

DESTINATION OF THE MONTH

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Festivals Bring La Joie de Vivre to Montreal and Quebec

By Aaron Dalton

Much distinguishes the Canadian cities of Montréal and Québec. Montréal is a cosmopolitan metropolis of millions, a former Olympic host with a famous underground city composed of passageways connecting boutiques, hotels and restaurants. Québec City approaches its 400th birthday in 2008 proudly upholding its French language and culture, still wrapped in the embrace of the ancient defensive walls that won the city its distinction as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Yet for all their differences, Montréal and Québec City share an indomitable determination to enjoy each season to the fullest. In the winter, that means building ice hotels or engaging in winter sports. When summer comes amid a riotous burst of flowers and warm sunshine, citizens of both



Quebec City Summer Festival.

cities take to the streets and crowd performing arts venues to celebrate life at a string of festivals.

Some of the best festivals in each city take place during July and August. In Montréal, the 27th Festival International de Jazz actually kicks off June 29, but stretches all the way until July 9. The largest jazz festival in the world puts on more than 500 concerts, including more than 350 free outdoor shows under the balmy summer skies.

Highlights of this year's Jazz Festival include a Paul Simon concert July 5 at Symphony Hall, as well as performances by Tony Bennett, Elvis Costello, Bonnie Raitt, Dave Brubeck and a special 80th birthday party for B. B. King.

Festival Director André Menard expects more than a million music lovers to congregate for what he describes as a very large, safe street party throughout Downtown Montréal. "The atmosphere is really that of a family-oriented event," says Mr. Menard. "It's not just a late night party for initiated music fans. The whole family can take interest in the Jazz Festival."

If the jazz festival will have you dancing in the streets, the other must-see Montreal festival of the summer will get you rolling in the aisles. A comedy festival started back in 1983, Juste Pour Rire (Just For Laughs) attracted more than 2 million people last year to see all types of comedic performances. This year, there will be more than 2,100 events during the month-long festival held July 1 to 31. One longtime Montréal resident has said it is impossible to walk along a downtown street during the festival without stopping to laugh.

Other Montréal attractions of note this summer include the highly regarded World Film Festival (August 24 to September 4) and the first ever International Flora Montréal, a landscape and gardening extravaganza held from June 16 to October 9.

Meanwhile, Québec City throws some unforgettable parties of its own during the summertime. The Festival d'été de Québec (Québec City Summer Festival) brings nearly a million people together from July 6 to 16 for music and street performances. The eclectic mix of entertainment guarantees something for everyone at this award-winning festival. You can dance along to top world-beat performers or sway to the tunes of a French crooner.

If you'd like to take a trip back in time, consider making your visit to Québec coincide with the SAQ New France Festival, a colorful pageant of festivities that turns back the clock to French colonial days. Festival participants dress in period costume to recreate the ambience of Québec in the 17th and 18th centuries – and visitors are encouraged to rent costumes and join in the make-believe fun if they like. Make sure to witness the

Where to Stay & Eat

If you like to be near chic department stores, art galleries and museums, Downtown Montréal is the place to be. Stay at Loews Hotel Vogue (1425 rue de la Montagne, 514-285-5705), a plush 142-room hotel that extends a warm welcome to guests. Sip a drink at the lobby's stylish Opera Bar or try a generous and tasty pasta sampler at in-house restaurant Cellini.

Downtown has plenty of other good dining choices, including La Queue de Cheval (1221 boul. René-Lévesque Ouest, 514.390-0090), a theatrical steakhouse where you can watch servers dash up and down the curving staircase that wraps around an enormous open grill where chefs work hard over equally enormous Canadian steaks.

For more of a historic ambience, you can choose to stay amid the cobbled streets of Old Montréal at the 31-room Auberge Bonaparte (447, rue Saint-François-Xavier, 514-844-1448), a charming establishment with gleaming hardwood floors and French dormer windows that flood the rooms with light. Step out for lunch or dinner at the nearby restaurant and wine bar Chez L'Épicier (311, rue Saint-Paul Est, 514-878-2232) for impeccably fresh French-Asian cuisine with an emphasis on regional products.

