



Surf at Poipu Beach Park



Hanalei Bay sunset



Na Pali Coast/all photos by Jim Becker

# TRAVEL

## Prince of the Islands

by Jim Becker

During a recent visit to Kauai, I realized what Kauai is all about. Kauai is often referred to as the “Garden Island” and has a reputation for being known as the most romantic place on earth. We stayed in Princeville at the Hanalei Bay Resort where most of the units have great ocean and bay views. These condos offer nearby access to golf, tennis, hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, and beach activities.

Each morning we would hike slightly less than a mile up to the newly remodeled St. Regis Princeville Resort and enjoy coffee on their terrace while taking in the breathtaking views of Hanalei Bay. The hotel is the only four-diamond, five-star resort on the island, but you can access most of its amenities from the surrounding condos and villas as easily as if you were staying there. However, if it's pure luxury you're looking for, prices at the St. Regis Princeville start at \$329 per night. Most condos in the North Shore area are priced between \$99 and \$250 night.

The North Shore of Kauai offers stunning coastlines and remote beaches. Haena Beach Park is a great place to stop for a swim. The same is true of Makua, where the snorkeling is excellent and scuba divers can cruise through underwater lava tubes that inspired its nickname, “tunnels.” Legendary Hanalei Bay, with its long sandy beach, is ideal for all beach activities including boogie-boarding and surfing. The waves were huge when we were there, so the local experts were the only ones at-tempting the high surf. That's often the case in the winter months. Spring and summer are the best beach times on the North Shore.

A two-lane road leads

north to Kee Beach, a lovely lagoon surrounded by lush, towering mountains that mark the start of the Na Pali Coast, one of the world's scenic treasures. Experienced backpackers love the 11-mile Kalalau trail, which requires a permit. We took the short two-mile hike to Hanakapiai, a dreamy tropical valley where a river flows from stunning falls onto the sandy beach. It was one of the most beautiful hikes I've ever taken.

Another approach to view the famous Na Pali Coast is to charter a boat. We used Activity Wholesalers, who booked us at a discount on Blue Dolphin Charters for a sunset dinner cruise. Our catamaran captain found ample humpback whales and one yearling calf which breached more than 10 times within a few hundred feet of our boat.

After the outdoor activity, our desire for fresh fish and ripe papaya was strong. Our best find was the fish market at the rear of the Dolphin Shopping Center and Restaurant in the picturesque town of Hanalei. It's the first building on the right coming north into town on Highway 56. Locals shop here for the catch of the day. Restaurant owners also frequent this quaint market, although it's only the size of a small dining room.

We bought ono, walu, and my favorite, monechong. You can also purchase sashimi, sushi rolls and fresh poki for a picnic.

Down the road near the Kilauea lighthouse exit there are several local fruit stands where we found “red sunrise” papaya that was extremely flavorful. However, Safeway and Foodland both offer great local papaya for half of what we normally pay in California.

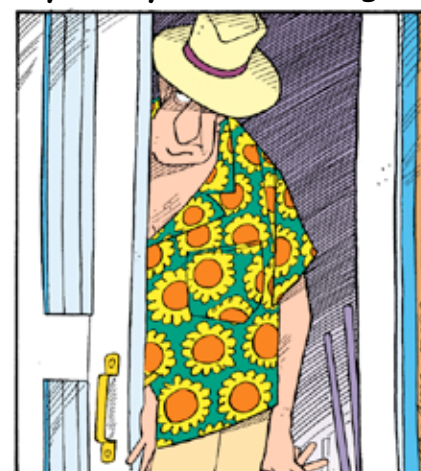
Avid golfers will be in heaven. Kauai has nine challenging golf courses with gorgeous coastal views. Poipu Beach is located on the south side of Kauai and has the largest timeshare resort community on the island. Several beaches provide great snorkeling, easy access, lifeguards and showers. One is Poipu Beach Park near Brennecke's Restaurant.

Kauai is the cleanest of the islands due to the most recent volcano eruption on the Big Island known as vog. Kauai's air is clean and offers miles or clear visibility, beautiful unspoiled beaches and breathtaking views. You will never regret a return visit to Kauai or being a first time traveler!

United Airlines offers daily direct flights to Kauai from SFO.

## BALLARD STREET

by Jerry Van Amerongen



You can almost see where Gil might be giving some thought to being more social.