



25 Must-See Attractions in  
**Hawaii**

Local, Insider Knowledge  
of the Best Attractions

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## **Introduction**

Some people visit Hawaii to experience the warm, blue waters that meet breathtaking beaches of white, red and even black sand. Others come for the exotic fauna, which forms a picture-perfect backdrop to cascading waterfalls and sprawling green valleys.

Whether you're drawn to Hawaii for a chance to see million-year-old volcanoes or to view lush rainforests that nestle against rocky cliffs, there is no doubt than when you come to Hawaii, you're entering an island paradise unlike any other.

## **The “Spirit” of Hawaii**

When you visit Hawaii, you'll be greeted with a resounding “aloha,” which means “hello,” “welcome,” “I love you” and even “goodbye,” until you join the spirit of the Hawaiian community again.

Hawaiians like to salute their guests with a lei, and you may just be surprised at how many handcrafted symbols of affection you'll receive when you visit the exciting attractions listed in this book. The fragrant, sweet-smelling blossoms that you collect throughout the Hawaiian Islands will serve as wonderful mementos of a place of caring, sharing and unrivaled beauty.

## **Why Visit Hawaii?**

In Hawaii, the sun shines practically year-round, except for an occasional tropical rain that gives life to the island and to its inhabitants. The Hawaiian Islands enjoy an ideal climate in one of the most secluded places on Earth. The perfect temperatures of the air and ocean surrounding Hawaii make it one of the most popular destinations to visit in the world.

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Do you love rock climbing, hiking or kayaking? On any one of the Hawaiian Islands you'll find opportunities to trek up steep summits, forage through forests or meander along river ways that tell tales of an ancient world and then beg you to keep their secrets.

How do days spent diving, surfing or snorkeling sound? Come to Hawaii and dip into pristine seas, with a good likelihood of spotting colorful fish among coral reefs or young and adult whales breaching in unison.

Bicycle down a volcano, visit stunning historical landmarks or simply kick back with a cool drink. In Hawaii, you can find romance, adventure or family entertainment; it's simply a matter of choosing what incredible experience to take in first.

## **What to Do in Hawaii**

Before we jump right into the 25 must-see attractions in Hawaii and give you the insider knowledge to the best things to do on each island, you should take note that we want to show you Hawaii as the locals see it.

When you visit Hawaii, we want you to really "feel" what island life is like on The Big Island, Kauai, Maui, Oahu and Molokai and explore the ins and outs of Hawaii that most guidebooks don't tell you about.

For this book, we'll be concentrating on the five Hawaiian Islands that are most frequently visited and will go beyond telling you about the typical attractions in Hawaii like Pearl Harbor, Diamondhead and the USS Arizona Memorial.

While these attractions are absolutely important to the history of the people of Hawaii and to the world at large, we want to take you on a trip where you'll

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see the hidden gems and enjoy them, as do the people of Hawaii.

This book will focus on some of the brilliant gifts that Mother Nature has bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and will introduce you to some of the “off-the-beaten-path” excursions to do in Hawaii, which give nod to the islands’ Polynesian heritage and fantastic geological treasures.

## **What You’ll Find in This Book**

In this guide to the best “must-see” attractions in Hawaii from a local perspective, you’ll notice that we sorted the activities by island, with lots of useful information:

- Attraction overviews
- Recommendations for getting to each attraction
- Hours of operation
- Suggestions for what type of traveler might enjoy the attraction
- Ticket prices, which are reliable as of the date of this book’s printing

You’ll also find addresses and contact information, when available.

Whether you’ll be spending a day or more on a single island or hopping from island to island on your Hawaiian vacation, there are plenty of things to do and places to see that leave you with a better understanding of the multi-cultural society that is Hawaii and the mixed heritage roots that took hold in this heart-stirring tropical oasis so many years ago.

The following is an insider list to the best 25 attractions in Hawaii.

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## The Big Island

The Big Island of Hawaii is the largest of the main Hawaiian Islands and contains all but two of the world's climate environments. On The Big Island, you'll find natural wonders that will blow you away and an atmosphere that is rich in contrasts.

### 1. Hilo Panaewa Zoo

The Hilo Panaewa Zoo is the only natural, tropical rainforest zoo in the United States, and it shelters more than 80 species of animals, including the endangered Nene, Hawaii's state bird. The 12-acre zoo is home to Namaste', an infamous white Bengal tiger, whose ancestors were found in the central Indian forests of Rewa.

Namaste' is one of about 250 white tigers that are descendants of Mohan, a wild tiger caught in 1951 by the Maharaja of Rewa. This particular blue-eyed beauty was raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, and donated to the Panaewa Zoo by magician Dirk Arthur. "Namaste'" means "*Aloha*" in Sanskrit, and it is fitting that this fascinating, 500-pound tiger is an ambassador, of sorts, for the people of Hawaii.

Along with Namaste', you'll find mammals such as the Axis deer, binturong and kinkajous at the Panaewa Zoo, as well as reptiles, primates, birds, amphibians and invertebrates, such as monarch butterflies.

