

Welcome to the 'wreck-diving capital of the world'

BERMUDA

East vs West



NEED TO KNOW

Essential information on the island's best wreck dives

Top 5 things you **MUST** do in Bermuda

FEELING HUNGRY?

Insider's guide to the best places to eat





FROM THE WRITER

As we sped out to the dive site, I couldn't help but admire the Bermuda blue sea. Sunshine reflecting back off the coral sand below gave the shallow water an intense turquoise hue. Stephan, our boat skipper, skilfully slalomed around the shadowy areas which defined the submerged reef system. Some patches were just below the surface and others high enough to form breakers.

Cloud cover momentarily blanked out the sunlight turning the crystal-clear sea completely opaque. Within an instant the treacherous reef had become virtually invisible, even to the polarised eye. As Stephan eased back the engine throttle, we all heard a faint grating noise from below. Nobody took much notice and the dive went ahead as planned. When I went into the water, Stephan pointed out a jagged gash underneath the hull. A few centimetres shallower and this could quite easily have been a gaping hole.

Stephan told me about a local fishing boat that recently ran aground and sunk even though the skipper had more than a decade's worth of navigational experience. This explained why, after several centuries' worth of nautical disasters, there were more than 300 shipwrecks scattered around Bermuda's coastal waters. From wooden sailing ships to giant iron-clad luxury liners, they had all suffered a similar fate.

As the old saying goes 'one man's loss is another man's gain'. This has created the perfect wreck-diving playground. Just to make life even more interesting, most of the wrecks are steeped in history and there's still a chance of finding buried treasure among the broken remains.

During my recent visit to Bermuda I managed to explore the top dive sites at both the east and west end. The west end is serviced by Dive Bermuda, based at the Fairmont Southampton Hotel, and Triangle Divers, located at the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel, look after the east end. Each dive centre offers a variety of wreck dives from historical to modern day at depths between 3-25m. This is complimented with a variety of reef dives where several species of parrotfish, grouper, horse-eye jacks and even turtles can be sighted. Finally, there are swim-throughs, caves and canyons to satisfy the most-discerning scuba diver. Does this all sound tempting?

In my mind, Bermuda makes a superb all-round diving holiday destination for all experience levels, but don't expect anything too taxing - this is chilled-out wreck diving. Underwater photographers will definitely have a field day, especially on the Hermes and the King George (dredger). The following pages will give divers an insight into what's on offer - and don't forget to ask for the special wreck certificates after each dive!

Stuart

Stuart Philpott
Sport Diver contributor

TOP FIVE THINGS YOU MUST DO

1 Visit the town of St Georges, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The town, established way back in 1612, was once the capital of Bermuda. Attractions include the National Trust Museum, St Peter's Church and Fort St Catherine.

2 Take a tour of BUEI, the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute in Hamilton. There is a wealth of information including videos, displays and historical artefacts from some of Bermuda's most-famous shipwrecks. Treasure hunter Teddy Tucker features prominently throughout. His most-famous find has to be the gold-jewelled crucifix which was mysteriously stolen some years later.

3 Play a round of golf at the Port Royal 18-hole PGA Grand Slam course. Bermuda has nine courses in all from nine to 18 holes. Some are privately owned and for members only. Three are open to the public.

4 For the adrenalin junkies, why not try the cliff jump at Admiralty Park, which is also the home of BSAC Bermuda. This has become an extremely popular activity. Jumps are between five to ten metres.

5 Why not browse around the Royal Naval Dockyard. The 19th century fortress is now a full-on entertainment complex with shops, restaurants, arts, crafts, cinema and national museum. This is also the docking point for any visiting cruise ships.

NB: Hire cars are not allowed on Bermuda, so transportation options are limited to local buses, taxis, mopeds or peddle bikes.



DINING SIX PLACES TO EAT

The Fairmont Southampton and the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel have a good choice of in-house restaurants and bars offering everything from snacks to three-course dinners. At the Fairmont Hotel the Gastro Pub is extremely popular for evening meals, even with the locals. Grotto Bay offers an all-inclusive meal plan option. The weekly barbecue event is always well attended.

For the more adventurous there are a number of top-notch restaurants dotted around the island to suit all pocket sizes. Numerous local delights are within walking distance of the hotels or it's just a case of hopping in a taxi to the capital, Hamilton (the taxi fare from the Fairmont to Hamilton costs around \$18 each way). Don't forget to try out a Dark and Stormy, the island's 'national' drink.



1 *The Swizzle Inn* is less than a five-minute walk from the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel. Quiz nights are extremely popular events. The menu includes curry, pizzas, chicken wings and burgers. A jug of Rum Swizzle is recommended but the after effects can be lethal.

