

Hawaii – Oahu and Big Island

Aloha from Hawaii!

The sun shines, palm trees slowly move in the wind and the legendary surf waves break upon Hawaii's coast. Quite clumsily we step into the unknown water and appreciate very much that the water temperature rather resembles our bathtub back home rather than a glacier lake in New Zealand. Our cycling tan cannot be hidden – where normally we wear our lycras, white skin appears and blinds the onlooker, arms, thighs, head show brown skin. So we somehow wear a white bathing suit!!



The waves are enormously high, only 20 meters from the beach they reach a height of 1.5 meters. I hold on to the boogie board firmly and try to catch one of these waves. Whoosh! The wave reaches the board and like driftwood I am driven to the beach. Successful try! Waiting for the very highest appraisal by beach blonde Julia I turn to her and smile happily. But, Oh No!, where Julia was standing one moment ago only two white struggling feet are to be seen. Hm, that's not Julia's favorite position while swimming. I rush to her and she raises up again coughing and spluttering. My perfect boogie board wave just caught her and rushed her off her feet. Some more training necessary by both of us! But in the end we liked boogie boarding a lot and the following days we got on the boards again and again. At the end of the holiday our bathing suit is not white anymore but beige and we keep our head above the water while boarding – most of the times.

Nobody cycles on Hawaii

The stout woman gets out of her jeep, recognizes us and the fully loaded tandem and asks us immediately: "Are you nuts?"

We hear that question daily everywhere we cycle on Hawaii. We were warned that nobody cycles on Hawaii – and indeed while doing our round cycle trip on Big Island we never saw another touring biker. But why? Because of the humid heat, the constant threat of rain on the tropical side of the island, temperatures above 40 degrees through heated-up lava fields on the sunny side? Or because of 45 kilometers endless constant uphill cycling? Steep hills of 19% gradient? Big guard dogs following us because they are not used to cyclists? Or due to Americans who do not think of bicycles as an adequate vehicle on the road and like to show that roads belong to cars only? Probably a mixture of all those reasons.



But here are the things that car drivers miss: The beautiful song of a thousand tropical birds in the trees of lush rainforest or warbling to the stomping feet of wild black hogs in the bushes running away from us. The sound of breaking waves at the shore. And the satisfied feeling in the evening when the cyclists have made it up the endless road to the Volcano National Park. The praise one gets for that from other people! And all the contacts you could make when you are a cyclist. It's interesting – on Oahu we did not cycle – and only met one person talking to us – and he was drunk! On Big Island people approached us several times a day, we got in contact with the locals, we were invited to a Barbecue and homesteads, and so we not only got to know the land but also its inhabitants. So who is nuts?



Touring Hawaii

The flight from Auckland to Honolulu (Oahu) takes nine hours. And suddenly we were in a new world. Unfortunately we were not greeted while arriving with the flower chains known from the movies and the TV (you could have ordered that for \$25US) but we got an enormous rental car for transporting our bike boxes – the giant Ford Explorer which even dwarfs the Mercedes M-class. At least a good vehicle for driving on the four lane highways that are built across the island. On Oahu we lived in a small cozy cottage in Kailua for ten days, where we took a holiday from our tour. The tandem stayed packed in its box and instead of cycling we enjoyed beaches and explored the island. Of course we included a visit of the world famous Waikiki Beach and Pearl Harbour. Gigantic skyscrapers and kilometers of wonderful beach and shopping malls as long as – a lot to be seen!

This holiday was over much too soon and we flew to the biggest island of Hawaii, Big Island, home of the famous Iron Man contest. In contrast to the cosmopolitan Oahu this island is more rural and remote. More than 500 kilometers had to be covered to circle the whole island, perfect for a ten day stay. If one thinks of the roundtrip as easy cycling along paradise beaches – that is wrong. In the first day from Kona only the first ten kilometers lead along beaches and resorts, then we had to climb up to the high Hawaiian Belt road. On this road we started cycling south for the next days.



