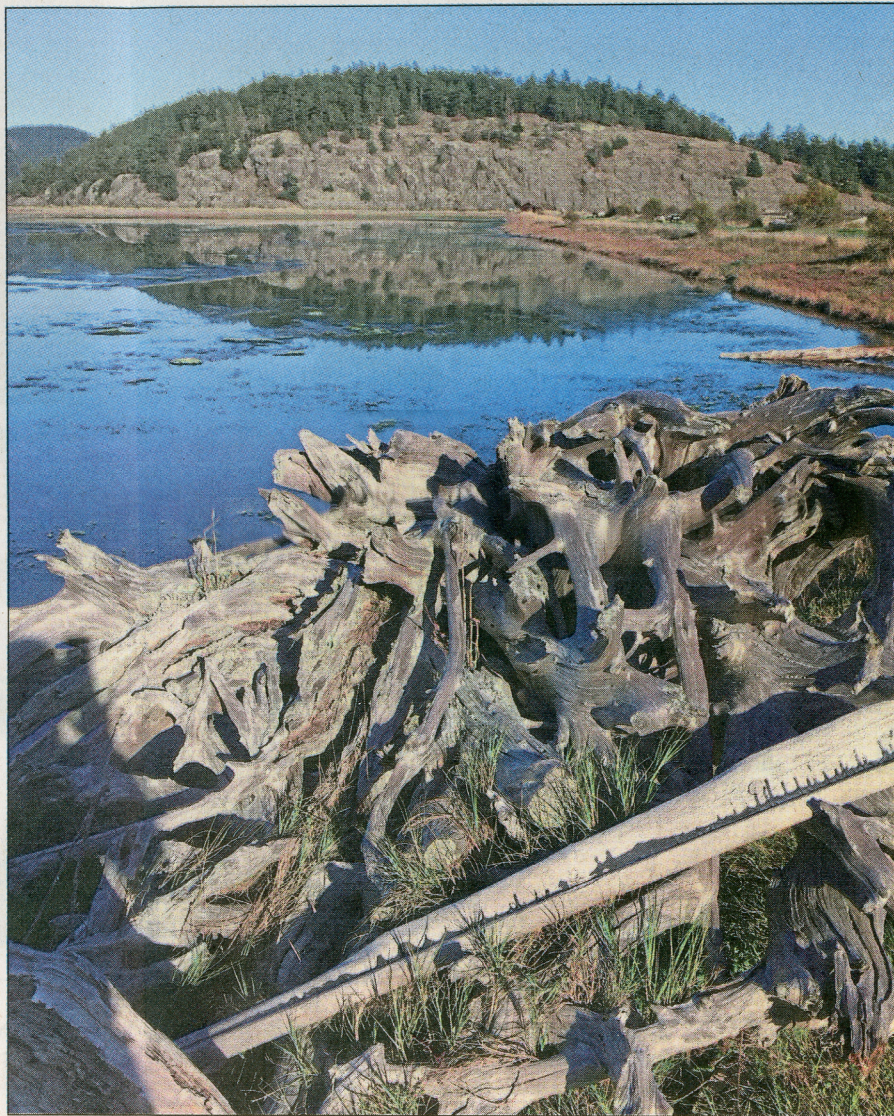


TRAVEL

Wondrous hiking



Hiking on one of the many trails in the San Juan Islands in Washington. An archipelago, they are between the U.S. mainland and Vancouver Island, British Columbia. EMILIE C. HARTING



Washington's San Juan Islands offer a range of adventures, including encounters with porpoises and bears.

By Emilie C. Harting
FOR THE INQUIRER

Our guide Krista held up a long, three-inch-wide ribbon of bull kelp, a sea algae, and squeezed open the bulbous end. "See the little dark spots. Crickets have decided to go inside and feed."

She told us that this type of kelp could grow up to five feet in a day and that conservationists had placed it at various spots to attract sea otters that have been disappearing from Puget Sound.

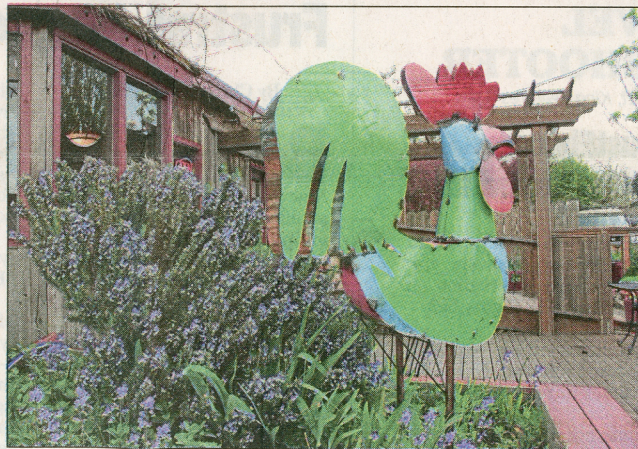
As we walked along on this one-week expedition cruise on the Wilderness Discoverer through the San Juan Islands, north of Seattle, we stopped to examine giant acorn barnacles, sea urchins, and large Dungeness crabs, the kind that are often advertised at roadside stands in the Pacific Northwest.

