

The Big Island: So Much Space You Can Find Yourself

By RUTH & RICH CARLSON
talkintravel.com

After you've seen eye to eye with elephants in the South African bush, hiked 400 steps in Hong Kong to meditate at the feet of the largest sitting Buddha in the world, and last Christmas you wore a bikini on Bondi Beach, Australia—what's left?

The Big Island of Hawaii wants to help you find the most exotic destination of them all—your inner being. You can find the "big five" all over Hawaii—scuba diving, sailing, surfing, snorkeling and sunbathing—but the Big Island specializes in the sixth "S," spirituality.

For the first time, native Hawaiians are sharing their ancient arts of health and wellness, which were previously closely guarded within their families. "We're at a critical time in history," says Dan Akaka, the Cultural Advisor for the Mauna Lani Resort. "People need healing and we're slowly losing some of our ancient wisdom."

Filling the Space

Most mainlanders don't even know where the Big Island is or they think it's Honolulu. The Visitors Bureau admits the island is suffering an identity crisis and they've considered changing the name back to its original moniker, Hawaii, but fear that would confuse tourists even more. Movie stars like George Clooney, Goldie Hawn and Matthew McConaughey don't care what it's called. They know it's the place to find peace of mind. Harrison Ford reportedly stayed at The Palms Cliff House while filming "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" scenes in the rainforests of East Hawaii's Puna District.

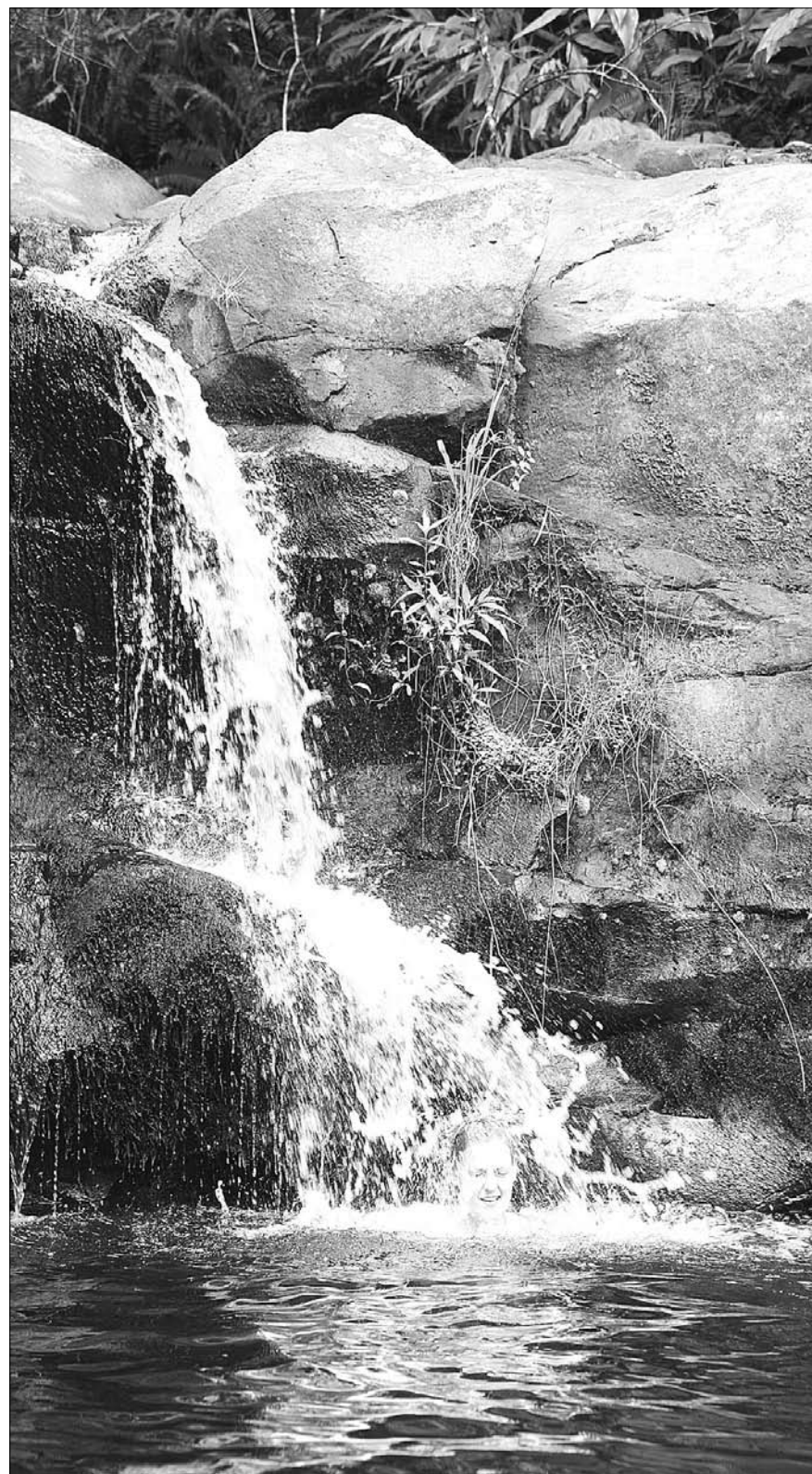
Because of all the space, (hence the name Big Island), you don't have to worry about traffic jams, finding an empty chaise lounge on the sand, or things to do like hiking to lava caves, volcanoes and waterfalls. There's a reason its nickname is the Island of Adventure. Here are some tips on how to exercise your body as well as your soul.

