



Adventures

Boating

The Wildcat

“This aint no pussycat, baby!” How many times did I hear that phrase and wanted to strangle the man who uttered it. I do know that I spent the most hair-raising couple of hours of my life on board the *Wildcat*, a 50-foot-plus, high-speed catamaran powered by two 800 horsepower, supercharged Caterpillar diesels.

It was a cool, somewhat overcast morning when I stood at the dock on Front Street waiting for the boat to arrive. I’d been told by those who know I was in for a fairly wild ride, and that seas off the South Shore were expected to be a little on the choppy side. So what? I consider myself a fairly experienced sailor – I’ve spent many a day deep sea fishing and had yet to experience anything I couldn’t handle. Anyway, I was looking forward to a couple of hours of offshore sightseeing. The boat arrived at the dock; it looked docile enough, even taking into account the rather garish paint job – yellow with black tiger stripes. I boarded and seated myself strategically in the last row of seats against the rail – the best place, so I thought, to enjoy the views. I should have known something was afoot when I was asked to strap myself in and the tour guide, a tall Bahamian with an attitude, announced to the passengers for the first time that, “This aint no pussycat, Baby!” He then went on to give a safety talk that I felt would have been more ap-

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appropriate on an airplane. Finally, the boat cruised quietly out of the Great Sound and into the ocean off the North Shore – the first leg of a ride that would take us completely around the island, more than 50 miles. The waters off the North Shore were as smooth as glass. The wind barely whispered over the bow. The sun was shining; it was going to be a beautiful day. So far, so good.

Once the boat was a half-mile off-shore the engines began to growl and the speed rose to some 20 knots, at which point the great boat rose out of the water onto its hydroplanes, and the speed continued to increase. Within a few minutes we were skimming over the emerald waters at almost 50 knots, and I have to tell you it was exhilarating, though still no indication of what was to come.

We sped eastward toward St. George, then south around the eastern end of the island, and the sea became a little choppy, throwing up clouds of spray and causing the boat to buck, but not alarmingly so. All the while the guide was giving us a running commentary over the speaker system, from the relative comfort of the enclosed bridge, I might add. The boat slowed and we pulled into the harbor at St. George to pick up more passengers.

Everyone began congratulating each other, exclaiming that it wasn't as bad as they had expected. Ten minutes later we were back on the ocean, speeding up and heading for the South Shore. We rounded the southeastern tip of the island and turned west into a sea that was running five to six feet. The guide yelled over the noise, "Hold on, folks. This ain't no pussycat, baby." At this point the boat took off for the first time. It hit a wave and rose some 10 feet into the air, and it stayed there as it traveled forward more than 50 feet before slamming down and throwing up a huge cloud of spray and a wall of almost solid water, most of which landed squarely on me! Yes, my carefully chosen seat was now the worst possible place to be on the whole boat.

For what seemed like hours, although I now know it was only about 25 minutes, I suffered shower after shower of water and spray that hit me full in the face at more than 50 miles an hour, and that's not all. The pesky boat spent more time in the air than it did on the water. We suffered bone-shatter-

ing, pounding hits as the great catamaran sailed high in the air and then crashed down again. Never once did it slow down. The cries of excited joy from the passengers as we had sped across the quiet waters off the North Shore had by now turned into screams of desperation. Everybody on board, except for that excruciatingly annoying guide and his crew, wanted the torture to end. And it did, eventually.

We rounded the western end of the island and sped back onto the quiet waters and onward toward the entrance to the Great Sound. The gentle cruise back to the dock was a definite anticlimax. Everyone was exhausted, glad it was over. At least, I was. During the 10 minutes it took to make it back to the moorings on Front Street, however, I began to hear people telling each other that “it wasn’t so bad.” I don’t know. I staggered up the steps to Front Street where the guide was waiting to say goodbye. I shook his hand and thanked him. Yes, I thanked him for one of the most terrifying two hours I had ever experienced. Was I out of my mind? I must have been. That was my first and last trip on the *Wildcat*, and the tour guide was absolutely right: It ain’t no pussycat, *Baby*. What it is is a real outdoor adventure. It’s not for the faint-hearted, or those with physical or medical limitations, but if you like to experience thrills on a grand scale, this is a ride you should not miss. The price of the adventure might, at first, seem high. I assure you it’s not. This is definitely one of those times when you get exactly what you pay for. It’s not my kind of adventure, but, for those who enjoy this type of wild experience, it would be worth twice the price. Now available for private charters only. For bookings and information, ☎ 441-293-RIDE.

