



Simply Wander

THE LATEST TRAVEL GUIDE TO INSPIRE YOUR NEXT TRIP

An Adventurous 7 Day Kauai Itinerary

Day 1:

FLY INTO LIHUE

The first day will be a travel day. After flying into the Lihue airport, you'll want to pick up a rental car. I would recommend using [RentCars](#) or [Expedia](#) to compare costs between the different rental car companies.

LUNCH AT KENJI BURGER

You'll probably be starving once you land, so grab a bite to eat at Kenji Burger. This Japanese-style burger joint serves only 100% grass-fed Kauai beef burgers.

You'll find unique and delicious items on their menu like a Sushi Burrito, Truffle Burger, and Chicken Katsu Sandwich. Be sure to get a side of Furikake Fries!

A few other recommendations include Smiley's Local Grinds, Kauai Beer Company, The Fish Express, and the Kauai Boba & Barbeque Food Truck.

CHECK INTO THE MARRIOTT KAUAI BEACH CLUB

The [Marriott Kauai Beach Club](#) is located just a few miles south of the airport on the beautiful shores of Kalapaki Beach.

It is one of our favorite places to stay in Kauai due to its central location just steps from the beach. It is also near restaurants, stores, and activities.

The resort boasts amazing balcony views and the amenities include multiple pools and hot tubs.

After a long day of travel, you'll want to just relax and spend the rest of the day lounging at

the pool or beach.

DINNER AT HAMURA SAIMIN

Hamura Saimin is a favorite among locals. It is the best place to get authentic saimin, a classic Hawaiian noodle soup.

This no-frills joint is cash-only and you'll find only a few items on the simple menu. After a steaming bowl of saimin, save room for a thick slice of Lilikoi Chiffon Pie!

Day 2:

MORNING KAYAK AND HIKE TO SECRET FALLS

Stop by a grocery store on your way out to grab something quick for breakfast. You'll also want to pick up some drinks and snacks to take while kayaking.

There are several [kayaking tours](#) that you can take to get to Uluwehi Falls, also known as Secret Falls.

However, it is possible to kayak to the falls without a guide. We rented kayaks from a local who used to rent them out of the [Kamokila Hawaiian Village](#).

Unfortunately, the village has since closed but the phone number on the website is still active and is the best number to reach if you want to rent kayaks.

The rental rates are about half the cost of the tour and you will be given maps and instructions for finding the trailhead for Secret Falls.

After meeting with the guy at his house to get life jackets and go over the map and safety information, he transported and launched the kayaks the mouth of the Wailua River at Wailua State Park.

The Wailua River is fed from the freshwater that pours down from Mt Wai'ale'ale which is known as one of the wettest spots on earth. It is also the only navigable river in Kauai.

You'll paddle about 2 miles up the river, which takes approximately 45 minutes. The water is generally pretty calm, although motorized boats frequent the river as well.

It will most likely be pretty crowded with other kayakers heading in the same direction, so just follow them and you won't get lost.

Once you reach the trailhead, you will find a spot to park your kayak on the beach then follow the trail through the woods.

The hike to the falls is a little over a mile and takes about 20 minutes. It is fairly easy with little elevation gain and you'll walk along a raised boardwalk in some areas to avoid the mud.

There are a few river crossings, so be sure to wear water shoes ([Keen](#) is our favorite brand).

If you are planning to swim in the falls, I would also recommend bringing [Turkish towels](#). They are our favorite towels for traveling because they are lightweight and absorbent.

The hike is stunning as it follows along the river through the thick native rainforest.

The trail ends at the stunning 120-foot-tall Uluwehi Falls. This is one of the few waterfalls in Kauai that you can swim in, so take a dip in the plunge pool and enjoy the serenity.

The waterfall does get quite crowded, so I would recommend coming early in the morning.

After getting back to your kayak, you can continue a little further upriver to Fern Grotto. Fern Grotto is a natural amphitheater and hanging garden.

Tour boats dock here throughout the day so it can get crowded. I wouldn't say that it is a must-see, so if there are boats already docked then it might not be worth stopping.

