

The Art Of Planning A Hawaii Vacation

Planning a Hawaii vacation is half the fun of going to Hawaii. The great news is that tourism is starting to fall in Hawaii, and you can find some great deals if you just know where to look. Prices are very seasonal, so you can save and still enjoy all that Hawaii has to offer if you can travel in the off season.

What to Take

Hawaii is a very temperate place, with low temperatures rarely below 60 and highs rarely above 85 Fahrenheit. Still, the winds sometimes get strong, and it's a good idea to bring a sweater. Don't worry about formal wear; almost every restaurant has a laid-back attitude about dress, with covered beachwear being fine in most cases. Do bring sunscreen and a cool hat, as the sun gets very hot (you're almost on the equator). You can find inexpensive straw hats at almost every tourist stop.

For almost every occasion, aloha wear is a good choice, and you can find it cheap in Hilo Hattie's, the ABC Store, or at swap meets and local shops everywhere. Instead of packing the suit or nice dress, just pick up a nice aloha dress or, for men, a Hawaiian shirt and khakis. This works just fine for the kids as well. Not only do you solve the problem of what to wear, you get clothing that is perfect for the climate here and you also have some lovely souvenirs to take home with you.

Where to Go

Most people, when they think of a Hawaii vacation, think of being right on the beach at Waikiki. That's okay, but the Waikiki strip is very crowded and somewhat overbuilt. You may have a better time on Oahu if you go with Turtle Bay or a hotel in Kaneohe, just a few miles from Honolulu and on the scenic windward side of the island.

On the other islands, you don't find the built-up problem, but you do find that most of the regular resorts and hotels are expensive. If you can't find a good deal on one of these, check out one of the many bed-and-breakfasts, especially on the Big Island. If you're part of a large group, check out the possibility of renting a beach house for your Hawaii vacation instead of staying at a hotel; there are hundreds of beautiful properties available, and groups of eight or more will almost always find significant savings this way over a hotel. There's the added advantage of being able to cook your own food, too, which can represent a great savings.

What To Do

Hawaii has hundreds of things to do, mostly centering around the ocean and hiking through some of the most glorious natural beauty you can imagine. Hanauma Bay on Oahu is not to be missed for the snorkeling, the beach, and the scenery; this protected bay has something for every member of your party. North Shore at Oahu has dozens of great shops with inexpensive souvenirs, or more expensive souvenirs like works of art from the world-famous Wyland Galleries.

Often, just going on a Gray Line tour or booking something through the Polynesian Cultural Center will give you the Hawaiian experience without huge expense. Don't leave without going to a luau -- but pass up the Polynesian Cultural Center luau and try Germaine's Luau on Oahu, or one of the great luaus on Maui instead.

Plan out island-to-island travel in advance. By boat or by plane, traveling between islands can get expensive, so it should be budgeted for. But it is definitely worth including in your itinerary to get the most out of what could be the greatest vacation you will ever take.

You can spend the rest of your Hawaii vacation picking up box lunch with chicken katsu or poke aku (Hawaiian raw fish, sort of like sashimi) and lounging on the beach like you've no place particular to go. That's living on Hawaii time and is sure to be a vacation to remember and want to repeat in the future.

About the Author

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