TRAVEL OFF THE BEATEN PATH ON OAHU

OAHU – The Island of Oahu offers more than just shopping, nightlife and hotels. Oahu gives visitors many opportunities to explore pristine beaches and verdant mountains and watch graceful hula dancers and big wave surfers in action, experiences that can only be found by traveling on and off the beaten path. Here are some activities you won’t find in every Oahu guidebook:

**Scenic Drives**
Stay in the comfort of your air-conditioned car, or roll down your windows and let the warm tradewinds flow through your hair, and take some time to drive along Oahu’s spirited neighborhoods, breathtaking coastlines and lush, green mountain ranges.

**Manoa Valley** – Located just minutes away from downtown Honolulu and Waikiki, this drive takes you through a rainforest and the quaint neighborhood of Manoa and ends at a location where you can walk to a beautiful waterfall. The road from the freeway that takes you into Manoa is University Avenue, which goes through the University of Hawaii campus. Along University Avenue and along East Manoa Road and Oahu Avenue, you’ll see charming historic homes and lush greenery in a valley surrounded by beautiful mountain ridges. The main points of interest in Manoa are Manoa Marketplace, Manoa Valley Theatre, a Chinese cemetery, Manoa Falls, and Lyon Arboretum.

- Lyon Arboretum, which is located on 194 acres deep in Manoa Valley, is home to more than 5,000 tropical plant species, including one of the largest collections of palm trees found in a botanical garden.

**Tantalus** – For some of the best views of Honolulu, take a drive on the road that circles Mount Tantalus. The road is narrow and has several hairpin turns with beautiful homes along the way.

**Round Top Drive** – On the way up Round Top Drive, you can stop at The Contemporary Museum and Punchbowl Crater, which contains the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. More than 30,000 military veterans are buried here including Astronaut Ellison Onizuka. At the top...

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of the drive is Puu Ualakaa Park lookout, which provides spectacular views from Honolulu to Waianae.

Oahu’s Halona/Southeast Coast – The road along Oahu’s southeast coast winds along magnificent sea cliffs. The cliffs and rock layers take on many different colors and formations. Points of interest along this drive are Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve, Koko Head Regional Park, Halona Point and Halona Blowhole, Sandy Beach, and Makapuu Point. From Makapuu Point, you’ll see two islands known as Rabbit Island and Turtle Island, and on a clear day, the Island of Maui can be spotted along the horizon.

- Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve is dedicated to protecting and preserving marine life in the bay. While snorkeling is enjoyed, Hanauma Bay’s main purpose is to educate the public on Hawaii’s marine environment. Emphasis is placed on appreciating and understanding the bay and its marine life that includes, amongst other things, humuhumunukunukuapuaa, Hawaii’s state fish.

Upcountry Waimanalo – For a glimpse of rural Oahu, drive down Kalanianaole Highway through the small town of Waimanalo. As you get deeper into Waimanalo, you’ll see dozens of farms, ranches and nurseries that raise local vegetables and fruits and flowers. Catch a rodeo at New Town and Country Stables, watch a game of polo at the Waimanalo Polo Grounds, play a round of golf at Luana Hills Country Club, or relax on the white sand at Waimanalo Beach.

Pali Highway – From town, take the Pali Highway and head to the lush Windward side of Oahu. Along the way, stop at Queen Emma’s Summer Palace, foreign consulates, Royal Mausoleum Hsu Yum Temple, Tenri Cultural Center, and Oahu Cemetery. Further up the road stop at the Nuuanu Pali Lookout for breathtaking views and vistas of the Windward coast and the rugged cliffs of the Koolau mountain range. From the Pali Highway, venture to Kaneohe Bay to visit the Heeia Fishpond, which was used by ancient Hawaiians to store fish for food and to allow fish to reproduce. From the Pali Highway, you can also journey to Kailua town or head to Kahekili Highway.

Windward Oahu – On Kahekili Highway, stop at the Valley of the Temples and see Byodo-In Temple, a replica of a famous ancient temple in Japan. Further down the road is the expansive
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Senator Fong’s Plantation and Gardens, which visitors can tour on a rickshaw. Continue on Kahekili Highway, which becomes Kamehameha Highway, to Kualoa Ranch where many blockbuster movies and popular TV shows have been filmed, including Jurassic Park and Lost. At Kualoa Ranch, you may also visit a garden and ancient Hawaiian fishpond, learn about ancient Hawaiian navigation on an ocean voyage, or tour the expansive property by horseback, ATV or jungle expedition.

