

Day 4 continued- Captain Cook, Big Island

We arrived at the Edge of the World B&B in Captain Cook (on the West Coast, South of Kailua) about 5:00 PM. Traffic between the airport and the B&B was awful. It took an hour to go 17 miles. Luckily that's the only place we really hit traffic the entire trip (besides Oahu). The B&B is on a 5 acre, family run farm that grows coffee beans and macadamia nuts. The owners were really nice and the house was gorgeous. Our room was called the Crow's Nest and it fit the title. It was a separate floor at the top of the house (surprise) and we had a private bath, king bed, futon sofa, TV, DVD player (and DVDs), walk-in closet, mini-fridge (and use of one shelf of their



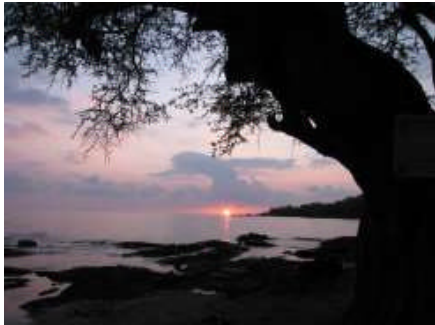
main fridge) and a private deck overlooking the valley and the bay below - absolutely gorgeous.

We also had the use of their boogie boards, masks, snorkels, reef shoes, fins, beach chairs, washer/dryer and could take any fruit we wanted off their trees. Downstairs they had a large wrap around deck with a double hammock- I love hammocks. All this and breakfast for \$100/night - you can't go wrong. I could easily chill at a place like this but too much to see and do!

Once we got the car unloaded took a 10-15 min drive down to the Pu-uhonua o Honaunau (aka Place of Refuge). The ancient kapu system had an odd array of weird laws that had to be obeyed. Men and women were not allowed to eat together, your shadow couldn't cross the path of a chief, etc. The penalty for any violation was some tortuous form of death for the offender



(and sometimes his/her family) to avoid the wrath of the Gods in the form of lava flows, tidal waves or some other disaster. I wonder if this is where "kaput" comes from. Anyway, if the offender could survive long enough to make it to a Place of Refuge, the priest there would mandate a ritual to perform that would forgive ANY violation of kapu. This particular Place of Refuge is the only one that remains. There wasn't a lot to the place but it was very pretty, especially the way the late afternoon sun hits the palm trees and structures there.



The best part for me was the great snorkeling place right next to it called Two- Step. Just after you turn off the highway into the park, there is a one way street that goes about a block and then turns right at the water. Just park anywhere you can along the water. There is a lava bench 15-20 feet off the beach. On the far left side it literally has two steps in the lava bench where you can access the water. There were lots of coral, colored fish and sea turtles out the ying yang here and it was sooooo easy to access.

We stayed there until after sunset and made it to the restaurant at the Manago Hotel just before they closed. The place reminded me of an old restaurant out of the 50's, complete with 50 year old tables and chairs. I had pan-fried pork chops and Wayne had pan fried Opelu (it was a whole fish, panfried). Tasted just like grandma used to cook on those heavy cast iron skilletts. The side dishes were served family style and were kind of unusual. They had potato/macaroni salad, rice, pickled fern stalks (they had an official name that I can't remember) and some corn combo. Everything was good. The waitress came by and asked if we had tried the "chili water" with the fish. I'd never heard of that one before. It was a jar with water, vinegar, and some other seasonings with whole red chilies floating on top. Smelled like watered down Tabasco to me.

She got a little bowl and mixed some chili water with soy sauce and told him to dip the fish in that. Wayne tried it and started putting chili water on everything.

