

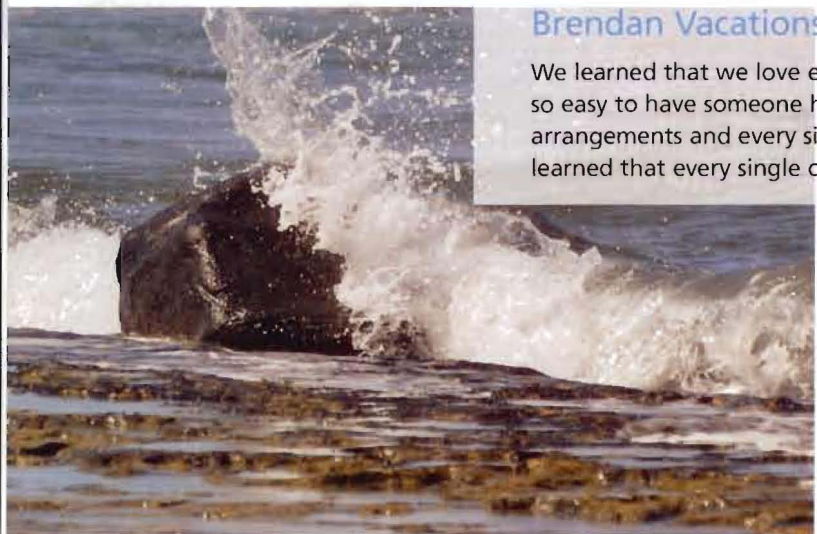
Kauai



We learned a lot from island-hopping around the Hawaiian Islands with Brendan Vacations during the summer.

We learned that we love escorted travel because it is so easy to have someone handle your luggage, your arrangements and every single detail of your trip. We learned that every single one of the islands has a unique

and fascinating character. We learned that all, but that Kauai is the best to end your trip because the best word for Kauai is relaxation in Kauai and it was quite wonderful. Through everyone's experience, however — Kauai is known as "The Island of Discovery." With its vast canyons and gorgeous beaches, you get a bit of everything on this island . . .



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by Jan Ross, Staff Writer

We hopped the last of our inter-island flights and landed on the beautiful island of Kauai, where we immediately boarded a comfortable, air-conditioned bus. We were taken to Smith's Fern Grotto Wailua River Cruise, the expedition which Brendan Vacations had arranged for us. After a drive by lush forests and beautiful beaches, we arrived at the dock area where we had a wonderful lunch, then waited in a cool shaded area until it was time for our small river cruise ship to embark on a cruise up the Wailua River.

It was while we were waiting that we saw the famous Kauai chickens, which apparently roam all over the island. If you have been to Kauai, you have seen the chickens — they are everywhere! Finally, we boarded the low, open river boats with comfortable seating and plenty of room for the cool breezes to blow through and to see the beautiful views on either side of the boat.

A group of Hawaiian musicians and even a hula dancer entertained us as we cruised two miles up the river through the rain forest. Trees and plants grew right down to the river's edge and dormant volcanoes covered with greenery loomed in the distance.

Finally we arrived at the Fern Grotto dock where we began the trek through the rain forest to reach the Fern Grotto. Stands of skinny bamboo and huge, tropical flowers surrounded the path, and we were serenaded by hundreds of jungle birds as we made our way along the smooth, easy-to-traverse path.

The Fern Grotto is a lava rock grotto or cave which is filled with hundreds of ferns making quite a spectacle as they grow upside-down, stretching their green fronds down. There had been a mud slide recently so there were not as many ferns as there had been in the past, but they are quickly coming back.

After a trip back up the river, we headed

to a lookout for an incredible view of waterfalls tumbling down the mountainside into the river we had just left. Surrounded by dormant volcanic mountains covered with lush greenery with waterfalls wending their way through the jungle, we were amazed at the incredibly scenic view which ended our tour of this area.

Our time in Kauai was far from over, though, as next we headed to our favorite resort of the entire trip — the Kauai Beach Resort. The Kauai Beach Resort is new and modern, yet beautifully furnished with dark furniture and tropical prints in a plantation style which make you realize you are indeed still in Hawaii. Located oceanside on the eastern side of the island of Kauai with three miles of private beach, it's a wonderful destination. In the middle of 25 lush acres of land, only about five minutes from Lihue airport, and located on one of the most laid-back of the islands, it's also the perfect place to relax.

The lobby is large and open with several French doors opening to a lovely pool area. This is the place to stay if you enjoy pools because the Kauai Beach Resort has four fabulous pools. You will want to use these because the beach is lovely but the water is rather wild — not a good choice for families, especially those with small children. This is a beach to stroll on, enjoy the views, take pictures — then go swim in the pools.

This is really OK because these were the nicest pools we saw during our stay — waterfalls, slides — they had it all. There's even a pool with a little sandy beach that the kids would love.

