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The Design Fiend's Guide to Bermuda

It's a hidden gem that's been there all along. Here's a design lover's look at Bermuda—beyond the pink sand and crystal clear water.

BY [DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH](#) PUBLISHED: AUG 25, 2026



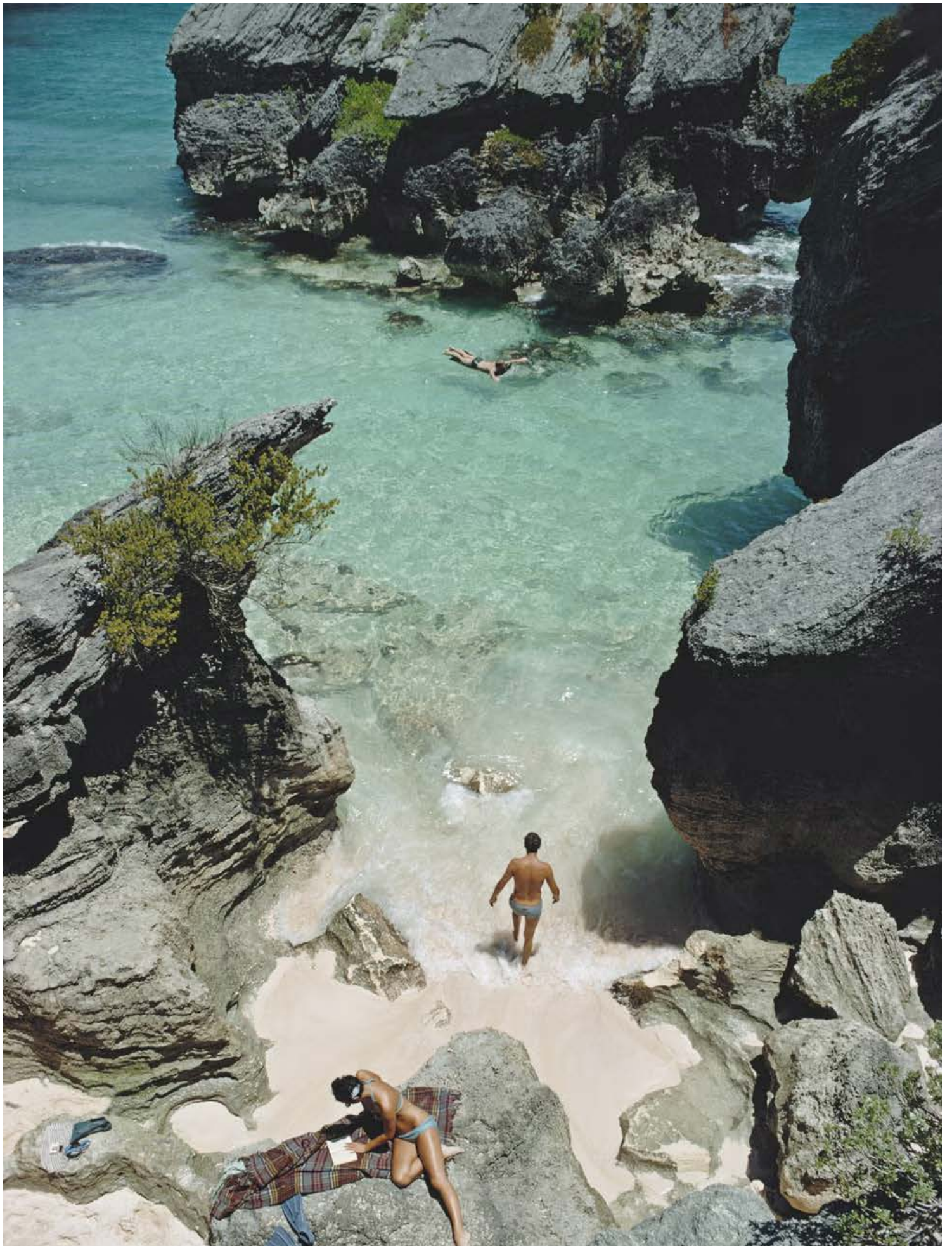
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Mark Twain once said, “You can go to heaven if you want. I’d rather stay in Bermuda.” And for a time, it seemed like everyone was. Peaking in the *Mad Men* era but lasting about a century, it was one of the most popular beach escapes for Americans and Brits. But since the 1980s, the island nation has lost tourism to Nantucket, St. Tropez, and Hawaii. However, Bermuda is more than ripe for a comeback.

