

The Best of Oahu

Everyone ventures to Oahu seeking a different experience. Some talk about wanting to find the “real” Hawaii, some are looking for heart-pounding adventure, some yearn for the relaxing and healing powers of the islands, and others are drawn by Hawaii’s aloha spirit, in which kindness and friendliness prevail.

This book is designed to help you have the vacation of your dreams. For those too excited to page through from beginning to end, this chapter highlights the very best of what Honolulu and Oahu have to offer.

1 The Best Oahu Experiences

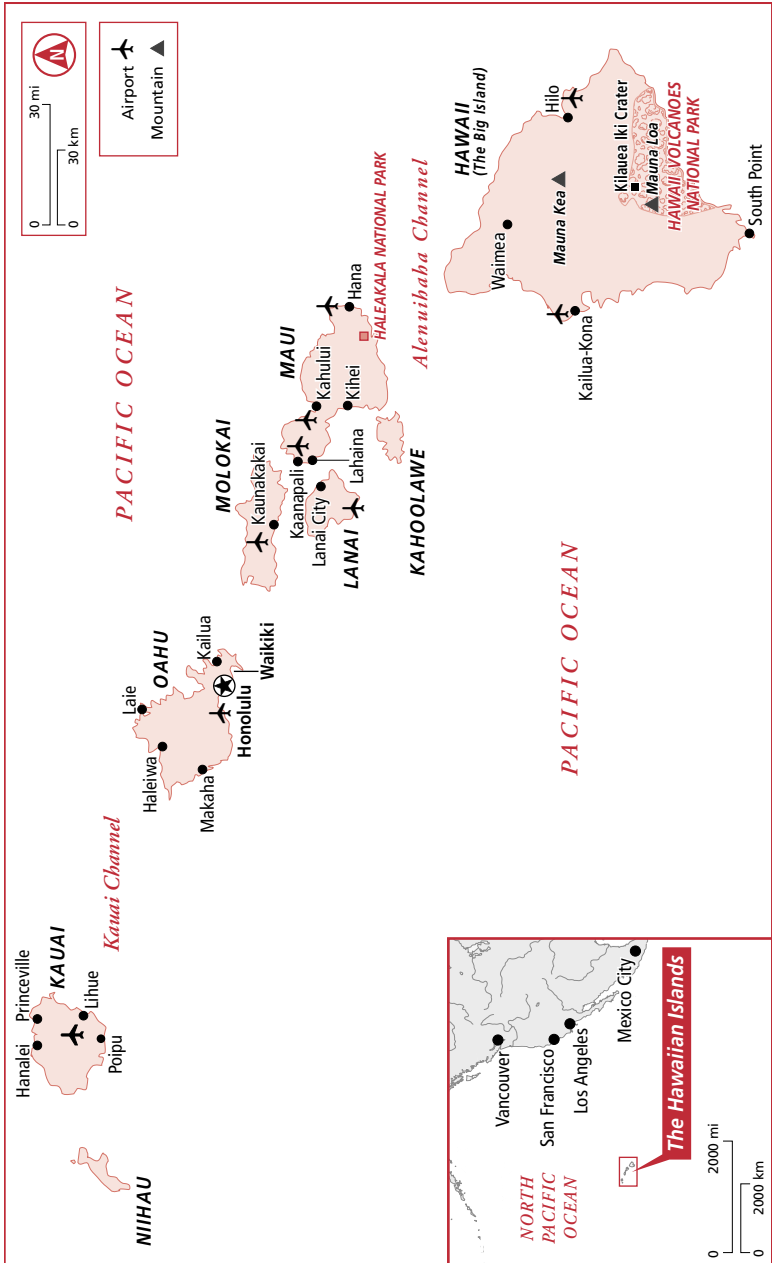
To have the absolute best experiences on Oahu, be prepared for a different culture, language, cuisine, and way of doing things. Slow down—you’re on an island that operates on its own schedule. To really experience Oahu, we recommend the following:

- **Get out on the Water:** You’ll take home memories of an emerald island rising out of the cobalt sea with white wispy clouds set against an azure sky, or the Waikiki shoreline colored by the setting sun. There are many different boats to choose from, ranging from tiny kayaks to 100-foot sight-seeing vessels, even state-of-the-art boats guaranteed to prevent seasickness. See chapter 6 for details on all kinds of cruises and watersports.
- **Plunge under the Water:** Don mask, fins, and snorkel and dive into the magical world beneath the surface, where clouds of colorful tropical fish flit by, craggy old turtles lumber along, and tiny marine creatures hover over exotic corals. Can’t swim? Take one of the many submarines or semi-submersibles. If you come to