Each day on this cruise we would travel from the explorer boat on zodiacs to hike and kayak, while keeping an eye out for wildlife, harbor seals, river otters, and sea creatures.

That morning we had been walking with Krista on Lopez Island, along Spencer Spit, a sandy clay strip of land jutting into a salt water lagoon. In the 1880s, settlers came here as homesteaders. Now the land is a remote state park with replicas of their brown wooden cabins spread about in the forest.

"Sometimes you can spot bear and deer in the woods," Krista continued. "And when you are kayaking, constantly examine the shore beside you. Across the water, for example, the shore is lined

See **SAN JUAN ISLANDS** on N3



Spencer Spit State Park on Lopez Island, Wash.: A sandy clay strip of land jutting into a salt water lagoon.

BARBARA MARRETT /
San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau

Eastbound Village, three blocks of art galleries, clothing stores, and coffee shops, on Orcas Island.

San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau

Cape Verde: A casual, friendly adventure

CAPE VERDE from N1 shared taxi) that bounced us to the end of the road: a town of cobblestone streets and sherbet-colored houses clinging to cliffs facing the furious Atlantic Ocean.

But at our friendly guesthouse, Kasa Tambla, all the guides are booked for hiking excursions into the Paul Valley — a verdant pilgrimage spot for hikers. “Go ask at the bar up the street,” we are told.

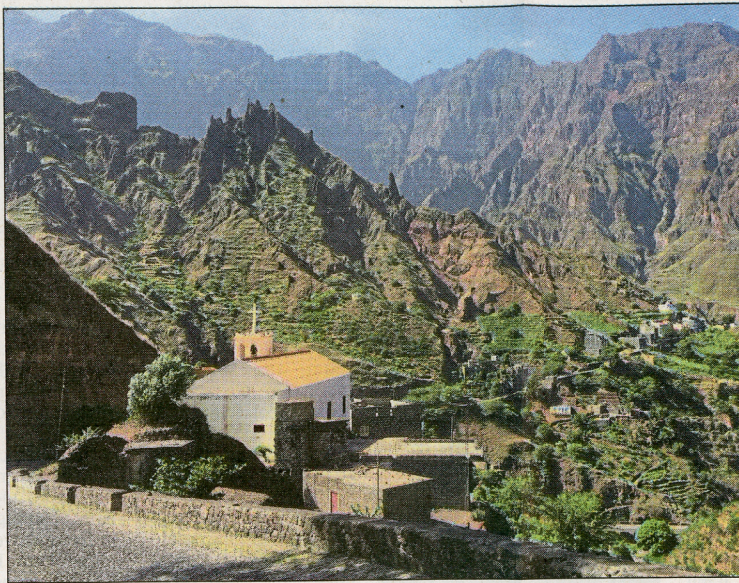
And so do we happen to meet the French-speaking Beбето, as he tells us to call him. Shrugging, as I can always translate from French to English for my sister, I agree to a price and a departure time the following morning.

At the beachfront, the sun burns bright orange as it drops into the water. We gaze at the craggy mountains rising from the ocean, sipping shots of *grogue*, the local spirit made from sugar cane. “On the house!” the waiter grins. Favorable wind patterns and ocean currents meant that Cape Verde played an important role in maritime history — and a sinister one, at the heart of the infamous transatlantic slave trade. Ships stopped to pick up supplies and pay customs fees. Later, Cape Verde became a port of call for whaling ships, then ocean liners needing to stock up on coal, salt, and water.

In the morning, Beбето is right on time. Emmy and I fill water bottles from the dispensers offered by the eco-conscious guesthouse. Then we climb into Beбето’s red pickup truck for a drive along the old cobble road.

“Before these islands were discovered by the Portuguese in the mid-15th century, this was completely virgin land,” Beбето explains.

Much like the Galapagos, these isolated volcanic islands developed their own plant and animal life, with seeds carried from the African continent on the Saharan trade winds. When Charles Darwin arrived here in 1821 awestruck by



A bend in the old cobblestone road affords vistas of terraced hillsides and a church in the middle of the island of Santo Antao. MARY WINSTON NICKLIN / For the Washington Post

it as the Atlantic’s crossroads, an anchor between Europe, Africa and South America. Favorable wind patterns and ocean currents meant that Cape Verde played an important role in maritime history — and a sinister one, at the heart of the infamous transatlantic slave trade. Ships stopped to pick up supplies and pay customs fees. Later, Cape Verde became a port of call for whaling ships, then ocean liners needing to stock up on coal, salt, and water.

Uninhabited when discovered, the islands served as a blank slate, both geographically and culturally, for Portuguese colonialists. The great mariners had ventured to all corners of the Earth, carrying back an incredible variety of plants. The settlers imported edibles such as papaya and sugar cane, along with agricultural methods including irrigation systems developed on mountainous Madeira. The hybrid population represents a melting pot descended from original Por-

known as *morna*, sung by the great chanteuse Cesária Évora are infused with longing for those who departed and for the land left behind.

