THE ART OF RIDING A WAVE ON O'AHU

From surfing, canoe paddling to kite boarding, visitors take to Oahu’s legendary surf

O'AHU – Pipeline, Sunset, Cliffs, Queens, Pops. Surfing is so ingrained in O'ahu’s culture that there are almost as many names for surf breaks around the island as there are names for streets. From the world-class waves on the North Shore to the gentle breakers in Waikīkī, O'ahu lures surfers of all ages, expertise, and styles into the water. There’s more than one way to ride a wave too, whether it’s ripping on a shortboard, cruising atop a stand-up paddleboard (SUP), or gliding through the water like a dolphin with no board at all, as in the case of body surfing.

In the winter on the North Shore when wave heights can surge to 40 feet, the world’s best surfers test their courage and skill in the massive surf. Yet, even bystanders on the beach can share this thrill, watching the surfers drop into the massive waves like mere specks against the walls of water. In the summer, the action shifts to the rolling swells of the South Shore. While not as large as the winter waves on the North Shore, the southern coast still offers enough variety to engage both the experienced and the novice. The South Shore also provides a perfect playground to the increasingly popular SUP, a larger and thicker board than a typical surfboard, with a paddle used for propulsion.

The Windward Coast, aptly named for the constant onshore winds, offers an opportunity for completely different types of surfing – windsurfing, kite surfing and wake boarding. Windsurfing utilizes a sail attached to a surfboard, enabling the surfer to use the power of the wind, much like a sailboat. It’s a similar technique for kite surfing, in which the surfer on a board holds onto a kite that harnesses the power of the wind, allowing the rider to glide across open water. In wakeboarding, a hybrid of water skiing and snowboarding, wake boarders strapped to a board are pulled by a boat.

History

Ancient Hawaiians practiced surfing to maintain their strength and agility, and the elite class had exclusive access to certain woods for its boards, separating themselves from the commoners. But surfing was almost entirely wiped out in the 1800s when the missionaries arrived in Hawai'i and
discouraged the sport. In the early 20th century it experienced a revival, in part because of a young teenager by the name of Duke Kahanamoku. An Olympic swimming champion, Hollywood actor, Hawaiian folk hero and pioneer of modern surfing, Duke Kahanamoku and his friends kept the sport alive and promoted surfing and aloha worldwide.

**Surf Etiquette**

All sports have certain rules that players abide by, and failure to do so can be seen as cheating or result in a foul. Surfing is no different. Even in recreational settings there are a set of unwritten rules that are meant to keep things orderly and safe in the ocean. In general it’s good for all beginners to be observant of their surroundings in the ocean, especially to avoid collisions with other surfers nearby. The main rule to remember is not to “drop in” on other surfers. If multiple surfers are paddling for the same wave, the person who is closest to the “peak,” or the breaking part of the wave, has priority and all others must yield to avoid “dropping in” on the surfer with priority. A drop in can also result when a surfer paddles and catches a wave that another surfer is already riding.

**Lessons**

To learn the many styles of surfing O'ahu offers, here are a few places to check out:

Founded by professional surfer and big wave rider, Tony Moniz, **Faith Surf School** offers surf and SUP lessons conveniently located in Waikīkī. It can also organize personalized surf tours and outrigger canoe rides.

(808) 931-6262 or [www.faithsurfschool.com](http://www.faithsurfschool.com)

The experts at **Hans Hedemann Surf School** strive to make surfing an exciting, memorable, fun, and successful experience. With several locations on O'ahu, including Waikīkī and the North Shore, Hans Hedemann makes lessons easily accessible for surf students.

(808) 924-7778 or [www.hhsurf.com](http://www.hhsurf.com)

**Hawaiian Watersports** offers personalized lessons and tours in surfing, SUP, kayaking, windsurfing and kite surfing. Locations include Kailua and Waikīkī.

(808) 262-5483 or [www.hawaiianwatersports.com](http://www.hawaiianwatersports.com)
Operating since 1955, **Waikiki Beach Services** perpetuates and honors the legacy of the original beach boys: a group of expert watermen who introduced visitors to the Hawaiian arts of surfing and canoe surfing in Waikīkī. The stands in front of the Royal Hawaiian and Sheraton Waikiki offer daily surf and SUP lessons, as well as outrigger canoe rides. (808) 388-1510 or [www.waikikibeachservices.com](http://www.waikikibeachservices.com)

Visitors can sign up for surf or SUP lessons at **Waikiki Beach Activities** in front of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort. Located in the area traditionally known as Kālia, this famed stretch of Waikiki was once the location of Duke Kahanamoku’s home and many of his usual surf spots. (808) 951-4088 or [www.waikikibeachactivities.com](http://www.waikikibeachactivities.com)

Yellow surf school buses, part of the **Ohana Surf Project** fleet, whisk people from their Waikīkī hotels to the beach, where knowledgeable instructors offer surfing, SUP and body surfing lessons. (808) 599-7873 or [www.surflessonwaikiki.com](http://www.surflessonwaikiki.com)

**Aloha Beach Services**, located on the beach fronting the Moana Surfrider, A Westin Resort offers surfing lessons, catamaran rides and outrigger canoe paddling.

(808) 922-3111 or [www.alohabeachservices.com](http://www.alohabeachservices.com)

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