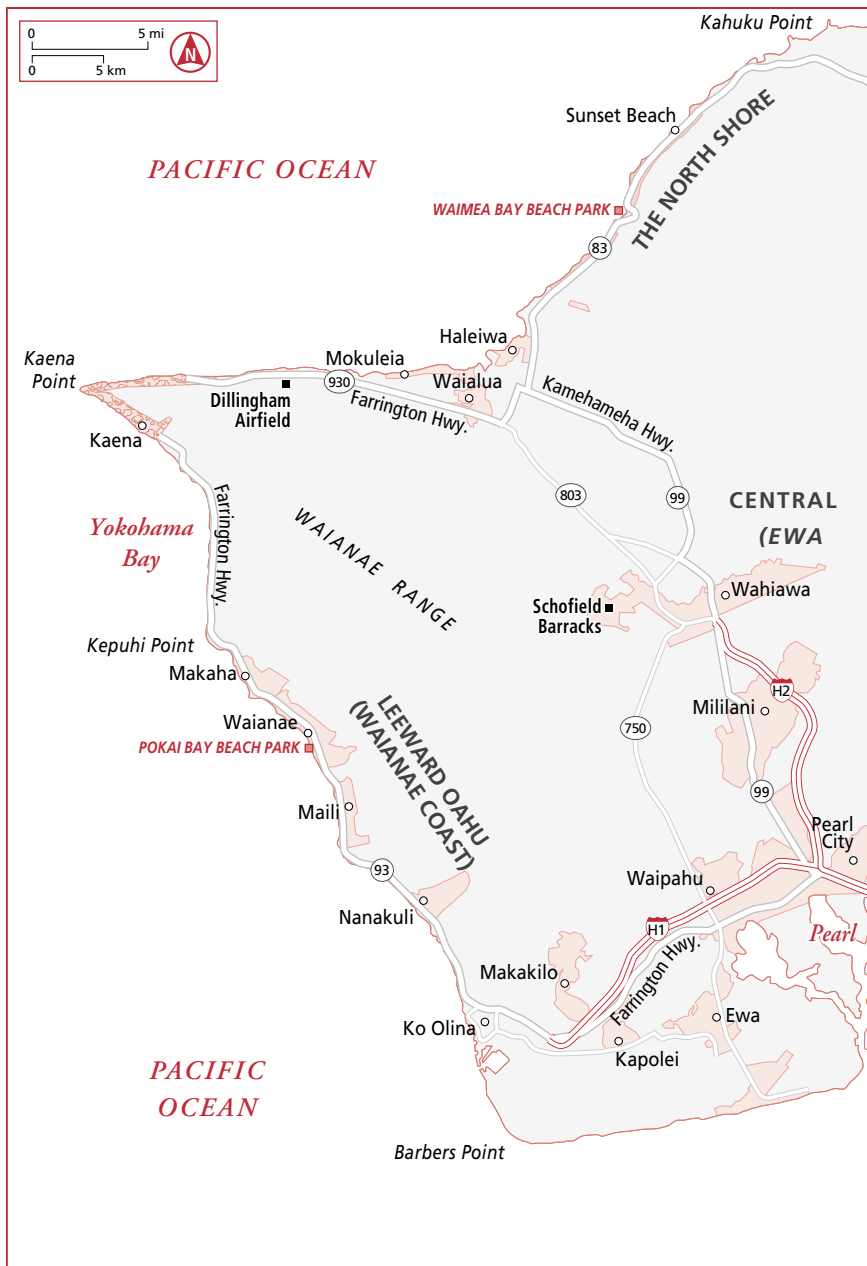
Hawaii and ignore the underwater world, you’re missing half of what makes up this paradise. See chapter 6.