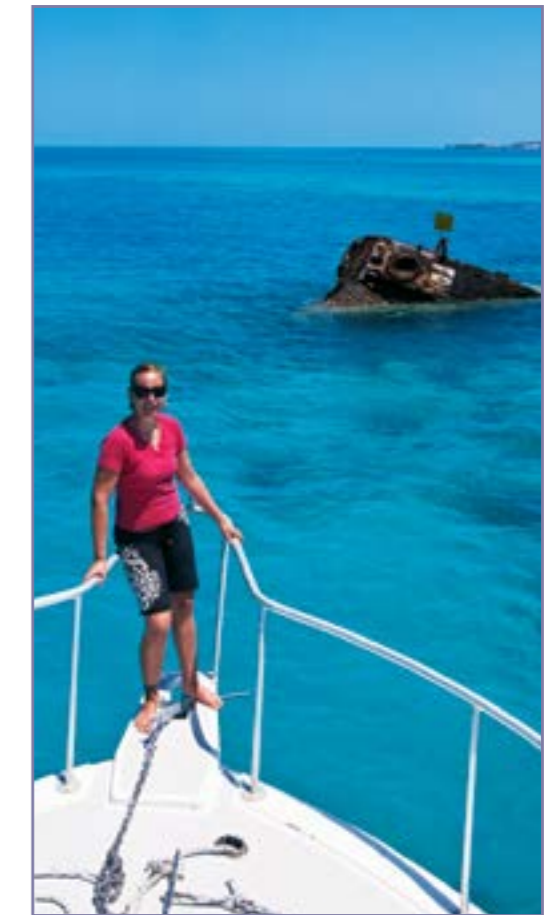
2 *Wahoo's Bistro and Patio* is located in St George's just a five-minute taxi ride from the Grotto Bay Beach Hotel. It offers a really nice selection of fish dishes. Wahoo is obviously the main attraction. The chowder and tacos are definitely worth a try.



3 *The Henry VIII* is exactly 15 minutes walk from the Fairmont Southampton. Taxis are available at the hotel foyer for the less active. Diners can get everything from curry and sushi to a plate of fish and chips.

4 *The Dining Room Restaurant* located at Gibb's Hill Lighthouse is a 15-minute walk (plus a hill climb) from the Fairmont so a taxi ride is probably a wise option. This has to be one of the best spots for a romantic supper. The views are awesome especially when illuminated by the lighthouse beam. The small cosy restaurant really does offer a classy menu. Favourites include the Foie Gras and the seared tuna. It's best to book in advance.

5 *Bistro J's* main entrance is situated down a discrete alleyway in Hamilton. The back entrance through the kitchen and up the stairs is a far more novel approach! The restaurant has a great atmosphere and comfortable surroundings. The menu changes daily and usually includes a fish, meat and a veggie option. This really is a hidden gem.



6 *The Harbourfront* restaurant, located at BUEI (Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute), is one of a number of sushi eateries around the island. It has a great sushi and tempura bar overlooking the waterfront. There is even a sushi happy hour. The Maki spicy tuna is a popular choice.



TRIANGLE DIVING



Walking down to the beach from the Grotto Bay Beach Resort on the north-eastern side of Bermuda, just ten minutes' drive from the historical town of St Georges, Triangle's dive shop is right there on the dock. As you enter the dive shop and look around, you get the sense of a long history of diving. There are pictures of divers and dive sites on the walls, artefacts from old shipwrecks, nautical charts and diving helmets, as well as a Kirby Morgan dive helmet and mask that harks back to owner Graham Mad-docks' life as a commercial diver. You soon realise that you have walked into a diver's dive shop.

Triangle Diving was set up by Graham, a Bermudian dive-industry veteran, in the wake of Hurricane Fabian in 2003. When you get talking to Graham, it's easy to understand why Triangle Diving has become so popular with locals and tourists alike. "It's my staff," he says, "They're all my friends, but to me, they're family. Triangle was built from their love of diving and their dedication to our guests. We are a 'full service' dive shop from beginning to end and it's all about our customers; we set up all our equipment and change out your tanks between dives. We always make sure we are going to the very best dive sites that we have available to us that day."

Triangle Diving is the only dive shop in Bermuda that has easy access to the north and south shore at the eastern end of the island. The reefs to the north of the island display an amazing abundance of soft corals and give one the impression of an underwater garden, while those to the south are formed around rugged boulders with a plethora of interesting caverns, canyons and 'swim-throughs'. The east end of Bermuda is where all the big steamship wrecks can be found, as well as the largest fully intact wreck in Bermuda, the King George dredger. Graham says: "We have a couple of 116-metre steamships sitting almost right next to each other. We have a 152-metre cruise ship dating back to 1900, and so much more. I can dive you for a week and you won't dive the same spot twice."

Together, Triangle Diving and the Grotto Bay Beach Resort make an ideal dive package. You can walk out of your hotel room a few yards down to the dive shop, board the dive boat, and within 35 minutes be diving in crystal-blue water around world-class dive sites.