Day 5- Captain Cook, Big Island

Kurt has a friend that lets him rent out his double kayak for only \$20/day. Not only was that less than half what the rental places were charging but since it was right there at the house, we could hit the water way before anyone else. We got up at 7 am and Kurt helped us load the kayak on the car. Then we drove 15 minutes in the other direction to the kayak launch at Kealahou Bay. This is supposed to have some of the best snorkeling in the state. Unfortunately they have closed off the parking lot there so we had to drop off the kayak and then Wayne drove off to find a place to park. Good thing we were there early. We then kayaked a mile out to Captain Cook



Monument. There's supposed to be a lot of spinner dolphins along the way but we didn't see any that day. We pulled our kayak up on the shore, walked over to the monument and then went snorkeling. The water was so clear and the reef was in pretty shallow water so we could see a lot. I had my underwater housing figured out a little better and got some good pics. It's still hard to get pictures though because the fish are swimming and you're floating all over. I swear the fish would tease me by swimming on their sides for a couple of seconds so their colors look really neat and then returning to vertical and dashing away with me chasing after them trying to get a good shot. We saw an eel that was about 6 feet long. I got a picture of his head but he was in a deeper section. It's not too clear but you can see his white mouth wide open. After an hour or



so, 4 or 5 raft tour boats came up with big loads full of people making it a lot more crowded. We headed back across the bay. No dolphins again ;-(. After loading the kayak, we made a quick trip back to Two Step while I had my camera set up for underwater so I could get some pics of the turtles. I was swimming around looking for them and was just about to go to the car to get my fins when I almost swam right into one. He swam around me for about 5 minutes until I got out.

After dropping off the kayak, we headed north to Hapuna Beach. Wayne sat and read a book and I boogie boarded for a couple of hours. The waves weren't great but there were still some good ones every once in a while that would bring me to the shore.



Next we headed up to Kohala Mountain Rd and drove to Pololu Lookout. This area was kind of like the Napali Coast on Kauai. We hiked 15 minutes down to the Pololu black sand beach below.



We took the coast road back and could see the outline of Maui off in the distance at sunset. First I thought the clouds were blocking the other side then I realized that I just wasn't looking far enough over. That is one BIG mountain. The whole west side of the island is pretty barren. All along the highway for miles and miles you see rock graffiti where people line up white stones on the black lava to make messages. We had a nice dinner at Teshima's Japanese Restaurant near the B&B and called it a day.

Day 6- Volcano, Big Island

We managed to sneak in a load of laundry before breakfast at the B&B and then headed toward Volcanoes National Park. First we stopped at South Point (the southernmost point of the US). The water was a gorgeous blue there. They think this may be where the first inhabitants arrived.



It is so windy there that all the tree branches grow to one side there. We also passed the Kanoa Wind Farm. It sure looked rundown. Several of the windmills were missing propellers. It was cool to get out of the car and listen to them. They made a sound kind like what you hear when the aborigines swing their hollow gourds. Wayne and I made some rock graffiti of our own. Then we drove a few miles down to Punalu Black Sand Beach. It's the easiest black sand beach to access and it was on the way to Volcano National Park so it was pretty crowded with Japanese tour buses. We'd gotten pretty spoiled having most places to ourselves and wanted to beat the buses to Volcano so we didn't stay long.

Next stop Volcano National Park. We stopped at the visitors center and asked about walking out to the lava flows. The woman took one look at me and said it wasn't worth the trip- HA! She doesn't know me. We got instructions anyway ;-). 3 miles out to the flow, the first mile clearly marked, the rest of the way you're more or less on your own. We then drove Crater Rim Drive and checked out the steam vents and walked the short trail to the sulphur banks. Maybe we were just lucky with the wind but the sulphur banks didn't smell nearly as bad as parts of Yellowstone.

The Jagger museum had some very interesting displays. By the time we drove the full circle and checked out all the lookouts I'd had my fill of seeing barren craters so we headed over to Kilauea Lodge to check in. The room was very nice and the grounds were lovely. Wayne loved the towel warmers. They have loaner flashlights so we brought them along as spares for our trek to the lava flows.

