

The scenic Big Island is not meant to be rushed around

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



Ahhh — paradise, peel me a grape

Story and photos: IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Lapahoehoe Point, Hawaii. — We are crouched on the lava beach, or in the doorway of our motor homes, watching the sun pull itself up from the Pacific Ocean. The sun is silhouetted against the black spires that mark the shoreline. The spires are made of lava that rolled down this steep slope long ago and froze in their upward leap as they hit the sea.

Eager photographers are wet with ocean spray, and I am sipping Gordon Morse's coffee and listening to the Legend of Naupaka, that green vine that grows inexplicably on this inhospitable-looking lava rock.

There is beach naupaka that grows here on the shore, and mountain naupaka that grows thousands of feet up where this slope becomes a mountain-top. Each plant has only half a flower, according to the legend. They are separated lovers, and when you put the two together they form a whole flower.

YOU CAN SEE the whole history of the island from here, with a little imagination. Here is the lava that formed this mountaintop six miles above the ocean floor.

Where the mountain crevices upward into valleys a high above the thick tropical foliage grows on the same lava-flowered vines hang 100 feet down from the trees between sugar cane fields.

The coastline that folds away in these deep narrow valleys hides ancient Hawaiian villages, missionary churches, taro patches, and macadamia nut factories.

The road that is just visible along the misted green cliff leads south to Hilo and the volcanoes, north to the Waipio Valley and across high cattle country to the Kona coast, once the kingdom of King Kamehameha the great and now ruled at least partially by resort hotels.

THE RESORT HOTELS are world-standard in both Hilo and Kona, but you must leave them behind if you are going to see the island that the Polynesians found 12 centuries ago.

These early settlers moved by sea because the land is too rugged for carts or easy walking. According to Robert Wendiman's book "Hawaii" a marvelous photographic record, the few 19th century tourists traveled down these perilous slopes by mule over 100 years ago. Today there are fine roads, and the curious traveler drives them if he wants to see the Big Island.

The island is too big to use a single hotel as a base, and the hotel situation too uncertain in rural areas to expect good accommodations without advance reservations. That is why we are here in a recreational vehicle led by Gordon Morse and his family, who run the largest rental agency in the islands.



A Hawaiian girl poses next to a grooved konane stone, which was used by the ancient Hawaiians in a game similar to checkers.



Taking the backroads on the Big Island will bring you to scenes like this of men at work in the taro fields in the Waipio Valley. Derived from the edible taro stems is the Hawaiian delicacy poi.

Morse was born on Molokai, the island once infamous for its leper colony. He was a newspaperman in Honolulu when he decided to leave the world of television and comic books for the real world of the Fire Goddess Pele.

Morse is one of the few people who has seen the white rainbow by moonlight over the mountain of Moanaka. He is leading us in a caravan of RVs around the island, a trek he makes in special groups several times a year.

Most travelers rent his vehicles, hear his little speech and go off on their own here as they would do elsewhere. The speech includes information about the 16 campgrounds around the island, and the fact that they are designed for nature lovers and not for people who need modern facilities.

There are no hot showers, flush toilets or fancy RV hookups. Just cold showers, simple toilets, sometimes a lighted pavilion for cooking and dining, and the world's most magnificent sunsets.

You'll also hear where the gas stations are, get a warning about not running out of gas on the Saddle Road near the summit of Mauna Loa and a painful bit of information about insurance. RVs weren't designed for steep narrow roads and low-hanging trees, so Morse explains that you will probably knock a vent cover off the camper or otherwise damage it, and that Hawaiian law does not allow you to insure for 100 percent of such damage.

If you damage a vehicle, it will cost you at least \$100 deductible. Now that you've picked your Flair, Jubilee or other motor vehicle you can follow the Holo-Holo Camper map you'll find inside the glove box long with other valuable information. The Big Island is a mountaintop with three sides. The long side, the Kona coast, faces west. If you pick up your camper at Hilo, you will probably go south along the Puna coast to the volcano area, north through lush country and then across to Kona.

