

It is amazing how easy it is to forget that you are still mortal while on vacation. In my own town, I often marvel at the stupidity of tourists, But when I am a tourist myself, I definitely end up in the running for idiot of the week award. My recent episode with jet ski rentals in Hawaii is a case in point. I was on vacation with my family on the big island, showing my kids all the sites. They loved the sandy beaches, the beautiful blue of the ocean, and all the traditional splendor of Hawaii, but like most teenagers they wanted thrills. They begged and pleaded and finally I gave in. We went to find jet skis for rent.

You would be amazed at how cavalier the jet ski rental place was about safety. They had us sign a legal disclaimer - they never forget that - but they gave us only the most cursory explanation about how to ride jet skis. After a brief safety lecture, they let us out on the bay all but unsupervised. They said jet skiing was easy, but I soon found out that they were mistaken.

If you are ever going to take out jet ski rentals, let me give you some free advice: don't do it on the ocean. Especially, don't go out on the ocean around Hawaii. Whatever they say about the conditions that particular day, it is likely to be too much for you. Even on a calm day, the surf can get pretty big. Of course, we found this out the hard way. As soon as we had boarded the jet ski rentals, we were flying across the waves almost completely out of control. My children almost collided two times before I stopped it. We decided to take the rentals back for a partial refund, believing that safety was more important than one fun day. The guy wouldn't refund any money, even though we had only been out for about 20 minutes. Honestly, it didn't matter too much to me. I was just happy to be alive.

If you have contemplated jet ski rentals in the past, remember this: they are dangerous pieces of equipment. You would actually do better to let your kids power motorboats unsupervised than to let them take jet skis on the water. They are difficult to control, but they have enough power to ram and kill a human. Sometimes, they even turn around and hit riders who land in the water.