

TRAVEL

# Hawaii's a heavenly destination, but Maui's the best

BY THE THREE OL BAGS  
SPECIAL WRITERS

First, the bad news, "you have to leave to come back home." That's the answer Tom and Wendi Sparkman, former Livonia residents who recently moved to South Lyon, gave in unison, when asked if there was anything at all they did not like about Hawaii.

Their introduction to Hawaii was in November of 1997, when they honeymooned in Maui. Since then they've gone two additional times, and are packing their bags for trip number four, this month.

The Sparkmans like the island of Maui best, and they're not alone. According to Wagonlit Travel in Plymouth it's the number one island destination in the world.

Maui has an ideal combination of lush scenic nature, plenty of sporting opportunities, ideal weather conditions and great island entertainment.

Tom and Wendi Sparkman have lots of insider tips about Hawaii, and fortunately for us, they're happy to share them.

According to Tom, everyone should experience the road to Hana "it's one of the most beautiful roads in the world," he said.

"Driving in Hawaii is like having your own travel channel - the windshield is a big TV," he added.

"Don't stop at Hana when you take the road to Hana" cautioned Wendi. "Some people get to the city of Hana and think it's time to turn around, but the Seven Sacred Pools are just past Hana."

"The problem is, you sign rental agreements saying you

## Travel tips

- Take a video camera.
- Consider which time of year will accommodate activities you want to participate in.
- Check the Internet for package deals.
- Expect to pay about 25 percent more for everything on the island during whale watching season.
- Scuba dive at Black Rock (near the Sheraton, on Maui).
- Don't rent scuba equipment at the beach. Go into the village and save big.
- Plan on at least 10 days for your trip (two days dedicated to travel).
- Take the helicopter trip at least once.
- Don't limit whale watching to charters. Try any beach you see people gathering. (Charters do have fun amenities, however.)
- Don't visit more than two islands during a two-week trip. Too much time is wasted boarding airplanes, renting cars and checking in and out of hotels.
- Use lots of sunscreen, especially when snorkeling. Ten minutes in Hawaii's sun is equal to one hour of Michigan's.
- Take the road to Hana. Purchase the audiotape to hear directions to important stop off points.
- Don't expect a lei to be placed on your neck unless your package specifically promises that. (But, you can purchase one for about \$10.)
- Leave formal wear home. Dress is casual. Shorts and a polo shirt is the perfect outfit.
- Attend a luau, in spite of how "touristy" the locals say it is.
- Watch local windsurf. (Maui is the windsurfing capital of the world.)
- Don't surf at locals only beaches. However, you are welcome to watch the locals there.
- Get to know locals and ask them for tips about what to do.

## Helpful Web Sites

- www.expedia.com
- www.travelocity.com
- www.gohawaii.com

can't go all the way around ... well you can go to the Seven Sacred Pools. That's actually the turning around point."

Depending on the time of year, the pools are varying degrees of fabulous.

"When we went in November, every single one of them was full

of water," said Wendi. "People were swimming in them, and the plants were lush."

"Don't expect Hana to be like Las Vegas, either," warned Tom. "It's just a little town. The road is the attraction."

The Sparkmans encourage travelers to stop at the Shell gas station just before the road to Hana to purchase a cassette tape that walks travelers through the most scenic spots.

The tape includes vital details, like "stop at mile marker 13, pull over 13 feet, walk back and you'll see a 100 foot waterfall," said Tom.

Without the tape you might drive right by some spectacular sight, and wonder what the big deal about the road to Hana was."

In addition to soaking in the natural beauty of the island,



We're on vacation: Wendi and Tom Sparkman pose for a photograph at Luau on Maui.



Pretty drive: On the road to Hana you'll see lots of scenic spots including this beach

there are a number of other activities to enjoy. Take for example golf.

"It's a golfer's paradise," said Tom. "Every hole you're on is like a signature hole. There are whales jumping in the background on one hole. There's a movie star on the next hole. It's just a crazy place."

Speaking of whales jumping, whale watching is one of Maui's biggest attractions. Excursion boats take tourists out into the ocean and stop near mating prides. However, the Spark-

man's witnessed a full breach, (a whale jumps entirely out of the water, does a complete flip and splashes in, backside down) while walking along a private beach.

"We just got off the road, and sat on a tree that had fallen down to watch the whales," said Tom, grateful for the experience.

"Some people go there all the time to see whales, and never see a full breach."

However, if parasailing is your passion, skip the whale season (late December through early April), because parasailing

isn't done during whale watching season.

"You can't be going with the boat and then have to stop for a whale," explained Wendi, who was hesitant to parasail at first, but now considers it one of her fondest memories. "I was petrified. The only reason I went up was because they let us go tandem (together). It was awesome."

The island is home to some of the most famous restaurants in the world, including Longhi's, recommended by Al Michaels, of ABC Sports, as the place to request your last meal from, if you ever wind up on death row.

In addition to fish so fresh, "they'll tell you the name of the guy that just caught it," the Sparkmans urge travelers to try Longhi's Chocolate Souffle.

"It's to die for," said Wendi.

"You have to order soufflé a half-hour before you want it, because it takes that long to prepare," said Tom.

The Sparkman call Hawaii "heaven on earth." Now, if only there were no return flights.

The Three Ol Bags are Sandra Campbell, Sharon Heywood and Linda Sparkman of Garden City, three women in their 50s who enjoy traveling together. Visit their Web site [www.threelolbags.com](http://www.threelolbags.com)

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