

# MEN'S JOURNAL



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THE  
**10  
BEST  
PLACES  
TO  
LIVE**

**CITIES WHERE  
YOU CAN WORK  
(ALMOST)  
AS HARD AS  
YOU PLAY**

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**The King  
of Bare-  
Knuckle  
Boxing**

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**Shoot  
Outdoor  
Photos  
Like a Pro**

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**How DNA  
Testing Can  
Improve  
Your Fitness**



Clockwise from left: Deepwater climbing in Clarence Cove; biking on the west shore; Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, which is worth the island overview alone; a fish chowder served with sherry-pepper sauce and dark rum



# Bermuda Gets Rad

Trading in golf shirts and pastel shorts for bikes, hikes, and deepwater rock climbs. **by MARK HEALY**

**B**ERMUDA'S LOCALS like to describe their island homeland with a joke: "It's 68,000 alcoholics clinging to a rock." But that description isn't at all accurate. Most of them are also clinging to their golf clubs. This outcropping of coral and sand of finely ground seashells 650 miles east of the Outer Banks certainly has a preoccupation with rum (which is tasty enough to warrant the attention), golf (there are more courses per square mile than anywhere else), and genteel pursuits like sailing. Its pink beaches are the site of countless romantic declarations; its crystal caves are a day trip for hordes of cruise ship passengers. As one Bermuda native describes the visitors, "It's the overfed, the newly wed, and the nearly dead."

But lately Bermuda has been set upon by a more adventurous people who exploit the natural riches sometimes overlooked between the marquee golf courses and the honeymoon coves. They're bounding along jungle trails by

bike, rock climbing, and doing backflips off cliffs into the turquoise coves below. The real beauty of Bermuda is its manageability — not only is it a two-hour flight from New York, but you can see it all in three days' time.

## DAY ONE

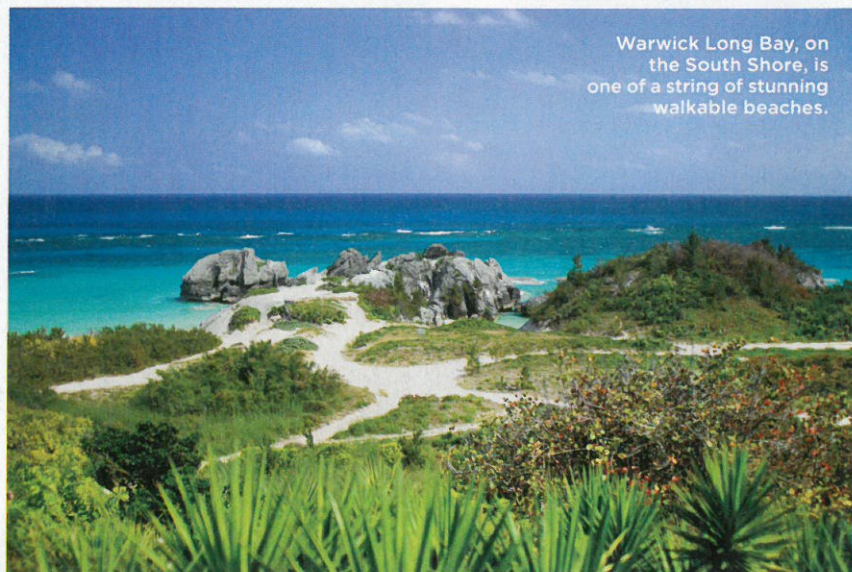
The island is only 21 miles end to end, so a day of unstructured exploration on a rented moped (which are ubiquitous because of the country's one-car-per-household limit) or a mountain bike is an obvious and easy first step. Pick a point, east or west; no matter the route, you'll be awash in Bermuda's photogenic appeal: colorful stucco outcrops, amazing harbor views, and a string of postcard beaches (nearly all public) you can ramble through. Make your way from Horseshoe Bay up to Warwick Long Bay, one stunning beach after another, following a path in some spots and scrambling over rocks to get to others. And when you settle on your favorite, take a swim.

