

# Celebrity Solstice, Sept 2018 Hawaii Cruise Port Guide

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## Port of Kona

While cruise ships call it "Kona," this stop on the western part of the island of Hawaii is actually a region rather than an actual city. Ships anchor in Kailua Bay and tender their guests to the Kailua Pier, which is right in the middle of Kailua Village, the historic heart of Kailua-Kona.

Kona's sunnier and dryer than Hilo to the east -- it almost never rains -- and features the island's best beaches, snorkeling and surfing. (The east coast is more tropical, with waterfalls and mountainous regions closer to the town of Hilo. Believe it or not, the island has 11 climatic zones!)

Coffee grown in the hills above Kailua-Kona (the one place where it rains more in the summer than in the winter) is very delicious and highly prized. Beaches in the area range from black sand to sugar white, with sea turtles, manta rays, dolphins and -- in season, November to May -- humpback whales visible from the surf or the shore. Whereas Hilo is the business anchor of the Big Island (with a more authentic, local feel), the area just north of Kailua-Kona -- the Kohala Coast -- houses the island's most desirable resorts, with renowned restaurants, spas and golf courses.

## Hanging Around

Just across from the tender pier is the King Kamehameha Hotel, a historic Hawaiian temple and a small beach with water sports rentals. Head right for a quick walk to restaurants and cafes, souvenir shops, the farmers market and a few historic sites; head left and up the hill for more restaurants and shops, as well as the larger stores like Hilo Hattie's and Long's Drugs.

## Don't Miss

**Historic Kailua-Kona:** Kailua Village has several historic sites worth checking out. These include Ahuena, King Kamehameha's temple, the grass-thatched structure sitting on a rock that you can see from Kamakahonu Bay (to the front and left from where you get off tender); Mokuaikaia Church, the first Christian church in Hawaii; and Hulihee Palace, once a summer palace for Hawaii's royal family. These sites, as well as others along the seven-mile Alii Drive, are included in the Royal Footsteps Along the Kona Coast free smartphone app, which lets you take a self-guided historic tour of the area.

**Cultural Attractions:** Most resorts will have some sort of historic sites on their premises. These might include lava tubes or ancient fishponds, where grates were set up to allow in smaller fish but keep the bigger fish from getting out. While most visitors don't visit a hotel simply to view the cultural attractions on its grounds, you might wish to take time out of your beach or golf day to look around. Find the resort's cultural director, who can point you to interesting locations or alert you to any cultural performances (like hula dancing) taking place that day.

**Outrigger Canoe Rides:** Travel the way the ancient Hawaiians traveled, in these hand-crafted wooden canoes. You can book rides at the rental kiosk at Kamakahonu Bay, right by the pier, where you'll get a sense of the history of these vessels before you get in for a ride. Hotel activity desks may also arrange canoe rides.

**Kona Farmers' Market:** Tired of ABC stores? Hit the Kona Farmers' Market for a more fun and authentic shopping experience. You can ogle local produce and flowers, or pick up hand-crafted gifts and Kona coffee. (Intersection of Alii Drive and Hualalai Road; open 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday)

**Eco Adventures:** Those looking for an adrenaline boost can try zip-lining, ATV rides and nature hiking with Kona Eco Adventures. Tours can be booked by phone or online, and tour pickup is at the Keauhou Shopping Center on Alii Drive in Kailua-Kona. Another recommended outfit for adventure tours is Hawaii Forest and Trail, offering waterfall, birding and zip-lining tours.

**Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park:** This significant historical site is located next to Honokohau harbor and its fishing boats. Take a self-guided walking tour along the footpaths and view ancient fishponds, heiaus and petroglyphs.

You might even see green sea turtles on the beach. (Highway 19, three miles north of Kailua-Kona; visitor center and parking lots open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily)

**Helicopter Tours:** From Kona, helicopter tours will fly you over the Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa volcanoes, as well as Kilauea with its active lava flows. Longer tours will also circle over the island's northern coastline to see waterfalls and other breathtaking sceneries.

## Getting Around

**On Foot:** If you're just going to visit Kailua Village, you can easily do it on foot. It's small and compact.

**By Bus or Shuttle:** Shuttles at the pier will deliver you to Hilo Hattie's, Kmart, Wal-Mart and the Kona International Market. The Keauhou Trolley is a local area shuttle that makes two alternating loops around Kona area attractions for a couple of bucks. It picks up at the pier and does a shorter loop to retail/restaurant areas and a longer one to nearby beaches; service is limited, so make sure you have a copy of the schedule, available from the tourist reps at the pier.

**By Car:** You can take advantage of the easy accessibility and reasonable prices of Kona's car rental agencies. Just be savvy about which agency you choose; some have in-town branches, while airport locations might not provide courtesy shuttles for cruisers. (If not, you'll need to hire a cab for the seven-mile ride.) It's best to book ahead, if you can, because if the cars sell out, last-minute rentals can increase the price exponentially. Discount Hawaii Car Rental is one great source for discounted rentals and information on pickup service.

## Beaches

**Closest to Port:** Kamakahonu Beach is a crescent-shaped beach just across from the tender pier and King Kamehameha Hotel. A water sports stand rents snorkel gear, kayaks, bikes and standup paddleboards and can book you on an outrigger canoe ride. The beach's shallow, clear waters and proximity to bathrooms and beach showers make it ideal for families or anyone looking for a quick dip pre- or post-tour. Old Airport Beach (Kailua Park) and Magic Sands Beach are also close to Kailua-Kona but will require a car, cab or trolley ride.

**Best for Snorkeling:** Just a few miles south of Kailua-Kona, Kahaluu Beach Park is quite popular with snorkel enthusiasts (see **Don't Miss**, above). You can rent equipment onsite and paddle into the water to see Hawaii's green sea turtles and other marine life.

