

have a problem, it affects the entire island. The power was restored in about an hour, and we could cook breakfast. The stove is electric, and I was thinking we could cook breakfast on one of the gas barbecues. Kathy is an experienced camper and I am sure she could have handled it. We got settled in to the condo, and spent quite a bit of time on our lanai overlooking the stream. Another thing that really made our stay enjoyable was the NOOK tablet Kathy's sons gave us. We would sit outside, and listen to a large selection of Hawaiian music from Pandora on our mini speakers.

McBRYDE GARDENS

On our last visit to Kauai, we saw a sign for the National Tropical Botanical Gardens. We both love gardens, and wanted to see them this time. We stopped at the visitor center to see what tours were available. There were two tours offered, a 3 hour guided tour of Allerton Gardens, or a self guided tour of the McBryde Gardens.

We love to tour at our own pace so we opted for the McBryde tour, rather than "following the yellow umbrella" of a guide. The tour would take us by bus to the highest point of the gardens, so we could walk down by ourselves to the pickup point when we were ready to leave.

To prepare for the tour, Kathy started handing me things from her purse to put in the leg pockets of my cargo shorts. It finally dawned on me why she told me to buy cargo shorts when I ordered some new ones. The pockets were so loaded by the time she finished emptying her purse that my pants were about to fall down! I have concluded that I am her personal pack mule LOL! I love her any way (Hee Haw).

Secluded between rugged cliffs dropping down to a verdant valley floor, McBryde Garden is a treasure house of tropical flora. We saw rare and endangered Hawaiian species and learned about the efforts to save them. We took a trip back to ancient Hawai'i in the Canoe Garden. These plants were carried by the ancient Polynesians across thousands of miles of ocean. They provided them with food, medicine, building materials, clothing and shelter in Hawai'i.

The first plants we encountered were bananas which are rich in potassium and a staple food.



The next tree we saw was the candlenut tree, which is Hawaii's state tree. This tree bears oil-filled nuts that can be used for providing light, as medicine, for making dyes, and even fishing. With its light green foliage, it is easy to spot in Hawaiian forests.



Many Hawaiian plants have medicinal uses, but none was more important than the noni or Indian Mulberry tree. The fruit is uneven, about the size of a potato, and ranges in color from green to white to grey.



The breadfruit tree was an important source of food and timber. A single tree produces large numbers of starchy fruits, and planting one almost guaranteed highly nutritional food for a family.



After viewing these trees, instead of following the road down, we took “the road less traveled”. We followed the Lawa’i Stream as it meandered toward the sea. We saw a profusion of beautiful trees and flowers along the way.



Following the stream further, we came to a small dam, and more beautiful flowers.



These are called trumpet flowers for obvious reasons.



These beautiful flowers are called Heliconias



One of the most striking trees was covered with brilliant Red Jade vines. It looked like someone had thrown flower leis in the tree!



We also passed a tree with beautiful orchids growing on its trunk



One of the men in our group pointed out a tree called Jackfruit. The fruit can grow to the size of a watermelon!



On the way back to the visitor center, our driver stopped at the top of the hill and we looked down at part of Allerton Gardens.



There is a private beach connected by a footbridge and a caretaker's house. We were told the waiting list for the position was very long. The present caretaker got the job as a result of the last hurricane. After the storm had passed, he was the only one who volunteered to stay there to protect all the valuable plants and possessions even though the house had been destroyed.

LAWAI BEACH

There are over 70 named beaches on Kauai, each having its own identity as far as access, waves, and dangers. After visiting the McBryde Gardens, we were on our way back to our condo when we noticed a small curved beach called Lawai Beach. It was not crowded, and boasted a large sea grape tree at one end. The owners of our condo had left beach chairs and mats, a cooler, as well as snorkeling equipment for us to use.

The next morning we loaded up the cooler, and made our way to the beach. We set up in the shade of the sea grape tree, and headed for the water. It turned out the beach was very popular for beginning snorkeling classes, as well as something called SNUBA.

SNUBA is relatively new, and combines snorkeling and SCUBA, hence the name. The swimmers use a SCUBA regulator to breathe, but the air comes from a 20 foot hose connected to a floating air tank. This frees the swimmers from wearing a tank.

The nice thing about this beach is a strip of sand leading into the water. This made it much easier than climbing over slippery rocks. I went first, and the number and types of fish in the shallow water just blew me away! I told Kathy, and when she got back from snorkeling, she said it was the best she had ever seen!

These are my pictures

Butterfly fish

Christmas Wrasse



Convict Tangs

Orange Spot Surgeonfish



These are Raccoon Butterfly fish, for obvious reasons. I even got up close and personal with one!



I could not identify this one in the fish chart we had.



Well, all that snorkeling we did worked up a thirst, and as we looked behind our beach chairs, there was the Beach House Restaurant!



