Oh We’re Going to a Hukilau—
A Week on Kauai

by Nancy Bestor

We exited our plane at little Lih‘u‘e airport on the island of Kauai, and the first thing I noticed was the warm tropical air, breezing through the open-air facility. Then I heard the Hawaiian music playing softly in the background as an airport employee began an announcement on the loudspeaker with “Aloha, E komo mai,” (Hello, welcome). At that moment I knew that eight days of Spring Break on Kauai would be eight days very well spent.

Our family had been to Maui twice before, and loved it both times, but when looking for a relaxing Spring Break location this year, Bob suggested we try a different Hawaiian island, and Kauai was the winner. We booked a condominium on Poipu Beach in south Kauai through Suite Paradise (www.suite-paradise.com).

When browsing for vacation homes or rentals online, I gravitate towards professional websites that list all the prices up front (I am always irritated by websites that say “call for price,” or “send us your email and we’ll send you a price”). I want the information up front, as quickly as possible, so I can compare. Suite Paradise’s website was professional, and after checking prices and scrutinizing reviews on www.tripadvisor.com, we booked a spacious, ocean view, one-bedroom condo, with free wireless, a pull out bed in the living room and a rental car too for about $1800 for eight nights. The condo worked out perfectly. It was roomy and clean, the complex grounds were lovely, and we could see the ocean from our deck. The girls had two swimming pools to choose from, we had a full kitchen (with blender

continued on page 2

Top Carry-On Friendly Products

On every trip, I learn something more about making travel a little easier. One thing I’ve noticed is how many people are carrying on bags now that airlines are charging a per bag fee to check. I recently overheard a United agent tell a crowd of people waiting to board a flight from San Francisco to Chicago that the airplane had room for 75 carry-on bags, and more than 100 people waiting to board. What does this mean to you and I? For one thing, you might want to board as quickly as possible to grab an overhead spot. You might also consider a smaller carry-on bag, which will give you a better chance to find a spot for it in the overhead compartment.

Briggs 20” Extra-Wide Carry-on

Briggs and Riley has come up with a perfect suitcase to meet these carry-on restriction needs. Their new Transcend

continued on page 3

Traveling With the New Technology

by Robert H. Bestor

Imagine you’re in a rental car parked by the side road in the town of Marktheidenfeld, Germany, about 45 minutes east of the Frankfurt Airport. It’s 10am and you have no planned itinerary. What’s on your mind is a slow meander over scenic backroads through a few small villages, a stop for lunch, and at the end of the day a good dinner and bed in a charming country inn.

To accomplish this while still ensuring good food and pleasant accommodations, you may, as I have for many years, rely on Michelin’s Red and Green Guides for Germany, and the Deutschland ADAC Maxiatlas. The Red Guide locates the right hotel and restaurant, the Green Guide is for sights, and the Maxiatlas determines the scenic route. Though those tools are still effective, there may now be a better way.

Let’s say that instead of these three

continued on page 3

©2002 Travel Essentials, Ashland, OR. All Rights Reserved.
Oh We’re Going to a Hukilau...

continued from page 1

A trip to Kauai would not be complete without a visit to the Waimea Canyon. The road to the canyon runs along Kauai’s western shore, and the spectacular views are usually worth the hour-long drive from Poipu Beach. Waimea Canyon is a 10-mile long, one mile wide, and 3600+ feet deep gorge that reminded me of a greener Grand Canyon. We took the 18-mile drive from the main highway to the Pu’u o Kila lookout at the top of the canyon, 4100 feet above sea level. Is it, as our trusted guidebook suggests, one of the greatest views in the Pacific? Sadly, not when it is completely covered in fog. Much to the delight of our oh-so-happy children (who if I have not mentioned previously are two teenage girls), we waited and waited in the chilly breeze but the clouds would not lift. Fortunately just four miles down the canyon road, the weather was delightfully warm and sunny, and the 10 and 13-mile viewpoints were outstanding. I did not let my girls’ irritation with the twisty drive to nowhere faze me however, so I suggested we take the Canyon Trail hike to Waipo’o Falls. The four-mile roundtrip hike (trailhead between mile marker 13 and 14) was listed as “moderately strenuous” in the guidebook, and amazingly the idea was met positively by our teenagers, so Bob and I jumped at the opportunity. It was fantastic, and easy for all of us. Great canyon views throughout, culminating in a hair-raising yet stunning view from the top of the 800-foot Waipo’o Falls. Not recommended for those uncomfortable with heights. Waimea Canyon Road also includes grand views of the famous and vibrant Kauai red dirt. Don’t miss it!