**Best for a Day of Sunbathing:** You can easily spend the day at the resort area of Waikoloa, with its beautiful beaches and fancy resorts offering amenities like restrooms, water sports rentals and even interesting cultural attractions onsite. Hapuna State Beach Park, about a 45-minute drive from the Kailua pier, is the largest white sand beach on the island. Located next to the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel, the beach offers easy parking, available bathrooms and picnic areas. Another good choice is Anaehoomalu Beach, next to the Waikoloa Beach Marriott. You'll find watersports rentals (body boards, kayaks, hydro bikes, snorkel equipment) and even an old Hawaiian fishpond.

## Lunching

Lunch in Kona can be almost anything you want, from extravagant elegance in the hotels around Waikoloa to cheap eats just a few blocks from the tender dock. Fresh fish is a Hawaiian staple; look for mahimahi, opakapaka, opah and ahi. Fresh fruit (including tropical ones like pineapples and coconuts) are also a good bet.

One very typical Hawaiian meal is the plate lunch. It consists of two scoops of rice, a scoop of macaroni salad and one protein: Choose from options such as barbecue chicken, kalbi ribs, hamburger steak, beef stew or the fish of the day. A mixed plate lets you choose two different meats. For a perfect dessert on a hot day, stop in any shave ice shop. Hawaii's version of the snow cone consists of ice shaved off a large block then topped with flavored syrups. You can even order them with a scoop of ice cream in the center.

If Hawaiian food isn't your thing, don't worry. Restaurants in Hawaii are quite diverse with ethnic cuisines including standard American, Chinese, Korean, Italian, Japanese, Mexican and French. Cruise Critic members have been pleased with several of the near-to-pier options, including *Splasher's Grill* and *The Fish Hopper*.

**Kona Inn:** Sit on the open terrace for lunch, where the prices are lower, the views of the bay fantastic and the mai tais are potent. It's located on Alii Drive, not far from the pier and attached to a shopping center. The food's good, but the Hawaiian atmosphere, ocean breezes and views make it special. (75-5744 Alii Drive, Kailua-Kona; 808-239-4455) For a more casual vibe and sports on the TV, stop at *Kona Canoe Club*, in the same marketplace. It has a similar menu and prices.

**Kona Brewing Co.:** If you want to try local beer, it's worth the uphill walk to the Kona Brewing Co. to sample their brews -- including ones you can't find in the supermarket. Lunch is typical salads and sandwiches, pizza and pupus (appetizers). It's a bit pricey but typical for Hawaii rates. Get here super-early (before noon) or be prepared to wait for a table. Don't worry -- you can sip a Longboard Island Lager or Pipeline Porter while you wait.

**Hawaii Calls at Waikoloa Beach Marriott:** If you're heading north toward Waikalua and the Kohalo Coast, this is a fabulous place to have lunch. It's open air, with a koi pond and waterfalls, and serves fresh fish and produce. It's pricier than some of the other recommendations, but it's well worth it. (69-275 Waikoloa Beach Dr., Kohalo Coast; 808-886-8111)

**Huggo's On the Rocks:** Located about a mile south of the tender pier, *On the Rocks* is the place to eat with your toes in the sand. The casual menu offers up sandwiches, burgers, tacos and fish and chips -- not to mention an array of "exotic tropical potions." In season, you might even spy a few humpback whales diving offshore. (75-5824 Kahakai Road, Kailua-Kona; 808-329-1493; open 11:30 a.m. to midnight daily)

**Scandinavian Shave Ice:** This small downtown shop is in the running for the title of Hawaii's Best Shave Ice. We're no experts, but we loved the choices of sizes, flavors (65!), toppings and ice cream or frozen yogurt centers. A small can easily be shared by two; the larges are enormous. Eat it there or sit on the seawall across the street as you indulge. (75-5699 Alii Drive)

### Where You're Docked

Tenders arrive in the middle of downtown Kailua Village. Shopping shuttles will pick you up at the pier, as will rental car company shuttles. Local tourist representatives set up a small table with brochures and maps and can answer questions.

### Currency & Best Way to Get Money

Local currency is the U.S. dollar. There are plenty of ATMs around the little city, including at the Courtyard King Kamehameha Hotel, retail stores on Alii Drive and at the Lanihau shopping center. An American Savings Bank is located at the corner of Kuakini Highway and Palani Road. Almost all shops, restaurants, car rental companies and tour companies take credit and debit cards.

### Best Souvenir

Kona Coffee is your best bet for coffee drinkers. Try to buy at one of the plantations or at a grocery store rather than in a tourist outlet. You'll get a much better price in the grocery stores although the packaging might not be as pretty, and at the plantation, you'll find coffee varieties you can't find in retail stores. For other food souvenirs, head to a KTA Super Store or Long's Drugs to pick up local favorites such as ulu (breadfruit) chips, Kona Chips potato chips, mochi (a sweet rice cake) and manju (a confection filled with red bean paste), or Donna's Cookies. If you're looking for shot glasses, keychains and the ubiquitous chocolate-covered macadamias (which you can also find in your hometown Costco), head to an ABC Store, Wal-Mart or most any shopping area. You'll find the bigger chains up Palani Road from the pier and a variety of tourist shops along Alii Drive.

### Best Cocktail

You can't go wrong with a Hawaii-themed cocktail like a Lava Flow (a cross between a strawberry daiquiri and pina colada, made with light rum and coconut rum plus strawberries, bananas, pineapple juice and coconut cream) or a Blue Hawaii (a concoction of rum, curacao, pineapple juice and sweet and sour mix). For something a bit more local, order a beer from the Kona Brewing Co. or a drink made with Ocean Vodka, made with water sourced from deep sea water off the Big Island's coast.

### **For More Information**

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IndependentTraveler.com: [Hawaii Travel Guide](#)

<http://www.clarkshawaii.com/index.html>

<http://www.marylousbigislandguidedtours.com>

## Port of Hilo

To really experience Hilo, forget first impressions and dive right in to old Hawaii. Unpretentious and just a little bit gritty, this often-overlooked city on the Big Island is abundantly authentic and full of charm.

Why is it overlooked? Hilo is the departure point for shore excursions to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the state. And that's too bad because there's much to recommend Hilo itself, defined in part by a history of tsunamis and challenging economics.

