

Beaches

## *La Vie en Rose*

Life is always rosy on a Bermuda beach,  
where pink sands play with turquoise waters.

Vacation destinations make big claims about their beaches — sugary white, pearly white, alabaster white — and some really are. But few can claim pink, and only one spot in the world can offer Bermuda's powdery pink beaches against its radiant turquoise shallows with deep ocean blues in the distance, all under a golden winter sun.

How did these beaches get to be so pink? Besides the pulverized remains of calcium carbonate shells and coral skeletons — found in beach sand anywhere — the beaches here contain two secret ingredients to give them their sparkle and hue.

They get their signature pink cast from tiny scarlet protozoans of the order Foraminifera, which cling to the reefs while alive, then colour the sands when dead. The beaches get their sparkling personalities from crystalline quartz, a mineral not native to these volcanic isles, but transported here in the guts of birds on migrations.

A simple walk on any Bermudian beach is a glorious event. Find dozens of favourite spots for sunbathing, swimming, beachcombing or games. Water temperature can reach 85°F/29°C in August, but dip below 64°F/18°C in winter — a bit nippy for locals but quite enjoyable for Canadians, Europeans and penguins.

Bermuda has a beach to please everyone. Kid-friendly hideaways snuggle on shallow bays. Secluded coves host romantic strolls hand in hand. Paddle a kayak, snorkel a reef, mount up your horse and gallop through the surf.

Beaches along the south coast — among the most photographed in the world — are popular for water sports as they whip up waves perfect for swimming, surfing and more. On the coral bluffs high above the rosy sands blossom fragrant summer flowers.

Along the north shore, meanwhile, shallow waters and pristine parks characterise the beaches.

On Good Friday, Bermudians across the islands hoist colourful handmade kites at the shores. During Cup Match each summer, cricket parties connected to the games via radio spill onto the public beaches.

Below find several of our favourites in the west end (Sandys, Southampton and Warwick parishes), east end (Smith's, Hamilton and St. George's parishes) and centre of the islands (Pembroke, Devonshire and Paget parishes).

## **WEST END**

**Astwood Cove.** Snorkellers favour this rocky shoreline in Warwick Parish. At the bottom of a steep, winding road. So do singles and couples escaping the more family-oriented beaches. Look in the cliffs for nesting Bermuda longtails. Nearby is a park for nature walks and picnic lunches.

**Black Bay.** Off Ireland Island's Malabar Road, near Royal Naval Dockyard, are three tiny beaches unprotected, but pleasantly secluded.

**Chaplin Bay.** In Southampton, surrounded by cliffs, this small shore between Stonehole Bay and Horseshoe Bay makes for a great place to read a good book or just work on your tan.

**Church Bay.** Colourful fish and coral reefs lure swimmers and snorkellers to this scenic beach in Southampton Parish.

**Horseshoe Bay Beach.** Bring the camera. This Southampton shoreline is surrounded by limestone cliffs, sheltered by offshore reefs, and rated by *USA Today* as a favourite beach for lovers. Waters can get rough, but lifeguards watch during summer. Play volleyball, go for a beach run, or catch some rays on the soft sand. Look for the café, showers and other beach amenities.

**Jobson's Cove.** This Warwick Parish beach has the feel of a secret hideaway, only 30 feet / 9 m wide in places. Excellent for snorkelling, the water is just 6.5 feet / 2 m deep well offshore. No buildings encroach on one's feeling of seclusion.

**Mangrove Bay.** This tranquil bay near Somerset Village has both public and private beaches. The public beach, popular with families, is lined by mangroves and a curving shoreline.

**Parson's Bay.** Families with children appreciate this small beach, off the beaten track near Royal Naval Dockyard.

**Snorkel Park.** One of Bermuda's most fun spots, at the far tip of Royal Naval Dockyard, visitors enjoy not only the sands and palms but also the beach equipment and unbeatable view of the open ocean. Popular Hammerheads Bar and Grill, which serves cocktails and snacks, occupies a large gazebo. At night this beach comes alive with music and entertainment.

**Somerset Long Bay.** Off Long Bay Road, this vantage is well suited to beachcombing or long walks in seclusion, especially during sunset. The nearby Bermuda Audubon Society nature reserve offers good spots for picnics and family fun.

