

Quieter spirits traveling aboard this Hawaiian Islands cruise ship

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

HONOLULU — A new cruise line, American Hawaii Cruises, has started a weekly service in the Hawaiian Islands. The ship sails to Hawaii, Maui and Kauai before returning to Honolulu early the following Saturday morning.



Bars and smiles are natural go-togethers.

The 30,090-ton ship, built in Massachusetts in 1951, was originally designed to cruise from the U.S. to the Mediterranean Sea. After several years of service, it was refitted and floated to Hong Kong. It was refurbished to start the Hawaii run in June 1980.

I sailed the S.S. Oceanic Independence on its 10th run. They were still ironing out the kinks that are inevitable in any new-cruise service, but the ship was beginning to take its own place among the varied cruises available to North American travelers.

Most cruise lines are of foreign registry and take their personality from the Italian, Norwegian, British, Dutch or other foreign crews. Most such cruises, in the Caribbean especially, are firmly established in the tradition of lavishing passengers with attentive personal service and a Mardi Gras atmosphere.

The Independence has good food, luxurious accommodations and exotic island destinations, but it does not provide the lavish service or entertainment common to other cruises. This may or may not become part of the cruise style here, which is presently designed to fit the quieter aloha spirit of the islands.

PASSENGERS from the Detroit area are taken to a hospitality suite and swimming pool on Waikiki after Saturday afternoon flights arrive in the islands. They board the ship about 7 p.m.

The first night is open seating in the dining room. Seating assignments, which determine your meal partners for the week, are not made until the following morning.

Choice of dining room partners may be the most important choice a passenger makes on a cruise ship, since you spend more time at meals than in almost any other activity. Meal partners often form the basis of social life aboard ship.

Sunday is spent cruising past the islands of Molokai and Maui, with passengers clustered around the deck chairs, bars and swimming pools at the back of the nine-deck ship. Exercise and sauna facilities are available on the top deck forward.

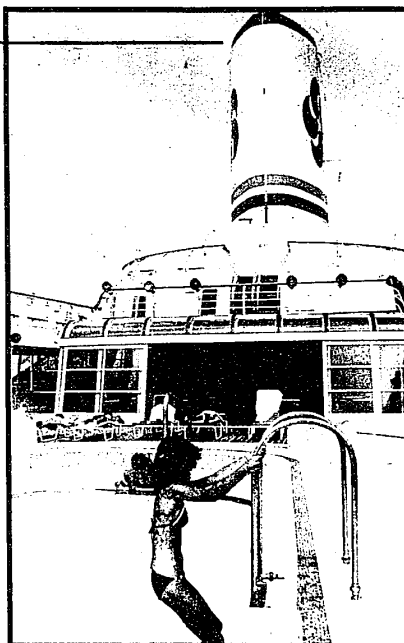
The captain's cocktail party and a formal first-night dinner highlight the evening, followed by stage entertainment. Passengers who choose the first sitting can catch the entire show; those who choose the second sitting usually will find the show well under way by the time they have finished their last piece of Baked Alaska.

NIGHTLY entertainment is presently limited to the Commodore Bar, the disco, and the midnight buffet, although cruise executives are exploring the addition of a piano bar and other additional late-night entertainment.

There were 180 travel agents aboard my cruise on a convention of American Retail Travel Agents. Most of them had cruised extensively in the Caribbean. Many complained about the lack of trained, personal service in the dining room and the lack of that familiar shipboard Mardi Gras atmosphere.

Passengers who preferred the quieter cruise style were happy to enjoy the ship with its present low-key style. The cruise company is attempting to balance both needs based on the feedback it is getting from its first few months in these waters.

The American registry of the ship to some extent determines its character, because American registry demands a crew of American citizens. There is presently no available pool of trained American cruise personnel, so most of the ship's staff is being trained from scratch by the maritime union.



The sky above may be overcast but the water below is fine. (Photos by Iris Sanderson Jones)

The ship's agenda is also dominated by the amount of time spent ashore in the islands. It is an excellent, if expensive, way for midwesterners to get an overall view of the various Hawaiian Islands without having to pack and unpack every night.

Passengers form their own group of friends on a ship, so a cruise like this also gives you a built-in group of friends with whom to tour the islands.

THE FIRST TWO days are spent on the Big Island of Hawaii: Monday in Hilo, on the lush side of the island, and Tuesday in Kona, on the dry

side. Tours are available to both cities, as well as to Volcanoes National Park, the City of Refuge and some of the scenic spots such as Akaka Falls.

Charter fishing boat tours are also available out of Kona, which is noted for its deep sea fishing. Kona is the only stop where the ship weighs anchor off shore instead of at docksides.

Wednesday, the Independence pulls into Maui at dawn, and passengers scatter to the beach, to the resort areas, or on an eight-hour scenic-but-bumpy ride called the Hana Road, which takes you to the beautiful, uninhabited end of the island.

Thursday and Friday are spent in Kauai, which I think is the most scenic and exciting of all the islands. Helicopter tours to the Na Pali coast, and bus tours to Waimea Canyon are offered.