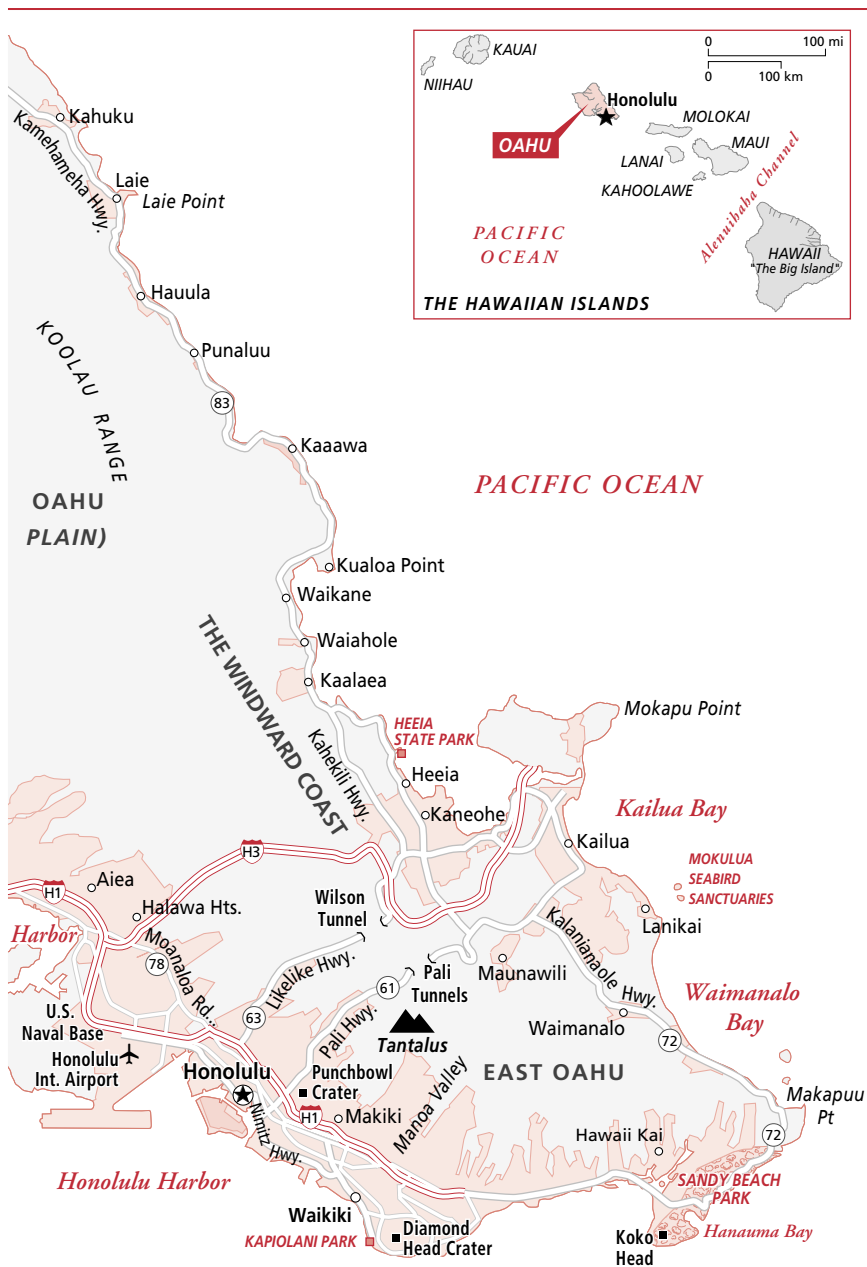
- **Meet Local Folks:** If you go to Hawaii and see only people like the ones back home, you might as well stay home. Extend yourself, leave the resorts and tourist quarters, go out and learn about Hawaii and its people. Just smile and say “Howzit?” which means “How’s it going?”—and you’ll usually make a new friend. Oahu is remarkably cosmopolitan; every ethnic group in the world seems to be here. It’s fascinating to discover the varieties of food, culture, language, and customs.
- **Drive to the North Shore:** Just an hour’s drive from Honolulu, the North Shore is another world: a pastoral, rural setting with magnificent beaches and a slower way of life. During the winter months, stop and watch the professionals surf the monster waves. See chapter 7.
- **Watch the Hula:** This is Hawaii, so you have to experience the hula. A hula performance is a popular way for visitors to get a taste of traditional

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Oahu





Hawaiian culture. For a more genuine Hawaiian hula experience, catch the hula *halau* performed Monday through Friday at 1pm at the **Bishop Museum**. See chapter 7.

- **Experience a Turning Point in America's History:** The United States could no longer turn its back on World War II after December 7,

1941, the day that Japanese warplanes bombed Pearl Harbor. Standing on the deck of the USS *Arizona* Memorial, which straddles the eternal tomb for the 1,177 sailors and Marines trapped below deck when the battleship sank in 9 minutes, is a moment you'll never forget. See chapter 7.

2 The Best Beaches

See chapter 6 for complete details on all these beaches and their facilities.