You can picnic amidst 100 varieties of shade trees and plants at the zoo, and stroll peacock-filled pathways and bamboo gardens. The amazing botanical

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garden at the Panaewa Zoo includes victoria water lilies in shades of white, pink and purple and Epiphytic orchid hybrids like the violet-hued Cattleya.

**Panaewa Zoo Hours:**

Daily - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

(Closed Christmas and New Year's Day)

**Panaewa Zoo Admission Prices:**

Free

**Panaewa Zoo Location:**

800 Stainback Highway, Hilo, Hawaii 96720

**Panaewa Zoo Contact Information:**

808-959-9233

## 2. Ahalanui State Park and Infinity Pool

If you're looking for awe-inspiring beauty on The Big Island, head to the spring-fed infinity pool in the Ahalanui State Park, a pool that's part natural, part man-made and entirely thrilling. The pool is heated volcanically to 90 degrees, perfect for taking a soak or swim accompanied by little fish visitors.

You may notice a slight smell of sulfur, which comes from the sand at the bottom of the pool. That's all part of the charm and wonder of this fun, outdoor attraction that's engulfed in the middle of green grass and palm trees. Sit or snorkel in the pool, as you look out onto calm waters of the Pacific Ocean.

It's like you're spending time in your own personal tropical retreat, as you'll usually find only a few visitors in the pool at a time. After you've relaxed and recharged your spirit, there are several places within the park to barbeque or enjoy a picnic.

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**Ahalanui State Park and Pool Hours:**

Open Daily

**Ahalanui State Park and Pool Admission Prices:**

Free

**Ahalanui State Park and Pool Location:**

Highway 137, Pahoa, Hawaii 96815 (Take Highway 130 South from Pahoa, and turn right when it dead ends at Highway 137. The park will be on the left, just past Mile Market #10).

**Ahalanui State Park and Pool Contact Information:**

808-961-8311

### 3. Mo'okini Heiau State Monument

Visiting Hawaii is a wonderful opportunity to witness some of the oldest, pre-Christian places of worship. The 1,500-year-old Mo'okini Heiau (*heiau* means religious temple) is a sacred historical site of human sacrifice (*luakini heiau*), and is revered by the Hawaiian people as a hallowed location.

Mo'okini Heiau sits on the northernmost top of The Big Island in North Kohala and is just a short walk north of the birthplace of King Kamehameha, the greatest king of Hawaii. You'll see this spot noted by a large sign, which reads "Kamehameha Akahi Aina Hanau," directly in front of a large stone wall.

As much as you may be tempted to gather rocks from this site to take home as souvenirs, it's best that you don't. The Hawaiians, amongst others, consider this sacred location to have spiritual power (*mana*), and it should be treated with the highest respect.

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Although the heiau is worth seeing, it must be viewed from the exterior only, as the earthquake in October of 2006 destroyed some of the ruins, and exploration is now limited.

**Mo'okini Heiau State Monument Hours:**

Open Daily

**Mo'okini Heiau State Monument Admission Prices:**

Free

**Mo'okini Heiau State Monument Location:**

If you're driving toward Hawi, turn left on an unmarked dirt road at the Upolu Airport sign, and follow the road for about two miles.

## 4. Makalawena Beach

The Big Island has some of the most beautiful beaches in the state of Hawaii, and Makalawena Beach tops the list by far. It's not the easiest beach to reach, but trekking there by foot or by car is absolutely worth the effort.

This is exactly what comes to mind when most people think about "off-the-beaten-path" beaches. In fact, it is so isolated and pristine, you may think twice about ever coming back to civilization. It's that incredible.

**Makalawena Beach Location:**

Makalawena Beach is about 20 to 30 minutes from any convenient parking spots, most of which sit at nearby Kekaha Kai Beach. Start out by traveling north on Highway 19, and head toward the ocean when you see mile markers 90 and 91.

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Here, you'll see the sign for Kekaha Kai State Park, and you'll need to follow the unpaved road. Drive slowly and rest assured that most cars are just fine on this road. After approximately five minutes, the road will end, and you can join other adventurers by parking on either side of the road. Jump ship (or car), and depart on foot with as many belongings as you want to carry for a half an hour.

Walk northbound from the parking area to a gate that opens to a pathway. You'll notice tons of trees ahead (the backside of Kakaha Beach) and will need to walk through a lava field for 20 minutes or more, until you reach the sand dunes. At this point, you'll see your destination, an image so perfect that you may blow off all other activities for the rest of the day.

Take some time to swim, daydream, snorkel, body board or do whatever it is that calls to you here.

## 5. Puako Petroglyph Archeological District

Ancient Hawaiians delicately fashioned petroglyphs into stone, and the art (*kī'i pohaku*) is on display for all visitors in the Puako Petroglyph Archeological District. The word "petroglyph" comes from the Greek words "*petro*," which means rock, and "*glyphein*," for carve.

Within the 233-acre Puako Petroglyph Archeological District, which is the largest concentration of petroglyphs in the Pacific, you'll find carvings that are thousands of years old, including pictures of dancers, sailors, families, animals and gods.

