

Florianópolis, Brazil

Reporters Jonathan Karp and Miriam Jordan on the charms of a less-explored isle in southern Brazil.

By JONATHAN KARP and MIRIAM JORDAN

What to do: Locally referred to as Florianópolis, the state-capital city on its bay side, Santa Catarina Island was first settled by Portuguese fishermen from the Azores. The island boasts some 93 beaches, many with distinct personalities. The northern beaches, such as Jurerê have calm surf, but are thronged by tourists. Instead, try serene Moçambique, the island's longest and least-developed beach. Further south, Mole beach, bordered by dramatic boulders, is divine for its water, soft sand and beautiful bathers. For the hardy, an hour's mountain hike brings you to the Logoinha do Leste, a beach accessible only by foot or boat. The trail, frequented by surfers with boards strapped to their backs, starts in the southern village of Pântano



do Sul. Ask for directions at the hardware store on the main street, and carry plenty of water. Extreme-sports enthusiasts should surf the dunes at Joaquina beach -- the global birthplace of sandboarding. Enjoy a sunset stroll in Santo Antonio de Lisboa, a colonial village, and shop for folk art at the enchanting gallery Casa Açoriana (Rua Cônego Serpa 30; Tel: (48) 3235-1262).

Where to eat: Arante Bar & Restaurant in Pântano do Sul has been an institution since the 1970s, when university students began posting notes for fellow travelers. Now the eatery is covered in paper. "Everyone turns into a poet after the first cachaça," the menu says. The restaurant offers free caipirinhas -- made with cachaça, Brazil's national liquor -- in modest quantities. Anchovy is a local specialty; try it baked or stuffed (Tel: (48) 3237-7022; arantebar.com.br). The bay between Santa Catarina Island and the mainland is a veritable oyster farm. Eat them fresh at Ostradamus in the village of Riberão da Ilha (Tel: (48) 3337-5711; ostradamus.com.br). For pizza in a clubby atmosphere, prepare to wait at Bâsilico, whose exotic -- and expensive -- pizza creations are served in a festive atmosphere (Rua Laurindo Januário da Silveira 647, Canto da Lagoa; Tel: (48) 3232-0485;).

Where to stay: Don't expect world-class digs. The Pousada Pênareia is a pleasant inn just behind the dunes at the southern Armação beach. The inn has a kayak and beach-sports equipment for guests. Standard rooms start at about \$60 (Rua Hermes Guedes da Fonseca 207, Praia da Armação; Tel: (48) 3338-1616; pousadapenareia.com.br). If you insist on a resort, there is but one: Costão do Santinho Resort & Spa on the crowded northern end of the island. The sprawling grounds have villas, multiple pools, tennis courts, a soccer field and a private beach. Room rates \$350 with meals included (Estrada Ver. Onildo Lemos 2505, Praia do Santinho; Tel: (0800) 48-1000; costao.com).