Water remains scarce in Cape Verde, with modern desalination plants supplying much of the potable water. The exception is Santo Antao, where we are. This is the greenest of the islands, a fertile paradise sprinkled with rainfall.

As we walk up the Paul Valley, we marvel at the agricultural bounty. Terraced hillsides are planted with coffee, coconut, avocado, manioc, sugar cane, mango, banana, and breadfruit crops. Beбето shows us how farmers painstakingly plant in mountain streams; taro plants are cultivated in the rushing water like rice. Small stone walls are constructed to prevent erosion and to pool the water flow. The harvest takes place in August before the rains wash out the stream beds. Each year, workers rebuild the walls, stone by stone

over by the grandeur. The canyons appear as deep lush grooves, a wrinkled green carpet cloaking the volcanic peaks.

Évora sang of the Paul Valley as the “Jardim Prometido” — the promised garden where the river is flowing, water is falling, and hope is blossoming. And what we see is a harmonious cohabitation between humankind and nature. We salute the workers we pass, and Beбето describes a tilled terrace as a “work of art.”

Not until much later in the day do we encounter another set of hikers. Clad in Patagonia outdoor gear, the tanned and toned guide beams at Beбето, reaching out to shake his hand. “He’s the best guide on the island!” he tells us. There, on the top of a mountaintop gazing at the mar azul, or blue sea, that Évora sang so passionately about, we realize that we had lucked into the very best. It is a stroke of serendipity that marks the best travel adventures.

Later in the week, Beбето drives us to the ferry, taking the longer panoramic route over the mountains. The Estrada de Corda is epic. Following a steep ridge, the cobble road reaches a vertiginous altitude. We stop to give a lift to a few schoolchildren in uniform, along with a trio of young Bob Marley-inspired guys with dreadlocks.

Even these locals are wowed by the vistas, snapping grinning photos via selfie sticks. We marvel at the deep volcanic craters circled by jagged peaks. Spiky agave plants sprout from sheer rock cliffs.

IF YOU GO

Where to Stay

Kasa Tambla

Ponta do Sol, Santo Antao
011-238-225-1526 or kasatambla.com

This welcoming, eco-friendly guesthouse has eight rooms and a tropical garden where breakfast is served. Reservations can be made online, and the manager is happy to help arrange a car pickup from the ferry dock. Doubles from \$58 per night.

Casa Colonial

Rua 24 De Setembro, Mindelo, Sao Vicente
011-238-231-8760 or casacolonial.info

Inside one of the oldest houses in Mindelo, this lovely hotel has nine rooms with mahogany four-poster beds. There’s also a small pool and a rooftop with sweeping views of the city. Doubles from \$73.

Where to Eat

Caleta

On the waterfront, Ponta do Sol, Santo Antao
011-238-225-1561

Friendly restaurant and bar overlooking the Atlantic. Tables are situated on the sidewalk. On the menu: fish and traditional dishes like *cachupa*. Live music offered nightly. Mains from around \$9.

Divin’Art

Santo Antao
011-238-999-5773 or divinant-guesthouse.com

Filled with art, this guesthouse has a restaurant serving traditional food with a leafy terrace. The fish of the day costs around \$7.

What to Do

Museu do Mar

Avenida Marginal, Edifício Torre de Belem, Mindelo, Sao Vicente
011-238-232-6502 or on facebook.com

A terrific little museum, housed inside the replica of Lisbon’s Belem Tower on the waterfront, tracing the island’s maritime history and whaling. Beautiful views from the top of the tower. Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays and closed Sundays. Tickets cost about \$1.

Guided hike in the Paul Valley

Island of Santo Antao

Guides can be arranged at your guesthouse in Ponta do Sol. A day hike for two people costs about \$44 to \$55, not including transportation and lunch. Our terrific French-speaking guide, Beбето, has a website: guideindependantcapvertbeбето.blogspot.fr.

General information: capeverde.com

The road climbs into the clouds. The temperatures are cooler, the soil planted with fragrant pines. Reforestation has helped create a distinct microclimate. Beбето tells us that tourism on Santo Antao began only 18 years ago.

As we near the ferry terminal, Beбето points out the aridity of the island’s southern side, where the rains are blocked by the mountain peaks. One of our reggae friends says with a laugh, “The only things growing here are acacia trees and unemployment.”

Our return flight is from Sal, where transatlantic

all about fun in the sun. It has fine sandy beaches, world-renowned kiteboarding, and vibrant nightlife in the town of Santa Maria.

But it’s jarring to see the sheer number of all-inclusive resorts, operated by international hotel chains and kitted out with sprawling infinity pools. Mass tourism to Sal is soaring.

From the terrace of our guesthouse, Emmy and I drink the passion fruit punch we had purchased at the artisanal *grogue* factory in the Paul Valley. We remember the two poignant words Beбето had said about Sal: “No water.”