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Kauai high

On a family vacation, sun, swim, and zoom above the jungle

BY KATIE TAMONY

My idea of adventure in Hawaii is renting a convertible or lolling in a chaise longue. Taking short hikes along the beach is also acceptable. Helicopter tours? Kayaking? These are beyond my comfort zone. So how did I end up ziplining over a 150-foot-deep ravine on Kauai?

Ziplining is 2006's hottest activity for adrenaline-seeking travelers. It combines the thrill of soaring through the air with the aesthetic pleasures of a bird's-eye view. It does not involve, say, lounge chairs.

But my husband, Patrick, and I were facing the challenge of a vacation with teenagers. Parents are always looking for ways to bond with their children, but those can get hard to find as kids develop their own interests. We thought Kauai would cater to adventurous souls like our 13-year-old, Caitlin, and to leisure lovers like me and our other daughter, 15-year-old Sara. ▶ 58



Zip drive: A daring rider zooms 150 feet above the jungle at Princeville Ranch.

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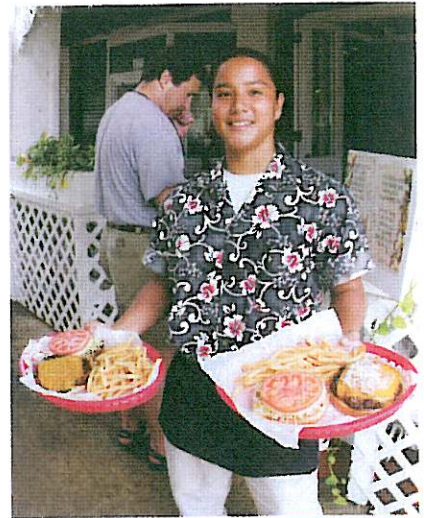


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TRAVEL | TAKE THE TEENS

Kauai pleasures: lunch at Poipu Tropical Burgers; Spouting Horn.



Kauai visitors tend to be loyal either to the north, which includes the lush region around Hanalei and Princeville, or to the drier, sunnier south, around Po'ipu Beach Park. We chose Po'ipu because I had long fantasized about splurging on the Grand Hyatt Resort there.

With its palms and pools, the Grand Hyatt is a successful tropical fantasy, and the girls both gave it a thumbs-up. They loved the amusement park scale of the pools. The beach in front of the hotel is a little rough for swimming, but we enjoyed combing the lava rock for crabs and pieces of coral. For snorkeling and swimming, we could head to Po'ipu Beach Park, just down the road.

No trip with teenage daughters is complete without shopping expeditions. By day three, we were on the hunt. They found swimsuits at Poipu Shopping Village, and bargain souvenirs for friends at the Whalers General Store. Our favorite discovery was Spouting Horn, which sends up spectacular sprays of surf as vendors sell jewelry nearby (we found good prices on earrings).

Still, by day five of our week's vacation spent swimming, shopping, eating, and lounging, even I was ready for something away from Po'ipu. The concierge at the hotel gave me the brochure for a zipline adventure at Princeville Ranch on the north shore. Caitlin, of course, was enthusiastic. Sara, of course, was not. Inspired by my younger daughter, I was game.

When Caitlin and I checked in for the Zip Express, we met our nine fellow, nervous zip adventurers, all first-timers. There were honeymooning couples and another family with a teen. Our affable guides



appeared: Kimo, who had grown up in Hanalei, and Susanna, from Vermont, who worked as a part-time guide to stay in shape. We loaded onto trucks for a 15-minute trip out to the ranch.

Our first zipline was the "bunny slope, only 25 feet above the ground," as Kimo said, to get us all acquainted with the feeling of gliding down the cable. He showed us how to put on a harness and a lightweight helmet, and demonstrated how he would clip the harness to the cable suspended over the ravine. Then each of us was supposed to walk along a platform, slowly, until our feet dangled and our weight did the rest of the work to carry us off to the other side of the valley, about 200 feet away.