A Spiritual Cleanse

While Catholics have confession, in Hawaiian water culture, the sea is the place to renew your life. Mr. Akaka often performs a hiuwai (spiritual purifying ceremony) in the surf. Typically held at sunrise to symbolize renewal, he blows a conch shell in the direction of the four winds to remove evil spirits before leading people into the ocean. It's worth getting up early to feel the crisp clean water washing away your mistakes and envisioning a future as bright as the fuchsia sky. Afterwards, Mr. Akaka "talks story"—shares his culture.

Take a Hike

There's no better place to begin a new life than the elegantly casual Four Seasons Resort Hualalai. The staff is so attentive my friend said, "They'll blow your nose for you if you sneeze." It's the only hotel with a special arrangement that allows tourists to hike into a remote lava tube. Olympic champion Oliver



A small waterfall, like this one in the Kohala countryside, helps ease tension at the Spa Without Walls, where you can get a "loving hands" massage. RICH CARLSON

Fix leads guests on a three-hour Hualalai hike up to Puhiapele, a 200-year-old crater with a vast view of lava rock. The adventure ends with hikers attaching a lamp to their forehead and walking inside a rocky, pitch-dark tube created by volcanic explosions. Ancestors of lava tube inhabitants claim it gives them superior eyesight.

Unleash Your Inner Strength at the Spa Without Walls

Hawaiian legend says everyone has mana (power) within and the Lomilomi massage is designed to help release that energy. This Hawaiian tradition of "loving hands," is passed down through generations. At the Fairmont Orchid Hotel, masseurs use their forearms and hands to glide rhythmically along your body, easing tensions you didn't know existed. Request to have your massage in one of the outdoor bamboo huts where all your senses are engaged. You can feel the wind softly caress your body, hear the flowing

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waterfall, smell hibiscus blossoms, watch orange koi fish swim under your massage table and sip an umbrella drink.

Later that evening, learn about astronomy from a new, free star gazing class that explains how the ancient Polynesians used the skies to navigate from Hawaii to New Zealand in canoes.

Get Your Head Examined

Hawaiian Healer Keahi Hanakahi has the gift of reading minds



ISLAND BREEZES: Palm trees sway in the inviting tropical breezes that caress the Big Island. RICH CARLSON

called "a pono Hawaiian modality." After placing his hands on your head he gives you guidance on how to move forward in life. Whole Soul Travel can arrange visits with Mr. Hanakahi and other spiritual leaders on private property you'd usually never get to visit. This house without windows in Laupahoehoe is located on tropical acreage under a waterfall. You can also stay overnight there for only \$150! Email: ronna@warmlava.com for more information.

