



WAIKIKĪ STORY IDEAS April 2007

Waikikī's Historic Sites – Then and Now

Waikikī, meaning “spouting water,” was once a marsh full of fresh, flowing water from the Ko’olau Mountains. Early Hawaiian settlers gradually transformed the marsh into hundreds of taro fields, fishponds and gardens. Hawaiian royalty soon made these lush fields their playground and summer retreat, passing the days surfing off the shores of Waikikī Beach, taking moonlight horseback rides, participating in canoe races, and welcoming visitors to their homes. Today, Waikikī is a world-class visitor destination boasting numerous hotels, resorts, attractions, and activities. Yet it is the sense of place, its preservation of historic sites, and perpetuation of its host culture that makes Waikikī so special. Visitors can discover Waikikī’s history through the self-guided **Waikikī Historic Trail** or can travel through time simply by strolling the area and visiting various historic sites such as:

- **The Moana Surfrider Hotel**, which established Waikikī as a resort destination, opened its doors on March 11, 1901. “The First Lady of Waikikī” was a four-story, 75-room structure that was the costliest, most elaborate building in the Hawaiian Islands. The resort later added two wings, creating an open-air courtyard surrounding a majestic banyan tree, which faced the Pacific Ocean. Under this banyan tree, Johnny Noble delighted audiences with his orchestra and hula dancers. It was also here in 1935 that the famed radio program, “Hawaii Calls,” was inaugurated. Today, this historic seaside Victorian resort continues to attract the elite, bringing back nostalgic memories with classic Hawaiian entertainment. The resort has coupled its legacy of excellence in Waikikī with modern-day comforts and will be re-branded a Westin in June, offering Heavenly Beds and amenities, along with an enhanced service culture.
- Waikikī’s third oldest building, the **Gump Building**, lies on the corner of Kalākaua Avenue and Lewers Street. When Louis Vuitton came to occupy the architectural landmark, it was committed to preserving the area’s historical elements. The boutique acquired historical images from the Bishop Museum’s archives and has since restored and recreated the building’s architectural details. In addition, to further perpetuate the island’s culture and give the store a sense of place, Louis Vuitton Hawaii created its first-ever signature brand motif – the LVH hibiscus.
- **The Royal Hawaiian** continues to live up to its reputation as one of Waikikī’s most prestigious properties. King Kamehameha I had used the area as a playground after he conquered O’ahu and Queen Ka’ahumanu had her summer place in the coconut grove where the “Pink Palace of the Pacific” was built. When the resort opened, it ushered in a new era of luxury travel to the islands, attracting the elite, rich, and famous since 1927. During World War II, the hotel closed and was leased to the

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U.S. Navy as a recreation center for those serving the Pacific Fleet. Today, its historic Coconut Grove remains a focal point of the area and the world-renowned Mai Tai Bar continues to offer the classic Mai Tai along with entertainment from Hawai'i's premier musicians. The resort also features the only lū'au on Waikīkī Beach.

"Hanging with the Locals" in Waikīkī

Waikīkī, once known as a popular destination just for visitors, has since grown to be a hot spot for the local community. O'ahu's kama'āina (residents) keep Waikīkī's unique flavor and culture alive as they live, work, and play in the area. Travelers coming to Waikīkī have the opportunity to get to know the local community and be a part of the island's 'ohana (family) by joining activities such as:

- The **Waikīkī Beach Boys** have been an important part of the local culture since the early 1900s. These "Ambassadors of Aloha" earned their living on the beach in Waikīkī by giving outrigger canoe rides, teaching surfing lessons, and renting beach equipment. More importantly, they had a deep passion for sharing the aloha spirit with visitors. The Waikīkī Beach Boys told stories, took visitors around Honolulu, and invited them to their homes. Today, second and third generation Beach Boys can be found on Waikīkī Beach as they continue the tradition of sharing Hawai'i's culture with visitors.
- The **Waikīkī chess players** have become local fixtures in Waikīkī, occupying the Kūhiō Beach Pavilion almost all times of the day and night. These chess enthusiasts come to socialize, compete and enjoy the spectacular ocean view. Waikīkī has become a mecca for chess players over the years and welcomes visitors to join in and take on these masters of the game.
- **Kapi'olani Park**, dedicated in 1877 by King David Kalākaua in honor of his Queen Kapi'olani, has remained an important part of Waikīkī's history. Listed on the Hawai'i Register of Historic Places, the oldest and largest park on O'ahu is home to the Honolulu Zoo and the Waikiki Shell. In addition, the park holds numerous tennis courts, soccer fields, an archery range, an art walk, and a bandstand for outdoor concerts and shows. No matter what the activity, Kapi'olani Park has something for everyone!
- **Sunset on the Beach**, an event that attracts hundreds of locals and visitors to Waikīkī Beach, shows blockbuster movies on a giant 30-foot screen. Local residents and visitors can relax in the sand, enjoy the balmy ocean air, and delicious food and drinks from booths by local vendors all while watching a movie under the stars.
- **Aloha Festivals' Waikīkī Ho'olaule'a** is an annual festival that brings residents and visitors together to celebrate the Hawaiian culture through music, dancing, and food. The island's top entertainers are featured on multiple stages lining Kalākaua Avenue. Aloha Festivals' celebrations also include a floral parade through Waikīkī, an 'ukulele contest, and much more.
- For years, residents of Hawai'i have flocked to the **Waikiki Shell** for top-notch concerts. World-renowned musicians such as Lou Rawls, Kenny Loggins, Willie Nelson, and Jack Johnson, along with Hawai'i's top entertainers have performed under the stars at the shell. Its picturesque location, with Diamond Head in the background and Waikīkī Beach just across the street, adds to a perfect evening in Waikīkī.