In Québec City, you can stay in a modern high rise topped with L'Astral, the city's only rotating restaurant (Loews Le Concorde, 1225 Cours Du General De Montcalm, 418-647-2222) or within the walls of Vieux Québec at a romantic Victorian-style home such as Hotel le Clos Saint-Louis (69, rue Saint-Louis, 418-694-1311). The city offers a wide range of dining options – fine French cuisine such as fois gras and braised veal among elegant surroundings at Restaurant Initiale (54, rue Saint-Pierre, 418-694-1818), festive Italian cuisine at Ristorante Il Teatro (part of the hotel-theater complex Le Capitole at 972, Saint-Jean Street, 418-694-9996), or the edgy intellectual experimentation of L'Utopie where your meal might include vermouth sorbet or blue cheese panna cotta (226 1/2 Saint-Joseph Est, 418-523-7878).

If your stay stretches over a Sunday, make time to stop by Le Château Frontenac (1 rue des Carrieres, 418-692-3861). The landmark castle, sometimes called the most-photographed hotel in the world, serves up a lavish brunch in its Le Champlain dining room. Try to obtain a table overlooking the St. Lawrence River where you might be lucky enough to see a flock of geese take wing along the water's glistening path.

parades of Giants, towering marionettes representing mythical or historical figures from the city's past.

Finally, for an unforgettable combination of manmade beauty and natural splendor, visit Montmorency Falls Park for the Loto-Québec International Fireworks Competition held this year from July 22 to August 9. Five teams from Europe will put on pyromusical performances – fireworks with musical accompaniment – against the stunning backdrop of a waterfall nearly 100 feet higher than Niagara.

As the last firework fades like the fleeting days of summer, you can console yourself with the thought of all the festivals to come next year and every summer thereafter in Montréal and Québec City. 🇵🇶

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Wrigley, Skyscrapers and All That Jazz

Chicago is One Town That Won't Let You Down

By Dan Schlossberg

As the song says, Chicago is My Kind of Town.

Lots of planes, trains, and automobiles.

Sailboats on the placid surface of Lake Michigan.

Museums and restaurants of every size,

description, and taste. Old and new sports

venues. And cops whose hats bear a unique

checkerboard ring.

Michael Jordan and Oprah Winfrey are national

icons, a maze of architectural giants make

Chicago's skyline the most distinctive in the

Western Hemisphere, and the baseball White Sox

are defending their first world championship since

1917.

Hollywood certainly loves Chicago: Hundreds of

television and movie projects, including "When

Harry Met Sally" and "The Untouchables" were

filmed there.

Seventy years after Al Capone's heyday, city

tourism officials react to him much the way

Chicago cops did before the arrival of Eliot Ness:

They look the other way. But the era of gangsters

and tommy guns remains as much a part of local history as the 1871 Chicago Fire.

Mrs. O'Leary's cow may have done the city a favor: Architects anxious to contribute to the rebuilding designed the world's first skyscrapers during the 1880s.

Today, the Chicago Architecture Foundation runs more than 50 guided tours: by foot, bicycle, boat, and bus. The best is a 90-minute Chicago River cruise on The First Lady of Chicago. This slow-paced narrated voyage passes 53 points of architectural significance, including the Wrigley Building, the first skyscraper with air-conditioning (1946); the art deco Chicago Board of Trade (1930); and the serpentine reverse-S of the residential River City.

At the Sears Tower, also visible from the river, tours of the Skydeck begin with a seven-minute multi-media show called "the Chicago Experience."

The view is also spectacular — day or night — from the top of the John Hancock Center, in the heart of the posh Magnificent Mile. After a 39-second elevator ride, visitors can see 80 miles in all directions.



On a clear day in Chicago, visitors to the 99th floor of the John Hancock Center can see 80 miles in all directions.