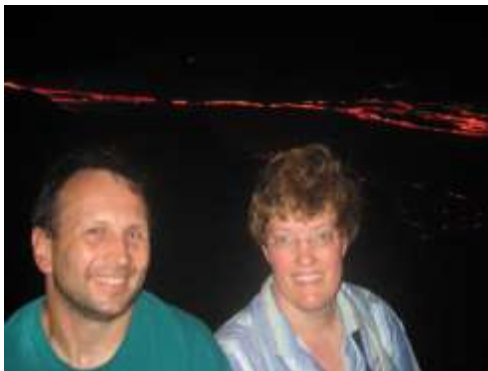
About 4:30 we headed over to Phai Thai for dinner. They had mild, medium, hot and Thai hot. Wayne ordered his "Thai Hot" and the waitress told him he didn't want Thai Hot, he just wanted hot. She kept trying to dissuade him. When he insisted, she asked if he had been to Thailand. She finally caved in and then had to convince the cook that he wanted Thai hot. Wayne said good Thai food makes your lips burn, great Thai food makes your eyes water and this was making his eyes water. All I can say is that I wish she would have given ME some warning too. I only got "medium" and my eyes were watering! After about 4 bites I started scraping those little red bits off my food and soaking my tongue in my glass of ice water.

Kurt had recommended that we head out to the lava flows about 2 hours before sunset and I would agree with that. You don't want to have to walk in the dark both ways and you want to get pictures of the steam at ocean entry before it gets too dark. Unfortunately there was no place to get food any earlier so we didn't get down to the end of Chain of Carters road until 6:00 PM and sunset was 7:30 AND we had to park almost a mile from the trailhead. It took us 1 hour, 50 minutes to walk the 3 miles out to the flow and 2 ½ hours to walk back (probably 4 miles the way we zigzagged ;-). It wasn't particularly difficult, just a long way over rocks and boulders. They weren't slippery or unstable, they just went on forever and it was REALLY dark out there. The moon didn't even come up until about 11:30. On the way out we saw more stars than you can imagine.

It was definitely worth the trip. As you walk down Chain of Craters Rd you reach a point where the lava flows cross the road. Off in the distance, you can see the steam clouds where the lava



enters the ocean. About an hour out, we could see scattered red stripes along the hillside and some red glow under the steam at water's edge. Other than that, you just see a lot mounds of black lava. We finally walked up to the edge of a bluff with lava flowing like a stream below. When we first got there we saw small flows of lava hitting the ocean and making steam clouds.



Once in awhile we'd see sparks fly up along with the steam. We could see some lava flowing about 100 feet up the ridge so we walked up there. Someone said it was all crusted over and grey 20 minutes earlier, then it started oozing and flowing. When we got there the top looked like a giant fireman's hose pumping out golden lava. You could watch floating glowing lumps in the lava stream. The flow would slow as it got farther from the source and some would start to cool and crust over. Then another burst would come and the lava stream would creep farther and break through the crusted area. We stayed for about an hour hoping the main stream would make it to the

edge and go into the water. It kept getting closer but we finally gave up and headed back.

On the way out to the lava flows, you could just follow the trail of people with flashlights going through the lava fields. However, on the way back it was so dark that we couldn't see anyone else within about 30 seconds. They have some warning signs to keep you off lava benches on the ocean side and away from the mountain flow on the other side but that leaves a wide path in between. After about an hour of trying to stay between the beach and the hillsides we finally figured out that they have flashing beacons about every ¼ mile. The lava creates rolling hills so you can't see them a lot of the time but we'd just try to realign whenever we got to a high point. We finally got to the trailhead at around 11:45 and Wayne left me with the backpack while he went for the car. As I was waiting for him I turned toward the lava flow and noticed that the hill directly behind the visitor's center were glowing red with lava. It's a good thing we saw that big stream of lava after walking all the way out there because I would have been really mad if I only saw the glowing hills like the ones I could see from right there! It sure felt good to hit the shower and go to bed that night!

