



Enjoy a Cup of Kona "Coffee of Your Dreams" at Holualoa Inn on the Big Island of Hawaii

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(Above, the Holualoa Inn appears like some far off dream, surrounded by lush tropical fruits and coffee orchards)

It's the "cup of my dreams" – rich, flavorful Kona coffee at the Holualoa Inn, which makes its home on a coffee plantation up here on the western slope of Hualalai volcano.

Coffee never tasted so rich, and to think, my wife and I can repeat this little miracle each morning at breakfast!

Conditions are ideal for growing great coffee beans 1,400 feet above the Kona Coast on the Big Island of Hawaii: there's rich volcanic soil and a tropical climate with just the right amount of sunshine and rain.

The sign for the inn comes into view as we pull into Holualoa, all three blocks of it, on the Mamalahoa Highway.

(The swimming pool at the Holualoa Inn offers a spectacular view of the Kona Coast)

In the early 1900's, this was a bustling commercial sugar cane center, but all that remains now are historic storefronts with art galleries, studios and tourist shops in a sleepy little village.



We find the inn tucked away on a 30-acre estate of tropical fruit plants and 3,000 Arabica coffee trees.



(Some of the inn's 3,000 coffee trees are seen with the ocean in the foreground)

Two large rooms, a mind-calming lanai with a distinctly Japanese feel and a comfortable living room, greet the visitor.

We're careful to take off our shoes – it's an old Hawaiian custom that protects the polished wood floors.

Outside, near the garden hot tub, we see the remains of a "long sled run," the literal meaning of Holualoa and a relic of the ancient Hawaiian test of manhood that involved sliding down long slopes on wooden sleds.

Well, we'll take a slower pace, thank you, in our tasteful Plumeria Suite, near a swimming pool edged by fig trees and lipstick palms, plus a dramatic view of the distant Kona coast.

(The Plumeria Suite offers comfortable living at the inn)

"You can give your body and soul permission to turn off and relax," says owner Cassandra Hazen of the Zen-like inn. "It's almost like rejuvenating."



The next morning the curtain goes up on some of that "rejuvenating," the sort that means discovering tastes you've never experienced before with chef Chad Douglas's breakfast.



(Breakfast begins with a colorful plate of tropical fruits, passion fruit juice, and, of course, a cup of 100% Kona coffee)

We join eight other guests, including a group of friends from Philadelphia and a couple from Tokyo just married on the Big Island, at a long table elegantly decorated for our repast.

Chef Douglas begins with exquisite tropical fruits all grown on the property and artfully arranged like a painting: strawberry papaya, pineapple, mango, fresh rambutan, and kiwi.

This is followed by three delicate crepes filled with an assortment of apple spice preserves, orange peach ginger preserves, and fresh sliced papaya served over home fries with caramelized potatoes and fresh garden herbs.

And, of course, as much Kona coffee as we want!

Later that morning, Douglas takes me on a walk through the orchards, remarking that he is "very big on a garden-to-plate concept," something so obvious in his creative cuisine.

Under a coffee tree, he tells me that the inn's pesticide-free Arabica coffee, low in acid, is hand-picked, with only red, ripe cherries selected for roasting.

(Only 100% Kona coffee beans, grown on the inn's property, is used in its superb coffee)

And, of course, it's fresh roasted the same day it's served, so the flavor is, well, unmatched.

The inn features Espresso, which has the least amount of caffeine; Dark, roasted at 472 degrees to develop a rich and hearty flavor (my favorite); and Medium, with subtle flavors and the most amount of caffeine.

You can also buy the coffee for home on the inn's website, www.coffee.holualoainn.com, or at the inn.



(The restful "Labyrinth" at the Holualoa Inn)

Towards the end of our walk, we come to the "Labyrinth," winding paths mowed into a large swath of grass, where you can just let your mind drift.

After lounging by the pool, my wife and I decide to walk to the village, where the art galleries and shops are complemented by the funky Holualoa Ukulele Gallery, which sells locally-made ukuleles and gives lessons.

(One of the art galleries along Holualoa's main street, which is part of the Mamalahoa Highway)

In early November, the village sponsors an annual "Coffee and Art Stroll," showcasing Kona coffee farmers who share samples of coffee at shops and galleries.



After our first day here, we're starting to see what Hazen means when she says Hawaii has "different vibrations" you can tap into.

The inn, the village, the Kona coffee and the remarkable breakfasts are one more reminder, to quote Hazen again, that "it's a beautiful day in paradise."



(At the end of a day of touring Holualoa's art galleries and studios, what could be nicer than relaxing by the pool with drinks...or a cup of the inn's famous Kona coffee?)