Triangle Diving, 11 Blue Hole Hill, Bailey's Bay, Bermuda
Tel: 441 293 7319
Email: Info@trianglediving.com
Website: www.trianglediving.com

DIVE BERMUDA



Dive Bermuda is a PADI five-star IDC, which is located on the south shore of the island on the property of the Fairmont Southampton Hotel. With its roots established in 1981, it is the only Instructor Development Centre located in Bermuda. With over 30 years' experience of offering diving trips, snorkelling tours and PADI training courses, from beginner to instructor level, their location on the private beach at the Fairmont Southampton Hotel is ideal for short journey times (usually under 15 minutes) to the dive sites, and also their partnership with the hotel guarantees a very high level of facilities and service. Non-hotel guests are very welcome to join them at East Whale Bay to participate in all of their offered activities.

Dive Bermuda has been under new ownership since April of 2012 and maintains its focus on customer service, having received two Excellence awards from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors and, in June of 2012, a Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor. The centre is working closely with two local marine charities Bermuda Reef Ecosystem Analysis and Monitoring (BREAM) and the Ocean Support Foundation with the Invasive Lion Fish Culling project.

Voted in the top two in the Caribbean and Atlantic for wreck diving by Scuba Diving Magazine in 2011. As the 'wreck capital of the Atlantic', Bermuda has over 300 wreck sites to visit, with both intact and historic wreck sites littering the shoreline in depths ranging from 10-21m of crystal-clear water.

The reef sites are full of jacks, snapper, spiny lobster, parrotfish and stunning queen angelfish, with hundreds of swim-throughs and overhangs - the reef and wreck sites are certainly busy enough to keep even the most-experienced divers entertained, yet at the same time the usually calm, clear warm waters assist even the most-cautious of divers. If needed or desired, Dive Bermuda can supply experienced guides and Divemasters to go with you or your group to point out the best parts of the wreck or the best places on the reef.

Divers of all experience levels are welcome. You have our assurance the centre will provide you all of the knowledge and assistance required to have a safe and comfortable diving experience.

Dive Bermuda, at the Southampton Fairmont Hotel, South Shore Road, Bermuda
Tel: 441 238 2332
Email: info@bermudascuba.com
Website: www.bermudascuba.com



The Hermes was built in Pennsylvania and used as a US Coastguard buoy tender until the end of World War Two. She then relocated to the Philippines as a freighter carrying mixed cargo. Enroute to the Cape Verde Islands, the ship experienced engine trouble off the coast of Bermuda. There was no money available for repairs and the crew hadn't been paid any wages for months, so the ship was abandoned.

The Bermudan Government took possession of the ship and sold her on to the Bermuda Dive Association for the princely sum of US\$1. The Hermes was thoroughly cleaned and made 'diver friendly' before being towed approximately one mile off-shore and sunk as an artificial reef project.

The wreck lies upright and almost fully intact at a maximum depth of 25m. Underwater visibility is usually very good all year round.

This is one of Bermuda's most-popular dive sites. Divers can either skirt around the outside of the wreck or penetrate deep within. The engine room and parts of the bridge are easily accessible. Main features include the engines, mast, toilet, wash basin and cargo boom, which used to pick up the buoys. The propeller is visible but, being wedged against the reef, is difficult to photograph. Barracuda, sergeant majors and damsels are regularly encountered.

HERMES

WEST BERMUDA



SPECIFICATIONS

Type: USCG buoy tender
Built: 1943
Sunk: 1984
Loss of life: 0
Length: 50 metres
Tonnage: 254
Max Depth: 25m

POLLOCKSHIELDS

WEST BERMUDA



Built at the Hamburg dockyards in 1890 and christened the Herodot, she was sold to the Hamburg American line in 1904 and renamed the Graecia. The ship was used as a freighter and then converted into a German Naval supply ship for military operations in the North Atlantic. In 1914, while travelling from New York to the Azores, she was captured by HMS Argonaut. Her Majesty's Government took possession of the ship and she was renamed the Pollockshields.

While carrying a cargo of ammunition, shells and general supplies from Cardiff in Wales to an undisclosed destination, she got caught in a hurricane and ended up on Shore Reef near Elbow Beach. There were 37 crew members aboard. Everybody survived apart from Captain Ernest Boothe.

Huge unexploded artillery shells are scattered over the seabed. Other prominent features include the triple-expansion engines and boilers. Divers are able to swim through the boilers, but watch out for the giant green moray that lives inside!

SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Cargo steamer | Built: 1890 | Sunk: 1915 | Loss of life: 1 | Length: 98 metres
Tonnage: 2,744 | Max Depth: 10m

NORTH CAROLINA

WEST BERMUDA

The North Carolina was an English iron-hulled barque built in Liverpool and owned by H Barber. While enroute from Bermuda to England with a cargo of cotton, bark and fuel, she hit the reef and sank on New Year's Day. The wreck lies approximately 8.5 miles west and five miles south of Gibb's lighthouse.

