



7 Day Oahu Itinerary

Day 1-2: Honolulu

I think 2 days is the right amount of time to spend in Honolulu. While I prefer escaping the city and spending more time on the North Shore, there are still plenty of things you won't want to miss in Honolulu!

Where to Stay in Honolulu

You can't beat the location and amenities at the [Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort](#). It is located right on the shore of the world-famous Waikiki Beach.

The property is beautiful with tropical gardens, ponds, and man-made waterfalls.

This resort is especially great for families with 5 swimming pools, including a massive beachfront pool and waterslides. They even have a fireworks show every Friday night!

The Best Things to Do in Honolulu

Here is a list of our favorite things to do in and around Honolulu. I recommend picking 2-3 activities each day, depending on how long they take, and how much time you want to spend relaxing at the beach.

Pearl Harbor National Memorial

Visit the free museums at Pearl Harbor, and [reserve tickets](#) in advance to take a boat ride to the USS Arizona Memorial.

Hanauma Bay State Park

Make [reservations](#) to snorkel inside an ancient volcanic crater. It's one of the best snorkeling spots on the island!

Waikiki Beach

Take a surf lesson, book a catamaran tour, stroll along the boardwalk, or just relax on the shore of one of the most iconic beaches in the world.

Ho'omaluhia Botanical Garden

This 400-acre garden has some of the most dramatic views on the island. It feels like you've stepped into Jurassic Park! We like taking the scenic 4.2-mile drive through the gardens, but they also have several hiking trails.

Iolani Palace

This 140-year-old palace is the only royal palace on US soil. You can take a guided tour of the 7,000-square-foot palace to hear fascinating stories about the royal families who once resided here.

Tantalus Lookout

Take the 20-minute drive to the top of the hill at Puu Ualakaa State Park to discover one of the best places to watch the sunset in Honolulu.

Olomana Trail to Three Peaks

If you're feeling ambitious, take the challenging 4.5-mile out-and-back trail to the summit of the first peak, where you'll find incredible panoramic views.

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

Makapu'u Lighthouse Trail

This family-friendly paved 2-mile trail offers incredible coastal views the entire way. It ends at the Makapu'u Lighthouse, which was featured in *the movie 50 First Dates*.

Byodo-In Temple

This small-scale replica of the original Byodo-In Temple in Japan is one of the most photogenic buildings on the island. It is surrounded by peaceful gardens and ponds with the dramatic Koolau Mountain Range in the background.

Lulumahu Falls Trail

There are only a few waterfall hikes on the island, and Lulumahu is our favorite. The short 1.6-mile trail leads through a bamboo forest to a 70-foot waterfall and swimming hole.

Judd Trail to Jackass Ginger Pool

This is one of our kids' favorite hikes. The easy 1-mile loop trail winds through a beautiful forest that was used as a filming location for *Jumanji*. The main highlight is a swimming hole with a natural waterslide, a rope swing, a small waterfall, and cliff jumping.

Diamond Head Crater

The moderately challenging 1.6-mile Diamond Head Summit Trail leads to the rim of an ancient volcanic crater. From the top, you'll find an incredible view of Honolulu's city skyline.

The Best Places to Eat in Honolulu

There are plenty of restaurants and cafes in Honolulu to choose from, but here are a few of our favorites.

Marugame Udon

The best place to go for homemade udon noodles. It's located next to the International Marketplace if you want to do some shopping before or after your meal.

Scratch Kitchen

We love coming here for breakfast and ordering their famous Milk & Cereal Pancakes, but everything on their menu is delicious!

Leonard's Bakery

No trip to Honolulu is complete without a stop at Leonard's Bakery for their legendary malasadas. The cream-filled ones are our favorite!

Uncle Clay's House of Pure Aloha

We love getting shave ice from Uncle Clay's. They use fresh, natural ingredients with real fruit and homemade syrups. Our favorite is the Strawberry Dream.

Monkeypod Kitchen

Everything we've tried at this farm-to-table restaurant has been delicious. The dishes are made using locally sourced ingredients, and you can taste the quality in every bite.

Duke's Waikiki

The atmosphere and food are always great at this Hawaiian institution. Be sure to order a slice of their famous Hula Pie.

For more details and recommendations in Honolulu, see our full [Honolulu Travel Guide](#).

Day 3-5: North Shore

The North Shore has it all, with stunning beaches, outdoor adventures, and the best local restaurants. You could easily spend the entire week on this part of the island, but here is a solid list of things to fill 3 full days on the North Shore.

Where to Stay on the North Shore

My ONLY complaint about the North Shore is that accommodations are limited. We usually stay at the [Marriott Courtyard](#) in Laie. The location is great, and the facilities and service are always up to the Marriott standards. They even give you a box of macadamia chocolates when you check in!

