



American Adventure

Oahu, Hawaii

Hawaiian Time

Farther Away From Everywhere Else
Than Anywhere Else

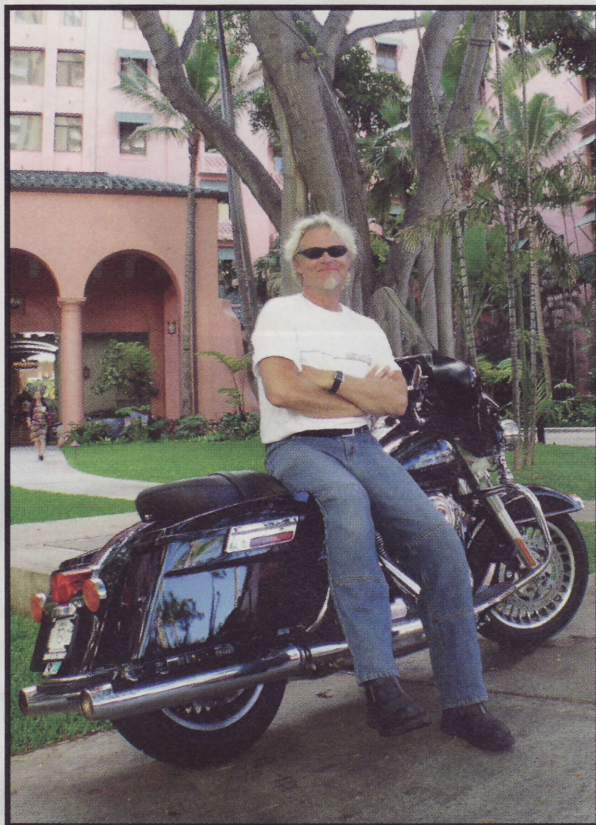


BY GARY MRAZ

I don't surf, never have. Don't get me wrong, I love the beach (except for all that water and sand). My friends who do surf tell me there's nothing like it, riding that perfect wave, just you and nature, one with ocean and wind. I'm sure they're right, it looks absolutely amazing ... except for all that water and sand. I ride chrome and concrete, and for me a visit to Oahu means planning a road trip.

Landing on the island of Oahu is awesome. As Pearl Harbor comes into view a momentary flash of impending peril prevails, images of kamikaze pilots descending on a sleeping Navy below. That silent moment gives way to excitement as Diamond Head appears.

My home base was the Royal Hawaiian in Waikiki, the second oldest hotel on the island (and the only pink one). I was surprised how few rooms actually view the ocean; in fact, the entire hotel faces the Koolau Mountains. When it was constructed in the 1920s the only transportation to Hawaii was (of course) by boat, and I suppose after a five-day cruise the last thing tourists wanted to see was the ocean. After settling in, I picked up my "Big One," an Electra Glide Standard, from Cruzin Hawaii Motorcycle Rentals. Owner Glenn Domhoff used to host tours to the islands, covering three islands in 10 days on motorcycles. Glenn eventually merged his dream of Hawaiian residence with his lifelong motorcycle enthusiasm when he purchased Cruzin Hawaii. With a fleet of Harleys and metric cruisers, he has all your riding desires covered and is very understanding of and





flexible with rider's needs and schedules.

I decided to take a whole day on a Cruzin rental leisurely cruisin' the entire circumference of Oahu. Leaving from the Royal Hawaiian, I cruised Diamond Head Road (which becomes Kahala Avenue) and leads to Route 72 (Kalanianole Highway). This two-lane road skirts the southeast tip of the island and takes you past Hanauma Bay, the spectacular site of an ancient crater that's filled with sea life. Continuing north you traverse 61 (Pali Highway) briefly, then connect to

83, the Kamehameha Highway. (Few islanders know these roads by number, they call them by name.) A slight detour on the Kahakili (still 83) takes you to the Valley of the Temples and the Byodo-In Temple. This is a replica of a 900-year-old Buddhist temple that houses a 9' Lotus Buddha covered in gold and lacquer. Outside is a 3-ton, brass peace bell (which you can ring). Surrounding the temple are large koi ponds set against a backdrop of the towering cliffs of the Koolau Mountains.



