

Hawai'i Adventure Cruise | Trip Report

November 9 – 16, 2018 | By Participant Karen Worcester

Photos by Greg Smith



With Guide Greg Smith and participants Karen, Wendi, Paul, Revin, Angie, Lori, Gaye, Sally, Mary, Alice, Richard, Carol



Fri., Nov. 9 Molokai

Most everyone made it to the hotel yesterday and met up with our operator to get ready for a hula demonstration by the local halaus at 2:00 PM. These ladies love to dance and we were a bit of a captive



audience, with each of five or six groups performing three pieces each, each with a costume change. They were really quite charming.

After a short initiation by cruise staff, we were bused to the very beautiful *Safari Explorer*, a 36-passenger yacht finished with glossy woodwork in a quiet, carpeted, luxurious lounge. Our rooms were not cramped, each with a double bed, desk, and private bath. It was a lovely place to be for a week.

Sat., Nov. 10 Halawa Valley, Molokai

We stayed in port overnight and disembarked in the morning (after yoga and breakfast of our choice) for an overland field trip to Halawa Bay/Valley at the far eastern tip of the island. This was a very lush place, grown thick with trees of many varieties. We learned that these trees are all relatively new to the area, with many of them orchard trees that have self-sown since the large tsunami that wiped this canyon clear in 1946. The tsunami was 111 feet high and traveled a mile and

a half up the valley. At the time, 5000 people lived here and all but one family survived this event. But now, there are only a few permanent residents remaining.

We were greeted ceremonially, with blowing of the conch, and then touching of forehead and nose by a father/son duo that were educating residents and visitors alike. Some of the group then braved the mud and stream crossings to hike to a lovely waterfall up the valley. Others stayed and listened to Greg and his father Phillip, talk about the culture and history of the valley. In the old days, the people who lived here picked a child at the age of five to learn about the traditional ways of the people. From 1893 to 1993, teaching the Hawaiian culture and language was actually banned by the US government. Bill Clinton abolished that edict. Greg and Phillip now carry on the teaching of Hawaiian tradition in this valley.

Greg wore a lei made of kikui nut, the beautiful, deep brown nuts that look as though they've been polished by hand. The word "kikui" means light, or goodness. So, the lei is a circle of light, and represents how you treat others. The nut itself has many functions, as food, medicine (it serves as an effective laxative and topical ointment), and as a seasoning. The nuts are threaded on palm leaf veins and used as candles; each nut burns for about five minutes. In addition, both men were wearing their family colors and wore Ti leaves over their neck for spiritual protection.

Later Greg gave a demonstration of how to make poi. Steamed taro was pounded and folded over and pounded

some more, until it reached a creamy texture. A large wooden slab was used, with a stone pestle. Traditionally, making poi was men's work, and there is definitely a lot of muscle involved.

Part of our group decided on a more physical time in the canyon. They hiked up country to the base of the falls. It was muddy, there were fast-flowing streams that needed to be forded, and there was that end of the trail reward. A different experience than the cultural one, but still a day of learning.

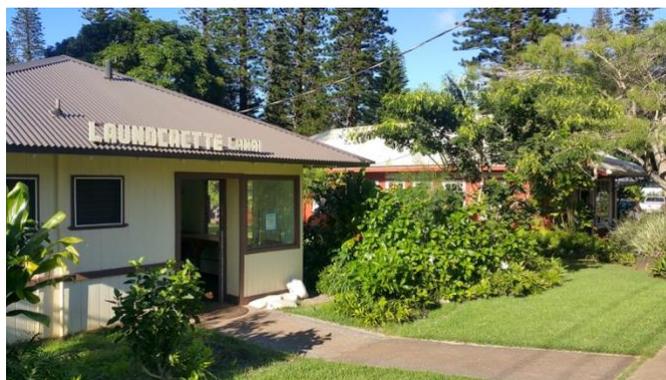
It was a long day, with a long and twisting drive back out of the valley. We arrived home just in time for cocktail hour, an event not to be missed.