You can easily access the petroglyph fields from Holoholokai Beach Park, in Mauna Lani Resort, just south of Puako. Enter through the resort, or on the Puako beachfront from Paniau, at Utility Pole 143. This entryway sits at the south end of Puako Road, and there are restroom facilities at this point,

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should you need them.

The people of Hawaii revere the Puako Petroglyphs, and all visitors are encouraged to view and experience this attraction with respect for the culture of Hawaii and mankind.

## 6. Mauna Kea

You can't visit The Big Island of Hawaii without experiencing the tallest mountain in the world, up close and personal. At 33,500 feet, 13,803 feet above sea level, this spectacular summit is one of the best places in Hawaii, and the world, for observing astronomical sights such as far-away stars.

The Mauna Kea Observatory is among the largest facilities of its kind on the planet and is a gateway to the universe for those interested in space and astronomy. Telescopes operated by representatives from 11 different countries sit near the peak, and the combined power of all the equipment is 60 times greater than that of the impressive Hubble Telescope.

If you want to visit the observatory on this dormant volcano, begin at the Visitor Information Station at the Onizuka Center for International Astronomy. This Visitor Station sits at the 9,000-foot-level of the mountain and even has a souvenir shop.

Although you can't look through the telescopes at the summit and won't be able to access this area after dark, the Keck observatory has a visitors' gallery and a telescope that can be viewed at certain times. Prepare for challenging travel should you desire to go to the highest elevations on Mauna Kea.

Mauna Kea is also a popular destination for biking, hiking and sightseeing.

### **Mauna Kea Visitor Information Center Hours:**

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Daily - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Keck Gallery Hours:**

Daily - 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Mauna Kea Visitor Information Station Location:**

From Hilo, take the Puainako Extension (Hwy 2000), which will merge with Saddle Road (Hwy 2000). Just before Mile Marker 28, turn right on the road to the sign that reads “Mauna Kea Access Road.” The station is approximately six miles up the road on the right.

**Mauna Kea Visitor Information Station Contact Information:**

808-961-2180

## **Kauai**

Kauai is known as “The Garden Isle” of Hawaii and is the oldest and northernmost of the Hawaiian Islands. Formed more than six million years ago, this lush, tropical paradise truly speaks of the beauty that awaits you when you envision the ultimate in tranquility and incredible scenery.

## **7. Iraivan Temple**

Sculpted in India and presently under construction in Kapaa on the island of Kauai, the San Marga Iraivan Temple is a Hindu temple carved of white granite. It is dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva.

In the Tamil language, “*Iraivan*” means “He who is worshipped,” and it is one of the oldest words for a deity. The Iraivan Temple is unique because it is the first all-stone temple to be erected in the United States, and it is truly a sight of spectacular beauty and brilliance.

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The temple is a work in progress, and when you visit, you'll immediately notice the detailed and distinct architectural features. Construction of the temple involved carving more than 3,000 blocks of granite by hand, which began in India in 1990. The blocks were shipped to Kauai for assembly, and the temple is expected to be completed in 2017.

Requirements for the temple, as inspired by a vision of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami as he saw Lord Shiva walking on this land, dictate that the temple is to last 1,000 years and be crafted without any use of machinery whatsoever.

The quartz crystal used in the Temple is considered sacred because it represents the element akasha. Situated "where heavens touch the Earth," the temple is a "must-see" when you visit Kauai.

The Iraivan Temple is maintained by Kauai's Hindu Monastery and is comparable in importance to the great Siva temples in India.

**Iraivan Temple Hours:**

Daily - 9 a.m. to noon

**Iraivan Temple Location:**

Turn left off of Kuhio Highway (Hwy 56) at the lights onto Kaumoo Road. Continue for four miles, just past mile marker 4, and then turn left on Kaholalele Road. The Information Center is at 107 Kaholalele Road, and parking is on Temple Lane.

**Iraivan Temple Contact Information:**

808-822-3012

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## 8. The Blue Room

One of the most spectacular geological formations in Hawaii is a wet cave known as The Blue Room. Located on the North Shore of Kauai, some liken The Blue Room to The Blue Grotto on Capri in Italy. Sunlight shines onto clear waters, creating a magical and mystical effect of blue light inside the cave.

You won't be able to go for a swim in The Blue Room, as the fresh water inside the cave contains leptospirosis bacteria and creates a viral condition that comes from the urine of infected wild animals.

The Blue Room is definitely worth a look, however, and it's a fun trek just to enjoy the incredible view from the cave's entrance. Beauty takes many shapes and originates from the most surprising of places on the island of Kauai.

### **The Blue Room Location:**

Take the highway toward Ke'e, and park in the lot on the ocean (*makai*) side, just before the end of the road. On the mountain (*mauka*) side, there will be a short trail that leads to the wet cave. Wear nonslip shoes, as the slope is steep.

## 9. Waimea Canyon

The "Grand Canyon of the Pacific" is the perfect nickname for Waimea Canyon, a geological marvel that sits en route to Koke'e State Park on Highway 550. You'll be blown away by the massive 10-mile-long and 3,000-foot-deep canyon that's just a fraction of the Arizona Earthly wonder, but no less impressive.