Continuing north on Kamehameha Highway, you pass through Kaneohe and are treated to a twisty back road with Kaneohe Bay on your right, taking you through sleepy little villages along the windward coast. These little villages are dotted with roadside fresh produce and flower stands as well as a macadamia nut farm outlet operated by Hawaiian locals. This is a special part of the ride. Every view is spectacular and parts of the highway almost literally dip into the ocean. I passed on Turtle Bay Resort, famous for giant sea turtles, or *honu*, and just followed the coast to one of the many seemingly remote beaches. Glenn told me that most beaches have these *honu* just basking in the sun, undisturbed by busloads of tourists.



Stopping for lunch in Haleiwa at the Grass Skirt Grill, a massive grilled *ahi* (tuna) burger with homemade sesame mayo awaits. Caught and cooked that day, it was delectable. Taking a stroll around Haleiwa, I discovered what the North Shore is all about.

Motorcycling is truly the way to experience Oahu. Immersed in the sights and smells of this tropical island paradise via two wheels is exactly how to experience its beauty. The temperature is just perfect; during the peak of afternoon temperatures riding keeps you cool because the humidity virtually

MT. TANTALUS DRIVE AND MANOA FALLS

Eight-mile, one-hour-ride loop.

Hiking Manoa Falls takes two hours each way.

Mt. Tantalus Drive is a fun run through tropical rainforest twisties with great views. Most of the turns are posted at 10 mph, and they mean it, so you'd best make sure you're comfortable rolling through these babies (especially on an Electra Glide with a passenger).

Nearby Manoa Falls is a relatively unknown corner of Oahu. The Valley of Manoa holds a towering pristine waterfall and is one of the best rainforest experiences on the island. Manoa Valley also shelters an arboretum and Chinese graveyard where food is left for the departed. Be prepared for some serious hiking!



evaporates in the breeze. Traveling on "Hawaiian Time," the posted speed limit averages 35 miles an hour on most roads, so relax and enjoy the views. The Electra purred along wonderfully, the new frame design and other features of the touring line make this bike a joy to ride.

As you weave down Kamehameha Highway it connects to Route 930 (Farrington Highway) and you pass through rich farming communities and little towns that time has forgotten. Approaching the last mile of paved road is Dillingham Airfield, which offers sky diving or rides in a glider, biplane, or a WWII trainer that follows the bombing run Japanese planes used in their attack of Pearl Harbor. Just beyond the air field is Kaena Point and the Edge of the World. This is the end of the road and it's the location of a hidden nude beach.

Doubling back connects you to the 803 (Kaukonahua Road), then to Kamehameha Highway toward Honolulu. You will pass the Dole plantation, another tourist trap boasting the world's largest maze and other tours and attractions. Open fields and plantations dot central Oahu, where tropical rains occur almost daily. (I got doused and it felt great.) Finally merging onto Interstate H1 back towards Honolulu, I took Pali Highway east to Pali Lookout. A short ride through the rainforest and I was treated to a spectacular view of the area. The Nuuanu Pali Lookout overlooks 985' cliffs of the Koolau mountain range and is one of the best vistas on Oahu. It was here that, in 1795, King Kamehameha and his warriors defeated the Oahu armies

by sending them over these steep, forested cliffs. This was the final battle that united the Hawaiian Islands.

My entire daytrip was only 162 miles and circling Oahu took about eight hours. No helmets are required in the state, but they are free with your rental. Just remember it's Hawaiian Time, so you want to embrace the scenery at a leisurely pace. It's a truly fantastic day of travel, through incredibly beautiful and diverse terrain.

The total population for all eight islands in Hawaii is 1.2 million, and over 900,000 of them live on Oahu. Add another 4 million visitors yearly, and you get all of the associated tourist trappings. Waikiki is a blend of Rodeo Drive and Venice Beach, an Armani Exchange with street vendors. When motorcycling Oahu, get out of Honolulu and you will find the two lane roads are uncrowded and well-maintained. Riding Oahu's circumference is as big as it gets. It's everything you expect from a trip to paradise, despite all that water and sand.

RB

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