As one survivor of a devastating 1946 tsunami put it: "We just cleaned up and went on with our lives." That same sentiment prevails today. There's a "pick yourself up, and dust yourself off" attitude and activism that has infused classic downtown Hilo with fresh energy palpable in its restaurants, shops, galleries and museums. There is also a tremendous amount of civic pride. When our docent at the must-see Lyman Museum and Mission House realized we were on a tight schedule, she packed us into her car to observe a few highlights we would otherwise have missed.

Hilo, which rests on the crescent-shaped Hilo Bay, possesses a rich cultural history. It's in Hilo that King Kamehameha is said to have fulfilled a prophecy of uniting the Hawaiian islands by lifting the ancient Naha stone, which now sits in front of the library. Cultural history is still being written. Hilo is the one place in the world to get a college degree in hula. Public school students have also started to take classes in the Hawaiian language. Leslie Lang, author of "Historic Hilo," frames it best when she writes: "It's a town whose cultures continue to hold on tight. But at the same time, it's one that is looking forward."

## Hanging Around

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## Port of Maui

Known the world over as a "trip of a lifetime" destination, the remote Hawaiian Islands were settled by the Polynesians more than 1,000 years ago and were "discovered" by explorer Capt. James Cook in 1778. In 1959, Hawaii became the 50th U.S. state, and to this day, it retains a sort-of-outsider status. Hawaii clings to its rich history while accepting newcomers and absorbing their unique traditions. Every Hawaiian island is imbued with a friendly "aloha" spirit, and most travelers fall in love with the destination the moment orchid leis are draped over their shoulders upon arrival.

Maui, the second-largest island of the archipelago, typifies all that is magical about the Sandwich Islands (as Capt. Cook first called the island chain). It's also referred to as the Valley Isle because a verdant, low-lying isthmus connects the two halves of the island. From the air, Maui looks like a butterfly with the 10,000-foot Haleakala volcano on one wing, Pu'u Kukui and the West Maui mountains on the other and the valley in the middle. You'll revel at the stark contrast between the stunning variety of flowering tropical plants and cascading waterfalls and the lunar-like landscape of Haleakala and Maui's other mountain peaks.

With more than 120 miles of coastline, Maui has dozens of beaches for you to discover. Some will be easily accessible, while others will take a bit of elbow grease -- in other words, pull on your hiking boots, or hop in a sea kayak. The ocean is teeming with wildlife and welcomes a large humpback whale population each winter. Maui is also one of the only places on Earth where you can still encounter the endangered Hawaiian monk seal.

While more rain falls on the windward sides of the island (north and east, i.e. Paia and Hana) than the leeward (south and west, Wailea and Lahaina), the temperature is just about always an ideal 85 degrees.

Maui offers a multitude of attractions, but there's one additional reason to visit -- the island's people. With a population of just fewer than 160,000, the community is small enough to retain strong, historic ties but is large enough to create the right type of infrastructure to eagerly welcome tourists from around the world. The Hawaiian people will embrace you with friendship and goodwill -- again, that "spirit of aloha" -- and will make you feel right at home.

## Hanging Around

Kahului Harbor is an industrial terminal, and the city is not a touristy one. A circuitous pedestrian path takes you out of the port, where you can walk across the street to Maui Mall, which houses a Whole Foods, Long's Drugs, movie theater and other shops. With a little scrambling, you can also hoof it to the beach near the port that you can see from the ship (just be careful where you swim because sharks are near).

If you anchor off Lahaina, you'll tender to a pier right in front of Pioneer Inn, one of the oldest accommodations in Maui. From there, you can begin exploring Front Street -- a hub for shops, restaurants and activities/tour providers -- on foot. Call a taxi, rent a car or take a tour if you wish to explore other parts of the island.

## Don't Miss

**Road to Hana:** You've probably heard of the Road to Hana, a narrow twisting road with nearly 50 one-lane bridges, carved into the lush rainforest and punctuated by breathtaking waterfalls, lava cliffs and sandy beaches. Before you start your drive in the town of Paia on the Hana Highway, arm yourself with the Hana CD guide. You can order the CD and map online in advance or buy it at one of many locations in Maui. Play the CD as you drive, and your private tour guide will tell you what's located where. Be on the lookout for the waterfall at Pua'a Ka'a State Wayside Park; the black-sand beach and lava tube at Wai'anapanapa State Park; the Halfway to Hana snack shop that sells mouth-watering, freshly baked banana bread; Kaihalulu Red-Sand Beach in Hana proper; and Ohe'o Gulch Pools, 10 miles past town.

**Haleakala National Park:** Haleakala Crater's lunar-like landscape is the piece de resistance of Haleakala National Park in Maui's upcountry. It's a two-hour drive from sea level to the summit at 10,023 feet, and it's amazing how many ecosystems you'll pass along the way. At 9,000 feet, you'll see the endangered silversword plant before you stop in to the visitor center at 9,740 feet (open sunrise to 3 p.m.) for exhibits about the native flora and fauna of the volcano. A trailhead

there leads to an easy walk to an overlook. (More difficult hikes may be tackled at Haleakala, as well, from the trailhead there and another down at 7,990 feet.) Most people visit Puu Ulaula Overlook, the volcano's summit, to watch the sunrise. Check weather conditions before you head out. The summit can experience heavy winds, rain and even snow. In fact, it's generally 30 degrees cooler at the summit than in Kahului, so be sure to bring a jacket or blanket, warm hat and gloves. A glass-enclosed outlook offers panoramic views of the valley below, the Big Island, Kahoolawe, Lanai, Molokai and -- sometimes on very clear days -- Oahu.

**Water Sports:** Maui is a snorkel haven with no shortage of excellent locations for all ability levels. Try Black Rock at Kaanapali Beach; it's not uncommon to run into sea turtles there, and fish huddle along the lava/coral wall below Black Rock itself. Three miles offshore, Molokini Crater is a Marine Life Conservation District that boasts clear water with visibility of more than 100 feet. You might see monk seals, thousands of tropical fish, manta rays and whale sharks. If you'd like to try your hand at surfing or stand-up paddleboarding, you can book a lesson in Maui's waves.