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The Waimea River and rainfall runoff from Mt. Wai'ale'ale, Kauai's central peak, and have carved out a lush landscape and visual spectacle that is nothing short of stunning.

Depending on the time of day, Waimea Canyon takes on changing views as the sun crosses the sky, making a trek to this natural beauty a unique experience every time.

Hike the canyon by checking out trail locations at the Koke'e Natural History Museum or at the Ranger's Station in Koke'e State Park. The most popular trail is the 800-foot pathway to Waipo'o Falls, which takes half the day and offers opportunities to picnic by the falls near a rock-filled pool.

Camping is available in tents or in cabins at the Koke'e Lodge, which has a restaurant where you can grab a bite to eat.

Take note that terrain leading up to Waimea Falls is made of very old, brittle volcanic rock and must be traversed with care. There are several cases of fatalities recorded each year, as some adventurers do not make proper arrangements for safety, including packing flashlights and instruments to light a fire, should you become lost at night.

## Maui

When you want to visit a Hawaiian Island with incredible beaches, spectacular natural wonders and the magical Hawaiian culture that draws so many people to Hawaii, visit Maui. Condé Nast *Traveler* readers voted Maui “Best Island” for 17 years in a row.

### 10. Red Sand Beach (Kaihalulu Beach)

Red Sand Beach is stunning, a truly breathtaking sight unlike any that most people have seen before. Officially known as Kaihalulu Beach, it has been given the nickname because of the red sand that fills the shore of this hidden cove, cinder remnants of a once-active volcano.

You’ll immediately notice the turquoise blue waters of the cove playing dramatically off of the towering rugged cliffs that make up the coastline. The water is deep and forceful at times, and the brittle cinder block walls are a beautiful contrast of black lava rock with lush green foliage at the top.

Red Sand Beach is one of those places that has an other-worldliness quality, like somewhere straight out of a science fiction novel or tale of a lost land.

You’ll need to hike to the beach, and the journey can often be dangerous if you are inexperienced at traversing more difficult trails. Part of the trail requires hikers to have sure footing on slippery and unstable terrain, as landslides have blocked part of the path and created hazards.

As you approach the cove, however, and get a glimpse of the scenic beauty that awaits you, you’ll surely want to keep going to arrive at a place with surprisingly interesting inhabitants like nudists and eccentric hippies who claim to be waiting for their “mother ship” to arrive!

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Along the trail, you may notice some large pieces of stone that mark the graves of an old Japanese cemetery that is constantly in slow motion, sliding as the land does. When you get to the beach, look for the 'iwa and Koa'e Kea, the impressive birds who soar above like masters of sky and wind.

Red Sand Beach Location:

To get to Red Sand Beach, park on the road near the Travasa Hotel parking lot. Walk across the Hana Community Center, and look for a trail on the right-hand side. You'll want to stay on the path that goes down the hill, so if you find yourself at the Japanese cemetery, make your way back to the downward-sloping path.

The original and most clear trail is now partly blocked, so don't use the trail to the right of the cemetery, even though it might seem more obvious. Follow one of the other smaller trails down to the shoreline, and then come back up to the main trail on the other side of the slide. You'll soon find yourself with Red Sand Beach in your line of sight.

This is definitely a trail for hikers who know how to navigate alternate routes and hold their footing about crumbly cinders and tons of pine needles. Be careful, and aware of what you'll need to do to get to Red Sand Beach. Rest assured, however, that the trail is relatively short. Again, this is not a trail for inexperienced hikers.

## 11. Black Rock (Kaanapali Beach)

If you're looking for a picture-perfect beach that surely belongs on the front of a postcard, head to Kaanapali Beach and Black Rock, which is a rocky peninsula at the north end of the beach. Here, you'll find outstanding ocean conditions for swimming, surfing, snorkeling and the ultimate beach experience.

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Kaanapali Beach stretches for three miles and offers gorgeous white sand to sun on and play in. Situated on the western shore of Maui, it has continuously been rated as one of the top beaches in the world by Condé Nast *Traveler* magazine and other travel publications.

Clear blue waters invite beachgoers into a warm, tropical wonderland, and travelers of all ages and family groups love spending hours here. Take a stroll along powdery sand, along the length of Kaanapali until you find shops and restaurants at Whaler's Village.

This beach is not secluded by any means, but there is plenty of space for enjoying the surf and sand by day and sunsets at night. Around the rocks of Black Rock, you'll find water that begins at about eight feet deep and then gradually transitions to deeper water of 25 feet plus, closer to the point.

If you do choose to snorkel Black Rock, be prepared to see all kinds of lovely fish, such as parrot, butterfly and cardinal fish and even some beautiful sea turtles that congregate around the underwater ledge.

#### **Black Rock (Kaanapali Beach) Location:**

Park in the public parking lot on the ground level of the Sheraton Maui Resort, as this hotel is closest to Black Rock. Get to the parking lot early to have the best chance of finding a stall before the lot fills up, and be prepared to pay \$2.50 an hour. You can also park in Whalers' Village, but this lot charges \$20 per day.

As you walk Kaanapali Beach, head to the north end toward Black Rock.

