

Hawaii trip (06/13~29/2013)

by John Harvey

We left the house at 8:15 A.M. (local,) landed in Kailua-Kona Thursday, headed to where we were staying on Ali'i Drive, and checked in at almost 9:00 P.M. (local.)

We got up Friday morning, had breakfast at The Big Island Grill, and stopped by the Sandwich Island Divers dive shop <<http://sandwichisledivers.com/>> to sign up for three days of diving – Saturday, Monday and Tuesday; it was good to see the familiar faces of Steve & Lara Myklebust, the owners. Next we stopped by the local farmers' market to get some fresh fruit, did some grocery shopping, then took our swag back to the condo where Nancy cooked most of the meat to be eaten later as reheated leftovers. A nap followed, and then we checked out some of the local stuff to see what had changed.

Saturday, I went to the dive shop a little early, as it was Kamehameha Day (public holiday of the state) and there was a parade planned along Ali'i Drive that I wanted to get by before any of the festivities started. The other two people on the boat that day did get caught up with the mayhem and were late getting to the harbor, so there was a late start. While I was diving, Nancy went to watch the parade.

Dive Log (All dives on EAN 32):

Day 1: (Sat. 06/16/13)

First Dive: Pipe Dream ~ Max depth – 100 ft., time – 40 min.

Second Dive: Kaiwi Point (a “w” surrounded by vowels sounds like a “v”) ~ Max depth – 58 ft., time – 51 min.

Saw a dragon eel; they're rare in the Hawaiian waters.

Day 2: (Mon. 06/18/13)

First Dive: Freeze Face (Lead City) ~ Computer malfunction – wouldn't reboot underwater; max depth about 65'

Second Dive: Golden Arches ~ Max depth – 55 ft., time – 45 min.

Saw a dragon wrasse ... not all that prevalent of a fish, but not as rare as yesterday's find.

Day 3: (Tue. 06/19/13)

First Dive: Wash Rock ~ Max depth – 65 ft., time – 47 min.

Second Dive: Garden Eels ~ Max depth – 58 ft., time – 51 min.

The diving was good, as usual ... incredible visibility and water temps about 77~78°; all dives had great visibility, and were a little 'surgey' – more so the closer to shore they were. The surge did die down somewhat by Tuesday.

On Sunday, we drove to the northeast end of the island, by way of Waimea, to the Waipio valley overlook, and back through Waimea where we stopped to eat at L&L

Hawaiian Barbeque. I like the town, and if I had to pick a place on the big island to live, it would be Waimea. It is located "Upcountry," in North Kohala, east of the Kohala Coast. It is ranch country, scenic paniolo (Hawaiian cowboy) country; a place where stop signs read "Whoa," instead of "Stop." (I've got pictures to prove it!) It is at 2,600 ft. above sea level, so the climate is a little more temperate than down by the coast.

After lunch we headed back the way we came on the lower, coastal road (SH 19) where we stopped at the King's & Queen's Court Shops by The Hilton at Waiulua Bay to do a little more shopping. It's one of the posh, fancy resorts on the island with a nice beach and some old petroglyphs scattered around among the lava rough of the golf courses by Anaeho'omalua Bay. There is a walking tour with a map available for close-up petroglyph viewing that we'd done on a previous visit that is interesting.

Wednesday was my Big Island beach day.

Thursday we drove south through the aptly named town, Volcano, where we toured and tasted some of the wares produced by the Volcano Winery and purchased some product to have shipped home.

We continued on to Hilo for lunch at Cronies. After eating, we drove a little farther around the coast to see the Akaka Waterfall (442 ft.) and its sister, Kahuna Waterfall (100 ft.) in the Akaka Falls State Park. The tropical surroundings were magnificent with everything from one of the biggest Banyan trees I've ever seen in the wild to beautiful little blue flowers the size of a dime growing out of the moss on a nearly sheer hillside.

We drove back to Hilo and drove over the Saddle road (SR 200) between Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea to get back to the other side of the island, and took 'the high road' (SR 190, as opposed to the previously mentioned "low road," SR 19 nearer the shore) back to Kailua.

Where we stay in Kailua is right next to a beach access path to 'the old salt pool,' where some of the locals, as well as some tourists, come to watch the sunset. It's a great vantage point to watch for the elusive green flash. I've been hunting it for years and don't really have a great photograph of it; but I keep trying. I had to explain the green flash to several of the tourists that had come down to watch the sunset who had never heard about it. I think a couple of them still thought I was crazy, even after I explained how it occurs:

It's a rare atmospheric phenomenon; a refraction of the sun's light by the atmosphere, like a prism, just after the sun passes the visible horizon. Since light moves slower through the denser, lower atmosphere than the thin, upper atmosphere, the higher frequencies of light spectrum – the greens and blues – curve more than the lower frequencies of light – the reds and oranges – allowing the higher frequencies to remain visible after the lower frequencies have become obstructed by the curvature of the earth. All that's needed to see it is a clear and

unobstructed view past the horizon. I've been told it can also be seen from an airborne aircraft.