**Whale-watching:** Although humpback whales call Alaska home during the summer, they spend November to mid-May in Maui. These majestic creatures hang around close to the shore, so you can whale watch from land, on water or by air. These grayish-black cetaceans often have white markings that help whale-watchers discern them from a distance. If you're visiting in season, don't miss a whale-watching excursion with your cruise line or through an independent operator. Many of these providers also offer snorkel or sunset boat trips.

**Luau:** Any self-respecting visitor to Maui will attend at least one luau. With their Polynesian dancers in beautiful costumes, beachfront locations, authentic island cuisine and open bars, luaus are the cultural touchstone of the Hawaiian Islands -- and they're a lot of fun! **Old Lahaina Luau** is one of the best, set at the ocean's edge and wonderful for families. Choose either authentic mat seating on the floor or a seat at a table -- be sure to note your preference when making your reservation. (1251 Front Street, Lahaina; 800-248-5828; shows start at 5:15 p.m. in winter and 5:45 p.m. in summer). Couples and older families should consider the more upscale **The Feast at Lele**. It's a served dinner, rather than a buffet, with a mix of performances and dishes from a variety of Polynesian cultures. (505 Front Street, Lahaina; 866-244-5353) For something a bit different, try **Ulalena's Luau** at the Makena Beach & Golf Resort. Instead of typical Polynesian dances, Maui's Ulalena theater company (in the Cirque du Soleil tradition) introduces you to Hawaiian mythology and culture in a unique way with storytelling, music and dance. (5400 Makena Alanui, Kihei; 808-856-7900; shows from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Sunday and Wednesday)

**Maui Ocean Center:** You can still get up close and personal with Hawaii's marine life, even if you don't want to snorkel or scuba. The Maui Ocean Center is an aquarium with indoor and outdoor exhibits, including a turtle lagoon, shark pool, hands-on tide pool and a 54-foot-long clear acrylic tunnel you can walk through to see eye to eye with stingrays, sharks and close to 2,000 fish. The center also offers an ocean-friendly restaurant serving burgers, sandwiches and salads, and an excellent gift shop selling a variety of local products and crafts, as well as sealife-themed souvenirs. (192 Ma'alaea Road, Wailuku; 808-270-7000; open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and until 6 p.m. in July and August).

**Golf:** Maui is home to world-class golf courses, many overlooking the ocean. The natural beauty that surrounds you might even inspire a better golf game. You can book a round via your cruise ship's shore-excursion desk or consider these options: Kapalua Resort (877-527-2582) or Wailea Golf Club (888-328-MAUI).

**Iao Valley State Park:** This heritage site is home to the 1,200-foot Iao Needle, a rock outcropping covered in greenery set in the lush green Iao Valley. Paved trails take you to the viewpoint. After you've snapped your photos, you can learn from interactive exhibits in the visitor center or take a walk in the rainforest. (Located at the end of Iao Valley Road/Highway 32 in central Maui; open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily).

**Helicopter Tour:** For a bird's-eye view of the island, book a helicopter tour that will fly you over the Haleakala Crater, the town of Hana and the nearby rainforest, Ohe'o Gulch, and the rugged northeast shoreline. Viewing these famous landmarks by air is invigorating.

**Hiking and Eco-Tours:** Try a hike or eco-tour for an up-close-and-personal exploration of Maui's rainforests or Haleakala Crater. There are many easy hikes on the island that culminate with a waterfall viewing; wear your swimsuit and cool off in the crystalline water at the waterfall's base. Other hikes can be more vigorous and even include a sea kayak component. For guided adventures, consider Hike Maui (808-879-5270 or 866-324-6284), or for scenic tours with a photography focus, try Photo Safari Hawaii (888-565-3185). Piiholo Ranch (808-270-8750) offers zip-line and canopy tours for a bit more adrenaline.

**Horseback Riding:** While most visitors journey up Haleakala in cars, perhaps daring to bike back down, a more unusual way to explore the volcano is on horseback. Options include descending Sliding Sands Trail to the crater floor or an easier excursion crossing at Haleakala Ranch. Try Pony Express Tours (808-667-2200). If you're just prefer a country ride with views of Haleakala, check out Piiholo Ranch (808-270-8750).

## Getting Around

Maui offers little in the way of public transportation, and while you may call for a cab, it's not an effective way to tour the island. It's best to rent a car to see the island's most visited attractions; try Discount Hawaii Car Rental for the best rates.

If docking at Kahului, take a complimentary car rental shuttle bus to nearby Kahului Airport (about a five-minute ride) to rent a vehicle from Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz, National or Thrifty. If your cruise ship overnights there and you'd like to keep your car, there's free parking right across from the tour bus pickup area outside the terminal, but it's small and will be filled up if you get back late. Other options include airport parking for a fee or leaving your car in the Maui Mall parking lot overnight.

Your cruise ship may also offer a shuttle (for a fee) to and from Lahaina (look for tours called "Lahaina on Your Own"), which is convenient if you only want to stay in that area. Free shuttles to the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center (with typical mall stores, free Wi-Fi and a kids' play area) depart from the port; from there, you can catch the Maui Bus to select destinations, including Wailea, Kihei, Lahaina and Paia.

If you plan to rent a car in the Lahaina area, make reservations at one of the agencies at Kapalua's West Maui Airport (JHM) and not the Kahului International Airport (OGG) on the other side of the island. (There's also an Enterprise outlet at the Sheraton on Kaanapali Beach.) Some companies will send a shuttle to the pier for pickups; others require you to take a cab to their office. The Maui Bus also offers service from Lahaina to Kaanapali.

## Beaches

Maui thrills visitors with more than 30 miles of white-, gold-, green-, red- and black-sand beaches. Don't be intimidated by fancy hotels blocking the waterfront -- all beaches are public and must have public access. Public parking is available, too; look for signs. But be careful, as the ocean waters can have a strong undertow.