Secret Beaches
While most visitors to Hawaii are familiar with Waikiki, Waimea Bay and Lanikai, Oahu boasts several other spectacular beaches along its 112 miles of coastline that are not as well known. Please be advised that some of the beaches have seasonal strong currents and big waves, so caution should be taken at all times.

Yokohama Bay – Located on Oahu’s Waianae coast, Yokohama Bay is a long stretch of secluded sandy beach that is a great place for picnicking, hiking, shore fishing and watching spectacular sunsets. The surf is calm during the summer, and is a popular spot for snorkeling, diving, swimming, and shell collecting. But when the surf is up during the winter months, “kooks” (novices) are advised to stay onshore to watch some of the world’s best surfers tackle 20-foot waves. Visitors can access Yokohama by taking the H-1 West until it connects to Farrington Highway. The beach is located at the end of Farrington Highway.

“From Here to Eternity” Beach – Located below the Halona Blowhole parking lot, this special spot is never crowded due to the treacherous climb down to the sand. But for the intrepid, what a treat this spot can be. The break in the ocean cliffs and the surrounding crags provide protection from the wind. Rough open-ocean waves roll up on the beach but unlike Sandy’s, a gently sloping sand bottom takes much of the punch out of them before they hit the shore. Turtles frequent the small cove, seeking respite from the otherwise blustery coast. It's great for packing a lunch and holing up for the day.

White Plains Beach/Kalaeloa – Located on the southwest corner of Oahu, White Plains Beach fronts Kalaeloa Point, the former Barber Point Naval Air Station. Picnic areas, a snack bar, showers and restrooms along with gentle surf and soft sand make for an enjoyable time for the whole family. Visitors can access this white sand beach by taking H-1 and exiting on Kalaeloa, then driving toward the military housing. Parking is available along campgrounds.

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Ke Iki Beach – Located in historic Haleiwa on the world famous north shore of Oahu, Ke Iki Beach is the perfect beach to kick back and relax. Far from the hustle and bustle of the city, Ke Iki beach provides visitors with peace and quiet. Beachfront vacation rentals are available for prolonged rest and relaxation. This is truly the place to go to “get away.”

Hidden Hikes

Whether you are a novice hiker or expert trailblazer, Oahu offers a plethora of hikes that suit all ability levels. Some of the more difficult hikes require hand-over-hand rock climbing, vertical ascensions and special equipment, yet at the top, those daring enough are rewarded with stunning panoramic views, upside down waterfalls and untouched vegetation. Here are a few easy and intermediate hikes that are great for everyone:

Aiea Loop Trail – This mild and peaceful hike is perfect for casual hikers who want to experience the natural beauty of Oahu up close. The trail, located in secluded Keaiwa Park, is a simple, 4.5-mile path through shady forests of guava, albizia, koa, and pine. There is no climbing necessary, as the trail is completely graded.

Kaunala Trail – This 2.5-mile loop trail wanders through the lonely and secluded gulches of the northern tip of Oahu, allowing hikers to have a peaceful encounter with nature and escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. This trail is only open on weekends and holidays.

Kamiloiki Ridge Trail – This is a short, moderately easy hike compared to other ridge trails on the island. There is no thick vegetation along this Hawaii Kai trail. Although this trail is not a constructed trail, its barely worn footpath, traveling over rocks and ankle-high shrubbery, is easy to follow. Along the way, hikers can get a great view of the surrounding valleys, and at the end of the trail, a shady lunch spot awaits.

Mariner’s Ridge – This hike provides a terrific view of the Windward coast from atop the Koolau crest. The uphill trail, beginning in Hawaii Kai, isn’t too dangerous and is easy to follow. This hike is a can’t-miss, as the view from the terminus is truly breathtaking.

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Kaiwa Ridge Trail – Located in the hills behind Lanikai, this trail is very short, but the payoff is unbeatable. After walking up a somewhat steep incline for about 10-15 minutes, the trail travels uphill along a fairly safe, dusty ridge with spectacular views on both sides. It leads up to a pair of military pillboxes upon which hikers like to sit and enjoy the view of the Windward side. This is the best and most rewarding view one can hope for after only about 30 minutes of hiking.

