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[OAHU, HAWAII](#)

First sighted by Captain James Cook in 1778, Oahu is the most popular of the Hawaiian Islands. A major tourist destination for American, Japanese & Asian tourists, the island is visited by more than 5-million people each year. The island is home of world famous Waikiki Beach and the City of Honolulu. Oahu is known as "The Gathering Place" in Hawaiian. It's the third largest Hawaiian island and the most populated with nearly 1-million residents. The Island is located around 2,350 miles west of the California Coast in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Its area covers around 600 square miles. The island is only 44 miles long by 30 miles across but has 227 miles of beautiful shoreline making it a tropical beach paradise. The island has a year-around tropical climate that attracts visitors all year around.

Temperatures will generally run around 70 °F in January and hover around 80 °F in July. The main airport is the Honolulu International Airport located on the south shore at the west end of Honolulu. A flight to Oahu is generally under 5-hours from California. There are direct flights to Honolulu from most major US airports.



OAHU, HAWAII



Honolulu is the capital of Hawaii and the largest city

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in the State. It's an active metropolis on the south shore of this island paradise. Since the late 1700s Honolulu has been a major commercial port for ships traveling between North America and Asia. The city has been the center of commerce for the Hawaiian

Islands and serves as a cruise ship port for the cruise lines. The port has had a long history with whaling ships and sugar exports. Honolulu is a modern high-rise city with it's famous Waikiki Beach and the Waikiki neighborhood as the focal point for tourism to the island. Downtown Honolulu is a thriving busy commercial, financial and governmental center. It is rich with arts, history and culture. You'll find various museums, art galleries, performing arts & cultural centers, a Chinatown, convention center and major shopping venues. For a piece of local Hawaiian cultural history, visitors can visit the Iolani Palace built in 1882 by the last Hawaiian King. The Palace was the Royal Palace of the Hawaiian Kingdom and is the only royal palace in the US.

Most tourists coming to Oahu will stay in Waikiki, which bears little resemblance to the rest of Hawaii. Waikiki is a neighborhood of Honolulu that is located about 3 miles east of downtown between the Ala Wai Canal and the Pacific Ocean. The neighborhood is active and vibrant with no shortage of things to do.



The main streets running through Waikiki are Kalakaua and Kuhio Avenues. Here you'll find major hotels, top fine dining restaurants, shopping, entertainment and nightlife. Waikiki features one of the most famous beaches in the world, Waikiki Beach. Waikiki Beach is a picture postcard white sand beach lined with high-rise resort hotels, bars and restaurants, shops and entertainment. It's probably one of the most photographed beaches in the world. The beach has magnificent views of Diamond Head (the dormant volcano to the east). Its hard not to get a great photo. The ocean water remains shallow for some distance into the ocean so this is a great beach to play and splash in the surf. The beach is one of the most popular surfing beaches and a great place for surfing lessons. Lessons are offered daily and this is truly the best place to learn. Surfing was popularized here by the great Duke Kahanamoku in the early 1900s. Duke was an Olympic Gold Medal champion in swimming. Today there is a statue on Waikiki Beach immortalizing Duke and surfers from around the world will come here for various surfing events.



Waikiki's most famous land mark is Diamond Head. Diamond Head is a dormant volcanic cone that rises up from the beach. Diamond Head is a popular tourist attraction and State Monument. Although part of the inner crater is closed to the public by the US Government, parts are still accessible to hikers who want to explore. Its a 0.7 mile hike to the edge of the crater up a series of steps, trails and tunnels. The climb takes most people over an hour but the view of Waikiki and the Pacific Ocean is spectacular. It's a great way to burn off some calories.

On your way to Diamond Head you'll pass through



Queen Kapi'olani Park that includes several local attractions, the Waikiki Shell, the Honolulu Zoo and the Waikiki Aquarium. The Royal Park was established in the late 1800s under the Hawaiian Kingdom. The Waikiki Shell is a 8,400 person outdoor concert venue. The venue hosts top performers as well as many local Hawaiian cultural gatherings and events. The neighboring Honolulu Zoo was founded in 1916. The Zoo is 42 acres and is home to over 1,200 animals. The exhibits are modled after the San Diego Zoo. Kids love the Zoo and it doesn't take long to see all the exhibits. Another local attraction in Queen Kapi'olani Park that kids will enjoy is the Waikiki Aquarium. Founded in 1904, it's the third oldest public aquarium in the US. The aquarium is located next to a living reef on the Waikiki Shoreline. The aquarium features over 420 species of aquatic animals including sharks and seals.