**Best for Active Types:** Located just minutes from Lahaina, the three miles of white sand that is **Kaanapali Beach** welcomes those who wish to swim or snorkel. The northernmost strip of the beach is called Black Rock, and this is a safe and easy place to snorkel -- just look out for those courageous enough to cliff dive off Black Rock! You can also book a sailboat or catamaran outing from Kaanapali -- and less-active types will love the people watching. Swimmers should watch out for the strong undertow; lifeguards are usually on duty, but be aware of your own safety whenever in the water.

**Best for Families:** **D.T. Fleming Beach Park**, in Kapalua, is a 20- to 30-minute drive from Lahaina. This white-sand beach is perfect for boogie-boarding as well as sunbathing and lounging in the shade of the pine trees lining the shore. There's a lifeguard on duty, restrooms, grills and picnic tables.

Many families also head to **H.A. Baldwin Beach Park** in Paia (Central Maui, just minutes from Kahului). It's an expansive and gorgeous white-sand beach that's excellent for swimming. Lifeguards are on duty, and there are restrooms, picnic areas and a sheltered lagoon that's dubbed "baby beach."

**Best for Windsurfing and Surfing:** Even if you don't plan to surf, you should definitely check out **Ho'okipa Beach Park** in Paia. Windsurfers and surfers covet the heavy surf, and a terrific viewing area lets you enjoy the action without being down on the beach or in the water. The biggest waves occur during the winter months. Restrooms and picnic tables are available. If you're a novice and want to learn to surf, head for less-intimidating beaches in Kaanapali, Lahaina and Kihei (and book a lesson).

**Best for a Luxurious Day in the Sun: Wailea Beach**, on Maui's southwestern coast, is lined with luxury resorts, but you can pretend you're a VIP when you set up your towel on its golden sands. It's a great place to swim, boogie board or spot whales in season -- or you might want to wander about and try to spot someone famous. Restrooms and equipment rentals are available, and a paved beach walk leads to the upscale restaurants and shops attached to the hotels.

## Lunching

Maui is considered a food-lover's paradise, but you'll need deep pockets to enjoy it. In addition to upscale Asian- and French-inspired establishments, Maui has a strong local restaurant scene that serves up tasty Hawaiian/Polynesian cuisine. You shouldn't be surprised to find an abundance of fish and seafood on most menus, as well as various meat dishes from Kahlua pork to Korean barbecue-style kalbi short ribs. A typical Hawaiian meal is the "plate lunch," composed of two scoops of rice, one scoop of macaroni salad and various types of meat (beef, pork or chicken) or fish. The local dessert, great for a hot day, is shave ice -- Hawaii's version of the snow cone -- where ice is shaved off a large block then topped with flavored syrups. You can even order them with a scoop of ice cream in the center of the ice.

Dozens of restaurants line Front Street in Lahaina in West Maui. The Shops at Wailea is the place to head for lunch if you're on the southern end of the island, and you'll find a variety of eateries in the town of Paia on the north coast beyond Kahului. There's also a growing food truck scene -- look for them on the opposite side of Kahului Harbor from your cruise ship.

**Aloha Mixed Plate:** You'll discover the Hawaiian phenomena of the "plate lunch" at Aloha Mixed Plate. Go for the traditional Alii Plate, and enjoy kalua pork with lomi lomi salmon (like ceviche, it's cured fish in an onion and tomato salad), poi (mashed taro root) and haupia (coconut pudding). The restaurant is a few blocks beyond the heart of downtown Lahaina. (1285 Front Street, Lahaina; 808-661-3322; open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily)

**Kimo's:** Sometimes you pick a restaurant because of its location, and sometimes you go for the food. Kimo's is great for both. Situated right on Lahaina's shoreline, this two-story hot spot is the place for spectacular sunsets. The food's excellent, as well. Many visitors stop by to enjoy pupus (appetizers) and drinks, but lunch entrees like coconut-crusted fish, beer battered fish 'n chips and a mixed-plate lunch of teriyaki chicken and pork ribs get high marks. Aloha hour, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. daily, features pupu specials and draft beers, house wine, margaritas and mai tais from \$4 to \$6. (845 Front Street, Lahaina; 808-661-4811; open 11 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. daily, food service ends at 10 p.m.)

**Sugar Cane Maui:** If you're looking for more of a gastro-pub experience, Sugar Cane Maui is for you. Pub fare like fish and chips, sliders and even edamame pupus are delivered with more sophisticated flavors than at your typical beachfront joint. Don't miss the thirst-quenching craft sodas. The decor is open and airy with beach views on one side and TVs showing the games on the other. (736 Front Street, Lahaina; 808-214-6662; open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily)

**Mama's Fish House:** This fine-dining establishment is a quick drive from Kahului but is definitely worth the commute, even if you're anchored in Lahaina. The Christenson family has owned Mama's since 1973, although it was just a simple Chinese restaurant back in the day. Now, it is one of the finest fish and seafood spots in all of the Hawaiian Islands (your credit card will feel the burn, however). The setting, on a coconut tree-studded white-sand beach, is inspiring in and of itself, but the building -- an open concept with Polynesian decor and flowers throughout -- completes the perfect spot for an unforgettable special-occasion lunch or dinner. (799 Poho Place, Paia; 808-579-8488; open for lunch 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. daily and dinner 4:15 p.m. to 9 p.m.)

### **Where You're Docked**

Depending on your itinerary, you'll either dock at Kahului Harbor in north Maui or anchor off Lahaina on the island's west side.

### **Currency & Best Way to Get Money**

A variety of bank branches and standalone ATMs are located near both cruise ports: Kahului and Lahaina. In Lahaina, there's a Bank of Hawaii ATM at the Wharf Cinema Center (also public toilets); in Kahului, try the Maui Mall or Long's Drugs. Most banks handle foreign-currency exchanges, or you can head to the only American Express office in Maui at the Westin Hotel (2365 Kaanapali Parkway).