STOP AT OPAEKA'A FALLS

After your kayak expedition, make a quick stop at the nearby Opaeka'a Falls lookout. You aren't able to hike down to the bottom of the falls, it's just a quick roadside stop.

Across the street from Opaeka'a Falls, you'll also find a lookout point over the Wailua River where you can watch the kayakers below.

Wailua Falls is also a popular stop. It's about a 20-minute drive between the falls, so you can see one or both depending on time. There is also a fruit stand at Wailua Falls if you want to try a fresh coconut.

LUNCH AND TRAIN RIDE AT KILOHANA KAUAI PLANTATION

The Kilohana Kauai Plantation dates back to 1896. It began as a cattle ranch, but later became a sugar plantation.

In 1936, a 16,000-square-foot mansion was built on the plantation. Today, the mansion has been lovingly restored and houses a restaurant and shops.

Stop by the Plantation House Restaurant for a fresh farm-to-table meal. After your lunch, take a train ride around the beautiful plantation.

There are also several shops where you can pick up unique souvenirs and local goods.

AFTERNOON AT KALAPAKI BEACH

Head back to the hotel where you can spend the afternoon relaxing by the pool or soaking up the sun on the shores of Kalapaki beach.

There are surfboard rentals and lessons available at the beach and it's one of the best beaches for beginning surfers.

DINNER AT DUKE'S KAUAI

Duke's Kauai is located adjacent to the hotel and is one of the best places to eat in Kauai. This beachfront restaurant offers delicious dishes with ocean views.

It is an open-air restaurant with a waterfall and stream running right through the center.

Reservations are recommended for the dining room, or you can enjoy a more casual meal at Duke's Barefoot Bar located on the ground level of the restaurant.

See our guide [13 Best Places to Eat in Kauai](#) for more restaurant recommendations.

Day 3:

BREAKFAST AT KOUNTRY STYLE KITCHEN

Kountry Style Kitchen is the place to go for a hearty homestyle breakfast.

We have loved every dish we've tried, including the French toast, omelets, hashbrowns, breakfast sandwiches, and pancakes that are as big as the plate!

KAUAI BACKCOUNTRY MOUNTAIN TUBING

Mountain tubing is such a unique experience and this is the only place in Hawaii where you can do this.

The tour starts with a 45-minute narrated open-air ride up to the mountains. You'll hear some interesting history, see some beautiful scenery, and maybe even spot a wild pig.

Once you reach your destination, you'll hop in a tube and then float through irrigation canals that were constructed for an old sugar cane plantation.

You'll be in the river for about 45 minutes and the majority of the time you'll be floating through 5 different tunnels.

The tunnels are narrow and only about as wide as one tube, so keep this in mind if you are claustrophobic.

You'll be wearing headlamps so it doesn't get too dark inside, and you'll also have gloves if you need to push off the walls.

Keep in mind that you are required to wear water shoes, no flip-flops or bare feet are allowed.

The float is generally mild and relaxing, making it a great family-friendly activity for kids ages 5 and up.

If you're looking for a thrill ride, this isn't it. But, if you are looking for a unique activity and a fun way to enjoy Kauai's beauty, then you'll love this!

After tubing, you'll be provided a picnic lunch by the river before heading back down the mountain.

If you're interested in booking a tour, [Kauai Backcountry](#) is the only company that is licensed to run this tour. They often sell out, so be sure to book your excursion in advance.

SHAVE ICE AT WAILUA SHAVE ICE

After your tubing adventure, get a sweet treat at Wailua Shave Ice. This is our favorite place in Kauai to get shave ice.

Their syrups are made fresh using locally grown fruit and organic cane sugar. They also top their shave ice with haupia foam, which we have never had anywhere else.

The Lava Flow, Ube, and Triple Coconut are our favorites but you can't go wrong with any of the flavors!

AFTERNOON HIKE ON KUILAU RIDGE TRAIL

After a refreshing treat, head out for another adventure! The Kuilau Ridge Trail is a fairly easy 3.6-mile roundtrip hike.

The trail offers breathtaking sweeping views of Mt. Waialeale and the surrounding rainforest.