A game at Wrigley Field is also an experience. No matter how much the Cubs struggle, fans fill Wrigley, the oldest and loudest ballpark in the National League. It is also the home of shirtless Bleacher Bums so loyal to the locals that they return balls hit over the fence by rivals.

To assuage the sting of a likely Cub loss, fans can drown their sorrows in overpriced beer or opt for a show at Second City Comedy Club. In fact, locals insist Second City — which borrowed its name from a derisive portrait of Chicago in The New Yorker — provides the best show in town.

Long a paragon of satirical comedy, Second City's Chicago branch has produced Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner, John and Jim Belushi, and Bill Murray.

Quality entertainment is also on tap at Navy Pier, a 50-acre entertainment mecca, where George H.W. Bush, later the 41st president, began his Naval training in 1941.

Getting around town is also entertaining, especially for visitors who like to ride the rails. All it takes is the ability to decipher complex maps of the city's century-old network of elevated trains and subways. Rails link both airports, Midway and O'Hare, with the Loop — the century-old maze of tracks that converge in the heart of downtown. Riding the rails beats the bus, which takes 45 minutes to make the trip from Sears Tower to the Museum of Science and Industry.

The 14-acre museum, opened in 1933, contains exhibits on communications, energy, the human body, manufacturing, defense, and transportation. Also at the museum are a coal mine, locomotive, submarine, virtual reality demonstrator, and an elaborate space center containing an Omnimax theater.

Further north on Lake Shore Drive are the Adler Planetarium, oldest in the nation, and the Shedd Aquarium, the world's largest before the 2005 opening of the Georgia Aquarium.

When the weather agrees, locals pedal along Lake Michigan on a dedicated bikeway that stretches 18.5 miles and bisects five parks.

Chicago has given the world Schwinn bikes, Pullman railroad cars, coed high schools,

cafeterias, steel-frame skyscrapers, Ferris wheels, Wrigley's gum, Cracker Jack, Baby Ruth candy bars, Benny Goodman, and Playboy. The word "jazz" was first applied to a Chicago sound and the local version of the blues has a life of its own.

The Harlem Globetrotters were the Savoy Big 5 when they sprang to life in 1926 and the Chicago Bears were the first football team to broadcast on radio, practice daily, and publish a team newspaper.

Some out-of-towners come expressly to visit the Art Institute, one of the world's leading art museums, or to shop at Marshall Field's, a department store so vast it contains a concierge to help plan itineraries for visitors.

North Pier Festival Market has made a smooth transformation from shipping to shopping; the lakefront terminal building contains three floors of unusual shops and restaurants.

The area's best bookstores are tucked into Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago (site of the first controlled atomic reaction), but the best reading is often found in the local papers. The Chicago Tribune and the Sun-Times both employ quality columnists and love to engage in old-fashioned newspaper wars. The Tribune, never willing to admit defeat, even calls its broadcast arm WGN, short for "World's Greatest Newspaper."

While some might argue, no one can dispute the significance of the company's building. Its exterior walls contain pieces of The Alamo, Westminster Abbey, the Taj Mahal, the Arc de Triomphe, and other famous structures.

The whole city is a living museum — a tribute to Daniel H. Burnham's Chicago Plan of 1909. He told civic leaders, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans. Aim high in hope and work."

Chicagoans have done that.

Dan Schlossberg is president of the North American Travel Journalists Association. 🇺🇸

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Cheers to the North Fork

Find Quiet Villages, Bountiful Farm Stands, and a Blossoming Wine Industry on Long Island's Tamer Side

By Megan Weeden

During the summer months, when the notorious Long Island Expressway is clogged and the seaside villages of the trendy Hamptons are teeming with locals, vacationers, and the rich and famous, the South Fork's tamer counterpart is a welcome alternative.



The North Fork of Long Island, just across the Peconic Bay, is best known for its quiet villages, bountiful farm stands, and its blossoming wine industry.

New Englanders can hop on the Cross Sound Ferry from New London, Connecticut, to Orient Point, New York, and bypass the L.I.E. on their way to Riverhead, a 30-minute scenic drive along Route 25.