Day 7- Volcano

We had breakfast then we headed over to the Thurston Lava Tubes before the tour buses showed up. Those were pretty cool. As the lava flows, the tops cool and create tubes that help insulate the lava so that it keeps flowing creating a plumbing type system. When the lava stops flowing these tubes drain, leaving hollow hollow lava tunnels running throughout the area. They have lights up in the first section of the Thurston lava tubes. Then there's another section of a couple hundred yards where you can go with your flashlights. It looks like the early beginnings of stalagmites and stalactites that are just little stubbles to the side if the tubes away from foot traffic. When you get to the end, you can turn out your flashlight to see (or not see) TOTAL darkness.



Next we took the Kilauea Iki Trail across the crater of the same name. It took 2 ½ hours to make the loop. It was neat going from jungle to lava and to see the ferns and other plants starting to come back. The base of the crater reminded me of a pan of brownies when you take them out too soon and you get a crust that collapses and cracks. I think I would have been just as happy walking down to the base of the crater, taking a peak and going back up, rather than walking all the way across the base of the crater and back up the other side.



Next we drove down Chain of Carters Rd and hiked the Napau Crater Trail to the Pu'u Huluhulu Crater (~1 mile). There's a field full of tree molds (where lava surrounds a wet tree and cools, leaving a mold of the tree) right near the beginning of the trail. Then you walk through fairly boring lava flows until right before you get to the Pu'u Huluhulu crater where it becomes forest again. The trail climbs up to a lookout platform above the crater where you can see the landscape all 360 degrees around. Very cool. Although everything around the crater was pretty barren, the Pu'u

Huluhulu crater looked like the middle of a jungle full of ferns and trees. From the lookout you could also see steam coming from the Pu'u O'o vent in the distance and the nearby Mauna Ulu crater that erupted from 69-74. We headed back from there and it took us about 70 minutes roundtrip. For hardcore hikers the trail continues on another 5 or 6 miles out,(one way), bringing you much closer to the Pu'u O'o vent. The trail goes even farther but it's blocked off to all but knuckleheads with a death wish.



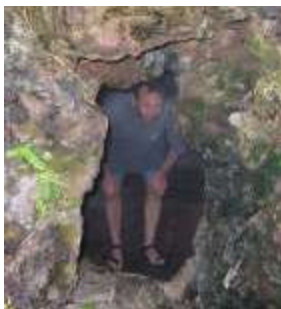
Volcanoed out, we headed to the Kapaho Tidepools, about the farthest point east on the island, about a mile off highway 137. This is a maze of lava tidepools right next to a subdivision. We didn't see as many fish there but there was a fairly deep pool near the center that had the best coral I've seen in Hawaii, Cancun, Isla Mujeres or Akumal. All shapes and colors: lavender, blue, green, yellow- really cool! I wish I had brought my underwater housing with me. They say there are more fish in the pools closer to the ocean but we didn't have our fins with us so I didn't want to get too close. There was a fun current running through the pools parallel to the shore. Too bad we had to swim against it to get back.



Next stop was the Ahalanui Beach Park 2 –3 miles down the road. This is a man-made spring and ocean fed pool. It started out as a cold pool but volcanic eruptions nearby changed the thermodynamics of the area and it is now volcanically heated to ~ 95 degrees. Like the rest of our stay, the surf had been pretty low so it wasn't getting much spillover from the ocean side. I don't like being hot so we didn't stay long but I'm sure some people would love it. On the ocean side of the retaining wall, you could see turtles floating in the waves as they were munching on algae growing on the rocks. I don't

know how they can eat while being battered against the rocks several times a minute.

We headed down to the end of Chain of Craters Rd where the 1990 lava flows buried the town of Kalapana and a famous black sand beach at Kaimu. The guidebook says you can walk out 1/3 mile to a new black sand beach that has been developed but there were warning signs and we we'd already seen two black sand beaches so we didn't bother. Apparently there were a few houses that were surrounded by the lava flow and had no access to their property or utilities but the owners couldn't get anything from the insurance companies because their houses weren't touched! That sounds like my kind of luck.