THE PUNA COAST road will take you towards South Point, the southernmost point in the United States and probably the landing place of the first Polynesian seagoing settlers. There are several campgrounds on this coast, none with lighted pavilions or showers. We followed Highway 13 to the Black Sand Beach, the Queen's Bath (see Travelog) and the Kamaoama Camp Ground in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Here you can walk along the sea through fields where signs of an ancient Hawaiian village have been recreated simply and tastefully by the park service. Kamaoama provides easy access to

Chain of Craters Road, which will lead you past the petroglyph fields, the small mountain called Moana Ulu that was formed by recent volcanic activity and the Thurston Lava Tube. From there, Crater Rim Road leads you past the cinder cones and steaming volcanic vents to a view of the Kilauea crater and the observatory. Take time to walk the half-mile into the petroglyph fields and take materi-

Going there?

There are three rental agencies for recreational vehicles on the Big Island of Hawaii. Aloha Camper Rentals, 145 Ponehawai St., Hilo, Hawaii, has two minihomes, Beach Boy Campers, Suite B2-A, 1720 Ala Moana Blvd., Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii has 28 compact cabover units throughout the islands. Holo-Holo Campers Inc., PO Box 11, Hilo, Hawaii, has 70 units throughout the islands with eight models including compact cabovers, van conversions, pickup campers, minihomes and motorhomes.

At Holo-Holo Campers Inc., the rates range from \$33 a day for a compact and standard cabover for two to \$60 a day for a 24-foot minihome for six. Oahu rates slightly higher; Maui and Kauai rates slightly lower. No mileage charge. Special rates on older models. Also U-drive cars and condominium-car packages. Same price all year. Heaviest rental period June 15 to Sept. 5, and Dec. 15 to Jan. 10. The Morse family also leads special expeditions to off-beat or archeological sites; helps do-it-yourself campers with information and equipment; and provides services for skiing on Mauna Kea.

You can also trek, do private camping, join a Hawaiian version of Outward Bound or a sea adventure called Sea Trek Hawaii. For information on these as well as festivals, fishing tournaments and other events contact the County of Hawaii, Dept. of Research and Development, 25 August St., Hilo, Hawaii 96720.

als to make rubbings of the designs carved long ago into the volcanic rock.

The desolation of the volcanoes is in contrast to the lush scenic country you will see north of Hilo. A four-mile scenic route north of Hilo plunges you downhill through post-card scenery where vines hang 100 feet from the trees, like flowered laundry.

Beyond Lapahoehoe, a road climbs straight up the mountain past sugar cane fields to Kalopa Native Forest, where huge Ohia trees rise above clipped grass and a few simple camper cabins and campsites in the middle of an authentic Hawaiian wilderness.

THE ROAD TO Kalopa is a narrow and wildly rising strip of asphalt going straight up above the sea with a kind of terrifying splendor.

Further north along the coast a similar road leads straight down 1,800 feet into Waipio Valley, but here you must hire a four-wheel-drive and driver or be prepared to hire ace-trover Jimmy Rice to pull you from a ditch.

Down in the valley, where taro fields gleam in flat patches between the narrowing walls, you can sleep overnight in the only simple hotel for \$5 a person, if you bring your food.

The whole island is like that if you take time to get out of the towns. High, high up the mountain, mauka, or down, down to the sea, makai.

There is more, of course. Take the high road through the Parker Ranch, or the scary Saddle Road past the summit of Mauna Kea. Visit campgrounds in Kona north, near Kohala, and in Kona south, near Milohi. Gordon Morse says that the fishermen still go out in outrigger canoes every morning at Milohi.

BY NOW you will wonder whether the rental period was left behind in Detroit or whether this magic mountaintop land of lava and legends and white rainbows is real.

There are colored rainbows every day all over the Big Island, as it is called, but listen to Gordon Morse: "Once, not long ago, I was camping on the Saddle Road near the summit of Mauna Kea. At dawn, it is silent and cold. Sometimes at two or three in the morning, if the mist comes in and the moon is full, you see a white rainbow. I saw the white rainbow.

"There is sparse vegetation there, and you see a yellow and green bird like a mynah bird. It's called a Palala bird and it will soon be extinct."

If you want to see the old Hawaii, perhaps you should go before the Palala bird and much of the rest of this ancient world becomes extinct.

I saw Adam and Eve last week, bathing in a Garden of Eden called the Queen's Bath, on the big island of Hawaii.

You would drive straight past the Queen's Bath if you were not looking for the bent metal sign on the rusty metal pole beside a dirt road.

A few feet down that road the huge black lava rocks form natural steps down to the green glade where the Queen's Bath makes a 15-by-60-foot slash of clear water in a volcanic rift between stacked black rocks.

