

Hawaii Thanksgiving week 2011

Sat November 19th

Left at 4:45 AM from home to SFO. Arrived 2 hours early for our flight in the eerily empty and large International Terminal. Had a nice eggs and fried potato breakfast. Uneventful flight to Honolulu. I read from my new Kindle Fire (the novel Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides - great book). We did have a three hour lay over in Honolulu...everyone was wanting to hop to Kauai so all the shuttles were booked solid. Thank goodness we found an outdoor garden area where we lounged on the grass after eating a typical lousy airport lunch.

Landed in Kauai late afternoon, and picked up our economy (ie junky) car and drove through pouring rain to our condo. (the Kiahuna Plantation near Poipu). Really nice condo with up graded kitchen, fully loaded, ocean view across a green lawn with palm trees.

We were tired but went out in the pouring rain dark to get kitchen supplies and food before landing ourselves at the Plantation bar for fun Hawaiian cocktails and an appetizer dinner.

It is hysterically windy - howling.



Sunday November 20th

We walked around the resort and also the neighboring Sheraton resort before settling down to our condo's lecture and sales pitch about what to do on the island. We promptly signed up for a helicopter ride (what we said we would NOT do); a motorized raft and snorkel trip with Captain Andy up the Na Pali coast, and a snorkel adventure with Captain Tara.



Exhausted after the lecture and subsequent time consuming process of getting everyone signed up for adventures we went for a swim at the beach in front of our condo. Lovely water, slightly rough, due to wind, but refreshing and gorgeous.

Then lunch in downtown Koloa. Fish sandwiches of course!

Our afternoon adventure was a hike along a bluff trail from Shipwreck beach to the stables. The golf course was on the island side and the gorgeous coast was visible during this windy hike.

Dinner in our condo (stir fried vegeys, baked potato, and NY steak cooked to perfection by Sig on one of the

gas grills on the Plantation). Tomorrow the helicopter ride!

Monday November 21st

Lovely coffee on our Lanai. Then wonderful helicopter ride around the island with a stop at Jurassic Falls (not the Hawaiian name, but named after the wild helicopter landing in the movie at this falls). The journey was magnificent. Our pilot was Jody (67 years old, native Hawaiian, flew in Vietnam, 8th grade teacher, has a "mail order bride" that he found at match.com and a 7 year old son). Anyhow, we felt safe in our ride over steep ridges and to the center of the island at Wai'ale'ale crater surrounded by steep cliffs of green with weeping waterfalls all round. Naturally the Na Pali coast was stupendous. It was a relaxing ride, not bumpy, our noise cancelling headphones maintained the



quiet. We had two other couples with us from Boise and from St. Louis. I think Sig and I were the lightest couple so we got to sit in front with probably the best view.

After a nice lunch at our condo we went to Poipu beach for an afternoon of snorkeling. As usual, gorgeous fish, nice garden like beach, plenty of vacationers like ourselves of all ages. We had to get our “snorkeling legs” back for our trip tomorrow on a power raft up the Na Pali coast. Water is a tad cold, glad we have our shorty wet suits.

Lovely dinner on the Lanai of barbecued Mahi-Mahi, stir fried vegeys, potato salad and cole slaw. Starry walk afterwards around the property spying on people through their open windows... I mean, looking at the beautiful starry sky.

Tuesday November 22nd. I turn 57 today, no wonder I feel so old and creaky!

Drove to Kikiaola harbor to meet up with our tour group under the name of Captain Andy's. Our captain wasn't called Andy however, but was called Matt and the first mate was Steve (family originally Korean). There were twelve of us passengers/tourists of varying ages and sex. We had a good group, no sissies! It was a typical wet and bumpy ride out to our various destinations. Most of the group sat on the edge of the raft holding on to ropes with toes tucked under ropes as well. Us royal types, sat in the “Princess seats”, which were in the back, I guess “stern” in boatspeak, much more comfortable, no rope clinging involved. We trundled in and out of various sea caves, backing in and wavering about on surges of Pacific ocean. The Na Pali coast was visible in all its splendor, with various clouds then sun amplifying the mystical

cliffs.

Our stopping point was a small beach with a reef for snorkeling and picnic tables for drying wet clothes and eating. Snorkeling felt good but the visibility wasn't that great, so it was a short snorkel. At that beach, Steve took us on a cultural hike, through Hawaiian ruins and graves. He showed us how coconut is broken open on a wooden stake and then peeled open. He cut it up in front of some kind of ancient Hula dance floor made of lava rock. The coconut tasted bland and very fibrous, but felt like it was good for you somehow. He wove/braided a rope from the fibers of the coconut husk. Very impressive.