Beyond the world-famous sparkling sea and sand, Bermuda’s style is unique. The towns and residential neighborhoods are colorful, popping even against the verdant greens and bright flowers. Birds-of-paradise, hibiscus, and fragrant plumeria both fill vases and inspire paintings and patterns. The design alone—pastel homes and lacquered doors made of Bermuda cedar—is more than enough reason to visit.

But before you book your trip, it’s important to understand the island’s geography. From end to end, Bermuda is about 22 miles long, surrounded by beaches on all sides, and looks a bit like a large fish hook. Hamilton, the capital, is in the narrow middle of the island, opposite Elbow Beach, one of the island’s best. Up at the northeastern top of the hook is **St. George’s, a UNESCO World Heritage site**, and, founded in 1612, the oldest continuously inhabited British town in the New World. In the southeast, there are residential communities in Warwick, Paget, and Southampton. On the northwestern edge of the hook is Somerset, another residential area, and the Dockyards, a former 19th-century British Royal Navy base, now often used by cruise ships.

To chart the course for the rest of your visit, we asked design insiders and tastemakers for their best Bermuda recommendations. I've also visited 30 or so times and have included a few of my own favorites. Below, find our full guide to the sun and sand paradise.





Slim Aarons // Getty Images

Holidaymakers in Bermuda, photographed by Slim Aarons, in the late 1960s.

The Look of Bermuda

“The pink sand, the blues, the white roofs, the teal water, so much pastel, it's fabulous. Even the greenery is greener than anywhere else, with hibiscus growing down every road,” says Savannah Engel, founder of **Savi PR** and longtime Bermuda-lover. Still, the PR exec says, “My favorite part is the residential homes, all different colors, all beautiful.”

Those boxy pastel-colored houses, with their step roofs, have origins in the island's weather patterns. Though most assume that Bermuda is in the Caribbean, it's actually much further north—its closest neighbor is North Carolina, which is 650 miles or so west. It was first discovered by Spain's Juan de Bermúdez in 1503, but until then, it was inhabited primarily by Longtails—now the national bird—and some lizards. Crucially, it was lacking any natural fresh water. The settlers ended up creating their own style of step roof to collect rainwater for drinking. The bright colors they've since been painted have become one of Bermuda's best-loved signatures.



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A watercolor of a lemon house and step roof by Winslow Homer, one of Bermuda's most ardent capturers.

ELLE Decor A-list designer **Jamie Drake**, who began visiting Bermuda in 1998, finds inspiration in these pastel buildings: “Typically, a home is comprised of multiple pavilions connected, and the block walls plastered in white or vibrant pastel fruit tones—pink grapefruit, peach, lemon, and lime are all very common.”

Inside, you'll find that interiors are often breezy but refined: take some pink or green damask curtains and add a few decades of salt or sea air, plus a bit of wicker, and you're about there.

Where to Stay



Courtesy Of The Writer

A tennis court at the Coral Beach Club.



Coral Beach Club

View of the Coral Beach clubhouse balcony out over the water.

Coral Beach Club (CBC) is a piece of history. Opened in 1948, it's a quasi-private club but non-members can still easily book rooms. It consists of nine cottages and 26 rooms, some of which date back to the 1650s. The club also has space on one of the island's most pristine beaches, Elbow Beach, and tennis courts, tucked under pink buildings and overgrown palm trees.

