

Welcome to Hawaii

It's easy to see why Hawaii has become synonymous with paradise. Just look at these sugary beaches, Technicolor coral reefs and volcanoes beckoning adventurous spirits.

Natural Beauty

Snapshots of these islands scattered in a cobalt blue ocean are heavenly, without the need for any tourist-brochure embellishment. Sunrises and sunsets are so spectacular that they're cause for celebration all by themselves. As tropical getaways go, Hawaii couldn't be easier or more worth the trip, although visiting these Polynesian islands isn't always cheap. Whether you're dreaming of swimming in waterfall pools or lazing on golden-sand beaches, you'll find what you're looking for here.

Go Play Outside

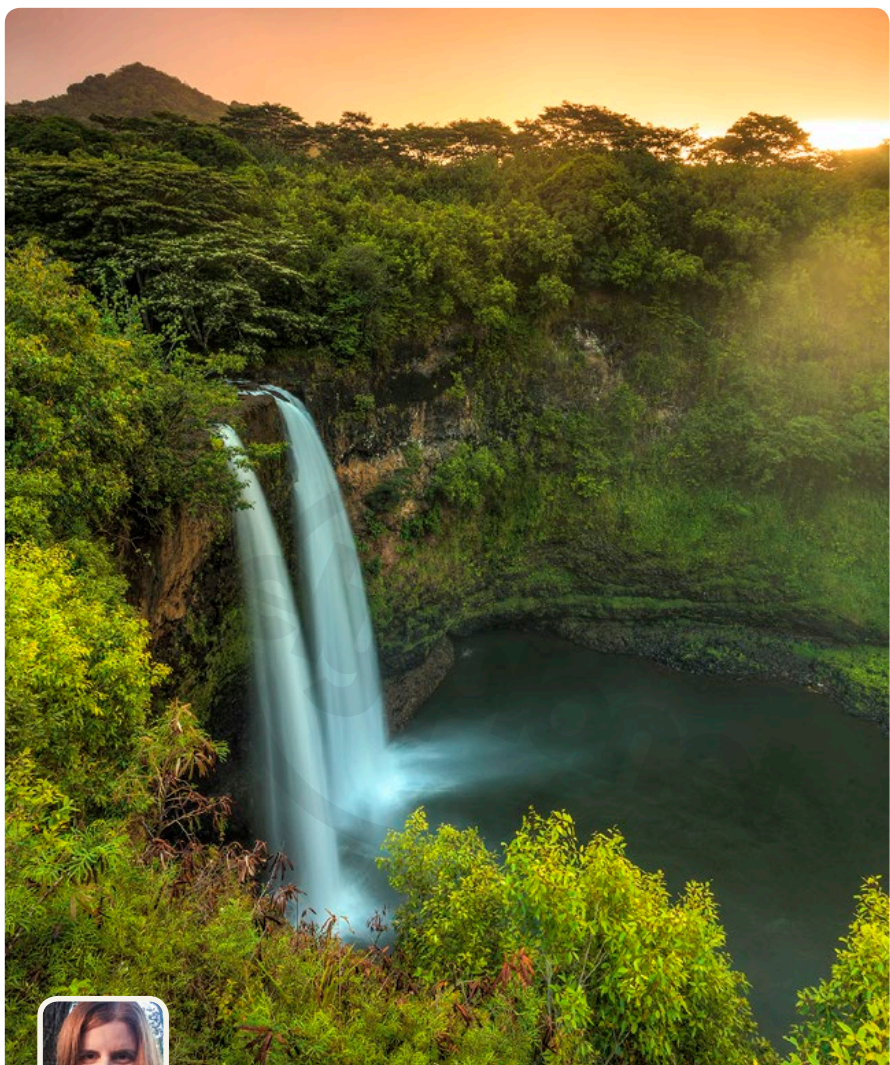
Just as in days of old, life in Hawaii is lived outdoors. Whether it's surfing, swimming, fishing or picnicking with the *'ohana* (extended family and friends), encounters with nature are infused with the traditional Hawaiian value of *aloha 'aina* – love and respect for the land. Go hiking across ancient lava flows and fluted *pali* (sea cliffs). Learn to surf, the ancient Hawaiian sport of 'wave sliding,' and then snorkel or dive with giant manta rays and sea turtles. Kayak to a deserted offshore island or hop aboard a winter whale-watching cruise. Back on land, ride horseback with *paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboys).

Island Style

Floating all by itself in the middle of the Pacific, Hawaii proudly maintains its own identity apart from the US mainland. Spam, shave ice, surfing, ukulele and slack key guitar music, hula, pidgin, 'rubbah slippah' (flip-flops) – these are just some of the touchstones of everyday life, island style. Pretty much everything here feels easygoing, low-key and casual, bursting with genuine aloha and fun. You'll be equally welcome whether you're a globe-trotting surf bum, a beaming couple of fresh-faced honeymooners or a big, multigenerational family with rambunctious kids.

Modern Multiculturalism

Hawaii is as proud of its multicultural heritage as it is of island-born US President Barack Obama. On these islands, the descendants of ancient Polynesians, European explorers, American missionaries and Asian plantation immigrants mix and mingle. What's remarkable about contemporary Hawaii is that multiculturalism is the rule, not the exception. Boisterous arts and cultural festivals keep diverse community traditions alive, from Hawaiian hula and outrigger canoe races to Japanese *taiko* drumming.



Why I Love Hawaii

By Sara Benson, Coordinating Author

On my first trip to Hawaii, I landed on Maui almost broke and with my luggage lost in transit. No problem: I camped by the beach, plucked ripe guava from trees and spent days hiking in Haleakalā National Park. Since that serendipitous first island sojourn, I've lived and traveled around the archipelago, from the Big Island's geological wonderland to the emerald river valleys of Kaua'i to the big city of Honolulu, whose backstreets now seem as familiar as my own hometown. When it comes to Hawaii, I'm always ready to go again. *Hana hou!*

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