THIS ONCE WAS the royal bath of Hawaiian queens, but on this day a young girl with her body glowing roundly out of her bikini, sat on the near edge with her feet in the water. Another girl swam under the Ohia trees etched against a blue and white Hawaiian sky.

On the other side of the pool, where the layered rock ledge rises



The secluded and off-the-path Queen's Bath.

higher, a bearded young man in a flowered bathing suit picked fruit from the trees.

He threw the fruit across the water to the girls and dived in after it. The water was so clear and deep that he could follow the fruit to where the rock rift narrows to almost make a bottom to the pool 20 feet below.

It was only a passing moment, there in a tree hollow of shining black water and silence, but the mystique of Hawaii gets to you after awhile.

I wasn't the only one who noticed it. A fellow photographer was so intent on taking a picture of Adam and Even that he fell off the black lava rock into a clump of bushes and nearly broke his leg.

From the Mailbag: United Airlines has new rules for passengers carrying guns. Rifles and shotguns will be accepted only when packed in a manufacturer's crushproof case made specifically for the gun or in another hard case such as United's hard-fiber sportsliner.

Handguns must be packed in locked hard-sided baggage. The Federal Aviation Administration requires that firearms carried as checked baggage must be declared and unloaded and United requires a signed declaration to that effect.

You can take up to 10 pounds of small arms ammunition if you pack it in the original manufacturer's box or in a wood, metal or fiber container that prevents movement of the contents. Every airline sets its own policy for transporting firearms, so check before you fly.

A WISCONSIN MOTEL is offering its regular \$50 rooms at 1945 prices between now and Christmas.

The Heidelberg Resort and Conference Center at Green Lake will give you a lakeside room at \$9.80 per room, and you can put up to four people in the room without extra charge.

Why? That's the rate that charged in 1945 and they are using it to promote the hotel during the off-season in an attempt to attract attention to the resort.

I haven't seen it, but it was described to me as a "luxurious 64-unit lodge on the lake, with a dining room, indoor pool and sauna."

The location attracts thousands of geese during their southward migration. For information contact Heidelberg House, Green Lake, Wis. 54941, or call 294-3344.

WINTER WEEKENDS at Shakerstown, Ky., were so popular last year that you should reserve now if you are interested in taking advantage of the 1980 packages.

The winter weekend packages are scheduled for Dec. 28-29; Jan. 11-12; Jan. 18-19; Jan. 25-26; Feb. 1-2; Feb. 8-9; Feb. 15-16; and Feb. 22-23.

The village has 62 rooms, all in restored 19th century buildings. Last year, they were all booked by Jan. 1. Write to Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Route 4, Harrodsburg, Ky. 40330, or call 608-734-5411.

It costs \$70 plus 5 percent Kentucky sales tax for adults, \$35 for young people 12 through high school and \$17 for children younger than 12.

Cruises stop at Peking

Passengers booked for the 14-day Indonesia Adventure Cruises of the M.S. Prinsendam may now stop at Peking and Kwangchow (Canton) as well as Hong Kong.

The Prinsendam cruises depart from Singapore every other Monday days through April 14, 1980, for Peking, Sumatra, West Java and Bali. The China tours are offered on all departure dates except Nov. 25 and April 14.

Watch for The Spring Season Thursday, November 22 Don't start the Holidays without it. The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

3rd person FREE IN A ROOM. ROOM BATH INCLUDES: 3 MEALS DAILY. HONEY MOON WITH ENTERTAINMENT. FREE TAXI FOR 2 IN A ROOM. FREE TOWELS (ON LA). MINIMAL WATER USAGE. WEEK END BATHS - FREE DAILY BREAKFAST. Harbor Island Spa MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA 33141

Christmas - New Years all via UNITED AIRLINES. HONOLULU ACAPULCO LAS VEGAS. ST. THOMAS SAN JUAN CRUISE. Call: (313) 557-5145

The "World Adventure Series" continues to take armchair travelers down the road and around the bend at the Detroit Institute of Arts auditorium.

Shows run Sunday afternoons and tickets are priced at \$3 each. Still to run in the series: Nov. 18: "Maritime Canada" with Arthur Wilson; Nov. 25: "Britain Rediscovered" with Thayer Soule; Dec. 2: "The Majestic Rhine" with John Roberts; Dec. 9: "Spectacular Norway" with Jonathan Hagar; Jan. 13: "The Spell of Ireland" with Bill Madsen; Jan. 20: "Egypt and the Nile" with William Stockdale.