

### 03 Mar ~ Monday, Kona Coffee

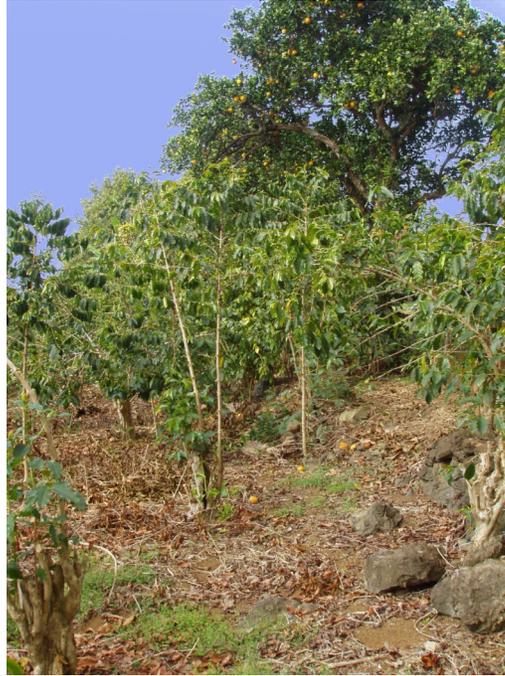
A 22-mile belt in the foothill region, along the west slopes of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, is Kona coffee country. Kona coffee is harvested manually, so is labor intensive and expensive. Coffee was introduced here in 1828 and flourished until the crash of the coffee market in 1899. Farms were subdivided and leased to Japanese immigrants who helped maintain the Kona tradition. Some 30 farms remain, each just a few acres in size.

Today we visit the Kona Historical Society's Living History Farm, once owned by the Japanese Uchida family. Divided into small groups, we see the primitive machinery and Spartan house they lived in, built in 1925.

Coffee requires 50-60 inches of rain. The shrubs begin to fruit in 4-5 years and last 15 years. The average coffee shrub grows to a height of about thirty feet, with white flowers and red, fleshy fruits. Each fruit contains pulp and two seeds, and it is the seeds, not "beans", that are used to make the brew. There are 4-8 harvests each year. A retired Japanese engineer explains how the coffee fruit, known as cherries, are skinned, abraded to remove the "parchment", washed and dried. A more complex process than I realized.



405. Our Guide.



418. Coffee bushes in front, orange tree behind.



Coffee fruits.



415. Donkey power.



406. Skinning the fruit.



407. Single cylinder donkey engine used to hoist beans.



410. Drying beans. The roof slides to protect from rain.



419. The Uchida home.

When calling on a neighbor, it was customary to bring a cloth wrapped gift to the hostess. Our guide instructs us to call out to announce our arrival. Shedding our shoes we are permitted to walk through their living quarters and witness a little ceremony. The "hostess" accepts the gift, traditionally cookies or sweets, and offers them to a Buddha shrine. Today, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, is "Girls Day" so several dolls are displayed.

We watch as she shows how lunch boxes would have been prepared for the field workers, rolled rice and vegetables.

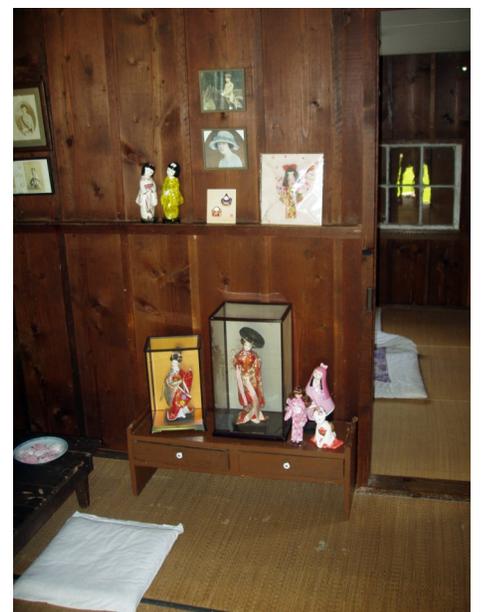
Because of the labor intensity, the whole family, including children was needed to harvest. Children used cans, adult's small baskets. To reach the higher seeds, a Kagi stick was used to bend the branch. This is a hooked stick with attached rope. You stand on the rope leaving two hands free to pick. The seeds were transferred to sacks and moved by donkey to sites where they are roasted.



424. Buddha shrine.



421. The kitchen.



425. Girls day dolls.



426. The living room. Notice the type writer.



429. The bathtub. These people must have been tiny.

Chickens run wild, but the rooster is tethered. He is partial to painted toenails.

Held every fall in Kailua-Kona, the Ironman Triathlon race encompasses three endurance events of a 2.4 mile ocean swim in Kailua-Kona Bay, followed by a 112 mile bike ride across the lava desert to Hawi and back, and ending with a 26.2 mile marathon along the coast of the from Keauhou to Keahole Point to Kailua-Kona; finishing on Ali'i Drive.



428. The laundry.



432. Lunch on the veranda at Casandra's overlooking Kailua-Kona Bay.

At the hotel, part of the veranda restaurant is closed. A result of damage during the October 2006 earthquake. I notice cracks adjacent to the high ceiling pillars, which have been stopped by drilling holes, and inserting plastic plugs. It looks as if a couple of ceiling lights fell down. Birds are going in and out of the hole with nesting material.

The front desk prints boarding passes for tomorrow's departure and secures an upgrade to Economy plus. Very nice assistance!

We enjoy our farewell reception at the pool bar followed by dinner in the restaurant.