If you're looking for a resort stay, the [Ritz-Carlton Oahu Turtle Bay](#) is your best (and only) option. Everything at this resort is top-notch, with updated rooms, oceanfront pools, biking trails, delicious restaurants, ocean views, and 5 miles of secluded shoreline. However, these amazing amenities come with a price tag. It isn't cheap to stay at this resort, but it is wonderful!

We've found that vacation rentals are often the most budget-friendly option. We love staying at the [condos at Turtle Bay](#). The location is great, they are usually reasonably priced for the area, and it's nice having a kitchen so that you can save money by cooking your own meals.

The Best Things to Do on the North Shore

You could easily spend every day just relaxing on one of the many beautiful North Shore beaches. However, here are a few of our favorite things to do on the North Shore if you want to get out and explore.

Kualoa Ranch

Kualoa Ranch is one of the most popular destinations on the North Shore. We love taking the Jungle Adventure Tour to see different filming locations from movies such as *Jurassic World* and *Kong: Skull Island*. They also offer ATV tours, Movie Bus Tours, Ziplining, horseback riding, electric mountain bike tours, and more. See our [Kualoa Ranch Guide](#) for more information.

Crouching Lion

The Crouching Lion trail is a fairly short hike that really packs a punch! The trail is steep and moderately challenging, but it leads to a spectacular view overlooking the ocean and Kahana Bay. The trail is not maintained, so hike at your own risk.

Polynesian Cultural Center

Every visitor needs to visit the PCC at least once. The 42-acre complex is filled with villages from the 6 different Pacific Island nations. Each village offers cultural immersive experiences and hands-on activities that are authentic to their native island. You can also book tickets for the nightly fire show and a luau dinner.

Shark's Cove

Shark's Cove is considered the best snorkeling beach on the North Shore. The cove is surrounded by a natural rock barrier, which creates a pool of calm water filled with vibrant marine life.

Ehukai Pillbox

There are quite a few abandoned WWII military bunkers around the island known as "pillboxes". You can hike to several different pillboxes, and the Ehukai Pillbox, also known as

the Sunset Pillbox, is one of the most popular ones. The trail is steep and slippery, but it's cool to explore the historic structure, and the views are unmatched.

Banzai Pipeline

The Banzai Pipeline at Ehukai Beach is one of the most popular surf breaks in the world. The Billabong Pipe Masters and Volcom Pipe Pro are held here annually, but it's fun to sit and watch experienced surfers ride the wave year-round.

Sunset Beach

Sunset Beach is arguably the most popular beach on the North Shore. Although it is a tourist destination, the wide beach stretches for over two miles, so it doesn't ever feel too crowded. During the summer months, the water is great for swimming and boogie boarding. During the winter months, the massive waves attract pro surfers from around the world.

If you're looking for more beautiful beaches, here is our guide to [10 of the Best Beaches on the North Shore](#).

Haleiwa

Haleiwa is our favorite charming little town on the island. The historic Plantation-era village is filled with adorable shops, delicious cafes, and pristine beaches. See our guide, [8 Things to Do in Haleiwa](#), for our top recommendations.

Dole Plantation

Take a narrated train ride on board the Pineapple Express, tackle the Pineapple Garden Maze, take a self-guided tour through the gardens, and order the signature Dole Whip dessert at this iconic pineapple farm.

Laniakea Beach

You are almost always guaranteed to see a sea turtle at this beach. It has been nicknamed "Turtle Beach" because Green Sea Turtles have been sunbathing on these shores for decades.

There is a roped-off viewing area where you can observe the turtles. You can also swim at this beach, but you must maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet if you see a turtle in the water.

Waimea Bay

Waimea Bay is another one of our favorite beaches on the North Shore. My kids love cliff jumping on the famous rock and boogie boarding in the summer. In the winter, it's fun to watch the experienced surfers tackle the massive swells.

Waimea Valley

At Waimea Valley, you can walk through the gorgeous botanical gardens to reach Waimea Falls, a popular swimming hole. Admission is required.

Ziplining

On this [zipline tour](#), you'll take an ATV to the top of the mountain, where you can soak in the views over the North Shore while you zip across 8 different lines (the longest is almost a half-mile long!), rappel, and cross over sky bridges.

Best Places to Eat on the North Shore

Oahu's North Shore is a foodie's dream! You'll find so many amazing local restaurants and cafes serving fresh dishes with locally sourced ingredients. Here are a few of our favorites....

Ken's Fresh Fish

This is my husband's absolute favorite place to eat on Oahu. In fact, he even has a "Ken's Fresh Fish" t-shirt that he proudly wears. This small shop serves the best fresh Ahi Katsu-style fish with breaded yellow-fin ahi tuna drizzled with a special house sauce and served over rice.

Seven Brothers

Seven Brothers is a family-owned restaurant that has gained a reputation for serving the best burgers on Oahu. Their signature Paniolo Burger is stacked tall with a locally sourced beef patty, two hand-battered onion rings, grilled pineapple, bacon, cheese, organic greens, and BBQ sauce.

