

DIY SMARTER HOME · TRAVEL

# Hawaii, four *islands*, seventeen days.

A complete itinerary across Maui, the Big Island, Kauai, and Oahu — late August into early September 2022. Hotels, daily plan, reservations, food guide, and what I'd change.

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DATES	August 26 – September 11, 2022
ISLANDS	Maui · Big Island · Kauai · Oahu
HOTELS	5
RESERVATIONS	6 (book early)

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# Maui — five days *upcountry*.

AUG 26 → 31 · VOLCANO SUMMIT · ROAD TO HANA · WEST-SIDE SNORKEL

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## STAY

### God's Peace of Maui

Upcountry Makawao — central, between west beaches and east Hana.

~\$160/night

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DAY 01 FRIDAY · AUGUST 26

## Arrival in *Maui*.

Fly EWR → OGG. Pick up rental car, drive upcountry to Makawao. Settle in at God's Peace, scout the lay of the land. If energy permits, sunset at Kapalua Cliff House overlook.

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DAY 02 SATURDAY · AUGUST 27

## Haleakalā *sunrise*, west beaches, luau.

- Pre-dawn drive up Haleakalā for sunrise — book the reservation two months in advance via REC.GOV (window: 7am HST, 48 hours out is too late)
- Bike ride down from summit (optional, if booked separately)
- Whaler's Beach at Kaanapali — snorkel, blackrock
- Kapalua Bay and Napili Bay — both excellent snorkel
- Drums of the Pacific Luau, 5pm — ~\$200/person

*Mama's Fish House dinner reservation, 2:45pm — book months ahead.*

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DAY 03 SUNDAY · AUGUST 28

## Road to *Hana*, sunrise to sunset.

- Start before sunrise — the road is what matters, not the destination
- Twin Falls (mile marker 2), Eucalyptus rainbow trees, Garden of Eden
- Ke'anae Lookout — Auntie Sandy's banana bread (M–S, 2pm)
- Wai'ānapanapa Black Sand Beach — reservation required, 3–6 PM slot
- Pipiwai Trail — bamboo forest + Waimoku Falls (4 mi round trip)
- Seven Sacred Pools / Oheo Gulch
- Wailua Falls (mile marker 45), Hanawi Falls, Makapipi Falls
- Iao Valley on the way back if time permits

*Eat: Paia Fish Market (blackened mahi mahi), Coconut Glen vegan ice cream, Nahiku Marketplace coffee, Braddha Hut's BBQ (M–F until 2:30pm).*

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DAY 04 MONDAY · AUGUST 29

## West Maui — *snorkel* and sunset sail.

- Snorkel Blackrock at Kaanapali (rent gear from Aston)
  - Sunset catamaran cruise from Lahaina
  - Optional: whale watching (seasonal), Iao Valley, Paia Fish Market lunch
  - Dinner at Kimo's, Lahaina — 5:15pm
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DAY 05 TUESDAY · AUGUST 30

## West Ridge Trail and *Honolua* Bay.

- Waihe'e Ridge Trail — start at 8am, ~2 hours, 4.4 mi / 2,600 ft elevation gain
- Olivine Tide Pools (Nakalele Blowhole, 10 min from viewpoint)
- Honolua Bay — snorkel access trail (~15 min walk in)
- Sunset at Kaanapali Beach — Japengo for dinner

## Maui — top *spots* by region.

### Kapalua Bay (NW)

Snorkel, turtle, calm

### Napili Bay (NW)

Snorkel, sunset

### Kapalua Coastal Trail

2.5 mi, all bays

### Honokeana Cove

Turtle snorkel

### Ho'okipa Beach

Turtles, windsurfers

### Olowalu Beach

Turtle snorkel, calm

### Honolua Bay

Best snorkel on island

### Kahakuloa Head

Coastal headland

**Lahaina town**  
Banyan tree, Front St

**Iao Valley**  
Lush state park

**Mākena Beach**  
Big & Little Beach

**Molokini Crater**  
Boat-only snorkel

## Maui — eat *where*.

**Mama's Fish House**  
East · book months ahead

**Paia Fish Market**  
Blackened mahi mahi

**Cuatro**  
Wailea/Kihei · 5:30pm

**Kimo's**  
Lahaina · 5:15pm

**Aunty Sandy's Banana Bread**  
Ke'anae · M–S, 2pm

**Coconut Glen**  
Hana road · vegan

**Hāna Farms Roadside**  
Pizza · Fri/Sat to 8pm

**Leoda's Bakery**  
West · pies, pastries

# Big Island — two days, the *volcano*.

AUG 31 → SEP 2 · VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK · KONA SNORKEL · HAPUNA

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## STAY

### Alii Kane Cottages with Loft

Volcano village — sleeps near Volcanoes NP gate, easy night-volcano access.

