Take it easy

Nothing is rushed in the heady atmosphere of Bermuda, where dream beaches lead to pristine towns and villages

FEATURE Jacqui Paterson **PHOTOGRAPHS** Cambridge Beaches/Bermuda Department of Tourism

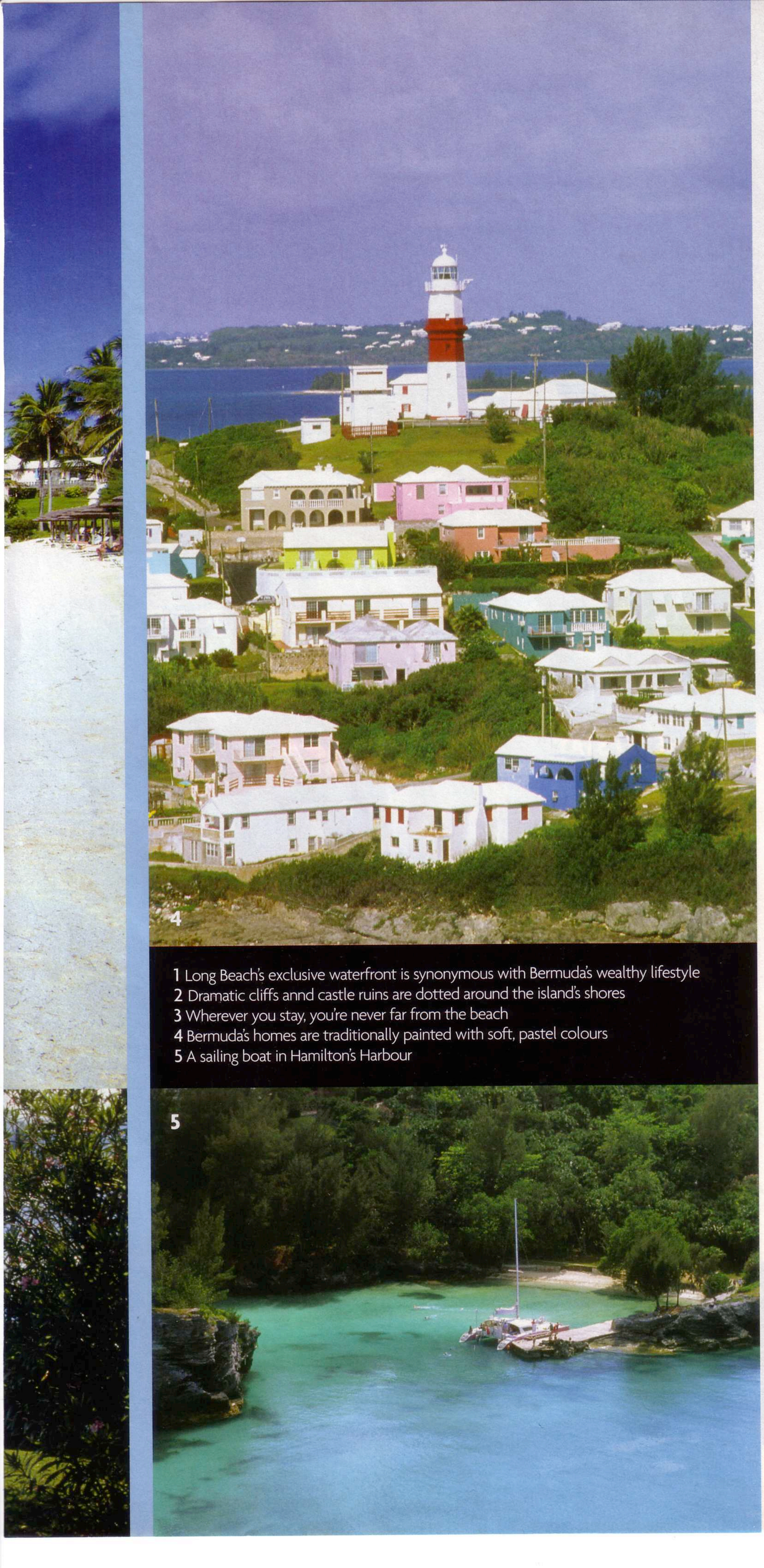
1

2



3





1 Long Beach's exclusive waterfront is synonymous with Bermuda's wealthy lifestyle
2 Dramatic cliffs annd castle ruins are dotted around the island's shores
3 Wherever you stay, you're never far from the beach
4 Bermuda's homes are traditionally painted with soft, pastel colours
5 A sailing boat in Hamilton's Harbour

The dimming sun doesn't so much set in Bermuda, as sink – converting the bright orange sky into a deep cobalt blue. As the light fades, the air reverberates with the shrill, throaty call of an army of tree frogs. In the distance, a traditional steel band launches into a familiar calypso melody. Stress? Bermudans don't know the meaning of the word.

