

[EB10SportsMain1.doc, Jeff Borg, 2,280 words main text + two boxes + ad edits]

Sports

Such Good Sports

Wet or dry, big ticket or practically free,
activities in Bermuda get the heart racing.

Why do so many good sports come to Bermuda?

Some like to get wet, maybe snorkel or dive amongst the shipwrecks and marvel at the corals. Some come to swim with the dolphins. Some prefer to catch fish, which can weigh up to hundreds of pounds. They test themselves on a quest for billfish. Some just like to stroll the sea bottom wearing a helmet. Some come for the boating — paddle, sail, motor — or at least the riding. Some come to race; others to cheer. Some just enjoy a bit of waterskiing on a tranquil sound.

On the other hand, many visitors prefer to stay dry. They come to whack golf balls on courses played by the greats. Or they want to join the parties that swirl around cricket games. Or they come to jog or bike through parks and preserves, along beaches and ponds,

around forts and lighthouses. Or they play football, uh, soccer, um, whatever you call it; or at least to cheer. Or they come for the tennis — day or night, summer or winter. They even come for the rugby; where better to play outside in November?

FOR THE LANDLUBBER

Golf. Bermuda offers more golf courses per square mile than anywhere. These layouts are both beautiful and challenging, featuring tight designs requiring perfect shots.

Golfers play in rarefied company here. Since the 1940s, Dwight Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, Jack Kennedy, Harold Macmillan, Richard Nixon, Edward Heath, George HW Bush, Jimmy Carter and countless members of the British Royal Family have played Bermuda.

Major tournaments include the hugely prestigious PGA Grand Slam of Golf (Oct. 18–20, 2010), at Port Royal Golf Course, the Southampton layout designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., opened to the public in 1970, renovated for \$13.7 million and reopened in 2009.

The Grand Slam allows winners of golf's top tournaments — the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship — to play each other in the sport's most exclusive contest. Established in 1979, today the 36-hole event comes with a \$1.35 million purse and television audience of 89 million viewers in more than 100 countries. Recent winners include Lucas Glover (2009), Jim Furyk (2003, 2008), Ángel Cabrera (2007), Tiger Woods (2000–02, 2005, 2006) and Phil Mickelson (2004).

When the PGA selected Port Royal, Premier Ewart F. Brown said, “We are especially proud to have an event as prestigious as the Grand Slam at Port Royal, a spectacular public golf course that belongs to the people of Bermuda and speaks loudly to our country’s commitment to the game.”

For more on golf, contact the Bermuda Golf Association (295-9972, www.bermudagolf.org).

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Golf courses

Take a whack at Bermuda’s leading layouts.

Belmont Hills Golf Club

Warwick / 236-6400 / newsteadbelmonthills.com

greens fee \$110 (twilight \$60 no cart), club rental \$60 (TaylorMade), lesson \$60 / half hour

The Fairmont Southampton

Southampton / 239-6952 / fairmont.com/Southampton

greens fee \$84 (sunset \$65), club rental \$25 (TaylorMade, Nike), lesson \$50 / half hour

Mid Ocean Club

Tucker's Town / 293-0330 / themidoceanclubbermuda.com

greens fee \$250, club rental \$45 (TaylorMade, Cobra), lesson \$55 / half hour

Ocean View Golf Course

Devonshire / 295-9092 / oceanview.bm

greens fee \$85 (twilight \$60), club rental \$40 (TaylorMade), lesson \$50 / half hour

Port Royal Golf Course

Southampton / 234-0974 / www.portroyalgolf.bm

greens fee \$180 (twilight \$105), club rental \$50 (TaylorMade), lesson \$60 / half hour

Riddell's Bay Golf & Country Club

Warwick / 238.1060 ext.101 / www.riddellsbay.com

greens fee \$155, club rental \$40 (Nike), lesson \$50 / half hour

Tucker's Point Golf Club

Tucker's Town / 298-6970 / tuckerspoint.com

greens fee \$215 (nine-hole \$107), club rental \$75 (Callaway), lesson \$70 / half hour

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Cricket. The Cup Match Cricket Festival consumes the attention of Bermudians and visitors each summer on the public holidays of Emancipation Day and Somers Day (July 29–30, 2010, at Somerset Cricket Club, [234-0327](tel:234-0327) / [297-0374](tel:297-0374)).

