The best places to eat, sleep and play in Honolulu this spring and summer

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INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you’ll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.

Inside HONOLULU

Thanks to Don Ho and the Brady Bunch, Honolulu may not seem like the once perfect paradise the wealthy steamship cruisers of the ’20s and ’30s found. Waikiki is now lined with malls and cement hotels, but you couldn’t find a more ideal place to put them – along one of the world’s truly great stretches of sand, with the mystical Diamond Head Crater looming beyond. The weather is nearly always warm, but not too hot, and the whole city is cooled by gentle trade winds. With its multi-ethnic populace, Honolulu is the perfect marriage of American convenience and alluring exotic flavor.

The island of Oahu is nicknamed “The Gathering Place,” because the vast majority of the state’s population lives here. Away from Honolulu, the rest of the isle is surprisingly rural and untouched. But Honolulu’s cleanliness, friendliness, sheer beauty and spirit of “aloha” still shine through magnificently after all these years.

PACKING TIPS

1. Most hotels have beach supplies, or they’re cheap enough to buy in Honolulu. “Packed beach towels, but never needed them!”—TripAdvisor Member, Reisterstown, Md.

2. Leave the heavy fabrics and materials at home. Pack tropical wear like “shorts and capri pants. No need for jeans really, unless you plan to hike through the brush.”—TripAdvisor Member, Indianapolis, Ind.

3. Honolulu is in the tropics, so don’t be surprised by the bugs. “My local sports store had little travel sizes of insect repellent with DEET. This is supposed to be the best for the monster mosquitoes near the waterfall areas.”—TripAdvisor Member, Texas

4. “The sun is so strong in Oahu. If you burn on day one, you will have a lousy vacation. Take a cap for your head because your scalp will burn too, even if you have a lot of hair.”—TripAdvisor Member, Indianapolis, Ind.
**HONOLULU’S BEST VIEWS**

“Do not miss the walk up to the rim of the Punchbowl—the view is spectacular! All of Honolulu is laid out before you, with the ocean as far as the eye can see.”—TripAdvisor Member, Washington

National Cemetery of the Pacific, 2177 Puowaina Dr., 808 532 3720.

A lot of tourists miss the Ala Moana Beach Park, a local favorite. “Soak up the rays or walk along the beach and around adjacent Magic Island for spectacular views of the harbor and skyline. Sit on the end of Magic Island and watch the local surfers do their thing.”—TripAdvisor Member, Honolulu

Ala Moana Beach Park, 1201 Ala Moana Blvd

“The walk up Diamond Head is sensational. We did it with our toddler this time; my husband carried our son on his shoulders the whole way. It is quite rocky from about one third of the way up, and you can’t take a stroller. The stairs close to the top are a killer. Once you get there, the view is superb!”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia

Diamond Head, Diamond Head Road, 808 587 0300

**FAMILIES**

To bond with our mammal cousins of the Pacific, book a trip on Wildside Specialty Tours’ dolphin snorkeling excursions. “My husband got to snorkel next to the dolphins. He loved it! We then went and stayed right by the dolphins for close to an hour. The biologists were friendly, knowledgeable and very helpful.”—TripAdvisor Member, Colleyville, Texas

Wildside Specialty Tours, Waianae Boat Harbor, Slip A-11, 808 306 7273

The Polynesian Cultural Center, on the island’s northern shore, has shows, hands-on activities and games all tailored for kids. “Maybe the place has gotten a little commercialized over the years, as so many places do. But I still loved it. The grounds are beautiful; the employees are very friendly and the Horizons show was a great welcome to the Islands.”—TripAdvisor Member, Newport Beach, Calif.

Polynesian Cultural Center, 55-370 Kamehameha Hwy., Laie, 808 293 3333

“...a great welcome to the Islands.”

**ROMANCE**

“Cocktail cruises give you the opportunity to look at Waikiki from the ocean as it lights up for the night. Dance and dine the evening away from the deck of the ship.”—TripAdvisor Member, Acton, Mass.

Na Hoku Cocktail Cruises, Waikiki Beach, http://www.nahokus.com

Ride horses on a rural ranch overlooking the ocean, not far from Honolulu. “We went horseback riding at Kualoa Ranch, the two-hour ride. It was BEAUTIFUL.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Antonio, Texas

Kualoa Ranch & Activity Club, 49-560 Kamehameha Hwy., Kaaawa, 808 237 8515

“...if you’re going for a romantic getaway, I highly suggest you visit Mount Tantalus when the stars are out. It’s a beautiful view of Honolulu and Waikiki. If you don’t make it all the way to the top, not to fret because you will see all kinds of amazing spectacles on the road up.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York, N.Y.

