

[Big Island Condo](#)

It was a long flight to get here, but thankfully all flights were on time and there were no issues during the flight.

The luggage carousels in Kona are outdoors in a covered area. It was very nice to walk off the plane and feel the sun and the temp in the low 80s.

We waited about 10-15 minutes for our luggage and then went to get the car at Budget. Thankfully, with the Fastbreak option, we only had to wait in line for about a minute to get checked in. We then did have to wait another 10 minutes or so to get the car as it was still being washed.

30 minutes later we were having lunch near our rental.

Our condo was located on the northwest side of the island about 30 minutes north of the airport. We rented [unit J33](#) at the Waikoloa Beach Villa resort. Overall, the condo was quiet, clean and beautiful. The bed was comfortable, the shower was hot and had good pressure. The a/c kept things comfortable inside, while you could relax on the lanai and enjoy the warm breezes and view of the 3rd fairway of the Waikoloa Golf Club course.

The unit was very clean in most areas – even the floor of the lanai was clean. The carpet was a bit stained in places and was not vacuumed very well in some places, but it felt clean and cushy. There were two dead bugs along the back of one wall in master bedroom - I vacuumed them up.

It was nice to have a garage to park in to help keep the car a bit cooler.

The shared pool area was very nice and quiet. It was nicely decorated with plants and flowers and had a rock waterfall cascading into the pool. There were high quality chaise lounge chairs that lay flat. There were also a number of umbrellas and small tables. Clean restrooms were located just behind the pool and are adjacent to a small covered area with a number of tables and chairs. The pool is sunny most of the day.

The stone walkway around the pool was beautiful, but it was very hot. We had to use our flip flops just walking from our chair to the pool.

The TV worked well and at night, we were able to watch a couple of shows from back home that we had recorded on Spectrum. The internet speed was fast at 283 MBPS.

There were just a few, very minor items that I should note...There were no instructions on how to light the gas grill. I figured out that you had to turn on the right most burner first – then you could start that side and then the left side.

A remote was provided for the garage door, but we were not given a code to open the door. So, you had to remember to bring the remote out of the car and up to the condo each night. If you left it in the car and closed the door with the keypad, you would be locked out.

There seemed to be some slight water dripping into the dryer. When we opened the door, the inside was wet. We could run the dryer to get it dry and then could use it to dry our clothes. We reported this to the agency and they came to inspect it, but we were never told what the issue was. We could use it, so no big deal.

The kitchen was fairly well equipped, but could use another one or two different sized pots/saucepans. There was one large saucepan and one even larger (pasta sized), but nothing smaller.

Definitely would return.

Day 3

The forecast looked to be clear at the top of Mauna Kea. So, we drove to the top to watch the sunset. There were clouds at the Visitor Information Station (VIS), but it was clear at the top. We did not have the prescribed four wheel drive required to drive up from the VIS, but we did have an all-wheel-drive (AWD) which was allowed. So, after spending about 30 minutes at the VIS to go to the restroom and get acclimated to the elevation (9,200 feet), up we went.

It was clear at the top. You could see all of the various telescopes there as well as the cloud deck hanging below us – very cool. It was 35 degrees when we got to the top (13,803 feet).

We watched the sunset from there. Of course, we saw the sunset as it went below the clouds and not the actual horizon. Very unique and colorful. There was a young woman standing next to us who had set up her phone on a tripod to record the sunset. However, she did not get a chance to hit record because her boyfriend proposed to her just prior to the sun setting! She said yes.

Immediately after sunset, the rangers close the summit and everyone has to drive back down. So, the clouds were still at the lower level and we did not get to see the stars or the Milky Way that night. It is very dark in that area and at that elevation. So, it is a great place to look at the night sky – if it is not cloudy.

Once we got back down to the VIS, the rangers make you stop and they check how hot your brakes are from the steep descent. They use some type of temperature gauge and place it by the front brakes to tell them how hot the brakes are. If they are too hot, they ask that you wait at the VIS for about 20 minutes so they can cool off before you finish your trip to the bottom.

Day 5

Today, we drove over to Hilo and Volcano National Park.

Our first stop was at Akaka Falls state park. We took the short walk to see the falls. Due to the ton of rain the islands have had in March and early April, the falls were gushing. We stopped in Hilo for lunch at Saucy Dogs for some unique, tasty hot dogs. They were huge and delicious - one is all you need. We then stopped to see Rainbow Falls. It was also gushing, but was not much to look at in the drizzling rain. The water was brown from the latest storms and it was not much to see when compared to Akaka Falls.

We drove into Volcanoes National Park to check out the active volcano (Kilauea) during the day. There was an eruption/fountaining episode about a week ago. So, all we could see was steam coming out of the main vents as well as many other vents in the area. It was still very cool to see the crater and where the latest lava flows have been.