### **Best Souvenir**

You'll find a plethora of festive Hawaiian shirts and grass skirts to fill your souvenir shopping bag, but if you're looking for a more authentic gift, food items make great souvenirs. Drop by a grocery store and pick up Maui Potato Chips, still made by the original Kahului family, or coffee from a farm in Kaanapali. (Kona isn't the only place on Hawaii with signature coffee.) Or, you might prefer some sweet-smelling soaps and body lotions from Alii Kula Lavender Farm.

### **Best Cocktail**

There's just something about a frosty, fruity tropical drink that screams "Hawaii!" You're not officially on vacation until you've sipped a Polynesian cocktail or two. From mai tais (rum, orange liqueur, simple syrup and lime juice) to pina colodas (rum, coconut cream and pineapple) to other libations, featuring fruit juices and rum, you'll find plenty of sweet and strong drinks. Order a glass of "POG" -- a blend of passion fruit, orange and guava juices -- for the kids.

### **For More Information**

On the Web: [Maui Visitors Bureau](#)

Cruise Critic Message Boards: [Hawaii](#)

IndependentTraveler.com: [Hawaii Travel Guide](#)

## Port of Honolulu

*With a cosmopolitan population of 950,000, Honolulu is Hawaii's largest city. It also is the hub of cultural, educational, political, dining, shopping, business and entertainment activities in the Aloha State.*

*After Captain James Cook put the Hawaiian Islands on the map of the world in 1778, Honolulu became an increasingly important stop for ships traveling between America and Asia. First came fur traders, who made fortunes exchanging otter pelts from the Pacific Northwest for teas, spices and silks from China. Later, fragrant sandalwood became such a prized commodity that Island forests were nearly stripped clean of it. Then came the whalers, who plied the seas relentlessly in search of the gentle giants that were the source of rich oil.*

*Around 1843, recognizing the importance of the harbor to local commerce, King Kamehameha III moved the capital of Hawaii from Lahaina, Maui to Honolulu, and it has held that designation ever since.*

*Honolulu Harbor bustles with activity every day of the week. Fishing boats, tugboats, tour boats, container ships, cruise vessels and barges berth at its piers. A mega-ship, NCL's Pride of America, even homeports year-round in the harbor (at Pier 2). Its centerpiece, Aloha Tower Marketplace, is a trendy shopping, dining and entertainment complex that sprawls over 11 waterfront acres. This is your jumping-off place for an unforgettable Oahu stay.*

## Hanging Around

*With almost 30 stores and 8 restaurants, Aloha Tower Marketplace is a great place to pass some leisure hours. In addition, you can check out the following activities and attractions, all located at Honolulu Harbor, just a short stroll from your ship.*

**Aloha Tower:** *The 10-story tower was the highest building in Honolulu when it opened in 1926. On the top floor, the observation deck reveals a breathtaking view of Honolulu Harbor. It's open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and admission is free. Piers 10 and 11 (808-566-2337).*

*If you're up for more cruising, **Navatek** (800-548-6262) and **Star of Honolulu** (800-334-6191) offer memorable excursions off the coast of Waikiki. From December through April, humpback whales are an additional attraction. The boats are docked at Piers 6 and 8, respectively.*

## Don't Miss

*Honolulu's **Chinatown** district is roughly bordered by King, Smith, Beretania and River streets. The Hawaii Heritage Center offers tours on Wednesday and Friday at 9:30 a.m. Cost is \$20 per person (no reservations are needed; groups of 20 or more can book any day of the week by calling 808-521-2749). The Chinese Chamber of Commerce conducts tours on Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. Cost is \$5 per person (808-533-3181).*

**Foster Botanical Garden** (50 North Vineyard Boulevard, 808-522-7066) *is an urban oasis featuring 4,000 species of tropical flora. The venue is often used as a site for weddings and other special events. Guided tours are available Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person, \$1 for children aged 6 through 12 and free for visitors under 6.*

**Hawaii State Art Museum** (No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, Second Floor, 808-586-0900) *features select works from the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts' eclectic collection are displayed in changing themed exhibits.*

**Hawaii State Capitol** (415 South Beretania Street, 808-586-0178) *is the heart of the state's political system. The imposing structure emulates a volcano, with the legislative chambers on either side shaped like cinder cones and the surrounding pools suggesting the ocean that embraces the Hawaiian Islands. Visitors can take self-guided tours Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.*

Dubbed the "Carnegie Hall of the Pacific," **Hawaii Theatre** (1130 Bethel Street) opened on September 6, 1922, as the most lavish venue in Honolulu. Tours, usually offered Tuesday at 11 a.m., include a mini organ concert. Cost is \$10 per person. Call 808-528-0506 for general information about the theatre and current performances.

Reflecting the opulence of the royal courts of Europe, **Iolani Palace** (364 South King Street, 808-522-0832) was the residence of Hawaii's last reigning monarchs, King Kalakaua and Queen Liliuokalani. Construction was completed in 1882; 11 years later, the Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown. Tours -- self-guided and guided -- are available Tuesday through Saturday. Guided tours cost is \$21.75 for adults and \$6 for children aged 5 through 12. Self-guided tours are \$14.75/\$6. Kids younger than 5 are not allowed on the guided tour.

Dating back to 1842, the stately **Kawaiahao Church** was built with more than 14,000 coral blocks quarried from reefs off Honolulu. It has been the site of numerous notable events, including the marriage of King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma. Services in English and Hawaiian are held at 8 and 10:30 a.m. every Sunday (957 Punchbowl Street, 808-522-1333).

Learn how Hawaii's first missionaries lived at **Mission Houses Museum** (553 South King Street, 808-531-0481), a complex of original 19th-century dwellings, including a white frame house that was pre-cut in Boston, shipped around Cape Horn and assembled in 1821. Tours are set Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 a.m. (every hour on the hour). Cost is \$10 for adults, \$6 for kids age 6 to college (with ID) and free for children under 5.

**Washington Place** (320 South Beretania Street, 808-586-0240) is the former home of Queen Liliuokalani. It's been the official residence of the governor of Hawaii since 1921. Free tours of the historic mansion are scheduled Thursdays at 10 a.m.; among the treasures visitors can view is the Queen's koa piano (she was a gifted musician and composer). Reservations for the tour must be made 48 hours in advance.