We were thrilled with the pools, but we were even more thrilled when we saw our room, one of the largest we had during our trip to the Hawaiian Islands at 320 square feet. We had a beautiful view of the pool and a comfortable lanai to enjoy that view, but you can also choose mountain/garden view, lagoon view or ocean view. One of the best things about our room was a very comfortable chaise

lounge which I enjoyed every day, relaxing and reading — when I was not relaxing and reading by the pool!

The Kauai Beach Resort has 350 beautiful rooms and six spacious suites with separate bedrooms, including the luxurious Presidential Suite. The rooms and suites all feature beautiful furnishings, stained wood doors, "plantation" louvered closets and spacious bathrooms with travertine marble. The "Serenity Beds" were absolutely incredible, and we slept like angels dozing on clouds the whole time we were there. We also enjoyed the Crabtree & Evelyn bath amenities, Cable TV with premium channels and movies, high-speed Internet, alarm clock radio with iPod dock, a large desk for both of our computers, a refrigerator and an in-room safe.

When you are ready for a bite to eat, that's no problem at this resort, and we were so kind as to sample each of the different restaurants for you — you're welcome! We had breakfast in the Naupaka Terrace restaurant, and it was by far the best breakfast buffet we had on our entire trip. Not only did they have a wonderful spread with delicious breads, fruit and hot foods, they also had an omelet bar, which was fabulous. We also had dinner with our whole group here one night and it was also wonderful.

The Driftwood Bar & Grille is located right near one of the pools and also has delicious food, including salads, sandwiches and wraps. I recommend the seafood wrap — it was so good, I ate it two days in a row. Shutters Lounge has several choices on their menu, but don't even think of ordering anything but the pizza. It is freshly made and absolutely delicious. They will even give you the leftovers (if you have any) in a pizza box, which you can stash in the fridge in your room and have for lunch the next day. There's also musical entertainment here in the evenings.

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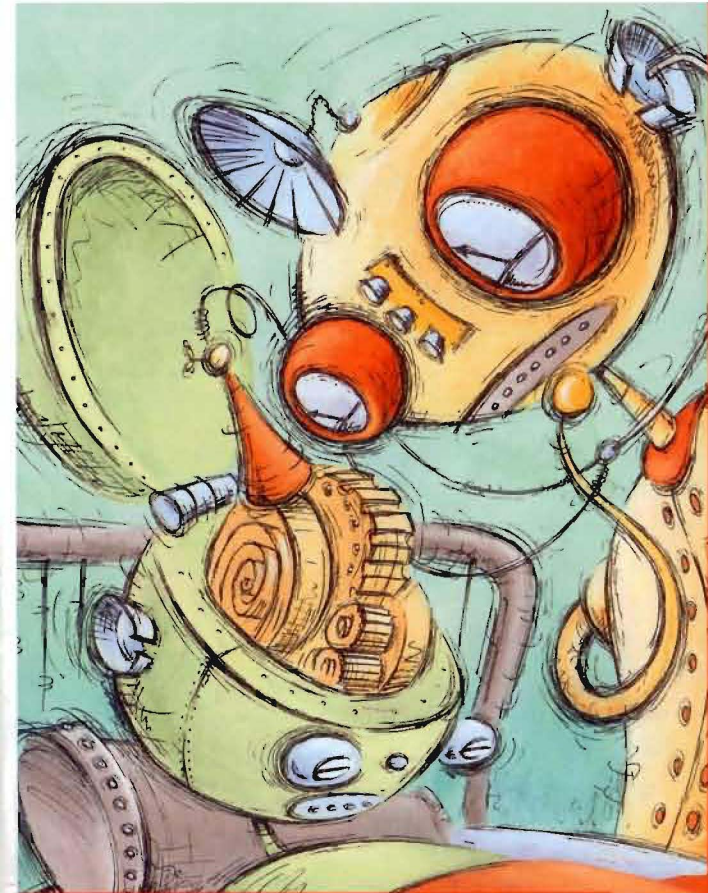
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Our last evening, we walked out by the pool and watched the musicians and hula dancer who were set up on an island in the center of the pool and were very professional and enjoyable. Since this was our last island and the last resort of our trip, we just relaxed, read, slept and ate for the few days we were there. There are, of course, many other things to do on the island of Kauai and the resort is happy to arrange any outing for you.

However, if you want to lie by the pool every single day reading your book, only expending enough energy to reach over and eat some fresh pineapple, that's OK too. It's exactly what we did for the last few days of this fabulous trip with Brendan Vacations.

We can't wait for the next one. We are talking about Tahiti and Australia. I think that will take a few magazine columns — don't you?

About the Author

Jan Ross is a blogger for The Travel Authority. Read her travel blog at <http://thetravelauthority.blogspot.com/> to find out about other fabulous travel deals and travel information. Or call The Travel Authority at 1-877-AXP-1515. They have offices located all over Central Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee and Florida and will help you get the best possible deal for a wonderful trip. You can contact Jan at kentuckygal53@gmail.com with comments or suggestions for article topics.

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one there seemed ready, willing and able to go above and beyond the call of duty to pacify a first-time mom and her somewhat anxious family members.

Each and every staff member made me feel like my baby and my health were their single top priority. I really appreciate their care, patience and dedication.

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