

Travel from Big Island to Kauai

We took a Hawaiian island flight from the Big Island to Kauai with a brief layover in Honolulu.

The flights were all on time. We got a rental car from Budget. Using Fastbreak, I was able to do the paperwork very quickly, but we had to wait for 15-20 minutes for the car to be ready for our use. Fastbreak possibly saved us 1 to 2 hours standing in line waiting to get the paperwork done.

Kauai Condo

Our condo was located on the north side of the island in Princeville. We rented [unit 229-A](#) in the Sandpiper complex.

Overall, the condo was quiet and clean. Even the lanai floor was very clean. The bed was comfortable and the shower was hot and had decent pressure. The unit had lots of windows to allow in the breezes. They were all opened when we arrived. The breezes however, died down and it was a bit too hot. So, we closed the windows and used the a/c. That also helped keep the noise down when an occasional car went by on the nearby road.

The fridge had been stocked with some Cokes and some cold water and glasses. The kitchen was well supplied, but could have had a pizza pan and an actual bottle opener. Appliances seemed newer and worked well, but at first I could not understand how to turn off the coffee pot so the warming burner would go off (I figured it out on the second day).

The view from the lanai had a peekaboo view of the ocean, but you mostly saw the other homes in the quiet, nicely landscaped neighborhood.

We had an assigned parking spot that was just steps from the condo, but someone else was parked there the day we arrived. We had to use another spot that first day.

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 fairly good at 110 MBPS.

The shared pool area was very nice and quiet. It was nicely landscaped. There were high quality chaise lounge chairs that lay flat. There were also a number of umbrellas and small tables. There were clean restrooms in the pool area. The shared BBQ gas grills were also located in the pool area as was a hot tub. The pool was large and went to seven feet deep. It was a good temperature with not too much chlorine.

The stone walkway around the pool was beautiful. It generally was not too hot to walk on with your bare feet. However, it could get hot on a fully sunny day and you would need to wear some type of foot covering to walk on it. The pool is sunny most of the day.

You needed to use a key to get in AND out of the pool area. It would be nice to be able to leave without using a key.

The one issue we had was the sliding, glass door to the lanai – it was very difficult to open and close. The screen door to the lanai was fine, but when we had the a/c on, we needed to use the glass door to get in and out. Not sure if it needs to be replaced or just oiled, but it definitely needs some attention.

Definitely would return.

Day 8

We bought some wine at the Princeville Wine Market that was next door to the grocery store. This is a fantastic, little wine market. It carries some excellent wines at good prices. It is a small selection of better quality wines and there are no real low end wines. We talked about to the manager and we ended up trying 2 new wines that we really liked and plan to try them again when we get back home.

Day 10

Today we went on a Napali Catamaran boat tour. We are staying in Princeville so it was close by.

We chose this tour because we felt it was the top ranked option on the North Shore. It did not disappoint.

We definitely picked a beautiful, calm day (thank you Lord). The sun was mostly out and the winds were calm – not something you get to experience every day on this part of the island. We had booked a 4 hour tour that left at 7:30am from Hanalei. It was a wonderful time boating along the gorgeous coast. There were still clouds, but with a lot of sun. Some of the mountains had shadows on them because it was earlier in the day, but for the most part, the mountains and water were gorgeous. We have some wonderful pictures from the trip.

The captain and one man crew were wonderful. The sandwich was very good and the snacks and beverage at Tunnels were appreciated.

You are driven from the check in point to the channel next to the Hanalei pier. Since we took the first morning tour, they picked us up on the sandbar on a little flat boat to take us to the main boat anchored out from the pier. They back the boat in and you have to walk through ankle deep water for a foot or two to get on the shuttle boat.

You then are shuttled out to the main boat and transfer from the shuttle to the main boat. It all was smooth and easy. On the return, the main boat drops you back off at the sand bar. The tide is higher by

then and the boat can get in the channel. You then just walk off into that same water for a foot or two and you are back on shore.

The boat backed into one of the sea caves along the way - the one with a waterfall coming down. That was pretty cool. You get plenty of time to take pictures, they even stop at a picturesque point and will take pictures on your phone of your group (no charge).