Our favorite spot is this hidden lookout point about one mile up the trail. For information about this trail and how to get to the lookout point, see our guide to [Hiking Kauai's Kuilau Ridge Trail](#).

DINNER AT BIG MONSTER SUSHI & THAI

Big Monster Sushi & Thai in Lihue is a fusion of Japanese sushi and traditional Thai dishes.

The food is fresh, flavorful, and absolutely delicious! We loved the sushi rolls, as well as the Pad See Ew, Pad Thai, Tom Kha Soup, and Mango Sticky Rice.

Day 4:

MORNING HIKE ON THE SLEEPING GIANT WEST TRAIL

The Sleeping Giant West Trail, also known as Nounou West Trail, is one of our favorite hikes in Kauai.

The 1.7-mile out-and-back trail leads through an enchanting forest of Cook Pines. It's one of my favorite features of the hike.

The trail ends at a lookout point that boasts one of the best views over the island.

Although the trail is relatively short, the steady incline will have you huffing and puffing so don't underestimate it. There are also steep drop-offs at the top, so use caution.

For more details about this hike and other recommendations, see our guide [8 of the Best Hikes in Kauai](#).

LUNCH AT PONO MARKET

After working up an appetite on your morning hike, grab a traditional Hawaiian plate lunch or poke bowl at Pono Market in Kapa'a.

Make sure you save room for shave ice from Hee Fat General Store just down the block!

RENT BIKES AND RIDE ON THE KAPA'A BIKE PATH

For a fun afternoon activity, rent bikes from [Hele on Kauai](#) or [Holoholo Bike Rentals](#). They are both located in Kapa'a on the Kapa'a Bike Path.

Hele on Kauai has a great selection of e-bikes, but you must be 16 or older to ride them.

Holoholo has smaller e-bikes available for kids 8 years and up, but they only have a few on hand so you'll want to reserve them in advance. Both shops have non-electric bikes available to rent as well.

The bike path is a 7.2-mile coastal trail with incredible views all along the way.

It connects to several beaches and ends at Donkey Beach. There is a cool tree tunnel along the path leading to Donkey Beach, just use extreme caution and go slow as there are blind curves.

There are also some fun little dirt hills to ride on near the beach.

Part of the path follows along the old rail bed used by the McKee Plantation and includes a cool stop at The Pineapple Dump.

Back in the mid-1900s when the Pono Pineapple Cannery was in operation, they would fill as many as 3 railroad cars a week with pineapple trimmings and waste.

Each Sunday, a steam locomotive would bring the filled hopper cars to this spot. The train cars would then back up onto this pier and dump the pineapple waste into the ocean.

Be sure to make time in your Kauai itinerary to ride along the Kapa'a Bike Path, it was one of our favorite things to do in Kauai!

DRIVE TO POIPU

After spending a few days in Lihue, it's time to explore the southern end of the island.

Along the drive to Poipu, you'll drive under the Maluhia Road Tree Tunnel, it's one of our favorite roads on the island.

There are quite a few beachfront hotels in and around Poipu. We stayed at the [Sheraton Kauai Resort](#) and loved the beautiful property.

A few other options include the [Marriott Waiohai Beach Club](#) and [Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa](#).

If you prefer to not switch hotels, you can just stay in Lihue and drive to the southern side of the island for a day trip.

After checking in, grab some dinner at Puka Dog which has been voted as one of the Top 10 Best Hot Dog Stands in America by the Travel Channel.

Puka Dog is famous for its Hawaiian hot dogs served inside of fresh baked Hawaiian sweet bread and topped with a secret sauce and Hawaiian relish.

After dinner, head to the shores of Poipu Beach where you'll find one of the best spots on the island to watch the sunset.

The Sheraton Kauai also holds luaus on select evenings if you're interested in making dinner reservations there instead.

Day 5:

NAPALI COAST BOAT TOUR

Today just might be the highlight of your entire trip. Book a small group [Zodiac Boat Tour](#) with Go Blue Adventures and explore along the stunning Napali Coast.

You'll want to book the earliest boat tour along the Napali Coast to increase your chances of experiencing the best weather and water conditions.

