

AN ISLAND FULL OF TREASURES

BY ALEX WRIGHT

Bermuda, with its pink beaches, golf courses and sub-tropical climate, is an obvious destination for both tourists and businessmen. Whether it is hosting the latest company conference or corporate event or simply bringing your family on vacation, Bermuda has it all. With the America's Cup just around the corner, the Government, hotel owners and private developers have been heavily investing in new developments and renovating existing properties.

The Island also boasts a range of top restaurants, food outlets and pubs to suit all tastes from traditional Bermudian fare to luxury fine dining.

Added to that, it has first rate banking and insurance, real estate and construction, and telecommunications services, not to mention its schools and main hospital.

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

For a small island, Bermuda has a lot of schools.

Thirty two to be exact - 25 public schools run by the Government, including 18 primary, five middle and two secondary, plus seven private schools.

Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club.
Photo: Courtesy Ann Spurling



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The secondary schools are Cedarbridge Academy in Devonshire and the Berkeley Institute in Pembroke. The private schools are the Academy at Woodlands, Bermuda High School for Girls, the Bermuda Institute, Mount Saint Agnes Academy, Saltus Grammar School, Somersfield Academy and Warwick Academy.

The public school system follows the UK's Cambridge International Curriculum for english, maths and science.

Over the last year, the Government has invested significantly in its schools' infrastructure, with major maintenance work carried out on many of the preschool and primary schools.

The Island has no university, with most pupils going abroad to study. However, Bermuda College, a further education college, runs courses in liberal arts, business studies, hotel administration and technology.

QUALITY CARE

The Island has one main accident and emergency (A&E) hospital, the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in Paget.

The hospital is run by the Bermuda Hospitals Board, a publicly funded quango. It has a blood clinic, a cardiac diagnostic unit and a maternity and special care baby unit, as well as an A&E department.

Work on a new \$300 million acute care wing was completed late last year.

The building, which has 90 beds, houses emergency, diagnostic imaging – essentially x-ray, ultrasound, MRI and CT scanners – a day surgery, dialysis and oncology services.

LUXURY HOTELS TO FINE DINING

Bermuda has a thriving construction industry, with new luxury hotels planned for the first time in a decade and several major public and private projects already underway.

Among the most significant developments is the \$100 million renovation of the Hamilton Princess hotel and beach club, the official hotel for the America's Cup.

Outside of Hamilton, the boutique Pink Beach Club on South Shore is being built by Sardis Developments at a cost of \$51.4 million, while the Ariel Sands resort has also been given a \$100 million makeover. In 2018 at Morgan's Point a Ritz-Carlton hotel will be completed and a St Regis hotel in St George's is set for completion in 2019.

With its well-travelled business community and well-heeled tourists, the Island also boasts an array of high-end restaurants and bars.

Hamilton, Bermuda. Photo: Courtesy Tom Clarke

Right: Washington Lane, Bermuda. Photo: Courtesy Ann Spurling

Far right top: Tobacco Bay, Bermuda.
Photo: Courtesy Bermuda Tourism Authority

Far right bottom: Artemis Racing shoots past the Commissioner's House on Ireland Island. Photo: Courtesy Tom Clarke



There are more than 150 restaurants and pubs, ranging from Italian, French and American to seafood and steakhouses. The flagship restaurant is Marcus at the Hamilton Princess Hotel, run by Marcus Samuelson of New York's Red Rooster fame.

For fine dining, the 350-year-old Waterlot Inn is one of the best steakhouses on the Island, while Harry's Oyster Bar has a great ambience and views overlooking the yacht club marina.

There is also a plethora of eateries in downtown Hamilton, including the rustic-chic Devil's Isle and Muse on the waterfront. Further afield, there's the family-run The Flame on North Shore and Anchor at Dockyard.

BANKING ON IT

The Island has four main retail banks – Bermuda Commercial Bank (BCB), Butterfield Bank, Clarien Bank and HSBC Bank of Bermuda.

The biggest is HSBC Bank of Bermuda, formerly the Bank of Bermuda, which was acquired by HSBC in 2004 for \$1.3 billion. Currently, it makes up almost half of the local market.

The second largest is Butterfield Bank, which has six primary shareholders, including entities affiliated with the Carlyle Group. It is majority Bermudian-owned.

BCB is owned by Somers Ltd, a Bermuda-incorporated international financial services investment holding company.

Clarien Bank, formerly Capital G Bank, was bought back by the Gibbons family in April 2015, just 15 months after selling its controlling stake in the company.

