

HOW TO HAVE THE TRUE HAWAIIAN EXPERIENCE

By Steven M. Keeler

Recently my family arrived here in the islands for a much needed vacation. One of the first things they wanted to know from me was: how do we have a real Hawaiian experience while we are here?

My answer: “stay out of the car.”

Yes, it’s true, and I know this won’t earn me any “local” bonus points, since tourism is our largest income producing activity here in the islands.

But, yes, stay out of the car. Stay out of the need to see and do everything. Ask yourself, “Why did you come here?” Are you here to relax? To release stress? To experience something different?

If you answered “yes,” then follow along.

I told my family, “If you want the true Hawaiian experience you’ve got to slow WAY down. You’ve got to become one with the pristine nature (kama’aina-of the land) that is here. Rushing around will prevent this from happening. You must be out in “it” rather than inside of the car driving from hither and yon. If you sit still long enough, you will see and feel amazing things here: the pristine ocean; the clean air to breathe; the amazing animals and plants—from whales to giant spiders and rain forests. You can watch the clouds and feel the gentle embrace of the humidity and the constant warmth.”

I continued, “Right now the first thing you must do is get in the water. Whether it is just your feet or your whole body, this will ground you here and is a practice I learned when I first moved here and it really works. In the evenings you’ve got to watch the sunsets, everyone of them, feel the gentle cool trade winds flow over you. You must get in the water everyday. Go for hikes and walks. Don’t be in a hurry. See if you can walk more slowly, as if you are on a cloud, taking it all in.”

It is surprising to me how many “locals” even forget these things.

So here is a partial list of suggestions for your consideration:

- Did I mention get in the water? And when in it let yourself be supported by it. Hold your breath and look down and just float; give all your worries and troubles to the water, they will wash away.
- Put your cell phone away.
- Instead of doing email/internet/TV read instead; go to bed early or take a nap, so you can get up and watch the sunrise.
- Breathe deeply as often as you can remember.
- Spend quality time with each other, talk story (share your experiences with each other) don’t allow video games, long phone calls home, DVDs etc.

- Play dominoes, cards or just sit still. Resist the urge to go, go, go! (but do fly GO! when you travel between the islands!).
- Buy leis and flowers-especially tuber rose if you can find it. These smells will help you connect to the 'aina (land).
- Eat the fresh fruit and vegetables you find here. Try the weirdest looking fruits you can find, most of them are awesome, and if you don't know how to eat them, just ask us.
- Don't kill any lizards (most likely geckos, not really a lizard) or bugs. Simply catch them and turn them loose outside. Making friends with these sacred things is what I have found to be the most effective means of not having them bother you.

Just three more things and then I'll let you go—1) Since you are in one of the areas on our planet where new earth is being created right under your feet (especially on the Big Island), make a Kanawai moaka aka (sacred intention or goal) everyday. In this way you are tapping into the ancient Hawaiian spiritual belief that whatever you say you want, the universe smiles back and gives it to you. 2) Live Manawa iki ola (moment to moment). In other words, be in the precious present. And 3) do everything with Pono (excellent connection to your spirit) and Aloha (loving breath).

And if all that sounds too complicated, just do what the dolphins do—play, eat, sleep and make love. And then do it again.

Aloha!

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