They did a great job and the weather cooperated!!

After the boat tour, we went back to the condo to change clothes. Along the way we stopped at the Hanalei Valley Lookout.

We then drove back to the town of Hanalei and walked to the end of the pier and then drove to the end of road that ends at Haena State Park.

Boat tour review I posted [here](#).

Day 12

We took a driving tour of the northern part of the island and visited the Kilauea Point Lighthouse and wildlife refuge. We had made reservations in advance. It is a quick walking tour – about 30-45 minutes to the lighthouse and back. It is one of the nations most intact, working light houses. You can just walk around the outside and watch a video of its history in a building next to the lighthouse. You can not go inside the lighthouse. Because I have a national park pass, it only cost us \$2 to make the reservation.

We then drove down to check out Anini Beach. The main beach was nothing special. However, there are a lot of little beaches in a two or so mile drive that you can park near and have almost all to yourself – at least that is what we saw mid-week.

General

It was between 78 and 81 degrees every day. Most days were dry and partly sunny with more clouds around the mountain tops. It rained off and on most of our last day (Friday) with a shower or two during the week.

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

No issues returning the car rental. Our flights home were on time. We even arrived into Milwaukee about 30 minutes early.

Dining

1 Kitchen

The views can be great here if the weather cooperates. Unfortunately, on our chosen night, it was mostly cloudy with some rain. At times, enough of the clouds disappeared and we could see the tops of the mountains and a couple of waterfalls flowing from the top. So, we had a partial view. It would have been nice to have better weather, but we had a nice dinner anyway and will get to see the mountains clearly on another day.

There is only one way to park when arriving here – via valet for a cost of \$20.94 (pay on pickup).

We had a reservation for the first seating (5:30pm) so that we could get a table on the lanai and have an unobstructed view. We did get a table on the lanai and the edge of the dining area. So, when the clouds cooperated, we did have a great view.

We did look at the full wine list, but decided to have some cocktails instead. The wine was just marked up way too much (4-5 times) for my tastes. We tried both of their signature Mai-Tais – the Princeville (\$25) and the Kauai (\$26). We liked the Kauai best – it was a unique style for a Mai-Tai and tasted wonderful. We each had two cocktails, but could have had two more – they went down so smooth!

For an appetizer we had the Isle Arancini (\$26) which was a tasty, Italian style rice ball with a nice aioli. Jan had the truffle pasta (\$65) for her main entrée. The pici style noodles were not what was listed on the menu, but they were fine. It was a large, tasty portion. While it was made with truffle oil and not fresh truffles, it was still good. I had the banana wrapped snapper (\$72) which was wonderful. A large filet of snapper that was cooked perfectly on top of a mild curry sauce. We had a chocolate covered, hot brownie with vanilla ice cream and macadamia nuts (\$18) that was indeed hot and delicious. The service was good, but like so many places, we had to wait longer to get, and then pay the check. The view would have been grand had the weather been better. Then, this expensive dinner may have been worth it.

Total before tax and tip was (\$284).

Bar Acuda

This was one of the best meals we have had in a long time. It is no wonder that getting reservations is difficult. You have to do that online 30 days prior to your desired date. The reservations are gobbled up within minutes.

They have no view to speak of – the food is the star of the show here. Since it is a tapas restaurant, you can try a lot of the items on any given night. Most portions are large enough to share. You should plan on 2-3 different items per person. We tried 5 different items plus dessert – each and every item tasted delicious and was wonderfully plated. You can order all of your choices at once and they will bring them to you at the proper time while allowing you time between courses, or you can order as you go. We ordered all at once (except dessert) and the pacing was perfect.

We had the bruschetta (\$19) which was 4 slices of garlic rubbed toast, grated fresh tomato and Calabrian chili, Manchego cheese, truffle balsamic, and basil. They had a nice little kick to them.

We then had the baby green salad (\$18) that included medjool dates, goat cheese, toasted walnuts, parsley, mint, and sherry vinaigrette.