It's very rare that anything more than a little green blip on the horizon is seen, but I've read about rare occasions when a green ray can momentarily extend upward from it; that would be cool to see.

We dined out at The Big Island Grill several times, as well as at some of the L&L Hawaiian Barbeque stands around the island. Both places cater more to the locals and travelers than to the tourists, with local dishes (Lau-Lau, Kailua pig & cabbage, Loco-Moco, etc.) that are both tasty and filling. If you leave hungry, it'll be your own fault. And nobody else on the planet can cook a pig as well as the Hawaiians.

Friday was the travel day to Kauai, The Garden Isle. We left Kona on a late morning flight, stopped in the Honolulu airport to change flight crews, and were in the baggage claim at the Lihue airport around 2:00 in the afternoon. It's said that Kauai is where the Hawaiians go when they go on vacation.

We got up early Saturday morning, ate breakfast, and drove into the valley below to the Hanalei farmers' market to get some of the local produce. It rained a little on us while we were there, but as we were near the top of the 'wet side' of the island it was no big deal. Considering that the top of the island of Kauai is the wettest spot on the planet, with more than 400 inches of rain per year, it's no wonder there are waterfalls everywhere. After we dropped the food off at the condo, we drove back to Lihue to do a little grocery shopping there.

Nancy said I could have three days to sit on the beach on Kauai (I was expecting maybe two days at best,) so after escaping the clutches of the timeshare salesperson Sunday morning, I stuffed a bunch of water, a bottle of mead, and a sandwich into the cooler and headed a few miles down the road to a nice, secluded beach. It was a very relaxing day.

Monday we drove around the island to see Glass beach. It is actually an old dump by a cemetery with a small patch of sand on one end in the middle of an industrial area near Port Allen Harbor in Ele'ele. There was one person there digging around in the cliff face, looking for (and finding) some old, unbroken bottles and such. He showed me an old perfume bottle he'd found, with its glass stopper still in the neck that would probably fetch a whole lot more than the entire six-pack of late 40s~early 50s Primo beer bottles he had dug out of the same area. Next time I'd like to spend a little more time there; there are some good photo ops.

We left Glass beach and drove up the hill to visit the Kauai coffee plantation, the largest coffee farm in the country. We bought some specialty coffees, a couple types of peaberry (and a T-shirt for me) and had it shipped home.

From Ele'ele we drove to Poipu to wander through some of the upscale shops there and grab a Puka Dog for lunch. The place that serves them has been featured on both the Food and Travel Channels. They're good, and the line to get their food always seems to be about the same length every time I've been there.

Tuesday was my second Kauai beach day. Another bottle of Nanny Moon's mead and a sandwich (and plenty of water!) in the cooler to make another wonderfully uneventful day in paradise.

Wednesday we headed off to someplace we hadn't been before, the eastern Napali scenic overlooks beyond the Waimea Canyon scenic overlook. We stopped for lunch at another L&L, this time in Kekaha, before ascending the 3500+ ft. up the Waimea Canyon Road to the two scenic overlooks. According to a guidebook Nancy found, the farthest overlook had the best view, but I think the next-to-last one was better. The weather, which can be a little 'iffy' up there, was absolutely clear, revealing a truly impressive vista. There is a path leading off across the ridge from the last stop that looks like a nice hike of a couple miles off to a peak in the distance. Next time I go up there I'll be a little better prepared for an excursion of exploration!

On the way back we stopped by Nanny Moon to get some products shipped back home. A few years back, when I first discovered the shop, it was the only place to buy any of her mead choices. Now, her products are sold in several grocery stores and wine shops across the state, with some of it being exported to a few upscale wine shops in California.

Thursday was my last beach day. There was a monk seal on the beach again this year. They're a protected species, so they have someone from the volunteer organization who cordons off the section and monitors the animal to ensure no other human interaction with it while it's 'camping out' there. That sounds like a rough job, eh?

For seeing and photographing the sunsets, and I did make it to several of them, I had to drive about a mile to the St. Regis Hotel; but due to the geography of where we were combined with the prevailing weather patterns, there were generally a lot of clouds. They made for some rich, colorful photography, but no green flashes.

Friday was our 'go home' day. We had to check out early (10 A.M.) but had an 8-ish evening flight out. We took our time driving back to Lihue, and ended up hanging out at Kalapaki beach, parked in the shade, watching and photographing the surfers and napping a little before having a late lunch at Kalapaki Joe's, a sports bar and restaurant in the harbor area. The plane took off at around 8:30ish (local;) eventually we got back to the house Saturday about 3:30 P.M. (local.) I still don't sleep well on airplanes and I definitely don't travel as well as I used to ... even when we go first class; but all in all, it was a good trip.