There was an attempt to refloat the ship, but this all ended in disaster when the anchor broke free and crashed through the hull, sending her straight back down to the seabed. Commander of the ship, Captain Alexander Buchan, must have been absolutely cursing blue murder!

The North Carolina sits upright at a maximum depth of 12m on a sandy seabed. The bow and stern sections are fairly intact, but she has collapsed amidships.

Underwater visibility varies depending on the surface conditions and divers' finning techniques. The prominent bowsprit and rows of deadeyes along her deck railings make perfect backdrops for photographs. Hogfish and snapper are often sighted.



SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Sailing ship | Built: 1877 | Sunk: 1st January 1880 | Loss of life: 0
Length: 62 metres | Tonnage: 533 | Max Depth: 12m



Bermuda's most-talked-about wreck site owing to the fact that in June 2011, five bottles of 148-year-old wine were found stashed inside a wooden crate at the tip of the bow compartment.

The Mary Celestia (not to be confused with the infamous Marie Celeste) was a side-paddlewheel steamer chartered by the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. She was used as a blockade runner smuggling guns, ammunition and supplies to the troops.

The ship, under the command of Captain Sinclair, had already made at least five successful runs back and forth. On 13 September 1864 she left for Wilmington, South Carolina with a full cargo of food, ammunition and rifles. They used a local Bermudian pilot, John Virgin, to navigate a safe passage when the ship hit the reef and sank close to south shore.

There were allegations that the sinking of the Mary Celestia had been an act of sabotage due to the fact that the pilot's house was in full view of the crash site. How could the man not know the layout of the reef directly outside his own home?

The wreck lies on a flat sandy seabed at a maximum depth of 18m. The main features include the bow, anchor, paddlewheels and boilers. Divers can also find lumps of coal lying on the seabed. Blockade runners used to use a high-grade 'smokeless' coal when they were trying to evade enemy encounters.

MARY CELESTIA

WEST BERMUDA



SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Side-paddlesteamer
Built: Unknown
Sunk: 1864
Loss of life: 1
Length: 68 metres
Tonnage: 207
Max Depth: 18m

VIRGINIA MERCHANT

WEST BERMUDA



The Virginia Merchant was sailing from Plymouth, England to Jamestown, Virginia when she hit a submerged reef and sank. Back in the 1600s, very few people knew how to swim. Tragically, from 179 passengers and crew, only ten survived.

After spending more than 350 years on the seabed, there is very little if anything left of the wooden sailing ship to see. A pile of granite ballast stones is the most prominent feature.

But this is a great reef dive with a number of dramatic archways and tunnels to explore. There is usually a shoal of around 100 horse-eye jacks patrolling the outer reef and large grouper are often sighted.

Some interesting artefacts have been found at the site. These include cannonballs, an onion bottle and clay pipes. The cannons and anchor have been recovered and are now on display at commissioner's point in the Royal Naval Dockyard.

SPECIFICATIONS

Type: English sailing vessel | Built: Unknown | Sunk: 26 March 1661 | Loss of life: 169
Length: Unknown | Tonnage: Unknown | Max Depth: 12m

CONSTELLATION

WEST BERMUDA

The four-masted, wooden-hulled schooner was built in 1913 and originally known as the Sally Persis Noyes. She was used as a cargo vessel up until 1932 and then underwent a complete refurbishment, including modern plumbing, spacious lounge, dining saloon, stately rooms and new rigging. Her name was also changed to the Constellation. Unable to find work as a cruise ship, she was sold off and started to carry cargo again.

On 19 July 1943 she was bound for Venezuela with a full 2,000 tons of general cargo, including cement bags, medical supplies and 300 cases of whisky. The ship began to take on water so diverted to Bermuda for repair work. On 31 July she hit the reef and sank. All of the crew survived.

A salvage company managed to retrieve some of the cargo and sell it at public auction in Bermuda, but a considerable amount was left undisturbed on the seabed. The Navy also got involved, but they only took the 300 cases of whisky!

Thousands of 20kg cement bags lie over the seabed. Snooker table slates, sheets of glass, metal drums and glass bottles can also be seen. Parrotfish, trumpetfish and sergeant majors usually follow divers around the wreck.

The Constellation was also carrying a variety of ornate-looking glass ampoules full of different drugs, including iodine, penicillin, insulin, adrenaline and morphine. By a strange coincidence a second wreck, a Civil War blockade runner called the Montana, sank at the same site almost 100 years earlier. This gives divers two historical shipwrecks to explore on a single dive!

This also formed the basis for American author Peter Benchley's novel The Deep, the movie adaptation of which was largely filmed on location in Bermuda.



SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Schooner | Built: 1918 | Sunk: 1943 | Loss of life: 0
Length: 58 metres | Tonnage: 1,034 | Max Depth: 10m



SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Luxury Liner | Built: September 1923 | Sunk: 25 October 1936 | Loss of life: 0 | Length: 151 metres
Tonnage: 10,833 | Max Depth: 15m

CRISTOBAL COLON

EAST BERMUDA

This Spanish trans-Atlantic luxury liner is Bermuda's largest shipwreck. She was built in 1923 by the Sociedad Espanola de Construccion Naval and mainly operated between New York and Central America. The ship had three deck levels and could carry 1,100 passengers. Powered by four steam turbines, she had a top speed of 18 knots.

On her last fateful voyage she departed from Cardiff in Wales bound for Vera Cruz, Mexico. Captain Crescencia Delgado made a fatal navigational error which sent the ship crashing onto the reef east of north rock at a speed of 15 knots. There were no paying passengers aboard, only 160 crew members. They all managed to get ashore safely.

When all attempts to pull the massive liner off the reef failed, she was salvaged by the Bermudan Government. Furnishings, paintings and fittings were brought ashore and sold at auction. Many of the locals took their own boats out to the wreck and pilfered whatever they could find. This led to a number of arrests and convictions.

By 1939 the ship had broken in two. There were some further salvage operations to retrieve metal parts, including the props. During World War Two, the rusting hull was used for bombing practice by the US Air Force, which completely flattened the remaining parts of the wreck to below sea level.

The Cristobal Colon is scattered over a wide area. There is still plenty to see, including the spare prop, boilers, prop shafts, winches, turbine engines, part of bow and a bath tub. Parrotfish, sergeant majors, butterflyfish and damsels are commonly encountered.



RITA ZOVETTA

EAST BERMUDA

The steamship was built by a Scottish shipyard in 1919 and originally known as the War Gascon. She was sold two years later to Parodi and Accame of Genoa, Italy, and renamed the Rita Zovetta.

Sailing from Georgia, Russia to Baltimore, Maryland, she ran aground in heavy seas at the north-east end of Bermuda. There was no loss of life. Most of the manganese ore was off-loaded before she sank.

The ship was heavily salvaged for non-ferrous scrap metals (brass, copper pipes, etc) several times after World War Two.

There is a wide debris field to explore, including propshaft, engine, boilers, winches, chains and other items. The stern section is reasonably intact and there are a number of swim-throughs for divers to negotiate. Commonly encountered fish life includes damselfish, sergeant majors and trumpfish.



SPECIFICATIONS
Type: Steamship | Built: 1919 | Sunk: 1924 | Loss of life: Unknown
Length: 109 metres | Tonnage: 5,107 | Max Depth: 18m

IRISTO

EAST BERMUDA



Built in Lorain, Ohio and originally known as the Lake Jessup, she was sold in 1935 to a Norwegian company and re-named Iristo. She is locally known as the Aristo, probably due to the New York Times misspelling the ship's name in an article.

The freighter was carrying a cargo of gasoline drums, a fire engine and a steam roller. Unfamiliar with Bermuda's reefs, the ship's captain panicked when he saw the broken remains of the Cristobal Colon standing proud of the water in front of him. He immediately gave the order to change course but, in doing so, grounded on a submerged reef nearby. A local tug managed to pull her off the reef but she started taking on water and sank one mile east of the northeast breakers.

At the board of enquiry, Captain Stephenson was found guilty of negligence for not carrying any local charts or having any knowledge of the area.

The fire engine's engine and parts of the wheels including tyres are still recognisable among the twisted metal. The prop blades are still visible and the stern stands a good few metres proud of the sea bed. Shoals of chub are often sighted.

SPECIFICATIONS
Type: Freighter | Built: 1918 | Sunk: 1937 | Loss of life: 0 | Length: 76 metres
Tonnage: 1,821 | Max Depth: 15m



KING GEORGE

EAST BERMUDA



The King George (better known as the Dredger Wreck) was one of three dredgers purchased by the Bermudan government. She was built at the Glasgow shipyard in 1910 and arrived in Bermuda on 28 June 1911. Her 30 buckets could dredge to a depth of 10m. A later refit allowed her to dredge a meter or so deeper. The more up-to-date ships required deeper waterways so she became obsolete in 1930 and was towed to a position approximately five miles from North Rock and scuttled.

This extremely pretty little wreck lies upright and is still largely intact. There is no marker buoy attached to the dive site. This can be a very silty wreck not recommended for large groups, especially those with poor finning techniques, as visibility can decrease dramatically. Average underwater visibility is about ten metres.

The dredger lies on a barren sandy seabed, there is no surrounding reef. Maybe this is why the wreck itself is a haven for fish life, from small crabs to shoals of snapper and jacks. The top framework is swathed in white tunicates and giant-sized anemones. There is also a unique 'archway' structure at the bow.