Stop by Orient Beach State Park, with its 45,000 feet of frontage on Gardiner's Bay and rare maritime forest with red cedar, black-jack oak trees and prickly-pear cactus. A beautiful wood deck lets you overlook Gardiner's Bay. Swim in the bay, fish, have a picnic, play ball, go hiking or biking, or walk a nature trail.

"As you head west along Route 25 on your way to Riverhead, the first town you will come to is Greenport," says Kristen Matejka, Marketing and Communications Manager of the Long Island Convention and Visitor's Bureau. "Greenport is a wonderful seaside village and home port to The Bounty, the schooner used in the film 'Mutiny on the Bounty' and more recently 'Pirates of the Caribbean II.'"

In Greenport, dine on the "catch of the day" at a seaside restaurant and visit the East End Maritime Museum. Enjoy a sunset "tall ship" adventure aboard one of the many schooner ships in port. Take a spin on the colorful waterside carousel. Lodging options range from idyllic bed and breakfasts to grand resorts or chic hotels. History buffs will appreciate the Railroad Museum in Greenport.

Over the past three decades, Long Island's wine industry has grown from one small vineyard to nearly 3,000 acres of lush, green vines, and the North Fork is known as "Wine Country."

"Driving along Route 25, you'll drink in the lush scenery, rolling hills, old barns, and farmhouses, passing two dozen vineyards where you're welcome to come in and sample the latest vintages," Ms. Matejka said. "Long Island's award-winning wines are produced amidst historic fishing villages, pristine beaches, rolling farmlands, charming inns and restaurants — making a tour of the vineyards and wineries a unique and unforgettable experience."



The abundance of wineries, with their sprawling fields, inviting tasting rooms, distinctive vintages, and special events that range from concerts to hayrides to poetry readings, has turned this region into a popular destination for tourists.

Take a detour north on Horton Road to enjoy the spectacular waterfront vista from Southold's Horton's Point Lighthouse, perched high atop the bluffs of the sparkling Long Island Sound.

While in Southold, pay a visit to the Southold Historical Society Museum and the Southold Indian Museum.

"The Indian Museum has a wonderful collection of artifacts from the local Algonquin Indians, such as knife blades, hoe blades, hammers, gouges, drills, and other tools," Ms. Matejka said.

Also in Southold is the Custer Institute, which houses three sliding-roof observatories. It is open Saturdays from sunset to midnight. Custer staff is on hand to assist you in observing the night sky using the Institute's telescopes and to answer your questions about astronomy.

Again heading west on Route 25, you will pass Pindar Vineyards in Peconic. This is the region's largest producer, and it can be three-deep at the bar with a fun crowd enjoying ample


free tastes of approachable wines. Tours are a real education both for beginners and the experienced.

Osprey's Dominion, also in Peconic, produces top wines like the rich cabernet sauvignon and is becoming a serious player in the industry. They also make a sweet wine from strawberries that is a great picnic pour. During a late-afternoon summer tasting on a patio, you might see the owners, avid flyers, buzz in for a 4 p.m. visit on an antique plane.

Vacationers interested in touring the different wineries can print a map from the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau's Web site at www.licvb.com and click on the link for Long Island maps.

As you continue your journey toward Riverhead, you'll notice the New England-style villages such as Jamesport, Cutchogue, and Mattituck, which are peppered with unpretentious restaurants and interesting shops. Clean, uncrowded beaches lie to the south on the Bay and to the north on the Sound.

Riverhead is where you will find attractions such as the Tanger Outlet Center for some real bargains, the top-rated water amusement park Splish Splash, Atlantis Marine World, a world-class aquarium, and the Dinosaur Museum.

"Long Island's North Fork is a welcome respite from the hubbub of everyday life," says Ms. Matejka. "With its lush green landscape of vineyards to its perfectly manicured rows of farms to its roadside stands offering fresh produce and homemade apple pies, it's the perfect laidback destination to spend the day exploring." 

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Long Weekend in London

A Little Bit of Jet Lag is a Small Price to Pay for a Jaunt to the U.K.

