



O'ahu

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Why Go?

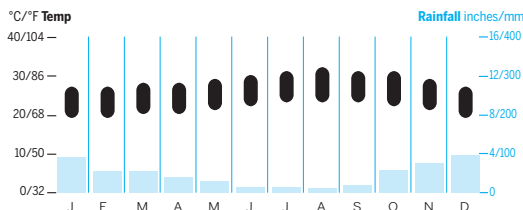
Nicknamed 'The Gathering Place,' O'ahu is home to nearly three-quarters of Hawaii's residents. Landing at Honolulu's airport plunges you into the urban jungle, but relax – this is still Polynesia. Even among the high-rises of downtown Honolulu, you'll find power brokers in breezy aloha shirts.

The jangling nerve center of the archipelago brings you face-to-face with contemporary Hawaii as it really is, not just a postcard fantasy. O'ahu has the most complex, multi-ethnic society in the islands, and through it all pulses the lifeblood of Hawaiian traditions, including at ancient heiau (stone temples).

O'ahu is not just a transit point en route to the Neighbor Islands. It's the thrill-of-a-lifetime adventure. Here you can surf the North Shore's giant waves, hike atop knife-edged *pali* (cliffs), dive into Hanauma Bay's outdoor fishbowl, go windsurfing or kayak to uninhabited islands off Kailua and still be back in Waikiki for sunset drinks. No worries, brah.

When to Go

Honolulu



Apr Sunnier skies; peak crowds depart after Easter and spring break; Waikiki's Spam Jam.

Sept Room rates drop after summer vacation; arts and cultural festivals in Honolulu and Waikiki.

Mid-Nov–mid-Dec Triple Crown of Surfing champs invade the North Shore just before high season.

History

Around AD 1350, Ma'ilikukahi, the ancient *mo'i* (king) of O'ahu, moved his capital to Waikiki, a coastal wetland known for its fertile farmlands and abundant fishing, as well as being a place of recreation and healing. O'ahu's fall to Kamehameha the Great in 1795 signaled the beginning of a united Hawaiian kingdom. Kamehameha later moved his royal court to Honolulu ("Sheltered Bay").

In 1793 the English frigate *Butterworth* became the first foreign ship to sail into what is now Honolulu Harbor. In the 1820s, Honolulu's first bars and brothels opened to international whaling crews. Protestant missionaries began arriving around the same time. Honolulu replaced Lahaina as the capital of the kingdom of Hawai'i in 1845. Today Hawaii's first church is just a stone's throw from 'Iolani Palace.

In the 1830s, sugar became king of O'ahu's industry. Plantation workers from across Asia and Europe were brought to fill the island's labor shortage. The names of some of Honolulu's richest and most powerful plantation families – Alexander, Baldwin, Cooke and Dole – read like rosters from the first mission ships. The 19th century ended with the Hawaiian monarchy violently overthrown in Honolulu, creating a short-lived independent republic dominated by sugar barons and ultimately annexed by the USA in 1898.

During WWII after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, O'ahu was placed under martial law. As civil rights were suspended, a detention

center for Japanese Americans and resident aliens was established on Honolulu's Sand Island, and later an internment camp was established in the Honouliuli area of Kunia Rd in central O'ahu. The federal government didn't apologize for these injustices until 1988.

After WWII, modern jet-age travel and baby-boom prosperity provided O'ahu with a thriving tourism business to replace its declining shipping industry. In the 1960s and '70s, the Hawaiian renaissance flowered, especially on the University of Hawai'i's Manoa campus and after the successful voyage of the *Hokule'a* (p571) to Tahiti, first launched from O'ahu's Windward Coast.

By the 1980s, rampant tourist development had overbuilt Waikiki and turned some of O'ahu's agricultural land into water-thirsty golf courses and sprawling resorts. The island's last sugar mills closed in the 1990s, leaving O'ahu more heavily dependent on tourism than ever. Debates about economic diversification, sustainable tourism and the continuing US military presence continue today.

National, State & County Parks

Even though O'ahu is Hawaii's most populous island, nature sits right outside of Waikiki's high-rise hotels. About 25% of the island is protected natural areas. The entire coastline is dotted with beaches, while the lush mountainous interior is carved by hiking trails, including in forest reserves just above Honolulu's steel skyscrapers.

O'AHU IN...

Two Days

Got only a weekend in the sun? Then it's all about you and **Waikiki**, baby. Laze on the beach, learn to surf, and enjoy the sunset torch lighting and hula. The next day get up early to snorkel at **Hanauma Bay**, then hike up **Diamond Head** or out to the lighthouse at **Makapu'u Point** in the afternoon. Reward yourself with a few sunset mai tais on a **catamaran cruise** or at the Halekulani's **House Without a Key**.

Four Days

With two extra days, rent a car or hop on a bus to the **North Shore** and **Windward Coast**. Stop off wherever golden beaches catch your eye – especially, say, around **Waimea** or **Kailua Bays**. Spend at least a full morning or afternoon exploring the capital city of **Honolulu**, with its impressive museums, historical sites, revitalized Chinatown arts scene and nightlife, or visit the WWII memorials at **Pearl Harbor**.

One Week

Switch over to island time; take everything a little more slowly. Complete your circle-island tour by cruising past the nearly empty beaches of the **Wai'anae Coast** out to **Ka'ena Point**.