This is a great penetration dive with an engine room, gantries, stairways and at least two toilets to explore. There are plenty of entry and exit points. Definitely a wreck not to be missed.

SPECIFICATIONS
Type: Dredger
Built: 1910
Sunk: 1930
Loss of life: Unknown
Length: 52 metres
Tonnage: Unknown
Max Depth: 18m

PELINAION

EAST BERMUDA



The 116-metre-long cargo steamer was built in Glasgow for Hill SS Company Ltd and originally called the Hill Glen. She then changed ownership (and name) several times before being purchased by a Greek shipping company in 1939 and given her final name, the Pelinaion.

In January 1940, the ship was enroute from Takiradi, West Africa to Baltimore, Maryland with a full cargo of iron ore. Captain Janis Valikos was hoping to refuel in Bermuda but a fatal navigation error sent the ship onto the reef off St David's Head. The lighthouse had been blacked out in accordance with war office regulations, which had confused the captain somewhat! The wreck lies one mile offshore at a maximum depth of 20m.

The wreck is scattered over a wide area and is basically in two sections. The bow is on the reef at a shallower depth of 10m and the stern is on the sand at 20m. The engine, boilers, prop, winches, anchor and propshaft are the most prominent features. There are also a number of swim-throughs, tunnels and caves to negotiate, which makes the dive more interesting. Wreck penetration is limited as most of the main superstructure is well broken up.

Barracuda are often sighted here, as well as the usual damselfish and sergeant majors.

SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Cargo steamer | Built: 1907 | Sunk: 16 January 1940 | Loss of life: Unknown
Length: 116 metres | Tonnage: 4,291 | Max Depth: 20m

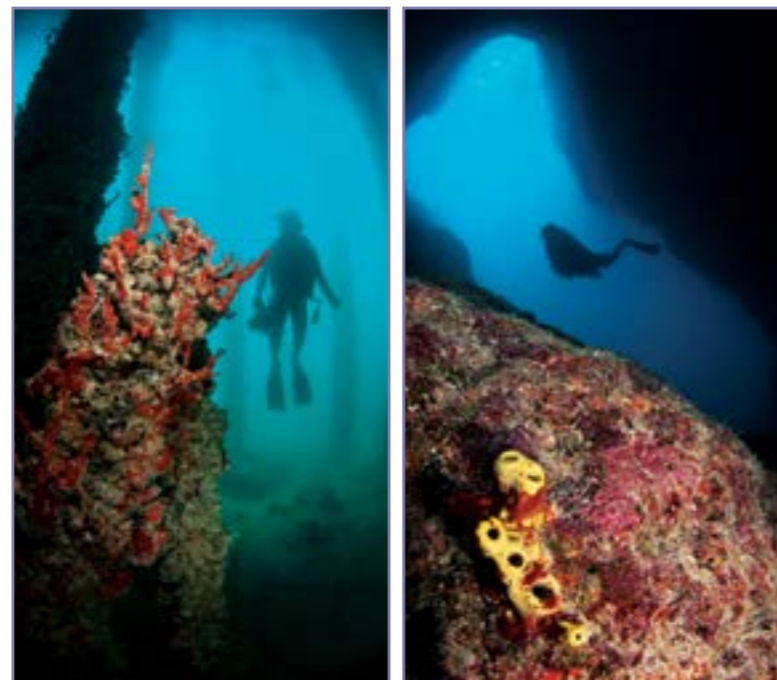
REEFS

The east end also offers a good variety of reef dives, including the old favourites Cathedral, Flatt's Bridge and Devils Hole. At northeast breaker there is a beautiful reef with a row of cannons and a huge anchor and chain lying on the seabed. Stephen, the dive centre manager, is very familiar with the site and even knows the entrance to a secret chamber packed full of cave sweepers.

Depths range from 3-15m and boat journey times from Triangle Dive Centre to the dive sites normally takes between 20-40 minutes, depending on the distance and sea conditions.

The sea floor is usually covered with huge brain corals and a variety of sea fans and other soft corals. In some places there are deep canyons with rocky archways, overhangs, caves and tunnels to explore.

Inquisitive parrotfish in all different sizes and colours follow divers around the reef. Snapper, grunts, butterflyfish, trumpetfish, angelfish, grouper and damselfish are regularly sighted.



INTERVIEW WITH... DR PHILIPPE ROUJA

I managed to speak with Philippe, via his mobile phone, while he was en-route to verify a potential new wreck find off the coast of Bermuda. Philippe said that the wreck had been seen by a fisherman coming back to the Bermuda platform on a particularly clear day. With little to go on but a running line on a single bearing, he wasn't too hopeful they would be able to relocate it, but with the fisherman's help there was always a chance.

