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Luscious greens and sparkling blue water adorn the 21-square-mile island.

THE LITTLE ISLAND THAT COULD



Bermuda is getting ready for the spotlight in June when international sailing teams will convene off its pink-tinged shores to compete for the world's oldest sporting trophy. Bonnie Schultz gets a taste of the treats in store for visitors.

"Look over there," says Robert Marusi, director of sales for the Hamilton Princess resort, and I follow the direction of his pointed finger. "That's where Larry Ellison is building his house." We are on board *Zara*, a 77-foot catamaran, sailing toward Great Sound, the site of this year's America's Cup. As I sip my Rum Swizzle, a local drink made of black rum, orange and pineapple juices and grenadine, he tells me about the growing excitement in Bermuda in anticipation of the race and how Ellison, owner of defending champion Oracle Team USA, will have a front-row seat from his huge new estate. Marusi adds that the Hamilton Princess, aka "The Pink Palace," was named the official host hotel for the America's Cup and recently underwent a \$100 million renovation, adding a full-service marina that can accommodate superyachts up to 500 feet and a new restaurant by celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson. "The hotel and marina are going to be full with spectators," he says.

Of course, they are. In fact, pretty much everywhere in Bermuda will

be packed when the 21-square-mile British Overseas territory, located 650 miles off the U.S. East Coast, takes the spotlight in June. "They really wanted this event and they want to be able to showcase what Bermuda can do and what a great sailing destination it is," says Russell Coutts, CEO of the America's Cup Event Authority and five-time winner of the Cup. "They are very proud of the island and want to show it off to the world."

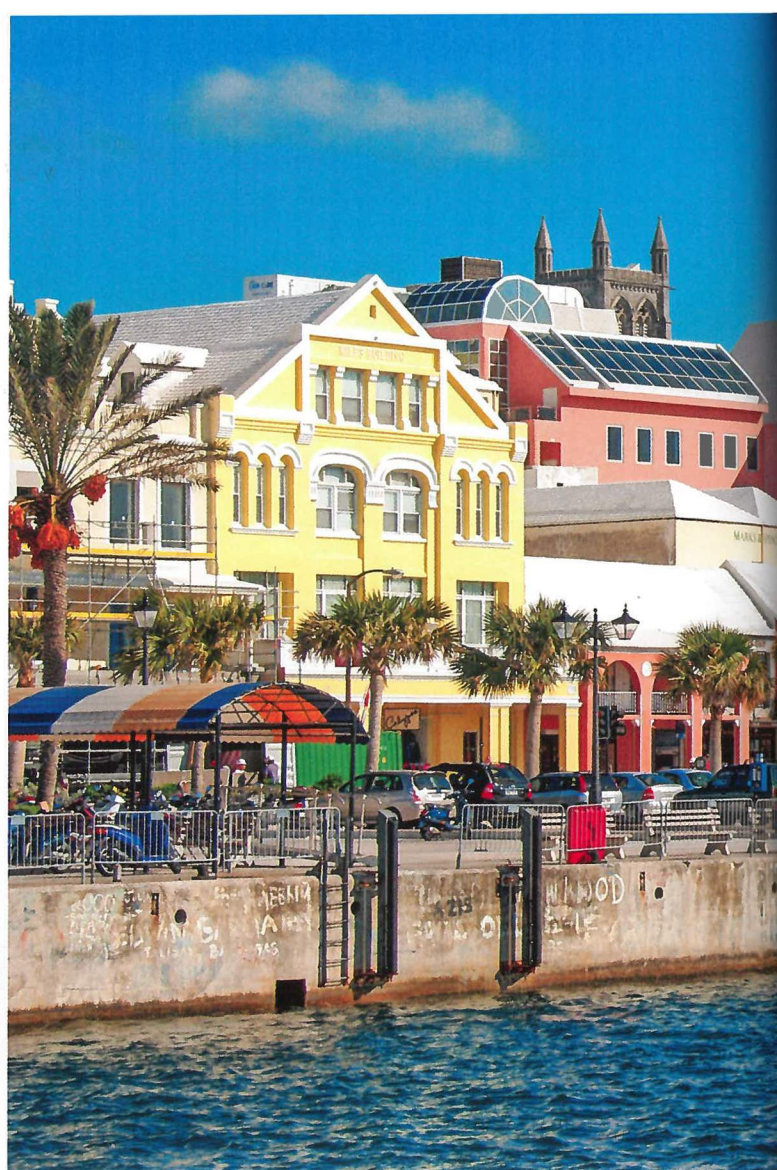
This newfound fame is intriguing for the locals. The island is normally slow-paced with a laid-back, no-hurry approach. Cars, mopeds and taxis share the two-lane road that runs from one end of Bermuda to the other — and they cannot go more than 20 mph. "It's faster to get to places by boat," Larry Rogers of Island Tours and Executive Transfers tells me. Rogers is my tour guide for the day. His jovial personality is infectious and within minutes, we are chatting like long-lost friends who recently reconnected on Facebook.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit Bermuda is during March or April, when the weather is at its best with warm (but not too warm!) days and cool, comfortable nights. High season runs from May to October — you'll need to make reservations well in advance.



