

WAIKIKI & MAUI 2011

This trip started off with a phone call. Kathy's older son Joey was planning a wedding on Oahu and then a honeymoon on Maui. He asked us to be there for the ceremony, and we agreed. After the ceremony we were all going to a luau to celebrate, and then be on our own.



OAHU

We discovered much to our dismay, that there was going to be a huge conference called the Asia Pacific Economic Conference going on during our stay in Honolulu. Among other participants are the presidents of the U.S., China and Russia. As a result, certain streets and parts of the ocean were going to be closed off, or access limited.

We got a call from the people picking us up for the Luau changing the pickup point because of these closures. Kathy's son was very worried about getting to the airport, so I finally found the Honolulu city website that had a list of all the closures. I got out the Honolulu street map, and determined that the closures would not affect any of us. I was sadly mistaken!

The wedding was a beautiful success, and everything that the family had hoped for. Joey's son and daughter and Dawn's son and daughter were the attendants for their parents. It is the blending of a beautiful new family.

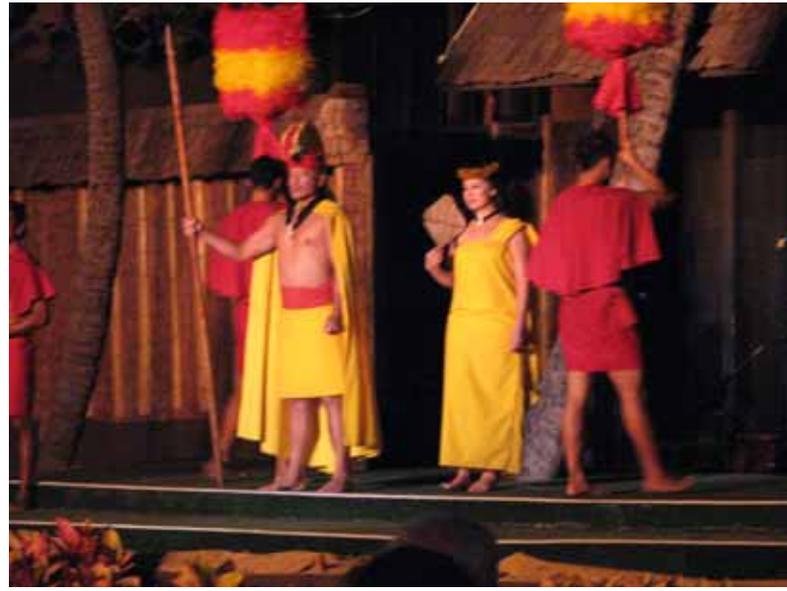
MAUI



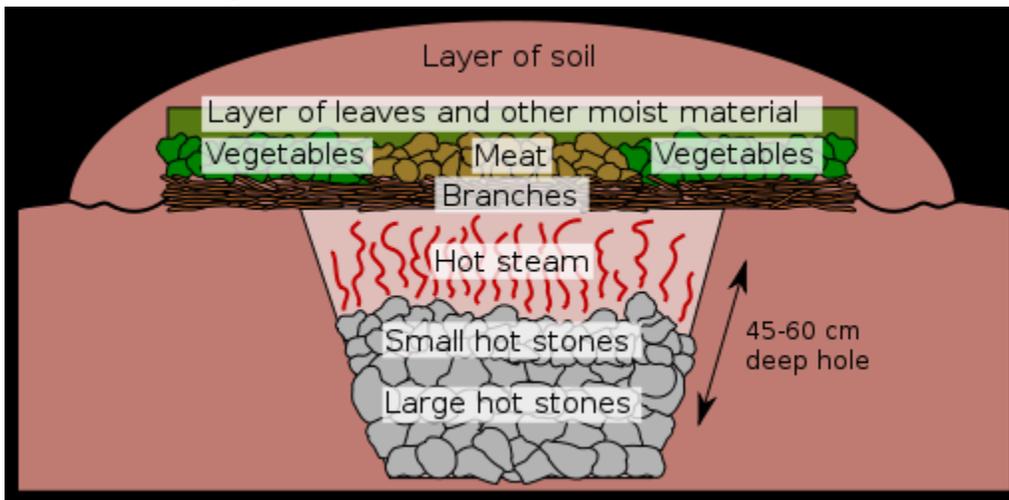
After the wedding we all went to Germaine's Luau, which was supposed to be the best on the island. We took a taxi to the new pickup point, and it was jammed! It seems all the tours were consolidated at

this one point. It took the buses forever to get through the traffic, and as a result we were about an hour late getting to the Luau.