Kauai’s west coast also offers some of the island’s best shave ice, a Hawaiian dessert delicacy. Not to be confused with snow cones (made from crushed ice), shave ice (not shaved, but shave) is made from a sharp blade that “shaves” off delicate slivers of ice from a block to make a fine ice powder. Add a great fruit flavor and drop it all on top of vanilla ice cream, and voila, a delicious local dessert. We tried several shave ice stands around the island and all were good, but our favorite was Jo-Jo’s Clubhouse in Waimea.

A 75-minute drive from Poipu in the opposite direction leads to Hanalei Bay and Princeville at the northern most point on the island. While this is, in my opinion, the more touristy part of Kauai, with grander resort hotels and golf courses and more expensive restaurants, it still offers great beaches, wonderful views and fantastic sites. In the winter and spring, northern Kauai has extremely high surf and more rain, so we were happy to be staying in the south. The high surf didn’t stop us from exploring, but it did keep us out of two of The Ultimate Kauai Guidebook recommended sites, the ocean-side swimming pool-size tide pools known as Queen’s Bath and the Secret Lava Pools.

Kauai’s eastern coast is home to a great family snorkeling and swimming spot at Lydgate Beach Park. Its two boulder-enclosed areas were cleverly created to offer calm swimming yet allow fresh seawater and fish in. Snorkeling near the rocks when the water rushes over them is a site to see, and I had to keep reminding myself that I wasn’t looking at an aquarium, but in fact nature, at its finest!!!!! For beginning boogie boarders Kalapaki Beach in Lihu’e is a great choice. We had fun riding the waves, which got big enough a few times to knock Sarah around as if she were in a washing machine. I’m sure there are now some fashionable fish on that beach, one wearing Sarah’s cute frog earrings, and another her bright yellow snorkel mask.

We ate yummy local food in Kauai, largely on the eastern coast (and entirely thanks to The Ultimate Kauai Guidebook). Three of our favorites were Mark’s Place, Hamura’s Saimin Stand, and Fish Express, all in Lihu’e. Mark’s Place is located in an industrial park. It’s not easy to find (1610 Hakeukana St.), is only open until 6pm, it offers no inside seating and has just two picnic tables out front, but the food is outstanding! I had a seared ahi tuna salad that was amazing, and Sarah’s teriyaki beef is the best I have ever sampled. Very reasonable prices too, every plate on the

“The cure for anything is salt water: sweat, tears or the sea.” — ISAK DINESEN

(KAREN BLIXEN)
Traveling With the New Technology

continued from page 1

books whose combined weight is more than five pounds, you’re carrying the new 1.5-pound Apple iPad with its 9.7-inch color screen.

From your car, using iPad’s 3G phone technology, you connect to the Internet. Your first stop is Google, where you type the word “Marlinescheidt, Germany,” then click on the resultant map. Zoom out and you get an overall perspective of the region. You decide to end your day in the wine village of Volkach traveling a U-shaped route through Wertheim, Tauberbischofsheim, Weikersheim (great castle), Krelingen, and Kirzingen. Google plots the route and tells you it’s 156 km (98 miles) and estimates a driving time of two hours, 43 minutes. But there’s more information than mileage and driving time. You click “Satellite” on the map to get an aerial view of the area. Zoom in on towns to get the same view as from an airplane, as well as labels for important buildings, even hotels and restaurants. Click “Terrain” for a topographical look at the region, then click “More” for photos and videos. Want to see what Volkach’s old town looks like? Just click the photos. Using the satellite view I was recently able to zoom in close enough on Volkach’s Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten to see the chairs in the garden where Liz and I spent part of a Sunday afternoon reading our books.

To find a hotel in Volkach, go to www.viamichelin.com and navigate to “michelin guide hotel selections.” A search for Volkach hotels will yield the Vier Jahreszeiten. At this point you can book online, phone the hotel using Skype on your iPad, or request an email quote. (Remember, you’re doing all this from your car.)

