

## **Swimming with Dolphins**

It is one thing to do that with trained dolphins at Sea World, but Jean saw it with her own eyes as six people swam with wild dolphins in the ocean.

There is a beautiful and generally deserted beach just a mile from our “second home” here in Kauai. Jean walks to the beach and back each day for exercise and to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the usually deserted beach. Normally there are fewer than 10 people either swimming or surfing on the half mile of sandy beach in a well protected cove. Weekends draw larger crowds, but they are almost all “locals.” Kalihiwai Beach is listed by one of the Tourist Guides as the locals favorite beach...it is, and it deserves to be.

As Jean was walking to the beach on day in 2000, she came to the bend in the road overlooking the beach below, perhaps a hundred feet above the beach with a vista where she can see the entire beach area. A couple of people were at the vista point and gesturing in a manner that caught her attention, so rather than continue to walk to the beach she looked over the side of the road.

She saw several people in the water with a number of large fish swimming around them. Jean could see that the “fish” were dolphins because of the fins, so she watched for a few minutes and then continued to walk down to the beach to get closer.

On the beach she saw the characteristic fins of dolphins, perhaps a dozen or so, and the six people were not actually swimming but just bobbing in the water so as not to disturb the dolphins that had come into the calm waters of the protected cove. As the people bobbed, the dolphins would swim right up to and past the people – neither mammal bothering the other – and both respectful but curious about the other.

The dolphins divided into three groups, some containing younger dolphins, and the people in the water divided with them by bobbing to the new location rather than swimming. The people did nothing to cause any disturbance in the calm waters, and the dolphins just swam around them, close enough to bump the people lightly.

Jean watched the “dance” for about 15 minutes before coming back up the hill and home. Jean came back up to the vista point and watched for a few minutes longer, but the dolphins were going further out of the cove and only two of the people were going out into the less protected area.

This was a really unusual experience. Jean has probably walked to this beach more than a hundred times in the past, and has not seen this and has never heard a neighbor talk about something like this.

## **Drive North, a Turn by Turn View**

The North Coast of Kauai, for the purposes of this writing, begins at Kilauea. Once you leave the airport at Lihue and drive north along the East Coast, you will pass through the last of the large towns, the town of Kapa’ā. You can tell that civilization reaches that far because there is a Burger King, a Safeway, and other such signs of civilized homogenization. For the next hour, the only such signs are a Subway Sandwiches in Kilauea and another in Hanalei.

And, with Kapa’ā you have left stop lights and stop signs

Kapa’ā is a good place to stop for groceries if you have a beach rental or some place to prepare meals – the food prices go north with the coast! It also has several of our favorite eating places – The Bull Shed for dinner and the Country Kitchen for Breakfast.

The Country Kitchen is a local favorite, and looks like a diner in El Paso in 1955, complete with green naugahide booths. The food is really good, and more than anyone really needs.

Eggbert's in the Coconut Shopping Center, is superb...but be prepared for a line, although the line moves quickly. The breakfast is good enough for a special trip.

The Bull Shed is the place we go for dinner at every opportunity, and specifically at the end of our visits when our food has run out. You need to be really hungry for this place! Right across the street from a Foodland grocery store there is a small, virtually unmarked road leading to the beach, and the Bull Shed. It is an island favorite, so get there before 5:15 because they open at 5:30 and you want a table on the ocean. They have a great salad bar and superb beef and fish. The Bull Shed was known primarily to locals for several decades, and to Bull Shed's credit, after they were "discovered" they changed not one bit! Same food, same prices, same excellence. Great food!



The Private Waterfall, as Taken from Our Bedroom

Ka'pa'a also has several good places to shop for gifts. If your taste runs to fine blown glass, Kela's is a treat for the eyes.

For truly great wood items, Jean and I buy at Zimmer's – their koa and milo wood products are near museum quality and I would personally buy every piece in the shop if I had the ability.

As you continue North, you get rapidly into the hinterlands of Kauai, and you will note that Kauai is aptly named the Garden Island. Beautiful flowers grow beside the road as weeds, and the island is many variations on the theme of green. Look at the hills at any time of the day and note the many grades of green!

When you think you have driven a long way, you haven't – it's just that the road is a double lane and traffic seldom gets to the posted speed limit of 50. The speed limit is actually set by the slowest car on the road, and that is usually lower than 50.

At an unmarked town called Anahola, you will pass a small grocery store on the right, and right next to it is a burger joint named "Onoburgers". "Ono" is a Hawaiian word which loosely translated means "the best." It isn't, but it is pretty good, and is worth a stop if it is open when you pass some time. Several years ago this shack was rated in Zagat's, which ain't bad for a burger joint, but I fear they are resting on their laurels. Try their blue cheese burger – it is messy but it is very good because the blue cheese dressing is homemade.

