

What George Johnson did on his Spring Break Hawaii Vacation - March 23 to April 6, 2008 Had a grand time with Elsie(mate), Dee Ann(daughter), Sister Daisy, and Darlene(niece).

Day 1, Travel, groceries and check in @ 11:00 PM Texas time (6:00 PM Oahu time). Stayed at the Turtle Bay Resort near Sunset Beach. Formally a surfer's hang out, but now a pricey Resort.
Day 2, Celebrated Elsie's Birthday and Easter Sunday. Toured Oahu's Northern and Eastern Beach. Had umbrella drinks and lunch at the Outrigger Hotel on Waikiki Beach. We could not see much of the beach due to the number of tourists. Later saw the interior and Pali look out.

Day 3, Had Breakfast at a Mickey Dees with orchids and a waterfall. Spent nine hours at the Polynesian Cultural Center (tour the villages, Luau and evening show.)

Three Free travel tips:

The Cultural Center was voted most popular by all the ladies at the end of the vacation. When in Oahu, stay on the North shore to see Hawaii; stay in Waikiki to people watch. In Turtle Bay, rooms are advertised as Ocean View. Stay on higher floors if possible for best view.

Day 4, Darlene and I golfed the Turtle- Dee walked the Turtle. A rest day for Elsie and Daisy.

Day 5, Up before dawn to make the 11:00 AM flight to Kawaii. Our room at the Outrigger plantation was not ready, so we grocery shopped. We could not accept the beautiful Ocean view room because of the steps. Luckily they had two rooms close together in the back of the grounds with full Ocean odor. Still a beautiful garden view.

Fourth free travel tip:

To avoid pre dawn wake up, book your inter-island flights around 2:00 due to strict airline security. Once they patted each and every one of us down, and searched all our carry ons and one of the bags we checked in. They took Elsie's gold plated toe nail trimmer which had cleared many a search before these folks gave us a whole new meaning to airline security. I told them I wanted to break the trimmer in two and take the case because my Mother had given it to Elsie. So they took me outside to break the one inch trimmer blade off. Then they patted me down again even though the security man was with me the entire time. Elsie and I resolved to check in all carry ons in the future and put our valuables in our pocket.

Day 6, Took a four hour whale watch and Sunset Dinner cruise. Saw about ten whales, a few tails and arms, but no breeches. The Napali coast line with the lava tube caves was beautiful. They stopped the boat in one area where a myriad of different fish were darting about. Mai Tais, dinner and the Sunset were ideal.

The trip started out really rough. With water splashing over the front of the bow. I looked at Daisy and her eyes were as wide as silver dollars. She weighs in at about 100 pounds after her fight with asthma. But within about twenty minutes the ride smoothed out. Daisy later became an old salt and was standing on the waters edge holding onto the rail with one hand and holding the binoculars with the other to scan for whales.

Fifth travel tip:

Take the Na Pali Coast morning cruise where they guarantee you will see dolphins and they stop at a beautiful snorkeling spot.

Day 7, Toured the South and East side of the Island. Went to the Fern Grotto and Smith's Luau. The food was excellent and the grounds were beautiful. Elsie and Daisy looked like Island girls (maybe elderly hippies) with flower bands in their hair. They recognized Elsie for celebrating her big 70, and she stood and gallantly waved at the crowd. Some began to chant birthday girl when we went for the buffet (the Luau included bottomless Mai Tais.)

Day 8, Toured the Plantation where we were staying. They had a large orchid garden and we were in the peak orchid period (uncounted tip.) There were also bountiful amounts of native flowers everywhere. We toured the North Shore and saw among other beauties, the beach where South Pacific was filmed. Then we picnicked on the beach, and fed the wild roosters and hens. The story is the recent hurricane freed the local's chickens, and now they are too tough to eat and too fast to catch.