By Christine E. McDermott



When my youngest sister announced she'd be spending a semester in London, I began plotting how I could visit her on just the two vacation days I had left for the year. Would it be worth it to hop the pond for a long weekend, with little chance to recover from jet lag before it was time to fly home?

A few clicks of the mouse confirmed the idea was not so crazy: I'd leave Logan Airport at 8:30 p.m. on a Wednesday and arrive at London Heathrow by 8 the next morning. The hours gained flying back west would give me

most of Sunday in London, with a 7:35 p.m. departure landing in Boston at 8:45 p.m.

I'd been to London before and done the main tourist attractions – Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and the like – so this trip would be more about enjoying the city itself. I wanted to watch football in a pub, eat Indian food on Brick Lane, and window-shop on Kensington High Street.

That's not to say we avoided looking like tourists; we did, after all, partake in a hop-on, hop-off bus tour. Big Bus Company tickets turned out to be a wise investment. For 20 pounds (about \$35), we received transportation around the city, a cruise on the River Thames, and an invitation to three themed walking tours. The value was even greater in the winter, when one ticket was good for 48 hours.

We spent our arrival day exploring Kensington, the upscale area where my sister attended school and where Princess Diana, who lived at Kensington Palace, once frequented shops and restaurants. Though the unfavorable conversion rate kept our wallets tucked away, we had fun browsing the fashions of the moment at stores like Mango, Zara, and Marks & Spencer.

Friday morning, we boarded the sightseeing bus for a two-hour orientation of the city. We rode through Notting Hill, Oxford Circus, Piccadilly Circus, and Trafalgar Square. Sitting atop the open-aired bus, we had excellent views of famous sights like Big Ben and St. Paul's Cathedral.



Our guide debunked a couple of common misconceptions, informing us that the name Big Ben actually refers to the bell hanging inside the clock, and that the most scenic bridge over the Thames is Tower Bridge, while the famous London Bridge is in fact quite plain.

We hopped off the bus after crossing Tower Bridge, figuring we could wander the Tower of London a bit before catching the river cruise. Not only does the Tower house Great Britain's Crown Jewels, but also an amazing amount of history. A medieval fortress founded by William the Conqueror in the 11th century, the Tower was the spot of Anne Boleyn's execution, Guy Fawkes' interrogation, and Richard II's and Elizabeth I's incarcerations.

The boat ride on the Thames afforded us a glimpse of the South Bank and new London – the rounded glass City Hall, the Tate Modern, the pedestrian-only Millennium Bridge, and the London Eye, an enormous wheel that gives visitors a 30-minute ride to almost 100 feet above the skyline.

Back on land, we hustled to Trafalgar Square for the "Ghosts by Gaslight" walking tour, subtitled "The Spooky London Pub Crawl." Our guide, Gordon, took us to several establishments. Whether you believe in ghosts or not, his stories became more plausible as the evening went on (though in London, thankfully, you can pace yourself on a pub crawl by ordering half-pints).

Gordon told us some eerie tales. There was the "woman" who alerted a policeman to a possible suicide at Cleopatra's Needle, a monument the Egyptians gave the British. The

woman vanished, only to reappear at the Needle and jump in the river when the officer arrived. Then there was the actor who was killed in a bout of jealousy after a show at the Adelphi Theatre more than 100 years ago. His ghost – complete in period attire – has been spotted at the theatre and around London.

Afterward, we rode the Tube to Aldgate East, one of the stations the actor is said to haunt, and did what I'd most been looking forward to: dined on Brick Lane, the South Asian enclave teeming with Indian restaurants. Competition is stiff on Brick Lane, where outdoor greeters beckon with special menus and free bottles of wine. We figured we couldn't go wrong if we found a place that looked busy, and so we followed a group of young Indian men into one. While the free wine was mediocre and the décor was disappointingly nondescript, the piles of curry we ordered satisfied my cravings.