Adopt a Pet Rock During Your Stay

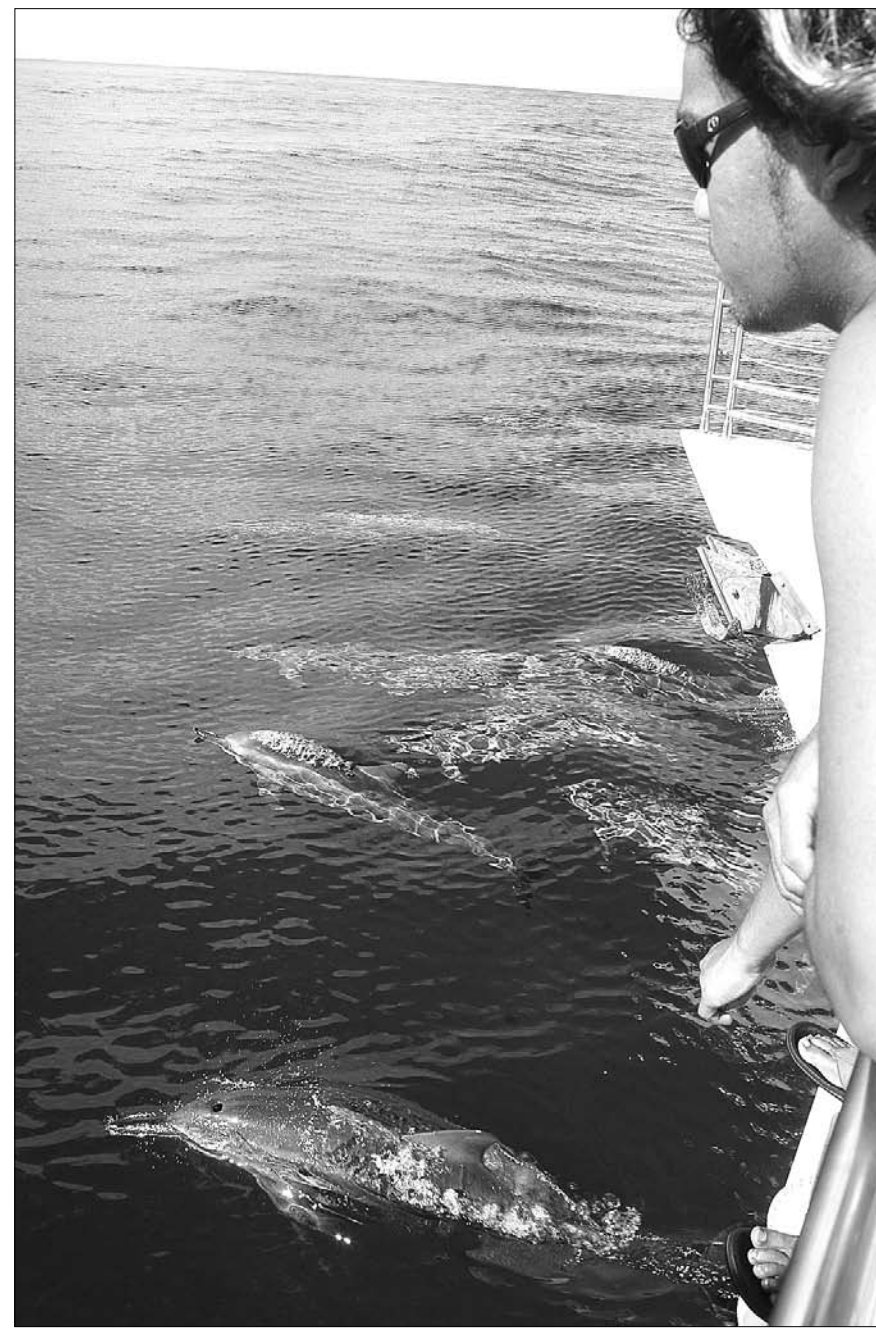
Pet rocks have been out of fashion for decades but Jeanne Sunderland is making them popular again. Her new Ahu Pohaku Ho'omaluhia resort, which just opened, has only eight guestrooms on 60 acres with a striking rock formation. Legend has it these are ancient council rocks where King Kamehameha and his Court made important decisions. Built like the bow of a ship, this eco-lodge overlooks a beach cove and all the beds have wheels in case you decide to sleep on your deck.

The resort has a natural hula stage and a path to a secluded beach and outdoor spa treatments. But you won't find TVs, phones or Internet access in your rooms, making it easier to commune with the rocks.

Visit Pele's Palace

Jimmy Buffet sings, "I don't know where I'm a-gonna go when the volcano blows," but the Big Island recommends you travel straight to the source. The state's most popular attraction is the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park where the Kilauea Caldera has been belching liquid fire for 25 years.

This year the volcano sent dramatic smoke signals from a new vent in the Halemaumau Crater increasing sulfur dioxide in the air and creating volcanic smog, or "vog," which caused the park to be closed several times. This new, large puka, or opening, consistently emits a magnificent plume of fluffy white steam and glows a fiery red after sunset.



OCEAN FRIENDS: During whale watching excursions offered at the Kona Village Resort, you can get plenty of glimpses of playful dolphins, too. RICH CARLSON



ISLAND BEAUTY: Local flora like this tropical ginger plant are a wild beauty to behold. RICH CARLSON

The best way to experience the volcano is with a local. Dane Silva, a kumu (meaning he has formal training in Hawaiian spirituality and culture) leads groups to a sacred site within the park called Uwekahuna Pali. Silva recommends that visitors bring a gift, such as flowers, to appease Pele, the volcano goddess who, according to Hawaiian mythology, has a fierce temper and a luckless love life. Silva's colleague, Kamaluhia Wooley, performs special hula dances on her knees to ask Pele's permission for guests to walk in the goddess' backyard.

