

FEATURED ARTICLE

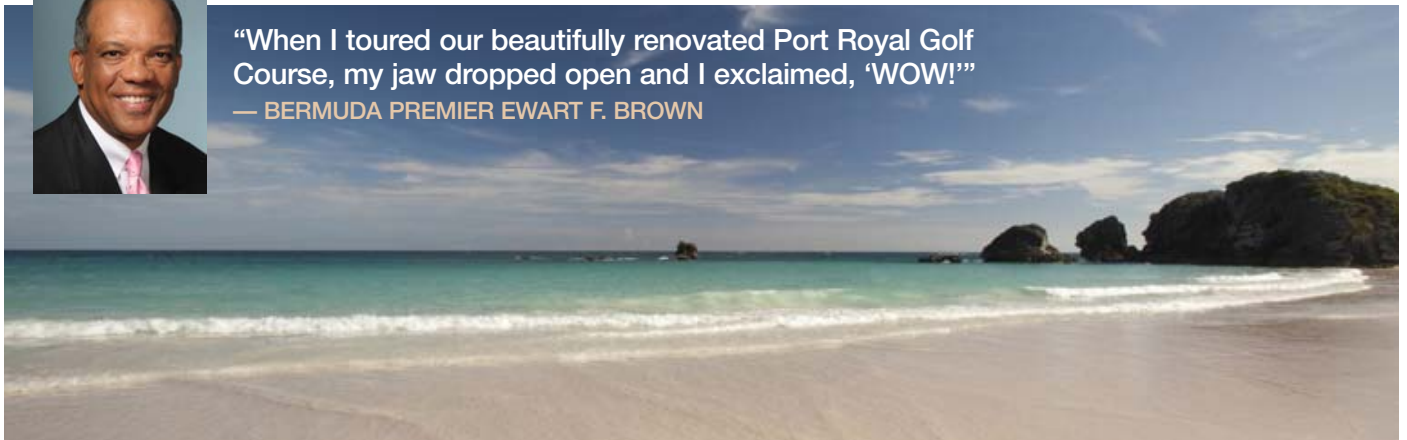
Bermuda Debuts Its Stunning Renovation of Port Royal Golf Course

A visit to Bermuda was full of many pleasant surprises; its easy accessibility, its charismatic Premier Brown, his lighthearted innovations, and his \$15 million upgrade of Port Royal Golf Course.



“When I toured our beautifully renovated Port Royal Golf Course, my jaw dropped open and I exclaimed, ‘WOW!’”

— BERMUDA PREMIER EWART F. BROWN



BY MARK PAZDUR, PUBLISHER

HAMILTON, BERMUDA: First time visitors to Bermuda, like me, are in for many unexpected, but pleasant, introductions to Bermudian culture and tradition. Getting to Bermuda is easy. It's only a two-hour flight from New York and about 120 flights from most of America's East Coast hub airports arrive each week. I flew to Bermuda from Los Angeles with a connecting flight in New York and cabbied it from Bermuda's airport to Cambridge Beaches Resort in Sandys Parish.

You cannot rent a car in Bermuda, but you have the option of taking a cab, renting a scooter or riding one of their famous pink buses. Travelers who are laden with suitcases, golf bags and other paraphernalia will opt for a taxi. Cab fare from the airport, located on the extreme eastern side of the island to the Cambridge Beaches Resort (my destination) on the extreme western side, is about \$50. A cab, with a colorful driver, is the most convenient and informative way to get around the island.

My assignment was to interview Bermuda's Premier, Dr. Ewart F. Brown, and to partake in the government's grand reopening of the Port Royal Golf Course's \$15 million upgrade celebration in Southampton.

I found Bermuda to be more beautiful than I originally thought and was surprised to learn all U.S. cell phone carriers provide excellent coverage. Hint: Make sure you are on an international voice/data plan in order to avoid roaming charges.

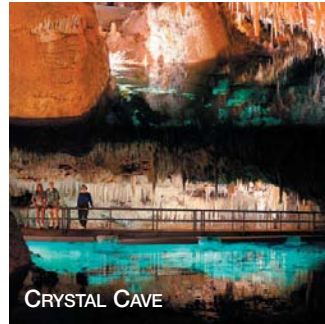


PORT ROYAL GOLF COURSE

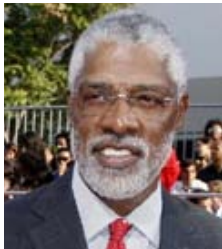
The island's nine courses make up the high concentration of golf per square mile. Although three clubs; Mid-Ocean, Riddell's Bay and Tucker's Point are private, access is possible through the hotel concierge or a club member.

NBA STAR DR. J'S PERSPECTIVE

Shortly after my arrival, I chatted with Dr. Julius Erving, better known as retired NBA superstar, Dr. J, who is an avid golfer and frequent Bermuda visitor. When asked for his opinion of Port Royal's makeover, his response was quick and unambiguous. "Port Royal," he said, "has a dynamite combination of an ocean setting, rolling hills and excellent conditioning. That makes it tournament worthy. There are only two courses in the world I have played, Old Head Golf Links in Ireland and Pebble Beach, that give me the same feeling of exhilaration," extolled Dr. J. "It's impossible to play it and keep that experience to yourself. It's just that type of place.



