

# A SURFER'S GUIDE TO HAWAII



What goes hand in hand with beautiful beaches? In Hawaii, it's great surf. Phoebe Tilelli explores the best breaks on Maui, Oahu and Kauai as well as a few extra hot spots

Hawaii is the home of surfing legend Duke Kahanamoku who introduced surfing to Australia and the rest of the world. Learning to surf is a rite of passage here, so be sure to ditch the hula skirt and pick up a board no matter what your skill level. Due to the increase of tourist numbers over the years, local surfers have become a little bit secretive and territorial about their favourite breaks. But don't let this put you off. The warm water combined with a stunning perspective of the coast will be enough to keep you coming back even if you do get unceremoniously dumped a few times. Whether you're keen to learn on a giant Malibu board with the kids in tow, or ready for cut backs on a short board with the pros, Hawaii has something to offer everyone.

## OAHU

**PADDLE OUT:** Waikiki is perfect for rookie surfers and families. People tend to use long boards or Malibu boards here, making it easier for the long paddle out and for catching smaller waves. Hire a giant floral Malibu or even a stand up paddle board and get lessons from one of the pros on the beach. These instructors are normally Hawaiian locals and give the best advice on how to catch that perfect ride. The waves here are small and gentle so before you

know it you'll be hangin' ten with a view of Diamond Head, the dormant volcano at the end of the beach. The crowds can be a downside on this beach, however people watching between waves is part of the experience. If you're lucky you might even see locals with their dogs onboard as well as tandem surfers throwing their partners in the air. If you have more experience and don't need an instructor, wait and go out in the evenings when it's less crowded. Watch the sunset, see turtles bob their heads above water and listen to the ukulele music floating out to sea from Duke's Beach Bar.

For the hardcore surfers, Oahu's North Shore arguably has some of the best surf in the world with professionals flocking here every winter to brave the 20 feet barrels at Banzai Pipeline. Even if you're not up for the challenge it's a great place to visit and definitely worth the drive. The beaches are stunning and festivals are often held when competitions are on. Pipeline Masters 2013 is held in December and is free to watch.

**HANG LOOSE:** When visiting the North Shore swing by to see the Ron Artis Family Band. This family of 11 children all play different instruments and sing in a shack in Haleiwa town. Before you spot the shack you'll often hear the blues beats playing from the other end of town. You won't miss this place with its colourful painted surf boards decorating the front yard like an outdoor art gallery. Watch



## NAVIGATING HAWAII

IF YOU GET LOST ON ONE OF THE COASTAL ROADS ON ANY OF HAWAII'S ISLANDS, YOU MAY HAVE TO ASK FOR DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO GET TO THE BEACH OR HOTEL YOU WERE HEADING FOR. BUT DON'T EXPECT ANY DIRECTIONS THAT ARE BASED ON A COMPASS POINT. NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST DO NOT FEATURE IN THE LOCAL LEXICON. INSTEAD, YOU MUST ORIENTATE YOURSELF BASED ON YOUR SURROUNDINGS. HAWAIIANS REFERENCE THE DIRECTION OF THE MOUNTAINS AS "MAUKA" AND THE OCEAN AS "MAKAI". AND IT MAKES SENSE TO KEEP IT SIMPLE. WHO NEEDS A COMPASS OR A MAP WHEN SCENERY CAN BE YOUR GUIDE.

### IN THE PICTURE

**Main:** Few places are more synonymous with surfing than Hawaii

**Left:** Oahu's North Shore has some of the state's best surf

*All photos: Thinkstock*

them jam as they rehearse their original music and pick up one of their many recordings. On Waikiki beach opposite the Princess Kaiulani Hotel be sure to visit the Duke Kahanamoku statue where it's tradition to place your frangipani leis around Duke's neck in remembrance of the Father of Hawaiian surf culture.

**BEACH BREAK:** The Aston Waikiki Beachside Hotel is a family favourite with a prime location right on the beach and its distinctive use of local art and antiques gives it a boutique edge. Overnight rates start from \$246.

## MAUI

**PADDLE OUT:** Escape the crowds and drive South from Lahaina to Wailea where you'll find Makena beach park. This is divided between Big Beach and Little Beach, which are separated by a rocky headland. The almost 1500 metre stretch of sand at Big Beach is paradise for body boarders with plenty of room to move and usually not too many surfers due to big shore breaks.

If you'd like to get in touch with your inner hippie, venture over the headland at the northern end via the cliff trail and you'll find Little Beach glittering down below. Remember to pack the sun block and leave the camera behind. Shuffle along the cliff edge, peer a little closer and you'll see that clothing here is optional. Wax up, dive in and wash the Maui red dirt from your feet. But be ready for an interesting view. Even the surfers leave their swimmers on the sand and work on their tans from out at sea while waiting for the next set.

**HANG LOOSE:** After a morning surf rest your tired arms and fill your hungry stomach while sitting in the shade of a palm tree at Aloha Mixed Plate. Located in the busy old whaling village of Lahaina, this is the place to get an authentic taste of Hawaiian cuisine with an ocean view. Forget fretting over the menu not knowing what to choose. The cheap and tasty food here is offered as a mixed plate so you can have a try of everything. Don't go past Hawaiian favourite, Kalua Pork wrapped in taro leaves and cooked in an underground oven. The coconut prawns are also a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

**BEACH BREAK:** Aqua Hotels and Resorts have a secluded boutique haven located in Wailea, only a short distance from Makena Beach. Hotel Wailea Maui offers a Private Beach Club and up to a 12% discount for Australian residents. Overnight rates start from \$285.





## KAUAI

**PADDLE OUT:** Kauai's South Shore is where you'll find Poipu — once named America's best stretch of coast — and a place where the sun comes out almost every day of the year. Head to Kiahuna Beach where lessons are available outside Kiahuna Beach Plantation. And a little distance offshore there is a perfect break for more confident surfers.

Paddle out with caution though and watch for sea urchin spikes against your fingertips as the water here is shallow. Once you make it out try to acquaint yourselves with the locals who can point out the rough areas. You don't want to find yourself scrambling over the rocks that hide in shallow waters. You might come out looking more like a porcupine than a pro surfer, with more than just a bruised ego to show for it.

Hanalei Bay is the Hollywood of Kauai, home to surfing stars including shark attack victim Bethany Hamilton, pro surfer Alana Blanchard and the late Andy Irons. Irons died a three time world champ at 32 and you can find his memorial site at this beach where his ashes were scattered in 2010. Go surfing here and you'll often drift among flowers left floating in the water by Andy's family, friends and fans.

**HANG LOOSE:** If you're visiting between December and May pack your binoculars and keep your eye out for Humpback whales which are often spotted spouting and splashing off the shores of Poipu.

When visiting Hanalei, stop at Ke'e beach at the foot of the Napali coast walking track. Well known local boys climb coconut trees and sell their takings. Most days you'll see a ute piled high with coconuts against the backdrop of black jagged cliffs as they

hang out listening to Hawaiian music. After a long surf, salty tourists and locals alike come to quench their thirst, kick back and enjoy the cool coconut water. Although this looks like a chilled out summer job, rumour has it they can make over \$500 a day on these juicy treats.

**BEACH BREAK:** The Grand Hyatt Kauai is located on Poipu road surrounded by many of Poipu's beaches with Kiahuna very close by. Hire a car and take a day trip from here up to Hanalei Bay. Overnight rates start from \$294. 🍍



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