

Catching the Big One in O'ahu

Story and Photos by Koz Mraz

I don't surf, never have. Don't get me wrong, I love the beach (except for all that water and sand). My friends who do surf tell me there's nothing like it, riding that perfect wave, just you and nature one with ocean and wind and I'm sure they are right, it looks absolutely amazing...except for all that water and sand. I ride chrome and concrete and a visit to Oahu means planning a road trip.

Landing on the island of O'ahu is awesome. As Pearl Harbor comes into view a momentary flash of impending peril prevails, evoking images of Kamikaze pilots descending on a sleeping Navy below. That silent moment gives way to excitement as Diamond Head appears.



The "Big One" Harley-Davidson Electra

Home base was the Royal Hawaiian in Waikiki, the second oldest hotel on the island (and the only pink one). I was surprised how few rooms actually view the ocean; in fact, the entire hotel faces the Ko'olau Mountains. When it was constructed in the 1920's the only transportation to Hawaii was of course by boat and after a five-day cruise the last thing tourists wanted to see was the ocean.

After settling in, I picked up my "Big One" an Electra Glide Standard from Cruzin Hawaii Motorcycle Rentals. With a fleet of Harleys and Metric cruisers, they have all your riding desires covered and are very understanding and flexible with rider's needs and schedules.



A view from the top of Hanauma Bay

I decided to take a day leisurely Cruizing the circumference of O’ahu. Leaving from the Royal Hawaiian in Waikiki, I cruised Diamond Head Road (which becomes Kahala Ave) and leads to Route 72 (Kalanianole Hwy). This two-lane road skirts the south east tip of the island and takes you past Hanauma Bay, a spectacular sight of an ancient crater that’s filled with sea life. Continuing north you

traverse the 61 (Pali Highway) briefly then connect to the 83 (Kamehameha Highway).

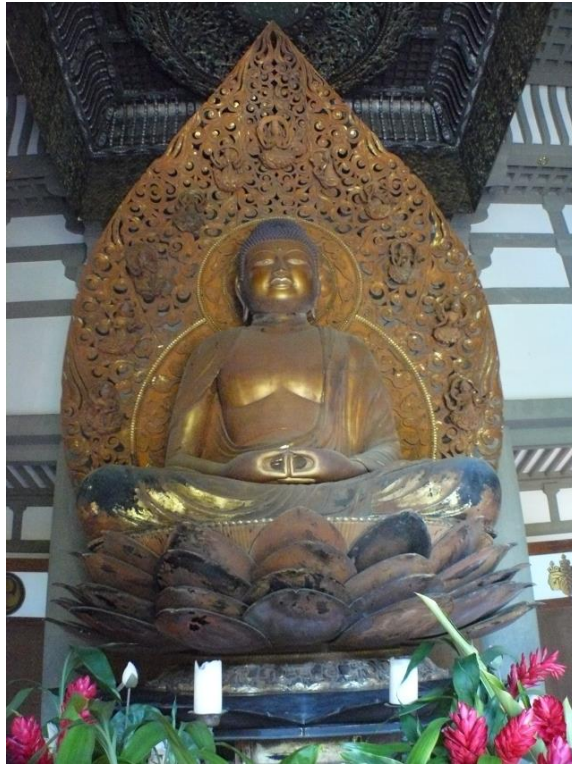
I learned few islanders know these roads by number, they call them by name. A slight detour on the Kahakili (83) takes you to the Valley of the Temples and The Byodo-In Temple. This is a replica of a 900-year-old Buddhist temple that houses a nine-foot Lotus Buddha covered in gold and lacquer. Outside is a three-ton, brass peace bell (which I rang, far too loudly because staffers came out to reprimand me). Surrounding the temple are large koi ponds set against a backdrop of the towering cliffs of the Ko'olau Mountains.



The temple grounds



bang a Gong



Nine-foot Buddha statue

Continuing north-on 83, Kamehameha Hwy, you pass through Kaneohe and are treated to a twisty back road with Kaneohe Bay on your right taking you through sleepy little villages along the windward coast. These little villages are dotted with roadside fresh produce and flower stands as well as a macadamia nut farm outlet operated by Hawaiian locals. This is a very special part of the ride. Every view is spectacular and parts of the highway almost literally dip into the ocean. I passed on visiting Turtle Bay Resort, famous for giant sea turtles (Honu), and just followed the coast to one of the many seemingly remote beaches. Cruzin Hawaii informed me that most beaches have these Honu just basking in the sun, undisturbed by busloads of tourists. And that they did.



