



Oahu, Hawaii — 7-Day Trip Plan from the Ilikai Hotel

Base Camp: Ilikai Hotel & Luxury Suites, 1777 Ala Moana Blvd, Waikiki **Vibe:**

University student — fun-first, budget-conscious, with room for a few splurges

Best for: Any time of year (winter = bigger North Shore waves; summer = calmer water everywhere)

Your Location Advantage: The Ilikai

The Ilikai sits at the **west end of Waikiki**, right where it meets Ala Moana. This is actually a killer spot because:

- **Duke Kahanamoku Lagoon** — calm, swimmable lagoon steps from the hotel (free, no crowds early AM)
 - **Ala Moana Beach Park** — locals' beach, way less touristy than Waikiki proper. 5-min walk.
 - **Ala Moana Center** — massive mall with 85+ restaurants, 5-min walk. Food court = budget heaven.
 - **Hilton Hawaiian Village** — right next door, Friday night fireworks show (free to watch from your hotel!)
 - You can walk into central Waikiki (~15 min to Royal Hawaiian Center) or escape tourist prices by going toward Ala Moana.
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Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Settle In + Waikiki Vibes

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|---------|--|-----------|
| Morning | Walk to Waikiki Beach — swim, people-watch, rent a surfboard (\$15-25/hr) | Free-\$25 |

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|-----------|--|--------|
| Lunch | Musubi Cafe Iyasume (Royal Hawaiian Center) — spam musubi & plate lunch | \$8-12 |
| Afternoon | Stroll Kalakaua Avenue , explore shops, hit International Marketplace | Free |
| Sunset | Watch sunset from Magic Island at Ala Moana Beach Park (5 min from hotel) | Free |
| Dinner | Marukame Udon — fresh handmade udon, watch them make it. Always a line, always worth it. | \$8-12 |
| Evening | Kuhio Beach Hula Show (Tue/Thu/Sat at 6:30 PM, free!) or grab drinks at Duke's Waikiki | Free |

💡 **Day 1 tip:** Don't rush. You just got to Hawaii. Adjust to island time.

Day 2: Diamond Head + Southeast Coast

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|---------|--|------------|
| 6:00 AM | Diamond Head Hike — go EARLY to beat crowds & heat. ~1.5 hrs round trip. Reservation required (book online in advance, \$5/person). Stunning 360° views of Waikiki. | \$5 |
| 9:00 AM | Drive/bus to Hanauma Bay — world-class snorkeling. Reservation required (book 2 days ahead online). Closed Mondays & Tuesdays. Bring your own snorkel gear to save \$20. | \$25 entry |
| Lunch | Koko Head Cafe (near Hanauma) — famous brunch spot, cornflake french toast is legendary | \$15-20 |

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|-----------|---|---------|
| Afternoon | Halona Blowhole Lookout & Makapu'u Lighthouse Trail (easy paved hike, whale watching in winter!) | Free |
| Dinner | Rainbow Drive-In — classic plate lunch spot since 1961. Get the loco moco or mixed plate. | \$10-14 |



Getting there: Bus #22 ("The Beach Bus") runs from Waikiki to Hanauma Bay.

Or rent a car for the day (\$40-60) to hit the whole southeast coast.

Day 3: North Shore Day Trip 🏖️

This is an ALL DAY trip. Rent a car or book a tour (\$80-120).

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|-----------|--|-------|
| 8:00 AM | Drive up via Pali Lookout (quick stop, incredible windward views) | Free |
| 10:00 AM | Laniakea Beach — turtle beach! Watch green sea turtles sunbathing (don't touch!) | Free |
| 10:30 AM | Haleiwa Town — surf town vibes. Browse surf shops, art galleries | Free |
| 11:00 AM | Matsumoto Shave Ice in Haleiwa — THE iconic shave ice spot since 1951. Get it with ice cream on the bottom & azuki beans. | \$5-7 |
| Lunch | Giovanni's Shrimp Truck — scampi or hot & spicy. Lick your fingers, no shame. | \$15 |
| Afternoon | Shark's Cove — incredible snorkeling (summer only, too rough in winter). Or watch surfers at Pipeline/Sunset | Free |

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|---------|--|---------|
| | Beach (winter = massive waves, pro contests) | |
| Late PM | Sunset Beach for sunset — one of the most beautiful on the island | Free |
| Dinner | Ted's Bakery — grab a plate lunch AND a chocolate haupia cream pie (non-negotiable) | \$12-15 |

🚗 **Car essential for North Shore.** The bus takes 2+ hours each way. Split a rental with travel buddies.

