



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

Luau

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

P **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** — 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!*