STATEROOMS on the Oceanic Independence range from \$800 to \$1,750, depending on whether you share an inside lower-deck room with three other people or have an upper-deck outside room with sitting room. Although shipboard accommodations are always smaller than you will find in a hotel, most passengers agreed that the staterooms on this ship are comfortable.

Shipboard costs are entirely covered by your fare, except for the bar bill and tips.

Air-sea packages are available for about \$450 additional airfare. All tours are extra.

Passengers may begin and end the one-week cruises from any of the island stops, but no overnight or part-of-a-week arrangements can be made.

More information on American Hawaii Cruises is available from your travel agent.

travel log Iris Sanderson Jones contributing travel editor

Frog-day afternoons, lobster bisque nights

KAUAI, Hawaii — It's more than a hotel. It is a fantasy. Sarong-clad Hawaiians run barefoot through the palm trees lighting the torches. Giant clam shells replace the washbowls in the rooms. Beaded curtains in the dining room are made from glass balls and kukui nuts.

Some people call it corny, but whatever you call it, it works. Coco Palms is the fantasy of Grace Guslander, a mainland woman who came here from Pennsylvania many years ago and fell in love with Hawaii.

The hotel she has created is a combination of resort, legend, Hawaiian history and fun, with a little chutzpa thrown in for good luck.

It is built in a huge grove of coconut trees, said to be royal ground. The grass house of the last Hawaiian queen was on these grounds, and her memory is celebrated here regularly, as are many ancient Hawaiian traditions as Grace Guslander sees them.

A torch-lighting ceremony is held nightly, with Mrs. Guslander's voice carrying the story over the microphone so that it can be heard throughout the grounds. As she speaks, a barefoot Hawaiian runs through the trees swinging a lighted pot.

ONE BY ONE he lights the tall torches that light the path and the small ones that make flickering light for as far as the eye can see under the coconut trees.

When the voice stops, and the lights go on, we are all speechless with wonder and delight.

The quiet disappears quickly enough in the dining room, but the delight remains. None of the staff has been trained in traditional chef's schools, including the Japanese chef who created this magnificent lobster bisque with its pastry hat. The Queenelles Ome are followed by Palace Oysters made with taro instead of spinach, and we are just beginning.

Mrs. Guslander is justly proud of her chef and of the family she has created here. She likes to tell about the young apprentice that this same Japanese chef is training in the kitchen.

I did not stay at Coco Palms; I only went for dinner. But the fantasy seems to float gently through all the rooms with their wrought iron chandeliers shaped like palm leaves, and their frog-shaped accessories.

The Legend of Pukaniini, the Polokauuni of Coco Palms, says that a handsome Hawaiian prince fell in love with a beautiful princess and was turned into a frog on this very spot.

NBODY REALLY knows whether the legends, traditions, and rituals are authentic, and after a few minutes at Coco Palms, nobody cares. The wedding scene from Elvis Presley's Blue Hawaii was filmed there under those palm trees. Fantasy Island cannot be very far away.

You can go home and be sensible about all this. I'll just stay here by the flickering lights with the voice of Mrs. Guslander murmuring Hawaiian legends in my ear and a tall beautiful Hawaiian man wrapping flower leis around my neck.

If you insist on being practical, however, Coco Palms is now a part of Amfac Resorts Hawaii; room rates range from \$51 to \$85 double, unless you take the \$225 Palace Suite.

There's no extra charge for the fantasy.



There are times for working, times for dancing, and times for wasting time. There are also times for mental health breaks the likes of which these serene souls are taking advantage.

Going to where the gusto is

I bring dry, SH, idly sipping here My beer.

— George Arnold

tripping

If a stop in Milwaukee is on tap, can a visit to the spot that makes the brew that makes that city famous be overlooked.

Jos. Schlitz Brewing Co. tours run 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays and follows the hop on its journey to stardom. Tour groups take the balcony pathway above 500-gallon copper kettles containing the filling for nearly 900 six-packs, past the bottling operation to the Brown Bottle, a guest hall authentically reproduced in the manner of a European ratskeller.

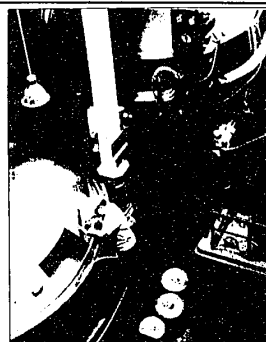
And since people for the most part only go around once in life, the tours and the gusto are free. The plant is at 234 W. Galena St. For information, 414-224-6686.

• FALLS TRIBUTE

A permanent international monument to the Americans held in Iran will be dedicated at 1 p.m. Oct. 13 at Prospect Point at Niagara Falls.

The monument, a lighted, 52-flag display, was conceived by Sgt. Henry Provost, an Air Force Communications specialist stationed at the Niagara Falls Air Force Base.

A plaque will be at the base of each staff for each of the names of the hostages. Names will be inscribed once they're back in the States.



A brewhouse employee dips a sampling cup into the boiling wort (beer in its early stage). The containers beside him hold hops.