

Bermuda — Escape To Paradise

Oprah flies in for lunch or dinner a few times a year. Michael Jordan frequently stops by for a round of golf. Michael Douglas, Ross Perot, and Michael Bloomberg have homes on the island. What draws these folks and so many others to Bermuda?

The island is renowned for its pristine pink beaches, houses painted in a rainbow of pastel colors, and lush gardens overflowing with hibiscus.

Visitors also enjoy the cheerful locals who have African, British, Portuguese, Caribbean, and Native American roots — and Bermuda is easy to access because it's in the Atlantic Ocean, not in the Caribbean, and only a two-hour flight from most East Coast cities.

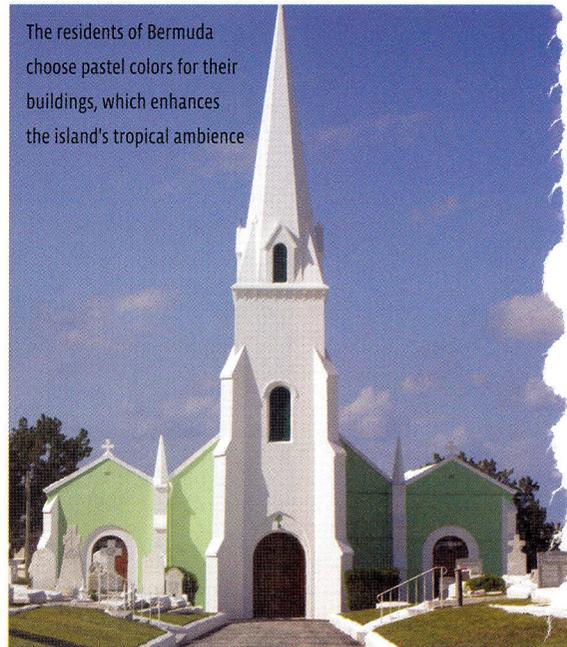
In many ways, this is a dreamlike destination: no neon lights, no graffiti, no slums, no billboards, a literacy rate of 98 percent, and

almost no fast-food restaurants. (A small KFC slipped into Hamilton when no one was looking.) In this subtropical British Crown Colony, afternoon tea, yachting, cricket, and soccer are part of everyday life, and the cordial ambience is one part Brit and one part New England. In short, the stunning surroundings, friendly hosts, and relaxing atmosphere lure travelers in search of paradise.

“You can go to heaven if you want. I'd rather stay in Bermuda,” Mark Twain is famously quoted as saying. The author made eight trips to “the islands” between 1867 and 1910, believing that “Bermuda is the right country for a jaded man to loaf in.”

Twain's frequent returns to paradise are mirrored today by the large number of guests who make repeat visits. On our first

trip, my husband and I toured historic St. George's (now a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and The Royal Naval Dockyards (now a mecca for cruise ship passengers). We also did some shopping in Hamilton and — as I



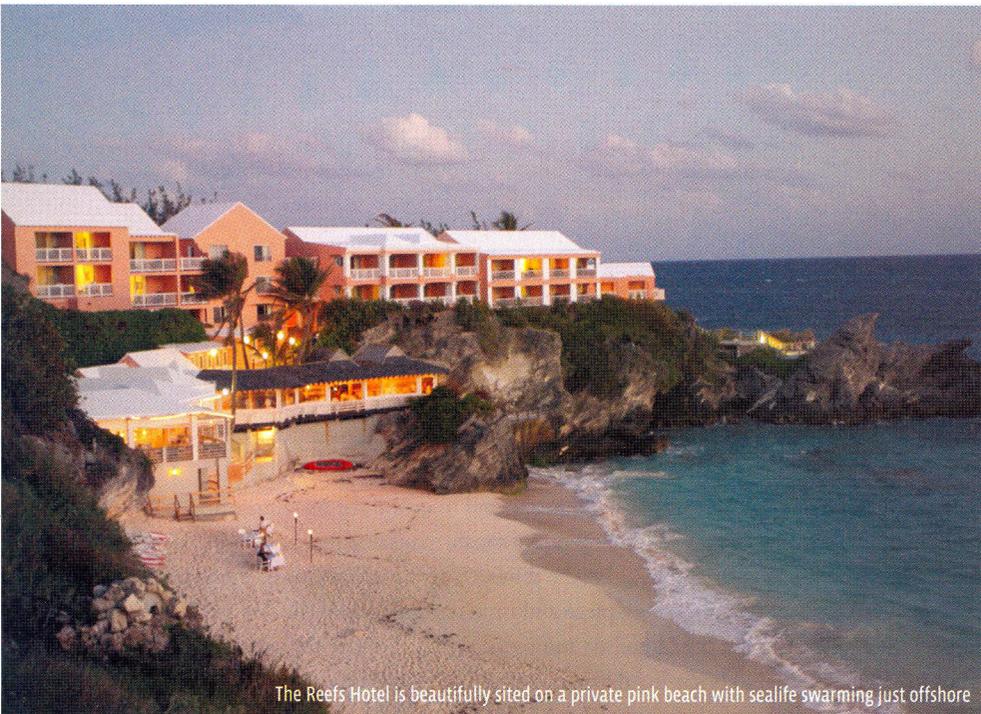
The residents of Bermuda choose pastel colors for their buildings, which enhances the island's tropical ambience