Kahuku Farm Cafe

This is a true farm-to-table cafe with the fruit and vegetables grown right on the property. You can even have a picnic right in the orchard. We love their Farm Pizza, Haupia Pineapple Smoothie, Acai Bowl, and Grilled Banana Bread topped with vanilla Haupia and drizzled with caramel.

Hukilau Cafe

This small cafe in Laei is the inspiration for Hukilau Cafe in the movie *50 First Dates*. It serves hearty breakfast dishes, including Hawaiian French Toast, Macadamia Nut Pancakes, Portuguese Sausage, and their famous Loco Moco Burger, which was featured in the *Food Network Magazine*.

Hukilau Marketplace

The Hukilau Marketplace is a collection of shops located just outside the Polynesian Cultural Center. They have several delicious restaurants, cafes, and food stands. We love the Mango Mascarpone Pizza from Pounders, the Portuguese Sausage Fried Rice from Tita's Grill, fruit smoothies from Elsie's Smoothies, and a savory crepe from North Shore Crepes.

Sunrise Shack

This cute roadside stand serves delicious organic smoothies, bowls, avocado toast, and coffee. My favorite is the Tropical Bowl with blended mango, banana, and pineapple, topped with coconut cream, honey, and granola.

Kahuku Sugar Mill Food Trucks

The Kahuku Sugar Mill was once a working sugar mill, but is now home to a collection of shops, restaurants, and food trucks.

We love the taro boba smoothie from Tina Fresh Fruit Smoothie, the lemon butter shrimp plate from Giovanni's, the poke bowls from Ry's Poke Shack, the sugar cane juice from Sugah Daddeh's, and the mango bingsu from Badabingsu.

For more recommendations, see our guide, [The Best Places to Eat on Oahu](#).

Day 6-7: West Side

Oahu's West Side, or the Leeward Coast, is not as touristy. This side is known as the locals' side, and they aren't always as welcoming to tourists. However, they do have some awesome resorts over here, which makes it the perfect place to relax and unwind for your last few days.

Where to Stay on Oahu's West Side

For the ultimate family vacation, splurge for a few nights at [Disney's Aulani Resort](#) located at Ko Olina Lagoons. This award-winning resort features an interactive splash zone, waterslides, a lazy river, a man-made ocean lagoon, and multiple swimming pools, including an infinity-edge oceanfront pool. For an additional fee, they offer Disney character experiences, excursions, a luau, and you can even swim with fish in the Rainbow Reef snorkeling lagoon.

Another option is the [Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club](#). It is part of the Ko Olina resort community with Aulani, but it is a little more affordable.

The best budget-friendly option is to book a [vacation rental condo](#) at the Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club.

The resorts share access to three of the beautiful man-made Ko Olina Lagoons. All of the lagoons are open to the public, but the fourth lagoon is designated as a public lagoon with parking and easy public access.

The Best Things to Do on Oahu's West Side

If you do decide to leave the resort and explore around, just keep to yourselves, be respectful, and don't leave valuables in your vehicle. This side is notorious for "smash and dash" car thieves.

Yokohama Bay

Ka'ena Point State Park Beach at Yokohama Bay is one of the most beautiful beaches on Oahu. It's also one of the least crowded due to its remote location. It is on the northwestern tip of the island and is a bit of a drive to get there, but it's worth the effort!

Mermaid Caves

The Mermaid Caves at Zablan Beach are somewhat of a hidden gem. At low tide, you can climb down inside these beautiful sea caves to experience a magical underground world. It can be quite dangerous, so only go at low tide in the summer months when the water is calm.

For more information about visiting these caves and other hidden gems, see our guide, [11 Secret\(ish\) Spots in Oahu](#).

Electric Beach

This small beach may not seem like much at first sight, but it is actually one of the best places on Oahu for snorkeling and diving.

The nearby power plant has an underground pipe that empties clean, warm water into the ocean about 300 feet offshore. This warm water attracts a wide variety of marine creatures, like sea turtles, eagle rays, dolphins, and even white-tip sharks. The water coming out of the pipe creates a strong current, so use extreme caution to avoid getting pushed out into the ocean.

There is also submerged machinery to the right of the pipes that is covered in coral and serves as an artificial reef. If you go further to the right, you'll find a sunken Buddha statue and the "shark cave". Please note, you must be a strong swimmer to snorkel or dive here, and you are doing so at your own risk.

The Best Places to Eat on Oahu's West Side

We haven't found any restaurants that we love on the West Side. I would just stick to eating at the resort.

Final Thoughts

There is so much to do and see on Oahu that it's impossible to fit it all into a one-week trip. I hope this guide will help you find the best things to do on your trip, and inspire you to come back to experience more!