Day 9, Three brave souls took the helicopter ride. A strong recommendation for Kauai and voted second most popular by our most knowledgeable group (tip?). We saw the wettest spot on earth, The waterfalls where they filmed "Jurassic Park" and "Six Days and Seven Nights." We saw much unnavigable scenery. The highlight was when the helicopter hovered over two whales which were below the surface mating. No, that's an exaggeration, they were just laying there having a smoke. But, can you believe the water is clear enough to see below the water from a helicopter.

Sixth Travel tip:

We called and booked Discount Helicopter, which turned out to be Safari Helicopter. We saved \$65 each for the same flight the agencies were trying to book us on.

Later we toured the most awesome Waimea Canyon- Hawaii's version of the Grand Canyon. Dee drove the rental car. We stopped to scoop up a bag of red dirt -"because it is bad, dude." Shortly after we left the canyon, the rental car broke down. It was close to dark, and two and a half hours later when it was very, very dark, they brought us another car. We had spent this time on the side of the narrow two lane road with speeding locals (some undoubtedly had spent the Sunday at a Boozy Bar-B-Que.) We superstitiously threw away the red dirt. No, we did not book with Discount Rental Car.

Day 10, More bad news as our Airline went belly up. We were able to fly to the big island in two groups after contacting our travel agents. Sometimes the insurance works (maybe tossed red dirt?) Another wasted day traveling between islands as we finally got to Hotel room in the super fantastic Hilton Waikoloa Resort @ 5:00PM. Putting on the dog, we had Chinese food dinner delivered to our room. The dinner included such favorites as prawns with honey crusted walnuts and appetizers of onion tarts with shrimp and scallops.

Our suite overlooked the beautiful Waikoloa golf course with a very partial Ocean view. I was delighted because we had booked Garden View. Darlene and I looked into playing the course because we got a discount for staying at the Resort. After learning that the discounted cost would be a minimum of \$165 each plus club and shoe rental, we decided the trade winds were too strong plus my arthritis in my hip on my wallet side really began to hurt.

Day 11, After singing several verses of that popular 50's tune "I'm a whale watcher" we headed for another two hour watch. The cost included Hotel pick up. Saw some whales holding their heads above the water, and others doing tail flukes .

This was admirable, but the best whale action we saw was at the lighthouse on the Northeast shore of Kauai. The whale did several full breeches before heading out to sea. - Later we went to Wal Mart for souvenirs, groceries etc.

More travel tips:

My experience and research is that the best whale watching is booked with the Maui Pacific Whale Foundation. Many humpbacks mate, fight to mate, and birth their calves off Maui's East coast. The whale season peak is mid March and lasts from February thru April.

Pack several designer shopping bags to hide your plastic Wal Mart bags when entering a four star resort.

Day 12, Toured the lush Resort and swam in the Pacific fed lagoon. Three of us had three rounds of umbrella drinks at the Dolphin show for over one Benjamin. Saw numerous turtles, tropical fish, flamingos, peacocks, marble statues and art. Ate at the Chinese restaurant and had really good Blue Hawaiis with our meal.

Day 13, Hooked up with some local tour guides and toured the touted orchid capital of the world, "Hilo". Sent a chocolate smelling orchid to our good friends who delve in these pretties. Lunched above Rainbow falls on private property. Saw the highest waterfall in Hawaii and toured the rainforest.

Best and last free tip:

You don't need a rental car on the big island. Much of the island looks like West Texas or the New Mexico lava flows. One or two tours will show you the Hawaii you came for.

Day 14, Searched in vain for Paris at the Resort. A number of ladies asked me what I was doing - touring with four ladies. Our last night was a Sunset dinner on the Resort Ocean front restaurant (this will help max out the old plastic.)

Day 15, One half day at the resort and then the exciting airport pat down and red eye flight.

In conclusion, God has blessed us greatly to be able to take this trip. A rogue thought is that the Garden of Eden was not near the mouth of the Tigris Euphrates River, but still remains somewhere on the beautiful islands where we took our Summer Break Vacation.