It may be a tiny country, but Bermuda is big on charm. Don't be alarmed if every car, bicycle and passerby gives you a cheery wave or a toot of their horn. They're not mistaking you for someone they know – they really are that friendly.

Bermuda finds itself in an unusual position – an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, it is not, as you may believe, in the Caribbean. In fact, it is just a 90-minute flight from the eastern coast of the United States of America, making it a popular holiday destination for visitors from the Deep South. Over 100 coral islands make up Bermuda, where US and UK influences collide so charmingly. Bermudans love cricket and partake in afternoon tea, but watch American satellite television. Their accent is an unusual hybrid of proper English and a North American drawl.

You can't help but be reminded of its British colonial history as you pass through the areas of Devonshire, Saint George, Southampton and Somerset. It's more polished than its Caribbean counterparts – the houses, traditionally painted in candy colours, are immaculate and the streets postcard-perfect.

Bermuda has a fantastic standard of living, but it doesn't come cheap. The average price of a home is nearly £700,000 and Bermudans have two, or sometimes three, jobs to pay their mammoth mortgages. While they don't pay income tax, all imported goods are heavily levied. Crime is low, and so is unemployment. The only people who don't work are those who don't want to, is a popular island joke.

The Bermudan dollar holds the same value as its North American counterpart, and both currencies are accepted everywhere on the island. While the British pound still stands up strongly, it could not be considered a cheap destination. Be warned – international phone calls are particularly pricey.

There are no rental cars on Bermuda, but you can hire moped or bicycles, even without a driver's license. Taxis are reliable, but make sure you pre-book them or keep a cab company number on you as they are in great demand. If staying anywhere outside of Hamilton, you'll need some form of transport to get around.

Bermuda sets itself apart with stunning scenery. The world-famous pink sand beaches, coloured by particles of crushed coral, are even more gorgeous experienced first hand. A visit to the most popular beach, Horseshoe Bay, is a must. If you want to escape the tourists, however, there are dozens of more secluded bays and beaches you can visit.

It's a great place for couples, with sunsets that take your breath away. One of the most unique experiences is offered at the Cambridge Beaches resort in Somerset. For a very reasonable £275, which includes a bottle ➤



1



2

> FIND YOURSELF A PATCH OF PINK SAND, PULL OUT YOUR HOLIDAY NOVEL, AND PREPARE TO EXPERIENCE SOME SERIOUS RELAXATION. AND AS THEY SAY ON THE ISLANDS, HAVE A BERMUDA-FULL DAY

of Dom Perignon, you will be taken by boat to a private island, where a candlelit dinner for two awaits. Your own waiter serves you a platter of hot and cold seafood, then discretely leaves you to enjoy each other's company, as the Atlantic Ocean laps on the shore, just feet away.

While not traditionally a clothes-shopping destination, Bermuda has a few retail highlights. The Royal Naval Dockyard is a popular destination, with restaurants, shops and craft workshops to browse through. It's also home to the Maritime Museum for all keen nautical historians.

Don't leave Bermuda without meeting the country's most famous resident. Every morning, you can find Johnny Barnes standing near the roundabout entering Hamilton, bidding the tourists a good morning. He is such a familiar sight that a bronze figure of him has been erected – a great honour since living people are not usually immortalised in statues.

So, find yourself a patch of pink sand, pull out your holiday novel, and prepare to experience some serious relaxation. And as they say on the islands, have a Bermuda-full day.

1 Take advantage of the year round good weather and enjoy your meals *al fresco*
2 The picturesque Elys Point
3 If water sports are your passion, you will not be disappointed with the range available
4 Bermudan architecture reflects its fascinating lineage

WHERE TO STAY

LUXURY **Cambridge Beaches Resort, 30 Kings Point Road, Sandys** (44 1 234 0331). Between 16 April and 31 October, cottages range from around £275 a night for a standard villa with a garden view, to around £850 a night for a two-bedroom cottage with an ocean view. Breakfast and lunch are included in the price.