Festivities come with full British protocol, plus plenty of calypso, reggae, soca and rap; much socializing; and the wearing of outlandish fashions. This has been going on since 1902, when Somerset Cricket Club, now appearing in dark blue and red, and St. George's Cricket Club, in light blue and dark blue, launched the ritual. Each club now hosts the event in alternating years.

No mere athletic contest, Cup Match draws thousands in person, and the sharp crack of ball against bat, followed by a roar from the stands, echoes via radio, television and Internet all across the islands.

British soldiers imported cricket in the 1840s. It looks much like baseball, except that teams have 11 members, and the pitcher is called a bowler. He aims at the wicket, a collection of three one-inch stumps (sticks), standing 32 inches high, with a pair of bails (crosspieces) teetering on top. Balls of cork and string, covered in red or white leather, are stitched at the equator. Bats are flat on one side and humped on the other.

A batsman in pads and helmet protects his wicket and smacks the ball as far possible. If he can run to the other end of the oval without a fieldsman catching the ball, he scores. Games can go on for days, and scores can reach into the hundreds. The Bermuda Cricket Board (bermudacricketboard.com), established in 1938, governs, promotes and develops cricket here.

Running. Bermuda lays at your feet countless miles of scenic hiking and jogging trails. They cross parks and preserves, parallel the beaches and ponds, round forts and lighthouses, even follow in the tracks of a defunct railroad.

The Bermuda Railway, which carried passengers in the 1930s and 1940s, was reborn in 1984 as the Bermuda Railway Trail, a peaceful pathway for walking, running and riding, offering spectacular scenery in nearly every parish. The best sections weave through Paget, Southampton and Sandys. Another trail runs the four miles from Royal Naval Dockyard to Somerset Village, passing Gilbert Nature Reserve and the Royal Naval Cemetery.

Serious runners come each January for Bermuda International Race Weekend (Jan. 14–16, 2011), featuring the invitational mile, the 10K, 10K charity walk, half-marathon, marathon and new Bermuda Triangle Challenge (236-6086, www.bermudaraceweekend.com).

Cycling. A great way to get your cardio in while steering clear of traffic is to bike the Bermuda Railway Trail. Even on regular streets, great scenery is everywhere. Long, twisting roads make riding in these islands particularly rewarding. Many resorts provide bikes, which Bermudians call “pedal bikes” to distinguish them from the motorized kind.

For more range — but less workout — scooters or mopeds are the quintessentially Bermudian way to get around. To rent a scooter requires that you be at least 16 years of age, wear a helmet, and remember to drive on the left.

Many scooter liveries will deliver to your hotel, so shop around. Oleander Cycles maintains locations all around the islands — Paget, Hamilton, Southampton, St. George’s and Royal Naval Dockyard (oleandercycles.bm).

Football. The game known in the States as soccer was introduced to Bermuda by the British Army in Victorian times. Over the years, it became a national sport.

In qualifying for the FIFA World Cup (June 2010 in South Africa), the Bermudan national team did well before eventually dropping out. It beat the Cayman Islands by an aggregate score of 4–2 in the first round, then ran headlong into Caribbean powerhouse Trinidad and Tobago in the second round.

Although pundits predicted a walk for T&T, Bermuda won its first leg 2–1, sparking hopes of an upset. Much improved from teams of the past, the Bermudians look forward to future competitions with justifiable optimism. For more, contact the Bermuda Football Association. (295-2199, bermudafa.com).

Tennis. With at least a hundred courts sprinkled over the islands, tennis is a national pastime, introduced in 1873 when Sir Brownlow Gray built the first court here.

