

Maui's New AgriTourism: An Upcountry Exploration



A rental car and a good map are all you need to explore Maui's newest touristic interest on the east side of this double-volcano island. Stepping away from the sea and sand pleasures of Maui's shoreline, I recommend an agritourism road trip that provides the perfect excuse to sample exhilarating upcountry scenery where rural vistas and narrow winding roads reveal an entirely different, more "local" personality behind this famous Hawaiian island.

Maui's Only Winery

Though the often humid, virtually season-less climate seems too treacherous for traditional grape growing, the 37-year presence of [Maui's Winery](#), with its volcano-side vineyards and wine-making reputation provides lessons in persistence and innovation that have clearly spelled success. Located on the lower slopes of 10,000-foot/3,000-meter Haleakala volcano, the landscape is cool and lush, the winery grounds shaded by huge-trunked trees to overcome even the hottest day.

The winery, on a segment of the much larger historic Ulupalakua Ranch property, offers an elegantly-designed Tasting Cottage "discovered" by about 180,000 visitors a year. There are also complimentary tours of the property three times a day and a fine museum with tales of Hawaii's 19th century plantation history featuring the last days of Hawaii's native royalty and the colorful culture of Hawaii's cowboys or paniolo.

The name, Maui's Winery, boldly says it all – there is only one on the island. Happily it produces a variety of internationally award-winning wines, among the most currently popular being a pineapple fruit wine exported to Japan, Canada, Switzerland and the U.S. mainland. Winery president and visionary, Paula Hegele, deserves much of the credit for the winery's creative vibrancy, constantly looking for ways to upgrade its 23-acre vineyard and considering new varietals based on the experience of non-traditional wine producing regions abroad.

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Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm

Nestled even higher on the slopes of the Haleakala volcano, the beautiful 13.5 manicured acres of the

[Ali'i Kula Lavender Farm](#) in Kula survey the central Maui isthmus and West Maui mountains from a 4,000 foot elevation. Comfortable walking shoes to enjoy the pathways and a light sweater or jacket in case a mist drifts across the mountain are advisable.

The farm is home to 55,000 lavender plants and 45 different varieties of lavender, olive trees, hydrangea and protea, created and cared for by agricultural artist and horticultural master, Mr. Ali'i Chang. On any given day he may be found nurturing his flowerbeds and lavender fields with passion and personal charm. Though his lavender beauties are not native to Maui, they thrive in Kula's perfect weather so that the lavender blooms year round.

Informative walking tours of 30 minutes are offered five times a day and golf cart tours twice a day, usually with Mr Chang himself at the wheel. There is a fragrant gift shop to take care of everyone on your lavender present list, and you may indulge in lavender herb tea and lavender scones or even a lunch picnic basket to enjoy in the grounds.

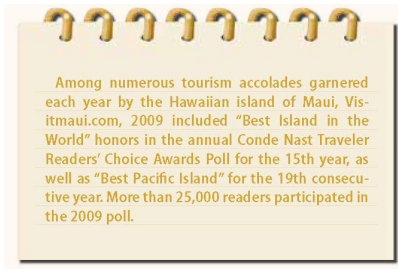
Surfing Goat Dairy

Looking for a new twist in their lives 11 years ago, German expatriates, Thomas and Eva Kafsack, decided to move to Hawaii and practice the art of gourmet cheese production. Quite a change from their previous occupations of heading a software company and teaching high school German in their home country! Their "new twist" was to start the [Surfing Goat Dairy](#). It is one of only two goat dairies in the state of Hawaii, beautifully situated in the rural Kula area on 42 lush green acres skirting the lower level of the volcano.



On the taste bud side, Surfing Goat Dairy produces over 30 award-winning cheeses from fresh creamy Chevre to Feta to ripened cheeses in wax, many with added ingredients such as herbs, spices or fruit. At the very least, you will want to sample the "Udderly Delicious" (plain) and the exotic "Pirate's Desire" (anchovies and capers) cheeses. All products are natural no hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, or herbicides are associated with this herd of four-footed cheese producers!

On the farm interest side, no reservation is required for "Casual Tours" or the "Evening Chores and Milking Tours". "Grand Tours" are offered on specific days for which reservations are advised (consult the website). While all these hands-on tours will appeal to any age of visitor, children particularly consider this farm visit a highlight of their stay on Maui.



Among numerous tourism accolades garnered each year by the Hawaiian island of Maui, Visitmaui.com, 2009 included "Best Island in the World" honors in the annual Conde Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards Poll for the 15th year, as well as "Best Pacific Island" for the 19th consecutive year. More than 25,000 readers participated in the 2009 poll.

By **Alison Gardner**

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