

25 Feb ~ Monday, Sheraton Kauai.

We flew on United Airlines who have no reciprocal arrangement with Hawaii Airlines to credit mileage, so we assume we have lost out. Then Jan discovers our American Airlines mileage card. Christine rushes to the phone minutes before we are due to board and secures credit for us.

Our flight on Hawaiian Airlines lasts 25 min. Just enough time for a drink of passion-orange-guava juice. There are a few potholes in the sky. Flying in over sheer red cliffs, we touch down at Lihue where our driver, Nani waits with a Rogers's bus.

Kauai is 5.6m years old. 63,000 people live on the island. Buildings have a height restriction of four stories.

Along the coast, the sun shines brightly. Inland, clouds float over the mountaintops.

Mount Wai`ale`ale 5,148 ft is the second highest point on the island. Averaging more than 460 inches of rain over the last 32 years, with a record 683 inches in 1982, its summit is considered one of the rainiest spots on earth. It has been promoted as *the* wettest spot, although the 38-year average at Mawsynram, India is 467.4 inches.

Beginning with "South Pacific" in 1957, more than 60 films have been made here.



Lumahai Beach where Mitzi Gaynor "Washed that man right out of her hair."

Kauai is home to the Barking Sands missile range.

Kamehameha 1 never conquered this island. He tried, but storms and pestilence defeated him.

Our first stop is the Gaylord Estate at Kilohana which translates into "Not to be surpassed." It was a 27,000-acre sugar plantation. The first sugar mill opened in 1835. Sugar cane production was a major source of revenue in the islands from the mid 1800's until 1998. At which time labor costs and the removal of favorable tariffs made it uneconomic. All the sugar cane mills closed causing the loss of many good jobs.

The original home has been turned into a restaurant. They cannot accommodate us all at one time, so our party divides in three. We are fortunate to dine first, and sit at an outdoor table for eight, shaded by an arbor. Stone pillars support concrete beams. Gardens either side are guarded by chickens. I know I dropped a french fry, which disappeared. Presumably a chicken snuck up and grabbed it.



108. Lunch.



111. Gaylord's guards, the chickens.

Two carriages await us. A pair of Clydesdales pull a dray. Benches down each side seat 16. Past the donkey paddock. Until surplus Jeeps became available after WWII, these were the main mode of transportation.



105. Our carriage awaits.



106.



107.



115



113. Pineapple.



121. The front of Gaylord's.

Throughout the tour, I am surprised how few insects there are. Our carriage driver tells us a couple of hurricanes wiped out the chicken farms, releasing them into the wild. The chickens multiplied and eat every insect in sight. Some pest control.

Sugar cane takes two years to mature. The fields are burned in sections to remove the leaves. The canes are then harvested by cutting. Ash and vegetable matter fall to the ground. This process has increased the thickness of the topsoil from a few inches to several feet. Sugar cane requires a huge amount of water, so irrigation is imperative. Fields are replanted every 7-9 yrs.

With the demise of sugar as a cash crop, farmers switched to raising cattle, however it is too expensive to fatten them in Hawai'i, so they are exported to the mainland for finishing.

With increased demand for ethanol, some farmers are switching back to sugar.

The trees with bright red blooms are African Tulip Trees considered a serious weed. There are 37 varieties of the Bird of Paradise flower. 70 varieties of banana, 450 of hibiscus. The funny tree with external roots above the base is the walking palm. It moves by sending down new roots seeking sunlight.



African Tulip Tree.



Bird of Paradise.



Ti Plant.



119. Walking Palm.



Banana.

It is very expensive to live on the island. 1/2 gal milk \$7-8, at Wal-Mart \$3, cereal \$6. Nani tells us it is OK if you know how to survive. She grows fruit and vegetables and trades with neighbors for fish and meat. She slows the bus to point out fruits and vegetables growing in the tiny front yards of homes.

Gas is \$3.57 here and as we later see, even higher on other islands.

We drive through a tunnel of swamp mahogany; they dwarf our coach. These are part of the eucalyptus family.

In Koloa the median home price is \$630K.



At Spouting Horn, we stand fascinated watching the wave action push seawater back through lava tubes. The spray rises thirty feet into the air. The tubes formed when soft underlying lava eroded away leaving a hard top surface.

Ancient Hawaiians believed this coastline was once guarded by a giant moo (lizard). Everyone was afraid of the moo because it would eat anyone who tried to fish or swim in the area. One day a man named Liko entered the ocean. The moo went to attack him but Liko quickly swam under the lava shelf and escaped through a small hole to the surface. The large moo followed him and got himself stuck in the lava tube. To this day, you can hear the lizard's groan and see his breath spraying from the hole.

A line of stalls ranges from cheap to expensive. "No, I don't need Tahitian black pearl earrings." Only \$450.

125. Spouting Horn.



128. Black lava.



131. More lava at Spouting Horn.



137. Hula.

Our luggage has been taken ahead to the Sheraton and waits in our rooms. A nice touch, which is repeated at each stop. The only problem is we have a wrong case. However, by the time I walk to the front desk and back, this has been corrected.

The hotel provides free Mai Tais from 5-6:00pm. We take the last open seats on a patio bar, overlooking the beach, stand in line briefly for drinks, and listen to a small band. Two guitars a banjo and hula dancer. We watch a beautiful sunset and chatter with a couple from Manhattan.

Time for dinner. We wait for a table on the outside balcony. It is chilly. I go for a sweater. Why don't the torches blow out?



138. Sunset.