Served with the salad, we had the Honeycomb cheese plate (\$25) with honey, Humboldt Fog goat cheese, crisp Fuji apple, parmesan, fennel, and pepper lavash (crackers). This was a nice plate with plenty of cheese and honey to go with the crackers and very thin apple slices.

We then had the lamb riblettes (\$39 for 3 ribs or \$52 for 4 ribs). These were served in a red wine & honey marinade, tajine spiced carrots, polenta, crispy garlic, parsley and mint. We asked for medium rare, but they were cooked just a little past that. These were one of the best lamb chops/ribs we have ever had – so tender and flavorful. The course is normally served with 3 ribs, but the server said we could get an extra so we each could have 2 ribs. Glad he told us that – we definitely could have ordered even more of these! Finally, we had the blackened mahi (\$36) with piquillo braised Cannellini beans, gilda puree, preserved lemon, and sunflower sprouts. Mahi is the main fresh fish you can get on the island. We were skeptical of getting this since we had it a number of times on our trip already. However, we are glad we did get it. The spice was flavorful, but not too hot and the puree and beans in the dish were melt in your mouth – very yummy.

We had the warm, flourless chocolate cake with house made vanilla bean ice cream (\$17) for dessert. We had a cappuccino (\$8), a French Press coffee (\$9) and a glass of dessert wine (\$28) to finish off the meal.

The wine list is small, but reasonably priced. We had a bottle of Truchard pinot (\$64) from Carneros and a two glasses of an Italian wine (\$19 each) made with the Susmaniello grape (have not had this before – it was dark and bold).

It was an extravagant meal, but worth every penny. Total cost before tax and tip was \$314. In addition to sales tax, they charge 4% for the Hawaii tax that provides health benefits to the staff. Of course, you can get by more economically without the wine and drinks.

They have mostly open air, but covered dining. Some tables are more inside while others are more open to the outside. We sat at one of the more open spots that had a “shade” pulled down so the setting sun did not get in our eyes. You can park for free in one of the nearby parking lots.

Service was excellent. Our server poured the wine (with a small spill that spattered a couple of drops onto Jan’s top). Other than that, he was attentive and pleasant and paced the dishes nicely.

Tahiti Nui (lunch)

We stopped here for lunch after our boat trip and a visit to Hanalei Bay Beach. Jan had a Wild Coco Rita (\$17) that she liked and I had their famous Mai Tai (\$18). It was a good cocktail – probably my second favorite so far (1 Kitchen is my fav). We then shared a pizza (\$32) that cost more than most as we had a

split pizza with different toppings on each side. It was good and had lots of toppings. A very casual, but nice stop for lunch and a drink.

Kenji Burger (lunch)

We stopped [here](#) for lunch after our visit to the light house. They had some excellent burgers and a couple of nice, cold beers from Maui Brewing on tap. Jan had the Old Skool burger (\$12) and a coconut porter (\$10). I had the Truffle burger (\$14) and a Hawaii Life Lager.

You place your order and then grab a table on the covered, outdoor lanai. 3% fee for using a credit card.

Happy Talk Lounge

The view of the resort gardens and the mountains are beautiful from here. We arrived about 5:30pm and did the self-park. There were a couple of empty spots in the main lot which was just steps from the restaurant. There were only some high top tables available. So, we decided to wait for a standard table.

We waited less than 5 minutes. We were seated at a primo table for two at the edge of the dining area with an unobstructed view of the gardens and mountains. It was the perfect table. The drinks, food and service were very good. Jan had a couple of Pina Colada's (\$15 each) that she liked. Not many places offered Pina Coladas. I had a Bali Hai Tai (\$14) and a "perfect margarita" (\$17). Both were good.

We shared a number of dishes – coconut shrimp (\$16), pork sliders (\$17) and a pork quesadilla (\$20). The only issue with the food was that the sliders were on three buns and the buns had not been separated. So, when you broke one bun off, a lot of the toppings fell off – not a big deal, but a bit messy. Service was very good. It took the bartender a bit long to make the second pina colada.

There was live music in the background after 6pm. All in all, an excellent meal when you factor in the good food and great views.

Total before tax and tip for 4 drinks and 3 food items was \$111. They charge 3% for using a credit card.