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10 unforgettable trips for 2011

10 amazing trips we test-drove in 2010 – book one now for the New Year!

By DAVID LANDSEL

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2) GO LOCAL IN MAUI

HOW WE DID IT As most people experience it, Maui is a very pretty tourist trap. Few of the resorts on its sunny western shores are worth either the journey or the money for New Yorkers. Maybe Californians, who live a lot closer. But not New Yorkers, who can sit at Sheratons on nice beaches a lot closer to home anytime they want to, in places like Florida, or the Caribbean. Whatever – I'm glad there are so many suckers out there; I didn't think it was possible, but as soul-crushingly same-same as the one side of Maui can be, the majority of the island turned out to be a contrarian's paradise. You don't see a lot of tourists in terrific and terrifically cheap eateries like Sam Sato's or Tokyo Tei, over in workaday Wailuku, the county seat. You never have to fight Road to Hana-style traffic driving through the eucalyptus stands lining Olinda Road from the old ranch town of Makawao. Want a platter from the state's best shrimp truck? No lines of Japanese tourists (as on Oahu's North Shore) at the unimpeachable Geste's, located in a dusty lot by the harbor in Kahului. For an island that is so synonymous with tourism, there sure is a lot of ground that the tourists never seem to cover. Thank God.



DAVID LANDELS

The shave-ice queens of Maui behind the counter at Tom's Mini-Mart in Wailuku.

Photos: 10 trips for 2011

YOUR TURN Get the insider's view of Maui and its food scene – call Bonnie Friedman at Tour Da Food. Friedman's decades on the island combined with her passion for local culture (and eating) make her the ultimate ambassador for the real Maui. Her tours will lead you some rather unusual places; her sassy Brooklyn attitude will make New Yorkers feel right at home. Information at tourdafood.com.

3) CELEBRATE IN NEW ORLEANS

HOW WE DID IT In New Orleans, it's always a good time – some times are better than others, but at the end of the night, it's New Orleans, which puts it well ahead of, say, Harrisburg. Or Fresno. But the week last winter that packed in a nail biter of a mayoral election, way too many Mardi Gras parades inching down St. Charles Avenue and the Saints at the Super Bowl was a week that will go down in the annals of history, if only because it was one of the few nights in recent memory where locals (who, it must be said, can hold their liquor far better than most tourists) took back Bourbon Street for a festive, friendly and downright heartwarming celebration that