Residents and visitors are encouraged to travel by moped in order to reduce traffic on this eco-conscious island. Below: The Fairmont Hamilton Princess, aka "The Pink Palace," is the official host hotel of the America's Cup.

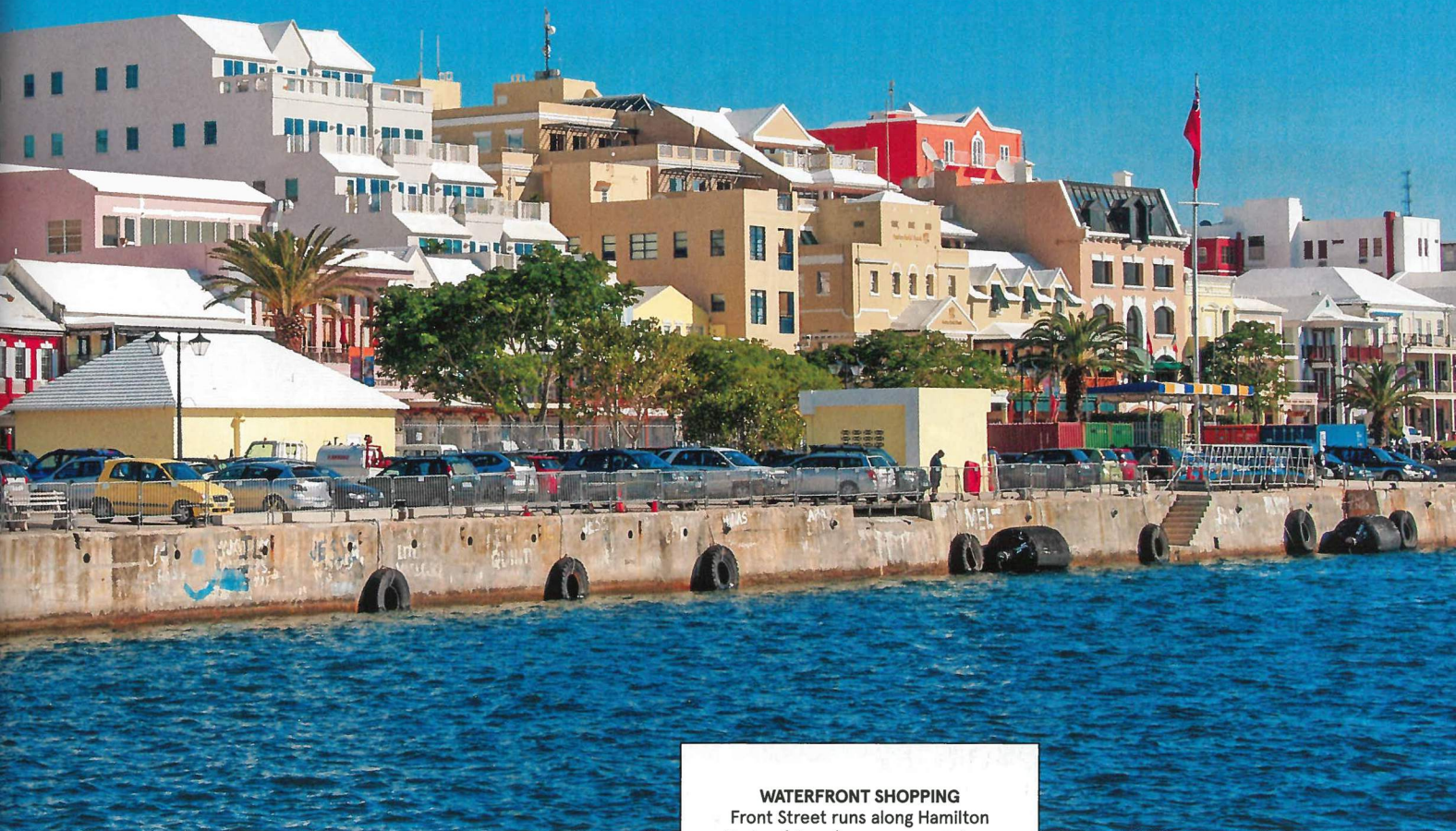


"In an effort to reduce traffic, tourists are not allowed to rent cars," he says. So they rely on the taxis, mopeds or boats to get around. Most stores do not open until 10 a.m. and are closed every Sunday, which is deemed a "quiet day" on the island. There is a pervasive environmental consciousness; residents are big on recycling.

With a population of around 65,000, "everybody knows everybody," Rogers says, as he honks the horn and waves to others from our taxi. He's wearing the island's "uniform," signature Bermuda shorts (also acceptable as formalwear when paired with a dark blazer) with long black or navy socks. "People are friendly here," he adds. I can't disagree, I think to myself while humming the theme song to the hit '80s TV show "Cheers."

Known for its pink-sand beaches, crystal-blue water and buildings in a bevy of pastel shades, Bermuda has a distinctive blend of British and American culture, particularly noticeable in the capital and the island's main port, Hamilton. Many Bermudians can trace their lineage back to colonial times when their ancestors arrived as British settlers or slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries. More recently, the 20th century saw a wave of immigration from the West Indies, U.S., Canada and Azores, making the country today a melting pot of nations.

"Bermuda is very different from the Caribbean," Rogers says. "There is a very large middle class and a sophistication like no other." The crime rate is quite low — "Crime is illegal in Bermuda," he jokes — and though



there are about 450 police officers on the island, “you rarely see them,” he says.

Surprisingly, international business – not tourism – has been the country’s main source of income since the 1980s. Wealth is dispersed pretty evenly around the island where the average home price is approximately \$1.2 million. The ultra-elite, such as well-known part-time residents Michael Bloomberg (New York City’s former mayor) and Silvio Berlusconi (ex-prime minister of Italy), live in an exclusive area overlooking Castle Harbour in St. George’s Parish known as Tucker’s Town or “Billionaires’ Row.”