**Farmers' Market:** Produce, flowers, baked goods, beef, seafood, cheese, fruit preserves, snacks, seasonings and more - all made or grown in Hawaii -- draw huge crowds to the Farmers' Market, held on Saturday mornings at Kapiolani Community College in Kaimuki, 4303 Diamond Head Road.

**Celebrate First Friday:** On the first Friday of each month, more than a dozen galleries in downtown Honolulu stay open until 9 p.m. to celebrate local art in all mediums. Be on hand for new exhibit openings; meet the artists; watch hands-on demonstrations; and enjoy refreshments, talks and live music. Free maps are dispensed at participating venues.

**Make a feather lei:** Although it was practiced throughout Polynesia, the ancient art of featherwork reached its zenith in Hawaii. At Aunt Mary Lou's Na Lima Mili Hulu Noeau (762 Kapahulu Avenue, 808-732-0865), you not only can purchase hatbands, hairpieces and other lovely feather items, you can learn how to make them. Cost applies for an initial two-hour lesson; supplies are extra. First-timers should call in advance to schedule their lesson.

**Visit the home of an heiress:** Built in the late 1930s on five gorgeous acres, Shangri La was the home of the reclusive heiress and philanthropist Doris Duke. Striking architectural features and more than 3,500 treasures from throughout the Islamic world (including marble screens, tile panels, ceramics, textiles, carpets and paintings) are the highlights of tours which are offered Wednesday through Saturday at 8:30 and 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Reservations are required. Cost is \$25 per person; this tour is not appropriate for children under 12.

**Getting face-to-fin with sharks:** North Shore Shark Adventures (808-923-3483) whisks you three miles from Haleiwa Harbor on Oahu's North Shore to meet Galapagos, sandbar, gray reef, hammerhead and tiger sharks ranging in size from four to twelve feet. You'll descend into the sea for a close look at these fearsome creatures, all the while perfectly safe within the confines of a seven-foot-tall barred cage. Tour times are 6, 8 and 10 a.m. and noon. Cost is \$96 per adult, and \$60 for kids ages 3 to 13 and. If you prefer, you can just ride along in the boat and observe other tour participants' shark encounters for \$60/\$35. Kids under three can ride in the boat for free.

**Catch some jazz at Blue Note:** The world's famous jazz and blues club has expanded to the Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort. Blue Note Hawaii features international musicians and local talent in a large, handicap-accessible venue, which seats more than 300 people twice a night, 365 days a year. This meant we had no trouble booking a Christmas performance by a homegrown artist singing Hawaiian favourites as well as classic blues tunes, while enjoying cocktails and a light meal. It's a mixed crowd of young and old jazz lovers and people who are experiencing the genre for the first time. There's no dress code and tickets can be purchased online or by calling the box office (808-777-4890). Depending on the caliber of the act, bar seating is usually priced from \$15 to \$25 and table seating costs \$25 to \$45 per person. Doors open at 5pm for the first set, with food and drinks available (an additional minimum spend of \$10 per person is required). Before or after the show, grab a drink with a view at the legendary Duke's Waikiki bar on the beach.

## Getting Around

Taxis line up curbside at Aloha Tower Marketplace adjacent to Piers 8 and 9. Rental cars are available, too. Companies that run shuttles between the pier and their lot include Enterprise, Thrifty, Dollar, Hertz and others.

TheBus, Oahu's excellent mass transit system, covers just about the entire island of Oahu. Fares are \$2.50 for adults, \$1 for seniors (65-plus) and \$1.25 for kids from age 6 through 17 (older teens may be asked to show their high school identification card as proof of age). Visitor passes, allowing unlimited travel on all routes for four consecutive days, cost \$25. Boarding locations will vary, depending on your destination; call for more information (808-848-4444).

Reminiscent of San Francisco's famed cable cars, the Waikiki Trolley operates more than 50 trolleys on three lines. The Red Line stops at 13 sights in Honolulu, including Chinatown, Iolani Palace and the Aloha Tower Marketplace. The Green Line travels along the eastern coast to Waikiki Aquarium, Diamond Head Surf Lookout and other scenic stops. Green and Red sandwich the smaller Pink Line, which emphasizes shopping and dining. Free brochures detailing the routes are available [online](#) or at the Waikiki Trolley's information kiosks at the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center and Ward Warehouse. Daily fares are \$25 for adults and \$13 for children aged 4 through 11, including unlimited reboarding. Four- and seven-day passes are also available (808-593-2822).

## Lunching

### At the Port

Set pierside, the **Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant** (Aloha Tower Marketplace, 808-599-4877) offers salads, sandwiches, pizzas and pastas all washed down with German-style lagers brewed on site. Not to be missed: hummus and goat cheese salad with salmon served over warm herb flatbread; beer battered fish and chips with malt minegar and spicy remoulade -- and wake-up-your-palate garlic fries. Also serves dinner.

### In Downtown Honolulu

Note: Be aware that some of these establishments are only open on weekdays; call ahead before going.

**Legend Seafood Restaurant** (100 North Beretania Street, 808-532-1868) is a popular Chinese eatery known for its dim sum, which loyal customers swear is as good as anything you'll find in Hong Kong. Servers roll carts filled with steamed, baked, fried and roasted delicacies by your table, and you select whatever strikes your fancy. Also serves dinner.

### Family Friendly

Bring the family to **Benihana of Tokyo** (Hilton Hawaiian Village, 2005 Kalia Road, 808-955-5955) for a great teppan-yaki meal and show! Right at your table, as he prepares your meal, your chef will juggle salt and pepper shakers, flip gleaming knives and catch lemons in his apron with the confidence and charisma of a consummate showman. Benihana is open for lunch and dinner.