We sat on their patio, overlooking the beach and our tree, and quenched our thirst with a Mai Tai for Kathy and a Longboard beer for me. Paradise!

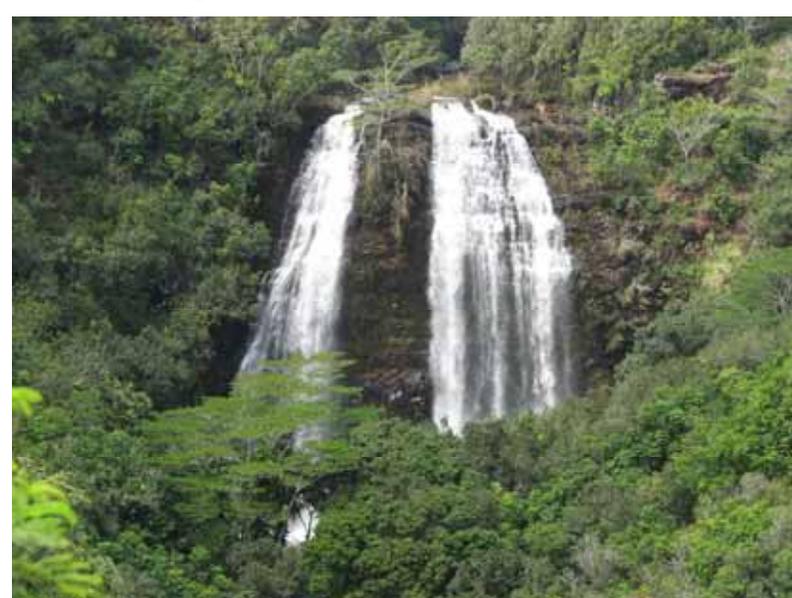
FERN GROTTTO

The next day we headed to Fern Grotto. Kathy had visited it about 30 years ago, and was taken by its beauty. I had read that the last hurricane had done a lot of damage, but it was coming back.

We planned to take the boat ride to the Grotto, but when we arrived at the landing, we were told the next boat left in 2 hours.

We went to the Wailua Marina Restaurant at the landing, and both ordered the Mixed Plate Special, a local recommended favorite. It came with chicken, fried shrimp, a skewer of Teriyaki beef, and chow mien with meat and mushrooms.

We still had time to kill, so we drove up to Opaeka'a falls viewpoint above the Wailua River. On the other side of the road from the viewpoint we could look down at the river and see the kayakers heading upstream.



We drove back to the landing and boarded our boat. Smith's famous Wailua River cruise boats are powered by an ingenious rear-engine pusher system invented by Walter Smith, Sr. The spacious, open-air boats provide excellent views from either side during the trip upstream. Going upriver we were serenaded by some local Hawaiian ladies to really put us in the mood.



We disembarked near the grotto, and walked up the trail. When we got there, Kathy and I were shocked and disappointed at what we saw. It was no longer possible to enter the grotto, and we had to stand on a platform to look into it.



The picture above was copied from the Internet to show how it used to look. We were told about beautiful candlelit wedding ceremonies that used to take place in the grotto.

There were three disasters that befell the grotto. First hurricane Iniki crossed right over Kauai in 1992 and devastated the island and the grotto. The storm destroyed most of the long hanging ferns. Then, some years ago there was a torrential rainstorm that loosened many of the boulders above the grotto, rendering it unsafe to go inside. The last straw was the diversion of the stream feeding the waterfall on the right, reducing it to a trickle.



This is how it looks now, and Kathy was terribly disappointed at the present state of the grotto after she had seen it so long ago in all its glory.

NA PALI COAST

We had cruised the NaPali (West) coast of Kauai last year, and enjoyed it thoroughly. The only access for many places there is either by boat or hiking down some steep trails. We went out in the same catamaran as last year.

What a difference!! Last year the seas were smooth as glass, but this year we had six foot swells. Thank goodness for Bonine to prevent us from seasickness. The cruise was a sail and snorkel, but since we had just snorkeled Lawai beach, we decided not to snorkel off the boat. It was just as well, as the water was a little murky and rough.

But talk about omens! Just as we anchored we saw a beautiful rainbow that seemed to start at one of the other boats. The other good luck omen was a school of dolphins that swam near the snorkelers between the boats!



After recovering the snorkelers, we headed northwest around Barking Sands Air Base. This is part of the Pacific Missile Test Range. It tracks missiles launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Rounding Nohili Point, we headed northeast along the Na Pali coast. There were huge canyons leading down to the sea. The tops of the canyons are 4000 feet above sea level!



We passed a place called Honopu Arch, which connected 2 beaches. One of the King Kong movies was shot there.