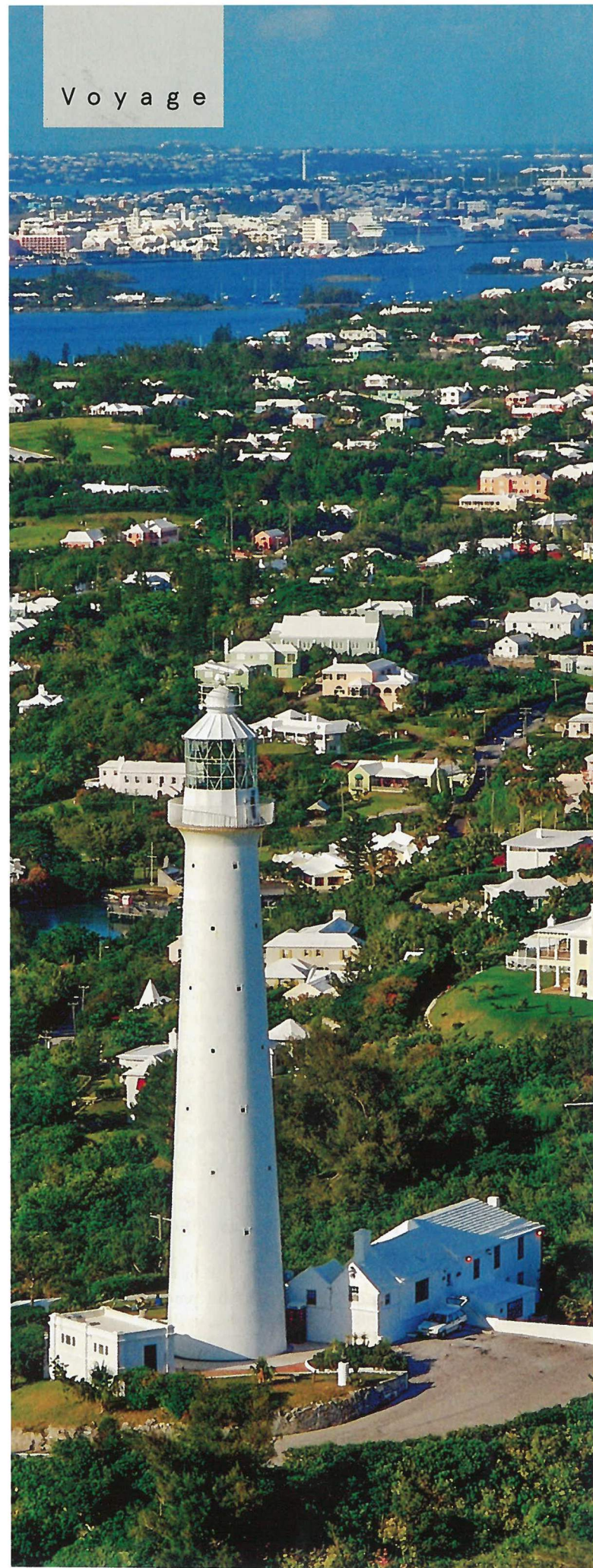
And you can’t name-drop in Bermuda without mentioning actor Michael Douglas, who owns a home with his wife, actress Catherine Zeta-Jones, in Warwick Parish. The son of Bermudian model/actress Diana Dill and American movie legend Kirk Douglas once owned interests in the now-closed Ariel Sands cottage colony in Devonshire. His mother’s family ancestry in Bermuda dates back to the 1600s. In the early 1900s Douglas’ maternal grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Melville Dill, served as Attorney General of Bermuda, was a member of the Parliament of Bermuda and was commanding officer of the Bermuda Militia Artillery. “There’s real solace in returning to this tiny island where I have so many relatives, probably seventy, in one place. To me, Bermuda is a real family spot,” Douglas said in *Architectural Digest* in 2002.