Onward we trekked towards the beach to be rewarded

with a large group (pod? Colony?) of green sea turtles, very large awkward things (they are called “green” due to the color of their meat we were told) and they sort of swim very slowly on the sand as opposed to their grace in the water. At a distance, and even up close if you aren't paying attention, they looked like rocks. They weigh 200-300lbs apparently!

We slowly sauntered our way back to the boat with Steve telling stories about Hawaii and legends and personal fishing trips etc.

On the boat trip back we were treated to a dancing pod of Spinner dolphins (we'd seen several pods on the way out, but these were particularly active and jumping out of the water to peer at us).

Back to shore all wind burned and salty, Sig and I headed to the nearest bar (1/4 mile up the road) and drank cocktails and beer on some plantation to calm down our sea legs.

After showering at our lovely condo, the Kiahuna Plantation, we went to dinner at a Tapas bar about one mile up the road and continued to sample the local cocktails and really delicious fresh fish.

That was a GREAT birthday! Now to get the energy to hike Waimea Canyon tomorrow.

November 23rd.

Drove to Waimea Canyon after a leisurely breakfast of papaya, banana, and English muffin with guava jam and Kauai coffee on our lanai over looking the ocean. On Waimea Canyon road we did the touristy thing of looking at the jaw dropping views from the overlooks. Our hike started on the Hale Manu dirt road at mile marker 14 of Waimea Canyon Drive. We planned a three hour hike and this was perfect. We had varied terrain and vegetation with gorgeous views of a part of the canyon and ended up at our destination Waipo'o Falls after about one hour of hiking. We explored the area back and forth from the lower falls to the upper falls and back. Ate our lunch with our legs dangling over an 800ft drop of water fall (luckily we couldn't see the drop from our vantage point). The Na Pali coast was in the distance, part of gorgeous



Waimea Canyon was to our right. And behind us a bucolic stream with flowers and tropical vegetation (wild ginger, lantana, a gorgeous red Datura). We had the whole place to ourselves! After our lunch on the way back, lots of people were arriving. We had timed it perfectly!

On the way back to our condo we stopped at Port Allen to buy Mom some Red Dirt tee shirts that she had requested, then some ice cream and a stop at Kauai Coffee gift store for some much needed chocolate covered coffee beans.

We also snagged a gorgeous piece of Ono fish at the local fish market. Ran into a Farmer's Market and bought some long (very long) green beans to go with our fish.

The weather had warmed up and was way less windy when we arrived back at the condo and we were over heated from our hike and the drive. What to do but jump in the ocean and have a refreshing swim before starting dinner. Excellent fish dinner on our lanai. Usual walk after dinner to turn off the bright lights of the barbecue in our vision if we get up at night and look outside towards the ocean. Last full day is tomorrow, boo hoo!



November 24th, Thanksgiving and dear Margaret's birthday

After another yummy breakfast of papaya, pineapple and English muffin we drove to our Zodiac put in about 10 minutes drive from our condo. There were 8 of us and Captain Tara and an assistant. Off we went in a Zodiac to snorkel. First stop some rock under the ocean in the middle of nowhere it seemed. The snorkeling was great, usual colorful fish, coral, urchins etc. After we'd had our fill of that, we motored to see a pod of spinner dolphins then to the place where the great green sea turtles swim. These several



hundred pound creatures are so graceful in the water especially when they dive down and swim along the ocean bottom.

We got up close and personal with them (without touching!). It was glorious and I didn't really want to go back when called. Lunch was served on a picnic table back at our put in pier.

Once back at our condo we decided to take a tour of a very nearby botanical garden called the Allerton Garden. Words cannot do this landscaping architectural gem justice. There were only six of us on the two and one half our tour. A previous Disneyland tram took us into the gardens themselves. Part museum, part horticulture paradise, part movie drop several hundred acre amazing "garden". Given to the National Tropical

Botanical Garden to manage in perpetuity by Mr. Allerton (a great story of its own). Our tour guide, Frank had great knowledge of the history of the land as well as the family and the architecture of the various horticultural "rooms" of different themes. This property along with the adjacent McBride Gardens are several hundred acres, all tended and mostly seen by the gardeners only.

Whew it was an amazing way to end our Kauai adventures.

Back in time for beer and sunset at our condo beach and Thanksgiving dinner at Roy's.

Friday November 25th.

Sig said good by to the ocean by walking in the water, while I drank my coffee from the soft green lawn and gazed at the waves crashing on the sandy beach. Final fruit and English muffins on the lanai for breakfast.

Had some time in the morning to do some shopping for gifts as we meandered to the airport.

Another uneventful trip to Honolulu with a short wait (pizza and soft ice cream - mango and passionflower

flavored) until our next flight to SFO. Flight was on time and baggage arrived as well. It was dark as we drove home, arriving around 11:30PM. The cats were confused at our arrival. Evan had spent the past 6 days at the house .

Back to reality...luckily we have the weekend before starting work.

What a great vacation.