Kayak Bermuda



I was wondering when some enterprising individual would realize what wonderful opportunities for sea kayaking are available on Bermuda; well, here we are at last.

Kayak Bermuda is the brainchild of Stephen “V” and Lexie McKey. They don’t have a full sea-going itinerary yet, but what they do have is something unique and extraordinarily appealing. At the moment, they are specializing in short



tours, 2½ to three hours, that anyone, experienced or not, can easily manage. They start with a practice paddle along Millionaire’s Row at Tucker’s Town and then continue on along the coral and limestone cliffs of the Castle Island Nature Reserve. There, you can observe the longtail birds and float over the coral reefs. After 35 to 45 minutes, you have the choice of relaxing on the beach or snorkeling, or you can continue kayaking another 20 to 25 minutes to reach some faster and more exciting paddling in the waves off the South Shore. Then again, you might like to go on the evening tour, which will take you along the North Shore to observe the sunset. I’ve got to tell you, this sort of soft adventure really appeals to me. The company uses the safe “sit on top” kayaks that are stable and easy to use, even for first-timers; full instruction is included. Tours depart at 9:30 am, 1:30 pm and 7 pm, June through September, from Ordnance Island & Penno’s Wharf, St. George. The rate is \$50 per person for all ages over eight years old. Children under 16 must paddle with an able adult. Payment is at the dock by cash or credit card. It’s best to make a reservation at ☎ 441-737-7378.

Boat Rentals

“You can do it all with a Boston Whaler,” at least that’s what the brochure says, and they’re “unsinkable,” again according to the brochure. Seriously, though, if you love getting out and about on the water, you should consider renting one of these sturdy craft. They are available for rent at **Somerset Bridge Water Sports**, Robinson’s Marina at Somerset Bridge, ☎ 441-234-0914. The boats travel at speeds up to 35 miles per hour, have center consol steering, Bimini tops to provide shade from the midday sun, and you can take along optional snorkeling gear, fishing rods and tackle, and a cooler with ice, all for a nominal extra fee. You can explore

the coastline and its many secluded coves, tiny islands and beaches, or speed around the Great Sound. You can snorkel over a reef, off an island beach, or even over a shipwreck. If you want a secluded picnic, that's available too. You can even feed the fish over the shipwreck of the HMS *Vixen*. All this is possible through map orientation and advice about route selection provided by Tony Roach, the owner of Water Sports. Tony's colored map highlights the best beaches, snorkeling spots, and where to find the best fishing, as well as convenient waterside restaurants. Never driven a boat before? Don't worry Tony's staff will show you how in just a few minutes; it's that easy.

You can rent a Boston Whaler at two hours for \$60; four hours for \$100; six hours for \$140; and eight hours for \$160. Gas is extra, costing about \$15 for four hours. The boats will carry up to four adults (one adult equals two children under 12 years old). Reservations are advised (no deposit is necessary) and you should plan to arrive about 30 minutes before you intend to depart. ☎ 441-234-0914.

Fishing



Nothing beats heading out to sea in the early morning just as the sun is peeping over the horizon, when the air is crisp and cool, with the breezes blowing gently in your face. And few things compare with the feeling one gets aboard a slowly trolling boat on a calm sea under a hot summer sun, a heavy rod between your knees, and a can of something cold in your hand. The ultimate experience comes when you hook your first billfish and you find yourself involved in the fight of a lifetime as the fish does its utmost to tear rod and line from your aching fingers. In the distance, you see him hurl himself many feet into the air and drop down with a mighty splash as he tries to rid himself of the hook. And then you have him there at the side of the boat, exhausted, docile, deep blue back glistening in the sunlight, your first sailfish. And so it begins.

You don't have to be a world-class angler to take advantage of what Bermuda has to offer. In fact, it's okay if you've never

fished in your life. There are plenty of skilled guides on the islands willing to take you in hand and show you how it's done. A couple of hours of instruction, a fast boat or a calm, shallow-water flat, and you're in business, as surely hooked as any wahoo or amberjack – doomed to spend the rest of your days in search of “The Big One.”