Upon arrival, we were traditionally welcomed with a Hawaiian Shell Lei. The sounding of the conch shell announced the beginning of the evening's festivities!



As the imu (underground oven) was uncovered, the savory aroma of the Kalua Pua'a (roasted pig) – our main course of the evening – reminded us that dinner is soon to be served.



Before the feasting began, we were also welcomed with a traditional hula performed by some of the cast.



There was then some fun as some volunteers went up on stage and were dressed in grass skirts and were instructed in performing the hula. Needless to say, it was hilarious!



The night was filled with beauty, color, and excitement as the multi-talented kane (men) and wahine (women) took us through a non-stop, action-packed journey throughout the Islands of Tahiti, Samoa, New Zealand as well as the romantic hula of Hawaii.





All in all, it was a very enjoyable night for all of us. This was the best luau either of us had seen. The bus taking us back to Waikiki could not get anywhere near our hotel because of the security restrictions, so we were dropped off about 6 blocks from our hotel. We had to hike back, which was difficult as we had a full day, with the wedding and the luau.

On our last full day in Waikiki, the security was even tighter, to a point where the sidewalks were blocked, and even crossing the street was regulated. Also, there was a restricted area in the ocean near the place we were to go for a sunset sail, patrolled by the Coast Guard and personal watercraft.



This created a problem for us, as the boarding point for the Sunset Sail was moved about 6 hotels down from the original point. This meant we had to slog about a half mile through the sand to get there. Also Kathy's son and daughter-in-law (Bradey and Carrie) were delayed because they were not allowed to cross the street to get to the beach!



We finally arrived at the meeting place, and signed in for the Sunset Sail. The catamaran sailed in, and we were told to sit in specific areas after boarded to balance the boat. Kathy had shown me the fun of being on the bow trampoline, so we were able to sit there.

As we sailed off, we could see the pink Royal Hawaiian Hotel, one of the first hotels established in Waikiki. The Royal Hawaiian Hotel is considered one of the flagship hotels in Hawaii tourism. It opened its doors to guests on 1 February 1927 with a black tie gala attended by over 1,200 guests. The hotel quickly became an icon of Hawaii's glory days. It was the Hawaii residence or Western White House of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and boasts the bar that invented the Shirley Temple cocktail. As you can see, it is now dwarfed by more modern hotels on all sides.



We could have not asked for a more beautiful evening to spend on our last full day in Waikiki. The seas were calm, the air was warm, and a good breeze propelled our catamaran past Diamond Head. Just as the sun set, another boat sailed between us and the sun, and the last picture will bring back wonderful memories of the time we spent here.



MAUI

We took the short flight Oahu to Maui- I think it took longer to go through security than the flight. However, as we were half way down the jet way, we were all sent back to the terminal because our plane had some mechanical problem. Unfortunately, that meant when we arrived in Maui, it would be dark! This brings a feeling of déjà vu about our time in Kauai, where we also had to find our hotel in

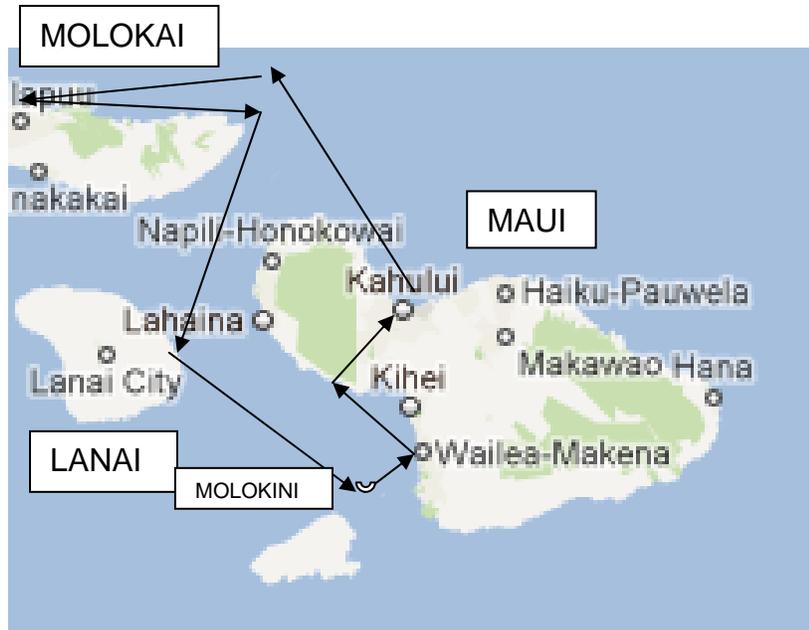
the dark. We picked up our rental car (a red Mustang convertible) and headed for our hotel. We had picked a hotel on the south shore of Maui because we wanted to snorkel Molokini Island which is near there.

