



# O'ahu

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## Why Go?

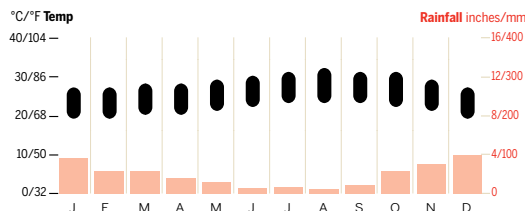
O'ahu is much more than just a transit point en route to the Neighbor Islands. It's the thrill-of-a-lifetime adventure. Here you can surf the North Shore's giant waves, hike atop knife-edged *pali* (cliffs), dive into Hanauma Bay's outdoor fishbowl, go windsurfing or kayak to uninhabited islands off Kailua – and still be back in Waikiki for sunset drinks.

Nicknamed 'The Gathering Place,' the capital island 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 see palm trees and power brokers in breezy aloha shirts.

Like Honolulu-born President Obama, O'ahu is proud of its multicultural heritage, and through it pulses the life-blood of Hawaiian traditions. A short drive from the modern city lies 'the country,' with its beckoning two-lane roads and all-natural beaches where sea turtles bask.

## When to Go

### Honolulu



**May–Jun** Sunny skies; fewer crowds after Easter's spring break and before summer vacation.

**Sep–Oct** Low-season discounts; big festivals in Honolulu and Waikiki.

**Nov–Dec** Triple Crown of Surfing sweeps the North Shore.

## History

Around AD 1450, 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 just as prudish Protestant missionaries began arriving from New England. 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 Asia and Europe were brought in to fill the 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 at Honolulu's 'Iolani Palace, creating a short-lived independent republic dominated by sugar barons and ultimately annexed by the USA.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, O'ahu was placed under martial law during WWII. As many 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 built in the Honouliuli area of central O'ahu. The US 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 1970s the Hawaiian renaissance flowered, especially on the University of Hawai'i at Manoa campus and after the successful wayfaring voyage of the *Hokule'a* canoe 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 and the continuing US military presence continue today.

## National, State & County Parks

Although O'ahu is Hawaii's most populous island, nature awaits right outside Waikiki's high-rise hotels. About 25% of the island is

### O'AHU IN...

#### One Day

Got only a day in the sun? Then it's all about you and **Waikiki**, baby. Laze on the sand, learn to surf, pose for a pic with the Duke Kahanamoku statue and catch the sunset torch lighting and hula show at **Kuhio Beach Park**. After dark, join the buzzing crowds for dinner and drinks along oceanfront Kalakaua Ave, or find local *grinds* (food) and watering holes on neighborhood side streets.

#### Three Days

The next day get up early to snorkel at **Hanauma Bay**, then hike up **Diamond Head** or to the lighthouse atop **Makapu'u Point** in the afternoon. Reward yourself with sunset mai tais on a **catamaran cruise** or at the Halekulani's **House Without a Key** beach bar. Spend a full morning or afternoon exploring the capital city of **Honolulu**, with its top-notch museums and historical sites, then dive into the arts, shopping, food and nightlife scenes of **Chinatown**. Take time to detour to the mighty WWII memorials at **Pearl Harbor**.

#### Five Days

Switch over to island time and take everything mo' slowly. Rent a car or hop on a bus over to the surf-kissed **North Shore** and **Windward Coast**. Stop off wherever white-sand beaches catch your eye, or to explore tiny towns like **Hale'iwa** and **Kailua**. Complete your circle-island tour by cruising past the wide-open horizons of the **Wai'anae Coast** for a windy walk out to **Ka'ena Point**.