All of the banks are regulated by the Bermuda Monetary Authority (BMA).

The share of loans issued by Bermuda's banks increased by almost 2% to 37.7% in 2015, while the share of investments was up almost 6% at 43.3%. During the same period the share of cash and deposits fell more than 7% to 15.8%.

Bermuda's currency, the Bermuda dollar is tied to the US dollar, which is also accepted in most shops.

PRIME LOCATION

The Island has a host of real estate agents; the main two are Coldwell Banker Bermuda Realty and Rego Sotheby's International Realty.

Property sales hit a five-year high last year, with 302 properties sold and sales volume of more than \$324m, according to Coldwell Banker. Commercial property sales were also up, with 16 sales during the year worth almost \$20m.



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Changes in the rules governing property purchases have also increased the number of permanent resident certificate holders entering the property market, while there have also been more overseas buyers.

Coldwell Banker said that the average price of a single family home last year was \$1.1 million, while the average condominium went for \$714,000. Plots of land sold for an average price tag of \$400,000.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Bermuda relies almost entirely on imported fossil fuels and solar power. Its voltage system is the same as North America at 120 volts.

All of the Island's electricity and gas is provided by BELCO, whose parent company the Ascendant Group also owns Bermuda Gas & Utility, iFM, iEPC, Air Care, Purenergy Renewables and Ascendant Properties.

BELCO, which is regulated by the Energy Commission, is capable of generating 152 megawatts (MW) of electricity from its 12 diesel engines and nine gas turbines at its main plant in Pembroke. However because of having to import all of its fuel, the cost of electricity is slightly higher when compared to many onshore destinations.

In May, the energy supplier announced an increase in rates for the first time in three years, with residential customers paying 8.7% more on their first 250 kilowatt hours (kWh), 5.7% more on the next 450 kWh and 17.7% more on anything above 700 kWh on their monthly bill. Commercial rates also went up between 16.6% and 22.4%, depending on the amount of electricity being used.

The majority of the usage is to power air-conditioning systems during the hot summer months. The Island's main air-conditioning firms are Bermuda Air Conditioning (owned by the BAC Group of Companies) and Air Care, both based in Pembroke.

BELCO plans to produce 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, with the Government in August announcing plans to build a six-MW AC solar power farm on land opposite L.F. Wade International Airport.

WELL CONNECTED

Bermuda is one of the world's most well connected places with more than 97% of the population having access to the internet, according to the Government.

The country is well served for internet capacity with three cable networks that run from mainland North America to the Island, all of which are continually being upgraded.

Its telecommunications companies invested \$885,000 in improving wi-fi, mobile and data capabilities for the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series in October 2015.

That involved laying more than seven miles of fibre in the central business district of Hamilton in the space of three days and the installation of new wi-fi and mobile phone sites.

The Regulatory Authority of Bermuda also made its spectrum allocation for mobile phone companies at the end of September 2016, enabling providers to start rolling out their new 4G LTE networks.

The Island's biggest mobile phone network and internet provider is Digicel. The company acquired Bermuda Telephone Company (BTC) in June 2015. Its main rival is Logic, which merged with Bermuda CableVision in July last year. Logic's parent company KeyTech merged with mobile phone provider CellOne in May.

"Both Logic and Digicel are looking to roll out various forms of fibre around the Island to increase capacity to get to speeds of 100 megabits per second," said Fiona Beck, a KeyTech director and chair of the telecommunication team for the America's Cup Bermuda Ltd.

EVEN YOUR BOAT'S INSURED

The Island has four main general insurance providers – Argus Group, BF&M, Colonial Group International and Friesenbruch-Meyer Group. Argus Group and BF&M are the two largest insurers and are both listed on the Bermuda Stock Exchange.

Colonial Group is part of a wider group with operations in the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands and Turks & Caicos.

Freisenbruch-Meyer is the newest company, formed in 1980 and in 2002 it partnered with ACE Bermuda, which has a 40% equity interest in the group's insurance services company.

All provide motor, property and travel insurance, as well as cover for boats and other sailing vessels. They also offer life insurance, pensions and investments and are regulated by the BMA.

ALEX WRIGHT



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He was previously the news editor of Insurance Times and Global Reinsurance as well as the deputy business editor at The Royal Gazette in Bermuda.

Alex currently edits for The Guardian, the Mail on Sunday, The Sunday Times and The Telegraph, among others.