



In Every Way, a Maui Vacation Is a Family-Bonding Experience

Not all vacations bring families closer together. Sometimes the kids are going one way and the older folks another. A true family vacation should be bonding – time spent together, time that everyone enjoys, a time of shared adventures that turn into family stories told again and again in the years to come.

There's something about Maui that really works for bringing a family closer together. It begins with sunrise in a warm, crystal-clear sky. The climate and natural beauty suggest that it's time to slow down. There's no hurry to "get somewhere" – unless, perhaps, out onto the beach for an early morning swim or stroll.

Beach sand is a great equalizer; it pleases infants as much as the elderly. A quiet beach becomes a place for conversations, or maybe just for "hanging out." Slowing down the business of daily life often allows people the luxury of simply saying hello.

"What shall we do today?"

Car touring must be the number two family activity on Maui (after beach-going) – day trips to Haleakalā Crater, to Hāna, to Upcountry Maui, and so on. Here, Maui's small size is a big help for family bonding. None of the trips is all that long. The drive from sea level to the summit of Haleakalā, a rise over 10,000 feet, takes only an hour and a half.

The trip from Kahului to Hāna can be done in two hours (although travelers generally take longer because they keep stopping for waterfalls, scenic views, fruit stands, and so on). In other words, it's unlikely that a car trip on Maui will ever end up in the glazed-over boredom and irritation of road fatigue.

Not only that, the island of Maui has tremendous variety. The landscape is constantly shifting. A driving tour of Upcountry, for example, can include something for everyone in just a few hours' time – the beach scene in Pā'ia; the boutiques and galleries of Makawao; a botanical garden or lavender shop in Kula; the cowboy life at 'Ulupalakua ranch and the wine-tasting room and lovely lawns at Tedeschi Vineyards. How about a horseback or ATV or zipline ride? Did we leave anybody out?

For some families, physical challenge is the way to go. Hikers love the trek in and out of Haleakalā Crater, with its strange landscapes and natural curiosities. People "do the crater" as a vigorous day hike or even with an overnight stay in a



cabin or campground. Families learn to scuba-dive together on Maui, and complete the course with an unforgettable experience in underwater “cathedrals” on the backside of Lāna‘i. If brothers want to head out together and explore a wild coastline by kayak, or if a mother and daughter want to paraglide together off the high slopes of East Maui, or if three generations want to snorkel together with the sea turtles, this island is the place.

But Maui doesn’t exclude the family members who may not feel ready to strap on hiking boots or swim fins. For example, a helicopter takes the whole family farther than feet dare go. Then there’s the Maui Ocean Center’s state-of-the-art aquarium, which lets the whole family experience the scuba-divers’ world from the comfort of shore, and learn about it, too. If you’re lucky, you might even see coral spawning, a rare site even for those who do venture into the watery depths.

Learning itself can add to the sense of family closeness – the sense that everyone has discovered something new together. Maui has lots of ways to learn. Consider Maui Tropical Plantation, the 60-acre working farm set up with a tram, displays, and demonstrations about fruit crops and flowers that one never sees growing in temperate climates. Consider the option of taking classes either at the Kapalua Art School or at Hui No‘eau Visual Arts Center in Makawao.

What about learning to play golf, or sharpening up your tennis game, or exploring the historic old streets of Lāhaina? Consider taking the ferry, or else the 20-minute hop by plane, to the little island of Lāna‘i with lovely Hulopoe Bay. Or else hop for the day to Moloka‘i and go mountain biking or touring, and get back in time for the astounding nightly sunset show over the channel you have just crossed.

In the evening, the family shares other kinds of experience – a meal together (Maui has cuisine for every pocketbook and tastes) and then a show, a performance of some kind, perhaps a moonlight walk on the beach.

Time together. It’s a precious gift for most families. Of all the things Maui offers that make it the perfect family destination, this one is the most important of all.