A new "Fruit Stand" is further on the right...Moloa's Sunrise Fruit Stand. Excellent "smoothies."

Just past the fruit stand you will pass the what appears to be a Dairy on the left, it is the remnants of the formerly Meadows Gold Dairy, currently just horses in a large field, and finally arrive at the first of the North Coast towns, Kilauea. Kilauea has several interesting places, and none are hard to find because the town is tiny. There is a beautiful Episcopal rock church, and the famous Kilauea Lighthouse. On the way to the lighthouse, the northernmost place in the Hawaiian Islands, is the Kong Lung store. This store, which has an eclectic collection of beautiful clothes and gifts, has been



open for more than 100 years and we always stop by each time we are on the island. Right behind Kong Lung is a soap factory that is more than worth a visit. Lot s of smellum good stuff there.

The first road after the entry to Kilauea is Kalihiwai road, and it leads to a really nice beach – but then many roads do on Kauai. We live on this road when we are on Kauai. (See “Home Exchanging” on this website.)

Our hosts built a standard A frame home in 1972 on the highest portion of their property, that portion with the best ocean view. Today, they have “only” 10 acres.

Kalihiwai is an interesting road. At one time, many years ago, it was a semi-circle with two entrances from the only road that encircles the island — but the bridge at about the center point washed out decades ago in a tsunami. Today, therefore, there are two separate roads called Kalihiwai. This story is much like the true story of Anini Beach just to the north. It was Wanini Beach, but the “W” was blown off in a storm, and rather than fix it they just called it Anini Beach. The stories of Anini beach and Kalihiwi Road tell you a lot about the culture here on Kauai.

Kalihawai is a street of extremes. There are five or more “shacks” along the road. These are simple lean-to structures or single wall constructed “homes” lived in by hippies, some of whom are actually the children of wealthy Hawaiians. Some of the other homes are owned by people whose names you would recognize, Getty. The Getty home is below the home we live in, between it and the ocean, and we have watched it

being constructed for several years. It is a multi-gazillion dollar home whose construction has recently been delayed because the special Brazilian wood ordered was flawed and had to be sent back, causing a four month delay.

The home where we live is comfortable, and the grounds are huge and well kept. The great waterfall, perhaps 50 feet across and a drop of 50 feet into a pool on their property is heard throughout the property, and is most prominently heard in the bedrooms. This waterfall can only be seen from the property and from a small portion of the road, so there are occasional cars that stop at the point on the road to take pictures, but few know of the road or the waterfall. There are hundreds of waterfalls on the island so our “private” waterfall is not a tourist attraction.

Continuing, the next road is also Kilihiwai road, as you may recall from a previous mention. Once the two roads were one, in a semi-circle, but the bridge was wiped out by the tsunami in 1956 and was never rebuilt. The second Kilihiwai road leads to Annini Beach – which you will recall was once Wannini beach but the “W” fell off and rather than replace it the locals simply call it Annini Beach. That, and the two Kilihiwai roads give you some flavor of the North Coast of Kauai!

Annini Beach is one of the best known beaches on the North Coast. Here are some great private homes and vacation rentals, a launch for boats, a windsurfing school, a camp grounds for tents, and most importantly – polo matches during the summer months.

Now, you are probably thinking that polo is a very sophisticated sport for an island that prides itself on a lack of sophistication. You need to go to a Kauai polo match on a Sunday afternoon. Yes, the match is first-rate with great horses and excellent riders, but the crowd is pure Kauai. We are talking Fourth of July picnic in Ames, Iowa, circa 1950. This is a funky, shorts and halter tailgate crowd, but the polo is top grade. Peter Baldwin, who owns the huge Baldwin Ranch on Maui flies his ranch friends and his private band over to Kauai, where he mounts one of the 40 polo ponies he barges over for the season, and the game is on. I have never figured out how the teams are selected because everyone seems to play for whatever “teams” are playing today. It seems to be a “pickup” game each week, and regardless of whether it is Budweiser vs. Bali Hi

Realty or Smith Chiropractic vs. Bubba's Burgers the same players are on the field, playing for one team or another – and often against the same team he played for the week before. It is great fun!

Continuing along the north Coast, you arrive in the Princeville. First, on the left is the Princeville Airport. This is a great place to take a helicopter ride, but helicopters are very pricey. The list price is nearly \$150 per person, but if you can get a seat on “standby” the price gets much more reasonable. The airport also has Amelia's – a weekend live music bar. Locals like Bette Midler and Charro (who now lives on O'ahu) have been known to sit in with the band on occasion.

Next, on the right, is the Princeville Pro Shop and gym. The Prince Course is a must play for serious golfers, but the morning fee is about \$115. Afternoon fee is about \$90. Enough said.