Mount Tantalus, Round Top Drive

**Where to PLAY**

**TOP 10 Attractions**

1. USS Arizona Memorial, 1 Arizona Memorial Place, 808 422 3300
2. Pearl Harbor, 850 Ticonderoga St., 808 473 1222
3. National Cemetery of the Pacific, 2177 Puowaina Drive, 808 566 1430
4. Diamond Head, Diamond Head Road, 808 587 0300
5. Lyon Arboretum, 3860 Manoa Road, University of Hawaii-Manoa, 808 988 0456
6. USS Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park, 11 Arizona Memorial Drive, 808 423 1341
7. Iolani Palace, 364 South King St., 808 522 0822
8. Koko Head Crater Trail Hike, 8800 Kalanianaole Hwy.,
9. Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve, 7455 Kalaniana’ole Hwy., 808 396 4229
10. Shangri La, 4055 Papu Circle, 808 734 1941

**Na Hoku Cocktail Cruises, Waikiki Beach, http://www.nahokus.com**

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Where to PLAY

BUDGET

“We were blown away by the Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl. Mosaic murals explain all the battles of the Pacific front. It’s hard to explain the hushed quality of this vast space; it has the feeling of a lush outdoor cathedral.”—TripAdvisor Member, Washington
National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, 2177 Puowaina Dr., 808 532 3720

ADVENTURE

“Check out the glider rides at Dillingham Airfield on the North Shore near Haleiwa. You’ll go up to 4,000 feet and stay aloft a half hour or so. You can see all the way back to Honolulu and get a great view of the North Shore, the ocean, the mountains.”—TripAdvisor Member, Maryland
Honolulu Soaring, Dillingham Airfield, Waialua, 808 637 0207

EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL

The seasonal home of tobacco heiress Doris Duke, Shangri La is “a beautiful home with one of the finest collections of Islamic art I’ve seen anywhere. The guides are fantastic, friendly and knowledgeable. The house offers an intimate glimpse into the life and vision of a wealthy woman, and that’s not something one can do every day.”—TripAdvisor Member, London, England
Shangri La, 4055 Papu Circle, 808 734 1941

RELAXATION

The SpaHalekulani is the perfect respite from Waikiki’s bustle. “So unbelievable, better than any massage I’ve ever gotten. No wonder it was ranked so high in magazines! Highly recommended!”—TripAdvisor Member, New York
SpaHalekulani, 2199 Kalia Road, 808 931 5322

For an entrance fee of just $7.50, the Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve is the perennial favorite for snorkeling on Oahu. “The snorkeling is amazing, gets better the further out you go. The coral is not sharp, which is nice. The fish are plentiful, and there are some turtles, too.”—TripAdvisor Member, Reno, Nev.
Hanauma Bay, 7455 Kalaniana‘ole Hwy., Route 72, 808 396 4229

“...I forgot I needed to breathe”

Want to get up close to Jaws? Sign aboard with Hawaii Shark Encounters. “I was so excited that I didn’t even notice how cold the water was. I think we were in the water for about a half hour. I could have stayed there all day. There were a few times that I was underwater just watching the sharks, and I forgot I needed to breathe and had to remind myself. The whole experience was incredible.”—TripAdvisor Member, Ashburn, Va.
Hawaii Shark Encounters, Haleiwa Boat Harbor, 808 351 9373

“We ate at Blue Water Shrimp numerous times and especially enjoyed the seafood pasta and lobster tails. Even our 18 month old and 3 year old enjoyed all the food we tried!”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia
Blue Water Shrimp and Seafood Co., International Market Square, 2145 Kuhio Ave., 808 926 8981

With Kailua Sailboards and Kayaks, “we kayaked to several of the offshore islands in Kailua Bay, and then we snorkeled on Lanikai Beach. Then we went kayak surfing. This was for sure the most exciting thing I have done in...maybe ever!”—TripAdvisor Member, Carlton, Ga.
Kailua Sailboards and Kayaks, 130 Kailua Road, Kailua, 808 262 2555

“...many hidden secrets to be discovered”

“My husband and I recently took the docent-guided tour of the `Iolani Palace and would highly recommend it to anyone wanting an interesting taste of Hawaiian history. You’ll learn things you won’t read in books and have the opportunity to see how Hawaiian royalty lived. One of our best experiences on Oahu. Don’t miss it!”—TripAdvisor Member, Washington
`Iolani Palace, 364 S. King St., 808 522 0822

