

Back Home

Bermuda's Port Royal Golf Course is both beautiful and challenging as can be seen in this view of the 16th hole.

Introducing Bermuda—forty years later

by Deborah Burst

While my family's faces were glued to the plane's tiny windows, I took the center seat determined to be a passive observer. As the cabin pressure squeezed my eardrums and the familiar turquoise waters came into view, the butterflies inside my stomach changed from a casual flutter to a pounding stampede. A husband of twenty-five years would understand a tear or two, but the kids, Julie, twenty-three, and Jared, twenty, might be a bit harsh, so I held back.

As we began our descent I saw streaks of whitewashed roofs, the blur of pastel homes, and finally the oleanders, palm trees, and Australian pines. This was the Bermuda I remembered. I couldn't hold back any longer, the tears rushed down my face. And I whispered, "Can you see it, daddy? We're back home."

I don't remember what the kids said as I drifted back to the first time I saw this place with my dad, mom, sister, and

brother. Dad was a Navy man and this was heaven on earth. During the '60s he spent three years showing me the wonders of this twenty-two mile paradise. And for forty years the memories of Bermuda have haunted me.

So now I return with my family of four. We would stay a week, first at 9 Beaches, a colony of stilted ocean-side cabanas, and then, thanks to Bermudian native Fiona Campbell, experience life inside a centuries-old cottage.

Fiona suggested prearranging for a taxi to meet us at the airport and recommended Melvin Outerbridge. We left the airport moving west toward the setting sun. Sitting in the back with the kids on either side, I could feel the energy as Melvin shared the secrets of his island.

"On Tuesdays and Wednesdays the beaches are packed with cruise people, but by Thursday they're gone," said Melvin. "Lindo's Grocery in Warwick is where I go; clean, nice people, and a good selection."

After forty years, Bermuda still has the charming allure of pink sand and turquoise waters, but my former home on a banana-filled acre has today been replaced by several cottages. Nearby, my old shopping village, Somerset, seems unchanged, but my favorite beach, Mangrove Bay, has lost some of her luster.

The island is mapped into nine



parishes, and narrow roads are lined with rock walls draped by palms and oleanders. Rental cars are not allowed, but the island has excellent public transportation with numerous bus and ferry stops. We rented two double-seated motor scooters for six days—about two hundred dollars each—and kept a pocket map handy. Road signs can be tricky, and don't forget to drive on the left-hand side.

For nature lovers who don't mind parting from television's daily dramas, 9 Beaches offers a front yard of infinite ocean, nine private beaches, and a playground of tropical fish. Some cabanas peek over the waters while others hug the ocean cliffs. Besides the snorkeling, we enjoyed family banter on a balcony roomy enough for four and toasting the sunset on a nearby cliff. The guys missed their ESPN, but we all enjoyed the breakfast buffet (included in the stay) right outside the lobby on the hotel veranda.

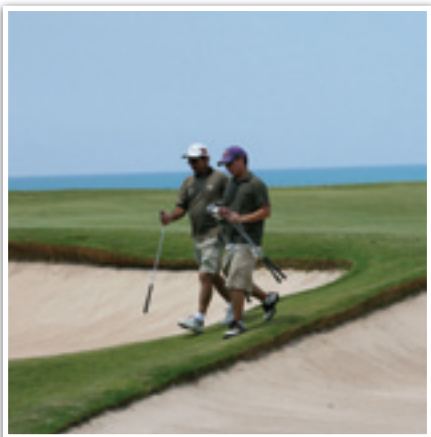
After riding out Hurricane Arlene as a child, my perspective on island architecture changed completely. The island maintains strict building guidelines and



(above) 9 Beaches offers a “green” alternative with stilted cabanas wrapped in sail cloth. (below) Father and son enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime round at Port Royal Golf Course.

continues centuries-old traditions. High pitch stair-stepped roofs stand strong against the winds and filter precious rain water to home cisterns. Our stay at Midway cottage brought back memories of a home long gone. Surrounded by English gardens, we enjoyed fresh picked bananas and fell asleep to the sweet smell of flowers. And with a television and full-size kitchen, the guys watched ESPN and we saved a bundle at the grocery.