Fortunately, we had a pretty good map, and the road signage is quite good. We finally found a little sign pointing to our hotel, but to our dismay, we ended up in a shopping center parking lot! After a few false turns, we discovered the correct driveway and checked into our hotel.

The hotel grounds were huge, and we were fortunate to be put in the building closest to the parking lot. Our room was very large and very comfortable. However, being a high end resort, the bar and dining room prices reflected that fact.

FLIGHTSEEING

We had planned an air tour circling the entire island with Maui Aviators. However, after discussions with our pilot, he suggested a three island tour of Maui, Molokai, and Lanai. This seemed like a much better idea.



Since the wing strut would get in the way of my pictures, Kathy got to sit in the pilot's seat while I sat in back. I told her the secret to flying was simple-push forward the houses get bigger, pull back the houses get smaller. Below is a picture of our pilot ready for another adventure.



After taking off, and leveling out at 1500 feet, we headed northwest past Nakalele Point, the westernmost point on Maui. We flew across the Pailolo Channel towards Molokai. We flew past some steep valleys that were reminiscent of the Na Pali coast on Kauai. We then crossed Kalaupapa point.

This was where Father Damien, a Roman Catholic priest from Belgium tended to people with leprosy. He won recognition for his ministry to people with leprosy (also known as Hansen's disease), who had been placed under a government-sanctioned medical quarantine on the island of Molokai.



On the way back from Kalaupapa, we flew by on of the tallest waterfalls in the world. We then flew past Halawa Bay, with 2 beautiful beaches.



We then flew southwest past the southern shore of Molokai, and were taken with the different colors of the ocean. There was also a small harbor shaped like a trefoil.



We then flew southwest over the Kalohi Channel toward Lanai to visit Shipwreck Beach. The island is owned by the Dole Company and at one time was used to grow pineapples.

Perhaps the most famous resident at Shipwreck Beach is the World War II Liberty Ship, whose rusted hulk still clings to a reef near the shore. This was not the result of an accident. After World War II, this vessel was given "residence" as an economical means of disposal. Made of concrete, the ship was one of 22 ferrous-concrete oilers built between 1942 and 1944.



From Lanai, we flew southeast across the Alalakeki Channel to Molokini crater. This is a semi submerged volcanic cone that has great snorkeling. We will be sailing there in 2 days to snorkel.



After viewing the crater, we headed east toward Wailea, where our hotel was situated. Our pilot told us about Little Beach, which was an isolated clothing optional beach below Wailea. He said he quit flying over the area after viewing an 80 year old nude man in the lotus position!

We flew past our hotel, and could really see how extensive the grounds were. We were happy that we were staying in the high rise building, as it was closest to the parking lot.

We then flew up the valley which is between the two mountains back to the airport at Kahalui.

The pilot asked Kathy if she wanted to land the plane, but she declined.

All in all, it was a wonderful flight with smooth air almost all the way and beautiful weather.



SUGAR TRAIN

We decided to try to snorkel off a rocky point in front of our hotel. It was a bad decision because there was no safe way to get past some of the jagged rocks to snorkel. We asked where the best place was to get in the water to snorkel, and we were directed to a beach about a quarter mile away. We felt that was too long a hike, especially after snorkeling, so we decided to drive to Lahaina.

I had wanted to take the Lahaina-Kanapaali sugar train many years ago, but it was not running at that time. It is running now, and I had downloaded the schedule, so we headed for Lahaina.