~\$130/night

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DAY 06 WEDNESDAY · AUGUST 31

## Maui → Big Island, *night* volcano.

- Drop rental, drive to OGG airport
  - OGG → ITO flight, 4:45 – 5:20 PM (Hilo side)
  - Pick up Big Island rental, drive to Volcano
  - Night volcano viewing — verify Thurston Lava Tube is erupting on arrival day
  - Backup AirBnB option in Volcano village if first stay unavailable
- 

DAY 07 THURSDAY · SEPTEMBER 1

## Volcanoes National Park, full day.

- Volcanic crater national park — full day exploration
- Eastern lava areas in afternoon
- Drive west to Kona side for night two
- Kona-side stay (book an AirBnB near Kailua-Kona)

## Kona snorkel, west *beaches*, fly to Kauai.

- Two Steps at Honaunau Bay — go left for easy snorkel, right is harder
- Pu'uuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park (next to Two Steps)
- Kaloko-Honokōhau temple near KOA airport
- Punalu'u Black Sand Beach — south side, en route
- Hapuna Beach — white sand, swim
- Manini'owali Beach (Kua Bay) — white sand, near airport
- Kanaloa Octopus Farm tour (book ahead)
- 'Akaka Falls — easy boardwalk, dramatic drop
- Manta ray night snorkel (if booked)
- Flight KOA → HNL → LIH, 4:35 – 6:35 PM

Mauna Kea stargazing — book separately, requires a clear afternoon.

## Big Island — top *snorkel*.

### Hapuna Beach

White sand, swim

### Richardson Beach Park

Easy, Hilo side

### Kahalu'u Beach

Reef, easy entry

### Honaunau Bay (Two Steps)

Morning, go left

### Captain Cook Monument

Kayak in

### Kīkōkō Point Park

Easy, west side

# Kauai — four days on the *garden* island.

SEP 2 → 6 · NA PALI COAST · WAIMEA CANYON · HANALEI · POIPU

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## STAY

### Kauai Palms Hotel

Lihue — central, walking distance to airport, used as a base for both north and south day trips.

~\$90/night

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DAY 09 SATURDAY · SEPTEMBER 3

## Na Pali coast — *Holo Holo* charter.

- Na Pali coast Holo Holo Charters — full day boat tour
  - Snorkel stops along the coast, sea caves, dolphins likely
  - Recovery afternoon, swim at Lydgate Beach Park (very easy snorkel, kid-safe)
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DAY 10 SUNDAY · SEPTEMBER 4

## North shore — *Hanalei* and Hā'ena.

- Hā'ena State Park & Ke'e Beach — snorkel + Hanakāpī'ai Beach trail (4mi RT, reservation required)
  - Limahuli Garden and Preserve
  - Hā'ena Beach Park and Dry Cave — smoothie trailer
  - Hanalei Bay / pier — sunset, food trucks, bridge crossing
  - Hanalei town — food trucks, shops
  - Anini Beach — snorkel, restrooms in county park
  - Kīlauea Lighthouse, Kīlauea Fish Market (M/W/F dinner), Trilogy Coffee, Wishing Well Shave Ice
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DAY 11 MONDAY · SEPTEMBER 5

## South shore — *Poipu* and Koloa.

- Shipwreck Beach + Mahaulepu Heritage Trail (rough water, scenic)
- Poipu Beach — food, picnic, snorkel cove
- Spouting Horn Park
- Hanapepe town
- Koloa town — old sugar mill, food trucks (Kickshaws, Taco Libre, Naruto noodles), shave ice
- Kauai Plantation Railway + Koloa Rum Co.

## Waimea Canyon and *Kalalau* lookouts.

- Waimea Canyon State Park — drive the rim
- Kekaha LO, Niihau LO, Pu'u Hinahina LO, Waipo'o Falls LO
- Kalalau Lookout, Pu'u O Kila Lookout — cliff trail (0.8 mi, muddy)
- Pihea Vista junction trail (1 mi, 200 ft, muddy)
- Wailua Falls on the return
- Kapa'a town — Java Kai, Small Town Coffee
- 'Ōpaeka'a Falls — free pull-off
- Fly LIH → HNL, 5:30 – 6:10 PM

## Kauai — top *spots*.

### Makana Charters (Na Pali)

7:45am check-in

### Hā'ena State Park · Ke'e Beach

Best snorkel + hike

### Anini Beach

Snorkel, RR available

### Hanalei Bay & pier

Sunset, town

### Poipu Beach

Snorkel + beach

### Tree Tunnel

500 trees

### Koloa town

Sugar mill, shave ice

### Waimea Canyon

"Grand Canyon of Pacific"

### Wailua Falls

Roadside, twin falls

### Beach House / Lawai

Snorkel left, RR

### Kīlauea Lighthouse

Reservation

### Shipwreck Beach

Mahaulepu trail

# Oahu — five days, *Honolulu* base.

SEP 6 → 11 · PEARL HARBOR · DIAMOND HEAD · NORTH SHORE · KO OLINA

## STAY

### Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club

West side resort base — manicured lagoons, easy day trips to Honolulu and the North Shore.