You postpone the lunch decision and decide to find something along the way. When the time comes you can either choose a place with “curb appeal” or get back on the iPad. One option might be to find a restaurant via an application such as Yelp, which uses the iPad’s GPS feature to locate hotels, restaurants, banks, bars, etc. The software knows where you are and identifies nearby businesses in various categories and spots them on a map. The info provided typically includes street, email, and web addresses, plus phone numbers, ratings, and user reviews. (Ed. Note: Yelp does not yet cover Europe, but surely will in the very near future.)

It should also be noted that the iPad is not just a traveler’s aid. One can download books, newspapers, and magazines from the iBookstore, wirelessly access movies and music (which undoubtedly you’ll soon be able to play through your rental car’s sound system), and stay in touch via email. Let me stress again that this can all be done from a car, train, hotel room, or park bench; in fact anywhere there is cell phone service.

This is not a sales pitch for the iPad, merely to show how certain elements of the travel experience have changed in a few short years. I’m a bit nostalgic for the days when a European vacation felt like the real world had been left behind. One warm summer night at a tiny hotel deep in the Austrian countryside, I recall the sudden but oddly pleasant realization that I was totally inaccessible. Not a soul in the world knew my whereabouts. Today, with a mobile phone and a laptop, I’m almost as reachable on the road as I am at home.

Like it or not, changes wrought by technology affect every traveler, even those who choose to detour the cyber highway. Twenty years ago, buying a transatlantic airline ticket required conversation with another human being. Today, the folks who own airlines, rental cars, and passenger trains want to shift the booking task from their own employees to the customer. They do so by providing a financial incentive for booking on the Internet. You may have to pay extra to book by phone or in person.

Despite my vague longings for the good old days of European travel, I love the new technology. The astounding, marvelous Google maps are alone worth the price of a monthly broadband connection, and I still find it hard to believe such a magnificent service is free.

Remember when you had to carry a big thick book to know when the trains ran in Europe? It was the Thomas Cook Timetable and a subscription cost something like $20 a month. Today that information is free at www.bahn.de. I have zero nostalgia for the Thomas Cook days.

Technology has also removed some of the stress from European travel.

Every so often someone will opine that getting lost is part of the fun. While I understand the sentiment, I can’t agree. Using a map to find a small hotel on a rainy night in the narrow streets of an ancient European town is not my—or Liz’s—idea of fun (driving around in the rain when I could be having a beer?). Our Garmin Nuvi GPS with Europe maps has taken the tension out of this particular travel activity.

One of the more worrisome elements of European travel in the old days for me was how my business would fare in my absence. Given the nine-hour time difference and the high cost of transatlantic phone calls, it was difficult to stay in touch. With email and mobile phone I am almost immediately aware of problems that arise and can quickly deal with them. With a laptop, I can update our website (www.gemut.com) from anywhere in the world and even access our network and main business files.

While there may be some negative aspects to the changes technology has brought to travel, for most of us they have made it easier and cheaper.

—Robert H. Bestor is Bob Bestor’s father, and the publisher of Gemütlichkeit, the travel newsletter for Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Travel Essentials’
Free Packing Workshops with Anne McAlpin

Tuesday, April 27
at 2:00 and 6:00 pm
Call now to reserve your space!
(541) 482-7383

“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.” —RALPH WALDO EMERSON
Top Carry-on Friendly Product...

continued from page 1

Extra-Wide 20” Carry-On ($299) is a smartly designed rolling bag with the same capacity as a standard 22” bag (the largest carry-on size), because of its extra wide design. It’s a bit shorter and fits into the overhead compartment “wheels in”, making it much easier to fit in a tighter space, as well as easier to stow and retrieve. The TD-520XW (which measures 20 x 15.5 x 7.5 inches, and weighs 9 pounds) is also more likely to comply with international carry-on requirements, which are often stricter than those of domestic airlines. Plus, the bag is a breeze to pack. The roomy main compartment features garment securing panels, shoe pockets, and a zippered garment sleeve—all to help keep your clothes compact, neat and wrinkle-free. It’s the perfect organized rolling carry-on for any traveler who wants to ensure a spot in the overhead, likes to fly internationally, or who just wants a bag that’s easier to fit in the overhead compartment on the plane.