At four o'clock each day, guests gather from all around in the main clubhouse for tea time, set among the lacquered-wood bars and tables. Grab a kumquat cake and a chocolate chip cookie, and sink into the cozy pink and green couches. It's a local hangout for a reason.



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The Sunken Harbor Club at Cambridge Beaches.

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For those who love a clubby look, Bermuda is full of options. The century-plus-old **Cambridge Beaches** is a more contemporary version of CBC, particularly since Kellyann Hee, of Hee Designs, gave it an upgrade. It has an infinity pool, oceanfront cabanas, and one of the best bars on the island: the **Sunken Harbor Club**, a tiki joint that serves up umbrella cocktails to guests perched on barstools—ideally in Lilly Pulitzer.

Further north, in Tucker's Town, are the **Loren** and **Rosewood** hotels, both of which blend elegance with classic Bermuda charm. They're also both great options for golf fans, as they're centrally located to some of the best golf courses in the world: **the Mid Ocean Club** and **the Tucker's Point Golf Club**. Drake noted, "If you are a golfer—and I am not—Bermuda is heaven! The famed and posh Mid Ocean Club was designed by the esteemed Charles Blair Macdonald, who designed some of the most famous courses in the U.S. Opened in 1921, it was conceived as a top-notch course and club, safely beyond the reach of Prohibition. Macdonald was one of the most

admired course designers of his time and also helped create Shinnecock Hills Golf Club.”

Part-time local Kelly Pasciucco, a former fashion editor, seconds the island’s golf credentials. “Golfing is world class, and Bermuda has one of the finest public golf courses in the world, **Port Royal**,” she says. She is also a fan of the Mid Ocean Club’s courts and notes that “many hotels can arrange for guests to play at one of the private courses, like the famous Charles Blair Macdonald-designed Mid Ocean Club, for a fee.”



Ken Hayden Resort Photography

A waterfront room at the Rosewood.

If you’re hoping for more hustle and bustle, check out Hamilton, Bermuda’s capital. The **Fairmont Princess** is a longtime favorite for many, who find its sleek pools, bay views, and central location worth the lack of beach (though the hotel can transport guests to a private beach out of town). Less well-known, though, is the clubbier **Rosedon**, just across the street from the Princess. The hotel’s true highlight is its

main restaurant, **Huckleberry**, where Chef Damien Griffith manages a creative and delicious menu full of local produce.

What to See and Do

First and foremost are the beaches: They're unmissable and excellent. **Horseshoe Bay** and **Elbow Beach** are among the best, but you can stumble upon any hidden gem just by jumping on one of the pink public buses and wandering around a neighborhood. The public beaches are plentiful and quiet, and the generally calm water is warm in the summer and mild in the spring and fall. You'll see locals diving into the ocean well into November and walking along the soft pink and white sand year-round (except during September hurricane season). But Bermuda has much more to offer beyond the sea.

Drake has a number of favorite spots on the island, but one of his favorite sites is the **Brant House** on the private, lush Tucker's Town Road. "Designed in 1976 by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc. It is a playful riff on tradition by the hot bad boy (and girl) architects of the period, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown," he says.



Courtesy Of Bacardi Global

The Mies van der Rohe-designed Bacardi headquarters in Hamilton.



Courtesy Of Bermuda Tourism Authority

Front street in Hamilton, including Gosling Brothers and Brown's.

Another design attraction is in Hamilton: **the Bacardi International Building**. It has been the headquarters for the liquor brand since 1965 since it's departure from Cuba in 1960. The flat-roofed glass building is special—it's also the only spot on the island designed by the mid-century master Mies van der Rohe (the Minimalist architect behind the Seagram Building in midtown Manhattan). After visiting, walk around Hamilton and pop by some of the area's stores. Tuck into the **English Sports Shop** for ties and those ubiquitous pink shorts, or stop into **Atelierie** for curated looks from Staud and Faithfull the Brand, along with much-needed Supergoop sunscreen. **The Island Shop**, which is full of art inspired by Bermuda, is a perfect and not-touristy place to pick up some souvenirs.