Just behind Waikiki is a secret nature preserve, the Lyon Arboretum. “The lush tropical valley setting by itself is worth the visit. From rare to unusual, from flowering shrubs to very mature trees, the vibrant colors excite. There are waterfalls and many hidden secrets to be discovered.”—TripAdvisor Member, South Hadley, Mass.
Lyon Arboretum, 3860 Manoa Road, 808 988 0456

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What's the TOUR

How to Get Around

With $2.25 fares taking you around the entire island of Oahu, **The Bus** “is too cheap not to use, and it allows one to have a mai tai any time and to see the sights instead of worrying about big city traffic.”—TripAdvisor Member, Colorado Springs, Colo.

**The Bus, 808 848 5555**

Countless films and TV shows have been made in Hawaii, including Lost and Jurassic Park. “One of the highlights of our trip was the **KOS Hummer Tour**. We had a wonderful time learning about all the films that were made in Hawaii. We never felt rushed and saw so many beautiful sights and places we’ll never forget.”—TripAdvisor Member

**KOS Tours, 808 561 2440**

“Many tourists enjoy riding the **Waikiki Trolley** to get a sense of the atmosphere of Oahu. The trolley, which is reminiscent of the famous cable cars of San Francisco, takes tourists to all of the popular destinations and provides information about the area.”—TripAdvisor Member

**Waikiki Trolley, 808 593 2822, http://www.waikikitrolley.com**

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**Map of HONOLULU, OAHU**
WHERE to eat

FAMILIES
"My family and I are great fans of good Mexican food, and we scored a hit when we ran across Cha Cha Cha. What’s not to like about a place where the food is plentiful and affordable, a rarity in Waikiki! The kids have a special menu to order from, but the restaurant will fix almost anything to accommodate the little ones’ tastes."—TripAdvisor Member, Palm Springs, Calif.

Cha Cha Cha Restaurant, 342 Seaside Ave., 808 923 7779

"Duke’s is such a fun restaurant. The music, ambience, location and staff can make it a fun time or a great casual-romantic dinner. We first came here in the 80’s as young singles and the last time was as a family with kids. Our daughter celebrated her 13th birthday here and had the Hula Pie as a birthday cake."—TripAdvisor Member, Alberta, Canada

Duke’s Restaurant & Canoe Club, 2335 Kalakaua Ave., Suite 116, 808 922 2268

Complete with "Keiki" (children’s) menu, d.k Steak House is "so good. Skip the chain steakhouses and head to d.k. The patio has a nice view of Waikiki, and the food is amazing."—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

d.k Steak House, Waikiki Beach Marriott, 2552 Kalakaua Ave., 808 931 6280

ROMANCE
"We visited the House Without a Key several times during our visit to Oahu. The food is good, but the ambiance and the environment are unforgettable. They have musicians that play tranquil Hawaiian music and a hula dancer, as well. It’s a very romantic and relaxing environment."—TripAdvisor Member, Dallas, Texas

House Without A Key, Halekulani Hotel, 2199 Kalia Road, 808 923 2311

La Mer is Hawaii’s only five-diamond restaurant. "We chose the Menu du Soir, which was nothing short of amazing. The food, all five courses, was delicious and inventive. The hostesses, wait staff, sommelier and bus staff were all perfect. A GREAT spot for special evenings, celebrations, wedding proposals."—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

La Mer, Halekulani Hotel, 2199 Kalia Road, 808 923 2311

"The Hau Tree Lanai is the quintessential Hawaiian restaurant: oceanfront, waves lapping a few feet from your table, palm trees swaying in the breeze. Order any one of the delectable island fish entrees, prepared fresh, in a number of creative ways. Come early to enjoy the gorgeous sunset. This is the kind of place where memories are made."—TripAdvisor Member, Toronto, Ontario

Hau Tree Lanai, 2863 Kalakaua Ave., 808 921 7066

BUDGET
The Side Street Inn is "definitely a favorite—would go again and again! The Clams Pochu is heavenly and the fried rice divine! Very large portions and great prices. Also tried the tomato and pesto encrusted tuna and couldn’t get enough of it!"—TripAdvisor Member, Spring Hill, Fla.

Side Street Inn, 1225 Hopaka St., 808 591 0253

"Cafe Kaila is THE place to go for breakfast. Outstanding quality & value! We had a frittata with eggs, fresh local sausage & bacon, two kinds of cheese, and Belgian malt waffles with caramelized apples, all for just over $20."—TripAdvisor Member, Chaska, Minn.

