



Way Beyond Waikiki

On a repeat visit or a short layover, there's much to do on Oahu

Story and Photos by Gillian Kendall



photo courtesy Turtle Bay Resort

You can tell how often a person has visited Hawaii by what they call it. On a first or second trip, it's exciting just to say, "I'm going to Hawaii!" Usually those journeys start and end in Honolulu — it's gorgeous, exciting, and vibrant. Hey, it's *Hawaii*!

But repeat visitors tend to speak of individual islands by name: "We're headed for the Big Island," or "Going to Lanai and Maui." Not only does it sound more sophisticated, but also those places are more exotic and less expensive than Waikiki.



First surf lesson with Outrigger Waikiki Beach Services.



Palm trees in sea breeze at Turtle Bay Resort.

Living in Australia for the last decade, I've done dozens of two- or three-night layovers on Oahu, breaking up the marathon flights across the Pacific. I stay in North Shore or Lanikai, or sometimes just overnight in Honolulu to see parts of the city I haven't seen before.

Here are suggestions for what to see on Oahu on a second, or fifth, or 50th trip. For people who've already walked

Waikiki, done Diamond Head, and gone all over the Ala Moana Center, there's a great deal more to do on Oahu.

Arrive in style

Some 2,000 miles from the nearest landmass, the Hawaiian Islands are a long flight no matter where you come from. (Even a flight from San Diego's Lindbergh Field is more than five



Part of North Shore where "Lost" was filmed.

hours). Rather than deal with a rental car right away or get in a taxi, arrange a pickup with *Island Transporter* (www.isletransporter.com). You'll be greeted by an amiable host with a purple-yellow lei and lots of aloha. A knowledgeable driver will carry your bags and transport you wherever you want to go by the most scenic route (or the shortest — your choice).

Island Transporter — locally owned and operated — charges about \$75 for a van ride to North Shore, or less to other points. You can sleep in the back or sit up front and enjoy the beautiful "interstate" (which does not, incidentally, run

between states). Drivers are happy to tell you about local points of interest and may stop to show off special beaches or buildings on request.

Overnight in Honolulu

Waikiki must have more spas per acre than almost anywhere else on earth. Most of them are alike: clean, gleaming expanses of mauve tile, tasteful vases of orchids, stacks of white towels, and New Age music playing softly in the background. They're charming, they're lovely, and they're all pretty much the same.

But **Spa Pure** (www.spapurewaikiki.com) stands out. Run by dancer/ yoga teacher



Victorian Room, Ali'i Bluffs Windward B&B.

Dennis Miller and his Japanese wife Y, Spa Pure combines East/West body treatments and movement. Take a yoga class on the beach, in the park, or at Waikiki Trade Center, or sign up for bodywork at the Courtyard by Marriot Waikiki Beach hotel. The "water massage" is a unique treatment designed by Miller — the one-on-one treatment done in a 95-degree private pool is fantastic for alleviating jetlag and stress. Also available are traditional massage, and Japanese-style hot stone-bed treatments, called "ganban yoku," where the client lies on a superheated granite



Coming in from eco-kayak tour at Shaka Kayaks.



A corner for reading or conversation on the lanai Ali'i Bluffs Windward B&B.

table to detox and deeply relax (and, yes, Spa Pure has flowers and fluffy towels, too).

Not just another pretty face in the dozens and dozens of high-rise hotels in Waikiki, **Hotel Renew** (www.hotel-renew.com) is a medium-sized (72 rooms), newish, designer hotel with the

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Horseback riding at Turtle Bay Resort.

atmosphere of a cool jazz bar. Near the western (windward) edge of Waikiki, this boutique hotel is just a block from the beach and around the corner from dozens of shops and eateries. In this hotel, guests actually chat over breakfast — maybe a function of the good modern design, or maybe because of the complimentary Kona-blend coffee. The views, the rooms, and the service are as good as in the huge resorts; the vibe is much more personal. Try the “Scoot and Stay Package” or “Toes on the Nose Surf Package” for extra oomph.

Gone Surfing. One of the few female surf instructors on Waikiki, Joanne “JoJo” Howard (owner of Gone Surfing Hawaii, www.gonesurfinghawaii.com) is also one of the few who prefers afternoon lessons. The waves are longer and a bit better before sunset, she says. And besides, she doesn’t always want to leave

her house at dawn. In many years of teaching, she’s only ever had one student who didn’t get up on the board — she makes surfing look easy, and then she makes it easy to do!

Laniakea YWCA. Housed in a former resort designed by architect Julia Morgan, this is surely the most glamorous Y in the world. Its motto is “Eliminating racism, empowering women,” and who can disagree with that? More like a hip, low-cost club than a workout facility, the Y (1040 Richards St., Honolulu) offers a decent café, a small but lovely pool, free coffee and books, a used clothing exchange, and a variety of classes and activities — many, get this, at no cost. Sign up for a (free!) one-month membership when you arrive, but don’t forget a donation to the nonprofit before you leave, to help it keep doing great work.



