



Travel & NW Escapes

Tales from the Trail: A Lew Clark-style trek across the Great requires red meat – and Kansas historically a stockyard center, de Pa

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SPECIAL HAWAII ISSUE

TRAVEL E



ABOVE: Cradling an ancient rock, Lawrence Aki keeps Molokai's oral history alive. The rock, discovered by early settlers, figured in fertility ceremonies 1,500 years ago.

RIGHT: Father Damien's well-preserved St. Philomena Church at Kalawao enjoys an inspirational setting; nearby, the world's tallest sea cliffs plunge into the Pacific.

Photos by
TERRY RICHARD
THE OREGONIAN

SHEER INSPIRATION



*With soaring
sea cliffs and
a history of
horror and
compassion,
Molokai is
a place apart*

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Tales from the Trail: A Lewis and Clark-style trek across the Great Plains requires red meat — and Kansas City, historically a stockyard center, delivers.

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INSPIRATION



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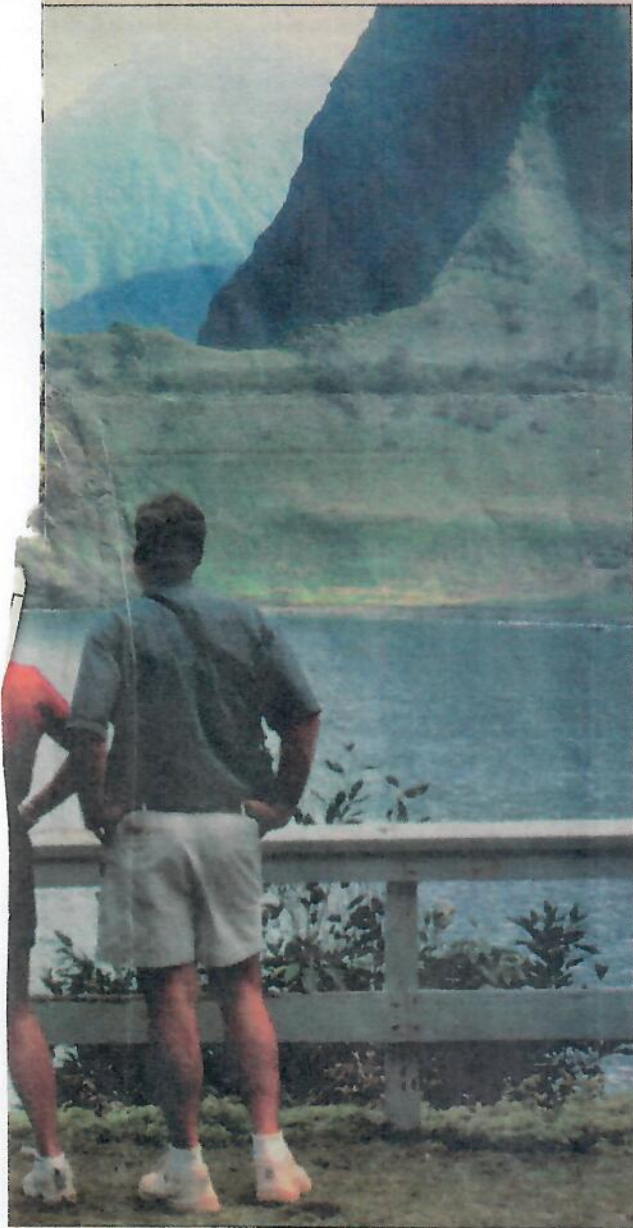
By **TERRY RICHARD**
THE OREGONIAN

The cliffs that confined the lepers to a small peninsula on Hawaii's Molokai Island are formidable to this day.

As I hiked the trail up the cliffs on a muggy afternoon, my thoughts turned to a famous bumper sticker — a saying that means someone would rather be doing anything instead of the routine of daily life.

"I'd rather be riding a mule on Molokai," I repeated in my head, over and over, quoting a bumper sticker that must have been concocted by someone stuck in traffic on Interstate 5 back on the mainland.

But in my case, I really would rather have been riding a mule on Molokai. The day's mule string had left a few minutes after me, but it quickly passed me and must be depositing riders at their cars by now.



ill peninsula on Molokai Island.