In recent years the numbers of fish on the reefs and in the shallow water within the reefline have declined. This situation has caused real concern and new government regulations have already done much to restore the dwindling finny population.

The quality of sport fishing in Bermuda is high year-round, but the prime season is between May and November. There are more species of fish in the waters off Bermuda than you're ever likely to catch, and you have several options as to how you might go about it. Of course, offshore fishing is the premier version of the sport in Bermuda, but there really is something for everyone. You don't need to charter expensive deep-sea boats to enjoy a good day out. You can do it from a small rental boat all by yourself, from the beach, from a private dock or a hotel fishing pier. You're not likely to catch a trophy sailfish or marlin from the dock – you'll have to go to sea for that – but you will catch pompano, and perhaps even bonefish. The key is knowing where to fish.

The Catches



Blue marlin

On the reef you'll find **snapper, grouper, little tunny, Bermuda chub, and yellowtail**, to mention only a few. In the deep waters beyond the reef are the great gamefish. Besides the **sailfish**, the king of fish is perhaps the **blue marlin**, but they are few and far between. When you do find one, you're in for the experience of a lifetime. The “big blue” typically ranges in size from 100 to 200 pounds or more. Fish of three, four and five hundred pounds have been caught in more southern waters and stories of “the one

that got away” tell of fish in excess of 1,000 pounds.

Bluefin tuna is another exciting blue-water catch. Fish weighing in at 100 pounds or more are not uncommon, and catches between 500 and 800 pounds have been recorded in the western Atlantic. **Blackfin** and **yellowfin tuna** are smaller, but no less fun to catch.



Yellowfin tuna

Other excellent deep water species include the **kingfish**, or king mackerel. They can be caught year-round, although peak seasons are the spring and summer. Then there's **dolphin**. No, not Flipper; he's a mammal. This dolphin is a fish. Dolphins are usually found fairly close to the shoreline, weigh anywhere from five to 20 pounds, and are excellent to eat. **Wahoo** weigh 15 to 30 pounds and, in rare cases, as much as 60 pounds. They too make tasty dinners and are highly prized by sport fishermen. Wahoo are most often found lurking in the deep water off the edge of the reef.



Amberjack

Amberjack is another prized sporting fish found most often in the cooler, deep waters just off the edge of the reef during the summer months, and closer to shore the rest of the year. Amberjack can run anywhere from 20 to 40 pounds. Other

species include **white marlin**, **almaco jack**, **skipjack tuna** and **rainbow runner**.

Sharks, too, are common throughout the waters of the Bermudas and can be found in both shallow waters and deep. Makos, blues, hammerhead and tiger sharks abound. The truth is, however, that the fight usually lasts only as long as it takes for the shark's razor-like teeth to bite through the wire traces that hold him. Even so, you're sure to remember the battle for a long time.

The wily **barracuda** is found in large numbers, in shallow or deep waters, and can often be seen swimming close to the

*Barracuda*

average 15 to 25 pounds, and fish of 30 to 45 pounds are not uncommon. Likewise the **snapper**. He, too, may be caught on the reefs throughout the islands. Most common are the red and gray variety.

surface in the clear waters over the reefs and sandy banks. Barracuda range in size from a few pounds to about 15 or 20 pounds and, small though they might be, you're sure of a good fight if you can get one on the hook.

Grouper is a tasty fish, often found swimming lazily, close to the bottom on the reefs all around Bermuda. Catches

Licenses & Regulations

A fishing license is not required. You are not allowed to collect sea turtles, whales, porpoises and dolphins (the mammal), or corals of any type. Nor are you allowed to take the conch, helmet shells, bonnet shells, netted olive shells, Bermuda cone shells, scallops, the Atlantic pearl oyster, calico clams or West Indian tap shells.

No spear fishing is allowed within one mile of any shore; scuba gear may not be used to spear fish. A spear gun may not be used anywhere at any time.

No more than two fish of any one species may be taken by spear fishing in any 24-hour period. Lobsters may only be taken from September 1st to March 31st, by licensed residents only.

