

Lahaina

West Maui's Favorite

Stables

Eco-Adventure

IMAGINE: THE MAJESTY of the West Maui mountain range (Mauna Kahalawai), its verdant valleys and peaks rising above the vast blue of the ocean and sky. Now imagine yourself planted in the middle of this natural beauty, sitting atop a graceful horse who gently takes you across the landscape and back through Hawaii's history.

"The Morning Historical Ride was amazing; from the beautiful rainbows to the guides; informative, running commentary on Hawaiian history, culture and fauna, my family thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Your horses are the best."

-Emily C., San Francisco, CA

Lahaina Stables is the only activity company offering trail rides from Kauaula Valley, culturally significant to ancient Hawaiians, to Launiupoko Valley, an integral part of Maui's sugar plantation era. Owner Ray Fuqua, a 25-year Maui resident, started 'Ohe'o Stables in Hana 14 years ago, then moved the business to Lahaina in 2004 with the idea of sharing West Maui's scenic beauty, local history and rich folklore with smaller, more intimate groups of riders.

The Historical Early Ride meanders from Makila Plantation about 1.5 miles up and into Launiupoko Valley, revealing expansive views of the Pacific Ocean, islands of Kahoolawe, Lana'i and Moloka'i, and picturesque Lahaina Harbor, stretching across

the main part of town. Along the way, thick stands of kiawe and endemic wiliwili trees are punctuated by native dry land plants sprouting from rock formations and remnants of sugar plantation water flumes.



For almost 150 years sugarcane was grown on these foothill slopes, fed by the waters flowing from numerous mountain streams. The tour's leisurely pace allows all guests to take advantage of many photo opportunities. Often, riders are treated to sightings of the rare Hawaiian owl (Pueo) along with a variety of songbirds and

"This ride was the best thing we've done on Maui. Lovely terrain and unbelievable views. I actually saw a Pueo pick up a mouse off the trail! Can you imagine? The wild kingdom in Lahaina. Now back to the honeymoon. We'll be back on our three-year anniversary." - Lauren E., Dallas, TX

coveys of francolin quail. Throughout the ride, the trail guide shares a lot of intriguing trivia, history and lore about Hawai'i; the type of information varies each time, depending on the guests' interests.



Near the 800 foot elevation, across Launiupoko Streambed and into the valley, riders dismount to take a relaxing break in the shade of a thatched hale halawai, or meeting house, built in the ancient Hawaiian style and perched beside a freshwater reservoir stocked with ducks. Snacks and beverages are included during this two-hour adventure.

The Lunch Ride takes about two and a half hours and includes a freshly made sandwich, chips, dessert and soft drinks. Offered in the early evening, the Sunset Ride is a real treat when you consider the 180-degree view of West Maui's spectacular sunsets. On all rides, closed-toe shoes and long pants are required.

Ray Fuqua offers this about his horses and trail rides: "One of the real pleasures of my job is seeing how being around horses can have a positive effect on people. We're positioned to be here a long time and to share a great experience, not only with visitors, but with the local community."

He recently completed construction on a riding arena where dressage and riding lessons will be offered, as well as children's summer camps.

"Way cool ride! I love that we got to canter these incredibly responsive horses. I liked the way you divided our group according to riding ability. The guides were a blast! They all obviously enjoy their job and take great care of your horses. Great job!"

-Cindy S., Philadelphia, PA

Fuqua considers horses to be one of life's greatest instructors. "Horses teach you self-confidence," he says. "We all have fears that keep us from moving forward in our lives. Many of our guests sign up for a ride just because their husband, wife or kids want to do it.

"They get on a horse and it's obvious they're petrified," Fuqua says. "But by the time they get back from the ride, they've got big smiles on their faces and they look like they've conquered the world. Not only did they accomplish something that they never thought they could do, they discovered it was a whole lot of fun?"

To book a Lahaina Stables ride, call (808) 661-4996