Day 4: Pearl Harbor + Chinatown + Culture Day

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|-----------|--|---------|
| 7:00 AM | Pearl Harbor National Memorial — USS Arizona Memorial is FREE but you MUST reserve tickets online (recreation.gov) well in advance. They sell out. Go early. Allow 3-4 hours. | Free |
| Optional | USS Missouri Battleship tour (where Japan surrendered in WWII) | \$35 |
| Lunch | Head to Chinatown Honolulu — walk around, explore the markets, arts district | — |
| Lunch | Maguro Brothers — tiny poke counter, insanely fresh. Come early, they sell out. | \$12-18 |
| Afternoon | Iolani Palace — only royal palace on US soil. Audio tour is fascinating. | \$20-25 |
| Afternoon | Walk to King Kamehameha Statue & explore downtown Honolulu | Free |

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|---------|---|---------|
| Dinner | Helena's Hawaiian Food — James Beard Award winner. Kalua pig, pipikaula, laulau. Old-school authentic Hawaiian. | \$15-20 |
| Evening | Explore Chinatown bars — artsy cocktail scene. Try Bar Leather Apron (splurge, world-class cocktails ~\$18-20 each) or Tchin Tchin (wine bar, chill vibes) | \$\$ |

Day 5: Kailua + Windward Coast

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 8:00 AM | Lanikai Pillbox Hike (Ka'iwa Ridge) — short but steep, absolutely insane sunrise/morning views of the Mokes (twin islands). ~30 min up. | Free |
| 10:00 AM | Lanikai Beach — consistently rated one of the best beaches in the world. Powder-soft sand, turquoise water. Limited parking (residential area), go early. | Free |
| Late AM | Kailua Beach Park — kayak to the Mokulua Islands (\$40-50 half-day rental) or just chill | Free-\$50 |
| Lunch | Boots & Kimo's — macadamia nut pancakes. Legendary brunch spot, expect a wait. | \$15-18 |
| Alt Lunch | Kalapawai Market for poke bowls & sandwiches (quicker, cheaper) | \$10-14 |
| Afternoon | Explore Kailua Town — cute shops, cafes, laid-back vibe | Free |

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|--------|---|----------------|
| Dinner | Back in Waikiki — Side Street Inn (locals' favorite, fried rice and pork chops to share) | \$15-25/person |

Day 6: Hike + Beach + Treat Yourself

| Time | Activity | Cost |
|----------------|---|---------------|
| Morning | Pick your hike: | |
| | Manoa Falls — easy, lush rainforest trail to a 150-ft waterfall (muddy, bring shoes). \$5 parking. | \$5 |
| | Koko Head Stairs — 1,048 railroad-tie steps straight up. Brutal. Rewarding. Free. | Free |
| Lunch | Waiola Shave Ice (near Waikiki) — locals say it's better than Matsumoto. Fight me. | \$5-7 |
| Afternoon | Lazy beach afternoon at Ala Moana Beach Park — swim, nap, read | Free |
| Splurge Dinner | Highway Inn (Kaka'ako) — upscale Hawaiian comfort food. Poi, laulau, oxtail soup. | \$20-30 |
| Alt Budget | Pioneer Saloon (Kaka'ako/Monsarrat) — Japanese-style curry and katsu plates | \$12-16 |
| Night | Sky Waikiki — rooftop bar with panoramic views. Get one cocktail for the view, then bounce if on a budget. | \$15-20/drink |

Day 7: Your Choice + Last Day Vibes

Pick from what you missed or loved:

Option A: Beach Bum Day - Sleep in → Duke Kahanamoku Lagoon → Ala Moana food court lunch → afternoon at Waikiki Beach → sunset → last dinner

Option B: Adventure Day - Kualoa Ranch — movie site tours (Jurassic Park!), ATV, zip-lining (\$50-130) - **Dole Plantation** — touristy but fun, pineapple everything (\$8-14) - Stop at **North Shore** again on the way back