remember — got lost trying to walk the Bermuda Railway Trail.

With those requisite activities behind us, the focus of our recent return visit was simply having a good time — mainly snorkeling and enjoying the beach. That goal made The Reefs Hotel & Club seem like the best place to stay. This family-owned property, which opened in 1947, is sited on a secluded pink sand beach and is small enough (64 ocean view rooms, suites, and cottages) to be able to provide personal service.

I couldn't take the grin off my face when our taxi pulled into the resort's circular drive and I spotted a lovely outdoor sitting

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAMSHANSEN STOCK PHOTOS



The Reefs Hotel is beautifully sited on a private pink beach with sealife swarming just offshore

area on a cliff overlooking the turquoise ocean. Colorful murals painted on salmon pink walls and a row of chaise lounges and pink-and-white umbrellas on the beach were further evidence that we'd made the right selection.

Before checking into the suite we'd booked, we toured the property and fell in love — as in head-over-heels — with the fully-furnished residences in The Reefs Club. These units, added in 2009, were being offered on a fractional ownership basis, but — due to the soft market — were available for rent.

We couldn't resist. Number 411 was steps from the club's exclusive infinity pool and from our living room it appeared that the pool water was spilling into the Atlantic. The two of us hardly needed three bedrooms, three-and-a-half bathrooms, a full kitchen, and

The Reefs Club, adjacent to the Reefs Hotel, is comprised of spacious two- and three-bedroom apartments

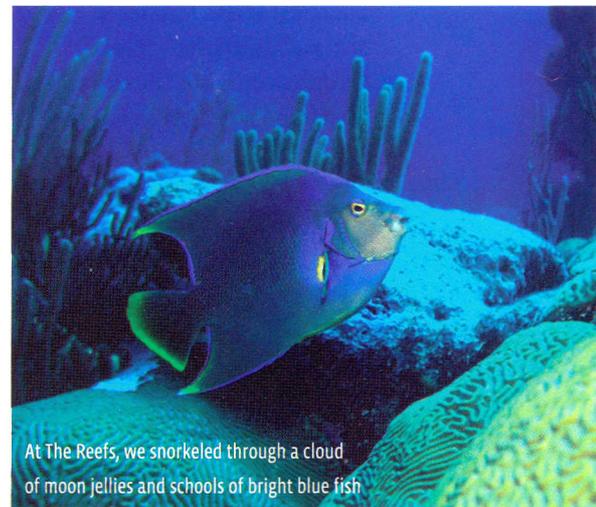
Residents of The Reefs Club enjoy their own infinity pool that appears to spill into the Atlantic Ocean



laundry facilities, but we really appreciated our lovely home and its amenities — including a private Jacuzzi on the deck.

We snorkeled the reef in front of the hotel every day and encountered ethereal clouds of white moon jellies, wavy soft corals, and myriad colorful fish. We also explored adjacent bays by kayak, lounged on the beach, and chatted with many guests who migrate back to this patch of paradise on a regular basis. Most of them were from New England, Atlanta, or the Carolinas, and they all considered The Reefs their beloved home away from home.

As luck would have it, the hotel's Serena Spa was very near our quarters and our favorite of the resort's three restaurants, Ocean Echos, was also close by. Many guests made sorties from the resort to play golf, go horseback riding, and ride scooters around the island.



At The Reefs, we snorkeled through a cloud of moon jellies and schools of bright blue fish

As for me — I agreed with Mark Twain. It was heavenly to enjoy the sound of waves rolling up on the beach and feel the caress of a constant gentle breeze. (www.thereefs.com)

For more info on Bermuda and The Reefs Hotel & Club, please see www.ranchandcoast.com. You can also access my "Luxury Travel" and "Inside La Jolla" blogs on our Web site. ELIZABETH HANSEN