Cafe Kaila, 2919 Kapiolani Blvd., 808 732 3330

You won’t go hungry for the price at Ezogiku, with large helpings of “charsui ramen, which came with fried rice and four gyoza. The lunch special was a great deal, but there was no way I could eat all that food.”—TripAdvisor Member, Frederick, Md.

Ezogiku, 2146 Kalakaua Ave., 808 926 8616

TOP 10 Restaurants
1. Sushi Sasabune, 1417 S King St., 808 947 3800
2. La Mer, Halekulani Hotel, 2199 Kalia Road, 808 923 2311
3. Roy’s Waikiki Beach, 226 Lewers St., 808 923 7697
4. Leonard’s Bakery, 933 Kapahulu Ave., 808 737 5591
5. Roy’s, 6600 Kalanianaole Hwy., 808 396 9875
6. Alan Wong’s Restaurant, 1857 S. King St., 808 949 2526
7. Helena’s Hawaiian Food, 1240 N. School St., 808 845 8044
8. Hy’s Steak House - Waikiki, 2440 Kuhio Ave., 808 922 5555
9. Sushi Izakaya Gaku, 1329 King St., 808 589 1329
10. House Without a Key, Halekulani Hotel, 2199 Kalia Road, 808 923 2311

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WHERE to eat

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

"Ruffage Natural Foods is a classic natural foods deli. Its tiny but the food is great. They do have a few non-vegetarian sandwiches, but the vegan and vegetarian are the best."—TripAdvisor Member, Davis, Calif.

Ruffage Natural Foods, 2442 Kuhio St., 808 922 2042

“The sushi at Doraku Waikiki is pure delight. It’s quality and the right quantity at an unbeatable price. The attention to detail is noted in the presentation and the flavor. The Doraku roll must be ordered - so delicious!”—TripAdvisor Member, Bath, Maine

Doraku Waikiki, 2233 Kalakaua Ave., Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, 808 922 3323

“The menu at Nico’s is limited, but the food is super fresh & tasty. Some of the preparations are quite unique and it’s popular, so come early or be prepared to wait in line.”—TripAdvisor Member, Boston, Mass.

Nico’s at Pier 38, 1133 N. Nimitz Hwy., 808 540 1377

HIDDEN GEMS

La Mariana is “the way places in Honolulu looked in the 1950s: bamboo, fishnet, glass balls, stuffed fish, twinkling lights all adorn the walls. A trip to Hawaii just isn’t complete without a stop at this hard-to-find but well-worth-the-hunt spot on the way to airport from downtown. Go, have a mai tai, pretend Iike is still president and life is still slow and easy.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Diego, Calif.

La Mariana, 50 Sand Island Access Road, 808 848 2800

Known for its garlic ahi (tuna), the hole-in-the-wall, kitschy Japanese-themed Irifune Restaurant is walking distance from Waikiki and a real local secret. “The seared ahi was soft as butter. Perhaps the most wonderful piece of fish I have ever tasted.”—TripAdvisor Member, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Irifune Restaurant, 563 Kapahulu Ave., 808 737 1141

Arancino has a “lovely location, good service and fantastic food—an alternative to high priced ocean front restaurants. I liked their variety of pastas and pizza; some were quite unique. The Spaghetti con Tobiko e Calamari was so good I literally licked my plate clean—no joke.”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.

Arancino Di Mare, 255 Beachwalk, 808 923 5557

SPECIAL EVENTS

This year marks the 23rd anniversary of the Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival, celebrating the best in gay and lesbian filmmaking. Award categories include Best Documentary and Best Hawaiian Made Film. (May 31 - June 3)

Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival, Doris Duke Theatre-Honolulu Academy of Arts, 808 728 3026, http://www.hgclf.org

Experience the best of Hawaiian and Japanese culture during the Pan Pacific Festival, a three-day event that includes a street party, hula performances and more. (June 8 - 10)

Pan Pacific Festival, Various locations, 808 926 8177 x279, http://www.pan-pacific-festival.com

Join in the celebrations to honor the greatest chief in Hawaiian history during the Kamehameha Celebration Floral Parade, featuring floral floats, marching bands and pa’u riders representing a royal Hawaiian court. (June 8 - 9)