Basic fishing information can be obtained from the **Bermuda Department of Tourism**, ☎ 441-292-0023, or from the **Bermuda Game Fishing Association**, PO Box HM 1306, Hamilton HM FX, Bermuda, ☎ 441-297-8093. The association is an advisory body representing the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) affiliated clubs in Bermuda, and is the caretaker for all official local records and world records held locally. ☎ 441-292-7131.

Tournaments



Visitors are encouraged to enter their catches in the annual **Game Fishing Tournament** (January 1st to December 31st) with the Bermuda Department of Tourism, Global House, 43 Church Street, Hamilton.

No license is required and there is no entry fee. Awards are presented for top catches in 26 classes of fish found in local waters.

Qualifications for Awards

Twenty-six species of fish are recognized for competition purposes. The section below indicates these species and also advises maximum line test that may be used. Note: maximum line test does not apply to an entry for the Award of Merit.

Awards

- The **Award of Merit** may be received by a visitor only. Entrant must use the official entry form. Any game fish caught on any test line can qualify.
- The **Citation** is made for an officially entered fish a) to a visitor catching a fish weighing at least 1½ times the test line used, and b) to a resident catching a fish weighing at least twice the test line used.
- The **Outstanding Angling Achievement Award** is a handsome silver pin that may be won by catching one of four species of fish – greater amberjack, bonefish, yellowfin tuna, and wahoo – in a variety of ways: The Heaviest Fish in each Recognized Species caught by a visitor during any one year will win an award; the High Point Fish in each Recognized Species caught by a visitor in any one year will win an award.

Where to Find the Fish

Among the most popular spots for shore fishing at the western end of the islands are **Great Sound**, **Little Sound**, and many of the rocky beaches and inlets from **Frank's Bay to the Royal Naval Dockyard**. On the outside of the islands, the beaches from Long Bay southward around **Daniel's Head**, **Ely's Harbour**, and on to **West Whale Bay** seem to offer the best opportunities.

Going east, **Castle Harbour** and **St. George's Harbour** both offer good opportunities for a day's sport. The beaches off the extreme eastern end of the island around **St. Catherine's Point**, and the rocky shores around **St. David's Head** offer great possibilities too. You might also try the South Shore around **John Smith's Bay** and **Devonshire Bay**.

You can go flyfishing for bonefish almost anywhere around the islands – in the tiny inlets, the sandy coves, and on the flats inside the reef. Bonefish are not very big. Most often they will weigh in around six to 15 pounds, with some growing to 20 pounds. Hook one, however, and you're in for a battle. Bonefish are known for fighting.

Reef & Deep-Sea Fishing



Reef fishing, or deep-sea fishing, is how you'll find "The Big One." The three major reef systems forming the tip of the extinct volcano that is Bermuda lie at varying distances from the islands. The first, **the inner system**, runs as close as a half-mile from the shore in some places and stretches outward almost five miles. The second system, the **Challenger Bank**, lies 17 miles offshore; and the third, the **Argus Bank**, is more than 25 miles out. Trolling is the most popular method of fishing over the reefs, and catches of snapper, grouper, barracuda and amberjack are common. Just off the reef in deeper waters are wahoo, tuna, dolphin, sailfish and marlin.

Charter boats are available to take you out to the fishing grounds. They come in different sizes, from 28 feet to 55 feet, and are equipped with a variety of tackle with line-test weights from 20 to 130 pounds. Most boats are also fitted

with all the modern gadgets for tracking the fish, including depth sounders, sonar, and radar.

Rental Equipment for Shore Fishing

Fishing tackle may be rented from any of the following outfits on a daily or weekly basis. You will be required to leave a deposit (usually about \$30) in case of loss or damage of the equipment. Prices range from \$10 per day to \$50 or \$60 per week.

Four Winds Fishing Tackle Ltd.	2 Woodlands Road, Pembroke, HM 07	☎ 441-292-7466
Mangrove Marina Ltd.	End of Cambridge Road, Mangrove Bay, Somerset	☎ 441-234-0914
Harbour Road Marina	Newstead, Paget	☎ 441-236-6060
Pompano Beach Club & Waterports Centre	Pompano Beach Club, Southampton	☎ 441-234-0222, extension 212
Sea Kettle Yacht Charters Ltd. (tackle comes with boat rental only)	Sea Kettle, Paget	☎ 441-236-4863

Charter Boats for Deep-Sea & Reef Fishing

Some charter boats are available year-round, although the best fishing and charter deals are from May through November.

