

Maybe this time Kaho‘olawe will benefit from our hindsight and our diligence.

LANA‘I

For most of the 20th century Lana‘i was known as the pineapple island. Almost 98% of the island was owned by Dole Pineapple, and pineapple dominated this 140½-square-mile island. In the late ‘80s the owners (the island is now privately owned by a mainland family named Murdock) decided that owning a secluded Hawaiian island was more valuable than owning pineapple fields. So they got out of pineapple and began marketing Lana‘i as the “private island,” complete with two high-end resorts and excellent golfing.

The population is around 3,200 and most work for the landowner, often paying cheap, subsidized rent. More than once we’ve seen residents taking the ferry to Lahaina to pick up stacks of pizzas for delivery back to Lana‘i City. (Lana‘i is a tad out of Domino’s delivery range.)

Lying in the rain shadow of West Maui, Lana‘i is arid, receiving only 10–20 inches of rain annually in most locations, and it’s certainly not the most attractive island you’ll visit. Some of its beaches, however, are excellent (though occasional heavy storms from the south can muck up the water for as long as six months at a time). Taking the **Expeditions Maui–Lana‘i Ferry** (661–3756) for \$30 each way is the most popular way to get there. (Sit on the right/starboard side.) There are also flights into the airport.

Lana‘i is an amazingly relaxing place to stay. The second day into our first visit, we were tempted to call the front desk and complain that someone had broken into our room and surgically removed our bones. You can actually *feel* motivation and ambition draining from your body. The downside to the relaxing nature is the lack of options

available to you here. The island is dominated by a few players who have more control over you than you may realize. For instance, the company that does most of the boat activities, Trilogy, also owns the island’s **Dollar Rent A Car** (800–533–7808) and the only gas station, and you may find yourself wondering if they prefer that you take a profitable tour rather than rent a car. Because renting a car can be difficult—there are fewer than 3 dozen vehicles to accommodate all 362 rooms. (Moloka‘i has *10 times* that number of cars for a similar visitor count.) And rental car prices will shock you. In fact, *everything* is expensive on Lana‘i. (You’ll be forgiven if you start to wonder if Lana‘i is the Hawaiian word for, “It costs *how* much?”) It’s easy to let expenses get away from you since nearly every place on the island lets you charge things to your room. (It’s called check-out shock, and it can be fatal for those with weak hearts.)

Though resort personnel “aren’t supposed to tell you this,” there is another company renting JEEPs on the island with prices better than Dollar’s. **Adventure Lana‘i Ecocentre** (565–7373) also gives coolers, etc., with the JEEP, has fewer restrictions on where you can drive (*that’s important*), and their mud tires are better than Dollar’s. Sure, their JEEPs are a bit more banged up. But that’s because they allow *you* to bang ‘em. They also have ATV and bicycle rentals and tours.

If you rent a JEEP, use it! Although Lana‘i’s not the prettiest island, if you don’t mind eating some dust and getting your hands dirty, it’s a JEEP-lover’s dream. Especially recommended is the **4WD Munro Trail** that skirts the island’s misty upper ridge. (Parts might be inaccessible if it’s been raining a lot.) The views of Maui and Moloka‘i are awesome up

here, and the pine trees, ferns, wild turkeys and pheasant transport you to another world.

If you drive your JEEP west of town you come to the **Garden of the Gods**, a very dramatic collection of weathered boulders eroded over eons in a serene setting best seen in the early morning. Past here a dirt road leads down to **Polihua Beach**, over a mile long and super wide. Take a tip from us and *don’t* drive on the sand at the north end of the beach. Beneath that sand lurks a swampy goo that will snag your vehicle. And you’ll spend hours and hours trying in vain to get it free, then someone else will get stuck trying to help and...Sorry, had a flashback.

At the north end of the island you’ll find miles of empty beaches and a shipwreck off to the left. (There’s another wreck to the west but it’s hard to access.)

And for expanding your knowledge and appreciation for the island, you want to stop at the **Lana‘i Culture and Heritage Center** in town. They are a wealth of good information on all things Lana‘i.

The main beach at the hotel is probably among the top 10 beaches in the state. Called **Hulopo‘e Beach**, it has a huge sand deposit and good swimming coupled with unreal snorkeling on the left (southeast) end of the beach. Venture along the rocky shoreline away from the beach, and you’re treated to some very dramatic underwater scenery. Not because of the coral (which is sparse) or the fish (which are abundant) or visibility (often a bit cloudy), but because of the canyon-like lattice structure of the lava and dead coral. Chasms, holes, stacks and arches create a miniature Bryce Canyon with exciting possibilities. Avoid during moderate to high surf, however, or it may get *too* exciting due to surginess. Occasionally, large Kona storm runoff causes severe water cloudiness that can last for many months. You can easily walk to the beach from the ferry landing.

Staying on Lana‘i

The island has only three places to stay, and two are **Four Seasons Resorts**.

Renting a JEEP on Lana‘i allows you to discover the mouth-watering views of Moloka‘i and Maui during your drive down to the north coast.