You can be back at the hotel by midday for a nap or a gear change or lunch, which, if you're smart, will include some fish chowder. This deeply flavored, auburn-colored soup is everywhere on the island, and everyone has an opinion about who makes it best or which of its roughly 28 ingredients (from the head of a fresh grouper to three shots of Gosling's rum) are most essential. Billy Phillips, a former firefighter whose recipe won the Outerbridge Cup a few years ago, says the key to the soup's rich broth is "the slimy jelly that comes from boiling down the grouper's head. That's what gives it body." Never mind. It's delicious whether you get it at one of the larger hotels or at a backstreet gem called the Lobster Pot.

## DAY TWO

No one will confuse Bermuda with a mountain-biking mecca like Moab: Space is limited, and the island's elevation tops out at about 350 feet. But that hasn't stopped Hans Hirschi and James Holloway. They channel Bermuda's growing sense of stoke into a 10-race bike series called the Fat Tire Massive, which stages mile lap courses out of whatever terrain they find, including a creepy overgrown estate property that's lain dormant since the Thirties. Hirschi

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: MARIA LIOY; CEDRIC ANGELES/INTERSECTION PHOTOS; ALL CANADA PHOTOS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; ANDREW BURR



Warwick Long Bay, on the South Shore, is one of a string of stunning walkable beaches.

and Holloway take me across the island a slightly gentler way, on the Railway Trail, which was once the site of the island's end-to-end railroad. Now it's mostly a wide fire road that cuts through thick vegetation and rock and winds past destination golf courses, and through canopied jungle and residential areas. Hirschi assures me that it's the best way to cross the island. It's certainly the most fun. We take plenty of detours — to beaches and secret lobstering spots, as well as a tiny church that dates from the 1600s — and wind up at the Royal Naval Dockyard, at the island's tip. Nearby are a few rowdy bars, a boulangerie, and boathouses, like Oracle's, whose team is prepping for the America's Cup, which will take place here in 2017.

From there I take a 20-minute ferry ride back to the Hamilton Princess Hotel, where New York chef Marcus Samuelsson recently opened a soul food-island mash-up called Marcus'. The place makes its own ginger beer, elevating the Dark 'n' Stormy to a slightly less sweet refresher well worth a stop. I still have time to cruise out to Clarence Cove (in Admiralty House Park) to meet Grant Farquhar, a Scottish psychiatrist who moved to the island eight years ago and almost instantly became the godfather of Bermuda rock climbing. "There was no recorded climbing when I got here," he explains. "They thought I was going to kill myself." As it turns out, Bermuda's low, accessible overhangs are ideally suited for deepwater solo climbing, which lets you act out your Alex Honnold fantasies by busting a few moves you'd never try if you weren't hanging 25 feet above a turquoise cove. "The worst that can happen," he tells me, "is you fall into 77-degree water and you have to try again." I suffer this fate time and again, and

have to restart myself by climbing through a cave or swimming over to a humiliating rope ladder, while Farquhar remains dry. Neither of us is complaining.

### DAY THREE

Bermuda's low-key check-in process, combined with an afternoon departure, converts a travel day into an action-packed half-day. Mine starts with a scooter ride to the John Smith's Bay Beach. Within minutes of locking my bike, I am snorkeling along the reef. It's a healthy, decent-size wall of rock and coral with striking visibility and a kaleidoscopic array of native fish. After, I'd be content to spend an hour shopping for local rums or lounging in the hotel pool. But Mike Wilson, a former freestyle skier who came to Bermuda three years ago to get serious about jumping off cliffs, shows up with a couple of headlamps. "You have time to check out a cave?" he asks.

Soon we are scrambling through an expansive cave system of crystalline pools, massive columns, and delicate, hollow soda-straw stalactites that hang from the ceiling. Mike finds the glassy pool he sometimes dives into. The trick, he tells me, is jumping out far enough to clear the rock below without scraping your head on the stalactites above. "That would suck," he states. More crucial, it means I wouldn't be able to stop for a sandwich on the way to the airport. Every visitor here is steered to Art Mels Spicy Dicy, an institution renowned for its sloppy fish sandwich, with coleslaw and tartar sauce, on raisin bread. Instead, skip the line and T-shirts and opt for the Flame, which, unlike Mels, features only fresh local fish.

Then get to the airport. There's still time for a Dark 'n' Stormy before the flight. ■