Local Eats:
Oahu’s culinary scene is greatly influenced by the diverse cultures that are found on the island. To experience the true tastes of Oahu, try some of the “hole-in-the-wall” restaurants that locals often frequent.

Poke Stop – Former Sam Choy’s executive chef Elmer Guzman opened Poke Stop at the Waipahu Town Center in 2005. The casual restaurant and store offers fresh and refined seafood dishes and variety of poke made with different sauces and seafood, including hamachi, shrimp, salmon, and tako (octopus).

Helena’s Hawaiian Food – Helena’s Hawaiian Food is a small, family-owned restaurant popular with locals for serving delectable Hawaiian food. In 2000, the James Beard Foundation awarded the restaurant with a Regional Classics award. Highlights of Helena’s menu include tripe stew, squid luau, short ribs (pipikaula style), and fried butterfish collar.

Char Hung Sut – At Char Hung Sut, located in Honolulu’s historic Chinatown, crowds line up daily for its award-winning manapua (pork bun), pepeiao (ear-shaped pork stuffed noodles), pork hash, and other dim sum-type treats.

Gulick’s – For more than 25 years, Gulick’s, the popular family-run okazuya (Japanese delicatessen) has served a long line of customers at its Kalihi location daily. With the opening of its McCully store in 2007, more people can now enjoy Gulick’s famous musubis (rice balls), fried chicken, vegetable tempura, chow fun noodles, and other small dishes.

Sugoi’s – Specializing in bentos and plate lunches, Sugoi’s is a local, family favorite known for its crunchy and flavorful garlic chicken. Sugoi’s famous chicken is deep-fried and coated with garlic sauce then served with two scoops of rice and tossed or macaroni salad. With delicious local food, quick service and reasonable prices, Sugoi’s is a perfect choice for families on the go.

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Crepes No Ka Oi – Famous for its savory and dessert crepes, Crepes No Ka Oi is a small, hole-in-the-wall Kailua eatery. The eatery is open every day, except Tuesday, and is especially popular as a Sunday brunch spot.

Ono Hawaiian Food – This tiny restaurant located on the outskirts of Waikiki is regularly voted the best restaurant serving Hawaiian food. Portions are big and include menu items such as kalua pig, lomilomi salmon, chicken long rice, poi, pipikaula (seasoned beef jerky), and haupia (coconut) pudding.

Bob’s Bar-B-Que – It’s the only drive-in in Hawaii that offers Western-style baby back ribs. Bob’s offers a variety of BBQ styles, including Western, kalbi and teriyaki. Their specialties are baby back ribs, hibachi chicken, teriyaki chicken and their “Giant Burger.” The small eatery is located on the corner of Dillingham and Waikamilo in Honolulu.

Diamond Head Cove Health Bar – Located in a tiny strip mall at the ma kai (toward the ocean) end of Monsarrat Ave, Diamond Head Cove Health Bar is known for its ‘awa (kava) drink. This traditional herbal drink was popular with Polynesian royalty for its calming effects. The Health Bar, popular with surfers and health nuts, also serves up refreshing acai bowls, made from the popular Brazilian berry known for its antioxidant benefits and served with organic granola, berries, bananas, and sweet Hawaiian honey.

Liliha Bakery – Although it serves dozens of different types of pastries, and also offers a full-menu at its tiny restaurant counter, Liliha Bakery is most well known for its chantilly-topped coco puffs. Open 24-hours a day, six days a week (closed Mondays), customers come at all hours to pick-up one, or a dozen, of Liliha Bakery’s famous coco puffs.

Activities

Escape Waikiki to experience what Oahu has to offer beyond its beaches and hula shows. Watch a live fish auction as chefs from Oahu’s popular restaurants bid on the day’s fresh catch, or help to protect and preserve Oahu’s environment by joining an eco-tour. Whatever your interests, you are sure to find an exciting activity on the Island of Oahu.