Play night or day year-round, since most courts are lighted. Tennis pros give lessons starting at \$20 or \$30, and racquet rentals are nominal. This being Bermuda, do wear proper tennis attire. For information on tournaments, contact the Bermuda Lawn Tennis Association (296-0834, blta@northrock.bm).

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Tennis courts

The Bermuda Department of Tourism has compiled a guide to tennis facilities.

Cambridge Beaches

Sandys / 234-0331 / three all-weather courts

Coco Reef Resort

Paget / 236-5416 / two Plexipave courts

Coral Beach & Tennis Club

Paget / 236-2233/6495 / eight clay courts, private

Elbow Beach Bermuda

Paget / 236-3535 / five Plexipave courts

The Fairmont Southampton

Southampton / 239-6950 / six Plexipave courts

Grotto Bay Beach Resort & Tennis Club

Hamilton Parish / 293-8333 ext.1914 / four Plexipave courts

Hamiltonian Tennis Club

Hamilton / 295-5608 / three asphalt courts

Horizons & Cottages

Paget / 236-0048 / one Plexipave, two GrassTex courts

Mid Ocean Club

Tucker's Town / 293-0330 / two Elastaturf courts

Pink Beach Club

Tucker's Town / 293-1666 / two Har-Tru courts

Pomander Gate Tennis Club

Paget / 236-5400 / five hard courts

Pompano Beach Club

Southampton / 234-0222 / one clay court

Port Royal Club

Southampton / 238-9430 / four Plexipave courts

The Reefs

Southampton / 238-0222 / two Plexipave courts

Tucker's Point Tennis Club

Tucker's Town / 298-6960 / four clay courts, private

WER Joell Tennis Stadium

Hamilton / 292-0105

Willowbank

Sandys / 234-1616 / two Plexipave courts

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Rugby. The rugby season runs from October to April, with two types of rugby: league rugby for professional players and rugby union for amateur teams.

International rugby began here in 1972, and the World Rugby Classic began in 1988. To play in the Classic, teams have come from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, the United States, Spain, Portugal and Uruguay, usually in November. The event grows each year, the standard of play improves, and the ferocity of the tackling shows how much it means to the players (295-6574, worldrugby.bm.)

FOR THE WET SET

Diving. More than 300 sunken ships — warships, schooners, frigates and freighters — make Bermuda the wreck-diving capital of the Atlantic. Bermuda also offers nearly 300 square miles of reefs, where divers meet black grouper, tarpon and other exotic locals.

Helmet diving provides a truly Bermudian experience. You don't even have to swim, just breathe normally as you stroll the sandy sea bottom near Somerset Village, communing with the friendly fish. Look for Hartley's Under Sea Adventures.

Best months to dive here are May to October. Expect visibility from 70 to 100 feet, sometimes to 150 feet, and water temperatures up to 85°F/29°C in summer, below 64°F/18°C in winter.

Snorkelling. Sometimes the best things in life are (practically) free, like wading out from a public beach with nothing but a snorkel, mask and fins to enjoy Bermuda's living coral reefs and crystal-clear waters.

Get to know Bermuda's marine life by gliding through sea gardens and over shipwrecks, spying on frenzied fish and mysterious marine life. When the sun goes down, grab a lamp and catch the ones that only come out at night. Sometimes in some places, natural bioluminescence appears, an extraordinary display of light created by microscopic creatures in the water.

At the far tip of Royal Naval Dockyard, discover the exciting features of Snorkel Park, with a beach, amenities, snorkel gear, paddleboats, kayaks, inflatable toys and water slides. Explore the natural coral reef and sunken sailboat.

To reach the outer reefs, look for tour boats departing from Royal Naval Dockyard, Southampton, Hamilton, Flatts Village or St. George's. Sometimes based at major resorts, tour operators may combine snorkelling with glass-bottom-boat tours, catamaran cruises or some deserted-beach time.

Dolphin swim. Fun for everybody — singles, couples, parents and children — is to reach out and touch the muscular bodies of Bermuda's most adorable denizens. Dolphin Quest Bermuda, part of the maritime museum at Royal Naval Dockyard, introduces kids of all ages to its friendly dolphins. Participate in face-to-face encounters, either dockside or in the water, with these powerful yet gentle marine mammals.