Head out early and stop at Aloha Sweet Delites on the way for some custard-filled Malasadas for breakfast on the go.

Once you board the zodiac boat, you'll cruise about 25 miles up the coast.

These high-speed rigid inflatable boats provide a thrilling ride as they bounce along the waves. It is not recommended for pregnant women or those with back problems.

Catamaran boat tours are also available, but we loved the zodiac boats because they can get right up close to the coast and can even cruise through sea caves if the water conditions are right.

Along the way, you'll see marine life, waterfalls, and the remote Polihale Beach. We had a pod of dolphins following right along side our boat!

You'll even be able to get out and snorkel with sea turtles if the conditions allow.

Your final destination will be the breathtaking Kalalau Beach, the crowning jewel of the Napali Coast.

You won't be able to dock at the beach, but you will get a chance to jump out and swim.

If you're feeling extra adventurous, you may want to look into getting a permit and hiking the 22-mile round-trip Kalalau Trail to camp at this beach.

The boat tours run year round but the best time to go is in the summer when the water is calm.

If you are prone to seasickness, I would avoid booking in the winter as the waves can get quite rough. However, if you want to see whales, the best time to go is November-April.

The tour lasts about 4 hours and includes a snack and drinks. You can also bring your own snacks. Dry bags and snorkel gear are also provided.

LUNCH AT PORKY'S KAUAI

Porky's Kauai hits the spot after a morning of adventure!

Order their signature dish with smoked pulled pork piled on top of a pork sausage or beef hot dog and topped with a pineapple, grilled onions, and barbecue sauce. It's amazing!

They also have a grilled cheese version that is just as good.

HIKE AT WAIMEA CANYON

Waimea Canyon is considered the Grand Canyon of Hawaii and can't be missed.

Take the scenic drive and stop at the lookout points along the way. Waimea Canyon Lookout is the first stop and perhaps the most popular one.

You'll find an observation deck that overlooks the colorful canyon and you can even spot Waipoo Falls in the distance.

It's also worth driving to Pu'u O Kila Lookout, the last viewpoint at the end of the road. Here you'll find the beginning of the 2-mile Pihea Trail.

This trail follows along the ridge with beautiful views of the Napali Coast.

The clouds often roll in during the afternoon, but if you are patient they usually blow over so you can catch a glimpse of the rugged mountains and coastline.

If you have time for one more hike, check out the 3-mile Canyon Trail that starts at the Pu'u Hinahina Lookout and takes you to the top of Waipoo Falls.

RELAX AT SALT POND BEACH

Salt Pond Beach is one of our favorite beaches on Kauai. The protected cove makes it the perfect beach for swimming, boogie boarding, snorkeling, and just hanging out on the sand.

The southern side of the island also sees the most sunshine, so if it is raining on the north shore then head south to Salt Pond Beach for some sunshine!

For more of our favorite beaches, see our guide [7 of the Best Beaches in Kauai](#).

DINNER IN HANAPEPE

Hanapepe is a laid-back pre-WWII town that served as the inspiration for Disney's *Lilo & Stitch*.

It is a small sleepy town with colorful wooden storefronts and overgrown trees.

The Hanapepe Swing Bridge can be found just off the main street. It was built in 1911 for plantation workers to easily access the fields in town and is still used today.

I would also recommend getting dinner in Hanapepe at Japanese Grandma's Cafe for fresh sushi, Japanese fried chicken, and steak.

DAY 6:

BREAKFAST AT ANUENUE CAFE

Anuenue Cafe is a family-owned eatery that serves hearty breakfast and lunch dishes made fresh with locally sourced ingredients.

Start your day with the Surfer Bowl, Avo Toast Sandwich, or Hawaiian Sweet Bread French Toast.

DRIVE TO PRINCEVILLE

This Kauai Itinerary will help you explore every part of the island during your 7 day trip! After spending time on the eastern and southern parts of the island, it's time to head north to Princeville.

On the way, stop at the Kilauea Point Lighthouse and Wildlife Refuge. If you are interested in visiting the lighthouse and walking around the peninsula, you'll need to reserve a [timed entry ticket](#) online.

