

Columbus Adventist Academy's Eighth-Grade Class Trip

By Sean Maycock

When I plan my class trip for my 8th graders, I try to ensure that the ideal class trip has some key elements. Hawaii checks all of my boxes and then some – air, land, and sea. This year, I took two classes – the class of 2022 and the class of 2020, who missed their class trip due to COVID.



Air, Land and Sea: the triple threat of first time experiences

My goal is to have my students experience things for the first time. For many of my students, the trip is the first time they have ever flown on airplane. Hawaii also marks the first time they have been to a tropical island. And finally, many students have never been to the ocean. I love giving students these new experiences.



Our class chaplain at the peak of Diamond Head Crater with Honolulu below



Some of the class of 2020 enjoying Kailua Beach

Almost everything we did in Hawaii was outside. There was the beach of course, but the Polynesian Cultural Center, the hike up Diamond Head, and the luau were all outside. But even beyond merely being outside or doing an outside activity was being exposed to nature in a way

that was both profoundly educational and new to my students. Our day at Hanauma Bay exemplified this. Hanauma Bay is a protected nature preserve containing a vibrant coral reef teeming with hundreds of species of fish – some that are found nowhere else in the world – as well as the occasional sea turtle or sea lion. Because the fish are used to people they tend not to scatter as you approach. As a result even my non-swimming students were able to dip their heads under waist deep water and see beautiful tropical fish. At Hanauma Bay you are not *at* the aquarium, you are *in* the aquarium. It's a priceless experience.



Even in water this shallow, the kids could see amazing fish at Hanauma Bay

One of my favorite things about Hawaii is being able to introduce students to a new culture. They get a taste of language, lifestyle, and yes, food, that is new to them. Most of my students have had little to no exposure to any Pacific Island culture and have limited knowledge of Asian cultures (which also have a strong presence in Hawaii). Their experiences at the Polynesian Cultural Center learning about the people of Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Fiji, and Hawaii was a rich experience. The kids get to try their hand at traditional cultural activities like starting a fire with two pieces of wood or learning some basic hula moves. They learn more about Hawaiian culture at the luau where they feast on Hawaiian cuisine, listen to Hawaiian music, and watch the beautiful and powerful dances of the various Polynesian cultures they've learned about. It's an added plus that my students can experience this "foreign" culture without needing a passport!



A student tries his hand at weaving a basket from pandanus leaves



A Tongan presenter shares about Tongan food



The students try out canoeing and...



... spear throwing



Some of the fellas with their (temporary) Fijian tattoos



At the Fijian section of the Polynesian Cultural Center

History is not usually my students' favorite part of any class trip. Those museum trips have to be in small doses, otherwise they zone out. Fortunately, our two history stops in Hawaii are both short and gripping, so they really register with the kids. First, we went to Iolani Palace, the only official royal residence on American soil. The palace was the last home of the Hawaiian kings

and queens before the monarchy was abolished with the imprisonment of the last Hawaiian monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, in one of the bedrooms of the palace.



The 2022 students outside Iolani Palace



Here's the class of 2020 in front of the palace

Also on a solemn note, is the visit to Pearl Harbor and the USS Arizona Memorial – the site of the Japanese attack on the United States that ushered our country into World War II. For this visit, I was already on my way home. Parent chaperones Belvia Jackson and Tricia Crawford stayed with the kids an extra two days in Hawaii.



The Class of 2020 at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial



The USS Arizona Memorial as seen from a distance

Our luau was at the Paradise Cove Luau on the western side of the Oahu. In addition to the delicious feast, we were treated to a lei greeting, a picture perfect sunset (we got lucky, but it almost felt like that sunset was part of the package), and a fantastic show featuring the music and dances of Polynesia. Obviously, the fire knife dancer from Samoa was a highlight.



The Class of 2022 at the Luau



Me with our class vice president



One of my students at the luau with her mom, who was one of our chaperones



Group Shot of the Class of 2020 at their Luau

The one thing we don't have in Hawaii is a "just for fun" day. This is not a must for me on class trips, but if we've covered the history, culture, and outdoors and we still have space in our trip, I'll throw in some time at the local amusement or theme park. What I love about Hawaii is that even though we don't have time for a "just for fun" day, it's also not needed. In between our planned activities, the kids can go shopping or grab an extra swim at Waikiki. But Hawaii is unique in that all of the other experiences we have are also really fun and interesting. As you

may have noted, each activity in Hawaii kills multiple birds with one stone. One event can be outdoors, historical, cultural, *and* fun. You can't beat that! We don't even bother swimming in the hotel pool (which is usually the number one thing kids want to do when we go on a school trip). I think we hit the pool once for about 40 minutes when we first got to Hawaii, while we were waiting for everyone to be ready to go to dinner and then a sunset swim at the beach. I found the pool small and crowded, and we never went back. And honestly, who goes all the way to Hawaii just to swim in the hotel pool!



Missing the fun? Not hardly!



Hiking Diamond Head Crater



Snorkeling at Hanauma Bay



Playing in the sand on Waikiki Beach

There's one final thing that makes Hawaii special. It's that it opens my students' eyes to the possibilities that life offers them. Visiting Hawaii makes them realize that the whole world is open for them to explore if they choose. They have options, choices that they can pursue and achieve with focus and hard work. They don't have to be excluded from places like Hawaii. They can not only visit Hawaii, but they realize they could live there if they wanted. Hawaii is the jumping off point to seeing the world.



Students from the class of 2022 in our Aloha shirts

Next year, as the class of 2023 considers its options for class trip, you can bet I'll be strongly encouraging them to consider Hawaii as the perfect trip!