MID-RANGE **Clear View Suites and Cottages 3-star Hotel, Sandy Lane, Hamilton** (44 1 293 0484). A moderately priced, semi-secluded lodging option. Rooms from £100.

BUDGET **Bermuda Paradise Vacation Villa Bed and Breakfast, 6 St Anne's Drive** (44 1 236 6154). Rooms from around £65 per night.

WHERE TO EAT

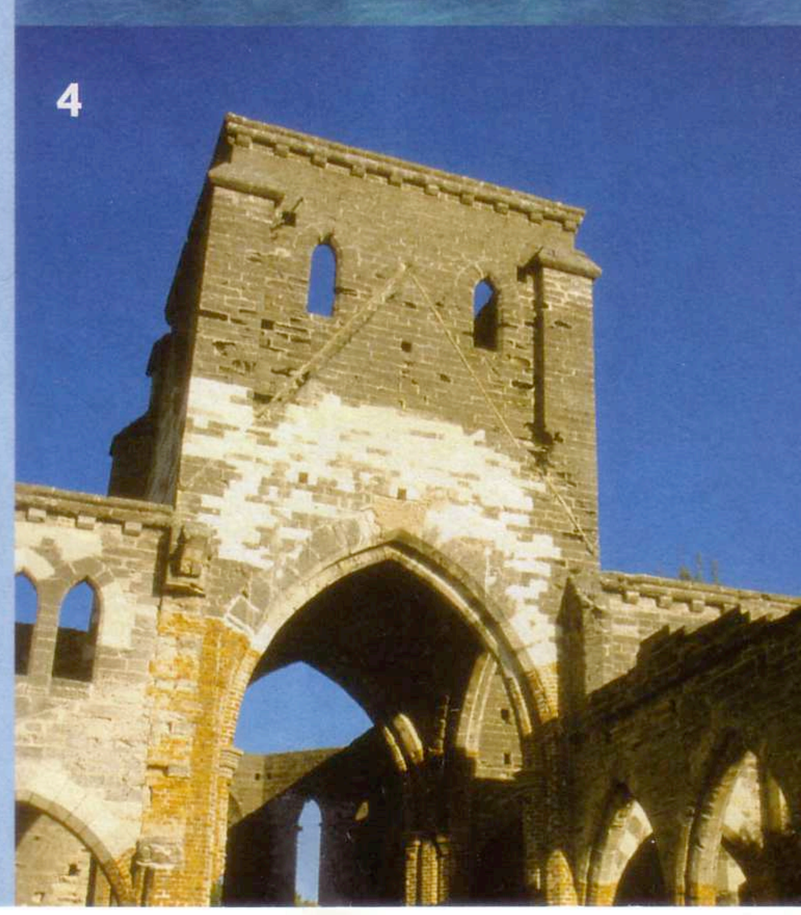
LUXURY **Breezes Restaurant, Cambridge Beaches Resort, 30 Kings Point Road, Sandys** (44 1 234 0331). Bermuda's only beachfront restaurant, which looks out over the clear waters of Long Beach. Main courses range from £15 to £33. For guests staying at Cambridge Beaches, dinner is included in the room rate. Smart dress.

MID-RANGE **Barracuda Grill, 5 Burnaby Hill, Hamilton** (44 1 292 1609). Outstanding seafood and meats prepared in a contemporary style. Main courses from around £15. Smart-casual dress.

BUDGET **Dennis's Hideaway, Cashew City Road, St David's** (44 1 297 0044). Offers traditional Bermudan dishes from around £10. Be warned – credit cards are not accepted. Casual dress.