On our way back to Kilauea Lodge we stopped by the natural lava steam rooms. Heading north on highway 130, there is a pullover on the right side of the road just before the 15 mile marker. If you walk down the hill along a narrow trail you'll see a bunch of little trails wandering off. These trails go to individual lava holes of varying size. Rain collects in this area and is heated into steam and collects in these holes. The deepest "room" supposedly has ladder to help people get in and out. A guy came out of one of the holes while we were there and showed us to one of the popular rooms. Wayne went inside first. It was a little awkward to get in because the opening was small, rough and elevated a little so it took me a while to get in. Wayne started complaining that the room was getting all steamed up because I was blocking the opening so long! The one we went inside would easily hold 3 or 4 people. It had a grass mat over the top opening to keep the steam in and wooden benches inside! Again, I don't like getting hot so we didn't stay long but it felt exactly like the real McCoy.

The guidebook and the man that showed us to the steam room said that you could get the easiest view of the Pu'u O'o vent from the road across from the Hirano Store on hwy 11, right before the 20 mile marker. Since it was close to the hotel we decided to check it out. We couldn't see anything but it was a little hazy.

We had reservations for dinner at the lodge for 8:15 but we got back early and they let us move them up. I was really looking forward to it because everyone, including friends of ours, raved about the food there. In season you have to book weeks in advance. Well...it sucked. Wayne had Ono (wahoo) with mango chutney and macadamia nut sauce. He said the sauce was good but the fish was very dry. I had some eggplant dish that sounded similar to that Sachetto dish I really liked in SF. The sauce tasted burnt or something. Even Wayne said it was bad, so you could only imagine how bad it must have been ;-)

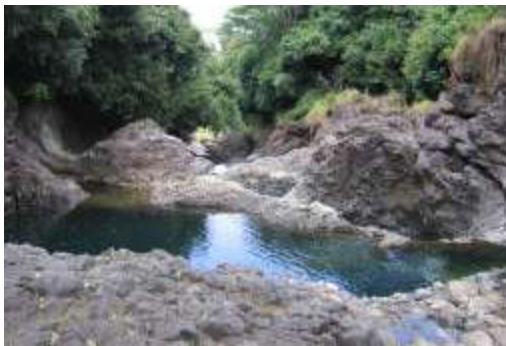
I'm not sure what you do in a situation like that but, wimp that I am, I just shut up and ate it. To add insult to injury the bread was the consistency of biscuits, but without the flavor, and Wayne's caramel macadamia nut dessert tasted like toffee instead of caramel. What a bummer. The only saving grace was that the service was good and they didn't mess up my triple chocolate cake!

Since the sky was clear after dinner, we made one last attempt to see the Pu'u O'o vent from the road across from the Hirano store. No such luck. We looked in every direction so I'm not sure if it wasn't doing anything at that time or we just weren't looking in the right place but we decided to give up trying ;-)

Can't complain too much since we saw that good lava flow the night before.

Day 8- Waipi'o Valley

After a breakfast of mango French toast at the lodge, we headed north to Hilo. There are several falls on Waiaanuenue Ave within 3 miles from town. First stop was Rainbow Falls. You need to be there in the morning to see the rainbows in the spray. We were there about 9:00 AM and saw a little bit of a rainbow but the sun was already pretty high so I'd try to get there even earlier. A short trip down the road brings you to Boiling Pots and Pe'epe'e Falls. The Boiling Pots weren't boiling because the water level was too low. You can see part of the Pe'epe'e Falls from the Boiling pot lookout but there's another set of falls around the corner and a much better view



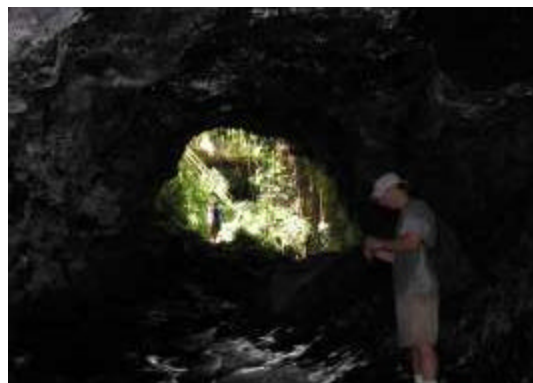
if you hike down there (if the water isn't too strong). There is a little trail to the left of the lookout. Once you get to the stream at the bottom, try to cross the rocks as soon as you can. Do not follow the trail that stays on the same side and then goes back up the hill. That is very steep and ends at a dead end. When we were there, a couple and their dog swam across the middle pond to get to the last pond where the falls are. I'm not sure what that would be like if the water was high.