## 12. Road to Hana

You can't visit Maui without taking the famous Road to Hana. You'll see this adventure in almost every Maui guidebook, and there's a reason why. The trip

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is long, and the road winds around 617 hairpin curves, but the sights along the way are impressive and not to be missed.

Again, the journey to Hana is the highlight, not the final destination. Hana is a sleepy town that has little more than a gas station, general store and post office. They do have a new hotel, the Travasa Hana, which you may want to stay a night.

Otherwise, just plan on spending the day traveling over 56 one-lane bridges and seeing gorgeous waterfalls, black lava rocks butted up against white foam seas and towering cliffs, tropical jungles and greenery everywhere you look.

If you go just a bit past Hana, you'll come to the Seven Sacred Pools or the 'Ohe'o Gulch," which is a collection of waterfalls and pools inside Haleakala National Park.

The drive to Hana is an all-day event, so fill up your gas tank and bring lots of snacks and drinks. The road is just a mere 53 miles from the Kahului Airport, but it feels like you're going on a vacation within a vacation.

There is another point to gas up at, should you need it, in Pa'ia. Enjoy this wild, untamed view of Maui on the Road to Hana and perhaps switch drivers halfway so that each person in your car can take in the streams and other mountain sights that present themselves along the way.

### **Road to Hana Location:**

The Road to Hana begins on Hawaii State Routes 36 and 360, the highways that connect Kahului with Hana in east Maui. After Kalepa Bridge, the Road to Hana continues as Route 31 (Piilani Highway) to Kipahulu, which is the unofficial start to the Road to Hana.

It will take about 2.5 hours to reach the end of the road, without any stops, but

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you'll most likely want to stop and sightsee along the way. Often, you'll come upon landslides on the dirt road past Route 31, which will lead to road closures and the end of the line. Take note that most car rental companies forbid their cars to be traveled on this road.

### 13. Kapalua

Want to know what's so special about Kapalua? How about white sand beaches, crystal-blue Pacific waters and green, foliage-packed volcanic peaks that invite you to sunbathe, relax, enjoy water sports and do practically anything you want to on an exciting Maui vacation.

Kapalua is a resort area located on Maui's northwest shore, and you'll find that your spirit of adventure and tranquility come into beautiful balance here.

Kapalua is a treat for the senses, and it soothes the soul. Come to this Maui destination for nature adventures, beach days or walks in gardens overflowing with topical, indigenous plants.

You can visit the Haleakala Volcano, and explore the wildlife in this protected, conservation district. Follow trails through lava rivers long since cooled, and venture into caves that hold treasures like stalagmites and stalactites. You can walk the banks of a subterranean river, and take the entire family to the peak of the Haleakala Volcano to view the crater from the highest vantage point.

Kapalua is one of the most beautiful places on Earth, and you'll find plenty of opportunities for exploring a variety of facets of Maui all in one place.

#### **Kapalua Location:**

Start off at Kapalua Bay, which sits on the western tip of Maui. From here, you'll be able to explore activities like zip lines and hiking trails, or simply lay on the white sand beaches all day.

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Kapalua Beach is bordered on both sides by rocks, and swimming here is excellent. It is one of the safest beaches for children, and you'll find plenty of amenities nearby at the many resorts that line the beach.

Kapalua Beach is located approximately at 300 Kapalua Drive, Lahaina, Hawaii 96761.

## 14. Leleiwi Lookout

If you're looking for stunning views and a sight unlike any other in Maui, stop at Leleiwi Lookout, on the way to Haleakala. At an elevation of 8,800 feet, Leleiwi Lookout overlooks the 3,000-foot crater and offers vantage points that simply should not be missed.

Haleakala is one of Maui's two volcanoes that are dormant, and it's on the way to the summit of Haleakala that you'll find your destination, Leleiwi Lookout.

Haleakala sits near the Kihei coast and measures 7.5 miles long and 2.5 miles wide. You could easily fit a couple of small cities inside; that's how large it is. Likened to a moonscape, it has actually been used by NASA astronauts to train for moon landings.

Although impressive, this is not what you're coming to see when you set out to experience Leleiwi Lookout. When the clouds are in a position low in the sky, and the sun is just perfectly behind you, a phenomenon occurs at the Lookout that you'll only happen upon in two other locations on the planet, in Germany and Scotland.

About sunset, you'll notice the reflection of your own shadow on the clouds, surrounded by a halo rainbow ring. Now, this is what you travel to Maui for.

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The illusion is called “Specter of the Brocken” and is made possible by a precise combination of mist, shadow and sun.

The Hawaiians call this *akaku anuenu* (reflection rainbow) and say that it is the same as seeing your own soul.

**Leleiwi Lookout Location:**

Take Highway 378 just past mile marker 17, and walk the short trail, which leads from the parking lot to Leleiwi Lookout.

## Oahu

When you visit Oahu, you'll immediately see a unique combination of historic ancient Hawaiian culture and a modern metropolis. Oahu offers the luxuries of a big city with the charm and atmosphere that is only seen in the Hawaiian Islands. There is so much to do in Hawaii that you'll most likely be able to fill all of your desires for the perfect Hawaiian vacation in one island paradise.