The big draw at the **Oceanarium** (Pacific Beach Hotel, 2490 Kalakaua Avenue, 808-922-1233) is the three-story, 280,000-gallon aquarium that's home to more than 70 species of tropical marine life, including black-tip reef sharks, spotted eagle rays, ulua (crevalle) and wrasses. The fish are fed by a diver several times per day. All the buffets are good, but we usually opt for Sunday brunch, which offers a seafood bar (who can resist fresh oysters and mussels on the half

shell?), prime rib seasoned with Hawaiian salt, made-to-order omelettes, Belgian waffles and table after table of other goodies. Serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch.

#### *In or Near Waikiki*

**Hau Tree Lanai** (New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel, 2863 Kalakaua Avenue, 808-921-7066) is an alfresco restaurant with an idyllic setting -- beneath a spreading hau tree right on San Souci Beach. The food is also good. Choose from a nice selection of sandwiches, pastas, fresh island fish, and vegetarian dishes and salads. Also serves dinner; with lights twinkling in the branches of the hau and the rolling Pacific providing soft background music, it beckons to lovers.

**Kakaako Kitchen** (Ward Centre, 1200 Ala Moana Boulevard, 808-596-7488) adds a gourmet twist to standard lunchwagon fare. The venue serves hamburger steak, shoyu chicken, beef stew under the direction of Chef Russell Siu of 3660 on the Rise fame. Don't miss the daily specials or the desserts (we always make a beeline for the bread pudding and coconut mochi). The prices are reasonable, too; most plates fall in the \$10 to \$15 range. Also serves dinner.

Even the most avid shoppers will agree lunch at the **Pineapple Room** (Macy's, Ala Moana Center, 1450 Ala Moana Boulevard, 808-945-8881) is worth an hour's break from an all-day spree. James Beard Award winner Alan Wong oversees a talented team that turns out innovative options such as kalua pig BLT on an onion bun from a large open kitchen. The adjacent Patisserie Bar is a "must" stop for anyone with a sweet tooth. Also serves dinner.

Located in a congested Moiliili residential area, **The Willows** (901 Hausten Street, 808-952-9200) is a one-acre oasis brightened by lush gardens, tropical flowers, cascading waterfalls and koi-filled ponds. There's buffet dining only here. Lunch features prime rib; roast turkey; steamed fresh catch; a saimin station; Hawaiian mainstays like laulau, kalua pig and lomi salmon; and the restaurant's signature chicken or shrimp curry. Many of the desserts are cut in bite-size portions, so you can try as many as you want, guilt free! Also serves dinner.

#### *Dinner*

These acclaimed restaurants are all within a half-hour drive of Honolulu Harbor.

Chef/owner Russell Siu's food at **3660 on the Rise** (3660 Waialae Avenue, 808-737-1177) has been described as "a delicate blend of European, Pacific Rim and Island-style cuisine." All you need to know is it's fabulous. Tip: If you can't decide on an entree after perusing the enticing menu, you can't go wrong with the 3660 medley, which combines beef tenderloin, chicken and a catch of the day. And whatever you do, don't miss the signature appetizer: ahi katsu, sashimi-grade ahi wrapped in nori (seaweed) and deep fried medium rare.

Only Alan Wong could turn an obscure Moiliili locale into a mecca for discerning diners. Winner of the 1996 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef in the Pacific Northwest/Hawaii, Wong is unquestionably one of the stars of Hawaiian Regional Cuisine, which promotes the use of fresh locally grown produce, seafood and meats. Menu highlights at the eponymous **Alan Wong's** (1857 South King Street, third floor, 808-949-2526) include seafood cakes; ginger-crusting onaga; chopped ahi sashimi & avocado stack; Maui Cattle Company rib steak.

In 2003, it was chef/proprietor George Mavrothalassitis' turn to snare the James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef in the Pacific Northwest/Hawaii. Editors of Gourmet magazine singled out his eponymous restaurant, **Chef Mavro** (1969 South King Street, 808-944-4714), as "where we would eat if we had only one night in Honolulu." Dine here and you'll agree the accolades are well deserved. Menus change seasonally. Prix four- and six-course menus are available with or without wine.

**La Mer** (Halekulani Hotel, 2199 Kalia Road, 808-923-2311) is the epitome of fine dining in Hawaii; it is the state's longest consecutively ranked AAA's five-diamond restaurant. You'll enjoy spectacular views of Diamond Head and Waikiki and the soothing sounds of la mer, the sea, as you dine on dishes inspired by flavors from the south of France.

**Honolulu Cruise Port Address:**

Pier 2 Cruise Terminal, 521 Ala Moana Boulevard, Honolulu, HI 96813

Most cruise ships visiting Honolulu dock at Piers 10-11, adjacent to Aloha Tower Marketplace. Norwegian Cruise Line's *Pride of America*, which is based year-round in Honolulu, cruises from Pier 2, about a quarter mile south of the marketplace. As a general policy, Aloha Tower Marketplace management will provide courtesy shuttle (trolley) service to port call visits at Pier 2.

**Currency & Best Way to Get Money**

Numerous banks are located in downtown Honolulu. Hours are generally 7:30 or 8:30 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, with hours extended to 6 p.m. on Friday. Most offer foreign exchange services.

**Best Souvenir**

Popular choices include items handcrafted from native woods (from bowls to sculptures to jewelry); bags and baskets woven from coconut fronds and the leaves of the hala tree; Niihau shell and seed lei; Hawaiian quilts; Island attire (aloha shirts and muumuu for the ladies); coffee table books; CDs featuring the music of local performers; artwork; bath and beauty products imbued with tropical scents; and food (teas, jams, jellies, chocolate-covered macadamia nuts, and Island-grown pineapple and coffee). Stores in or near downtown Honolulu that specialize in made-in-Hawaii gifts include Native Books/Na Mea Hawaii (808-596-8885), Martin & MacArthur (808-524-6066), Nohea Gallery (808-596-0074) and Island Keepsakes (808-550-0996). If you're visiting Honolulu in August, you'll also find quality local products at the Made in Hawaii Festival at Neal Blaisdell Center (808-533-1292 x3).

**For More Information**

**On the Web:** [Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau](#) and [www.gohawaii.com](http://www.gohawaii.com)