Going down to the beaches again would have taken us up to 8 kilometers and then up again – not too tempting. Passing the southernmost tip of the U.S. we reached Punalu'u Beach, a nice campground directly at a black beach. The next morning two big lovely turtles were waiting for us.



This experience was followed by the toughest day of our tour on Big Island: The 6 hour uphill ride over 45km to Volcano National Park. The landscape consisted of nothing but solidified lava, and over the course of the day it was getting a little bit dreary. Really dreary, to be honest. In the Volcano National Park we learnt a lot about the active volcanoes that surrounded us and enjoyed the stunning view of the red glowing lava which flowed into the sea under a blood red evening sky. New land arises spectacularly. It is an uplifting feeling to witness this. The smallest of the volcanoes, the Kilauea, was in the news worldwide a couple of days later. It erupted more heavily than it had over the last 50 years before – the Richter scale showed 4.7. The next day – after the climbing tour to the National Park - the well earned downhill to Hilo rewarded us. On the way to the rainiest town on Hawaii we almost didn't have to pedal. As well, we even had no rain. Big Island offers a diversity you wouldn't expect on a relatively small island. After all the lava we had seen in the last days, we encountered tropical lush rainforest with great views of the Pacific Ocean. We left the rainy side quickly and climbed up into the mountainous classic farmland with cattle all over the place. It looked like we were in a John Wayne movie. Because of its extreme height, Big Island accommodates eleven different vegetation zones. Everything from tropical

to alpine vegetation. At the end of the day we crashed on a beach – just like on the picture postcards! – Spencer Beach Park. Swimming in shallow water, dinner in the sunset and we drifted off to the sound of the waves under the stars. Life is good!!

The way back to our start and end point at Kona led us over wide shoulders through a really hot lava region – this is the cycling course of the famous Iron man. The brutal headwind and the temperature slowed us down to the speed of snails. Our admiration for the Iron Men grew accordingly.



To reward ourselves for the successful completion of the round trip we stayed a night in a posh resort. That was still missing on our list for Hawaii. It was not as laid back as expected. The smart doormen asked us if they could park our tandem somewhere on the parking lot. We had other plans on our mind. We received the key and a map of the resort. A map? We should have thought about the offer to park the bike. We couldn't take the train for the resort so we walked a kilometer indoor (!) to our hotel tower. The tandem would not fit into the elevator, so we carried the beast seven levels up to our room - loaded with luggage! We didn't need the gym that afternoon. Instead we went for Mai Tais and the pools. The next day we were about to carry the Iron Maiden down to ground level again, but then we saw a guy with a massive luggage carrier coming out of a big elevator which said "personal only". With our desperate persuasions we finally gained access and went down... and down. No exit on ground level, just an underground exit. We came into an impressive tunnel labyrinth with hundreds of people working with towels, food,

luggage and machinery. Very impressive. Nobody seemed to notice us so we just cycled into the next tunnel. The people down there were friendly, everybody greeted us. We finally found the exit and were spat into freedom together with a big truck full of waste. The shadow of the hotel disappeared and we were on the way back to the airport.

What comes next?

May is over and we leave Hawaii. We were told to cycle on the other islands as well, but we always like to have a reason to come back someday. We really enjoyed the sunshine and hope to have warmed up enough for our next goal Alaska. On May 29th we reach Anchorage and therefore the start point of the Panamericana. The legendary route winds down the Americas all the way to Argentina, covering about 24,000 kms. It is the dream route of many adventurous travelers. But at first we are very much looking forward to two good friends, who will visit us for a couple of weeks in the land of the giant woods, the glaciers and the bears. Till next month, we lean back and say "Mahalo" to Hawaii and "Hang Loose" to the rest of the world.

Julia und Stefan



"Variety is the spice of life." (English saying)

Sponsor of the Month:



Arriving late in the dawn on the bicycle, in the tent or while watching lava flows at night, our light never fails. We especially like our IXON LED-light. With that nothing stays hidden!

www.bumm.de