

Bermuda

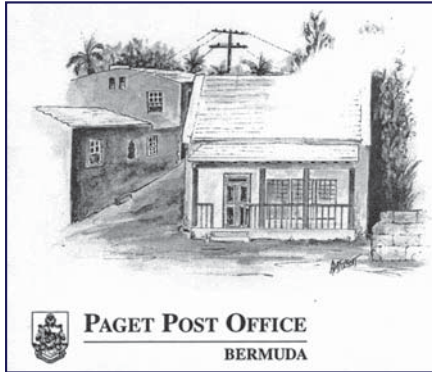
Political Status: The oldest and most populous remaining British overseas territory

Area: 20.6 sq miles

Population: 67,837 (2009 est.)

Capital: Hamilton

Currency: Bermudan Dollar (BMD) \$1= 100 cents.



Bermuda is an archipelago of 138 coral islands, located 580 miles east of North Carolina. About twenty of the islands are occupied. It was discovered in 1503 by Juan de Bermudez, a Spanish navigator, who gave his name to the islands. An English ship, the *Sea Venture*, wrecked off St. George's Island in 1609 en route to Jamestown. Apparently unaware that the Spanish had gotten there first, the ship's captain, Sir George Somers, called the group "The Somers Islands," after himself.

In 1612 the Virginia Company founded the first permanent settlement in Bermuda at St. George, which now has the distinction of being the oldest continuously inhabited English settlement in the Americas. St. George was the capital until 1815, when the administration moved to more centrally located Hamilton. The colony passed to the British crown in 1684. Bermuda has enjoyed limited self government since 1620, possessing one of the world's oldest parliaments. A new constitution in 1968 granted even more power to the local government. A referendum for independence in 1995 was soundly defeated.

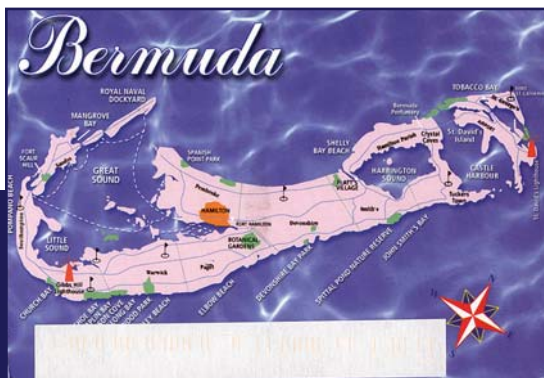


Bermuda enjoys the third highest standard of living in the world (more than 50 percent higher than the United States). Its economy is based on international financial services and tourism. The Bermudan dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar.



Bermuda's first postal service was established in 1784 by Joseph Stockdale, editor of *The Bermuda Gazette*, the colony's first newspaper. His local postal service was so successful that it quickly expanded from St. George to serve the entire colony.

The Post Office Act of May 8, 1812 established an official postal service, with post offices in St. George and Hamilton. Subsequently, the PMG in London appointed a deputy PMG at St. George to handle Packet and Ship Mail. The local authorities continued to be responsible for the internal mail service. In 1859 they assumed responsibility for foreign mail as well.



The success of the British experiment with postage stamps led William B. Perot, the long-serving post master in Hamilton to issue the first of his postmaster provisionals in 1848. Six different versions appeared from 1848-61. James H. Thies, the postmaster in St. George, issued a provisional in 1860. The first colonial stamps were issued in 1865.