After squeezing so much into our Friday, we were left with another day and a half to hang out in London. We spent Saturday exploring on foot some of the neighborhoods we'd ridden through the previous day. We peered into the high-end stores on Oxford Street, munched on sandwiches and tea at Pret (London's ubiquitous and delicious answer to Panera), and made pledges to our true loves at the Eros statue in Piccadilly Circus.

On the way back to Kensington we made a pit stop at Harrods, the world's most famous department store. The spectacular window displays alone make Harrods worth a trip, but we ventured inside and fought through the crowds to check out the "luxury" restrooms and the shoe section. After pulling ourselves away from \$600 pairs of Jimmy Choos, it didn't seem so bad to spend about \$5 on a Belgian chocolate bar downstairs in the Food Hall (especially since it was the best chocolate of my life).

That night, we hit the pub scene and happily discovered a group of football fans absorbed in the Barcelona-Madrid match. They were so into the game that we assumed they were Spanish, only to learn they were a mix of British and Belgian. We pretended we knew enough to root along, dropping into the conversation our knowledge that David Beckham forsook his native England to play for Madrid.

As expensive a city as London is, the British do value access to art and many of its top museums offer free admission. We took advantage of this Sunday with stops to the Victoria & Albert and the Science and Natural History museums. A highlight was the fashion exhibit at the V&A, particularly the stunning collection of clothing from Queen Maud of Norway. From beaded gowns to hand-cut suits, the queen's outfits exemplify the high standards of dress in early 20th-century Europe.

Twenty hours later, I was back in the office. It may have been a whirlwind weekend – and I confess, the jet lag was a bit rough when I returned to work Monday morning – but the trip across the Atlantic was jolly well worth it. 🍷

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**Honeymoon in Paradise
Hawaii's Blend of Adventure and Relaxation
the Perfect Way to Begin Wedded Bliss**

By Megan R. Weeden

It is no coincidence that Hawaii is often called paradise on Earth. Even while you are there, it is hard to believe the sights are indeed real and not merely illusions. Waterfall after endless waterfall, cascading rainbows at the end of a shower, and swimming with sea turtles are just some of the reasons I found Hawaii to be absolutely breathtaking.

My husband and I honeymooned in Hawaii this past September and were fortunate to spend a week on the island of Kauai — a perfect spot to unwind after the hectic wedding planning and to start our new life together. We ended our visit with three incredible days in Maui.

In researching my trip, I had heard that “there isn’t much to do in Kauai, but it’s beautiful and a good place to relax.” Pure relaxation is exactly what I was looking for on this vacation. I could easily and happily have sat on one of the gorgeous white sand beaches for the entire week. My new husband, however, is more ambitious and wanted to explore. We compromised and did both. There was so much to see and do in Kauai — I would have missed the best parts had we stayed on the beach.

Nicknamed the Garden Isle, Kauai is a laid-back island that hasn’t succumbed to development, and the state has set aside more than half of it as parkland. Free from high-rises, shopping malls, and fast-food outlets, it reminds you of a bygone era. Kauai is so lightly developed and its landscape so untouched, it’s easy to slow down there.



Relaxing at one of Kauai’s many beaches.

Wildlife Refuge, a haven for endangered Hawaiian water birds. The backdrop of our 2.5-mile tour was the magnificent Haupu Mountain Range — an area steeped in ancient Hawaiian legends. We stopped along the way at the site of the famous “Raiders of the Lost Ark” scene, where Indiana Jones narrowly escapes from warriors by jumping on a rope toward freedom. We got out of our boats and tried our best to recreate the scene, but no one pulled it off quite as gracefully as Harrison Ford’s stunt double.

Later, we stepped out of our kayaks and into the tropical forest, where we were introduced to Kauai’s lush greenery and exotic plant life and birds. We hiked up the trodden path and were greeted by a van ready to take us to our next destination — two hidden waterfalls. Before this point, I wasn’t sure why they said you must be able to climb eight to 10 flights of stairs to do this tour; it had been easy going so far. The hike down to the waterfalls was quite treacherous and coming up was



Kauai’s majestic, 80-foot Wailua Falls.