**Stonehole Bay.** Rarely crowded, the sandy shoreline, scattered with large rocks, disappears at high tide, but shallow waters beckon just offshore.

**Warwick Long Bay.** This scenic stretch, popular with swimmers, joggers and horseback riders, offers much to do. Steep cliffs and shrubby hills provide privacy for sunbathers, who may be avoiding families and crowds. A long stretch of sand provides plenty of space to stretch out. Bird watchers like to inspect the prolific bay grape and cedar trees. In summer, rent snorkels, masks and fins.

**West Whale Bay.** In March and April, beachgoers are treated to a parade of migrating humpback whales. Picnickers can spread out on the sand or take advantage of tables on a grassy field. When the tide is low, wade out to the coral reefs. Public facilities are available.

## **CENTRE**

**Clarence Cove.** Two small beaches ring an exquisite lagoon on the north shore of Pembroke Parish. A trail to the beach, at Admiralty House Park along Spanish Point Road, winds down a hillside.

**Elbow Beach.** Taking its name from Elbow Beach Bermuda Resort, this beach attracts windsurfers, snorkellers and kite enthusiasts in addition to swimmers. Only a portion of the beach is public, accessible from Tribe Road #4.

**Grape Bay Beach.** Not far from Hamilton and well worth the trip, be greeted by soft sands, blue water, and blessed peace and quiet.

**Jobson's Cove.** Full of great photo ops, in Warwick Parish, the sheltered beach is especially good for snorkelling. You can spot fish even without gear.

## **EAST END**

**Achilles Bay Beach.** Near Fort St. Catherine in St. George's, this secluded spot is shaped like a heel, thus the name that evokes ancient Greece.

**Bay Island.** Visit this cluster of tiny beaches off Bailey's Bay when the tide is low. At other times, they are fairly submerged.

**Clearwater Beach.** With a kids' playground and other recreational activities, the nearby airport does not seem to disturb visitors to this popular spot on St. David's Island. Families appreciate the lifeguard in summer as well as amenities like Gombey's restaurant and bar serving local treats. Patches of turtle grass create a haven for turtles and fish.

**John Smith's Bay.** This beach is extra pretty in pink — more popular with residents than visitors, who often don't know about it. The bay was named for Capt. John Smith, who never actually visited Bermuda but nonetheless drew a map of the place in 1631. There are occasional rip currents, but a lifeguard is on duty during summer. The waters are shallow, and the fish are easy to spot.

**Shelly Bay Beach.** Kids can splash in shallow waters along this northern stretch of shore in Hamilton Parish. They can also enjoy a sizeable playground. Find snacks and equipment rental. A tidal cove enclosed by mangroves draws a variety of nesting birds. Nearby in Flatts Village is the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo.

**Tobacco Bay.** With more facilities than most beaches — sporting equipment for rent, shops to find sundries, and places to eat and drink — this relaxing spot near the Town of St. George is especially popular with families. Pursue your quest for the perfect tan, cool off with a refreshing swim, even snorkel around the rocks. The shallow water is safe for kids. Top off the day at Tobacco Bay Concession, with a deck to enjoy your favourite beer or wine, as well as lunch or dinner.

**Turtle Bay.** Get away from it all at this remote beach, east of the airport, outside the former NASA station.

## **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

Many beaches behind large resorts are private. But no matter, Bermuda has plenty of shoreline to go around! Plus, even the private parts are only private above the high water mark, so the water itself is still public, accessible by boat or foot.

Amongst the colourful fauna is the occasional Portuguese man-of-war (genus *Physalia*), a brilliant purple-blue colony of marine polyps and medusoids, propelled across the ocean by gas bladders that resemble the sails of 17th-century Portuguese warships. They are not jellyfish. They attract curiosity with their exotic beauty, but they are infamous for their painful sting. Tendrils can extend 165 feet / 50 meters from their “sails.” If stung, rinse with seawater, then vinegar, then scrape off any remaining tissue with something plastic like a credit card.

Public beaches open from sunrise to sunset; there is no camping or sleeping. In season, the Bermuda Lifeguard Service watches the larger, more popular spots. But don't forget your swimsuit, because clothing is not optional in Bermuda.