

Title:

Getting Around On Oahu: Keeping Your Mauka Separate From Your Makai

Word Count:

538

Summary:

North, South, East and West don't have a lot of meaning on the island of Oahu. Sure, there are some references to these points-of-the-compass: The North Shore is famous for its big wave surf and West Oahu is booming with development, but you're much more likely to hear the term Windward Oahu than you are East Oahu and we haven't even begun discussing the local terms for direction of mauka, makai, ewa and Diamond Head.

Consider for a moment the geography of Oahu--it's an is...

Keywords:

oahu,hawaii,maui,kauai,vacation,rentals,island,beach

Article Body:

North, South, East and West don't have a lot of meaning on the island of Oahu. Sure, there are some references to these points-of-the-compass: The North Shore is famous for its big wave surf and West Oahu is booming with development, but you're much more likely to hear the term Windward Oahu than you are East Oahu and we haven't even begun discussing the local terms for direction of mauka, makai, ewa and Diamond Head.

Consider for a moment the geography of Oahu--it's an island, surrounded by water (obviously) that rises from sea level around its coast line to a series of mountain ridges in its middle. Diamond Head is a prominent coastal landmark located on the Southern-most point of the island. These features are what are used for directions and navigation by those of us who grew up on the island of Oahu. No looking for moss on the side of the tree. No sun rises in the East and Sets in the West nonsense. Directions are simple and direct. You can go Mauka (towards the mountains) or Makai (towards the sea). You can go Diamond Head (towards Diamond Head crater) or Ewa (away from Diamond Head crater). Since no matter where you are on the island, you can almost always see the ocean, the mountains and, at least until recently, Diamond Head using these geographical markers to get from point A to point B make sense.

To those of us who grew up on Oahu this is simple, easy to understand and clear

to convey. It's only when you try to explain it to someone unfamiliar with the island's directional concept that it starts to get confusing. For instance, let's say that you are standing in the town of Kailua on the Windward side (east side) of the island, facing North then clearly Makai would be on your right (or east) and Mauka would be on your left (or West). Ewa would also be on your left (or West) and Diamond Head would be to your Southwest. Now let's say that you are at Pearl Harbor in West Oahu and again facing North then ipso facto Makai would now be on your left (or west) and Mauka would be on your right (or east.) You would be in Ewa and Diamond Head would be to your Southeast. Now, let's put you facing North while in Haleiwa on the North Shore of Oahu. Makai would now be North: Mauka, Diamond Head and Ewa would all be to the South--see how easy this is to navigate by? Finally, let's have you standing in Diamond Head Crater on Southern Oahu and facing North. Makai is now to the South, Mauka is to the North, you're in Diamond Head and Ewa is to the Northwest. With a little practice and you will be able to get around like you lived on Oahu all your life. If you were to drive around the island in a clockwise direction makai would always be on your left but at varying times would be to the North, South, East and West. Similarly, mauka would always be on your right and at varying times would be to the North, South, East and West.