

Many fresh activities and developments

By Jeanne Cooper

Of the many Hawaiian words visitors to the islands will encounter in everyday use, two of the handiest to know may be *mauka* and *makai*, “toward the mountains” and “toward the sea,” respectively. They’re not only convenient for understanding directions, but also for describing where to explore new activities and developments:

Mauka

Maui: The “upcountry” town of Kula is becoming agritourism’s version of a gourmet ghetto. In April, [Ocean Vodka](http://www.oceanvodka.com) (www.oceanvodka.com) will open its new solar-powered distillery and organic sugarcane farm to the public, with a “martini garden” for mix-your-own cocktails. (Is it a coincidence olive groves are also being planted nearby?)

The distillery is just down the road from Surfing Goat Dairy (www.surfinggoatdairy.com), which beckons with free goat cheese tastings and cute four-legged kids. Higher up Haleakala’s slopes, Alii Kula Lavender Farm (www.aliikula.com) is now run by Koa Chang, son of the late founder, but still offers lavender tea and scones after its tours.

At the end of the road in Ulupalakua, Tedeschi Winery (www.mauiwine.com) recently released its

new sparkling rosé, Loke-lani.

Big Island: Kilauea volcano marked 30 years of continuous eruption on Jan. 3. Paradise Helicopters (www.paradisehelicopters.com) now offers flights from Kona that fly over active lava fields, then stop near Hilo’s Honolii Mountain Outpost so passengers can go aerial on its eight tandem zip lines; the return trip includes views of deep valleys and plunging waterfalls.

For bargain thrills, visit Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (www.nps.gov/havo), where Halemau-mau Crater billows smoke by day and glows with fire by night; admission is free April 22-26, Aug. 25, Sept. 28 and Nov. 9-11.

The Keck Observatory (www.keckobservatory.org) celebrates 20 years of research atop the towering — and fortunately dormant — shield volcano Mauna Kea with a free open house at its headquarters in Waimea

March 16, and other presentations and festivities at the Fairmont Orchid and Four Seasons Hualalai the week of March 13-19.

Kauai: Zip lines remain a popular way to view the Garden Isle’s lush interior. On the South Shore, Outfitters Kauai (www.outfitterskauai.com) has expanded its tandem lines through Kipu Ranch (seen in “Jurassic Park”), while Koloa Zipline (www.koloazipline.com) claims the longest line on the island, a 2,500-foot zip crossing over the largest

reservoir in the islands.

Oahu: Makaha Valley Riding Stables (www.makahastables.com) is offering a new horseback tour with guides who share the leeward area’s history and culture; a portion of proceeds benefit the nonprofit Makaha Cultural Learning Center.

You don’t have to be a spelunker to explore Vintage Cave Honolulu (www.vintagecave.com), an adventure in fine dining led by executive chef Chris Kajioka, formerly of San Francisco’s Aziza and Ritz-Carlton Dining Room. Found underneath the Shirokiya department store in the Ala Moana Shopping Center, this cave was built with 150,000 custom bricks in the style of ancient Rome’s underground, and is open for lunch, tea and dinner.

Makai

Big Island: While an indefinite moratorium on kayaks and stand-up paddleboards remains in effect at Kealahou Bay, some snorkel and dive tours are permitted within the state historical park. One of the newest is aboard a traditional double-hulled outrigger sailing canoe, operated by Kona Boys (www.konaboys.com) out of Keauhou Bay. The company also recently introduced single-hulled outrigger canoe rides from Kamakahonu Beach on Kailua Bay.

Oahu: Hawaii Duck Tours (www.hawaiiducktours.com) relaunched last month with a tour of

Pearl Harbor in a restored World War II amphibious vehicle; it's offered four times a day with Waikiki pickups available.

Speaking of Pearl Harbor, the Battleship Missouri Memorial (www.ussmissouri.org) has opened several previously inaccessible areas to guided tours, including boiler, plotting and engine rooms; the "Heart of the Missouri" tour also features video commentary from the ship's last chief engineer. Participants must be able to climb 10 sets of ladders, step over 2-foot-high obstacles and navigate through tight spaces.

Maui: February means "Whale Craze" at the Maui Ocean Center (www.mauiocenter.com), which means daily activities and, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays, whale watching with expert volunteers from Harbor Plaza. If watching the action at Hookipa Beach Park inspires you to test the winds, note that Four Seasons Resort Maui (www.fourseasons.com/maui) hosts its first Aloha Windsurfing Clinic with island champions Matt Pritchard and Shawna Cropas March 2-7.

Kauai: With the recent drowning of two San Francisco men in high surf conditions, educating visitors about water safety remains a key concern here. A new iPhone app, Kauai Beach Guide (www.beachtoolz.com), provides detailed maps and information, including safety ratings

and ocean and weather reports.

Ke Ala Hele Makalae (www.kauaipath.org), the East Side's coastal hike/bike path, continues to expand, although not without controversy. The newest segment under construction will connect Wailua Beach — home to sacred Hawaiian sites and ancient burials — with the original 2.5-mile section near Lydgate Park and another 4.1-mile stretch from Lihī Park in Kapaa to Ahihi Point.

For more updates and photos, see SFGate.com/hawaii.



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Ocean Vodka is distilled in Kula, Maui.



National Park Service

Halemaumau Crater gives off an eerie glow at night due to the lava lake inside, part of Kilauea volcano's ongoing 30-year eruption.