You can't go inside the lighthouse, so in my opinion it's not worth the entry fee. The best view of the lighthouse is actually at a free lookout point right before you drive onto the grounds.

This wildlife refuge is a sanctuary for sea birds, so you'll see a variety of unique birds nesting in the cliffs and flying around.

CHECK INTO YOUR AIRBNB OR HOTEL

We like staying in an Airbnb when we're on the north shore, mainly because they often come stocked with beach chairs, sand toys, boogie boards, beach towels, and snorkel gear.

We loved staying in this [Airbnb](#) vacation rental. It is spacious, clean, centrally located, fully stocked with beach gear, and reasonably priced.

A few other options on the north shore include the [Hanalei Colony Resort](#) or [1 Hotel Hanalei Bay](#) (formerly St. Regis Princeville).

LUNCH AT KILAUEA MARKET + CAFE

Kilauea Market is a small local grocery store that is an unassuming spot for a decent meal, but the cafe located inside the store serves such delicious food!

Try the Kubano Sandwich, Guava BBQ Chicken Pizza, or Kilauea Fried Chicken.

QUEENS BATH

Take an afternoon hike to the Queen's Bath. The hike is a short 0.6-mile trail, but it is often muddy and very slippery.

Once you reach the bottom, walk across the lava rocks to the left for about 1/4 mile until you reach a large sinkhole filled with water that is known as Queen's Bath.

It is possible to swim in the pool at low tide when the water is calm, but use extreme caution as there have been quite a few deaths here due to rogue waves.

EXPLORE HANAIEI

After your hike, head to the charming town of Hanalei. Visit the shops for souvenirs, local merchandise, and handmade goods.

Be sure to stop by the historic Wai'oli Hui'ia Church. This American Gothic-style church was built in 1912 on 17 acres of former plantation land.

It is one of the oldest surviving churches on Kauai and still houses the old Mission Bell from 1843.

DINNER AT THE DOLPHIN

The Dolphin Fish Market is a North Shore institution.

It is known for its fresh poke to-go from the small kitchen in the back. They often sell out, so you'll need to come early if you want to get some.

However, The Dolphin Restaurant is also a great place to go for fresh sushi rolls, poke bowls, seafood chowder, lobster, and so much more.

Alternatively, if you aren't craving seafood or have picky eaters, then head to the North Shore General Store for some good pizza and burgers.

DAY 7:

BREAKFAST AT NOURISH HANAIEI

Start your day with a light and fresh acai bowl from Nourish Hanalei. Not only are their bowls delicious, but you can enjoy your breakfast with a gorgeous view over the river valley.

HIKE A PORTION OF THE KALALAU TRAIL

You may not have time to do much today, depending on your travel plans. However, if you do have some extra time then you'll want to try and fit in one more hike.

I previously mentioned the 22-mile Kalalau Trail, an epic multi-day hike that requires a permit. However, you can hike the first two miles from Ke'e Beach to Hanakapi'ai Beach without a permit.

You will need to make [parking or shuttle reservations](#) if you do want to do this hike, so make sure you book it in advance.

If you are planning to do this hike, make sure you spend time on the beautiful shores of Ke'e Beach while you are there.

LUNCH AT PINK'S CREAMERY

Pink's Creamery is a cute ice cream parlor near Hanalei Bay.

Order a Kalua Pork Grilled Cheese Sandwich with Pineapple and a side of Maui chips for lunch.

Just be sure to save room for a scoop of slow-churned ice cream for dessert!

HANAIEI BAY

Spend the afternoon relaxing on the scenic shores of Hanalei Bay.

This is a great beach for boogie boarding, surfing, and jumping from the Hanalei Pier. The mountain range in the background also makes it one of the most picturesque beaches on the island.

Tunnels Beach, Hideaway Beach, and Secret Beach are also beautiful beaches on the North Shore if you want to do a little beach hopping.

And that's a wrap! Hopefully, you'll have a chance to do some or all of these activities on the last day before heading home.

This Kauai itinerary isn't for the slow traveler, but hopefully, it will help you pack in the most adventure and beauty into 7 days!