3



4

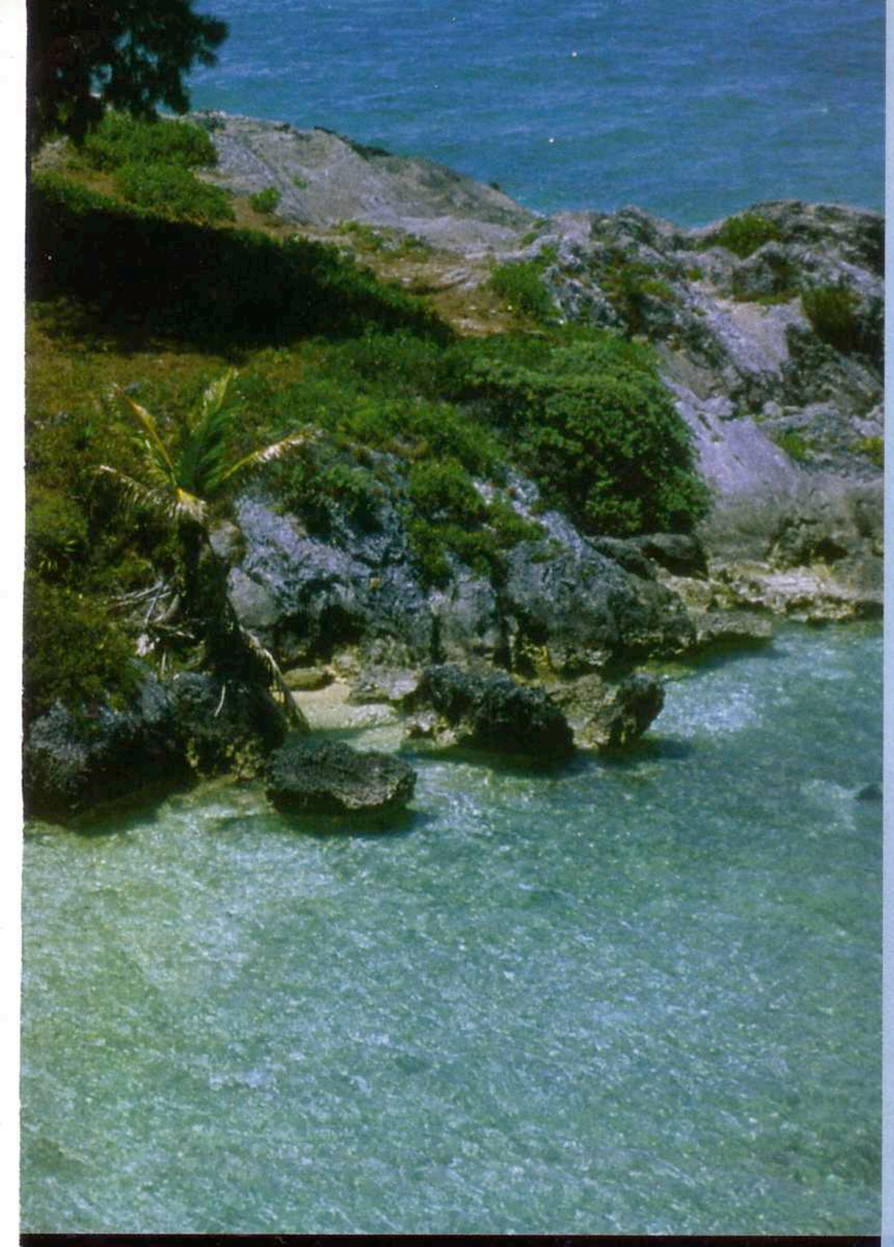
GETTING THERE

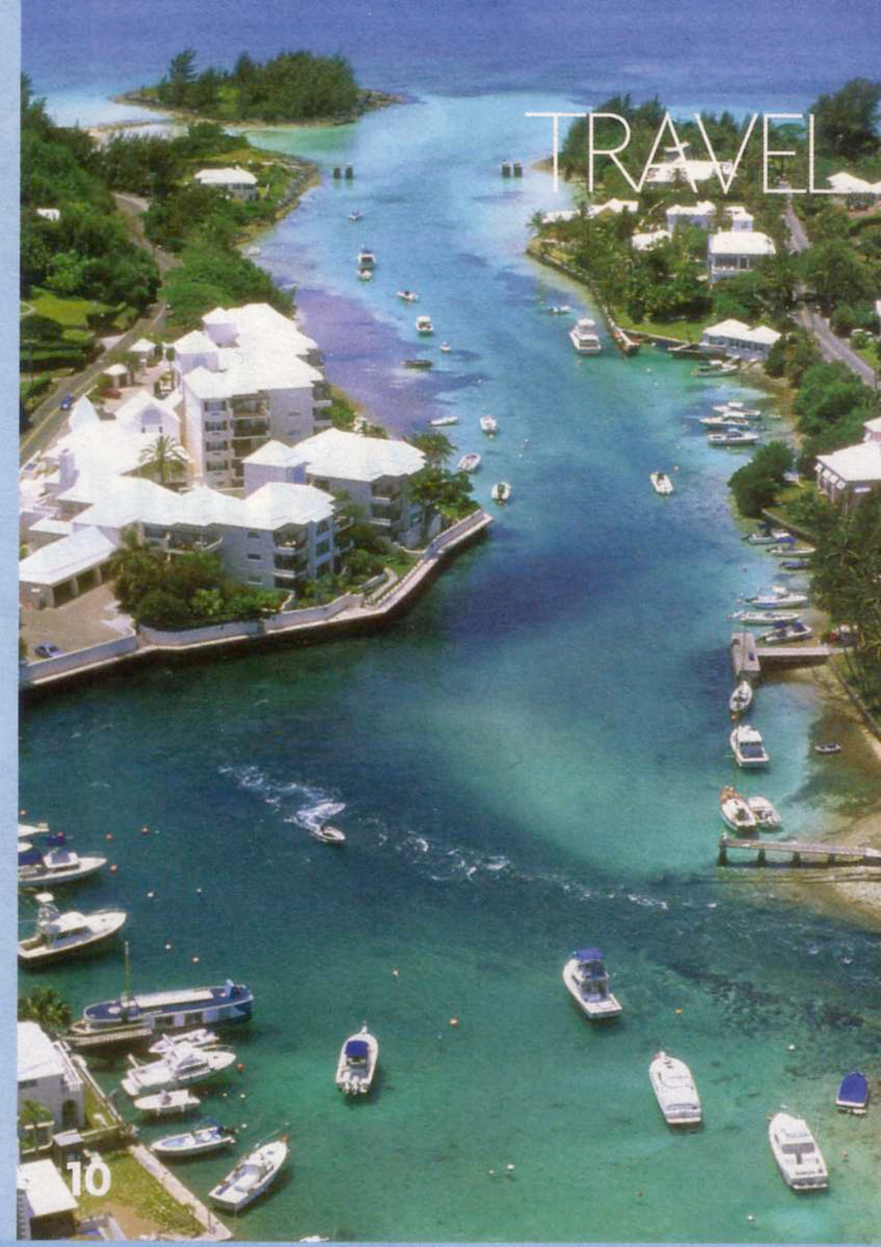
BA offers direct flights to Hamilton from London Gatwick.
Seven night's at the Cambridge Beaches resort will cost from £1314 per person. The price includes accommodation in a standard water-view room, direct flights from London Gatwick with British Airways, and private taxi transfers on the Island.

Call Elite Vacations 01707 371000
Bermuda Tourism 020 8410 8188
www.bermudatourism.co.uk

WHEN TO GO

It is hottest from May to mid-October, reaching, on average, 86 degrees C in August, however, Bermuda is famous for its comparatively temperate weather conditions, and year-round heat, so you are free to choose.





5 Seafood is a particularly good choice for eating out
6 Dusk in Bermuda is a sight to behold
7 The sea is full of exotic underwater life
8 Bermuda has five well-laid out golf courses
9 Snorkelling in a rocky inlet can reveal hidden treasures
10 A stunning aerial view of some of Bermuda's 123 islands