Waikīkī's Legendary People

Waikīkī's rich history and culture are reflected in its people. Through the years, Waikīkī has been home to legendary icons, including surfers, entertainers, cultural ambassadors, and hula dancers:

- **Duke Kahanamoku**, renowned surfer, Olympic championship swimmer, and international ambassador of surfing is often associated with Waikīkī. Kahanamoku, who passed away in 1968, is known as "The Father of Modern Surfing" for helping to mainstream the sport when it was starting to die out in the early 1900s. Today, Kahanamoku's legacy is kept alive in Waikīkī with a monument where people drape lei in his honor. The **Waikīkī Beach Boys** have continued his mission by teaching visitors how to surf on longboards similar to the ones that Kahanamoku once rode.
- **Don Ho**, perhaps Hawai'i's most famous entertainer, has become a Waikīkī legend over the course of his 40-plus year career. He first began performing at Duke's nightclub in 1962 and his Hawaiian-influenced pop music became an instant hit with visitors and locals alike. As Ho's fame began to grow, Waikīkī also grew in popularity. After making cameo appearances on a number of national TV shows such as *The Brady Bunch*, *Charlie's Angels*, and *The Johnny Carson Show*, Ho's career expanded even more. He went on to release several albums and host his own TV show. Today, Ho can be found back where he started – performing every Thursday and Sunday night at the OHANA Waikiki Beachcomber.
- **Kanoe Miller** (also known as Kanoehua Kaumeheiwa on stage) has become a local celebrity and hula legend in the 22 years that she's been performing in Waikīkī. The former Miss Hawai'i is a fixture on stage at the Halekulani's House Without a Key, performing traditional hula with effortless grace. She has seen Waikīkī evolve over the years, but still dances under the kiawe tree every night with as much passion as if it were the first time.
- **Fred Hemmings** is a man with many titles: legendary surfer, outrigger canoe paddler, marathon runner, contest entrepreneur, national sports commentator, radio personality, and state legislator. Hemmings attributes much of his success to his early beginnings as a humble Waikīkī surfer. He was winning professional surf competitions by the age of 15 and eventually went on to produce competitions of his own, such as the Pipeline Masters and Triple Crown of Surfing. He was also a good friend of Duke Kahanamoku.
- There is no question that the **Society of Seven (SOS)** is considered a legendary group in the Waikīkī community, having headlined at the Outrigger Waikiki for more than three decades. Prior to coming to Hawai'i, SOS was the most popular group in Hong Kong in the 1960s, being the first in the country to have a number one hit single that topped The Beatles. Today, SOS continues its legacy with a second generation of local entertainers, easily appealing to audiences of all ages. As such, it's been repeatedly voted the best show in Waikīkī by *Honolulu Magazine*.

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Waikiki Entertainment

From Hawaiian music to the theater, Waikiki has a non-stop mix of entertainment for every age and taste including live music, dinner shows, lū'au, and performing arts. For those looking for a cocktail or dinner show, Waikiki offers a large variety of options including **Waikiki Nei**, a show illustrating the mythology of the region, which will open this summer at the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center's new showroom; **The Don Ho Show**, featuring Hawai'i's living legend along with performances by the state's up and coming talent; **Magic of Polynesia**, a spellbinding stage production with spectacular magic illusions by internationally-acclaimed illusionist John Hirokawa; and **Society of Seven**, the longest-running variety show in Waikiki. One can also experience some of O'ahu's acting talent and playwrights at **Diamond Head Theatre**. Traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music artists play nightly at bar and restaurant venues throughout Waikiki, including **Tiki's Bar & Grill at the ResortQuest Waikiki Beach Hotel**, **The Royal Hawaiian's Mai Tai Bar**, **Duke's Canoe Club Waikiki at Outrigger Waikiki**, and **Halekulani's House Without A Key**. Every Monday night, experience the only lū'au on Waikiki Beach at **The Royal Hawaiian** hotel, featuring hula dancing, Hawaiian music and a fire knife dance. Each evening as the sun sets in Waikiki, stroll along Kalākaua Avenue for a hula dancing and torch lighting ceremony on the hula mound at Waikiki Beach.