Kamehameha Celebration Floral Parade, Various locations, 808 586 0333

Outrigger canoe rides, cultural demonstrations and food booths are just part of the celebrations during Independence Day at Maunalua Bay. Enjoy all-day entertainment from a variety of different artists and end the evening with an aerial pyrotechnics show. (July 4)

Independence Day at Maunalua Bay, Maunalua Bay Park, 808 394 9226, http://www.independencedayatmaunaluabay.org

Marvel at the art of Hawaii during the 15th Annual Hale’iwa Arts Festival, a summer event featuring the work of over 140 artists from the islands. (July 21 - 22)

Hale’iwa Arts Festival, Hale’iwa Beach Park, Haleiwa, 808 637 2277, http://www.haleiwaartsfestival.org

Help keep Hawaii’s ukulele tradition alive at the 42nd Annual Ukulele Festival, a celebration that features a free concert starring some of the nation’s finest ukulele players. (July 22)

The 42nd Annual Ukulele Festival, Kapiolani Park Bandstand, Waikiki, 808 732 3739, http://roysakuma.net/ukulelefestival

Sample everything Hawaii has to offer at the Made In Hawaii Festival, a three-day festival showcasing Hawaiian-made art, books, clothing, jewelry and much more. (August 17 - 19)

Made In Hawaii Festival, Neal S. Blaisdell Center, 777 Ward Ave., 808 533 1292, http://www.madeinhawaiifestival.com
Where to STAY

FAMILIES
“…an oasis of calm and elegance”

“The Kahala Hotel & Resort was the perfect honeymoon hotel. Everything was relaxing, from check-in to the staff. The room was lovely, with absolutely no flaws, plus the biggest and most comfortable bed I’ve ever slept in. I cannot recommend and praise the Kahala and its staff enough. They made our honeymoon perfect. It really was paradise.”—TripAdvisor Member, Glasgow, Scotland
Kahala Hotel & Resort, 5000 Kahala Ave., 808 739 8888

“The Embassy Suites Waikiki Beach Walk is the perfect place to stay. You get more than just a room! The best part is all the free stuff. There was a nightly manager’s reception around the pool area, a very nice hot food buffet, free internet and phone calls. You can walk to the beach in five minutes, and many rooms have very nice views. A very good family place.”—TripAdvisor Member, Wiesbaden, Germany
Embassy Suites Waikiki Beach Walk, 201 Beachwalk St., 808 921 2345

BUDGET

“…an oasis of calm and elegance”

“Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach for our honeymoon, and it was absolutely fantastic. The location of the hotel is spot on, with Waikiki’s shops on one side and the ocean on the other. The service was excellent. The Hula Grill and Duke’s were both fantastic: great service and lovely views.”—TripAdvisor Member, Newcastle, U.K.
Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach, 2335 Kalakaua Ave., 808 923 0711

Royal Grove Hotel, 151 Uluniu Ave., 808 923 7691

LUXURY

“The Royal Hawaiian Hotel, 2259 Kalakaua Ave., 808 683 7777

“The Royal Hawaiian Hotel, 2259 Kalakaua Ave., 808 683 7777

“The Royal Hawaiian Hotel is ‘paradise at a budget price. Perfect location, the rooms were newly decorated, and the staff were very accommodating.’”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia
Best Western Plus Coconut Waikiki, 450 Lewers St., 808 923 8828
Where to STAY

HIDDEN GEMS

“If you have had enough of the craziness of Honolulu, or want to avoid it altogether, take a ride to the other side of the mountain and stay in Kailua at Paradise Palms. The beach there is beautiful, wind-surfing is great, restaurants are wonderful. Ah, Paradise!”—TripAdvisor Member, Graham, Wash.

Paradise Palms Bed & Breakfast, 804 Mokapu Road, Kailua, 808 254 4234

“The Aqua Lotus is a wonderful place to stay. The room was lovely, big and airy and the views were breathtaking. The extras such as a glass of wine in the evening and the internet in the room were the things that made the difference.”—TripAdvisor Member, Providence, R.I.

Aqua Lotus Honolulu, 2885 Kalakaua Ave., 808 922 1700

“If you’re thinking of staying in Oahu, do yourself a favor and plan to stay at Turtle Bay Resort. Although located 40 minutes from the airport, the North Shore is quietly inhabited by local shops and stores that will provide you with all your needs for a seven-day stay. And as far as Turtle Bay is concerned, everyone is friendly; the accommodations are outstanding.”—TripAdvisor Member, Florida

Turtle Bay Resort, 57-091 Kamehameha Hwy., Kahuku, 808 293 6000

“Ah, Paradise!”

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