Dr Philippe Rouja has been working as the custodian of historic wrecks for the past eight years. He said: "This is a dream job. I really am privileged." He is also the principle scientist for marine heritage and ocean human health. With such a broad range of responsibilities, Philippe is a very busy man. Philippe said that he spends 70 per cent of his time in the office, which is the Department of Conservation Services opposite the Aquarium in Flatts. Presently he is a Department of one highly dependent on a strong network of University, NGO partners and experienced local volunteers to help him with the growing amount of work. All the projects have a maritime theme and so any day out on the water can overlap the needs of many projects. One of the most inspiring is the new initiative to protect the Sargasso Sea that surrounds Bermuda, and Philippe is hopeful that even if they don't find the wreck, they will bump into some beds of Sargassum weed and he will be able to take some pictures of this unique floating ecosystem.

Philippe wants to 'expand diver's interests' and



get them more involved in finding new wrecks and exploring the marine ecosystem that surrounds Bermuda. The waters around Bermuda are literally the vast Atlantic and just randomly dropping in on an unknown or unexplored part of the diveable platform area is as simple as dropping the anchor and seeing what's down there. Bermudians have always called this 'Star Trek' diving. He said: "It really is 'to boldly go where no man has been before' stuff."

With a new Historic Wrecks Act in 2001, all work on shipwrecks needs to be licensed and done to the highest scientific standard. But Philippe was keen to stress that this didn't preclude local involvement

and especially diver participation in the process. "Bermuda was until the last 50 years an island primarily focused on maritime activities and had some of the earliest tourist helmet diving and then scuba schools in the Atlantic. Diving has become one of our traditions. Almost all of the known shipwrecks were originally discovered by fishermen and divers and it is important that we keep living maritime traditions alive. There is definitely room for the public and visitor to get involved - especially in the search and discovery phase," he said.

Philippe said that the recent Mary Celestia finds had made the Government look up and take notice. Philippe and dive buddy Stuart Joblin were the first divers on the wreck conducting a survey after a violent storm in January 2011. The bow area had been emptied of sand and a bottle of wine was found. He said that they also saw what looked like the corner of a wooden case. Philippe managed to get some private funding from the Waitt Institute for a rescue archaeology excavation which uncovered a significant historical find. This led to a number of articles and a documentary film, which is in production.

There are still wrecks to be found and currently Philippe, with the local dive shops and hopefully their clients, is working with local iconic diver and ocean explorer Teddy Tucker to relocate a wreck Mr Tucker found in the 1960s. From the initial information he had gathered, the wreck is potentially another American Civil War ship, perhaps a gunboat, scuttled somewhere off the east end of Bermuda.

A STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER



Diving in Bermuda is a fascinating experience for adventure-seekers and nature-lovers alike. Our island paradise is home to the northern-most reef system in the Atlantic Ocean, with an outstanding 280 square miles of coral reef, and over 300 shipwrecks to explore. Bermuda is recognised by the Reef Association as having one of the healthiest coral ecosystems in the world, with hundreds of thousands of species of ocean life thriving in the destination.

The geographic location of Bermuda is really what sets our reef system apart, from the variety of coral-encrusted topography from the spectacular flats on Bermuda's north shore to the breath-taking southern swim-throughs, from the SW Breakers up to the Cathedral.

As the wreck-diving capital of the world, Bermuda offers divers so many options to explore, including wreckage of vessels dating from 16th century Spanish galleons to Greek freighters from the 1940s, to Air Force bombers. There are even believed to be as many as 12 undiscovered treasure wrecks buried in the ocean floor around Bermuda.

The quality of our reefs and wrecks simply cannot be beat. Come visit us, all year round (the vis is endless in the winter), and see why Bermuda is so much more.

The Hon. Wayne L Furbert, JP MP
Minister of Business Development and Tourism

NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL

The island of Bermuda is not just about the diving, there are also some stunning beaches, nature reserves and superlative snorkelling

Photographs courtesy of Bermuda Department of Tourism

The breaking reefs that fringe Bermuda (known locally as boilers), protecting the island from the wide-open Atlantic swell, are in large measure responsible for Bermuda's attractiveness as a dive destination. Many a ship has come to its final resting place after encountering one of these. The maze of underwater caves and tunnels that pass underneath also produce the foraminifera that add the iconic Bermuda pink to the soft limestone beach sand.

The boilers come closest to shore along the south shore of the island, and conveniently some are knee-deep directly off the prettiest beaches in the world. Attracting feeding parrotfish and containing robust weather-tested corals and sea fans, they provide an incredibly accessible magical snorkelling experience inches from the surface.

Bermuda's south shore beaches are a collection of interlinked bays and small coves where there is always a spot of peaceful tranquility in shallow clear water to give the kids their first swimming or snorkelling experience.

