



LEFT: Dive all day and party all night at Trinidad's famed Carnival. **RIGHT:** Bali's elaborate cremation ceremonies celebrate life.



EXOTIC DIVE-ISLAND CUSTOMS

Topside color can rival what you see underwater

BY TRAVIS MARSHALL

The reefs of the world's tropical islands are loaded with colorful creatures and exotic sights, but don't miss out on colorful local customs happening topside. Here are five of our favorite experiences from dive spots around the world.

TEMEZCAL ON THE RIVIERA MAYA

On the Riviera Maya, many resorts and spas are keeping alive the ancient *temezcal* tradition. Aztecs and Maya used domed sweat-lodge-style steam huts as a form of meditation and healing. You too can experience the ritual steam bath, scented with indigenous herbs, as the perfect way to wind down from a week's dive vacation — just be warned: It's hot in there.

CREMATION CEREMONIES OF BALI

In contention as the most elaborate and exuberant displays of any dive island are the joyous cremation ceremonies of Bali. Open to all visitors, these ceremonies are actually celebrations of life, in which endless food, music and offerings circulate as the deceased is placed into a ceremonial

bull and set alight on a blazing pyre amid the crowd.

BAINING FIRE DANCE IN RABAUL, PNG

The waters of Rabaul Harbor, on the east end of Papua New Guinea's New Britain Island, are littered with World War II-era shipwrecks, but travel inland to the Baining Mountains for a far more ancient historic experience. The Baining Fire Dance is a coming-of-age ritual for men of this secluded tribe, wherein they don eerie, painstakingly crafted masks while dancing around — and upon — a blazing fire, occasionally kicking showers of red coals among the onlookers.

KAVA IN FIJI

An integral part of any village visit in Fiji is the communal kava ceremony. The mildly narcotic root is ground and steeped into

a tea before coconut-husk bowls are passed around the circle. You might be asked if you prefer high tide (full cup) or low tide (half-cup). When a bowl is proffered, first clap and yell "bula" before draining it in one gulp, then clap three times when you're done.

THE ULTIMATE ALL-NIGHTER AT THE TRINI CARNIVAL

Carnival is celebrated almost everywhere in the Caribbean, from the Virgin Islands to Belize, but regional festivals happen at different times of the year, and each island celebrates in its own way. Trinidad's Carnival is largest in the Caribbean, the gold standard by which others are measured. If two full days of calypso, costumes and revelry sound like your bag, then this is one party you can't miss.

FROM LEFT: INGOLF POMPE/AGEFOTOSTOCK; ALVARO LEIVA/LAMY

TAG AND RELEASE

Students at the University of Miami track shark migratory patterns

BY AMANDA MORALES

Scientists are getting closer to revealing the secret lives of sharks.

An ongoing project at the R.J. Dunlap Marine Conservation Program at the University of Miami is utilizing a custom satellite-tagging network to track sharks and their travels in the Atlantic Ocean. On a typical outing, RJD scientists and students tag an average of three to five sharks. Media and virtual-learning manager for RJD, Christine Shepard,

COURTESY CHRISTINE SHEPARD

has joined researchers on numerous trips.

"We catch a variety of shark species, such as nurse, great hammerhead, lemon, blacktip, bull, tiger, and many more," says Shepard.

Sharks are caught and released using methods intended to inflict minimal stress and harm.

"All the research methods we use are designed to promote health and survivorship in the sharks, while

also gathering vital data to improve conservation management," says Shepard.

The satellite tag records the shark's location, as well as conditions surrounding the animal. Every time the shark surfaces, the satellite tag transmits data on water temperature and the depth at which it is swimming.

"I feel very fortunate to be working on a team with incredibly passionate and innovative marine scientists," says Shepard. "Our work is



aimed to not only further the science behind marine-conservation policy, but also to improve scientific literacy and marine-conservation ethics." You can sponsor individual satellite tags, and track the sharks using Google Maps.

Sharks are tagged and released with minimally invasive procedures.

» To follow the sharks, visit sharktagging.com.



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