All Bermudian charter boats are skippered by experienced guides and are equipped with fighting chairs and outriggers. All necessary tackle, bait, ship-to-shore telephones and life-saving gear – rafts and life jackets – are included in the price

of the charter. All you need to bring is lunch and refreshments. All vessels have toilet facilities.

Skippers operate under their own set of rules with regard to the fish that you might catch. You should, therefore, check out your prospective skipper's policy before you sign on. Does the boat retain all, or a percentage of the catch? Is there freedom of selection by the party renting the boat?

Rates & Hours

You can charter a boat by the half-day (four hours) or full day (eight hours) and rates vary according to the size of the boat and the reputation of its captain.

A four-hour trip will limit the grounds that may be fished.

Parties of six persons are preferred. Charter rates differ from season to season, mainly due to the fluctuation of fuel prices, and the rate is often determined by the type of fishing you want to do, e.g. deep-sea, reef or bonefishing.

All Bermudian charter fishing boats are inspected annually by the Department of Marine & Ports Services and the Department of Fisheries, who then issue a license to operate. Check that current licenses are displayed when you board the boat.

Charters can be arranged privately or through one of the organizations listed below.

Charter Companies

- **The Bermuda Charter Fishing Boat Association**, Box SB 145, Sandy's, Bermuda, SB BX, ☎ 441-292-6246.
- **The Bermuda Sport Fishing Association**, Creek View House, 8 Tulo Lane, Pembroke, Bermuda, HM 02, ☎ 441-295-2370.
- **The St. George's Game Fishing & Cruising Association**, Box 107, St. George's, Bermuda, GE BX, ☎ 441-297-8093.

Members of the above organizations are indicated on the the list of outfitters that follows by these codes:

★ The Bermuda Charter Fishing Boat Association

★★ The Bermuda Sport Fishing Association

★★★ The St. George's Game Fishing & Cruising Association

To book, call the individual charter captains direct or contact the member's association booking office. Independent Charter Fishermen have no stars at the beginning of their listings and must be called direct.

Outfitters

★ **Michael Baxter:** ☎ 441-234-2963. *Ellen B*, 28-foot Down East; 14 rods, 4 to 50 pounds test; spinning to heavy troll; two depth sounders.

Alan Card: ☎ 441-234-0872. *Challenger*, 45-foot Flybridge Sportsfisherman; 26 rods; 12 to 130 pounds test; three fighting chairs; Loran; depth sounder; three outriggers and two downriggers.

Eddie Dawson, Sr.: ☎ 441-504-3474. *Sea Scorpion III*, 33-foot Young Brothers Flybridge; 10 rods; 12 to 80 pounds test; one fighting chair; two downriggers; Loran; radio depth sounder.

Allen DeSilva: ☎ 441-295-0835. *Mako 4*, 53-foot Jim Smith Sportsfisherman; 24 rods; fish finders; Loran; three fighting chairs; air-conditioning.

★★ **David DeSilva:** Call the association booking office, ☎ 441-295-0835. *Miranda*, 47-foot Bermuda, custom built; 29 rods; 12 to 80 pounds test; three fighting chairs; fish recording machine; live bait well; two downriggers.

★★ **Eugene Dublin:** Call the association booking office, ☎ 441-732-2207 or 441-292-2466. *Princess*, 31-foot Bertram; 10 rods; 12 to 80 pounds test; one trolling chair; fish finders; two downriggers.

★★ **Willard "Joe" Kelly:** ☎ 441-297-8093. *Messaround*, 40-foot Down East Sportsfisherman; 15 rods; 20 to 130 pounds test; fish finder; Loran; microcomputer; three fighting chairs; live well; outriggers and downriggers.

Robinson's Charter Boat Marina: ☎ 441-234-0709. *Lady-bird*, 22-foot Cabin Cuddy Aquasport; mainly light tackle and spinning lines.

☆☆ **Allan Virgil:** ☎ 441-238-2655. *Lady Gina*, 35-foot Bertram Sportsfisherman; selection of rods and reels; 30 to 130 pounds test; three downriggers; centerrigger; live bait well; fighting chair; Loran; color depth and fish finder.