Original Glider Rides pilot Meagan Nauman.+

You Get Around, Brah

Move on a Moped. (www.hawaiianstyle-rentals.com) Well, you could rent a car. But as Brad Fresch of Hawaiian Style rentals said, “A car is just another house.” Much more fun (and green!) is using a scooter to explore the island (you could spend the day getting around the whole island, but it’s more fun just to buzz up to different beaches and parks a few minutes up the coast or inland from Waikiki). The scooter shop provides helmets, maps, and great advice for touring.

The Bus. For even easier, cheaper,



Part of the Original Glider Rides fleet

and greener transport, hop on the bus — the official name of which is “The Bus.” One-way fares anywhere on the island are \$2.50 for adults, and there are discounted fares for passengers with special needs. Bikes and wheelchairs welcome; luggage over what can fit on your lap is not allowed.

Lanikai

If you’re on the island for more than 24 hours, you can — and should — get out of Honolulu.

Go either north (see below) or east (windward) to Kailua, an artsy, breezy beach town, and Lanikai Beach, which has been called, and possibly is, the best in the world.

An easy bus ride or walk out of Kailua, **Hawaii’s Hidden Hideaway**



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Old lava stone wall.

(www.ahawaiiibnb.com) is a charming bed and breakfast in a peaceful, green setting. With only a few studios and one fantastic suite, HHH offers as much peace and quiet and beautiful views as you can enjoy. Make your own breakfast from a well-stocked fridge, walk to the beach for kayaking or swimming, or hike to the mountaintop “pillboxes”

(World War II lookout posts) for world-class views of big rolling hills and even bigger rolling ocean.

A short drive or bus ride away in Kaneohe is **Ali'i Bluffs Bed and Breakfast** (www.hawaiiiscene.com/aliibluffs), run by a male couple who are between them an award-winning real estate agent, a former high-end fashion designer, a painter and sculptor, a collector of circus memorabilia, and a Scotsman. A lifetime together collecting art — they used to own a gallery in Greenwich Village — has resulted in a tiny (two guestrooms) B&B full of lovely tchotchkes and original art. Conversation and drinks held nightly on the lanai; breakfast is a cold buffet with hot drinks and warm sun.

North Shore

Go west and north of Honolulu Airport to the North Shore, where the sole resort — Turtle Bay — offers as much space and coastline as the whole area of Waikiki. This unpretentious, outdoory resort (www.turtlebayresort.com) features tennis, surf, and yoga sessions with enlightened, enlightening teachers, and horseback riding or kayak eco-tours for the soft-adventure set. Rooms, spa, food, and prices are much like those in Honolulu — views and quietude are vastly different. Instead of towering over

concrete and crowds, the modest, five-story resort, surrounded by a backdrop of dark green mountain ranges, offers ocean views from all accommodations including beach cottages, villas, guest rooms and suites. On one side of the resort is a swimming beach (where turtles hang out) and the fantastic beach restaurant Ola's; on the other side is the surf bay and miles of great hikes in the woods where “Lost” was filmed.

Gliding. Original Glider Rides (www.honolulusoaring.com/staff_mr_bill)

offers a vision of Oahu usually seen by only sea birds and Pele (the volcano goddess). Two- or three-seater gliders carry you in serene silence on the wind — with views of the whole mountain range and the vast patchwork shallows of the North Shore. Safer than driving, more silent than swimming, gliders offer a nearly invisible carbon footprint and have a much smaller price tag than the noisy, polluting helicopter tours. Take a camera and be prepared for joy. ★



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Mama Roxy waiting for orders at Shrimp Shack truck.

Visiting Oahu, I can take only so many exquisitely prepared meals in fabulous oceanside restaurants featuring panoramic views of the Pacific and compelling wine lists. After a while, it's time to get real — and get past paying \$50 for a plate of seafood.

Fortunately, the real Hawaii and relief for the wallet are just a short walk from any North Shore beach, in the form of shrimp trucks, shacks and stands. Roughly a dozen contenders line the Kamehameha Highway around the top of the island, luring customers with wafts of fried garlic and hand-painted signs as vibrant as their names: Romy's, Macky's, Giovanni's, Fumi's, and Big Wave Shrimp.

Each place has legions of fans, and all offer fresh-cooked, fresh-caught, locally raised shrimp (the most gigantic are called "prawns"). Common preparations include coconut-crusted, fried-garlic butter, or (extremely) hot

and spicy shrimp. About \$12 buys a "plate meal," usually including quarter-kilo of luscious shrimp, two scoops of white sticky rice, and corn or salad. Since the trucks don't have liquor licences, you can grab a can of soft drink or bottle of water for a dollar or two, or BYO (in a brown paper bag).

Most vendors open before lunch and serve till after dark. Popular spots such as Romy's and Macky's sometimes have queues, especially right after the sun goes down and the surfers come in. Since the food is cooked to order, it can take up to a half hour at busy times, but hey, it's Hawaii: why rush? Giovanni's offers visitors felt-tip pens to leave their own graffiti on the truck — if they can find space!



Customers leave their marks on Giovanni's truck.



Shrimp truck in camouflage.

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