

ISLANDS
TOP 10

Exotic Moments

The most bizarre events sometimes happen on the most accessible islands

BY DAVID LANSING

1

DANCING COOKS OLD SAN JUAN

I DON'T BUNGEE JUMP OFF NEW ZEALAND'S BRIDGES OR CRAWL UP ICELANDIC MOUNTAINS. MY idea of island adventure is more about immersing than conquering. Inside cultures — that's where I find the most memorable surprises. And some of the best have happened within easy reach of the continental United States. Like the time I went to Old San Juan and scarfed up mofongo — a garlic-flavored mashed plantain dish — with almost every meal. But what I really wanted to do was learn how to make the stuff. Not from a cookbook. From a person. Shoulder to shoulder. And, as it turned out, hip to hip. I went to Rosa de Triana, where the cooks, who looked just like my aunts, playfully slapped my hand when I messily tried to peel a plantain. (The trick, they said, was first to soak it in hot water for a few minutes.) Things really warmed up when they said it was time to dance. Next thing I know, I'm learning saucy flamenco moves from a dark-haired cook. My mofongo was still cooking, and she's stomping her feet and clapping her hands around me. Now that was wild. sanjuanfoodtours.com