### 15. Chinatown in Old Honolulu

The city of Honolulu is home to some of Hawaii's most important landmarks and attractions, such as the King Kamehameha I statue, Iolani Palace and the Aloha Tower. It's also a hub for government buildings and cultural enclaves, which make the eclectic nature of Honolulu so enticing to visitors.

In Honolulu's financial district, on the western edge of the city, you'll come across what is called "Old Honolulu" and the community of Chinatown. This district houses a variety of shops, temples, restaurants, bars and vendors selling herbal tinctures and homemade leis.

During the day, roam busy markets such as the Mauakea Marketplace, where you'll be able to pick up exotic fruits and other curious finds. Take a step back in time and witness the history of Japan and China at the fascinating temples, the Kuan Yin Temple and the Izumo Taishakyo Mission Shrine.

Grab a bite of Vietnamese, Malaysian, Chinese or even French food, or take in the Oahu arts scene along the Chinatown Art Walk. Chinatown in Old Honolulu has its own theater featuring live performances and some amazing underground clubs and bars to visit after dark.

#### **Chinatown in Old Honolulu Location:**

Chinatown is just a few blocks from downtown Honolulu, bordered by Bethel

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and River Streets, North Bertania Street and Nimitz Highway in Honolulu.

## 16. Honolulu Museum of Art

When you visit Hawaii, the incredible scenery is part of the magic of the islands. Cities like Honolulu offer opportunities that you won't find on any other island.

The Honolulu Museum of Art features some of the only exhibits in the state of Hawaii devoted exclusively to modern art. The museum recently took over holdings of The Contemporary Museum at Honolulu, which presented the works of modern artists Enrique Chagoya, David Hockney, Jasper Johns, Yasumasa Morimura, Dennis Oppenheim, Otto Piene and Andy Warhol, among others.

Galleries at the Honolulu Museum of Art are viewable at two locations, at the Spalding House and at the main building of the museum on Thomas Square. The Spalding House, in Makiki Heights, is a former 1925 residence and has displayed many Japanese art works throughout the years.

Spalding House currently houses many beautiful gardens and sculptures by Satoru Awe, Deborah Butterfield and Arnold Zimmerman. Don't miss the fantastic wall painting by Paul Morrison.

The artwork from the old Contemporary Museum now sits in the Honolulu Museum of Art in downtown Honolulu's First Hawaiian Center, which is headquarters to the First Hawaiian Bank. Here, you'll see more than 3,000 art pieces in a collection that is primarily focused on Hawaiian art but also includes notable pieces of modern art.

### **Honolulu Museum of Art Hours (Main Museum):**

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Monday – Closed

Tuesday through Saturday – 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sunday – 1-5 p.m.

(Closed on January 1, July 4, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day).

\*Spalding House – Call for Hours

**Honolulu Museum of Art Admission Prices (Main Museum):**

Adults – \$10

Children (ages 4-17) – \$5

Children (under 3) – Free

Members and active military (and family) for select exhibitions – Free

\*Spalding House – Call for Admission Prices

**Honolulu Museum of Art Location:**

Main Museum – 900 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96814

Spalding House – 2411 Makiki Heights Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

**Honolulu Museum of Art Contact Information:**

Main Museum – 808-532-8700

Spalding House – 808-526-0232

## 17. The Sea Life Park Hawaii

Hawaii seems to have more than its share of beautiful beaches and natural wonders. It's practically a heaven on Earth for tourists when you consider that the island of Oahu has modern attractions that are built to educate, entertain and provide sustenance for the people and land of Hawaii, in addition to its breathtaking nature sites.

The Sea Life Park Hawaii is a one-of-a-kind entertainment and educational facility located on one of the most popular of the Hawaiian Islands. It's a

magical place filled with wonderful sea creatures, including sharks, dolphins,

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sea lions, penguins, sea turtles, rays and many other fascinating species.

At Sea Life Park Hawaii, you'll have the opportunity to swim with and feed some of the animals and also listen to trainers talk about the unique characteristics of some of the Sea Life Park inhabitants.

The park is beautifully designed with reefs, pools, lagoons and amphitheaters, with each venue delivering a chance to learn more about the creatures of the sea. Come see the new Hawaiian Shark Tank that is home to a dozen native Hawaiian Sharks, and relax in the Hawaii Ocean Theatre, as you watch shows that highlight the conservation efforts of the Sea Life Park team.

Catch a sea lion feeding or witness the hilarious antics of the penguins, a beloved threatened species in Hawaii. Kids can even play in an Adventure Play Zone, and pretend that they're pirates for the day. There is a gift shop in the park and a café for grabbing a snack or lunch.

**Sea Life Park Hawaii Hours:**

Daily – 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Sea Life Park Hawaii Admission Prices:**

Adults - \$29.99

Children (ages 3 through 11) - \$19.99

**Sea Life Park Hawaii Location:**

41-202 Kalanianaʻole Highway #7, Waimanalo, Hawaii 96795

**Sea Life Park Hawaii Contact Information:**

808-259-2500

## 18. Honolulu Zoo

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Visiting Oahu with a family often means you'll be searching for activities that are exciting for kids, much more so than lounging on a beach with a nice, fruity drink. Take your little ones to the Honolulu Zoo, and explore more than 300 acres nestled inside the Queen Kapi'olani Park.