We first went to see the world's largest Banyan Tree. This Banyan Tree was first planted in April, 1873, and marked the 50th Anniversary of Christian missionary work in Lahaina. The tree was imported from India and was only 8 feet tall. It now stands over 60 feet high, has 12 major trunks in addition to a huge core. It stretches over a 200-foot area and shades 2/3 of an acre. Members of the community carefully maintain the symmetrical shape of the Banyan Tree.

.We found a great place for lunch, and while eating I checked the train schedule. We discovered we had plenty of time to drive to Kanapaali to catch the train at that end.

While we were waiting for the train at the station, we enjoyed a huge cone of Hawaiian shaved ice from a little snack stand.

The train arrived on schedule, and we boarded it for Lahaina. I was wearing my t-shirt with a picture of an 1898 steam engine made by the same company as the sugar train's engine. I spoke to the engineer, and she said she noticed the shirt as they were pulling in to the station. It was a pleasant slow ride to the other end, and while I was visiting the gift shop to buy a pin for my conductor's vest, Kathy (bless her) got a picture of the engine on the little turntable.



We boarded the train for the ride back, and sat in one of the last cars for a change of scenery. When we got back to Kanapaali, the engine and tender were uncoupled and went through a “wye” switch. This is a track shaped like the letter “Y”, but with a connector track between the two arms of the “Y”. A wye is used to reverse the direction of the engine, which pulls completely through that leg of wye; a switch is thrown and reverses the direction, allowing the movement across the semi-loop track of the wye. The locomotive then comes through the other leg of the wye and connects to the rear of the train, which now becomes the front of the train.

The train can now go back to Lahaina. While passing through the wye, the engine blew off some steam to clean out the boiler.



MOLOKINI SNORKEL

For our final full day in Maui, we booked a cruise to Molokini Crater and Turtle Town. We went on the Quicksilver, which is a Maui snorkeling 55 foot power catamaran. This Maui snorkeling tour includes breakfast, BBQ lunch, 2 snorkel sites, and a great crew. It is a double-decked catamaran that sped us toward all of the snorkel destinations.



We were very fortunate that the weather was sunny and the seas calm, as it can get rough out there. We took Kathy’s newlywed son and daughter-in-law (Joey and Dawn) along as they were also staying on Maui. It would be the last opportunity to see them before Thanksgiving. We anchored inside the crater, which is also a bird sanctuary. We were then given a safety briefing, and were

issued fins, masks and snorkels. I opted for a floatation belt, because I cannot float the way Kathy (the cork) can. The water was so clear that I actually got pictures of fish from the boat's deck.



There were all manner of fish, but mainly black ones with white stripes.



We snorkeled there for about an hour, and then motored to Turtle Town. There were a number of other boats there, and many snorkelers in the water. Our skipper gave us instructions about not disturbing the turtles and they will ignore you.

I got in the water, and found a coral shelf near the boat. I figured that the turtles would prefer that as opposed to the sandy bottom, and swam along the shelf toward shore. All of a sudden, a large turtle swam by me and disappeared into a small cave in the shelf. I figured at some point it had to come up for air, so I waited outside the cave. In about 10 minutes, sure enough, out it came! I shot about 6 or 7 pictures with my camera, but unfortunately the parallax only allowed one good picture.



I am going to experiment on land with the viewfinder so I can take better pictures with the camera. On the way back to the marina, the skipper stopped near a reef that was also known for turtles. We drifted for a while watching the turtles come up for air. We then headed into the marina and said goodbye to Kathy's family. Since they were staying a day longer than we were, we gave them our snorkel gear to use.

HOMEWARD BOUND

We had an afternoon flight the next day, so we leisurely packed and drove to a nearby shopping center. We discovered it on the way home from snorkeling, as we were not happy at paying resort prices in the hotel restaurant. There was a Subway, a Hawaiian barbecue place and a Vietnamese restaurant all next to one another.

We had lunch at the barbecue place, and then got a foot long sandwich at Subway to eat on the plane.

I returned the rental car and checked in for our flight. Fortunately, the flight was not full, and we had a seat between us. We landed on schedule, and our car and driver were waiting for us.

The trip home was easy, and we got to the house at 11 PM, which was 9 PM Hawaii time.

This trip was extremely memorable spending such happy and fun days with Kathy's family in one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Our next trip will be back to Hawaii in March 2012. We love the island of Kauai, and will be staying at the same condo we had last year.