Roadside Garden at Kalihiwai Ridge



However, the Gym is excellent, if you can stand awful and loud music. All gyms, indeed many public facilities insist on playing loud raucous music as if everyone likes the same garbage. But the gym is good, open to the public, and a great place to exercise. Price is \$75 for two weeks and \$110 for a month, unless you arrive during an \$89/month “special.” Longer contracts are available. (Bring your own Walkman or MP3 player!!)

Continuing along the road you arrive at the entrance to Princeville, a beautiful but very pricey community of homes, condos, and the Princeville Hotel. You need to drive through the community, and perhaps even go to the hotel to buy a drink on the veranda so you can watch a sunset over Hanalei Bay. The Living Room is the lounge from which you can watch the sunset over “Bali Hi” – actually the Na Pali coast, but so named because it was used as the island in the original movie, South Pacific.

Just past the entrance to Princeville is the new Princeville Library, a beautiful building because everyone knows that is what is necessary to warehouse \$20 books. Non-residents can buy a library card by the year, or if you intend to return often, in 5 year increments. A five-year card is \$25.

Immediately adjacent to the Princeville Library is the Princeville Shopping Center. All prices in this center are just a little higher than they would have been if you had bought in Kapa’ā because it is more remote and besides, the residents of Princeville can afford it. This shopping center has a large grocery store, Foodland, a fine restaurant, CJ’s Steak House, and many smaller shops like a photo store and a Lapperts Ice Cream. Lunch or dinner at CJ’s is great. CJ’s was Chuck’s Steak House until 2003, when the employees bought the restaurant, and it is very good. Their luncheon Bar-B-Que sliced prime rib sandwich is huge – and their Beefeater’s sandwich is even larger!

Once you leave the shopping center, almost immediately there is a good viewpoint for the Taro fields on your left. This is a good spot for a camera shot.

Proceeding along, on your right you will see the fire department and the police station and almost immediately you begin your descent into the Hanalei Valley, culminating with the first of many one-way bridges. Both sides of the bridge have yield signs, so

the first side to start across will cause the other side to sit for a few seconds. The island rule is three cars at a time, if there is a line. Tourists, unaware of the policy and the Aloha spirit, make the policy difficult to enforce – more out of ignorance than malice.

Just a little way past the bridge on the right is an excellent restaurant. Sitting on the Hanalei River, the Dolphin House has excellent food. You can sit either inside or out by the river, and either way you can enjoy both good food and a fine atmosphere. Their luncheon menu contains one of the good buys on the island, a hamburger made with a thick slab of filet mignon for only \$7! Their salads and salad bar are wonderful. Their onion rings are superb – and their fish plates are unbeatable.

With the Dolphin House, you are in Hanalei. Hanalei is a great small community with a nice beach area, access to boating tours of the Na Pali coast, and the home of the very best mai tai on the island at Zelo's Beach House on the main street. Zelo's makes their mai tai with no commercial mix. It's all with fresh juice and the Happy Hour price (3:30-5:30 p.m.) is only \$4.50.

There are some nice shops in Hanalei, but Hanalei is basically just a nice place to live and drink mai tais. Sounds good to me! If you want to do something cheap, but nice, buy a bottle of Bacardi Tropic – the nearest thing to a real mai-tai, at a grocery store, get some cups of ice, and go out on the Hanalei pier for the sunset. Beautiful!

If someone told me I was exiled, and had to pick the spot of my exile, it would be Hanalei, or nearby Haena. Leaving Hanalei there is little else of civilization except Haena, a wide spot in the road and a nice place to live or vacation, and several good beaches. Tunnels Beach is a great snorkeling spot in the summer and the end of the road is Ke'e Beach. Ke'e is where Thornbirds was filmed, and it is now a very popular spot for hiking into the Na Pali coast or just playing on a reef protected beach.

Because there are several hikes that start at Ke'e Beach, you must arrive early in the morning to get a decent parking spot.

Jean and I remember when you could toss live hand grenades on Ke'e without harming anyone, but it has been “discovered.” Ah, progress!

Just one piece of friendly advice – don't try either the short or the long "hike" unless you are in pretty good shape. You have about an 800 foot climb up the mountain, mostly on slippery rocks in running water or on even more slippery mud. And if you think going up is hard, try keeping your feet coming down...all on a trail about two bodies wide in many areas. It's doable, even for older people, but it ain't easy. The longer hike is several days long, and only for the young and strong.

Long hikes or short, the secret is in footwear. The Foodland store in Hanalei sells a really UGLY pair of Japanese green booties with felt soles that are as good as they are ugly. This hike is NOT a fashion show...indeed, people have been known to hike the trail sans clothes, so buy the uglies and be comfortable! Even if you hike naked!

At Ke'e Beach, you have driven as far as you can go. If you have arrived here, you have seen but still do not understand Northern Kauai. Stay awhile. Relax.

This is a great place to do nothing. Enjoy it.



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