

TRAVEL

# Each island's the best

Part 2 of 2

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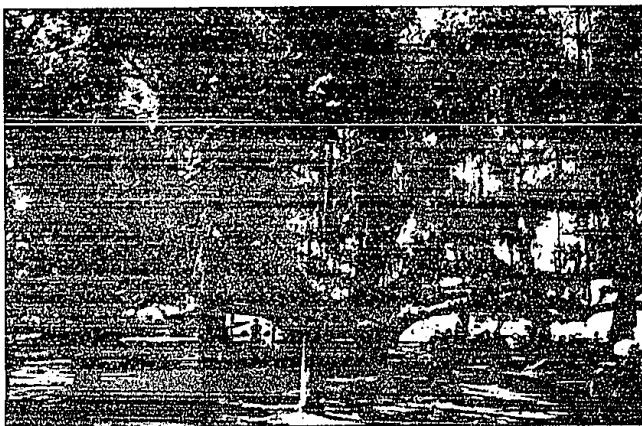
Remember those popular movies like "South Pacific" and "Jurassic Park"? Ever think you'd like to see where they were filmed? Then visit Kauai, the garden island, the location of the original "Fantasy Island" television series.

Kauai was the first stop on America Hawaii Line's S.S. Independence as we cruised to four islands in the chain. It was also one of the islands touted as the "best" on our return flight home. See if you agree.

Unlike the populated Oahu, which we explored last week, much of Kauai is inaccessible. There is just one paved road, and a round-trip drive is about 90 miles. If you've got the stamina, backtracking is popular on unpaved trails to see sugar cane plantations and mountain formations missed on other tours. Whatever tour you take, be prepared for some rain — all the better to see rainbows and waterfalls.

A rainbow can be seen from the top of Mt. Waialeale, the wettest place on earth; it gets 451 inches of rain each year, with frequent rainbows.

But, no problem. Hawaiians have a way of dealing with every



Cooling shade: Visitors to Lahaina on Maui take shelter under a banyan tree whose arms stretch out over an acre in the city.

situation. There is a universally understood gesture among islanders: With thumb and little finger raised, the hand is waved gently signaling others to "Hang loose!"

I took a helicopter ride over the famed "Grand Canyon of the Pacific," a 12-mile-long rift of eroded stone with some vegetation. The chopper climbed over the mountains and moved into the canyon as our pilot/guide glided us through the canyon, then up the face of Mt. Waialeale and over to the steep Na Pali cliffs, which resemble an accordion. Concluding the trip was an exciting descent as the pilot spiraled us into the Kawakini volcano, which formed the island. The cone is now covered with

vegetation. The trip has been rated as the No. 1 tour in the world by National Geographic.

### Surprising Maui

There is much else to be said for Maui: beautiful beaches and resort areas, opportunities for snorkeling, a variety of vegetation, cowboys and the dormant volcano Haleakala.

For me the best part of the trip to Maui was seeing a humpback whale breach not more than 100 yards from me. That means the 40-foot-long behemoth playfully propelled itself completely out of the water. Everyone screamed in delight, including me. Only problem was I got so excited I forgot to take a picture.

We were on watch for the humpbacks during a tour sponsored by the Pacific Whale Foundation. Adding to the memorable trip aboard a two-masted sailboat was the lowering of a microphone into the deep, clear waters so we could listen to the whales calling out to each other.

Or were they inviting us to follow their lead?

With us was a naturalist provided by the foundation, who had spent several days on board ship regaling us with tales during whale sightings. It had been the best sightings of the season, she said. The season runs from December through March.

Joining in on the fun was our amiable captain, who said he would use the ship to "sneak" up

on the whales. By law, all water craft must stay 160 yards from the whales or cut their engines. In this case, the whales seemed to willfully violate the law and delight in performing. It was their time of year to frolic in the waters off the islands for mating season.

### A clear day on Maui

At nearly 10,000 feet, the views from the peak of Haleakala are spectacular — as was the ride up. Switchbacks up the volcano showed the variety of vegetation, a one point looking like northern Michigan with its pine trees. But looking into the crater, clearly we were in another world in which pink mounds contrasted with the hazy blue of distant walls and the beige floor of sand.