Me? I was struggling up the three-mile, 1,700-foot-high path, mud clinging to my boots at every step. I worried about tripping and falling to the Pacific Ocean below. Sweat poured off my brow, fogging my glasses so I could barely see.

I was in no hurry, so I paused at one of the trail's 26 switchbacks. I sat on a muddy rock, reflecting on what I had just seen during a guided tour of Molokai's famous leper colony on the Kalaupapa Peninsula . . . one of the most hauntingly beautiful and strangely inspiring places on Earth.

Leper colony story

When leprosy arrived in the Hawaiian islands in the mid-1800s, King Kamehameha V didn't know what to do. Hawaiians were a beautiful, healthy people, isolated by thousands of miles of ocean from the world's diseases.

Leprosy is a disorder of the nerves, eyes and skin that causes gross disfigurement and loss of body parts. It later was named Hansen's disease, for the scientist who discovered that it was infectious, not hereditary.

The Hawaiian solution was to isolate the patients by tearing them from their families and casting them off ships to swim for shore on the Kalaupapa Peninsula, a flat outcrop isolated from the rest of Molokai by cliffs nearly 4,000-foot high.

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THE HONOLULU STARBUCK

The Starbuck
Hawaii

Molokai: Mail a souvenir coconut

Continued from Page T1

As the colony's population grew, word of the horrible suffering spread beyond the islands. The plight of the lepers attracted several remarkable people, including Father Damien of Belgium, who lived 16 years in the colony, eventually contracting the disease and dying from it; Mother Marianne of New York, who spent 30 years in Molokai; and Brother Dutton of Vermont, who worked among the patients for 44 years.

Their stories unfold today in tours given by Richard Marks, a colony resident and operator of Father Damien Tours.

Kalaupapa continues to be managed as a residential center for those with Hansen's disease, which has been controlled by drugs since 1946. Colony residents have been allowed to leave since 1969. The 42 who have chosen to stay can remain until they die. The youngest resident is 56.

The colony is managed jointly by the Hawaii Department of Health and the U.S. National Park Service, which became a partner in 1980 when Congress created the Kalaupapa National Historical Park.

Visitors arrive on foot or by mule, via the trail, or on short flights from Honolulu or Maui. To protect the privacy of the residents, visitors must join an escorted tour. No one under 16 is permitted.

The three-hour tour begins at the well-manicured Kalaupapa village, a self-contained outpost that receives most of its supplies via twice-annual barge shipments from Honolulu. Like other towns, it has a grocery store, post office, fire department and hospital. The village has no need for a school because of the age of its residents, but the library is a busy place.

From the center of the village, an old school bus takes tour groups on a five-mile drive across the peninsula to the abandoned town of Kalawao. This is where the sick landed, where Father Damien worked to enlarge the well-preserved St. Philomena Church and where the Roman Catholic priest was buried in 1889.

East of the church, the world's tallest sea cliffs plunge into the blue Pacific. The inspirational setting helps visitors look past the horrors of the disease to the care and effort that went into conquering it.



TERRY RICHARD/THE OREGONIAN

Eddie Maderos takes delivery of a green sea turtle off Molokai during a scientific catch-and-release roundup.

The Friendly Isle

The story of Father Damien and the colony will forever be associated with Molokai, but it's only a small part of Hawaii's fifth-largest island. Isolated on the central north shore, the Kalaupapa Peninsula makes up less than 5 percent of an island that is sought out by tourists who want a Hawaiian experience long since lost on the larger islands.

Nicknamed the Friendly Isle, Molokai has 7,000 residents who live mostly in native Hawaiian housing tracts in the center of the 38-mile long, 10-mile wide island.

The island's east end is lined by rugged mountains, with a beautiful oceanfront road snaking its way along the southeast shore. The west end is mostly open grasslands of 55,000-acre Molokai Ranch, punctuated by some beautiful beaches. Two-mile-long Papohaku, the state's longest sand beach, is 22 miles across Kaiwi Channel from the twinkling lights of Oahu.

On the central south shore, the only town of any size is Kaunakakai (pronounced KOW-na-ka-kai), one of the most laid-back towns in

America. The business district is three blocks long with no traffic lights. Waiting behind two cars at a stop sign takes on the feel of a traffic jam.

