

MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

Kauai's little-known deals

Visit a soap and candle factory store, buy produce at a farmers market or trek to a hard-to-reach state park. It's affordable or free.

April 26, 2009 | Jay Jones

You've spent hundreds of dollars on plane tickets and a place to stay on your trip to Kauai, the Garden Isle, where life moves a bit slower than on neighboring Oahu. That laid-back style, free of Waikiki's high rise hotels, may well be why you've chosen the oldest of the Hawaiian islands for your vacation.

Fortunately, "exotic" doesn't have to mean "expensive." There are plenty of off-the-tourist-track things to see and do on Kauai. Some will cost you a few bucks but won't break your budget; others won't cost you a dime.

For this guide to affordable attractions, I've selected some lesser-known sites, from a hangout for local musicians on the North Shore to an enticing, remote beach at the westernmost point on the island.

Slack-key guitar concerts, Hanalei. By loosening a guitar's strings -- slacking the keys -- Hawaiian paniolo (cowboys) created this distinct sound nearly 200 years ago.

Doug and Sandy McMaster keep the tradition alive at twice-weekly performances at the Hanalei Community Center. Admission: \$20 for adults and \$15 for kids (under 18) and seniors (over 50). www.mcmasterslackkey.com

Queen's Bath, near Princeville. Formed by an ancient lava flow and fed by the surf, this tidal pool is a bit of a hike over sometimes slippery rocks, but the experience of swimming in one of Hawaii's unique spots is worth the walk. You can find directions at www.hawaiiweb.com/kauai/html/sites/queens_bath.html, but inquire locally. Visits during the winter are discouraged because the rocks are extra slippery.

Island Soap & Candle Works, Kilauea. Since 1997, this factory store has been inviting guests to observe how products such as lip balms and lotions are made using local ingredients. The company also has shops in Princeville and Koloa. www.islandsoap.com

Farmers market, Kapaa. There's a farmers market somewhere on Kauai every day of the week except Sunday. One of the biggest begins at 3 p.m. Wednesday in Kapaa.

It's a great place to taste and buy such locally grown produce as coconuts and pineapples. www.realkauai.com/FarmersMarkets

Hula demonstrations, Lihue. Beverly "Auntie Bev" Muraoka's family has been immersed in the tradition of hula for more than 100 years, and she has been dancing for half that time. To the accompaniment of ukuleles she performs at 12:15 p.m. Wednesdays at Harbor Mall. www.harbormall.net