

Welcome to Honolulu, Waikiki & O'ahu

O'ahu attacks your senses. Tropical aromas and temperatures, turquoise waters, a kaleidoscope of colorful fish, verdant rainforest and sensuous scenery, plus so much to do.

Island Life

Spam, surfing, hula, ukulele, pidgin, rubbah slippah (flip-flops) – these are just some of the touchstones of everyday life on O'ahu. People are easygoing, low-key and casual, bursting with genuine aloha and fun. Everyone knows how lucky they are to be living in this tropical paradise and O'ahu proudly maintains its own identity apart from the US mainland. You'll feel welcome whether you're a globe-trotting surf bum, a fresh-faced honeymoon couple or part of a big 'ohana (extended family) with grandparents and kids tagging along.

Unparalleled Melting Pot

O'ahu, like the rest of the Hawaiian islands, is proud of its multicultural heritage. The nerve center of the archipelago brings you face to face with Hawaii as it really is, not just a postcard fantasy. All over this island, nicknamed 'the Gathering Place,' pulses the Native Hawaiian lifeblood, from ancient heiau (stone temples) to sacred hula dances and chants. Mix in the descendants of European explorers, American missionaries and Asian plantation-worker immigrants, plus recent arrivals from all over the Pacific, and you have one of the most multicultural communities on the globe. Boisterous festivals help keep diverse traditions alive.

Hawaiian Heartland

There's another side of O'ahu: the 'country,' where farms and dirt roads lead deep into a passionate Hawaiian heartland. Where anti-development slogans like 'Keep the Country Country' are everywhere and locals want a fair go to enjoy life in their much-loved and appreciated natural environment. On some wild, rugged and nearly deserted beaches, sea turtles still outnumber surfers. Set your watch to island time and cruise past the Windward Coast's emerald valleys, rustic ranches and roadside shrimp trucks, savor Central O'ahu's rich volcanic soils and pineapple fields, or lose yourself on the rural Wai'anae Coast.

Outdoor Adventures

O'ahu has so much going on, especially if you like sun, sand and adventure. Playing in or on the water could keep you happy for months. Learn to surf, and if you're already good, hit the big waves on the North Shore; bodyboard at Waimanalo, stand up paddle at Hale'iwa, dive into Hanauma Bay's giant fishbowl, or windsurf or kayak in Kailua Bay. On the land, hike up Diamond Head or atop knife-edged *pali* (cliffs). Up top, jump out of a plane or soar in a glider above the North Shore; circle the island in a helicopter. It's all there waiting.



Why I Love Honolulu, Waikiki & O'ahu

By Craig McLachlan, Writer

As a Kiwi from the southern end of the Polynesian triangle, I have a treasured affinity with and love for O'ahu. This is the most multicultural, happy, family-friendly place I've encountered; I knew I was somewhere exceptional when we enrolled our *hapa* (mixed heritage) kids at Waikiki School where every child feels the aloha. And I just love bodyboarding or lolling in the waves at Waimanalo Beach, watching a stream of beaming couples and entourages turn up for 'beach weddings'. O'ahu has a wonderful experience waiting for everyone who shows up to make the most of it.

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