We started our week with one-hour massages at the spa at the Kauai Marriott, where we were staying. It was just what we needed to recuperate from the wedding and the 12-hour plane ride.

Contrary to what I had been told, the island is full of adventure. We spent one day kayaking down the Hule’ia River, a historic jungle stream that passes through the Hule’ia National

even more difficult, but the sights were well worth the effort. A descent of about 80 feet led us to the Bamboo Falls and Jungle Falls, an awesome 50-foot waterfall. We waded beneath the rushing water, took a ton of pictures and enjoyed our surroundings, feeling as if we were in a private paradise.

Locals told us a helicopter ride was a must in Kauai, given that much of the island is inaccessible except by air. We took a one-hour tour, floating high above waterfalls, canyons, mountains, valleys, sea cliffs, rain forests and secluded beaches. With soothing music and narration by our pilot coming through our headsets, we climbed up the Hanalei Valley and entered the crater of Mt. Wai'ale'ale. We flew over Hanapepe Valley to see Manawaipuni Falls, also known as Jurassic Park Falls since it was used in the filming of the blockbuster movie. We took off into the vast Waimea Canyon – coined the Grand Canyon of the Pacific – and were awestruck by its vivid colors and awesome depth. We saw sights that were used in films such as “South Pacific” and “Six Days, Seven Nights.”

On the south shore of Kauai, luxurious Poipu Beach is considered one of the island's best beaches. We drove there to watch the magnificent sunset one evening and to dine in one of the area's fine restaurants. We came across a lookout area and discovered “Spouting Horn,” a natural wonder that occurs when water rushes under a lava shelf and bursts through a small opening at the surface. The blowhole spurts salt water 50 feet into the air and makes a loud groaning sound. Evening was the perfect time to catch this phenomenon, as the setting sun illuminates the spray.

At Poipu Beach, we were fortunate enough to see the abundant marine life in clear blue waters, including endangered giant green sea turtles. It's absolutely incredible to see them up close.

On a different day, we rented a Harley Davidson, which turned out to be my favorite activity. I'm not an enthusiast, but my husband has his motorcycle license and has been telling me for years he's going to buy a Harley — to which I just smile and say “uh-huh.” But, there was something refreshing about seeing the island from a bike and feeling the wind at your back. We rode along the coast to the North Shore, stopping along the way to wade in the water, see a few waterfalls, and shop at roadside stands and flea markets. We rode to the Kilauea Lighthouse, next to the Kilauea Point Wildlife Refuge, a 200-acre nesting area for tropical birds.

We left Kauai relaxed and feeling as if we had truly experienced Hawaiian culture. While we'd enjoyed the breathtaking views and adventure, we were ready for something with a little faster pace.

Three days in Maui were not nearly enough, but we made the most of our time. We arrived in the early evening at our bed and breakfast in Lahaina, a shopping village on the ocean. Lahaina is the most energized town on Maui, and you can feel it from the first moment you walk down Front Street. The main attractions are within a few blocks of each other; all along Front Street and its side streets are innumerable shops, restaurants, art galleries, and hideaways. One of the more interesting sites is the banyan tree in the main plaza. Imported from India, it stands over 60 feet tall, has 12 major trunks in addition to its huge core, stretches over a 200-foot area, and shades two-thirds of an acre.

The next morning, we awoke at sunrise to embark on the long and winding Road to Hana, a dramatic 60-mile journey that took almost four hours to complete. The folks at our B&B gave us a CD that narrated our trip, pointing out the different areas of interest. The Road to Hana is said to be one of the most beautiful drives in the world. We traveled through lush tropical rain forests and passed by endless streams, waterfalls, and black sand beaches — stopping frequently to take it all in.

Our last day in Hawaii, we spent relaxing on Kaanapali Beach, where we snorkeled above a coral reef with hundreds of brilliantly colored fish. We even saw a pod of dolphins playfully swim by.

After 10 days of blissful paradise, it was certainly difficult to snap back to reality for our nine-hour flight home. 🛩️

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