

(259-7933)—creating two radically different experiences. We brought along our 15-year-old nephew as a “consultant,” and the verdict from all of us was unanimous—Dolphin Quest is a *far* better experience.

This is an up-close-and-personal dolphin experience. You’ll even don masks to watch underwater as they swim by you. And you’ll touch them to your heart’s content. The only thing you won’t do is get pulled through the water by them (our nephew’s only complaint with Dolphin Quest since they do that at Sea Life Park). The trainers’ love and affection for these animals is obvious. Dolphin Quest’s dolphins live in a much nicer world than they do at Sea Life Park. Dolphin Quest is located at The Kahala Hotel and Resort, 15 minutes east of Waikiki. The same outfit does this on the Big Island and

Bermuda, and for most of the year it’s a good idea to reserve this a month in advance. For \$220, adults will spend about 25 minutes in the water with these mammals. For \$289 you get the same amount of water time plus a half-hour on the dock learning more about them. Kids 5–10 years old have a 2-hour program for \$275—20 minutes with the dolphins in the water and the rest at the beach, with some stingrays and other education experiences.

Sea Life Park has three programs—a \$99 short program where interaction is minimal, a \$165 program where you’ll get pulled through the water by them, and for \$215 you get all of the above *and* will have two dolphins push you around by your feet. For what it’s worth, the dolphins didn’t seem as healthy or happy here. (Granted, that’s a super-subjective observation and only our

It’s hard to say who’s mugging for the camera—the dolphin or the person.



Though your legs may still be shaking, stop on your way down from Mt. Olympus to admire the view of Honolulu.

admittedly untrained opinion.) And the swimming pool-like enclosures were smaller. The experience didn’t feel as intimate as it did at Dolphin Quest—more like being processed. And, of course, you also have to pay an additional \$29 to get into the park.

WA’AHILI RIDGE TO MT. OLYMPUS

Why put another ridge hike in the Adventures section? Simple. It’s fairly tough (2,600 feet of climbing and 5¾ miles round trip), there are steep areas where you can slip, and there are numerous places where a wrong step could be fatal. Yup, that’ll do it. But it also rewards you with a dramatic view of the windward side—from Coconut Island in Kane’ohe Bay to Bellows Beach south of Kailua—if the clouds are cooperating.

You’ll start at an elevation of 1,030 feet, and your objective is at 2,486 feet. Therefore, you’ll read in other places that

there’s about 1,500 feet of climbing. Yeah, you wish! What people seem to forget is that when a climbing-type trail undulates up and down, every downhill section on the way up to your goal means you have to gain that elevation three times. Once initially, once to regain it after a downhill, and again climbing *up* that downhill on the way back.

Right after the trailhead the trail splits—you’ll take the left fork. The trail is hot and windless in the beginning, and vegetation blocks all views. You’ll start climbing right away, then promptly lose much of the elevation you just sweated for. Get used to it. There will be some super steep sections followed by infuriating descents.

Keep an eye out on the left for some awesome views behind you of Honolulu. If you’re afraid of heights, you’ll hate some of the stretches where a narrow ridge trail straddles a horrible fall on both sides. You’ll probably also dislike