Stopping for lunch in Hale'iwa at the Grass Skirt Grill, a massive grilled Ahi burger with homemade sesame mayo awaits; caught and cooked that day... it was delectable. Taking a stroll around Hale'iwa, I discovered what the North Shore is all about.

Motorcycling is truly the way to experience O'ahu. The temperature is just perfect; during the peak of afternoon temperatures riding keeps you cool because the humidity virtually evaporates in the breeze. Being submersed in the sights and smells of this tropical island paradise via two wheels is exactly how to experience its beauty. Traveling at Hawaiian Time, your average posted speed limit is 35 miles an hour on most of these roads; so, relax and enjoy the views and ride. Electra purred along wonderfully, whether Cruzin the coast, the mountains or the highway; Harley Davidson got it right.

As you weave down Kamehameha Hwy it connects to Rt. 930 (Farrington Hwy) and you pass through rich farming communities and little town's time has forgotten. Approaching the last mile of paved road is Dillingham Air Field offering sky diving or rides in a glider, bi-plane or a WWII trainer that follows the bombing run Japanese planes used in their attack of Pearl Harbor. Just beyond the airfield is Kaena Point and the Edge of the World. This is the end of the road and is the location of a hidden nude beach.

Hawaii is considered the most remote populated landmass in the world, meaning it is farther away from any other significant landmass than anywhere else on Earth.



Kaena Point, Oahu's Edge of the World

Doubling back connects you to the 803 (Kaukonahua Rd.) then to Kamehameha Hwy towards Honolulu. You will pass the Dole plantation, another tourist trap boasting the world's largest maze, tours and attractions. Unfortunately, commercial pineapple for canning is no longer grown in the Hawaiian Islands; it's cheaper to purchase pineapples from Costa Rica. Open fields and plantations dot central Oahu where tropical rains occur almost daily. (I got seriously doused and it felt great.) Finally merging onto H1 back towards Honolulu I took Pali Highway east to Pali Lookout. A short ride through the rainforest and was treated to a spectacular view of

the area. The Nu'uaniu Pali Lookout overlooks 985-foot cliffs of the Ko'olau Mountain range and is one of the best vistas on O'ahu. It was here in 1795 that King Kamehameha and his warriors defeated the O'ahu armies by sending them over these steep, forested cliffs. This was the final battle that united the Hawaiian Islands.



Kane'ohe Marine Base (as seen from Pali Lookout)

My entire day trip was only 162 miles but circling O'ahu and my stops took about eight hours. No helmets are required in the state but are free with your rental. Just remember its Hawaiian time so you want to embrace the scenery with a leisurely pace. It's a truly fantastic day of travel, through incredibly beautiful and diverse terrain.

Mt. Tantalus Drive & Manoa falls

8 Mile Riding Loop -1 Hour riding time **Manoa Falls** - Hike Time - 2 hours each way.



Tantalus Drive is a fun run through tropical rainforest twisties with great views. Most of the turns are posted at 10 mph and they mean it so make sure you're comfortable rolling through these babies on your Electra Glide with passenger.



A Honolulu view from Tantalus Road

Nearby is Manoa Falls is a relatively unknown corner of O'ahu. The Valley of Manoa holds a towering pristine waterfall and is one of the best wilderness rain forest experiences on the island. Manoa Valley also shelters an arboretum and Chinese graveyard where food is left for the departed. Be prepared for some serious hiking!

The total population for all eight islands is about a million two and over nine hundred thousand living on O'ahu. Add another four million visitors yearly and you get all of the associated tourist trappings. Waikiki is a blend of Rodeo Drive and Venice Beach with street vendors. When motorcycling O'ahu, get out of Honolulu and you'll find the two-lane roads are uncrowded and well maintained. Riding O'ahu's circumference is as big as it gets. Add the Tantalus drive and I put a total of 190 miles on my big Electra. The island really is a riding paradise and best seen from the seat of a motorcycle. Beautiful vistas abound in every direction and it's everything you expect from a trip to paradise... despite all that water and sand.



Beautiful views abound



Listen to more stories at KOZMOTO.com