We parked at the Devastation trailhead and walked about 20 minutes to get to the viewing area that has been popular for these fountaining episodes over the last 16 months or so. The live web cams feeds I have been watching over that time have been incredible. Wish we could have seen an episode in person, but were happy to have been in the area.

We spent the night at Kilauea Lodge which is near the park in the city of Volcano.

General

It was between 83 and 86 degrees every day. Most days were dry and mostly sunny. It rained part of the time we were in Hilo and was mostly cloudy while we were there with temperatures 10-15 degrees cooler.

Days where I do not specifically mention any activities are days we spent relaxing by the pool.

No issues returning the car rental. Our flight from the Big Island to Kauai was on time.

Dining

Aloha Wine Bar

We ate lunch here on our arrival day. They had some good tropical drinks. The Dynamite chicken was good – big size for an appetizer, but a bit too much breading. It was tasty with the right amount of spice. Jan's Hawaiian pizza was not very flavorful. Good service.

Tommy Bahamas

Excellent dinner. The patio has a sunset view with a small view of the ocean. Inside, open air seating was noisy and there was a live musician over much of the dinner hour. Glad we had a seat on the patio. We had some cocktails to start the night. The Mojito and Baja margarita were okay, but the Mai Tai and the espresso martini were excellent, They were each \$18 or \$19. The lamb skewer appetizer (\$23) we shared was wonderful. The most tender pieces of lamb that we can remember. A nice yogurt dipping sauce and a small salad with tomatoes and cucumbers. Jan had the macadamia encrusted mahi-mahi (\$48) and liked it. I had the lobster seafood mix (\$52). The lobster was a small tail with the meat on top of the tail, but no melted butter – not very flavorful. The rest of the entrée was excellent – scallops, shrimp (tails off)

and an excellently seasoned rice mixture with tomatoes and other veggies. We shared a huge chocolate Oreo crusted dessert (\$14) that was topped with a light chocolate whipped topping and crushed macadamia nuts. Service was very good. They have a large menu and it would be nice to be able to come here again. Total bill before tip for four cocktails, one appetizer, two entrees and one dessert was \$219.

We ate here a second time on our last evening. We had a bottle of wine (\$68 Trouble Maker – which is marked up 4 times from Total Wine retail). It was good, but the markup was too much. We shared the crab cake appetizer (\$29) which is one of the best we have had in a long time. Jan had the sea bass (\$52) and she liked it very much – better than our favorite dinner place on White Bear Lake! I had the creole shrimp and crab pasta (\$43). The pasta was fresh and the sauce and shrimp were tasty, The Andouille sausage was good, but there was hardly any of it.

We had the pineapple crème Brulé, a cappuccino, espresso and ruby port for dessert. Those were all good and we were not charged for them because the waitress spilled the espresso and port onto our table and spattered a couple of drops onto Jan's top. Total bill before tip was \$208.

Other than the spill, the service was excellent as was the food. A great place to eat with nice ambiance and service. Wish the wine list was longer and not marked up as much.

Lava Lava Beach Club

What a great place to watch the sunset. We had a table just off of the sand and had a straight on view of the sunset. Off to the side, there was some live Hawaiian music and a native dancer. There were palm trees that were lit up as were the tiki torches – a very nice ambiance. We had made a reservation, but would have not needed on this evening as there were some empty spots. The meal and service were very good, but the view is what one comes here for. We each had Mai-Tais (\$17). I started with the Ahi tuna appetizer (\$28) which was a large portion and very tasty. Jan started with a salad of Spinach, Arugula, Strawberries, Candied Macadamia Nuts, Gorgonzola, and Balsamic Vinaigrette (\$19) – it was excellent. Jan had the coconut shrimp (\$42) for her entrée and liked the shrimp, but the sides were nothing special. I had the Hook line and sinker special which was a conglomeration of mahi-mahi with some fancy mushrooms, a sauce and topped with crab (\$56). It was very unique and quite good. Our total before tip for three tropical drinks, a beer, appetizer, salad, and two entrees was \$204.

Kilauea Lodge

We had an excellent dinner here on our one night stay. We were seated by the fireplace. That was nice because it was a bit chilly (about 63 degrees) up at this elevation. The wine list had a number of options with most priced about 3 times retail. They were out of our first choice, but we tried a bottle of a nice red blend from California called Rebellious (\$59). We started with a tasty appetizer of a warm and soft loaf of

bread with brie and apple honey butter and some red grapes (\$25). I had the ½ rack of lamb (\$57) which was wonderful. It was cooked just right and the sides of broccolini and Yukon potatoes were some of the best I have had. The broccolini was flavorful and not too soft. The potatoes were done perfectly. The skin was tasty and had just the right amount of crispiness. Jan had the short rib risotto (\$48.00) which was also excellent. It had large chunks of tender meat. We shared a cookie skillet (\$21) for dessert. It was a large chocolate chip type cookie made in a cast iron pan and topped with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream – expensive, but very good.

Service was excellent. An excellent meal. Total, with wine, but before tax and tip was \$210.