☆☆ **Blake West:** ☎ 441-293-0813. *Troubadour*, 42-foot Double Ender; nine rods; 12 to 80 pounds test; depth sounder; outriggers and downriggers.

☆☆☆ **John Whiting & Miles Mayall:** ☎ 441-534-8590. *Atlantic Spray*, 40-foot custom-built Sportsfisherman; 12 custom-built rods; 12 to 130 pounds test; depth sounder.

Russell Young: ☎ 441-234-1832. *Sea Wolfe*, 43-foot Torres custom-built Sportsfisherman; selection of rods; 20 to 130 pounds test; downriggers and outriggers; three fighting chairs; live well; refrigerated fish hold; color fish finder; Loran; VHF; Epirb; air-conditioned lounge.

Diving



Bermuda offers excellent diving. There are a number of qualified dive operators on the islands, all with expert knowledge of the waters and willing to take you on scheduled dives, or to locations of your own choosing. Unless you have an extensive diving background, it's probably best to take advantage of their knowledge, especially if you want to look for shipwrecks. For the most part, the waters off Bermuda are very clear, shallow and offer an abundance of coral reefs and underwater gardens for you to enjoy and explore, as well as more than 300 known shipwrecks, modern and ancient.

Dangerous Denizens of the Deep

As always, there are dangers, natural and manmade, that you should take into consideration when stepping out of your natural environment. The following are some that you should be particularly wary of:

- **Sharks.** The most feared predator of the deep, with a bad and, for the most part, undeserved reputation. Peter Benchley's graphic movie, *Jaws*, based upon a fantasy of his own, has done much to enhance our natural fear of the shark. The truth is, the shark, like every other life-form on earth except man, kills only when hungry and rarely will it attack a human. Shark attacks are rare, especially in Bermuda. They say you have more chance of being struck by lightning, twice, than of being attacked by a shark. Even so, especially if you are unable to identify them, it's best that you steer clear of all sharks you might see.
- **Moray eels** are nocturnal creatures and like very much to be left alone inside their chosen lair. There are a few that have become used to humans and their handouts, but most morays can, if disturbed or threatened, give you a very nasty bite. Stay at a respectful distance.
- **Barracuda.** Not really dangerous, just scary-looking, especially their rather frightening, ever-present grin. The sleek, silver tiger of the ocean is curious, however, and will often follow you around. If someone is feeding the local reef fish (which they shouldn't), be on the lookout for something bigger. A barracuda after his share of the pie attacks like lightning and, although he's only after a handout, it might be a hand he takes.
- **Reef fish**, such as the Black Hamlet, tend to be curious and, while they're not dangerous, you might find them nipping at your fingers, toes and hair.
- **Rays**, on the whole, are not dangerous. Tread on a sting-ray buried in the sand, however, and you're probably in for a trip to the local hospital. The ray's first reaction is self-preservation, and its natural instinct is to lash out with that murderous tail. Unless threatened or trodden on, rays are pretty much harmless and are fascinating to



Moray eel

observe as they flap over the sandy bottom. Watch where you put your feet.

- **Scorpionfish** can often be found lying in wait on coral heads or close to the ocean floor. The thick spines on its back can inflict a nasty sting, but this will happen only if you startle one.



Sea urchins

- **Sea urchins** are the spiky little black balls that lie on the sandy ocean floor or in the nooks and crannies of coral heads in shallow water. Step on one with your bare feet at your peril. The spines are brittle, often barbed, and will give you a very nasty and painful experience. Fortunately, they are usually easy to see and can be avoided. Keep a sharp look out and don't touch.
 - The **stonefish**, often hard to see due to excellent camouflage, can also give a nasty sting.
 - **Jellyfish**, transparent and often difficult to see, are mostly harmless. There are, however, some that are not and it's best if you avoid them all.
- **Coral** is often sharp and can become dislodged in cuts and abrasions, which will leave you in pain for a couple of days. Fire coral can be a problem, but only if you're foolish enough to handle it. Try not to touch coral at all. Not only can it be dangerous, but it's a delicate, living organism that can easily be damaged.



If you do happen to get stung by coral, jellyfish, or urchin, you can treat the sting first with vinegar, which will neutralize the stinging cells. You should then get ointment from the local drugstore to ease the pain.