### Resort points

DAY 13 WEDNESDAY · SEPTEMBER 7

### Diamond Head + *Waikiki*.

- Diamond Head Monument hike — 6–8am window, reservation via HAWAII.GOV
- Waikiki beach, Honolulu lunch
- USS Arizona Memorial — 3pm slot, REC.GOV booking 1 day before
- Sunset back at Ko Olina

DAY 14 THURSDAY · SEPTEMBER 8

### North Shore — *Shark's Cove* and food trucks.

- Shark's Cove / Pupukea Beach — snorkel before 10–11am for best visibility
- Waimea Beach, Laniakea (turtle beach)
- Kahuku — Giovanni's shrimp truck (or Roy's Beach Club)
- Ko'olina sunset

DAY 15 FRIDAY · SEPTEMBER 9

### East side — *Hanauma* and Lanikai.

- Hanauma Bay — 7am HST reservation, book 2 days out
- Lanikai Beach — white sand, calm
- Waimanalo Beach — long stretch of white sand
- Resort time at Ko Olina

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DAY 16 SATURDAY · SEPTEMBER 10

## Waimea Valley waterfall *hike*.

- Waimea Valley waterfall hike
  - Kuilima Cove (turtle bay) — N snorkel, right side of cove
  - Late afternoon at the resort
- 

DAY 17 SUNDAY · SEPTEMBER 11

## Fly home.

Pack up, last beach walk, return rental, HNL → EWR.

## Oahu — top *snorkel*.

Shark's Cove / Pupukea (N)

Beginner south side

Hanauma Bay (S)

Reservation required

Kuilima Cove (N)

Right side, turtles

Wailea Beach (E)

Snorkel

Papa'iloa Beach (N)

Turtles, 5 parking

Ko Olina (W)

Resort lagoons

Laniakea (WNW)

Turtles on beach

Queen's Beach (S)

Next to the wall

Waimea Beach (N)

Beginner snorkel

Electric Beach (W)

Non-beginner

# Reservations to *book* ahead.

Hawaii has tightened access to its most popular sites since 2020. Several have hard caps and book up; the rest are easy walk-ups with confirmation. Book the top three the day windows open.

SITE	WINDOW	TIME	BOOK AT	ISLAND
Haleakalā sunrise	48 hours out	7am HST	recreation.gov	Maui
Wai'ānapanapa Black Sand Beach	30 days	3–6 PM	state park site	Maui
USS Arizona Memorial	1 day before	3pm HST	recreation.gov	Oahu
Diamond Head Monument	30 days	6–8am	hawaii.gov	Oahu
Hanauma Bay	2 days out	7am HST	hanaumabay site	Oahu
Hā'ena State Park	30 days	any	state park site	Kauai

# What I'd *change*.

Honest notes from the trip — what worked, what didn't, what I'd do differently.

## SKIP / LESS TIME

### Big Island deserves more than two days.

Hilo and Kona are effectively two trips. Two days felt rushed — pick a side or budget four full days minimum. Volcano on the east, snorkel on the west, and the drive between them eats half a day.

## ADD

### Mauna Kea stargazing is non-negotiable.

If you have a clear afternoon on the Big Island, go. The summit closes at sunset, but the visitor center observation site stays open for stargazing — book a tour or DIY in a 4WD.

## LOCK IN EARLY

### Mama's Fish House. Two months out, minimum.

The single hardest reservation on Maui. Book the moment the calendar opens; lunch slots are easier than dinner.

## PACING

### Road to Hana is a full day, not a half.

Start before sunrise, expect to be back after dark. The lookouts and falls are the trip; rushing past them defeats the point. Don't try to combine Hana with anything else.

## SNORKEL

### Honolua Bay (Maui) was the best of the trip.

Better than Molokini, better than Hanauma. The 15-minute walk in keeps casual tourists out, water is clear, fish are everywhere. Go early.

## STAY

### Upcountry Maui beats the resort strip.

God's Peace in Makawao was a great choice — central, quiet, real Maui. The Kaanapali resort run is fine for a luau day but I wouldn't sleep there.