



Golf just one reason to visit friendly paradise of Bermuda

BY COLIN MYLER
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“You can go to heaven if you want, I’d rather stay right here in Bermuda.” As a marketing slogan, it’s straight out of a Don Draper “Mad Men” master class.

But it was actually coined by a more famous American son than the suave, skirt-chasing Mr. Draper: Samuel Langhorne Clemens, otherwise known as Mark Twain.

It took Twain four days at sea to travel to Bermuda on his first visit.

Bermuda was a paradise, he said, but you had to go through hell to get there.

Not anymore.

It’s a two-hour flight from JFK, a short ride to your hotel and the paradise so valued by Mr. Twain is already washing over you.

Bermuda, a group of 181 tiny islands in the Atlantic Ocean, is blessed with natural beauty.

The British overseas territory’s pink-sand beaches and turquoise waters are breathtaking — and for a collection of islands that total only slightly more than 20 square miles, there are an impressive 64 miles of stunning coastline.

It has so many coves and bays that it’s impossible to name them all, but Elbow Beach, Chaplin Bay, Church Bay — especially if you like snorkeling — Clarence Cove and Horseshoe Bay Beach, recently rated No. 8 in the world by Trip Advisor, are definitely worth a visit.

And if you are in Bermuda in April, at West Whale Bay beach you can catch humpback whales migrating north to their summer feeding grounds.

Other than its beaches, this

semi-tropical paradise is probably best known for its golf courses — more per square mile than anywhere else in the world.

As you would expect from an island that basks in exclusivity, not all its courses are open to nonmembers.

The Mid Ocean Club, regarded by many as Bermuda’s No. 1 private course — former Mayor Michael Bloomberg is a member — is a private club and an introduction is needed from a member to play.

As a course ranked the 47th best in the world, its manicured fairways and greens court the backdrop of the majestic Atlantic Ocean like a picture postcard.

Another beautiful course that

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Bermuda’s Port Royal Golf Course (top) is perhaps the world’s most stunning public links. The Fairmont Southampton hotel (top left) is perched on the ocean, while the pink sands of Horseshoe Bay Beach (above and opposite page) draw tourist raves. Top inset, the island’s signature drink, the Dark ‘N’ Stormy.



surprisingly isn't private is the Port Royal. It's actually owned by Bermuda's government, making it probably the most stunning public course you will ever play.

Also worth a visit is Riddell's Bay, Bermuda's first 18-hole course.

Like the Mid Ocean, it is a private club but you can play by booking an appointment.

One of Bermuda's major tourist attractions, other than its beaches and golf courses, is a hidden gem — the wonderful, laid-back courtesy and hospitality of its locals.

It's like stepping back in time.

They're always pleasant, friendly and ready to offer advice whether it's a query on the menu, where to swim, dine or just chill out.

And the Bermudian dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar, so there are no currency issues.

Dining out can be a little more expensive than in the U.S., depending, of course, on where you choose, but the seafood is sublime and overall we found the whole experience a terrific value for money.

It's difficult not to be tempted to try the island's famous signature drink, the Dark 'N' Stormy, a dark rum and ginger beer cocktail, still brewed today by the Gosling family, Bermuda's oldest business.

We stayed at the Fairmont Southampton (fairmont.com/southampton-bermuda), perched on a 100-acre estate facing the South Shore ocean and the Little Sound on the

north side.

There's a beautiful pink-sand beach — a courtesy shuttle bus drops you off and picks you up in minutes — a spa, pool and it's all surrounded by the enchanting 18-hole, par-3 championship Turtle Hill Golf Club.

It is a family-friendly hotel and offers a kids camp. It's also a popular convention venue so you might want to check dates beforehand.

Next year Bermuda is hosting the America's Cup, the much-prized jewel on the international yachting calendar.

It's a huge boost to the island's profile of going after the super-rich and it is estimated that the event will boost the local economy by over \$250 million.

Plans are already under way at Morgan's Point to build a luxurious boutique hotel and private residences for the ultra-rich, complete with moorings for their uber yachts.

The hotel will have 79 rooms, and there will be 149 residences each with plunge pools, berths for 77 boats and 21-mega yachts — a bespoke haven for billionaires.

The American team — Oracle Team USA — is already ensconced in a state-of-the-art camp at Dockyard.

Most days, weather permitting, you can see the team's magnificent catamarans scything majestically through the blue waters of the Great Sound as they prepare to win back the coveted trophy next summer.

If only they had been around in Mr. Twain's day.

The Union Jack at the Royal Naval Dockyard marks Bermuda as a British overseas territory.



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