

## The Real Polynesia

HULA WAS BORN AT KA'ANA, OR SO THE story goes. Every May, dancers gather on Molokai to share Hawaii's most beloved cultural legacy with a three-day festival, Ka Hula Piko. In pre-dawn rituals, dancers silhouetted by stars sway to ancient rhythms as

**GO NOW**

### Molokai

they chant the day awake at the summit of Ka'ana, amid the peaks of Maunaloa. Everyone else gets to sleep in until 9 a.m., when things get going on Papohaku Beach Park.

Ka Hula Piko brims with one highlight after another. Go for the food alone: homemade *laulau* (pork and taro tops steamed in *ti* leaves), sizzling fish ripe from the sea, *haupia* and *kulolo* (coconut and taro puddings) and baked treats fresh from island kitchens. Shop as you wander among traditional crafts, feather and fabric leis, gourd masks, Hawaiian quilts and carvings in rare native woods.

May marks 17 years since John Kaimikaua, the late *kumu hula* (hula master), founded Ka Hula Piko, and the spirit is still true to his vision: "To understand the island as our ancestors did, we must look and listen to the land with the eyes and ears of our feelings." -- RITA ARIYOSHI

### ALSO THIS MONTH

#### » Smell the Flowers

With their hearty, enduring qualities, oleanders have been a symbol of Galveston Island, Texas, since 1841. So when the Great Storm of 1900 ravaged the island, residents rebuilt the city from the flowers up. The Oleander Festival (April 26-27), which began in 1921, pays tribute to this flowering symbol of hope with displays, arts and crafts, and design competitions. Held at Moody



**TIME** your trip to the island of Molokai so that you can take part in the three-day Ka Hula Piko festival, which takes place this year May 15-17. **SPEND** nothing to attend this free event, but bring some cash for the craft and food offerings. **READ** the full account of Rita's experience at Ka Hula Piko on [islands.com/gonow](http://islands.com/gonow). **LEARN MORE** at [gohawaii.com](http://gohawaii.com).

#### » Set Fire

Head to the Polynesian Cultural Center, about an hour away from Wai-kiki on Oahu, for the 16th Annual World Fireknife Dance Competition (May 14-17). The ancient warrior tradition was once used to prepare warriors for battle and to distract the opponent with twirling, fast movement around the body. Now, modern adaptations of the original

#### » Soak It Up

Get soaked on Songkram (April 13), the first day of the traditional Thai solar calendar on Ko Samui, an island off Thailand's Malay Peninsula. Also called the "Water Festival," this New Year tradition celebrates the refreshing qualities of water, washing away bad luck and bringing in a fresh new start. What once was nothing more than a