Kimo told us the only rule was



The Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa lies on the island's south coast, in Po'ipu.

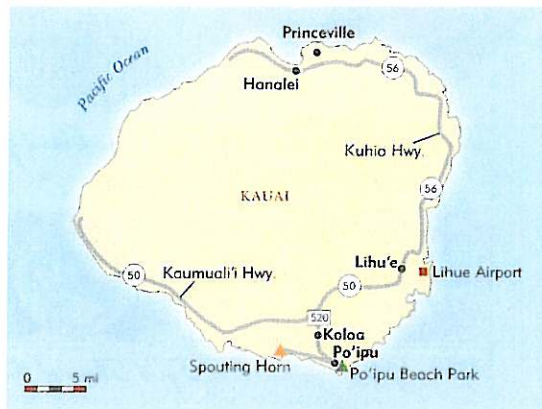
don't hang upside down—as if any of us would try it. When they asked for a volunteer to go first, my daughter raised her hand fast. I watched her calmly step off the platform and sail easily to the other side. Then it was my turn. With Caitlin watching me, I walked out on the platform as nonchalantly as possible. I felt the cable tighten and then I was gliding forward, suddenly suspended in the air. Although I was scared, the feeling was exhilarating. In seconds I reached the end of the zip, then I scrambled up the other side of the ravine. I wanted to do it again.

The zip course has eight lines in all, and each one is progressively more challenging. The longest is 740 feet, which gives you plenty of time to look down at the dense jungle canopy 150 feet below you.

By the end of our three hours, Caitlin and I were pros, taking one hand off the cable and even tucking into a ball to go faster.

That afternoon, we recounted our adventure together for Patrick and Sara. I was proud to hear Caitlin tell her sister: "Mom was actually pretty good."

Something new, something to remember, something we could do together: Now that's my kind of adventure. ✨



Kauai highlights

Kauai is typically wetter than the other Islands overall, but the south shore is usually drier than the north. For general information, contact the Kauai Visitors Bureau (www.kauaidiscovery.com or 800/262-1400).

Lodging

Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa. A fantasy vacation hotel. Many guests never even venture out to the rest of the island. Spacious rooms; six restaurants. 602 rooms and suites from \$455 (many special rates available). 1571 Po'ipu Rd., Po'ipu; www.grandhyattkauai.com or 800/554-9288.

Poipu Kapili. Intimate, oceanfront property near the Sheraton Kauai Resort. Pretty pool area. 60 condos from \$220 (five-night minimum). 2221 Kapili Rd., Koloa; www.poipukapili.com or 800/443-7714.

Dining

The Beach House Restaurant. Make reservations here as soon as you arrive on the island. Spectacular views, outstanding fresh

fish. \$\$\$\$; dinner daily. 5022 Lawa'i Rd., Koloa; 808/742-1424.

Plantation Gardens. Ask to sit on the veranda. Good mix of seafood and steak. \$\$\$; dinner daily. At Kiahuna Plantation Resort, 2253 Po'ipu Rd., Koloa; 808/742-2121.

Poipu Tropical Burgers. Extensive, please-everyone burger menu. \$; breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. At rear of Poipu Shopping Village, 2360 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Koloa; 808/742-1808.

Attractions

Princeville Ranch Adventures. Zipline tours. Choose the Zip n' Dip (4 1/2 hours; \$125), which includes a picnic lunch and swim, or the Zip Express (3 hours; \$110). Must be 12 years or older and 80 to 280 pounds. On Kuhio Hwy. (State 56), just past milepost 27, Princeville; www.adventureskauai.com or 888/955-7669.

Spouting Horn. Watch as the tide rolls in and blasts dramatic geysers into the air, and listen for the moaning sound that sometimes accompanies them. Nearby vendor stalls are open from 10 to about 4 daily. On Lawa'i Rd., just west of the National Tropical Botanical Garden's Allerton and McBryde gardens.

LEFT: TODD BIGELOW/AURORA PHOTOS