"I enjoy bringing my family to Bermuda. We feel safe and welcome. It's refreshing to see how proper and polite their culture is. Service staff diction is on the level of college professors. That's pretty cool," said Dr. J.



"There are only two courses in the world I've played, Old Head Golf Links in Ireland and Pebble Beach, that give me the same exhilaration that Port Royal in Bermuda gives me." — FORMER NBA STAR DR. JULIUS ERVING

BERMUDIAN GOVERNANCE

Bermuda is located 650 miles east of North Carolina. Although it's commonly referred to in the singular, Bermuda is an archipelago of seven main islands and many smaller islands connected by bridges.

Dr. Brown, 66, a former United States resident, received his M.D. from Howard University in Washington D.C., and was sworn in as prime minister in October of 2006 at the age of 63. He is also the Minister of Tourism and Transport. I was cautioned, prior to our meeting, the proper protocol to address him is Premier Brown and not Prime Minister Brown because Bermuda is still a British overseas territory.

Our interview, curiously, took place aboard a ferry in Hamilton. I found him to be charismatic, dapper, articulate and likeable. Knowing I was a single-digit golfer, he quickly explained he was a 17-handicapper and loved the game.

"What do you like about it?" I asked.

"It's a relaxing distraction," he grinned. "Although I'm not a great golfer, it provides a great escape and a contrast to the stress of daily life. I'm committed to make Bermuda a world-class golf experience. The government owns three courses and just invested \$15 million in the upgrade of Port Royal Golf Course."

"Are you happy with the renovation?"

"Happy is to put it mildly," he said. "When I toured Port Royal after its renovation, my jaw dropped open and I exclaimed: 'WOW!' I know you're playing it tomorrow and I'm sure you will be very impressed."

“Is Bermuda a safe place to visit?”

“Yes. It’s a very safe composition of islands and a melting pot of English, North American and African culture. Our interesting mix of English service, North American business standards, and African traditions make our island a memorable and safe place to visit.”

“What would pleasantly surprise an American on their first-visit?”

“I’m sure finding out how short the flight time is from all major East Coast cities in the U.S. is surprising. For example, it’s only about a two-hour flight from New York and Boston. That’s probably why most of our tourists come from the United States.”

DID HE SAY PINK BEACHES?

“I always get a kick out of the oohs and ahs from nearby passengers aboard a plane as we make our approach to land in Bermuda,” chuckled Premier Brown. “It’s their first opportunity to see how truly beautiful the color of turquoise is. How clean and manicured our island is impresses them. They fall in love with our signature pastel colored buildings, our lush landscape and our pink powdered beaches,” he proudly vaunted.

”Did you say pink beaches?”



“Yes. But our sand isn’t actually pink,” laughed Premier Brown. “Our beaches are a mix of powdery, bright white sand and granules of red coral. The combination of the two creates a striking pink hue.”

WHO WOULDN’T ENJOY A LOVE FESTIVAL

He seemed to relax when I asked him about his favorite sport and social event. He appeared to suddenly be free of tension and enjoying the interview. I surmised he thought of an amusing reply when his face broke into a smile and said: “Five years ago my wife came up with my favorite social event. She proposed the idea of having a ‘Love Festival’ on Valentine’s Day weekend. The Festival, now in its fifth year, continues to grow. Couples from all over the world attend to relax and reconnect with one another,” he said, quietly suppressing a chuckle.



“My favorite sports event is the Cup Match. A cricket contest,” revealed Premier Brown. “It’s a two-day summer holiday, dating back to 1901, that features cricket contests between St. George on the east side of Bermuda and Somerset on the west side. East versus West. It’s competitive, spirited and a long weekend of pure fun and celebration.”

“Has the global recession hit Bermuda?”

“Yes. Any downturn in the United States impacts us. About 85 percent of our visitors are from America and I’m bullish on America and Bermuda’s future,” said Premier Brown. “Airlines and resort rates are lower than anytime I can remember since 2001 because this recession is global. Airlines have been trending downward since JetBlue entered the market in 2004. Our economies will stabilize and recover.”

“Sir, what recreation does Bermuda have to offer for the non-golfer?”

“Oh, a lot,” bantered Premier Brown.

“Like what?”

“We have the best snorkeling and scuba diving in the world. One of our more popular sites is snorkeling around the *Montana*, a 236-foot long Confederate blockade-runner that sank in 1863. The *Montana*’s bow is encrusted with coral and her mid-ship region is a favorite with underwater photographers. I’d also recommend hiking our self-guide African Diaspora Heritage Trail. Slaves were first brought to Bermuda in 1616 and slavery was not abolished until 1834. It’s important to remember our past and learn from mistakes so they are not repeated. We have plenty to keep them busy and entertained. But sometimes,” teased Premier Brown, “the best thing to do is nothing. Just curl up on the beach with a good book!”