Commune With Whales

The Kona Village Resort offers whale-watching excursions on rib craft boats for small groups. Thanks to sonar devices, skippers can spot how close these monstrous mammals are and reach them in record time. If you're lucky you'll see pods of whales, spinning dolphins and huge green sea turtles all in the same ride. Just be sure your hat has a chinstrap or you'll lose it during the high-speed journey. After your adventure, share your tales at the resort's Shipwreck bar.

Indulge in Retail Therapy

Don't feel selfish shopping—you can still experience Hawaiian culture while spending money and you're helping the local economy at the same time.

The Farmers' Market is held in historic downtown Hilo every Wednesday through Saturday all year long, "from dawn till it's gone," as it says on the website (www.hilofarmersmarket.com). Over 200 local farmers sell their tropical fruits, vegetables, and flowers in a festive outdoor setting similar to the bygone era of sugarcane plantations.

A new spa line called Ola only uses organic fruits, flowers, and honey from the Farmers' Market. Try the volcanic foot scrub, coconut lemongrass sugar cane body scrub, or the tropical smoothie mist.

If you visit Hana Hou in

downtown Hilo, you'll be sure to return—the name means "encore!" Owner Michele Zane-Faridi uses vintage fabrics some with pictures of 1940s postcards to create silk skirts and tops. Just down the street, her relative Sig Zane has developed an international following for his stylish Hawaiian-print dresses.

Closer to the resorts, the new Mauna Lani mall features boutiques selling unique artwork, clothing and jewelry as well as popular mainland stores like Tommy Bahama. This is one of the few stores in the chain with a restaurant and, after you shop till you drop, the crab bisque or coconut shrimp are designed to perk you up...or could it be the umbrella drinks?

Walk With Royalty

The Hilton Hotel's Waikoloa Village has restored the Kings Road, a dirt trail enclosed by a small rock wall. Markers along the way point out historical sites, including ancient petroglyphs. The free walk has the ocean on one side and a golf course on the other. Originally the path was used by Hawaiian royalty to send messengers to pick up fresh fish. Today the contrast between the black lava rock and lush green fairways is striking. Locals claim you can see the ghosts of warriors and royalty walking the trail after dark.

Swim With Dolphins

The Hilton Hotel's Dolphin Quest attraction recently won the Hawaii Green Business Award for preserving natural resources. Dolphin Quest educates visitors about conservation, but you have so much fun petting the docile mammals and thrilling to them swimming under your floating body you don't even realize you're in class. Afterward, walk or take a free boat ride to Donatoni's Italian restaurant. Try for a seat on the lanai so you can get close to the strolling hula dancers and fire breathers, who may ask you to participate.

Now is the time to visit Hawaii's Big Island. Although ATA and Aloha airlines have closed, other carriers are picking up the slack and hotels are offering special deals to lure you to paradise. The airline industry's bad news is good news for visitors who want to experience paradise without the crowds. Finding peace of mind is a lot easier when you have the beach to yourself. What are you waiting for? Aloha!

For More Information

- www.bigisland.org
- www.maunalani.com
- www.palmscliffhouse.com
- www.fourseasons.com/hualalai
- www.fairmont.com/orchid
- www.wellnesstravelhawaii.com
- www.hawaii-island-retreat.com
- www.konavillage.com
- www.hawaiianbodyproducts.com
- www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com

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Quiz #181



SWARM OF B'S: The names of 18 nations begin with "B."

- Name the two "B" nations that have more than 150 million people, placing them among the world's top 10 (all the other "B" nations have fewer than 11 million).
- Name at least two "B" nation located in each of North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Read The Epoch Times next week for the answer!

Answer for Quiz #180

WHAT COUNTRY AM I? The name of my capital means "Good Air." The capital is located on the Rio de la Plata and is the third largest urban area on the continent. My physical features include Pampas, Patagonia, and Gran Chaco. Many of my people originally came from Italy, Germany, and Spain. I went to war with the United Kingdom in 1982 over the nearby Falkland Islands, but they remain British today. I am ARGENTINA.

Have an adventure to share?
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Sudoku

Fill in the boxes using numbers between 1 and 9 so that each column, each row, and each 3x3 square contain all nine numbers only once.

4					7	6		
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This week's solution