Sun., Nov. 11 Waking up in Lana'i

How to best start a day (AFTER sunrise yoga and another perfect breakfast)? Throw yourself in the 80-degree waters of the Pacific, especially in a little bay full of tropical fish. So, we did. The diversity was high and the fish were good sized and we saw dozens of species. Dai Mar, the expedition leader, was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide with a clear passion for the ocean and its denizens, all to our benefit!

We spent the morning snorkeling at Shark Tooth Rock, where again, the size and diversity of fish were gratifying. After lunch, a few chose to visit the cat sanctuary, where hundreds of feral cats have been moved to live out their lives in luxury, with the hope that this effort begins to benefit the beleaguered native bird population. Others of us wound our way away from the harbor up to the main town of Lana'i City, which is built around Dole Square. Years ago, Dole Pineapple owned much of the land, and pineapple was the mainstay of the island. But the last pineapples were harvested seventeen years ago. The island also had a long ranching history, but now, tourism is its mainstay and it is a charming, quiet place in which to immerse. We visited the cultural museum and a few of the galleries surrounding the square. Everyone was very friendly and chatty.

Lovely Lana'i! This serene Island is owned almost entirely (98%) by Larry Ellison of Oracle fame. Though this sounds rather ominous, he has visions of sustainability and hydroponics and such, and the single individual I quizzed thought very well of him.





Lana'i has one small harbor, near the large Four Seasons Hotel that provides much of the employment to the 3,000 residents of this small island. It is green. We were told that the usual rainfall is around thirty-five inches, but they've had a wet year. The habitat is arid, with much of the landscape kiawe (mesquite) grasslands punctuated by rows of Cook Island pines. Yes, very green.

We drove back down the mountain to a park along the beach where we walked out to Sweetheart Rock. The red cliffs are sheer to the water and quite spectacular. They are layer after layer of superheated lava laid down one on top of another, after shooting out of a nearby lava tube. There is an old story here of a Lana'i warrior who stole a princess from a neighboring island and accidentally got her killed by hiding her in a sea cave where she was drowned by a large wave. This was too much, so he threw himself off the rocks here to mourn her loss.

Cocktails and dinner (perfect pork loin) were followed by Jess's presentation on the many fishes and invertebrates we saw today (or hoped to see soon). She was a charming speaker and clearly loves the creatures of these islands!

Mon., Nov. 12 Waking up in Maui

After our usual near perfect start of the day with early morning fruit and yogurt, yoga on the top deck, and breakfast of choice, we headed out for morning activities of kayaking and a shoreline skiff ride. Kayakers enjoyed a paddle in and out of rocky channels along the shoreline, watching crabs scuttle, and peering into the turquoise blue depths for glimpses of reef fish. It was exquisite. We wouldn't have traded it for anything, but the report of a double Humpback breach from the skiff group did make the kayakers a tiny bit green. But, we were met by a spiked iced tea on deck, which made everyone feel that much better.

After lunch of curry and greens, we enjoyed an afternoon of whale watching. The Humpbacks cooperated, breaching and blowing for us and making themselves photo worthy. We passed by tiny Molokini Island, shaped like a half crescent, because its crater is partially submerged. It is a bird sanctuary, and boats cannot land without permits, nor can anchors be dropped. The birds nest in the vertical cliff face, often in the holes blasted



into the island by military training activities of the past (it was thought to be shaped somewhat like a battleship). The crater face continues to plunge underwater, where it forms a 350-foot vertical sea wall, and is considered one of the finest dive locations in the world.



There was time for a nap before cocktail hour and our exquisite meal of duck with panna cotta finish. We were visited by Ed Lyman of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback National Marine Sanctuary, who talked about his work disentangling Humpbacks and other whales and marine mammals from nets and other material. He said that it is estimated that 308,000 whales die each year from entanglement, and the majority of those are young Humpbacks. He also told us that male Humpbacks in an ocean basin all sing the same song, though it evolves over a period of eight years or so into a new song. The theory is that the whale sings to call in a “wingman,” another male, to talk each other up to the girls. Ed showed some extraordinary footage of him and his team disentangling whales on the fly. True heroes!