AN ORIGINAL ROBERT TRENT JONES SR. DESIGN

The Port Royal Golf Course was originally designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. in 1970, and rebuilt by architect Roger Rulewich with all of its design features and picturesque views retained. The bottom line really rested on the shoulders of Rulewich who was involved in the original design with Robert Trent Jones Sr. back in the late 1960s. “The course slowly deteriorated over the decades,” recalled Rulewich. “Some efforts were made in the ‘90s, but things never really got off the ground until Premier Brown understood the importance of golf for tourists and snowballed it. His course renovations include the removal of numerous trees for more views. All fairways, roughs and tee boxes have been re-grassed, a new irrigation system installed, bunkers redesigned, tees rebuilt, and yardage increased to 6,842, the longest in Bermuda.



“I just couldn’t be more pleased with how Port Royal has developed,” said Rulewich. “I think the citizens and the government of Bermuda have a right to be proud of Port Royal when it’s showcased, on world-wide television, during the 2009 PGA Grand Slam in October.”

Andrew Brooks, director of golf, said, “Thirteen holes have ocean views, but our three finishing holes, our trade winds, tiered greens and the lay of the land will really test your game. American snowbirds,” he felt, “can’t help but flock over here next winter after seeing our spectacular weather, fairways, beaches and facilities.”

SOME ADVICE FROM ANN SHUTTE

“When you come to Bermuda on holiday, be sure to experience our local culture and cuisine,” says Global Marketing Director Ann Shutte. “Other than one Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, there are no restaurant chains here. Make sure you try a bowl of piping hot Bermuda Fish Chowder. It’s tomato based broth with fish, sherry pepper sauce and a touch of Goslings Black Seal Rum,” vaunted Shutte.

“Our currency was originally called ‘Hogge money’ after wild hogs left behind by Spanish and Portuguese ships in the 16th century. Today, Bermuda’s dollar is pegged 1:1 to the U.S. dollar. Just about all of our establishments will accept U.S. dollars and credit cards. However,” joshed Shutte, “the change you receive will be in Bermuda dollars. This year Bermuda is celebrating its 400th anniversary. If you love history, you will love exploring our island. Bermuda boasts impressive forts built throughout the past four centuries. They are the oldest stone buildings in Bermuda and represent every stage of the island’s development from a small isolated outpost of the British Empire in the 1600s to what became the ‘Gibraltar of the West’ in the 1800s.

“Our island is only 22 miles in length, two miles across at its widest point, with a population of only 66,000 citizens and a warm, loving, inviting culture. It’s a wonderful retreat,” said Shutte proudly.

WHAT CABBIES FEEL YOU SHOULD KNOW

My cabbies proved to be a good source for information and pointers. They love the island and know the romantic retreats and physically robust activities that appeal to tourists. Here are some of their points of interest:

- Horseshoe Bay Beach, next to the Fairmont Southampton, is the most popular cove because of clean bathrooms, showers and umbrella rentals. Tobacco Bay, on the other hand, is recommended for better snorkeling and an area of shallow water to keep an eye on the kids.
- Pompano Beach Club, opened in 1956, operates more like a small fishing lodge. They take you deep-sea fishing in their private vessel from their own dock, clean your freshly caught fish, and serve it to you for dinner later that day. All of the accommodations are appropriately named after local game fish as a proud tribute to the club's fishing heritage.
- Most homes have an ingenious water-capture system built into the roof. About two feet from the edge of the roof is a limestone gutter to capture rainwater that is funneled into underground tanks for daily use. Because most homes are not hooked up to a main waterline, the rainwater capture system is their only source for water. It has proven to be environmentally friendly and self-sustaining.
- Bermuda shorts were originally designed by the British Army and later adapted by Bermudians. True Bermudians wear their shorts two inches above the knee with black or navy-blue socks up to your calf.



- All buildings are painted in light pastel colors to reflect sunlight in order to keep interiors cool.
- The best fishing for snapper, rockfish, and hind is along the coast. If you're angling for marlin, tuna, wahoo and other big game, go off shore.
- The golf and spa season is from October to April; summers range in the high 80s; winters in the 60s; and there really is no rainy season.
- The two best annual events for Americans are the Bermuda Music Festival (this year featuring Quincy Jones) and the PGA Grand Slam at Port Royal Golf Course.

CHECK OUT THE CAMBRIDGE BEACHES RESORT

"I can think of no place better than to curl up in one of Cambridge Beaches' 94 cottages spread over a private 30-acre peninsula with five private beaches," exclaimed General Manager Richard Quinn. "Our greatest compliment is when guests return to visit, like the Burke family from Massachusetts. They first came to our resort in 1947 and will celebrate their 88th stay in September this year.

"I agree with Premier Brown," said Quinn, "Bermuda offers so much. But, my favorite saying is, 'Come to Bermuda, do nothing, and do it well!'"

For more information, please phone (800) 237-6832 or visit bermudatourism.com.

American Airlines has non-stop flights from JFK and Miami; JetBlue from JFK; Delta from Atlanta and Boston; US Airways from Washington, Philadelphia and Charlotte; Continental from Newark; and Air Canada from Toronto. Cruise Lines Royal Caribbean and Carnival have itineraries with a stop in Bermuda. Time zone is one hour later than EST.