



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Aloha from Hawaii!

by Amaru & Suzanne, July 30th 2007

Our decision for staying in Hawaii was done quite early on. Flying from Australia to the main land of the US takes around 14-15 hours, flying to Hawaii takes 9 hours.... and it's well worth a small stop!

We flew with Air Canada (anything to avoid the US airlines) which turned out to be quite a nice airline with friendly people and movies on demand. On arrival 95% queued up on the "Foreigners" side of immigration where one person was working while the other 5% that went through the "US Citizen" side were served by 4 officers..... can someone explain the logic of that to us?

10min later, another flight arrived, this time it's Air New Zealand.... also filled with non-US Citizens, but still no change. Finally after around 20min, we get another officer to check us through, and she is greeted by applause and cheers. A few minutes later some of us are moved to the US-Citizens line and it speeds up.

We arrive at our hotel at around 01.30am, check in, get our key and take the elevator to our room. Suz unlocks the door and when she opens it we see that the security chain is in place, someone is already in our room!!



We make our way down to reception where they call the room and finds out that they should have been in the room next door, well, no harm done, we are told that we will get their room, which is a slight upgrade from what we would have had and everybody is happy.

After a good night sleep we leave to explore the area, Suz shows me around Waikiki, up and down the main street for a while until the day warms up. We then head back to the hotel, change into our swimmers and walk a whopping two blocks down to the famous Waikiki Beach.

The beach is quite nice, packed with people, but nice. This is where Duke Kahanamoku popularized the modern sport of surfing and a statue now stands on the beach in his honor.

The rest of the day was spent in a very similar way, we changed and had some food, walked for a while, went back for swimmers and swam some more and finally we went back to the hotel for a well deserved sleep. It's awesome to have ones hotel so close to the beach, it was literally not more than 200m to the beach.

The next morning I left Suz sleeping and went off to do some diving, I was picked up around 7.15am (very early I know), the minibus then picked up 3 more guys and that was it. A small group of four people, very nice! A funny thing was that all of the guys were Swedish, just the day before I had mentioned to Suz that I hadn't noticed them as much here in Oahu, and here I get to go diving with them.....jeeez, I just can't get away from them now can I ;)

Our first dive took us to "Sea Tiger Wreck", this is a wreck located at around 35-40m depth. The ship used to be used to smuggle illegal immigrants and was sunk in 1996 by a submarine. Coral growth is still in the early stages but it still offers quite a lot of marine life, it also offers several swim-throughs through its cargo holds, passageways and stairwells. All in all a very nice place to dive!



This photo was taken
...just when Suz was hit by a wave



Reflection time
Looking out from the jetty

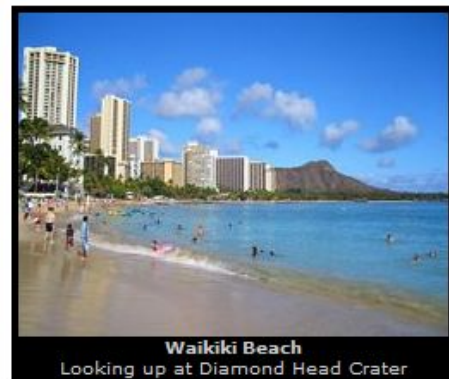
At one point during our dive our divemaster grabbed an octopus from inside the ship and was handing it around to us, it was very slimy and tried hard to get away by squirting ink all over the place (normally I would be against touching marine life but an octopus is not protected, they catch them all the time for dinner....at least we let this guy go).

Just before we were ready to head back up we encountered an enormous sea turtle lying just outside one of the doors of the wreck, we circled it for a while but headed back up to the surface right after that. On our second dive we did a shallow reef dive, only around 15m, it was nice but the wreck was a lot more fun....the highlight of this dive was another huge sea turtle, a sea snake or eel and a small reef shark.

After the dives we had a picnic lunch and I was then driven back to the hotel, here I had a quick rest while Suz went to the beach and when she returned we decided to climb the Diamond Head Crater.