Celebrity Exposure

With an impressive collection of world-class cuisine and fun-in-the-sun activities, Waikiki has found its way into the hearts of Hollywood's "A-list." This destination has become the hot spot for the elite to meet, eat, greet, sleep, and play. **The Kahala Hotel & Resort** is a celebrity favorite for its high-end cuisine and luxurious accommodations, attracting Janet Jackson, The Osbournes, Will Smith, Cameron Diaz, Justin Timberlake, Ben Affleck, and Sandra Bullock; many celebrities have flocked to the **Halekulani** when they want a delicious meal or exclusive place to stay, including Kate Hudson, Cuba Gooding Jr., Matt Lauer, Bette Midler, and Diana Krall; **The Royal Hawaiian's lū'au, Mai Tai Bar** and legendary status as "The Pink Palace of the Pacific," has attracted Elizabeth Taylor, Tommy Lee Jones, Laird Hamilton, Cindy Crawford, and Clint Eastwood; **The Ilikai, The Royal Hawaiian, and The Kahala Hotel & Resort** have all served as filming locations for movies such as *50 First Dates* and *Blue Crush* and popular television shows like *Hawaii Five-0* and *Lost*. The well-known bar on Waikiki Beach, **Duke's Canoe Club Waikiki**, hosted a surprise performance by Jimmy Buffett; The *Lost* actors love the **Hanohano Room** atop the **Sheraton Waikiki** and **Morton's Steakhouse** in **Ala Moana Center**; and **Tiki's Grill & Bar** at the **ResortQuest Waikiki Beach Hotel** has counted Wyclef Jean and Paul Walker among its guests.

Waikiki Nightlife

When the sun sets in Waikiki, the night heats up. The skyline twinkles as hip nightclubs, swanky lounges, and bars come alive, offering many options for nighttime revelers until the early morning. Whether the desire is to dance the night away, listen to Hawaiian music under the stars, or kick back in a bar or lounge, Waikiki has something for everyone. Visitors and locals flock to nightclub hotspots such as **Fashion 45**, for its open and modern atmosphere, three bars and two dance floors; **Skyline** at the Sheraton Waikiki, with stylish decor, DJs spinning the hottest mixes, and a wraparound view of Waikiki; **Lotus Soundbar**, where DJs play everything from deep house to progressive, club classics to hip-hop; **Monkey Bar**, Hyatt Regency Waikiki Resort & Spa's newest

club held in Ciao Mein restaurant; and the newly opened **Pearl Ultralounge** at Ala Moana Center offering late night appetizers, drinks and dancing. For those looking for a more low key setting, **Jazz Minds** showcases Honolulu's top jazz musicians, and the décor features New York-style brick and red lounge chairs surrounding the dance floor; **Uncle Bo's Pupu Bar and Grill** is an eclectic eatery specializing in American and local-Asian food that doubles as a swanky lounge; and **Lewers Lounge** in the Halekulani offers tempting appetizers, specialty cocktails, and the finest entertainment.

Beyond Waikīkī: An O'ahu Playground Awaits

Waikīkī, the gateway to the island of O'ahu, is only the beginning of what this oasis has to offer. Drive 10 minutes north of Waikīkī to **Mānoa** to hike through a lush rainforest or 10 minutes west to the thriving metropolis of **downtown Honolulu** and **Chinatown**. Offering up the finest cuisine, from the Euro-Asian menu at Indigo to the Hawaiian-Asian inspired cuisine at Chai's Island Bistro, downtown Honolulu is ideal for food-lovers. For a nightcap, return to **Indigo** and visit The Green Room and Opium Den & Champagne Bar, featuring the hottest sounds and coolest people. Or head to **Bar 35**, a New York-inspired lounge with red brick walls, black leather couches and a beer garden. For the late night owls, **Next Door** is a hot nightspot featuring concerts by local musicians and themed nights ranging from cabaret to reggae, while fashionistas dance in the gallery and mingle outside on the open-air deck at **thirtyninehotel**. Every first Friday of the month, downtown Honolulu hosts "**First Friday**," an event that draws a large crowd to the area's many art galleries. To see the greenest mountains and the clearest blue water, head over to the windward side and stop at **Kailua** and **Lanikai** beaches, ranked among the best in the world. Keep driving north to the **North Shore** to see surfers tackle 20-foot plus waves during the winter season and feast on fresh prawns from one of the many shrimp trucks. Then, head over to historic Hale'iwa town, a favorite hangout for pro-surfers.

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Special note to media: The Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) recognizes the use of Hawaiian diacritical markings (e.g. glottal stop [ʻ], macron [ā]) in place names of Hawai'i such as Lāna'i). However, HVCB respects the individual use of these markings for names of organizations and businesses.

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