

A summer holiday in Hawaii

It comes as a surprise to some, who look at those tiny specks on the map in the middle of the Pacific, to learn that the Hawaiian Islands are not low lying and palm fringed but volcanic and mountainous with peaks as high as many in the Rocky Mountains. (Highest mountain in Hawaii is Mauna Kee - 13,784 feet)

To those of us who have called Hawaii home for many years, it is not merely the most important military outpost of the United States, but one of the beauty spots of the world where one may live a quiet but interesting life among friendly people of various races.

What we do for amusement and where we go when we have a vacation perplexes many who visualize the islands as being so small that they must resemble a sort of Coney Island on a mid-summer Sunday. It is true that Honolulu and the Island of Oahu seem to be growing more crowded but there remain lovely, quiet spots for those who care to seek them and it is about one such that I thought my friends might like to hear.

In July, 1940, Ada Erwin and I packed the car with warm bedding, a few old clothes and some food and took it with us on the boat to Kauai, the most northerly of the five large islands of the group. We left Honolulu at 10 p.m. in the evening and arrived at the port of Nawiliwili on Kauai at seven the next morning. After breakfast on the boat we climbed into the car and were off on the 50 mile trip to our destination, Kokee in the National Forest Reserve.

After a few hours drive on excellent paved roads through sugar cane, pineapple and pasture lands and a few modern villages, with glimpses of blue ocean here and there, at an elevation of about 3,600 feet, we reached at the end of a grass grown road a little cottage in Malcapopoki valley which we had rented from a friend. But twelve hours from home and with little inconvenience to ourselves we had come from one of the busiest seaports in the Pacific to a quiet retreat deep in the mountains. A rather new cottage very roomy for two, simple enough to suit the surroundings but with many of the comforts of home such as running water, pumped from the stream below by an hydraulic ram. To be sure we cooked on a kerosene stove, but we had an excellent reading light from a pressure, kerosene lamp and each evening enjoyed the warmth of a little wood stove which heated our bath water to almost the scalding point.

I was unusually tired and Ada had promised that I might stay in bed for a week if I wished, until I could get completely rested. I seemed quite content, the first few days, to remain there indefinitely. Framed in the window above my bed were the soft green leaves, rosy pink buds and rich royal purple, five petaled flowers of the lasiandra (*Tibouchina granulosa*) against a deep blue sky with drifting white clouds. There were summer lilac (*Buddleia japonica*) in bloom too and their long lavender spikes nodded in the cool trade winds. Not a sound disturbed the beautiful silence except the singing or twittering of the birds. In the mornings we wakened to the music of the Mongolian thrush,

one of the most beautiful song birds in the world. They sang off and on all day but especially in the morning, about noon, and again, ⁱⁿ the late afternoon and evening.

Two neighbors could be easily seen but rarely heard about an eighth of a mile away and no one came over the grass grown road to disturb our peace and quiet. We had no radio so received no disquieting news except when the newspaper or letters arrived twice a week with the grocery boy who brought us food supplies, ice and fresh milk twice a week from the plantation store at the foot of the winding mountain road, 20 miles away.

A hill, clothed in koa trees with new moon leaves, rose behind our house, and in front a grassy slope descended a hundred feet to the nearest stream which came from the little valley to the left. A second stream from a small, narrow, uninhabited, inaccessible valley joined the first to make a larger stream which continued under a steep wooded cliff a little to the right. I loved to sit on the front step in the afternoon with my cup of tea and gaze upon this scene. The streams were almost choked with plants--the shrubs with lavender and purple blossoms, like those I saw from my bedroom window, grew to ten feet in height and contrasted sharply with the yellows and orange of masses of nasturtiums and montbretias. A few clumps of blue hydrangas struggled for a place in the sun and seemed to be doing very well with blossoms twelve inches in diameter. We felt almost selfish to be enjoying so much quiet and beauty when in some parts of the world we had friends who were suffering the strains and hardships of war.

When we had dissipated our fatigue and stored up some rest we began to think about taking some walks. There are many trails, not too well marked despite the CCC, but all kinds and lengths, requiring all degrees of strength and endurance, according to one's inclination.

Our longest hike (about six miles) was to the lookout over Kalalau Valley, a valley, inaccessible except from the sea with precipitous mountain cliffs on three sides, made famous by a poor leper who hid himself there in 1893 and defied the authorities who wished to place him in the leper colony. The trail was through the native forest, predominately tall silvery-grey-barked lehua trees with small feathery red blossoms, the color of some of the birds which once inhabited them and whose feathers were used in making the famous Hawaiian feather capes. The red feathered birds, like many of the native Hawaiian ones, are now extinct but there remain some of the less spectacular varieties of the sap sucking species which may be seen only in the relatively undisturbed high forest regions. That day we saw several of them with fine long curved bills silhouetted against the sky in the trees above us. One saucy little Elepaio that spreads his tail up like a fan accompanied us for about a mile, fluttering about in the bushes close by the trail, he diligently searched for insects, keeping one eye on us the while.

The view from the lookout was superb. From a point at the head of the valley 4,000 feet above the sea, we looked down into a beautiful valley about one and a half miles wide and two miles long. We could see the thin line of surf and the sandy shore far away, and in the distance the ocean melted into the sky and clouds so that the horizon could not be discerned. The white-tailed tropic birds with wing spread of about thirty inches appeared like tiny, white pieces of fluttering paper tossed from an airplane, as they wheeled and floated, soared and dived along the cliffs where they nest. To our right was a beautiful waterfall said to be almost a thousand feet high but so distant that we could hear no sound of it.

We hesitated a bit about making this trip on a beautiful Sunday as we thought there might be many people on the trail but we met only a group of four, a part-Hawaiian man, a Filipino man with his pretty young Hawaiian wife who with their daughter was hunting for the fragrant mokihana berries (capsules) (*Palaeaniseta*) to make leis. They did not go to the lookout, so we had it to ourselves. We rested, ate our lunch and feasted our eyes on the wild but peaceful scene for an hour, then left reluctantly, meeting no one but the birds on our return trip.

Waimea Canyon affords the crowning view in this region of Kauai. It may be reached by trail from the cottage, but our finest view was one evening an hour before sunset when we went by car twelve miles down the mountain road to an excellent lookout and stayed until night descended. Alone and undisturbed, 2,300 feet above the floor of the canyon, we ate our supper and watched the cloud shadows in this vast, ruggedly sculptured gorge. No picture nor description is adequate to convey the impression of this canyon with its exquisite coloring. The soil and rocks range through hues of brown, red and yellow; deep in the valleys, semi-tropical foliage contributes many shades of green; and over it all and in the winding distances a misty lavender haze blends the whole into a symphony of color. In the bright sun, in the glow of sunset or in the short, swift twilight when the lavender haze deepens to purple and blues; this great silent canyon with only the faintest sound of roaring water in the distance, leaves one with a feeling of awe and the timelessness of nature. Geologists tell us it cannot have changed much in the last ten thousand years.

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