Tues., Nov. 13 More Maui

Again, the gently rocking deck helped the yogis feel their balance. Then a lovely breakfast of avocado toast and eggs with another stellar sunrise, and then off we went, to snorkel a “pier wreck,” where a pier was allowed to collapse to the sea floor, providing amazing habitat for corals and other creatures. The remarkably diverse structural habitat provided by this collapse is a powerful attractant for sea turtles, who are commonly found here at “cleaner stations,” being picked clean of algae by industrious Surgeonfish. We watched several floating calmly past, or pausing to let their fish friends

do their work. We were also treated to not one, but two Frogfish, one of whom was wandering about in the open, perhaps looking for love in all the wrong places. A Lizardfish perched on his coral until darting off at Dai Mar’s approach. Beautiful ornate and oval Butterflyfish picked at the reef, and the corals were amazing in their size and variety. These are all hard corals; there are very few soft corals this far north.

The more adventurous among us surfed behind the zodiacs upon return to the boat, and others tried stand up paddle boarding. Steak or mushroom burgers for lunch, and off we went for an afternoon adventure in Lahaina, which has a colorful past involving the not so productive interactions between whalers and missionaries.

Near the harbor is a spectacular banyan tree that covers a city block. Several older structures still evoke the streets of the past, but there are still plenty of shopping malls, jewelry stores, and other trappings of the tourist

trade. We did stop at two spectacular galleries recommended by the crew, one of the large format photographer Peter Lik and the other of the Daliesque multi-media artist Vladimir Kush.

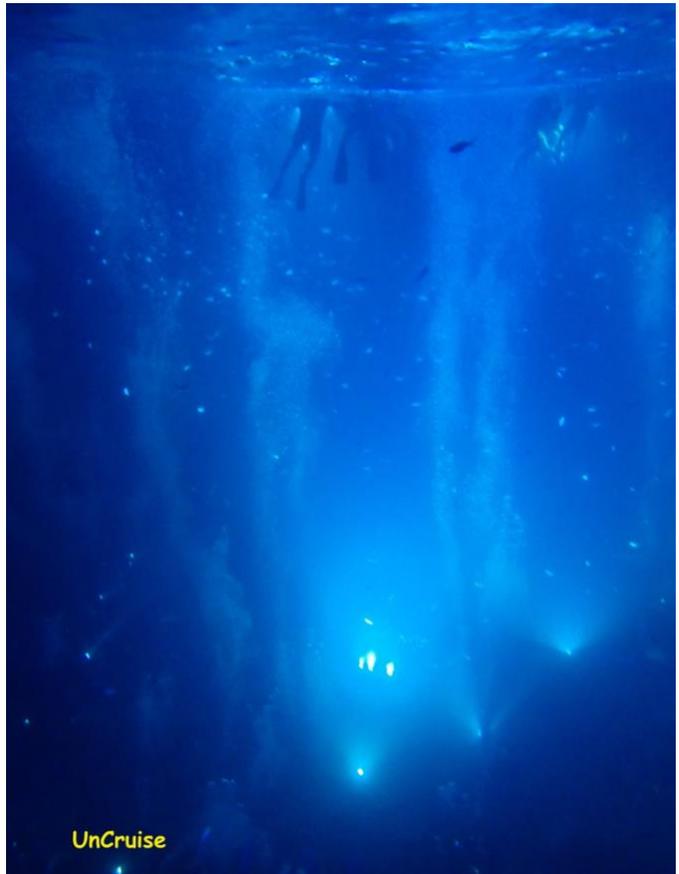
We returned home in time for happy hour with entertainment provided by our own Captain Gavin on guitar. After lamb chops and creme caramel, Jess talked about the love lives of various sea creatures, including sea Horses, obsters, sea turtles, and Hammerhead Sharks. She had us all in stitches.