There are approximately 1,200 animals to view in habitats specifically designed for each species. You're in for a treat when you see what kind of wildlife call the zoo their home.

The Honolulu Zoo's mission is "to inspire the stewardship of our living world by providing meaningful experiences to our guests. The zoo emphasizes Pacific Tropical ecosystems and our traditional values of malama (caring) and ho'okipa (hospitality)."

When you visit the Honolulu Zoo, you'll learn about the natural world and how conservation and environmental education are essential to fostering a sense of unity and collective consciousness on the planet.

Some of the animals at the zoo include mammals, such as African lions, cheetahs, Grant's zebras, llamas, miniature horses, ring-tailed lemurs and Sumatran tigers. There are more than 100 different kinds of birds, such as star finch, sun conures, black swans, common ostrich, hooded vultures and kookaburra.

Check out amazing reptiles, including the American alligator, crocodile monitor, Galapagos tortoise, komodo dragon and Philippine tree skink. Depending on when you visit, you may be able to take part in special activities like dinner safaris at the zoo and other fun events, such as stargazing, crafts and even overnight camping inside the zoo.

When you're at the zoo, look for special gardens filled with native shrubs and plants, such as the Naio, which is usually found on sand dunes or on dry

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sides of mountains. You'll also be able to spot the Na'u, an endangered species in Hawaii that is a type of gardenia.

You can easily spend the entire day at the Honolulu Zoo, so plan on bringing walking shoes, a camera, a jacket and a lot of energy.

**Honolulu Zoo Hours:**

Daily – 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Honolulu Zoo Admission Prices:**

Adults – \$14

Children (ages 3 to 12) – \$6

**Honolulu Zoo Location:**

151 Kapahulu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

**Honolulu Zoo Contact Information:**

808-971-7171

## 19. Maunawili Falls

Oahu is a modern city by Hawaiian standards, but it certainly shares the breathtaking natural beauty that the other Hawaiian Islands hold. Maunawili Falls is a “must-see” nature spot on Oahu, and you can get there via a hike along a river that ends with a great swimming and picture spot.

The trail to Maunawili Falls is muddy and often slippery, so plan on wearing good shoes and getting wet on occasion. You'll have to cross the river several times, and sandals are not really appropriate for this type of hike.

Once you arrive at the falls, you may decide to join the adventurous few who jump from the top of the waterfalls into the pool below. Do so at your own risk,

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as you'll be able to enjoy the experience just fine if you simply want to wade or sit to admire the view.

The trail to Maunawili Falls offers some great opportunities to take in the scenic mountains that surround the falls and to look out upon Kailua. Enjoy your trek through a mild jungle before you return to the bustling city of Honolulu.

**Maunawili Falls Location:**

No parking at the trailhead is strictly enforced, so you'll want to park opposite the bridge in the residential area. Follow the signs to the Maunawili Trail.

## 20. Waikiki Aquarium

If you've never looked directly into the eyes of a zebra shark or watched an octopus open a jar by himself, you'll be able to experience these fascinating things and more at the Waikiki Aquarium. Each year, more than 330,000 people visit the award-winning Waikiki Aquarium and get face-to-face with living coral, tropical fish in all colors of the rainbow, Hawaiian monk seals, squid, sea jellies and more.

In fact, this incredible aquarium sits on the edge of a living coral reef and features more than 3,500 marine animals that make the area their home. You'll view more than 500 species of ocean plants and animals, each representing the diversity of life in Hawaii and the Pacific.

The Waikiki Aquarium holds the designation of Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center for the Coastal America's Partnership Pacific Island Region, and it is filled to the brim with exhibits, galleries and live habitats that introduce visitors to the important ecosystems in Hawaii and in the West and South Pacific.

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Come see for yourself the exciting attractions at the Waikiki Aquarium, such as unique coral displays from all over the Pacific, freshwater and saltwater tanks with animals only seen in Hawaii, a 7,500-gallon outdoor water feature that recreates Hawaii's shoreline and an ocean aquaculture exhibit that showcases the methods used to raise fish in captivity.

The Waikiki Aquarium is one of the first of its kind in the world to make living South Pacific coral available for view by the public, and the Coral Farm exhibit provides colonies in the hundreds to other research facilities in hopes of learning how to properly care for and conserve the world's coral reefs.

Get ready to take a look at rare animals and creatures that are of special interest, such as the beautiful seahorse.

**Waikiki Aquarium Hours:**

Daily – 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

(Closed for the Honolulu Marathon and Christmas Day)

**Waikiki Aquarium Admission Prices:**

Adults – \$8

Seniors – \$6

Juniors (ages 13 to 17) – \$4

Children (ages 5 to 12) – \$2

Children (under 5) – Free

**Waikiki Aquarium Location:**

2777 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii, 98615

**Waikiki Aquarium Contact Information:**

808-923-9741

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## 21. Royal Hawaiian Center

When you want to get a feel for how old Hawaii meets the modern-day Hawaiian society, look to the Royal Hawaiian Center, which is a 310,000-foot entertainment facility and destination for shopping, dining and culture.