Boating. Weigh anchor. Set sail. Have some fun. See ya'! All manner of paddling, sailing, motoring and racing is enjoyed in these islands, as one might deduce from their location.

Be your own captain. Rent a motorboat, sailboat, Hobbie Cat, Sunfish, pedal boat or kayak. How better to see the islands and their sparkling waters? Imagine piloting your own 17-foot centre console to the island of your choosing, with a handful of friends, snorkelling gear, fishing poles, picnic lunch and nobody's schedule but your own.

Several agencies offer such adventures. Safety equipment is supplied, and reservations are required. Pay attention to weather reports and plan outings early in your stay; if the weather turns, you can reschedule.

Or leave the driving to someone else. Your concierge can probably recommend a good charter boat, like the MV *Venetian*, a sumptuous 100-foot Azimut-Benetti yacht that doubles as a gourmet restaurant (295-3503). MV *Destiny* is an elegant 78-foot cruiser

well stocked for parties (292-7103). MV *Bermuda Longtail*, a 65-foot catamaran, entertains up to 200 guests (296-5263). *Island Girl* is a 75-foot motor yacht for meetings, dinners, cocktails and functions with colleagues, clients, friends and family members (338-1014). Remember to reserve in advance.

In Bermuda, a “day at the races” means boats, and a uniquely local activity is the racing of fitted dinghies, small boats with large sails that can be difficult to operate but fun to watch. Crowds gather on alternate weekends in summer to cheer contestants.

In June of even years (June 18, 2010), the highly prestigious Newport Bermuda Race — 635 miles of open ocean over several days — crosses the mighty Gulf Stream and a patch of Atlantic known for challenging weather. Not a race for the timid, around 180 yachts launch from Rhode Island in this test of seamanship, stamina and seaworthiness. Three to six days later, weary crews — composed mostly of friends, family members and other dedicated amateurs — finally call at the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club, in Hamilton, which co-manages the event with the Cruising Club of America. Trophies, including ones for best navigator, top family crew and others, are awarded in an elegant ceremony at Government House.

Fishing. Major reefs deliver your best day of catching, not just fishing. Lucky for the anglers around here, these islands are surrounded by reefs. Cast a line for Almaco jack, Bermuda chub, gray snapper, yellowtail snapper, tuna, wahoo or grouper, and be prepared for a fight.

To fish from shore, good spots are Spring Benny’s Bay, West Whale Bay and St. George’s Harbour. The farther out you go, the bigger the fish you catch, and blue-water anglers here go all out for blue marlin, white marlin, spearfish, sailfish and dolphin (*Coryphaena*, not Flipper), especially in summer.

Half-day group charters usually include bait, light tackle and a couple hours of line time over calm, productive spots. Take your catch home for dinner or release it to thrill another day. Many boats leave from Royal Naval Dockyard, Hamilton or St. George's.

Fishing is good all year and best from May to November. Check with local officials, charter operators or tackle shops about the latest legal requirements.

The Bermuda Anglers Club, organized in 1938, has hosted an International Light Tackle Tournament each summer since 1961. The 45th annual is June 6–13, 2010. For four days, teams angle for blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, yellowfin tuna and blackfin tuna — no sharks (bermudaanglersclub.com). The tournament qualifies winners for the International Game Fish Association's Offshore World Championship.

The biggest local fishing series is the Triple Crown, including three events in July — the Bermuda Billfish Blast, Bermuda Big Game Classic, and Sea Horse Anglers Club Billfish Tournament. They qualify participants for the Bermuda Triple Crown Billfish Championship (BermudaTripleCrown.com).

Waterskiing. Bermuda's protected harbours are great for waterskiing. Popular spots include Hamilton Harbour, Great Sound, Castle Harbour, Mangrove Bay, Spanish Point, Ferry Reach, Ely's Harbour, Riddell's Bay and Harrington Sound. The water is warm and calm in summer.

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