Wed., Nov. 14 **Waking Up on the Big Island**

We were warned that the crossing of the Alenuihāhā Channel was almost never done by boats our size. But this sturdy and beautiful boat handled it very well, though we all woke to a bit of rock and rolling in the middle of the night. The morning brought a lovely calm sea and clear skies, though it apparently rained in the night. Our morning outing was a kayak/skiff trip to the City of Refuge, where according to Hawaiian tradition we couldn't be killed for, say, stepping on the wrong person's shadow. That was a relief. The shoreline is beautifully sculpted lava, and the occasional Wandering Tattler made an appearance. Kayakers backed in and out of lava caves and enjoyed the relief along the coast. The water was startlingly clear.

After lunch, we cruised the ocean waters looking for charismatic megafauna, and managed to enjoy several encounters with Short-finned Pilot Whales. They occasionally would spy hop to get a look, pushing their rounded heads straight up in the air. All of this made for great photo opportunities at the ship's rail!

We had a mini-dinner of soba noodles and slaw and were entertained by our Manta Ray guide, Ian. He told us a bit about the Manta Ray's life history: These underwater birds turn their cephalic fins into scoops to help feed on plankton (copepods). Plankton congregate at the edges of current lines, so the island of Kona is a perfect place to see Mantas, with its steep drop-off and strong currents. These



behemoths are three feet long at birth. Full-grown males grow to 9 feet wide; females are 11 – 14 feet, wing tip to wing tip. He prepared us for what turned out to be an extraordinary evening, though alas, no mantas were to be seen. But we were taken out to a bay where divers and snorkelers congregate with lights, the divers sitting on the bottom, the snorkelers floating above, hanging onto surfboards sporting downward facing lights. The result is a circular field of light that attracts plankton and fish, and hopefully manta rays. The diver's bubbles drift upward, catching the light and making the whole experience even more magical. We drifted for some time in the blackness, watching schooling fish flit below us. It was a party atmosphere above the water, with several dive boats congregated and many people participating. Oh, how we wished those mantas had shown themselves, but it was quite the experience regardless.

We came back to the ship for a second mini-dinner of flatbreads and wine. A fine finish to a very satisfying day.

Thurs., Nov. 15 More Big Island

It was our last day on this beautiful ship. Our morning outing was wonderful. We were picked up by inflatables belonging to another company, that were larger and faster and able to move us down coast more quickly to the site of Captain Cook's demise, with time-outs for Bottle-nosed and Spinner dolphins. There we suited up for snorkeling and jumped in. The water at first was a little chilly, as a freshwater lens was sitting on top of the warmer ocean water, distorting our visibility of the colorful fish life below us. This site was the prettiest of all our snorkeling spots, with diverse corals, and many fish hanging on the edge of the reef where it dropped into deeper water. We found a black morph of the Long-nosed Butterflyfish and a free swimming, not to mention large, Moray Eel. It was a busy location, with many swimmers, snorkelers, and boaters, but the marine life was unsurpassed. This area is a National Marine Sanctuary, with strict regulations about disturbance and even sunscreen use.

Captain Cook was killed here by the islanders after one of his men shot the King's son-in-law, not a good move. He had initially been warmly welcomed as they mistook him for Lono, the god of peace and agriculture. Later they doubted this, as he tried at one point to leave the island but had to turn back because of the sea conditions. Hawaiian deities just don't do that

