

## CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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**FOOD AND TRAVEL ENTHUSIAST: MIKE CLEARY**

### **'Aloha spirit' is alive and well**

IMAGINE CHECKING into a major Waikiki resort and, anxious to see the neighborhood, you step out onto the balcony overlooking the famed beach.

Shading your eyes from the brilliant sun, you glance right and left. Amazingly, there's not a hotel in sight. Also missing are high-rise condos, shopping malls and hordes of sun-ripened tourists.

Instead, Waikiki is a Polynesian paradise with a lazy stretch of a footprint-free sandy beachfront.

That scenario ran through my mind after learning Turtle Bay Resort ([turtlebayresort.com](http://turtlebayresort.com)) on Oahu's North Shore is large enough to hold all of Waikiki with a couple of hundred acres left over.

Mary Ann and I had just stepped onto the lanai of our beachside cottage and, sure enough, except for a limited view of the resort's pool and a segment of the main building, our view was a long stretch of dramatic shoreline and tropical forest.

The 440-room resort is comprised of a three-winged, five-story main building and lobby, a cluster of beach cottages and luxury villas, stables, tennis courts and two golf courses. That's it.

The rest is lush tropical forest, some five miles of shoreline and 12 miles of trails that allow you to investigate every square inch of this gorgeous piece of property.

Forty-five minutes from Honolulu, the North Shore is Oahu's countryside. There are a few small towns and lots of beaches like Banzai Pipeline and Sunset Beach that attract surfers from around the world. It is also home to the popular Polynesian Cultural Center.

Today the area is, perhaps, best known as the location for the TV series "Lost."

Turtle Bay Resort has been around for more than 30 years and, as one of the major employers in the area, has a staff that includes many who have been on the job since it opened.

Bobbie, one of the bellmen we met told me he was the baby of their group with only 22 years on the job.

That may be one of the contributing factors why the "aloha spirit" is so alive and well here. Mary Ann and I found everybody we came in contact with from store clerks to concierges to servers to be warm, gracious and engaging.

One example is Justin Langlois, a congenial server in the resort's delightful beached restaurant, Ola. Turns out his aunt Pamela Black in San Jose reads my column. I promised him I'd say hi. He's fine, Pamela, took great care of us. Do you know he has shaved his entire head?

Ola is just one of several restaurants on the property. We enjoyed them all, including their high-end dining room aptly named 21 Degrees North. The chef, John Armstrong, is an experienced hand at Hawaiian regional cuisine and his creative menu reflects that.

We were there to sample life in their version of a "hotel inside a hotel," a popular concept among many large, luxury destination resorts. At Turtle Bay, this meant taking up residence for four days in one of their 42 beach cottages.

Recently remodeled by Los Angeles designer Michael Smith, these stylish and sophisticated units feature Brazilian walnut floors, high ceilings, poster beds, large impressive bathrooms and a well-furnished lanai that is just feet from the shoreline.

A crew of four concierges offer what they call ho'okipa service. Ho'okipa is Hawaiian for, "We can do anything for you within reason and the law."

Mary Ann and I chose to spend all our time at the resort. Most of it was taken up with running or hiking the trails and shoreline, a recreation that appeals to us immensely.

However, if golf is your game, you can tee it up on the Palmer or Fazio Course. Turtle Bay hosts a PGA Champions tournament in January and an LPGA event in February on these championship courses.

Other activities that will keep you right on the property include surfing, scuba diving, tennis and horseback riding. With all those miles of trails, atop a horse is a great way to enjoy the surrounding beauty.

With a rental car, you certainly can take advantage of the resort's amenities and still have the freedom to explore the island and its other attractions. The trails, meals and lanai-lounging were all we needed. Cheers.

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