> "IT IS HOTTEST IN MAY TO MID-OCTOBER, REACHING, ON AVERAGE, 86 DEGREES IN AUGUST HOWEVER BERMUDA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS TEMPERAT WEATHER CONDITIONS"

WHAT TO DO

SCUBA DIVE The coral reefs and ancient shipwrecks that surround the islands.
Dive Bermuda (44 1 295 9485, extension 4371).
SPA TREATMENTS Enjoy a relaxing spa treatment at one of nine centres on Bermuda.
Cambridge Beaches Outlet (44 1 234 3636).
DOLPHINS Swim with the dolphins at Dockyards. Dolphin Quest (44 1 234 4464. www.dolphinquest.org).
CAVES Marvel at the stalactites and stalagmites at Crystal Caves (44 1 293 0640).
CRUISE Take a Consort Cruise around Hamilton Harbour and play spot-the-celebrity (44 1 236 3207).

WHAT TO BUY

BERMUDA SHORTS Of course! Price varies, depending on the make.
BERMUDAN RUM CAKE Available in a variety of flavours, priced £5.50 to £17.
CARVED WOODEN ORNAMENTS Expect to pay between £5.50 and £22.
FLORAL PERFUMES From the Bermuda Perfumery, £16 for 60ml of eau du toilette.
CDS of traditional steel band music, so you can relive your holiday at home, for around £11.

