

Hikers, artists, banyans, and onions all thrive here

By Emily Sweeney
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MAUI — I confess I was afraid to go to Maui. I imagined the beaches there would be so beautiful I would never be able to enjoy the ones closer to home the same way again. My fears were confirmed. Maui is a tropical paradise. I can't wait to go back. Here are some of the many things I love about the island.

Makena Beach, or Big Beach, is a gorgeous swath of powdery sand and powerful surf that's perfect for sunbathing and people-watching. Be careful if you venture into the water; the waves will knock you down like an angry linebacker. One hit me so hard that I flipped head over heels. Luckily, I managed to keep a tight grip on my bathing suit. There's a reason locals call it Break Neck Beach. *Makena State Park, Makena Road, www.hawaiiistateparks.org*

Speaking of bathing suits . . . At the northern end of Makena Beach there is a large volcanic cinder cone called Puu Olai. If you climb over that, you'll find **Little Beach**, a calmer, gentler cove that has long been regarded as clothing-optional (even though public nudity is illegal in Hawaii).

The highest point on Maui is the top of **Haleakala**, a dormant volcano whose name means "House of the Sun." We made the 38-mile trek in our rental car, driving slowly up the steep, winding road. The views from the 10,023-foot summit were incredible. It seemed as if we were looking out onto a vast ocean of clouds. Many tourists come here before dawn to watch the sun rise. A car pass costs \$10, valid for three days. *Haleakala National Park, 808-572-4400, www.nps.gov/hale*

Private companies will drive you to the top of Haleakala, then let you **ride a bicycle** back down. Hard-core cyclists can pedal up on their own; a pass is \$5.

The summit area of Haleakala looks like a gigantic crater, and there are plenty of **hiking** trails. The air is thin up there, and it's typically 30 degrees colder than on the coast. As my friends and I trudged through the barren, desert-like landscape, it felt like we were visiting another planet. Overnight camping is available. Campsite permits are free; cabins cost \$60-\$75 per night. *www.fhnp.org/wcr*

If you can't afford to stay at a



IN THE MIX ON MAUI

See why the author is head-over-heels in a video at www.boston.com/travel.

posh hotel resort like the Four Seasons or the Ritz, you can still drop by and see how the other half lives. We strolled around the grounds of **Grand Wailea** and stopped at the Bistro Molokini, one of several dining areas at the complex, where we sat at the bar, ordered an appetizer, and treated ourselves to \$13 pina colodas. *3850 Wailea Alanui Drive, Wailea, www.grandwailea.com*

The Baldwin Home, the oldest house on Maui, is located in the town of Lahaina, the first capital of Hawaii. Built in 1834, the house has walls made from coral, sand, and lava rock, and was originally used by medical missionaries from New England. It now operates as a museum, open to the public daily 10 a.m.-4 p.m. *696 Front St., Lahaina; admission \$3, 808-661-3262, www.lahainarestoration.org*

Shave ice, a delicious treat that looks like a Sno-cone, is served all over Maui. The recipe is simple: ice and sugary syrup. I sampled the pineapple and raspberry flavors at **Annie's Island Shave Ice**. It looked like a red-and-yellow snowball in a styrofoam cup, and tasted super sweet. *117 Prison St., Lahaina*

Cheeseburger in Paradise is an oceanfront restaurant with a fun, Tiki-bar-inspired decor. Lauren Gartner and Edna Bayliff opened their first cheeseburger joint in Lahaina in 1989, and their business has since expanded to eight locations. *811 Front St., Lahaina, 808-661-4855, www.cheeseburgerland.com*

The famous **Banyan Tree** stands in the center of Lahaina. It was planted in April 1873 to mark the 50th anniversary of

Protestant missionary work in the village, and has grown to be 60 feet tall, with an umbrella of branches that covers two-thirds of an acre. *Front Street, between Hotel and Canal streets, Lahaina*

Adventurous motorists will want to brave the drive along the **northwest shore** of the island. This narrow road twists around steep cliffs (who needs guardrails?) providing breathtaking ocean views. From the driver's perspective, navigating these nail-biting stretches of Route 340 and 30 make the Road to Hana (see below) seem like a breeze.

Whalers village, an outdoor shopping complex on Kaanapali Beach, is a popular tourist destination. Besides stores and restaurants, it's home to the annual Maui Onion Festival (yes, a raw onion eating contest — the next one is May 1) and the Whalers Village Museum, which features historical exhibits on the island's whaling industry and a collection of 19th-century scrimshaw. *2435 Kaanapali Parkway, museum admission free, 808-661-4567, www.whalersvillage.com*

Leilani's on the Beach, in Whalers Village, has outdoor seating that faces Kaanapali Beach. It's a great place to see the sun set while munching on a salad of mixed greens and sweet Maui onions. *2435 Kaanapali Parkway, 808-661-4495, www.leilanis.com*

The Road to Hana, a 52-mile scenic drive along the northern coast, takes several hours. Along the way are 600 curves, 59 narrow bridges, and plenty of photo ops for waterfalls, cliffs, valleys, tropical rain forests, and views of the ocean pounding the rocks below. We stopped near Mile Marker 28, at the Nahiku Marketplace, where you can buy fish tacos, coconut candy, baked breadfruit, and locally-grown coffee. There



CORY LUM/THE NEW YORK TIMES (LEFT); EROS HOAGLAND/THE NEW YORK TIMES; SNUBA INTERNATIONAL (BELOW)

A banyan tree dating to 1873 in Lahaina; the Oheo Gulch, also known as the seven sacred pools, near Hana; Molokini Crater, just off the coast, is rated one of the world's top dive spots.



are also arts and crafts for sale at the Nahiku Ti Gallery.