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Honolulu Fish Auction – To experience the life of a top chef, head to the Honolulu Fish Auction, where chefs and restaurateurs bid on a variety of fresh fish at the crack of dawn. This traditional auction has been held in Hawaii for over half a century. On display for purchase is a vast array of fish. The auctioneer quickly moves down the rows of fish surrounded by a huddle of buyers who battle one another for the best prices and quality fish. Beginning at 5:30 a.m. sharp, Monday to Saturday, the auction continues until all fish are sold.

Wild Side Specialty Tours – A team of marine biologists leads morning and afternoon snorkeling adventures along Oahu’s less-traveled leeward coastline. Participants board a catamaran and snorkel in tepid, crystal-clear waters among spinner dolphins, tropical fish (many found only in Hawaii), green sea turtles, and coral reefs.

Island Seaplane – Hawaii’s only seaplane service allows passengers to get a bird's eye view of the island of Oahu, from Hanauma Bay to the North Shore. Trusty pilot Pat even points out Michelle Pfeiffer’s home in Lanikai. Most notably, the plane departs from the same water runways used by the PanAm clipper ships, and eerily flies across the same path the Japanese used to bomb Pearl Harbor, igniting the U.S. involvement in WWII. Nowhere else in Hawaii offers a similar experience.

Bike Hawaii – Explore Oahu’s lush valleys, cascading waterfalls and far-reaching coastlines by mountain bike, foot and boat with Bike Hawaii. This guided adventure company offers a mountain bike tour of the lush Kaaawa Valley on the Windward side of Oahu. You may recognize the valley from Lost, Jurassic Park, or Mighty Joe Young. Other exciting tours are also offered that include visits to Mokolii (Chinaman’s Hat) Island and Secret Island by kayak, a hike through a volcanic rainforest, a sailing and snorkeling adventure, and a downhill bike on a road carved through a tropical rainforest.

Kawai Nui Marsh Tour – In ancient times, Kawai Nui Marsh was a large freshwater pond that contained an abundance of resources. Taro, sweet potato, coconuts, fish, and other plants used for food or tools were found in Kawai Nui and its surrounding area. Today, educational tours of the Kailua Ahupuaa and Kawai Nui Marsh are offered to inform residents and visitors about Hawaiian archaeological, historic and ecological resources of the marsh. There are also service-learning trips for elementary through college age student to various sites around the marsh. Kawai Nui Marsh is located behind the Windward YMCA, just below Ulupo Heiau.

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Arts & Culture
Oahu is the center of the arts and culture scene in Hawaii. Historic homes, notable museums and a lively theater and art scene, help visitors learn about Hawaii’s history and special culture.

Shangri La – Tour the 1937 estate of tobacco-heiress Doris Duke at Shangri La, an artistic and cultural treasure in itself. Shangri La houses an impressive collection of Islamic art and is considered one of Hawaii’s most architecturally significant homes.

Kumu Kahua Theatre – Located in the heart of downtown Honolulu, this not-for-profit community theatre company is dedicated to encouraging the writing and production of plays and theatre pieces about life in Hawaii, by Hawaii’s playwrights, and for Hawaii’s people.

Manoa Heritage Center – Manoa Heritage Center offers outdoor-guided tours for both adult and school groups by prearranged appointment. Discover the Kuka oo Heiau and the Native Hawaiian plant garden while learning the history of Manoa Valley.

The Contemporary Museum – Wander around the lush and whimsical Contemporary Museum in Makiki Heights. The Contemporary Museum in Honolulu is the only museum in the state of Hawaii devoted exclusively to contemporary art. In addition to preserving art from 1940 to the present, the Museum also maintains and presents the historic Spalding house and gardens for the enjoyment and enrichment of residents and visitors.

North Shore Surf and Cultural Museum – Learn about the history of surfing at the birthplace of surfing on Oahu. The North Shore museum features a collection of antique surfboards, ancient artifacts, and plays surf movies.

Hawaii’s Plantation Village – The outdoor museum in historic Waipahu showcases the lifestyles and experience of Hawaii’s plantation workers. Furnished homes and other community structures display and interpret the history of Hawaii’s multi-ethnic heritage. Asian art and architecture, along with fascinating antiques and relics, are among the main features of the Village.

KoAloha Ukulele – One of Oahu’s premier ukulele factories, KoAloha Ukulele offers narrated walking tours through its factory coupled with an ukulele lesson or an extended walking tour through Kalihi that showcases the area’s featured businesses. Both tours are one-hour.

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