Molokai is one place you won't find a one-hour photo store, or other trappings of the modern American economy. Most commerce comes and goes by barge, with visitors arriving by ferry from Maui or by air from Honolulu or Maui.

Despite its splendid isolation, Kaunakakai has a good school system, whose students took delight last winter at the return visit of a former student during his appearance in football's Pro Bowl in Honolulu. The town has a hospital, high-speed Internet service, an art gallery, nine restaurants and lots of residents who went to college on the mainland before deciding they would rather be riding a mule on Molokai.

Near Kaunakakai, visitors stay at the Polynesian-style Hotel Molokai, a collection of oceanfront bungalows two miles east of town, or at a number of B&Bs and vacation rentals.

The upscale Sheraton Molokai Lodge, in the west highlands of Molokai Ranch, is the main component of the former plantation town of Maunaloa. The hotel also has a Beach Village, with oceanfront bungalows on a private beach.

The condo resorts at Kaluakoi on the northwest tip were planned as a virtual bedroom community for Oahu. Some are well cared for and remain popular, but the bankrupt main property leaves a depressing picture with its weed-choked sidewalks. Nine holes of the golf course have been reclaimed by dense Hawaiian vegetation.

I spent my week on Molokai camping at Papohaku Beach county park, lulled to sleep by the pounding surf and awakened by hundreds of singing birds. At \$3 a night, it was an affordable way to add a third week to a Hawaii vacation after staying in time shares on other islands.

Can visitors find enough to do during a week on Molokai? Of course, as long as they don't mind relaxing in parks, watching the ocean waves and meeting the locals.

The activity center at the Sheraton offers snorkeling, kayaking, horseback riding, guided hikes, mountain biking, whale watching and deep sea fishing. Most activities require a minimum number of participants, so it helps to go with friends to avoid the disappointment of cancellations.

The ranch's mountain bike trail system has more than 50 miles of single-track trail. Our guide for the day, Jester Candelario, said his friends are learning to enjoy mountain biking, but they still prefer free diving with a spear gun.

"There's nothing quite like the rush of shooting a 5-foot fish and having it pull you along underwater until it dies," he said. "Or to have a big shark come up and nibble on the fish you're carrying."

Instead of going spearfishing, I took in a movie across the street from the activity center on the one day of the week when it rained. With a population of 100, Maunaloa must be the smallest town in America with a modern three-screen movie theater.

During a guided cultural walk from the Sheraton, host Lawrence Aki explained how the Hawaiian islands were discovered 1,500 years ago by the Marquesans.

"They followed the kolea bird," said Aki, who learned the story from his grandmother while growing up in Molokai's Halawa Valley. The bird is a golden plover, a type of sandpiper, which never lands on water.

When the birds gathered in big flocks and flew away, the ancestral Hawaiians knew that land had to be out there somewhere. "They just didn't know how far," Aki said. "The ancients filled their canoes with provisions for 60 days. If they didn't find land after 30 days, they turned around. The next time, they would bring 120 days of rations. That's how they found land."

to mainland family or friends

If you go: Molokai

Getting there: Island Air flies to Molokai from Honolulu and Maui. The turbo prop planes are reliable on days when southwest winds cancel Hawaiian Air's jet service from Honolulu (because of a short runway). Fares start at \$66. The airport code is MKK. The Molokai Princess ferry (www.molokaiferry.com) makes one or two runs daily from Lahaina, Maui. The one-way fare is \$40.

Car rental: A car is necessary to get around. Budget and Dollar are at the airport. I tried an in-town car rental to save money but got stuck with a high-miles vehicle and a \$25 cleaning fee. Expect to pay about \$250 for an economy car for a week. Gas is selling for \$2.54 a gallon.

Lodging: The main resort is the Sheraton Molokai Lodge (rates begin at \$360) and Beach Village (rates begin at \$275), both 808-552-2741 and www.molokairanch.com. Rates begin at \$85 at Hotel Molokai, 808-553-5347, www.hotelmolokai.com. Check with the visitor association for condos, B&Bs and vacation rentals.

Kalaupapa: Father Damien Tours cost \$30 for those willing to hike the trail. Make a reservation by calling 808-567-6171, or join the mule ride tour or a charter flight tour from another island.