Option C: Culture & Chill - Bishop Museum — Hawaii's best museum, Polynesian history & science (\$34 adults, book online for \$5 off) - Wander **Ward Village / Kaka'ako** — murals, craft breweries, local boutiques - **Ala Moana Center** for last-minute shopping

| Last Dinner Picks | Vibe | Cost |
|-------------------------|---|-------------|
| Ono Seafood | Best poke on the island, no debate | \$12-15 |
| Leonard's Bakery | Hot malasadas (Portuguese donuts). Get a dozen for the plane. | \$1.50 each |
| Senia | Fine dining splurge, worth every penny | \$\$\$\$ |

🍽️ Master Food Guide

Budget Eats (Under \$15)

| Spot | What to Get | Where |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Marukame Udon | Fresh udon + tempura | Waikiki |
| Rainbow Drive-In | Loco moco, plate lunch | Kapahulu |
| Musubi Cafe Iyasume | Spam musubi varieties | Waikiki (multiple) |
| Ono Seafood | Ahi poke bowl | Kapahulu |
| Pioneer Saloon | Katsu curry | Monserrat |
| Ala Moana Food Court | Everything — poke, ramen, Thai, Korean | 5 min from hotel |

| Spot | What to Get | Where |
|-----------------|--|------------|
| 7-Eleven | Seriously — Hawaii 7-Elevens have musubi, bento, and manapua. Legit. | Everywhere |

Poke Spots (Ranked)

- 1. Ono Seafood** — classic, no-frills, perfect
- 2. Maguro Brothers** — Chinatown, sashimi-grade everything
- 3. Foodland** (grocery store) — surprisingly amazing poke counter, cheapest option
- 4. Tamura's** — local liquor store with killer poke. Trust me.

Shave Ice

- 1. Waiola Shave Ice** — local favorite, super fine ice
- 2. Matsumoto** — iconic, Haleiwa (tourist-y but classic)
- 3. Island Vintage Shave Ice** — Royal Hawaiian Center, fancier flavors
- 4. Uncle Clay's House of Pure Aloha** — Aina Haina, worth the drive

Plate Lunch Essentials

- Rainbow Drive-In** — the OG
- L&L Hawaiian Barbecue** — chain but reliable
- Helena's Hawaiian Food** — elevated traditional
- Highway Inn** — Kaka'ako location is great

Malasadas & Sweets

- Leonard's Bakery** — hot malasadas, custard-filled = life-changing
- Pipeline Bakeshop** — Kailua, fancy malasadas with fillings
- Ted's Bakery** — chocolate haupia pie (North Shore)
- Liliha Bakery** — coco puffs (choux cream puffs), local institution

🌙 Nightlife & Entertainment

Bars & Drinks

| Spot | Vibe | Budget? |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Duke's Waikiki | Iconic, live music, on the beach | (happyhour!) ** * MaiTaiBar * * (RoyalHawaiian) Pinkpalacevibes, classicmaitais \$ |
| Sky Waikiki | Rooftop, panoramic views, DJs on weekends | \$\$\$ **RumFire** (Sheraton) Beachfront fire pits, cocktails \$\$ \$ |
| Maui Brewing Co (Waikiki) | Craft beer, chill | * * BarLeatherApron * * World – classcocktails, Chinatown \$ |
| Hula's Bar & Lei Stand | LGBTQ+ friendly, great views, fun crowd | * * LavaTube/CuckooCoconut * * Tikibar, kitschy – fun |
| Wang Chung's | Late-night karaoke, no cover, dive-y | \$ |

Luaus

| Luau | Price | Notes |
|----------------------------|------------|--|
| Paradise Cove | ~\$110-170 | Ko Olina, classic big luau, sunset views |
| Chiefs Luau | ~\$100-180 | Wet 'n' Wild park, highly rated, fire-knife dancing |
| Rock-A-Hula | ~\$80-150 | Right in Waikiki, more show than traditional luau |
| Polynesian Cultural Center | ~\$80-240 | North Shore, full day + evening show, most immersive |

💰 **Budget hack:** The free **Kuhio Beach Hula Show** (Tue/Thu/Sat 6:30 PM) gives you hula & music without the \$150 luau price tag. Also, the **Royal Hawaiian**

Center has free hula lessons and lei-making.