Many tourist to Waikiki enjoy some of the great shopping the area has to offer. Between Waikiki and Downtown is the retail district known as Ala Moana (meaning path to the sea in Hawaiian). Although Ala Moana has beautiful white sand beaches and the Ala Moana Beach Park, the main attraction is the Ala Moana Center. It was once the largest shopping center in the US and is said to be the worlds largest open-air shopping center. The center has many high-end designer shops as well as department stores and dining. A dedicated shopping enthusiast can easily make a full day of it.

Another popular shopping destination is the Aloha Tower and the Aloha Tower Marketplace. The Aloha Tower is a historic light house built in 1926. Located at Pier 9 of the Honolulu Harbor, the tower is a Hawaiian Landmark that has greeted many ships and immigrants to Hawaii over the years. At 10-stories high, this was once the tallest structure in Hawaii. Today the area around the tower is developed into a retail complex that houses shops, restaurants and the Hawaiian Maritime Center. The Maritime Center presents the history of the harbor. The complex offers several great waterfront dining choices and is a popular tourist attraction.



One of the most popular historic attractions in Oahu is Pearl Harbor. Prior to the more recent New York World Trade Center tragedy, the December 7, 1941 early morning attack was the worst attack ever on US soil and brought the US into World War II. Altogether 2,350 people were killed in the attack including 1,177 soldiers on the Naval ship USS Arizona. Today the harbor is still used as an active US Naval Base but tourism around this historic event brings in droves of

people each year to visit the site. The USS Arizona Memorial is the most notable landmark which rests on top of the sunken vessel. Tours of Pearl Harbor are available daily.

Oahu has some of the best water sports activities in the world. Diving, fishing, snorkeling, surfing, wind surfing, kayaking, and just plain swimming are all available on the island. A short drive east of Waikiki up the coast from Diamond Head you'll come upon Hanauma Bay, one of the best snorkeling spots.



Hanauma Bay is a marine preserve full of colorful coral reefs and abundant with sea life. The bay is protected so visitors are prohibited from coming in contact with the coral. Hanauma Bay is also a natural home for green sea turtles. The snorkeling is excellent. The bay has a beautiful white sand beach and public beach facilities. This is a very popular tourist destination that has been subject to over crowding and parking problems. Avoid peak hours. Several snorkeling tour operators will bring tourists here.



No visit to Oahu is complete without getting out of Honolulu and visiting to the north shore. The north shore more closely resembles the rest of tropical paradise Hawaii without the high-rise metropolitan pace of Honolulu. Best known for its massive waves, top surfers from around the world are attracted to the

north shore. One of the best surfing spots is known as the Banzai Pipeline which hosts several professional surfing competitions each year. Other popular north shore surfing beaches include Waimea Bay and Sunset Beach. Waimea Bay is at the mouth of the Waimea River and is a popular swimming and snorkeling beach for tourists and locals. It has fine white sand that is very soft under your feet. There is a rock formation at one end of the beach that is popular for amateur cliff diving and jumping. The Hawaiian beauty of this area brings television and film to the location regularly. While visiting the north coast stop into the Turtle Bay Resort to relax or visit Jameson's by the Sea Restaurant for one of their signature Mai Tai's.

A popular tourist attraction on the north shore is the Polynesian Cultural Center. Located on 42 acres, the center provides cultural performances and allows visitors to observe the local cultural activities of the people of the Central and South Pacific. There is a spectacular multicultural Polynesian show that is unmatched. The park has an IMAX theatre and a lagoon offering canoe rides. There are various small villages throughout the park, each representing a particular Polynesian culture. There is also a fabulous Luau (Hawaiian feast) that guests can participate in and enjoy cultural foods and entertainment.



Because of its metropolitan flavor and local competition for tourist dollars, prices in Waikiki and Honolulu are generally more affordable than many exotic beach resort destinations. Restaurant promotions, dining coupons and activities coupons are circulated around town and available at the airport kiosks in free tour guidebooks,



weekly event publications and driving maps. Happy hours offer cheap drink specials and often offer free pupus (horsduerves). Hotel package deals are offered regularly and many of the lesser-known hotels a block or two off the beach are generally affordable all year around. All this promotion and competition tends to keep regular prices in check compared to other popular tourist destinations.

Waikiki has some fabulous resort hotels. It should be noted that many of the hotels at the center of Waikiki Beach are located across the street from the beach. There are no hotels on the beach side of the street except for the hotels at the west part of Waikiki Beach and some to the east.