On the left side of the bridge less than a mile down the road is Wai'ale Falls. There are two bridges but you can only see the falls from the first. There is a path just to the right of the bridge that will take you to the top of the lower falls.

Next stop Kaumana Caves. Heading back toward Hilo, you turn right on Kaumana Drive (200) and go about 3

miles. This is a lava tube where the roof has broken through. Since this part of the island gets heavy rainfall, this open portion of the lava tube has developed dense jungle-like vegetation. A stairway leads down into the open area, then the lava tubes revert back to rock caves but with roots hanging down several feet from the ceiling. If you bring a flashlight you can explore further in the tube caves. They run 2 miles and open into some large rooms.



Next stop Hawaiian Tropical Gardens. They have tons of gorgeous plants that I've never seen or heard of before. It takes about an hour to walk the grounds. They also have a nice waterfall and scenic ocean views. They have 3 pairs of McCaws in cages and they're getting ready to build an aviary. This woman was going on and on loudly talking to these birds like they were her babies. She moved to the cage on the end and she was saying "hello" to that bird and Wayne (standing on the opposite side of me) says "hello" in parrot voice. LOL...this lady gets all excited and starts talking to him a bunch more and saying "say hello, we KNOW you can say it" Meanwhile we are about to die laughing



We had just enough time to for the side trip to to Kahuna and Akaka Falls before heading to Waipi'o Valley for our 3:30 wagon tour. The circle path to both falls takes about 20 minutes. Go to smaller Kahuna Falls first, then Akaka Falls (shown here). It's less than a 5 min walk If you just want to see Akaka Falls.





We were going to do a trailride into the valley but it was already booked when I called. Wayne isn't too thrilled with horses anyway and the wagons were cheaper so he was a happy camper ;-). Although we were staying in a house at the top of the valley, you can't go down into the valley without a 4 WD vehicle and there's no way I was hiking down there and back. They take you down into the valley in a 4WD van and then you ride the Mule drawn wagon around the valley. Our guide was originally from England and had lived in Waipi'o for 25 years. It was a pretty decent tour. He talked a lot about the history of the place.

In ancient times 4000 people lived in there. Then the missionaries came from Europe and brought diseases that cut the population below 1000. More recently there were a lot of taro farms there but a tsunami wiped out the valley in 1946 and now only 75 people live there. They tap into springs in the hillside for water.



A patient of mine recommended the cottage we stayed in. It had an amazing view (left) with a bedroom, bath, living room and kitchen and I think it was only \$75/night but I don't I would have chosen it had she not recommended it. There is a black sand beach in the valley but even if you could get to it, the water is usually too rough to go in and the valley is pretty far from anything else you'd want to do. There are supposed to be some good hiking trails along the back ridge of the valley but I was all hiked out by then. It would be a good place to just chill out if the bugs don't get you. This was the only place we had trouble with mosquitos. They also had the wildest

sounding frogs I've ever heard. As soon as we turned down the road you could hear them. They sounded kind of like a synthesized and amplified water droplet.

We had a nice Italian dinner at the Café Il Mondo. It's so funny to go to restaurants in these old places. I went to the bathroom and there was no sink in the ladies room. The only sink was in the men's room. Luckily men seldom use the bathroom so it wasn't a big deal but it was kind of strange to walk into a bathroom with two urinals on the wall to wash your hands. The food was good and they had a married couple that show up every Sat evening and play cello and guitar. We didn't recognize any of the songs but they sounded good. Then at the suggestion of the wagon guide and the guidebook, we stopped at Tex's Drive in for the "best" malasadas. I didn't see what the big deal was. They were doughnuts! I like hot Krispy Kremes better.