Digital Luggage Scale

With airlines constantly tightening both their carry-on and checked luggage restrictions, it’s becoming harder and harder to avoid extraneous fees at the airport—and that’s where the Balanza Digital Luggage Scale ($24.95) comes in handy. On our recent trip to Hawaii, Bob checked his golf bag, and since all our other bags were small carry-ons, we stuffed the golf bag to the brim with suntan lotion and other liquids, as well as beach towels, snorkel and mask sets, and more. I was worried we would be over the 50 pound limit (I am a worrier!), but we checked the bag’s weight with our Balanza Luggage Scale, and we were under the limit at a mere 47 pounds! This easy-to-use and simple-to-read scale lets you weigh your bags before you leave home. Just attach the scale to your bag’s handle, lift the bag, wait for the beep and read your bag’s weight from the digital display. Simple as that, you know if you can pack a little more or if you should, perhaps, remove an item or two.

Compression Sleeves

Fresh Legs Compression Sleeves ($39.99) are a revolutionary “sock” that starts at the ankle, letting you keep your feet bare (or wear whatever you’d like) while offering the same comfort and health benefits as a traditional compression sock. During long flights or long periods on your feet, Fresh legs compression sleeves will help prevent blood clots while reducing leg discomfort and swelling. And, the amazing “Zensah” fabric is both anti-microbial and thermo-regulating, which helps keep your legs cool in hot weather and warm in cold weather. Comfortable and supportive, Fresh Legs Compression Sleeves are an excellent choice for everyday wear as well.

Travel Binoculars

Celestron Up-Close Binoculars ($21.95) are a handy travel-sized pair of binoculars at an excellent price. Features include an 8x magnification that’s perfect for sight-seeing, fully coated optics for sharp views, a diopter adjustment for precise focusing and a protective rubber covering for a firm grip. The Celestron Up-Close binoculars also feature a folding center bridge for compact storage in their nylon carry-case. They fold down to a pocket-sized 4 x 3 x 1.5 inches and weigh just six ounces, so toss a pair into your day bag on your next adventure, and be sure to view everything up close.

Slash-Proof Bags

Theft resistant travel bags from PacSafe are a great way to safeguard your belongings on your next adventure into the urban jungle. Their StashSafe waist pack (10 x 6 x 2 1/2 inches) features a cut-proof strap, slash-proof panels on the front and bottom of the bag, a snatch-continued on page 5

“The weather is here, I wish you were beautiful. The skies are too clear, life’s so easy today. The beer is too cold, the daiquiris too fruitful. No place like home when you’re this far away.”— JIMMY BUFFETT
Top Carry-on Friendly Products...

continued from page 4

proof belt that can be used to lock your bag to a secure fixture, and tamper-proof lockable zippers. If you prefer a traditional shoulder bag, their CitySafe Bags offer the same safety features as the waist pack in a classic purse. The CitySafe Bag comes in two sizes, small and large, measuring 8.5 x 9 x 3.5 inches, and 10 x 6 x 2.5 inches respectively, and sell for $54.95 and $64.95. So, no matter where you go, you won’t need to worry about pick-pockets and bag slashers when you have a PacSafe bag at your side.

No Jet Lag

No Jet Lag homeopathic pills ($11.95) are a simple, effective way to beat the symptoms of jet lag. A customer favorite for years, these pills help to counteract everything from fatigue to muscle stiffness. Each package contains 32 pills and is good for 50 hours of flying time. And handily, that’s just about the perfect amount for two travelers flying back and forth from the west coast to either Europe or Asia. No Jet Lag is not just any customer favorite, it is actually the best selling product in the history of the store. We’ve carried it for more than 10 years now and the response has been almost 100% enthusiastically positive.

Shampoo Sheets

With the airlines’ liquid carry-on requirements so strict, we love to find non-liquid alternatives for traveling with things like shampoo and shaving cream—such as these handy Travel Shampoo Sheets ($4.95). These amazing little sheets (in the case just 2.75 x 1.75 inches) come in six varieties—shampoo, conditioner, hand soap, shaving cream, body wash and laundry soap. Each travel friendly package contains fifty sheets and is small enough to slip into your pocket. To get a good lather, just add water and rub a sheet between your hands. And since, of course, the sheets are not liquid, you can take as many as you like on a plane without worrying about TSA requirements or exploding shampoo bottles.