VoyageMonkey.Com recommends the following hotels in the Waikiki Beach area:

Halekulani Hotel – The 5-Star Halekulani Hotel is located at 2199 Kalia Road with famous Waikiki Beach just outside your door. The 17-story resort sits on 5 oceanfront acres and has 455 luxury rooms. The elegant guest rooms feature private lanais, separate shower and bathtubs, marble vanities, flat screen TVs and free wireless internet access. The resort features a 3,772-square-foot oceanfront pool offering personal attendants. The resort includes the state-of-the-art Spa Halekulani and fitness center. Other resort amenities include boutique shops, fine gourmet cuisine and casual dining choices, bars & lounges and live entertainment daily. The resort's activities center can arrange for canoe rides, snorkeling, deep-sea fishing, surfing and more. The location is one of the best and the first-class service is excellent. VoyageMonkey highly recommends this resort. It is expensive but look for regular deals on VoyageMonkey.





Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa –

The 4-Star Hilton Hawaiian Village is located at 2005 Kalia Road at the western end of Waikiki Beach. The Village sits on 22 oceanfront acres located on the widest part of Waikiki Beach. This resort has the best beach that includes a private lagoon. There are 2,860 guest rooms with the tallest tower reaching 35 floors. Guest rooms include private balconies and most modern amenities including high-speed internet access. The resort is a self contained Hawaiian village made of several guest towers, 90 boutiques & shops, 22 restaurants and lounges, luxury spa & fitness center, 5 pools including a 10,000 square-foot oceanfront super pool complete with waterfalls and lava rocks, and much more. There is daily entertainment around the village including a fireworks display and Polynesian shows. Other amenities include tennis courts, concierge service, car rental desk, activities desk and children's programs. This resort is designed so you really don't have to leave the resort. The stay is always enjoyable and the service is good. This is VoyageMonkey's favorite choice.

Hyatt Regency Waikiki Resort & Spa –

The 4-Star Hyatt is located at 2424 Kalakaua Ave. directly across the street from the center of Waikiki Beach. Because there are no hotels on the beach side of the street, the hotel is beachfront with the street separating it from the beach. This central location allows you to be close to all the beach action just steps from the hotel. The 40-story resort includes 1,230 guest rooms styled with Hawaiian décor, each with private balcony, deluxe bath, satellite TV, free high-speed internet and stocked mini-bars. The resort features a heated outdoors pool and two whirlpools overlooking the beach, a 10,000 square-foot spa, 24-hour fitness center, three-level shopping mall, several gourmet restaurants, bars and lounges. Other amenities include a car rental desk, golf reservations, business center, and children's Camp Hyatt. The service at the resort is very good and it's hard to beat the proximity to the main beach action.



Marriott Waikiki Beach Resort & Spa –

The 4-Star Marriott is located at 2552 Kalakaua Ave. directly across from the center of Waikiki Beach. Because there are no resorts on the beach side of Kalakaua Ave., the hotel is beachfront (with the street separating it from the beach). All the Waikiki Beach activity is just steps from the hotel. The resort sits on over 5 acres and has two 33-story towers that host 1,310 guest rooms. Guest rooms are equipped with modern amenities including private balcony and free high-speed internet. The resort features two outdoor heated pools and whirlpool, salon, spa & fitness center, daily entertainment, over 20 shops & boutiques and various gourmet & casual dining choices and lounges. This resort offers an excellent location and great service.



Sheraton Waikiki Hotel and Resort – The 3-Star Sheraton is located at 2255 Kalakaua Ave. and sits directly on Waikiki Beach with a great central location. You can walk a short distance to everything. The 31-story hotel features a beautiful lobby and 1,695 guest rooms each with most modern amenities. The resort pool area is next to the beach where Hawaiian performers put on a show each evening. The resort features a nightclub with live entertainment, fitness center, daily activities, shops, car rental desk, day care, game room and kids program. The resort offers several fine and casual dining options, bars and lounges. Guests can dine at the Hanohano Room 30-stories above Waikiki. This resort is great for families and offers good service and a great central location to beach, shops, dining and entertainment.



Disney's Aulani Resort - Perfectly positioned on the pristine beaches of Ko Olina, north of Pearl Harbor, the 4-star Aulani Resort offers you seaside splendor in Hawaiian grandeur. The resort is on the dryer leeward side of the island, far enough away from the crowds

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The resort has 359 hotel rooms including 16 suites, 460 Disney vacation club villas, four restaurants, two pools, and a fitness center. The resort also offers a variety of recreational activities, entertainment, culinary programs, excursions and more.

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Other recommended hotels include: The Kahala Hotel and Resort (4-Star, located just east of Diamond Head in an upscale neighborhood); Outrigger Reef on the Beach (4-star, on Waikiki Beach); W Honolulu Hotel (4-star, Located just west of Diamond Head at it's foot); Resortquest Waikiki Beach Tower (4-star, across street from Waikiki Beach); and, Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach (4-star, on Waikiki Beach).



KAHALA HOTEL



OUTRIGGER REEF



OUTRIGGER
WAIKIKI

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