REDA // Getty Images

The Unfinished Church.

There are amazing buildings around the island, particularly in historic St. George's. Couples, in particular, tend to flock to **the Unfinished Church** as a wedding venue, a soaring cathedral that never quite got a roof. The remaining Gothic structure, now more than 150 years old, was damaged in a hurricane, at which point, the locals gave up on finishing it. Instead, they continued attending **St. Peter's Church**, which was built in 1612 and remains the oldest surviving Anglican church outside of the British Isles.

Home design enthusiasts should also stop into **Verdmont**, which is tucked away in residential Devonshire. The 300-year-old colonial house has been a museum since 1956. Inside its pink walls, guests can peer into model ships and wander around historic bedrooms.



Jalen SIMMONS

The exterior of the Vermont house museum.



Jalen SIMMONS

Portraits and furniture in the English Colonial style at Verdmont.

But there are all sorts of museums around the island. **The BUEI** (or Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute, often pronounced like “buoy”), just on the outskirts of Hamilton proper, is one of the best ways to spend a rainy afternoon. In addition to being home to a great sushi spot (**Harbourfront**), it has absorbing exhibitions about shipwrecks, giant squid, and everyone’s favorite topic: the Bermuda Triangle.

Art fiends should head to **Masterworks Gallery** a bit further south. Perched on the outskirts of the Botanic Garden, it is home to pieces by major Bermuda fan Winslow Homer and two-time visitor Georgia O'Keeffe.

Then there's the **National Museum**, which has sweeping views of the water, historical artifacts, and a multistory mural. The museum is at the edge of the **Royal Naval Dockyard**, which resembles a fortress and is a spectacular sight in its own right.



Bermuda Tourism Authority

The Bermuda National Museum (left) and Dockyards from above.

Finally, be sure to check if your visit aligns with a seasonal event. There's Carnival, in June, the Good Friday Kite festival right before Easter, and everyone's favorite, Cup Match. Engel is a huge fan: "Go to Cup Match!" she says of the two-day July tournament. "It's the biggest celebration of the year on the island, a big cricket match between two sides of the island [Somerset and St. Georges] with lots of [Rum] Swizzles."

Where to Eat

Dining-wise, most people end up, at one time or another, at **the Swizzle Inn**, the bar and restaurant that claims to have invented the **Rum Swizzle cocktail** in 1932. Outside, you'll see a sign that says, "Let your fun begin at Swizzle Inn." It also has what appears to be a white circular hole, which is a mini version of Bermuda's famous "moongates," circular stone arches found in 40 or so spots on the island.

For food and drink, classics tend to be the best. Pasciucco says, "I love the taste of a **Dark 'N' Stormy** when I am on island. Make sure it is made with local Gosling's Black Seal Rum and Barritt's Ginger Beer." **Bailey's Bay Ice Cream Parlour** has a perennial line out the door for "Dark 'N' Stormy" and "Bermuda Tomato-jam"-flavored scoops. For formal dinners, **Tom Moore's Tavern** is a favorite and a Bermuda fixture since 1652. It serves excellent soufflés, real Bermuda fish chowder (with sherry), and homey ambiance.

The hotel restaurants at the Rosedon, Cambridge Beaches, and the Coral Beach Club (particularly the Thursday night seafood buffet, where oysters are piled high and guests often include high-ranking government officials) are all also must-tries. Jamie Drake loves **Little Venice**, an Italian seafood spot tucked away in Hamilton, complete with the requisite Venetian canal photo mural. **Harry's**, which has waterfront views near the Bacardi Headquarters, is another perfect spot for an aperitivo.

Stop there, or anywhere really, for a drink—ideally something classic and local—and watch the sunset. It's really the best way to end the day.



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