The Royal Hawaiian Center features more than 100 restaurants and retail shops and is one of the largest malls in Hawaii. There are four levels of stores where you can purchase all kinds of jewelry and apparel to unique Hawaiian treasures.

Sit down for a snack or meal, pick up gifts to take home and even find great items to use while you're on vacation on Oahu. The Royal Hawaiian Center is owned by Kamehameha Schools, and all of the profits benefit the education of Hawaiian schoolchildren.

As you shop and eat, stop to take a break and enjoy the nightly entertainment from Polynesian dance and music troupes, hula performers, Hawaiian composers and recording artists, and groups entertaining with authentic drumming and chanting.

In Hawaiian, Waikiki means, "sprouting waters," and in the heart of Waikiki, you'll find this lush oasis where more than 10,000 coconut trees once stood in the presence of Hawaiian royalty.

### **Royal Hawaiian Center Hours:**

Daily – 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

### **Royal Hawaiian Center Location:**

2201 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii

### **Royal Hawaiian Center Contact Information:**

808-922-2299

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## Molokai

When you visit Molokai, you'll discover a Hawaii that is unspoiled and untamed — an island that offers an honest view of beauty with little influence by man. Molokai is relatively undiscovered and perhaps the most authentic Hawaii you'll find.

### 22. Kalaupapa Overlook

Set high atop the Molokai cliffs, which overlook the awe-inspiring Kalaupapa Peninsula, you'll find the Kalaupapa Overlook. It's surrounded on three sides by the sea and on the other side by the towering cliffs that rise thousands of feet into the sky.

If you want to see panoramic views of the entire north-central coast of Molokai, you need to travel to The Overlook, which sits in Palaau State Park, just 10 miles from Kaunakakai. This area is of particular importance historically, as it's the infamous spot of Father Damien's leper colony.

Kalaupapa Lookout is one of the most striking natural areas on the island.

#### **Kalaupapa Overlook Location:**

From Highway 460, drive Highway 470 (Kalae Highway) to the north, and continue until it ends. Follow the signs to the overlook, which is just a short distance on an easy path.

### 23. Kamakou Preserve

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In all of Hawaii, if there is one thing you have to see in your lifetime, it's the Kamakou Preserve. Nestled in East Molokai, high up in the mountains, the Kamakou Preserve is a biologically rich rainforest that serves as a habitat for more than 200 species of plants, birds, insects and animals.

This natural treasure is accessible via a boardwalk that takes visitors into a pristine, moss-covered mountain forest. The Nature Conservancy has staff members and volunteers who lead monthly hikes through the preserve, where 2,774 acres are lushly filled with native plants, such as the *'alani*, a species in the same family as citrus fruits.

The incredibly rare Molokai thrush and creeper were seen in this area recently, and animals like these are truly a sight for adventurous eyes.

The Kamakou Preserve rainforest is so unique and so distinct from any other rainforest on the planet, it was granted conservation status in 1982 and is now protected by the State Department of Land and Natural Resources.

**Kamakou Preserve Location:**

The remote rainforest in the Kamakou Preserve is only accessible by 4x4 vehicles. Contact the Nature Conservancy of Molokai to arrange a visit.

**Kamakou Preserve Contact Information:**

808-533-5236

## 24. Palaau State Park

Palaau State Park is located in Central Molokai and is comprised of 233 acres of forests and pasturelands at the end of Kalae Highway. When you visit Palaau State Park, there are plenty of great photo opportunities and chances to get a good look at Makanalua Peninsula and Kaluapapa, which sit 1,600 feet below.

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Take some of the short trails to Kalaupapa Lookout or Phallic Rock, or picnic in the area. Camping is allowed by permit, and there are several historic sites to experience, such as locations where lepers were once banished.

**Palaau State Park Location:**

Drive north on Highway 470 (Kalae Highway), to the end, which will leave you just about three miles north of Kualapuu. Here, you'll see signs for Palaau State Park.

## 25. Waikolu Overlook

From Wailolu Overlook, you'll be able to take in unbelievable views of a pristine valley, more than 3,700 feet below. Waterfalls pour into plunge pools within lush jungles in Waikolu Valley, and at Waikolu Overlook, you've got one of the best views of this natural splendor on the Island.

**Waikolu Overlook Location:**

If you're traveling from the airport, head toward Kauanakaki and make a left onto Maunahui Road, which is just past the bridge and mile marker 4. You'll find that the paved road ends and becomes a dirt road. Follow this road for 13 miles, until you get to the lookout.

## Conclusion

Hopefully this book has helped you find some places to explore in Hawaii that you may have not known about otherwise. Travel is a beautiful way to experience the world through the eyes and experiences of the people who live there. These 25 insider tips for the best attractions in Hawaii will certainly introduce you to a little more about the native culture in Hawaii and offer you a glimpse of the breathtaking land that seems to be able to connect people of all cultures, religions and societal status.

Aloha, and happy travels!

## Recommended Reading

### Hawaii Active

<http://www.thehawaiiescape.com/go/hawaiiactive>

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