Hawaii Revealed

The Hawaii Revealed Guidebooks ($16.95) are candid, humorous guides, written by Hawaiian locals, to the Hawaiian Islands. Each book focuses on an island—the Big Island, Maui, Kauai, or Oahu—and quite literally reveals everything you’d want to see on the island, from breathtaking trails, stunning waterfalls and secluded beaches to delicious places to dine and relaxing places to stay. A spirit of adventure, a rental car and a Hawaii Revealed guidebook are all you need to plan the perfect Hawaiian vacation. We’ve used two of their guidebooks, for Maui and Kauai, and can speak firsthand that they are the best guidebooks for Hawaii, bar none. We found the best beaches, and several sites that were not listed in any other guidebook. The restaurant recommendations are the most opinionated we’ve ever seen, and spot on. We’d love to sell you multiple guidebooks, but the truth of the matter is, this is the only guidebook you need when traveling to Hawaii.

Learn the best tips for packing a carry-on bag at Travel Essentials’ Free Packing Workshop Tuesday, April 27 at 2pm and 6pm. Call 541-482-7383 for details.
News, Tips and Advice for the Traveler

- Checking in online up to 24 hours before a flight has always been a priority for me, especially when I’m not checking a bag. This means I can sail right past the ticket counter and head straight to the security line and to my gate. On a recent trip however, I checked in online from home even though I was checking a bag. United promised it would save me time. Not true! I still had to wait in the same ticket line as everyone who did not have a boarding pass in hand. The only thing it saved me was $1 off the checked baggage fee. Perhaps I would have cared more about the monetary savings if every member of my family were each checking two bags (thus providing a savings of $8), but I really just wanted to save time.

- Travel advisor Chris McGinnis, writing for www.sfgate.com, reports that the airline industry brought in half a billion dollars in January in “ancillary revenue,” which describes extra fees (excluding airfare)—checked baggage fees, food for purchase, ticket changes, and more. I’m guessing these fees are here to stay.

- Airlines aren’t the only ones charging more in “extra” fees. At a recent National Business Travel Association Symposium, NYU professor Bjorn Hanson said many hotels have begun charging for holding bags after check out, have increased cancellation and early checkout fees, and raised prices for business services such as receiving faxes, meeting rooms and more. Hotel rates however, remain down. In 2009, Hanson reported New York City hotel rates being down 40% from their high in 2006. Forecasts show rates will continue their downward trend for the remainder of 2010.

- On a recent stay at the Las Vegas Hilton a postcard in our room offered us $5 per day in hotel credits, if we hung the card off our front doorknob. On a recent stay at the Las Vegas Hilton a postcard in our room offered us $5 per day in hotel credits, if we hung the card off our front doorknob to deny housekeeping services. The credit could be used for any hotel service, restaurant or bar purchase. I’ve since learned that several other US hotel chains have begun offering the same thing. It was a good deal for us, as we’re not messy hotel guests, and didn’t mind making our own bed and hanging our towels up for reuse for two days.

- The Wall Street Journal reports that a new hotel in Chicago, the Elysian, has adopted a no-tipping policy. Guests are apparently notified of the no tipping policy when booking a room, and reminded of it when checking in. A hotel spokesperson says employees are paid competitive wages and benefits. The Journal goes on to quote a spokesperson for the Ritz-Carlton, who says that a general tipping rule of thumb is $2 per bag to the porter, $1 to the doorman who hails a cab, and $3-5 per night on longer stays for housekeeping. The Ritz tells their employees to never expect a tip, but instead view it as a pleasant surprise.

Oh We’re Going to a Hukilau...

continued from page 2

menu was under $10 and the portions were very generous. Hamura’s Saimin Stand (2956 Kress St.) is another popular local spot for a ramen-like noodle soup that includes vegetables, meat, shrimp, and other options—a huge bowl of food for less than $8. At night, the only dessert is liliko’i chiffon pie, which is similar to lemon chiffon pie and is also very good. During the day, Hamura’s also serves up some excellent shave ice. Fish Express is a great take-out only seafood stop. Every day features a fish of the day, served seven different ways. Bob had ahi with pesto served in a wrap (also yum!). I had ahi with pesto served in a wrap (also yum!). Each was about $10. Our epicuriously daring teenage daughters had fried chicken.

