda offers an incredible variety of activities. From the Royal Naval Dockyards with its historic market and impressive museum, the bus or scooter will take you toward Bermuda's capital, Hamilton. Enroute you will see forts, the world's smallest drawbridge at Ely's Harbour, a lighthouse built in 1846, a few nature preserves and a botanical garden. This will bring you to the middle of the Island. From here on, toward the shank of the hook, the Bermuda Aquarium and Zoo is a must-visit. A few kilometres along Harrington Sound, the Devil's Hole Aquarium is another natural attraction that should not be missed. The Crystal Caves, a few minutes down the road, are literally out of this world, before you enter the Historic town of St George's, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Golfing in Bermuda is like heaven! Of the eight golf courses in Bermuda, at least five are public. The settings of the courses are breathtaking, always within sight of the ocean and often challenging. The designs are tight as the fairways often run along the very scenic coastline and at times a stiff breeze will carry your ball to areas that you

never even knew existed. Yet games on Bermuda's golf courses are relaxing. Nobody cares about your handicap and your partners are too ecstatic having the opportunity of playing in Bermuda to worry about a missed shot. The staff at the hotel may wear pink or lime green Bermuda shorts under a tuxedo jacket; your attire on a course must be more appropriate. Proper golf attire applies on every course. Pack a golf shirt with a collar, some decent shorts, Bermuda style is preferred, or some dressy trousers. Cut-offs, tank tops or jeans may get you strange looks, but it certainly will not get you on the course.

The **PORT ROYAL** in Southampton with its breathtaking view of the Atlantic is among the best public golf courses around the world. You will play on cliff tops and navigate around challenging hazards. The most famous and challenging hole at the Port Royal is the 16th hole, where for 238 yards little stands between the tee and the pin. A par 71 with 6842 yards, no wonder the pros play the PGO Grand Slam of Golf here. www.portroyalgolf.bm.

ST. GEORGE'S GOLF Course near the World Heritage Site of St George's is also public with a view of the historic town and the sea below. Slightly shorter at 6135 yards and a par 62, a round will cost as little as \$60. A week's membership for unlimited golf is a mere \$250. www.stgeorgesclub.bm.

The **OCEAN VIEW** is only a 9-hole public course but it is convenient if you stay in Hamilton and is a joy to play. The second nine if you choose to play, from different tees than the front 9, makes this a par 70, 5880-yards long. www.oceanview.bm.

BELMONT HILLS Golf Course has been redesigned recently. The course is public and offers a challenge to the best of us. Watch out for narrow fairways and multi-layered greens. The new course is now 5980 yards and plays as a par 70. www.belmonthills.com.

FAIRMONT SOUTHAMPTON is a very challenging nine holes. Its hilly landscape makes it very exciting to play. It also declines sharply toward the ocean and is often windy. (On a stormy day a high ball may end up in Cuba!) The course is

part of the Fairmont Southampton Hotel chain but is open to everybody. The 18-hole par 3 is only 2684 yards long so you had better be familiar with your short irons and wedges. www.fairmontgolf.com

There are a few more courses open to the public on slow days, but if you are so inclined, try to rub shoulders with some of the Island's wealthiest residents and see if you can get an invitation to play the **MID-OCEAN** Golf Club. If you're lucky, rich or famous, maybe you will get to play there. It is considered Bermuda's best course.

Bermuda was discovered in 1505 by the Spanish and settled by the British in 1609. To this date Bermuda remains one of the last British overseas territories. The largest industry is finance followed by tourism. Although Bermuda has the highest GDP in the world, unlike some other popular destinations, they have remained affordable. Accommodations are plentiful and range from the stateliest of hotels to some rather intimate small resorts. If you happen to be a golfer, look for some resorts or hotels that have their own golf course or are associated with one nearby. Bermuda is very clean and safe, including Hamilton, and the people are very friendly. It truly is a country with a difference.

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Above: Sixteenth hole at Port Royal Golf Course.

Bottom left: Beautiful and mysterious crystal caves.

TRAVELGUIDE

Check out Bermuda Tourism at www.bermudatourism.com or www.experiencebermuda.com or www.bermuda.com One of the most attractive places we found was The Pompano Beach Club, right beside the Port Royal Course www.pompanobeachclub.com. If you like to stay in town, look at the Fairmont Hamilton Princess www.fairmont.com/hamilton.

Air Canada and West Jet have regular flights. Public transport will take you just about anywhere and Taxis are clean, safe and the drivers are polite and excellent guides. Currency is the Bermuda Dollar, equal to US dollars, which is also accepted. Electrical outlets are the same as in Canada.