Just past Mile Marker 32 on the Hana Highway is a **volcanic sand beach**. The state also operates cabins here that can be reserved for \$45 a night. *Waianapanapa State Park, Waianapanapa Road, 808-248-4844, www.hawaiiistateparks.org*

Ten miles past the town of Hana we reached the Oheo Gulch, where cascading streams feed several pools of water. This spot, nicknamed the **Seven Sacred Pools** (although there are more

than seven and none is deemed sacred), is part of the eastern end of Haleakala National Park.

The towering 400-foot **Waimoku Falls** is also part of the park. To reach the falls, we hiked on foot along the Pipiwai Trail, through a dense bamboo forest and countless guava and mango trees.

Maui is a haven for artists. I got to hang out with Dale Zarrella (www.dalezarella.com), an accomplished painter and sculptor who lives in Kihei. He works with wood, stone, and bronze, and his

work is displayed at the Grand Wailea and other places on Maui. He has also shown his work in Lahaina, a community that bills itself as **The Art Capital of the Pacific** and claims to have more art galleries per capita than any other town in the United States. Every Friday is Art Night in Lahaina, when from 7 to 10 all the local galleries hold an open house with guest artists, special shows, and refreshments.

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Blending wines within view of moonlit Mauna Loa

► WINERY
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person, and we're from British Columbia where there are lots of wineries," says Felicia, a first-time visitor to Hawaii. She discovered Volcano Winery on the Internet, and its unusual location piqued her interest. "It seems odd to us," Rece chimes in, "but we decided to give it a try."

After tasting two symphony grape wines, three blended fruit wines, and the winery's signature honey wine made from the nectar of the island's macadamia nut tree blossoms, Felicia weighs in on her favorites: She favors the peach-apricot fruitiness of the Symphony Dry, a white dinner wine and bronze medalist at the 2004 Finger Lakes International Wine Competition. The rich nutty flavor of the Macadamia Nut Honey, a bronze medalist at the 2003 Riverside International Wine Competition, also wins a thumbs-up.

Kilauea's rumblings are a boom to business. "Tourists come to see the smoke and molten-lava flows, and then stop at the winery," says Del Bothof, winery owner. Bothof, 64, runs a high-tech media company in Summit, N.J., and travels to Hawaii frequently. He likes to drink wine but knew nothing about running a winery when he purchased Volcano Winery from Alana and Lynn "Doc" McKinney, the original owners.



Tastings are daily events at Volcano Winery, where Kathie Nyberg does the honors and tea plantings dot the slopes of Kilauea.

"It's kind of a surprise that I ended up buying it," Bothof says. "I love Hawaii and was interested in buying a condo on the Big Island. A friend in the media business ran across an ad for the sale of the winery, and as a joke suggested we buy it and retire." Bothof struck a purchase deal with the McKinneys and walked off with the deed to the place in 1999. Under Doc McKinney's tutelage, Bothof's son Scott learned the ins and outs of the wine-making business and managed the winery for years.

"The beauty of being on Kilauea is that, at an altitude of 4,000 feet, its climate is very close to that of Napa Valley," Del Bothof says. "It is fairly dry here in the

summer but we have freezing temperatures in the winter, so the vines go dormant. This seemed like an ideal place to start a vineyard, which is why Doc picked it."

McKinney, a retired veterinarian from Oahu, experimented with plantings of many different varieties to see which grew best. He then tried mixing grape juice with various Hawaiian fruits. Over the past decade, Tim Kenny, the winery's vintner, has made refinements to the process and created smoother, more flavorful young wines.

In the vat room, Kenny, a biochemist from New Jersey who settled on the island of Hawaii after college, stands by an enor-



PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA CAPOS/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

mous stainless-steel mixer and a row of 2,000-gallon polypropylene storage tanks. "We have to ship all our equipment and grape concentrates from the mainland, so it's very expensive," he says, pausing briefly to test the acidity of a batch of Macadamia Nut Honey wine. "But seeing Mauna Loa in the moonlight at 5:30 a.m. when I come to work is beautiful."

Currently, Volcano Winery has two fields of symphony grapes and a promising Oregon-Washington pinot variety under cultivation. Imported wine concentrates, including a premium chablis, a merlot-sauvignon-zinfandel mix, and symphony, are purchased from growers in Sono-

ma and Napa valleys and brought here for processing.

"We use natural fruits from Hawaii in our blended wines because we want ingredients associated with the island," Kenny says. Dark purple jaboticaba berries, native to Brazil but grown in Hawaii, lend a cranberry or black-cherry flavor to the Volcano Red, nicknamed Pele's Delight, and the white Volcano Blush wines. The two-time award-winning Hawaiian Guava wine, created from fermented yellow-guava puree and white grapes, imparts a layered fruity taste that is pleasant for an aperitif. Volcano Winery's newest creation, Infusion, blends tea grown at the winery with honey wine.

If you go . . .

Volcano Winery
35 Pii Mauna Drive
(At 30-mile marker on Highway 11, northwest of entrance to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park)
Volcano, Hawaii
877-967-7772
www.volcanowinery.com
Free tastings daily 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; no appointments necessary.

"My favorite is the Symphony Mele, because it is a classic grape wine and a gold-medal winner at the 2004 Finger Lakes International Wine Competition," Bothof says. All wines are bottled by hand and then shipped to retail stores throughout the Hawaiian Islands or directly to customers in certain mainland states.

The sweeter blended fruit wines tend to be more popular with casual wine drinkers, Bothof says. "Connoisseurs of wine don't accept the fruit mix." Once the new pinot comes on line, however, he hopes to give even the toughest critics something to talk about.

"We're not trying to compete with Napa Valley," Bothof says. "We just want to make this a destination where people can have an enjoyable time and try some truly unique wines."

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