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GOING COCONUTS

AT MAUI'S PUNAKEA PALMS

The boutique farm focuses on all things coconut — and all things family

by MARTY WENTZEL

At Punakea Palms, Kai McPhee (right) shares his love of Hawaii's coconut crop.

PUNAKEA PALMS is a family affair. Island-raised owner Kai McPhee runs the west Maui coconut farm with his wife, Megan (the couple got married on an oceanview bluff there). His father — who planted the estate's coconuts more than 10 years ago — lives on the farm with Kai's mom

and Kai's sister and her kids.

A similar spirit of *ohana* (family) extends to guests on Punakea's two-hour tours, which offer a lively look at Hawaii's iconic coconut.

Participants can stroll around the upcountry expanse while admiring its 250 coconut trees — some of which are as tall as 100

feet. Visitors taste-test water from just-opened coconuts in various stages of maturity, and they munch on coconut meat of differing ripeness.

The experience culminates in an outdoor exhibition kitchen, where guests get involved in making — and slurping — their own coconut milk. Everyone receives a souvenir bottle of the rich, creamy results.

"Once you put coconut milk in your coffee or cereal, it's game over," McPhee said. "You'll never go back to regular milk."

McPhee makes learning fun as he talks about the many uses of the coconut, from its oil and fiber to its health benefits. He tailors conversations to the interests of each group, and he engages youngsters, asking them to describe what they are tasting and seeing. Since tours are limited to 10 people, multigenerational groups can take over the entire booking.

Guests can also browse the farm's new gift shop and pick up coconut-centric keepsakes, such as T-shirts, hats and cooking tools.

McPhee encourages families to bring a picnic lunch, which they can enjoy after the tour on the oceanview bluff. Plans call for the addition of a cafe selling fresh tastes from the farm.

"Personally, I have never met a coconut I didn't love," McPhee said. "I hope visitors feel the same way by the end of the tour." (www.punakea-palms.com)



MOON LANDING CELEBRATIONS

MAJOR MILESTONES

THIS JULY MARKS the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11's seminal moon landing in 1969. To celebrate the momentous event, Space Center Houston is hosting nine days of special activities for kids – and adults – to discover NASA's history. The celebration will

launch July 16, the same day Apollo 11 lifted off, and culminate in full-day festivities July 20, the anniversary of the moon landing itself. The celebration will conclude July 24, the date Apollo 11 returned to Earth 50 years ago.

The all-day celebration on July 20 will comprise book signings, an evening concert, late-night tours to Rocket Park and more. Panel presentations throughout the day will introduce visitors to topics such as lunar module operations and lunar science experiments.

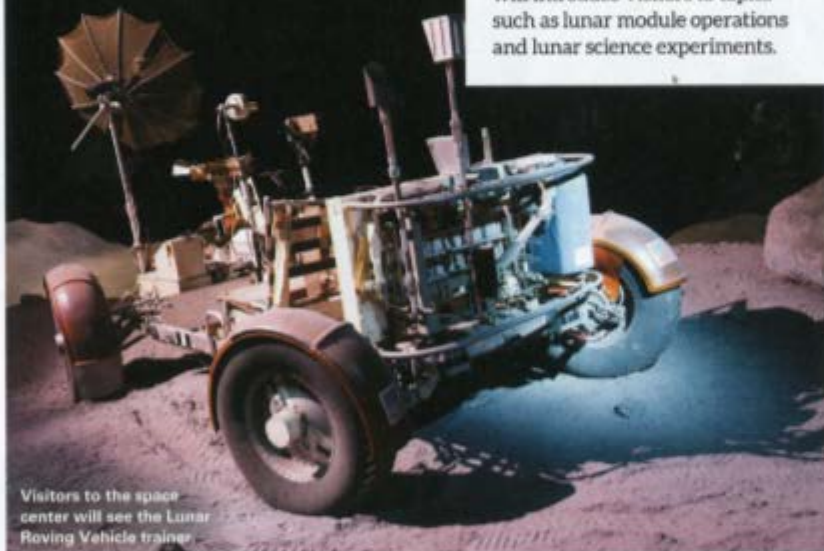
VIP packages will include additional experiences, such as a tour of Apollo Mission Control Center – where the Apollo 11 mission was operated – and a special presentation by a range of Apollo-era experts.

Here are some of the other recurring events presented by Space Center Houston.

Tram Tours: Every day from July 16-24, the center's NASA tram tour will take visitors to the Apollo Mission Control Center, which will be restored to its 1960s look.

Pop-Up Science Labs: These Apollo 11-themed labs will let kids interact with science and engineering firsthand. Workshops will help them understand what went into making the first moon walk happen.

Lunch With Apollo Flight Controllers: On July 16 and 24, participants will enjoy a lunch and discussion with an Apollo-era flight controller and get the chance to ask about experiences and memories from the mission. On July 18, there is a similar lunch with the descendants of Apollo-era astronauts and flight controllers. (www.spacecenter.org) – Kristie Chairil



Visitors to the space center will see the Lunar Roving Vehicle trainer.

TOUR OPERATORS

KID-APPROVED ITINERARY

BIG FIVE TOURS & EXPEDITIONS has announced the first itinerary created by its recently launched Kids Council, a junior think tank put together by the tour operator to discover what children ages 6 to 15 see as important to them when they travel. The new itinerary, India Kids Council Approved, offers experiences that include exploring the natural habitat of tigers in Panna National Park, visiting the one-of-a-kind Sulabh International Museum of Toilets and taking a family Segway tour through New Delhi.

"If you want to change the world, set out on a path that inspires confidence with the ones who will one day be in charge," said Ashish Sanghrajka, president of Big Five. "Let them see that their opinions can make a difference now, and they will be more willing to lead the changes of the future." (www.bigfive.com) – Kenneth Shapiro



Families can enjoy a Segway tour in New Delhi, India.