

Ruby Wax

When the comedian began to think her jam-packed lifestyle might send her crazy, she stepped off the fast lane for a restorative break on the beach in Hawaii

Halfway through last year, my life hit saturation point. I was creating lists of things to do that filled every second of the day. My life was so full, I didn't have time to think about it; like, did I like it? It was as if I was on a game show, a race against time, with no prizes and no finish. I even started trying to up the adrenalin. I'd get a bonus point if I had a meeting at 3pm and managed to buy a lampshade at 2:55pm when I didn't need a lampshade. I'd always thought that if I finally went crazy, it would be in some deep, Kafka-esque, angst-ridden way – not by making banal lists. But it's hard to know what to do about this kind of situation when you are nuts and on a mission.

Luckily, earlier in the year when I was still sane, I had booked a family holiday to Hawaii. My husband managed to get me on the plane to Honolulu after I insisted we stop to buy another lampshade. Cheaper than the Priory and faster-working than pills, it changed my life.

In Hawaii, every sense is accosted by

splendour, so the list-making stops because you're so in awe of the natural beauty. The place is a flower arrangement. It's prom night every day, with blindingly bright pink, orange and gash-red flora, each more Disney-dazzling than the next. And then there's a sea that hurts your eyes it's so blue, with velvet-green mountains that jut out of the waves as thousand-foot waterfalls smash over them. You don't register any weather but a slight breeze, which feels like God, or someone like that, is wrapping his arms around you.

I stayed at the Halekulani, which means 'house befitting heaven'. You never want to leave, as teams of nurse-like people make sure your every whim is fulfilled. The spa has its own meditative vibe, specialising in Samoan, Polynesian and hot-stone Hawaiian massage. The masseuse had those warm, healing hands that make you feel you want to marry her. She dripped divine essential oils on my feet (to keep them calm), then washed them as if I were Jesus on Maundy Thursday.

Honolulu has its own Nobu, the owner of which, Robert De Niro, was staying at the hotel. Nobu wasn't my favourite. I had to say: 'Bob, it's a good restaurant, but not the best here.' I think Bob cried. The best restaurant I have ever been to in my life is La Mer, at the Halekulani. I ate tournedos of Japanese Wagyu beef, which was orally orgasmic. Apparently, they massage the cow and send it to spas so it has no idea what's coming. By the time they kill it, it has evolved spiritually, and this is why

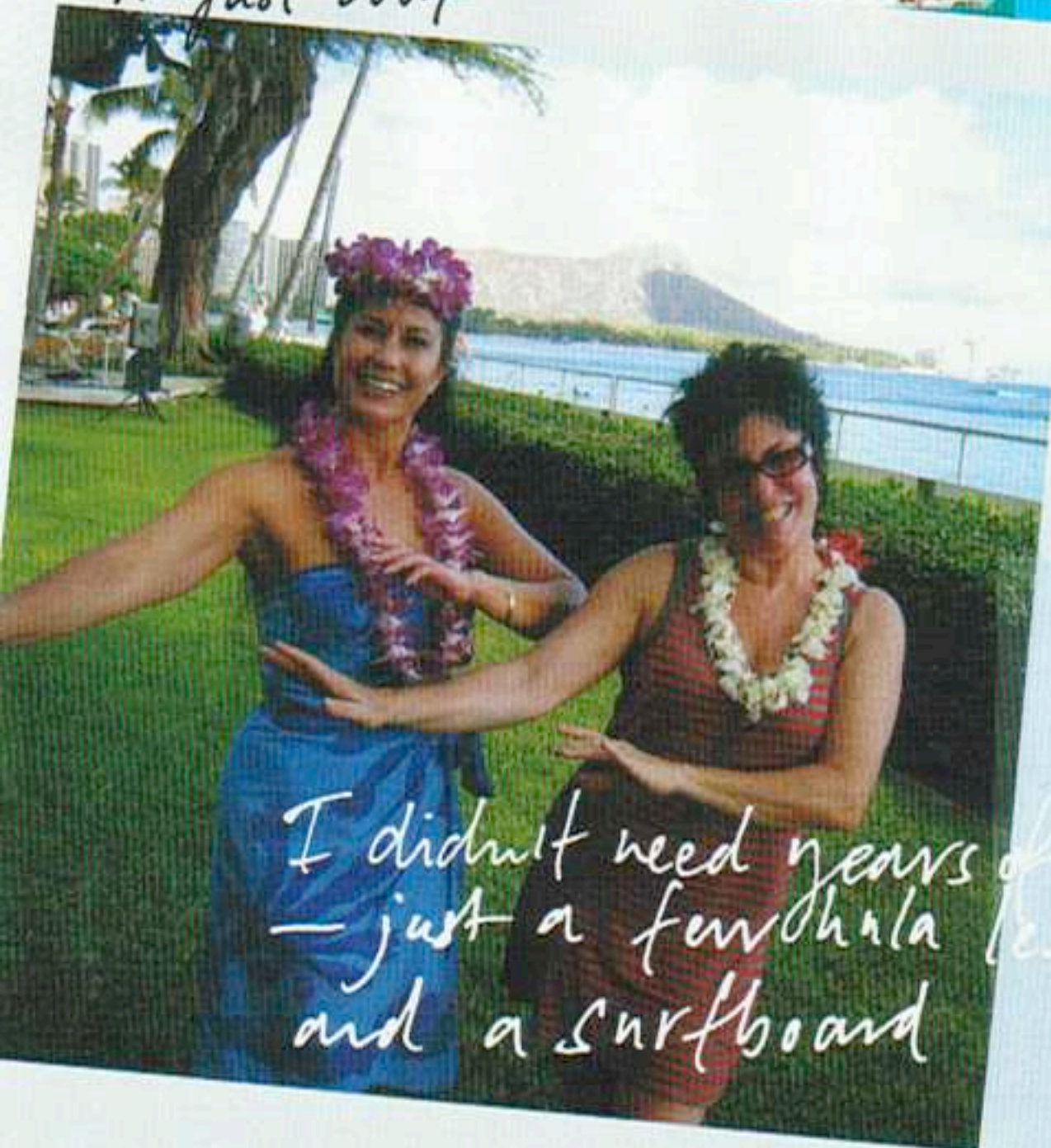
it tastes so good (I'm guessing).

Want to liberate yourself from an overactive brain? Go surfing. My teacher, Ty, a hunk with a washboard stomach, lay on his board in front of me and put his big toe on the front of my board. He did the paddling; I filed my nails. Then he turned me round, gave me a push and, *voilà*, I stood. I stood because I loved him, and did not want to disappoint as he shrieked: 'You go girl, don't mush out or rag doll; hang ten all the way to paradise!' I did it for Ty, though my toenails had to be gouged out of the surfboard later. In the video they gave me, I look like a hunchback with constipation. And while I'm on that topic, I also have to say that listening to Hawaiian music is like getting a sound enema; it lulls you into flat-line calm.

The people are smiley and don't come heavily equipped with a lot of culture. The only culture I could spot was the hula, and challenging it's not – just three hand movements to show rainfall, sun and moon while you hump the air. And here's what finally clinched my return to health. Hawaii costs nothing compared with the Maldives, the Caribbean and Europe. It's America, and hurrah, the dollar has lost its pants. I returned calm and serene; I did not need years of Freudian analysis – just a few hula lessons, some sushi and a surfboard. How shallow am I?

Halekulani (+1 808 923 2311; www.halekulani.com), from \$590 a room a night. For more information on Hawaii, visit www.hawaii-tourism.co.uk.

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