Now this may sound crazy, but our favorite meal of the whole trip was a hot dog. Well not a hot dog to be exact, but a Puka Dog. I know what you’re thinking, but this cute little stand serves up dogs like no other dogs IN THE WORLD! I am not exaggerating. Puka means hole in Hawaiian, and these Hawaiian style dogs are grilled polish sausages, served in a bun-sized loaf of bread that is pierced and toasted on a heated spike. Before sliding the sausage into the bun, your choice of delectable homemade Hawaiian relishes, sauces and mustards are added. The hot dogs were so good on our first visit that we had to go back a second time. The dogs were equally good on the next visit, in fact, Bob had two hot dogs on our last day. Not cheap for a hot dog ($6.25) but good sized (Bob really only needed one) and delicious. My favorite had hot garlic lemon secret sauce, mango relish, and liliko’i Hawaiian mustard. The only drink available is a homemade lemonade that is also delicious. Puka Dog (www.pukadog.com) is located in the Poipu Shopping Center at 2650 Kiahuna Plantation Drive. They have a second location on Oahu at the Waikiki Town Center in Honolulu. We aren’t the only ones who love it. Anthony Bourdain visited the Waikiki Puka Dog on his Travel Channel show No Reservations, and it has also been featured in many magazines, including Bon Appetit, and oddly enough, Modern Bride. If they would consider opening a location on the mainland, I would happily rent them 200 square feet of our Ashland, Oregon store for the fee of one Puka Dog a day.

—Nancy Bestor, along with her husband Bob, is the owner of Travel Essentials. At one time, she thought the best hot dogs were found at the Oakland Coliseum, at Oakland A’s games. She now scoffs at those ballpark hot dogs.

“It was a meal that we shall never forget; more accurately, it was several meals that we shall never forget, because it went beyond the gastronomic frontiers of anything we had ever experienced, both in quantity and length...That night we ate for England.” —Peter Mayle
Everything’s Rosy in the City of Roses

by Nancy Bestor

Distinctive neighborhoods, funky bridges, fantastic food and an inviting skyline make Portland a great “big city” visit for us. Just 4 1/2 hours from Ashland by car, Portland provides an array of excellent and inexpensive ethnic restaurants, eclectic shops, a hip arts scene and a big city hustle, bustle and anonymity that we often crave. Two recent visits only enhanced Portland’s lofty position near the top of our favorite cities list.

While we ate at several superb eateries, a spot we returned to three times over the two trips was Kenny & Zuke’s, a New York style, Jewish delicatessen (www.kennyzukes.com). K & Z’s is a sit down restaurant that offers traditional deli fare in a large, light-filled, appealing space at 1038 SW Stark, downtown. K & Z’s cures its own meats, bakes its own bread and bagels, and serves up tremendous sandwiches. The sandwiches aren’t cheap but they’re worth every penny. The fabulous pastrami on rye for $11.75 (the most expensive sandwich on the menu) is piled Dagwood Bumstead high with succulent meat, and can easily be shared between two. Besides, I’d rather pay $12 for a great sandwich than $6 for a bad one. The menu includes everything from a wide variety of sandwiches (pickled tongue, kosher salami, and chopped liver to name a few, as well as the basic roast beef, turkey, etc.) to salads, soups, latkes, hamburgers, fried chicken (but only after 5pm on fried chicken Wednesdays) and a fun assortment of bottled sodas, juices, and beers. The food sounds simple, and it is simple, but it is simple done incredibly well. If you like good food, don’t miss Kenny & Zuke’s.

Remember that big city anonymity I mentioned earlier? While waiting outside a New York style, Jewish delicatessen (www.kennyzukes.com). K & Z’s is a sit down restaurant that offers traditional deli fare in a large, light-filled, appealing space at 1038 SW Stark, downtown. K & Z’s cures its own meats, bakes its own bread and bagels, and serves up tremendous sandwiches. The sandwiches aren’t cheap but they’re worth every penny. The fabulous pastrami on rye for $11.75 (the most expensive sandwich on the menu) is piled Dagwood Bumstead high with succulent meat, and can easily be shared between two. Besides, I’d rather pay $12 for a great sandwich than $6 for a bad one. The menu includes everything from a wide variety of sandwiches (pickled tongue, kosher salami, and chopped liver to name a few, as well as the basic roast beef, turkey, etc.) to salads, soups, latkes, hamburgers, fried chicken (but only after 5pm on fried chicken Wednesdays) and a fun assortment of bottled sodas, juices, and beers. The food sounds simple, and it is simple, but it is simple done incredibly well. If you like good food, don’t miss Kenny & Zuke’s.