If you go, take the time to lounge on the beach and don't forget the water shoes for reef exploring. As a child I rode the big waves at Horseshoe Bay, which still kicks up a good surf. Locals and families grill on grassy overlooks at West Whale Bay and each evening watch the big red ball sink into the Atlantic. The kids tried out Church Bay, a bit reefy but great for snorkeling. Tobacco Bay, with its maze of snorkeling reefs, serves food and alcohol and is popular with the cruise crowd.



PHOTOS BY DEBORAH BURST

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Bermuda holds the distinction of having the most golf courses per square mile, with a total of eight courses, including three operated by the government. The guys played Port Royal Golf Course while we went along for the ride; they turned teary-eyed at every tee. “It’s a public course with the finesse of a private facility,” explained Bill Pitt, Port Royal General Manager.

For beer connoisseurs, six packs range from eight to twelve dollars. Our favorite watering hole, North Rock Brewing Company in Smith’s Parish, pours the best Bermuda brewed ales and stouts with five dollar pints and half-pints for \$3.75.

The island offers a treasure trove of shopping. On the west side, the Royal Naval Dockyard offers a bevy of eateries, a snorkeling park, and the Clocktower Mall. We stocked up on several Bermuda rum cakes for friends back home.

In the island’s capital of Hamilton, you can shop in international stores. On the east side, historic cityscapes of St. George bring favorites such as Lili Bermuda, a perfumery housed in the

(top) A view of some of the island’s more exclusive homes from atop Gibbs lighthouse; (middle) snorkeling at Tobacco Bay, just minutes from St. George shopping and cruise liners. (bottom) Horseshoe Bay, one of the most popular beaches in Bermuda, offers good wave action, sandy caves, a public shower, and a snack stand.

three-hundred-year-old old Steward Hall. After a tour of the grounds we began testing all the fragrances, using coffee beans to help filter the scents.

Bermuda does have a night life. Grab the brochure *Nightlife Entertainment Guide* for a complete listing of events, and check out the local talent Sunday

evenings at the open mike night at Chewstick’s Neo-Griot lounge housed in Champion’s Sports Bar in Hamilton. Joy Barnum blew us away with her operatic original titled “You Can’t See Me.” Dressed in an island formal complete with matching turban, her bronzed skin glowed under the lights.



PHOTOS BY DEBORAH BURST

A lasting memory for all of us was our fine dining experience at the Reefs Hotel's Ocean Echo Terrace Restaurant. The setting sun washed the patio with soft pastels while we feasted on olive bread, muscles in lemon butter sauce, coconut shrimp, and a whirlwind of sinful desserts.

The trip brought back old memories and the kids were able to share a piece of my childhood. But more importantly they learned a little more about their paw paw—a man they never met. 🐾

A New Orleans gal, Deb Burst now lives on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, spending most of her vacation time along the shores of Sanibel Island.

IF YOU GO



- When shopping for accommodations ask about cell phones. Some hotels provide them (local calls free).
- Take a break from the group and do your own exploring. For younger families there's always the zoo and aquarium.
- Make sure you have a passport as entry requires proof of citizenship.
- The Bermuda dollar is similar to U.S. denominations, and all merchants accept U.S. money.
- Most places are closed on Sunday.
- Bermuda has several two dollar stores, which are worth visiting.
- Take along some snacks and alcohol in your checked baggage. And wait to buy your Gosling's Rum duty-free at the airport when you leave.
- On the same latitude as North Carolina, Bermuda does have a winter, with temperatures in the fifties and sixties. While still warmer than the east coast of the U.S., the water is still quite cool from late October to early April. Labeled as the off-season, you can take advantage of some excellent bargains during this time.
- Bermuda clearly has its majestic appeal, but many shy away because of cost. With a little research you can afford a week's holiday comparable to a stateside beach vacation.

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