Information: Molokai Visitors Association, 800-800-6367, www.molokai-hawaii.com.

— Terry Richard

Another Molokai legend has a more modern foundation. It's called Post-A-Nut, the brainchild of postmistress Peggy Keahi-Leary of Hoolehua. Her post office is also the address for the island's airport, so lots of tourists go looking for the business district. But there is none — only a post office.

"With so many visitors stopping by to ask for information, I came up with a way for them to leave some money," said Keahi-Leary, who has been collecting coconuts for 10 years.

She gives the coconuts away, but it cost \$8.55 in postage to mail a 3-pound Post-A-Nut to my mother in Washington state.

Turtle roundup

The island's historic coconut grove is on Molokai's south shore, which is protected by Hawaii's largest barrier reef. The reef deflects the good surfing waves, but the sheltered waters are the safest for small boats in Hawaii.

One of the world's foremost experts in green sea turtles happened to be doing research on Molokai, so I jumped at the chance to join George Balazs of the National Marine Fisheries Service for a day on the reef.

Balazs' special interest is the *honu*, one of the most-loved animals of the islands. The gentle 4-foot green sea turtles glide through the water with the grace of a butterfly, even though adults can weigh 300 pounds.

We were joined in a small boat by three Molokai natives, who

server from the Hawaii Department of Fish and Game; a doctoral student from Australia, and a mainlander who was invited because her seat on an airplane happened to be next to the owner of the boat.

If boat owner Eddie Madieros hadn't been married, his "Want to go on a sea turtle roundup?" would have been the best pickup line on the islands.

As we left the wharf at Kaunakakai, the sun began to stain the eastern sky pink, a sure sign of another beautiful day on the Pacific.

We cruised for a half-hour to the only offshore fishing shack in Hawaii. Painted garishly pink, the open-windowed house perches on stilts in two feet of water two miles from land.

Because of the shallow water, we changed to a flat-bottom boat before heading for the turtles. The boat's crew knew the turtles would be waiting because they had put out nets the day before.

Green sea turtles are federally protected, so it requires a special permit to corral them in a net. This style of net fishing was brought to Hawaii nearly a century ago from the Philippines. Madieros and his partner, D'Artagnan Bicoy, are the last ones in Hawaii who fish this way, which is possible only in the shallow water inside Molokai's reef.

Long nylon nets extend from top to bottom in the shallow water perpendicular to shore. When a turtle or fish encounters the net, it turns and swims toward deep

lar net, the creatures swim in circles looking for a way out. Fishermen can either harvest them or release them alive.

When we arrived, the net held a dozen green sea turtles, two 5-foot sharks, numerous small fish, plus an eagle ray that the Maui Aquarium bought for \$300.

The turtle hunters donned snorkel gear and jumped into the water, being careful not to encounter the sharks. They grabbed each turtle by its shell and wrestled it aboard the boat. Back at the fishing shack, the only place around with any shade, each turtle was marked, measured and inserted with a scannable chip, like the ones used for cats and dogs, then released unharmed.

The Australian student was writing her doctoral thesis on the stomach contents of turtles. She collected samples by lubricating a plastic tube with cooking spray, placing it in a turtle's mouth and pushing it into its stomach. When water was pumped into the tube, the turtle regurgitated into a plastic bag.

The research was proceeding as planned until Madieros was whacked in the ankle by the razor-sharp barb on the tail of a trigger fish.

As the veterinarian stitched up Madieros' cut the way he would a dog, the fisheries biologist kept busy by stripping the scales off some fish with his teeth. He cut the flesh into bite-size bits, soaked them in lemon, vinegar and soy, then passed them around as a raw snack.

The snack was delicious — but only on Molokai.

Later that evening, the turtle crew gathered at the home of Fred Bicoy, the father of one of the fishermen. He put his granddaughters to work deep-frying the day's catch of fish, which fed a couple dozen extended family members throughout the evening.

Bicoy proudly pointed out two mounted turtle shells. No problem, the Honolulu turtle scientist said, the shells were taken before turtles were protected.

As the evening wound down, two preteen girls who had to go to school in the morning made the rounds to hug everyone — even visitors from the mainland — as though each was a longtime friend.

It was more proof that Molokai is different from the rest of the islands.