There’s one more place that is a must stop on every Portland visit, Saint Cupcake. I love everything about Saint Cupcake; their delicious cupcakes (whose variety changes daily), in two sizes—regular, and bite sized (so you can try more varieties), the design of their store, their cupcakes, their cupcake boxes, their cupcakes, the typeface they use in their logo, their cupcakes, and even their witty website (www.saintcupcake.com). Saint Cupcake has two Portland locations, 407 NW 17th Ave., and 3300 SE Belmont. I love their cupcakes.

On each of our most recent visits to Portland, we booked our hotel through www.priceline.com. I can’t say enough about how much money we have saved using Priceline. On both occasions, only two of us were traveling, which makes the number of beds in the room a non-issue. Priceline only guarantees beds for two people per room. For those not familiar, Priceline lets you bid on a hotel online. Priceline lists the hotel star rating, its amenities, and its general location, but you don’t know which hotel it is until you have booked. However, if you’re willing to do a bit of research, you can often determine which hotel Priceline is listing before booking (check out www.biddingfortravel.yuku.com). On our first visit, Bob and I booked the Benson, in downtown Portland, for $95 a night. Priceline considers the Benson a four star hotel, and since this was a romantic getaway, we were willing to bid $95. The location is terrific, but the Benson is old and tired, and not worthy of four stars. On our second visit, Sarah and I booked the downtown Marriott, for $52 a night. The Marriott is a 3 1/2 star hotel, but in my opinion, MUCH better than the Benson. And for $52 a night, it is a fabulous deal. Great location, next door to Peet’s Coffee (which I love), free wireless in the lobby (and Peet’s has free wireless in the coffee shop for two hours with any purchase), and great all around. I’ve since decided that 3 1/2 star hotels are a better bet in downtown Portland than 4 star ones.

—Having been raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, Nancy often has longings for visiting the “Big City.” A visit to Portland satisfies that longing.
“Pack It Up” at Our Annual Packing Workshop

Airline regulations are making it tougher and tougher to get through security in a timely manner. To help you figure out the easiest and fastest way to pack your bags both for airline security purposes, and for your own sanity, Travel Essentials will offer two free packing workshops with America’s leading packing expert, Anne McAlpin. The workshops, Tuesday, April 27 at 2:00 and 6:00 p.m., will take place in Travel Essentials’ store at 252 East Main Street in downtown Ashland. Anne will teach her inside secrets on packing a carry-on bag to save the cost of extra airline charges.

Anne McAlpin is a world traveler, packing expert & author of the popular book & video series, Pack It Up. She has been a regular guest on The View with Barbara Walters, sharing up-to-the-minute travel tips. She has also been a featured guest on Oprah, The Today Show, QVC, and Home & Garden TV’s Smart Solutions. Anne’s tips include packing smart for airport security, planning your travel wardrobe, safety secrets for women traveling solo, secrets to packing the perfect carry-on bag, and more.

Travel Essentials will also offer a 10% discount on all regularly priced merchandise, as well as other special discount offers, in the store on Tuesday, April 27 only.

Here’s a sneak peak of some of Anne’s tips for making traveling easier and more enjoyable, directly from her book, Pack It Up:

- Don’t forget to pack a healthy snack in your carry-on bag, because as the saying goes, “You never know where your next meal is coming from.”
- Always hang the “Do Not Disturb” sign on your hotel door (after the maid has cleaned) to avoid unwanted hotel room guests.
- Bring your health insurance information, as well as a list of medicines you are taking.
- Take a postcard or digital picture of your ship or hotel when in a foreign country and out sightseeing for the day. This way if you get lost, and have a language barrier, you can show a taxi driver the picture of where you need to go.
- Only pack items you can use more than one way.

Anne’s packing workshops are always full, so reservations are a must! To reserve your spot, call Travel Essentials at (541) 482-7383 today!