**Aw, I Missed That!**

Have you ever visited somewhere great, then found out later that you missed about 20 things that you should have done, but didn’t know about? I hear that all the time about Hawaii, and with today’s prices, not many people can afford to go back to Hawaii for a do-over. (Which reminds me of an old tour guide joke. “Stand up if this is your first time to Hawaii. Everyone, these people (standing) are what we call ‘malihini’s’ meaning not local. Now stand up if this is your second time to Hawaii. Everyone, these people are what we call ‘kama’aina’ meaning local. Now stand up if you’ve visited Hawaii three or more times. Everyone, these people are what we call RICH.” Gets a laugh every time.

**“Forced” to Go on Dinner Cruises**

When I was a tour guide, nothing made me happier than to escort a bus full of tired, sunburned, and happy tourists back to the airport for their flight home. I loved helping people make the most of their visit to Hawaii. I’ve been working with tourists since before I was born. My mom was an entertainer at the famed Coco Palms hotel on Kauai, the site of Elvis Presley’s movie, “Hawaii”. Since I was born and raised in Hawaii, on the islands of Kauai and Oahu, I thought I’d offer my advice on some of the best things to do and see while you’re on Kauai or Oahu. I was also a tour guide so I could recommend the best shows to see. (I was forced to go to every show, every luau, and every dinner cruise. These were called “fams” and were a mandatory part of my job. I remember going on my first sunset dinner cruise and not believing that I was actually at work. But by the 3rd week of sunset dinner cruises, I was complaining about it. Cut to me now, 30 years later, and my job takes place in an office all day, I’d trade places with my younger self in a heartbeat, if it didn’t pay so poorly. By the way, don’t forget to tip your tour guide and bus driver, especially if they’re funny, and most of us are.

**My Two Cents**

So, for what it’s worth, I’d like to show you the places that I think you should visit while on your Hawaiian vacation. **I want you to be able to say, “Yes, I went there!” instead of “Aw, I missed that!”** I’ll have links to other websites that you can book a tour through, or that gives you more information on the subject. For instance, I’ve listed the best hikes on Oahu, and there’s a link to alltrails.com which will give you much more detailed information on each hike than I can. (These sites have done all the research and all the work, so please visit them.)

**Oahu**

Oahu, the “Gathering Place” is Hawaii’s main island and the most populous. 69% of the total population of Hawaii live on the island of Oahu. Oahu is also the United States military hub of the pacific. It houses all branches of the armed forces. Prior to social media, people who’ve never visited Hawaii before used to assume we all speak Hawaiian and live in grass huts. I once had someone ask me if they could use their “American money” in Hawaii. But those malihinis (first timers) change their mind real quick on their descent into Daniel K. Inouye International Airport. Landing in Honolulu reminds me of a baby New York City.

But while Oahu is the hub of the state and rush hour traffic is horrendous, there is also the other side of the island, which is where Oahu looks like Hawaii. There is the drive to the north shore, a 30-mile drive right along the beach, where the exit from the Likelike tunnel overlooking Kaneohe will take your breath away. Driving on the H-3 freeway right smack in between two mountains will make you like driving on freeways. Oahu, though busy, has a lot to offer a visitor from the “mainland”. You just have to find the right things to do.

**Best Beaches**

Magic Island

Kailua

Ala Moana

Lanikai

**Best Activities**

Polynesian Cultural Center

Kualoa Ranch

Pearl Harbor combined with City Tour

Germaine’s Luau

Sunset Dinner Cruise

Snorkel at Hanauma Bay

Ala Moana Shopping Center

Iolani Palace

Hanauma Bay

Circle Island Tour with Waimea Waterfall

Circle Island with Byodo-Inn admission

**Best Shows**

Magic of Polynesia

Polynesian Cultural Center

**Best Hiking**

Manoa Falls

Diamond Head

<https://www.alltrails.com/trail/hawaii/oahu/kuliouou-ridge-trail?u=i>

**Kauai**

<https://lookintohawaii.com/hawaii/45341/sleeping-giant-nounou-mountain-information-kauai-kapaa-hi>

**Best Beaches**

Lydgate Park

Hanalei Beach Park

Ke’e Beach

Poipu Beach

Anini Beach

**Best Activities**

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Kauai/Kayak-and-Waterfall-Hike-Wailua-River/d670-215723P1>

Visit Waimea Canyon – the Grand Canyon of the Pacific

**Best Shows**

Smith’s Family Garden Luau

**Best Hiking**

1. Kalalau Trail

2. Hanakapiai Falls Hike

3. Alaka’i Swamp Trail

4. Canyon Trail to Waipo‘o Falls

5. Pihea Trail

6. Wai Koa Loop Trail

7. Kukui Trail

<https://travelnotesandbeyond.com/hikes-in-kauai/>