We walked slowly up the short path to the overlook site. Oxygen deprivation made breathing and walking difficult.

Pineapple fields spread out in all directions. Sampling some of the golden, melt-in-your-mouth pineapples showed the difference between fresh and the pale, canned varieties found at home.

After spending hours at the aquarium or shopping, many visitors liked to cool off under the shade of a remarkable banyan tree in Lahaina that spreads its sheltering limbs for an acre in the center of town.

It offered a good chance to regroup before heading for the other big island on our cruise, the Big Island of Hawaii which we were to visit a live volcano.

### The Big Island

The largest of the islands, Hawaii, offers two distinct climates — extremely wet and extremely dry on opposite sides of the island. Consequently, the landscape and activities vary from 13,700-foot Mauna Kea, which is the tallest mountain in the Pacific, and the still-active

volcano Mauna Loa and Kilauea to tropical gardens.

We walked at night past the lava flow from Kilauea with molten lava and billowing steam clearly seen where the volcano meets the ocean. Listening to our ship-board kumu (teacher) tell the story of the fire goddess Pele, we could hear the chants and drum beat of native Hawaiians. Pele is to be appeased, Hawaiians remind us, knowing full well the destruction she has wrought in eruptions that have wiped out villages.

Somehow we understand the magic of the islands that keeps returning people back to the island.

The Hawaiian experience is as much offshore as on the islands, as those of us who wanted to learn to snorkel enjoyed a new adventure. Supported by inner tubes and donning prescription swim masks, we floated over a fish preserve off the Captain Cook monument. The preserve, in which we were not allowed to touch the bottom, was filled with multi-hued coral and fish. Kelley, who guided me throughout the excursion, judged me "the most improved passenger" after a few false starts. I won't say how many.

I didn't want to get out of water, but it was time to leave for our ship, which was to sail to Honolulu for our trip home.

The whirlwind tour of the islands had been like traveling to a foreign land. It was an adventure I wouldn't soon forget. As the debate grew during the trip home on which was the "best" island, I found myself unable to argue for just one island in the chain.

Hmm, perhaps it will take a return trip to persuade me to decide.

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# Pearl Harbor memorial teaches many lessons

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The history of war times often is blurred. Places and names of wars vary, but reasons and results often seem obscured by political posturing as nations ready for the next battle.

That posturing is pummeled into reality off shore the island of Oahu, where the USS Arizona

came to rest on Dec. 7, 1941, in Pearl Harbor. Such a lovely name; such a vile deed when Japanese pilots bombed the Arizona and other ships in the harbor.

What really happened that day and why? A trip to the famous monument tells the sadder story. It began with trade disputes. Sound familiar? The story of that terrible day

is told in a 20-minute film shown to visitors. It is not for the faint of heart.

During the boat ride to the monument, we listen to an explanation of how the low center of the white monument represents the United States in its darkest hour, while the uplifted ends of the monument recalls the nation's return to greatness.

A nun quietly tells a passenger she frequently comes to the memorial to pray.

We disembark, and all are quiet, except for some teens yet untouched by war's devastation. We hang over the open sides of the memorial, waiting for a cloud

to pass.

When it does, we see the rusting tomb lying in shallow water.

In the shrine room of the memorial is a stone wall with the names of those who died when the USS Arizona went down.

As we near shore on the return trip, we hear former President George Bush tell us: "I bear no grudge toward the Japanese.

None at all."

These words echo as I recall a family I observed before seeing the film. The husband, wife and their young child were waiting to enter the theater, along with extended families on both sides. There was no doubt that all doted on the child. It mattered not that the father was of Japanese heritage and the mother of some other European her-

itage. Would that we all could bear no grudges — to anyone, anywhere.

Joining the Arizona in the Pearl Harbor area is the USS Missouri, on which the Japanese government surrendered at the end of the war. It's wise to get tickets ahead of time for both tours.




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