This is a volcanic crater located at the end of Waikiki overlooking the Pacific Ocean, we managed to get there by catching a local bus and then hiking for around 30min to get to the top. It was very hot walking to the top but well worth it, at the top we had an awesome view over Waikiki and some of Honolulu as well.

That night I was totally exhausted so we just went out for a quick dinner, had a look at some fireworks and then we went back to our hotel, we had another early morning the next day.



Waikiki Beach
Looking up at Diamond Head Crater

It was now time to head off to Pearl Harbor, from what we heard the tickets are free but it works along the "First come, First served" principle. So we got up at 6am and went to the bus stop to catch the local bus. When we arrived at the bus stop there were a lot of police cars right there, we weren't quite sure what was going on but a few seconds later we saw a homeless person lying on one of the benches. Not long after this the police brought over a blanket and covered him, he obviously passed away during the night.....



Duke Kahanamoku
The granddaddy of surfing

Well, at least we managed to catch the bus and get away before the coroner came by to pick up the body, that would have been a bit much and Suz was a bit distressed since it was the first time she'd seen a dead person.

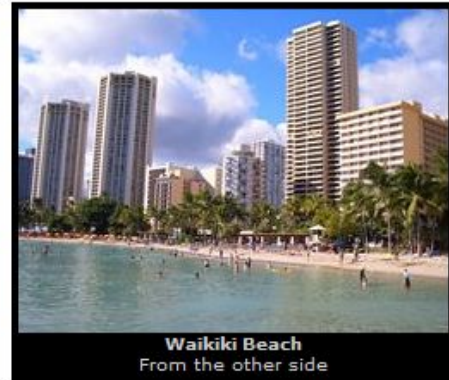
Anyway, after an hour on the bus we arrived at Pearl Harbor and got to stand in queue with many, many others. The line moved quite fast though and eventually we got our tickets, we were on the 10.30 show so we had to wait for 2 hours. Well, we passed the time by walking in the museum and reading a bit about the history of Pearl Harbor.

When our time came we got to see a short documentary about the event and were then transported by a small boat to the USS Arizona Memorial. This memorial has been built over the sunken ship where many sailors were trapped and died during the Japanese attack. It was quite a somber moment for a lot of the people that were there on the memorial.

That afternoon after we made it back to Waikiki we caught another bus, this time to the National Park of Hanauma Bay.

This is a beautiful bay located around 30min from Waikiki, it's supposed to have some of Oahu's best snorkelling so I was looking forward to jumping in the water. When we get there Suz laid down on the beach and I get into the water to see what I can find. Unfortunately the water was quite choppy which made it all very murky. Visibility wasn't good and it was very difficult to stay still and observe the fish....I almost got seasick just staying on the surface snorkelling, it was that bad.

So I just joined Suz on the beach that day, I can imagine that it's quite a nice place when the water is calm though.



The next day was just a very lazy day that we spent sleeping in (we hadn't done that in a few days), hanging on the beach, something to eat, more beach and then just a nice evening stroll.



That same evening Suz started noticing that she was getting some rash on her feet and she didn't know where it came from. The next morning it was even worse and Suz was by now quite worried. We made our way to a chemist and they just told her to use some hydrocortisone on it and it should heal. Well, that night when we were getting ready to catch our plane Suz was very worried about the rash and was a bit nervous about flying.

It all turned out to be nothing - apparently poison oak/ivy, and it healed fine over the next 2-3 days, but at the time it was a bit nervous.

Well, besides from the ending we had a great time on Oahu, we managed to spend a lot of time in the ocean, I did some good diving, we saw a national park and also a WWII battleplace. It's a very touristic place, but it still feels nice and since Hawaii is located where it is we will probably be back later on.... next time we will do Maui.