We also passed a beautiful beach with a waterfall, and Kalalau Valley, which was home to Native Hawaiians at one time. This valley can also be viewed from the Kalalau lookout on the Waimea Canyon Road.



At that point we turned around and headed for port. Since we had a following sea, the boat ride back was a bit smoother.

Well, all that sea air really worked up an appetite, and we went to a restaurant called Kalapaki Joe's. I looked at their menu on line, and discovered they had a number of reasonably priced lobster dishes. Many of them were done Mexican style, but we felt the lobster was too delicate to stand up to the salsa and sauces. The restaurant did feature a lobster salad, with a honey sesame dressing. We both ordered it, and it was delicious!!!!



We spent the next day at Lawai Beach again, under our Sea Grape tree. The weather was beautiful, and the snorkeling was still great! I have never spent so much time at a beach and enjoyed it so much!

WAIMEA CANYON DRIVE

Having cycled down Waimea Canyon last year, we decided to drive up the canyon further than our cycling starting point last year. We had the luxury of slowly driving along, stopping where we pleased, and not worrying about survival.



The canyon is 13 miles long, over 2 miles wide, and is 1500 to 2500 feet deep. It is much smaller than the Grand Canyon, but it makes up for the difference in the brilliant green and red scenery.



All that mountain driving made us hungry, (almost anything we do will), and I saw on the map the Koke'e campground and restaurant. It was a nice break after driving the winding road. Kathy said she was glad we never drove it before taking that bicycle ride last year, because she would have been too freaked out to do it.

Below is a picture of one of the straighter (?) sections of road. On the right is a sign at the end of the road.



After lunch we continued toward the end of the road, stopping at different lookouts. One of the lookouts was at Kalalau Valley, and we could look down at the valley towards the ocean. This was the same valley we looked up when we took the Na Pali cruise.



As we looked down, a double rainbow appeared! It is unusual enough to look DOWN on a rainbow, but the double rainbow blew us away!



After sightseeing at the end of the road, we headed down to the coast. Along the way, near the town of Waimea, we spotted JoJo's, which has the reputation of having the best shaved ice on the island. We stopped and ordered a mixed ice of Blue Hawaii and Butterscotch. The place did live up to its reputation.



HANELEI BAY

On our last full day on Kauai, Kathy wanted to drive to the other end of the road, counter clockwise from our condo on the south shore. We packed a lunch and headed out towards Hanelei Bay. The movie South Pacific was shot in this area.

We drove across 3 of the 10 one lane bridges into Hanalei, and found a small road leading to Wai'oli Beach Park. We found an unoccupied picnic bench in the shade, and ate our lunches with the beautiful beach in front of us.





After a few hours there, we slowly drove back toward Lihue, near the airport. There is a bypass road that avoids all the construction on the main highway between Lihue and Poipu, and after a false start we found it.

On our last night in Kauai, we planned to have a romantic candlelight dinner at Keiko's Restaurant. Well, we got the candlelight, all right, but not the dinner. As we were eating our appetizers, I heard a beeping noise. I thought to my self, gee, that sounds like the beeping from the backup battery on my home computer. Well, that was exactly what it was. It was the backup battery on the restaurant cash register! We had another island wide power failure, so that wiped out dinner!

As it was not quite dark yet, we headed back to our condo and found a large candle on the bookshelf. The only problem was, neither Kathy nor I smoke, and we had no matches or lighter, and the stove was electric. I got the idea of taking the candle down to the gas BBQ and lighting it there. Well, trying to walk with a lit candle 100 yards in the trade winds was quite a challenge. It took me 3 tries to get it home.

About 10 minutes after I got back with the lit candle, the power was restored. It was a good thing, as American Idol was about to come on. Kathy was ready to offer to rewind their transformer just to get the power back.

The next morning we checked out of our condo and headed for the airport on the bypass road. We checked our luggage, and headed out, as we had a couple hours to kill. We saw a sign for Ahukini landing, and drove down the 2 lane road to the landing.

It was a beautiful area with views of the mountains in the distance and the local beaches. We sat there for a while drinking it all in, when 2 tour buses from the cruise ship pulled up and shattered the tranquility.

We then drove back to the airport, dropped the car off, and boarded our flight. As luck would have it, we had nobody in the center seat again. When we arrived in Los Angeles, we could not get to our gate for about a half hour because of taxiway congestion! We finally got on the road and got home about 1 AM and crashed.

Being in Kauai again this year felt so relaxed and comfortable and we know it won't be our last trip to this same condo. It's really great having all the comforts of home without the expenses of a time share. Even better, it's only a 5 1/2 hour flight from California. That's about the same distance as Los Angeles to New York. We'll be back, as Kauai is truly one of the most beautiful places on earth.

We are now home for 2 months until our next adventure to Switzerland and a river cruise through the Burgundy region of France.

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