Day 9- Mauna Kea

This was our last full day. We decided to check out Mauna Kea Beach in the morning and then head up to the visitor's center on Mauna Kea for the U of H tour of the observatories. The Mauna Kea public lot was already full at 9:20 am so we went back to Hapuna Beach just 2 miles down the road. This time Wayne read his book while I went snorkeling. I found 2 sea turtles and got Wayne. At 11:00 we headed up to Mauna Kea for the 1:00 tour. They have a one hour program at the visitor's center at 9200 feet to get you acclimated to the altitude before you go to the summit. Then they take a caravan of 4 WD vehicles up to the summit and take you into at least one observatory. We went into Keck One (a 10 meter scope) and the U of H 2.2 M scope. We didn't have 4 WD so we got there at about 12:30 and asked a couple of them'd give us ride. Jim and Lynn ended up being a lot of fun.

Although they require 4WD to go on the UH tour (because they are responsible for you then), the guide said you don't have to have it as long as you know how to drive in the mountains. Lynn said the road was much better than stuff she regularly drove in her 2WD in Colorado. They both were amazed at Mauna Kea. They said it was different than Pike's Peak and the other peaks



they've climbed in CO because it was so clear up there. Because of humidity and temperature and wind patterns the clouds are almost always below the summit at Mauna Kea. When the tour ended at 4:45, they asked if we wanted to stay up there for the sunset and we said YES! We spent the next 2 ½ hours putzing around up top. We hiked to the summit (just a short hike down and back up a hill near the observatory) and we had a snowball fight and made a snowman from the snow on the north face of the summit! Ha! We were snorkeling at 11:00 and building a snowman at 5:00 PM. Then

we drove a little way down the mountain and hiked out to the permafrost lake on Mauna Kea. We were at 13,796 for over 4 hours and I even did fine hiking around up here (no way I could have made that at the beginning of the trip though).



After that we went back down to the visitor's center for stargazing. They set up telescopes around the visitor's center so people can see the stars. We saw Saturn through one telescope. It looked fake- a white ball with a disc around it. They had a guy giving a star tour but there are SO many stars in the sky, it was hard to find even the easy constellations. Then I started getting altitude sickness AFTER coming down from the summit. How weird is that? As I was watching the star tour I started getting a bad headache, couldn't walk straight and felt nauseous. I told Wayne I didn't feel good and we needed to leave. Shortly after we got in the car, we had to pull over and I got sick. Then within 5-10 minutes I started feeling better and felt pretty good by the time we got down. The only thing I can think of is that tilting my head back to look at the stars was restricting blood flow to my head causing my O2 level to drop even more. Wayne said he's not taking me to Everest. Oh darn! I wish we could have stayed a little longer and gotten to peek through some more telescopes but wasn't too upset since we had a 90 minute drive back to the cottage and had to head back to the airport at 6:00 am for our flight to Oahu. Luckily we made it into the drive thru at McD's just as they were closing so we could get some food. They don't have chain restaurants open til midnight like we do here!

BTW, the rental cars all say you can't drive on Saddle Road too (which is the only way to get to Mauna Kea) but the road is absolutely fine, although narrow. Apparently that restriction was made before the road was paved and never taken off. The only problem is that if you break down there, you are on your own.

Day 10

We packed up and drove to the KONA airport for our 8:30 flight to Honolulu. My friend Tammy lives in Honolulu and she picked us up at the airport and took us and Malinda and Craig (our

mutual friends from Australia) out lunch and to the Blowhole, Diamondhead and the Pali Look-out before dropping us back at the airport for our 4:30 flight home.

For a perfect ending to a perfect vacation, I was sitting on the left side of the plane on the flight out and got some nice shots of Honolulu and Diamondhead and then a beautiful sunset . It doesn't get any better than that.