....next, bring on Las Vegas





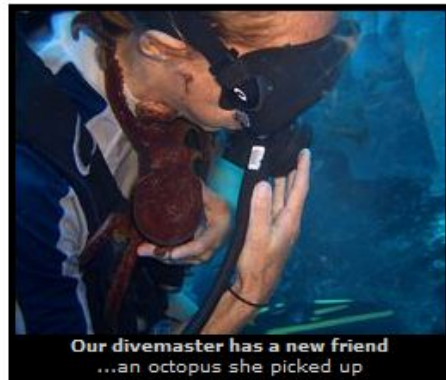
A gorgeous Nudibranch
Just not sure which type =)



Big school of fish
in the area



Diving around
the wreck



Our divemaster has a new friend
...an octopus she picked up



Spiky!
Don't want to get too close...



A sea snake/eel
Not quite sure to be honest!



A HUGE turtle
It was beautiful!



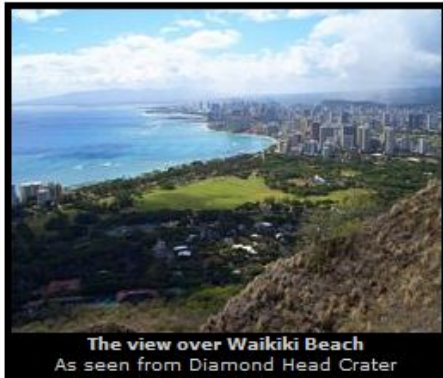
To the top
of Diamond Head



**The windy path
to the top**



**Having a quick rest
...it was very hot!**



**The view over Waikiki Beach
As seen from Diamond Head Crater**



**Cooling off in the tunnel!
Suz giving me the "No Worries" sign**



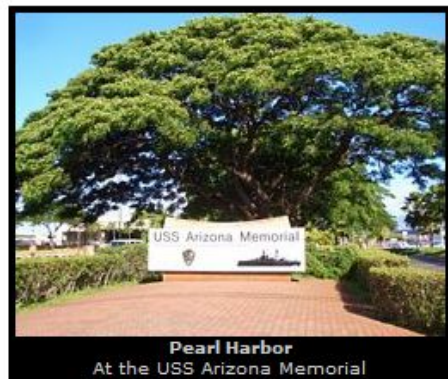
**"I Got Lei'd"
Fun Hawaiian licence plates**



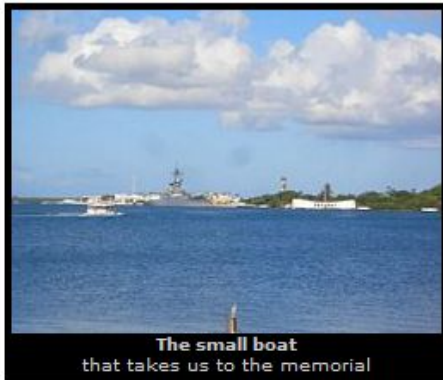
**Fireworks!
They occur every Friday night!**



**Waikiki Beach
By Night!**



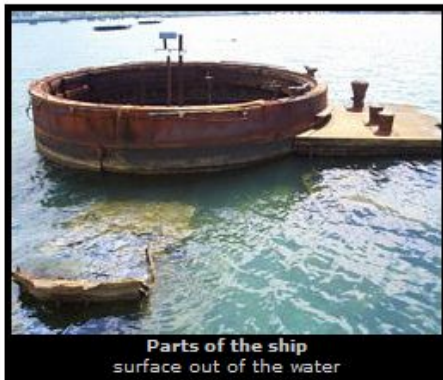
**Pearl Harbor
At the USS Arizona Memorial**



The small boat
that takes us to the memorial



The Memorial
sits on top of the sunken ship



Parts of the ship
surface out of the water



Looking down
from the memorial platform



The names of those
who went down with the ship



The flag
is set on the ship's original mast



The USS Arizona
Can still be seen through the water



Hanauma Bay
A National Park



People flock to Hanauma Bay
to sunbathe and snorkel



Suz is doing her part
Lots of sun, little snorkelling!



Amaru did some snorkeling
...not that good on this day though



Suz and the bay
Both of them gorgeous!!



The two of us
overlooking the bay!



Suz enjoying the warm waters
of Waikiki



Hey!!!
Give me that camera!



A self portrait
Just chilling in the ocean



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