Free Entertainment

- **Friday night fireworks** at Hilton Hawaiian Village (visible from Ilikai!)
 - **Kuhio Beach Hula Show** (Tue/Thu/Sat)
 - **Sunset watching** at Magic Island — bring a beer from ABC Store
 - **Watching surfers** at any beach
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Getting Around

Rental Car vs. Bus vs. Rideshare

| Method | Cost | Best For |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| TheBus | \$3/ride or \$80/month pass | Waikiki ↔ Honolulu, Diamond Head, Ala Moana |
| Biki Bikeshare | \$4.50/30 min | Short trips around Waikiki/Ala Moana |
| Rental Car | \$40-80/day (off- peak) up to \$185/day (peak) | North Shore, Windward Coast, full island exploration |
| Uber/Lyft | \$15-40+ per ride | Late nights, airport, one-off trips |
| Hui Car Share | ~\$12/hr | Short trips when you don't need a car all day |

Recommendation for a Student:

- **Days 1, 4, 6:** No car needed (Waikiki + bus)
- **Days 2, 3, 5:** Rent a car or join a tour. Split with friends to save.
- **Day 7:** Depends on your plan

Parking warning: Waikiki hotel parking is \$30-45/night. Only rent a car on days you're leaving the area.

Practical Tips

Reservations Required (Book Ahead!)

- **Pearl Harbor (USS Arizona)** — free but books out weeks ahead → recreation.gov
- **Hanauma Bay** — reserve exactly 2 days in advance at 7 AM HST → hanaumabaystatepark.com
- **Diamond Head** — reserve online → gostateparks.hawaii.gov (\$5/person)
- **Luau**s — book a week+ ahead
- **Kualoa Ranch** — popular tours sell out

What to Bring

- Reef-safe sunscreen (required by Hawaii law — no oxybenzone/octinoxate)
- Hiking shoes with grip (trails are muddy)
- Snorkel gear (buy at Walmart/Target near Ala Moana — saves \$\$\$ vs renting)
- Reusable water bottle
- Dry bag for beach days
- Leave valuables in the hotel safe — car break-ins are common at trailheads

Pro Tips

- **Sunrise = best time** for Diamond Head, Pillbox, beaches (fewer crowds, cooler)
- **ABC Stores** are everywhere in Waikiki — cheap snacks, drinks, sunscreen, souvenirs
- **Foodland & Tamura's** grocery stores have insanely good poke counters
- **Don't eat every meal in Waikiki** — prices are 30-50% higher than Ala Moana or Kaimuki
- **Tipping:** 18-20% at restaurants, \$1-2 for counter service
- **Jellyfish warning:** They arrive 9-10 days after a full moon. Check the jellyfish calendar online.

Budget Breakdown (Rough Estimates, Per Person)

Budget Mode (~\$80-100/day, excluding hotel)

| Category | Daily Avg |
|------------|---|
| Food | \$35-50 (plate lunches, poke, food courts) |
| Activities | \$10-20 (free beaches/hikes, occasional paid entry) |

| Category | Daily Avg |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Transport | \$6-15 (bus + occasional rideshare) |
| Drinks | \$10-15 |

Mid-Range (~\$130-180/day)

| Category | Daily Avg |
|------------|---|
| Food | \$50-80 |
| Activities | \$30-50 (snorkeling, tours) |
| Transport | \$30-40 (rental car days, bus other days) |
| Drinks | \$20-30 |

Splurge Mode (~\$250+/day)

| Category | Daily Avg |
|------------|--|
| Food | \$100+ (nice dinners, all the shrimp trucks) |
| Activities | \$80-150 (luau, Kualoa Ranch, boat tours) |
| Transport | \$60-80 (rental car + parking) |
| Drinks | \$40+ (rooftop bars, craft cocktails) |

☀️ Walking Distance from Ilikai (Under 15 min)

- Duke Kahanamoku Lagoon — 2 min
- Ala Moana Beach Park / Magic Island — 5 min
- Ala Moana Center (food, shopping) — 5 min
- Hilton Hawaiian Village (restaurants, shops, Friday fireworks) — 3 min
- Waikiki Beach Walk — 10 min
- Fort DeRussy Beach — 8 min (less crowded than main Waikiki)

👉 TL;DR — If You Only Have 3 Days

1. **Day 1:** Diamond Head sunrise → Waikiki Beach → sunset at Magic Island → Marukame Udon
 2. **Day 2:** North Shore (Haleiwa, Giovanni's, Shark's Cove/Pipeline, Matsumoto) → Ted's pie
 3. **Day 3:** Pearl Harbor morning → Chinatown lunch (Maguro Brothers) → Kailua/Lanikai afternoon → Leonard's malasadas → Sky Waikiki sunset drinks
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 A hui hou — until we meet again! Enjoy Oahu!