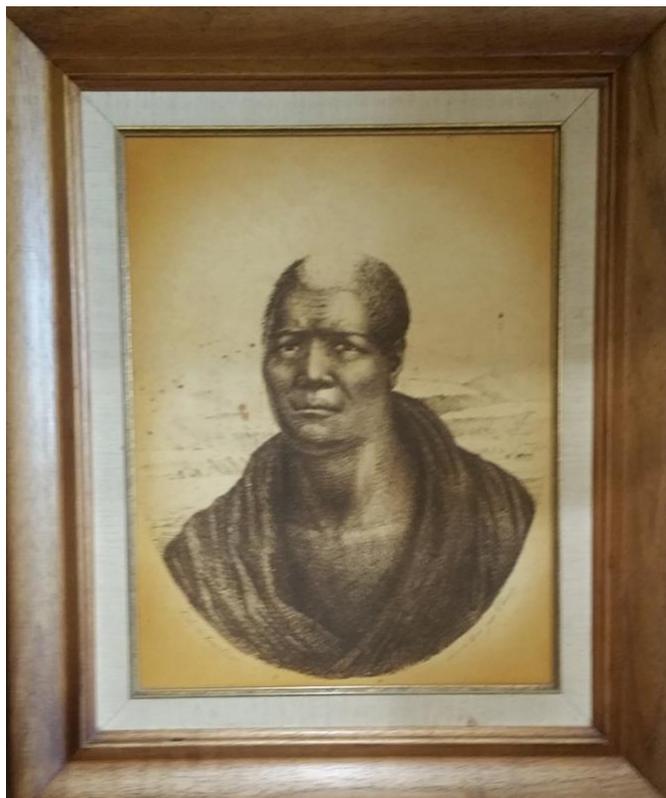


Our trip back was more leisurely, and again, the Spinner Dolphins put on a show for us, coming right up to our boat, showing off their babies, making a few leaps and spins in the air to earn their name. The coastline was spectacular black lava rock, with blow holes, and caves, and cliffs, and torturous coastline. In one place our guide pointed out the reclining figure of Pele, her wild hair formed by the striations of the lava, her hips rising up a gentle slope. In front of her hand was a flat platform, where native people placed their offerings. At times, fires were lit in the small lava tubes that formed her eyes, burning bright out into the sea.

After lunch of scampi on wild rice, we were taken ashore to explore Kona. Some experimented with rowing a double hulled canoe, whereas many of us took a historical tour with Dai Mar. Kona was charming, retaining some level of Hawaiian funk. In the mouth of the harbor is King Kameamea's heiau, his personal temple where his kahuna resided. King Kamehameha was hugely influential in uniting the islands and stopping 500 years of war. He died in 1819; at that time his two wives invited his son (King Kamehameha II) to eat with them at the temple. This was taboo under the old kapu system, where women did not eat with men, did not eat men's foods, and suffered many other restrictions. Together they announced the abolishment of the kapu system. Coincidentally, within six months Calvinist missionaries arrived and filled the religious void left by the abolishment of kapu with Christianity, which was adopted by many of the native Hawaiians.

We wandered through the nearby hotel lobby where a large exhibit of Herb Kane's work was on display, all scenes from Hawaiian history. Cases nearby showcased the gorgeous ceremonial capes worn by Hawaiian chiefs, entirely covered in the gold, red, green, and blue feathers of the many species of honeycreepers that used to be found on the island. We passed the starting and finish line for the Ironman triathlon, and then wandered through Hulihe'e, a royal palace built in the early 1800s. European influence here was profound, from the ornate wood furniture to the tucked and bustled gowns on display. Princess Ruth was a lone holdout to this cultural shift. She was primary heir to the Kamehameha family and Royal Governor to the Hawaiian Islands in the mid-1880s. She refused to speak English and lived in a grass house on the grounds of the palace.

After returning to the boat, we packed for our early morning departure, and then had cocktails while listening to our ship's visitors, Danny and Anna. They were story tellers and talked about Hawaiian history and culture. They had a lot to say about the cowboy life there, including how Hawaiian cowboys went to a rodeo championship in Wyoming in 1908, broke the green horses they were provided in nearby lakes, and then went on to win the





championship. They sang several songs, including one about the charismatic state fish, the humuhumunukunukuapua'a, which literally translated means a pig's snout that weaves back and forth. Exactly what we all thought when I saw it picking along the coral reefs. We were happy to have Anna join us at our table for our prime rib dinner. They both were lovely people.

Fri., Nov. 16 Departures

We woke up quite a way to the east of Kona, where an industrially-scaled port allowed the *Safari Explorer* to dock, fuel up, and generally take care of business. As soon as we finished up breakfast we were transported via bus back to Kona to the airport or hotel, depending on folks' plans. The staff lined up for goodbyes; they were such a great group! The ride was beautiful, with the early morning sun lighting up the dark lava fields, punctuated here and there by gold grasses. It was a lovely last look at this island before we headed homeward.