Rogers takes me on a drive-by of Douglas’ late mother’s estate in

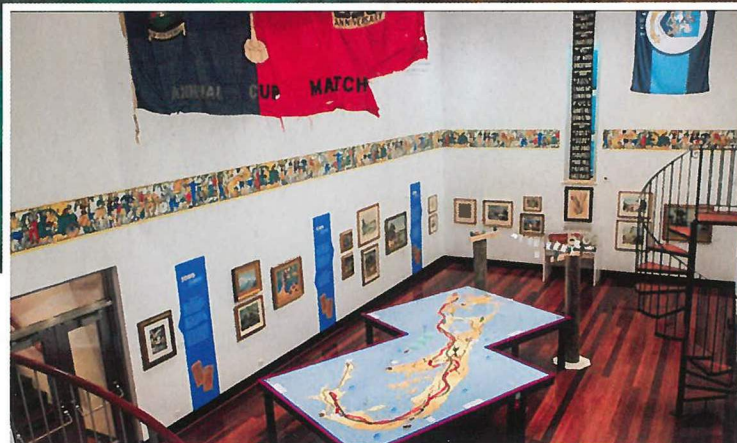
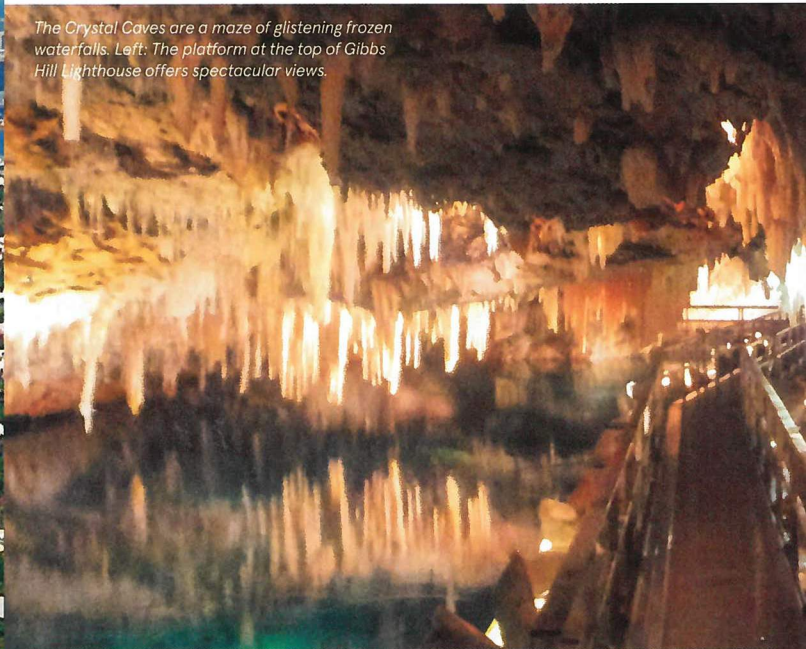
WATERFRONT SHOPPING

Front Street runs along Hamilton Harbor (above), so you can enjoy a view of the blue sea while you shop. The area is bustling with high-end retail shops selling everything from clothing to jewelry, as well as a plethora of places to dine. During the summer months, Front Street (below) becomes the hot spot for nighttime entertainment, complete with street performers and food vendors.





The Crystal Caves are a maze of glistening frozen waterfalls. Left: The platform at the top of Gibbs Hill Lighthouse offers spectacular views.



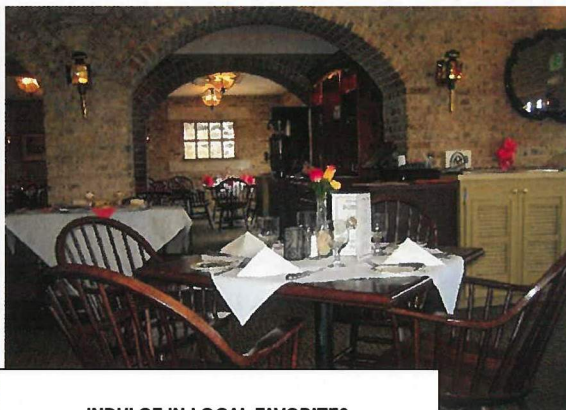
TOUR THE GALLERY

Founded in 1987, the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art has gathered more than 1,400 paintings and drawings by the likes of Winslow Homer, Georgia O'Keeffe and Henry Moore, to name just a few. Located in the lovely Bermuda Botanical Gardens in Paget Parish, its purpose is to enrich the community through art and education. Narrated tours are offered for a nominal fee and are by reservation only.

Devonshire Parish, explaining that her home was one of the island's firsts to have a swimming pool. "If you had a pool, that was a sure sign of wealth," he says.

Another famous resident? "It's not uncommon to see (former presidential candidate) Ross Perot on his little speedboat traveling back and forth about twenty times a day," says Mark Soares, owner of the yacht agent Bermuda Yacht Services, whom I meet for lunch. As we dine on grouper – a local favorite – prepared to perfection at The Tempest Bistro in the town of St. George's, I look out toward the sparkling azure sea but alas, no Perot sightings.