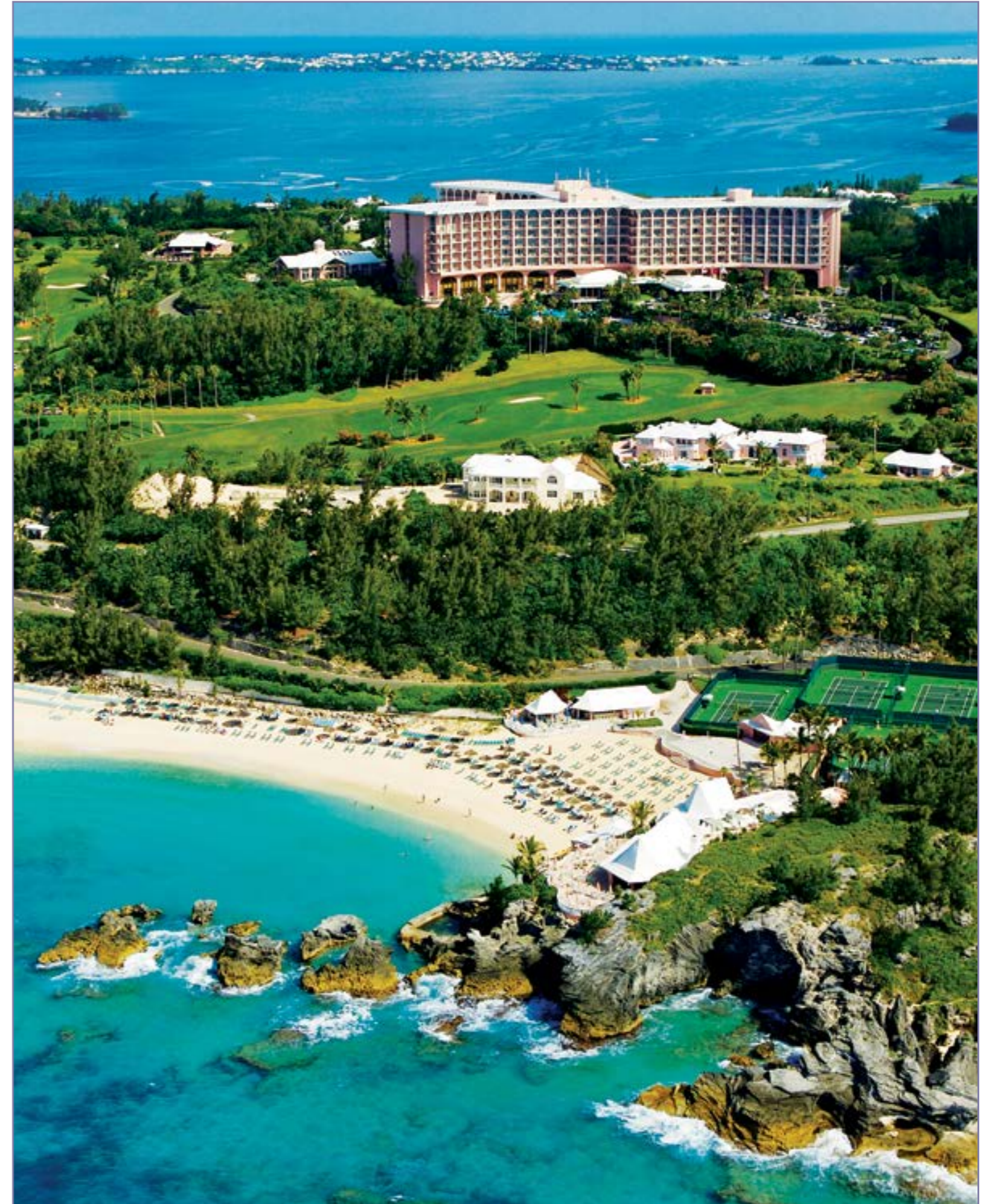
Almost all the beaches of Bermuda have public access and are preserved and protected as part of a National Park and Nature Reserve system.

For the kids' first experience try Baby Beach at the western end of the iconic Horseshoe Bay, and Jobson's Cove, adjacent to Warwick Long Bay.

The best west end coastal snorkelling can be accessed from the aptly named Church Bay beach park, and at the east end Tobacco Bay for an intimate snorkelling experience, as well Bermuda's newest nature reserve Coopers Island, that boasts wonderful walking trails, vistas and three glorious beaches on both sides and at the end of a peninsula, always providing a lee shore.

After an evening swim, a slow walk along the sand will make you privilege to one of life's unique experiences. A Bermuda sunset reflecting off the sand exposes a spectrum of pinks that defies the camera and the artists' palette.

The nature reserves, shipwrecks and dive sites are managed by the Department of Conservation Services. The Bermuda National Parks, where one can access most of the beaches, are managed by the Department of Parks. www.conservation.bm



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