



HEAVENLY HAWAII

RENOWN FOR ITS SURFING, HONEYMOONERS AND *HAWAII FIVE-O*, YOU MAY THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING HAWAII HAS TO OFFER. TONI KRASICKI TAKES A BREAK TO ADVENTURE-RICH KAUAI FOR A STYLISH WALK ON THE QUIETER SIDE OF PARADISE.

THE HAWAIIAN ISLAND OF KAUAI

is best seen from the air, as most of the island is either inaccessible by road or privately owned; plus, it's a lot more decadent to get around in a chopper!

Island Helicopters is the only operator allowed to land at Manawaiopuna Falls, a stunning location that appeared in the blockbuster movie *Jurassic Park*. We marvel at the falls, which retains its solitude thanks to being located on private land, before Gary kicks the blades back into action.

Officially known as the 'Garden Island', locals have their own name for Kauai. As you discover chooks at every turn, you'll realise why it's colloquially referred to as 'Chicken Isle'.

Rest assured, when you glide in to the luxurious Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa on Kauai's south shore, you won't have to contend with any chickens. There are none to be spied on the well-manicured lawns, nor in the lush



tropical gardens, or on the 18-hole golf course. There certainly aren't any by the lavish lagoon and pools.

Entering the main lobby, I'm blown away by its incredible view out to the ocean. The building is open and airy, with ceilings reaching up to the heavens, allowing the sea breezes to flow through. The ocean, a pretty shade of blue, and framed by vibrant green gardens, is hard to differentiate from the manmade lagoon and pools. All this, and I haven't even checked in yet!

The resort boasts 600 rooms, but is



spacious design makes it easy to find a quiet corner to call your own. There are several restaurants and watering holes, including Stevenson's Library that is reminiscent of a Victorian-era gentleman's club, ensuring that you don't need to venture outside the property if you prefer not to.

When you do make your way out of the hotel and down to the beach, you can add a touch of indulgence to an otherwise ordinary day on the sand by hiring a Maharaja-style private beach cabana.

And when you tire of the good life on the sands, you can easily whittle away half a day in the island's largest spa, Anara Spa. Including a well-equipped fitness centre, lap pool, saunas, spas and a plethora of tempting spa treatments, relaxation, rejuvenation, hydration or detoxification are guaranteed. For a soothingly authentic Hawaiian experience, try the traditional Lomi Lomi Massage in one of the open-air thatched roof treatment rooms.

Just down the coast is Koa Kea Hotel & Resort, a much smaller property with only 121 rooms and one small pool. The understated luxury doesn't cry out 'look at me', and feels more homely, making it a favourite with members of our group. The Red Salt restaurant, the only one on site and named after the well-known Hawaiian red salt, has some of the best food and service we have experienced in Kauai. The menu offers plenty of seafood dishes, including popular local fish Mahimahi, Ahi and Ono.

In addition to its decadent digs, Kauai is also an island for thrill seekers. As well as the usual suspects – surfing, stand-up paddle boarding and snorkelling – we

MUST-DO ACTIVITIES ON KAUAI

- » **Jurassic Falls Helicopter Landing Adventure** www.islandhelicopters.com
- » **Zip N' Dip** www.princevillerranch.com
- » **Sacred Secret Falls & Wailua River Kayak** www.kayakkauai.com
- » **Waimea Canyon Cycle** www.outfitterskauai.com/waimea-canyon-bicycle-downhill.php
- » **Na'pali Coast Sea Kayak** www.seakayakkauai.com
- » **Na'pali Coast Hike**
- » **Surfing and Stand Up Paddleboard Lessons**
- » **Robert's Hawaii Movie Tour** www.robertshawaii.com/kauai/hawaiimovietour.php
- » **Backcountry Tubing Adventure** www.kauaibackcountry.com/tubing.html

MUST-DO ACTIVITIES ON KAUAI

Having a quick stop off in Honolulu?

Here are a few places you can feel a million dollars on the Island of Oahu.

- » **Eat at Morimoto Restaurant** Waikiki situated in The Modern Honolulu Hotel. Chef Masaharu Morimoto, known as the star of Iron Chef and Iron Chef America, has fused Western and Japanese ingredients to create his own signature cuisine. www.morimotowaikiki.com
- » **Take a traditional Hawaiian High Tea** at The Verandah located in the first lady of Waikiki, the 111 year old Moana Surf rider Hotel right on Waikiki Beach. High Teas are served daily between 12-3pm. www.moana-surf rider.com/dining/veranda/
- » **Enjoy a stay at The Royal Hawaiian:** Stay at a Luxury Collection Resort, and wrap yourself in the pink surrounds that still scream 'indulgence' which has been going strong since it opened its doors in 1927. Choose from one of four prestige suites or a suite in the historic wing. At sunset sip on a Mai Tai at the legendary Mai Tai bar and rub shoulders with the rich and famous. www.royal-hawaiian.com
- » **Walk in the footsteps of the Hawaii Five-O cast and crew at the Hilton Hawaiian Village** that has featured in several episodes of the show. Amble past the pink flamingoes and get in the spirit of Hawaii with a special *Hawaii Five-O* or 'Book 'Em Danno' cocktail at any one of the myriad bars on the gigantic property.



go Zip Lining (aka 'flying fox'!) across a lush cattle ranch. And not for the faint-hearted or seasick prone is the mighty Na'Pali coast kayak that'll have you marvelling at the famous cliffs from the water and using some serious muscle power to paddle the 35km journey.

Back in the air, our helicopter tour reaches its grand finale at Mt Wiaaleale Crater – the geographical heart of the island. We hover just below a shroud of mist and watch waterfalls cascade down lush fern-covered cliffs as the sounds of Enya flood through our headsets. Providing a suitably cinematic ending to our tour of this movie-star island, the chopper breaks out of the mist and into blue sky as we turn for home to the strains of legendary Hawaiian musician Israel 'IZ' Kamakawiwo'ole's beautiful rendition of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.

Qantas has three direct flights a week from Sydney to Honolulu. Return prices start from \$1,479 to Honolulu and \$1,529 to Kauai, plus taxes and charges. Find out more at www.qantas.com



TONI KRASICKI has 22 years' experience in the fitness industry and has been lugging her backpack to many corners of the world for just as long. She is a freelance writer and can be contacted at tkrasicki@hotmail.com or visit www.adventuregirlwrites.com