It's quiet in the restaurant on this day, but Soares assures me that the calm won't last. Tourists come to Bermuda year-round to enjoy the beautiful weather. "In the middle of spring and especially summer, it



INDULGE IN LOCAL FAVORITES

The Tempest Bistro, located at the Old Carriage House in St. George's, is known for dishes like fish chowder, crab cakes, chicken wings, fish and chips and more. Once the storehouse of horse-drawn carriages, the spacious restaurant has a cozy and elegant ambience, with big, comfortable chairs, beautiful chandeliers and large brick arches adorning the interior.

Dark 'N' Stormy is a Bermudian classic, made with Gosling's Black Seal rum and ginger beer.



starts to get hot, but the water is warm; it's great for sailing and for golf," he says. "And when there's a nice breeze, it makes all the difference."

Soares adds that 65 percent of all yacht traffic in Bermuda occurs between May and June. Why? "Because that's when they're crossing to the Med," he says. "What's great about the America's Cup is that it's being held right in the middle of prime-time — when all the boats are leaving the Caribbean and continuing onto the Med."

After lunch, it's onto the "must-see" underground Crystal Caves. Discovered in 1902, this popular tourist attraction is called "Bermuda's oldest-living true hidden treasure" because it feels as though you are walking through a maze of glimmering frozen waterfalls (which are actually just calcite mineral deposits) whose mirror images float off the glistening water below. Suspended pontoon pathways span a 55-foot-deep subsurface lake to form this spectacular natural wonder.

As we drive by the most famous beach in Bermuda, Horseshoe Bay — rated as one of the world's most beautiful by TripAdvisor and Condé Nast — I can hear the sound of the waves crashing in the ocean and suddenly, I feel like this would be the perfect time for a short nap. (Unfortunately, there's no time and we press on.) The soft, pink sand — created by a mix of tiny bits of shell dust and coral, which also helps keep it from getting too hot to walk on — stretches along the southern shore of Southampton and forms the shape of a horseshoe, hence the name. The beach tends to get very crowded when a cruise ship is in port (mostly between May and October), but if you go early in the day, you can claim your spot of paradise easily.

Then it's off to another "don't miss" site — the cast-iron Gibbs Hill

Lighthouse. Built in 1846, it's perched 245 feet above sea level. Rogers says if you climb the 185 steps to a platform at the top, you'll be rewarded with a magnificent view of the island. I decide to take his word for it.

No trip to Bermuda is complete without trying a Dark 'N' Stormy, Rogers tells me with a smile. Invented on the island just after World War I, the cocktail is made with the staple ingredient, Bermuda's own Gosling's Black Seal dark rum (the dark), with a hint of ginger beer (the stormy). "Americans like to add a bit of lime juice to it," Rogers says wrinkling his nose.

As Mark Twain once said, "You can go to heaven if you want. I'd rather stay in Bermuda." I'm still trying to figure out the difference. This utopia has island charm wrapped in silky luxury. Once you get there, you never want to leave.

The sun is still shining brightly as I exit the Hamilton Princess to enjoy my last glorious day of Bermudian life. As I stroll down Front Street — lined with high-end boutiques and quaint little cafes — taking in all the beauty, a local walks by and reminds me to "have a 'Bermudiful' day!" Indeed. ■

BY BOAT



ROYAL BERMUDA YACHT CLUB, HAMILTON

Located just steps away from bustling Front Street, the 130-berth marina welcomes yachts up to 148 feet. Established in 1844, the RBYC is one of the Western Hemisphere's oldest yacht clubs and it will give you a true feeling for Bermuda's sailing heritage. rbyc.bm



BERMUDA YACHT SERVICES, ST. GEORGE'S

Bermuda Yacht Services manages the superyacht dock in St. George's and can arrange for yachts up to 295 feet to tie up, either stern-to or side-to. Captain Mark Soares runs this one-stop shop for all your nautical needs. bermudayachtservices.com



THE PRINCESS MARINA, HAMILTON

In the heart of the newly refurbished Hamilton Princess & Beach Club, the 60-berth full-service marina can accommodate yachts up to 500 feet. It has a dedicated concierge service and arriving vessels can clear Bermudian customs on site. thehamiltonprincess.com/marina