- **Waikiki Beach:** This famous stretch of sand is the spot that originally put Hawaii on the tourist map. No beach anywhere is so widely known or so universally sought as this narrow, 1½-mile-long crescent of soft sand at the foot of a string of high-rise hotels. Home to the world's longest-running beach party, Waikiki attracts nearly five million visitors a year from every corner of the planet. In high season, it's packed towel-to-towel, but there's no denying the beauty of Waikiki.
- **Lanikai Beach:** Hidden, off the beaten tourist path, this beach on the windward side has a mile of powder-soft sand and water that's safe for swimming. It's the perfect isolated spot for a morning of swimming and relaxation. With the prevailing trade winds, it's also excellent for sailing and windsurfing. Sun-worshippers should arrive in the morning, as the shadow of the Koolau Mountains blocks the sun's rays in the afternoon.
- **Kailua Beach:** Imagine a 30-acre public park with a broad, grassy area with picnic tables, a public boat ramp, restrooms, a pavilion, a volleyball court, and food stands. Add a wide, sandy beach, great for diving, swimming, sailing, snorkeling, and board- and windsurfing, and you've got Kailua Beach, which is tops on

the windward side of the island. On weekends, local families consider it *the* place to go. Weekdays, you practically have it all to yourself.

- **Kahana Bay Beach Park:** With salt-and-pepper sand, a crescent-shaped beach protected by ironwoods and *kamani* trees and, as a backdrop, a lush junglelike valley interrupted only by jagged cliffs, you'd swear this beach was in Tahiti or Bora Bora. Kahana offers great swimming (even safe for children), good fishing, and perfect conditions for kayaking. Combine that with picnic areas, camping, and hiking trails, and you have one of the best beaches on the island.
- **Malaekahana Beach:** If you'd like to venture back to Hawaii before jet planes brought millions of people to Oahu, back to the days when there were few footprints on the sand, then go north to the romantic wooded beach park at Malaekahana. This is a place to sit in quiet solitude or to beachcomb along the shore. There's good swimming most of the time, and good snorkeling when it's calm, but no lifeguard. Surprisingly, very few visitors come to Malaekahana—one of the best beaches on Oahu, it's a true find.
- **Sunset Beach:** Surfers around the world know this site famous for its spectacular winter surf—the waves

can be huge, thundering peaks reaching 15 to 20 feet. In the summer months, Sunset calms down and becomes a safe swimming beach. It's a great place to people-watch year-round, as you'll spot everybody from wannabe *Baywatch* babes to King Kong surfers.

- **Waimea Bay:** Here is one of Oahu's most dramatic beaches. During much of the winter—October to April—huge waves come pounding in, creating strong rip currents. Even expert surfers think twice when confronted with 30-foot waves that crash on the shore with the force of a runaway locomotive. It's hard to believe that during

the summer this same bay is glassy and calm—a great place for swimming, snorkeling, and diving. Oh, and by the way, despite what the Beach Boys croon in “Surfin’ USA” (Why-a-mee-ah), it's pronounced Why-may-ah.

- **Pokai Bay:** If you dream of a powdered-sugar sand beach, a place you can swim, snorkel, and probably be the only one on the beach (on weekdays), try this off-the-beaten-path shoreline. Surrounded by a reef, the waters inside are calm enough for children and offer excellent snorkeling. Come with aloha spirit and a respect for local customs—the residents here don't see too many visitors.

3 The Best Snorkeling & Diving Sites

A different Hawaii greets anyone with a mask, snorkel, and fins. Under the sea, you'll find schools of brilliant tropical fish, slow-moving green sea turtles, darting game fish, slack-jawed moray eels, and prehistoric-looking coral. It's a kaleidoscope of color and wonder. For more on exploring Oahu's underwater world, see chapter 6.

- **Hanauma Bay:** It can get very crowded, but—for clear, warm, calm waters, an abundance of fish that are so friendly they'll swim right up to your face mask, a beautiful setting, and easy access—there's no place like Hanauma Bay. Just wade in waist deep and look down to see more than 50 species of reef and inshore fish common to Hawaiian waters. Snorkelers hug the safe, shallow inner bay—it's really like swimming in an outdoor aquarium. Serious, experienced divers shoot “the slot,” a passage through the reef, to gain access to Witch's Brew, a turbulent cove, and other outer-reef experiences.
- **Wreck of the *Mahi*:** Oahu is a wonderful place to scuba dive, especially

for those interested in wreck diving. One of the more famous wrecks in Hawaii is the *Mahi*, a 185-foot former minesweeper, which is easily accessible just south of Waianae. Abundant marine life makes it a great place to shoot photos—schools of lemon butterflyfish and *ta'ape* are so comfortable with divers and photographers that they practically pose. Eagle rays, green sea turtles, manta rays, and white-tipped sharks occasionally cruise by, and eels peek out from the wreck.

- **Kahuna Canyon:** One of the most magical summer dive spots is Kahuna Canyon. Walls rise from the ocean floor to create the illusion of an underwater Grand Canyon. Inside the canyon, crab, octopi, slipper, and spiny lobsters abound (be aware that taking them in the summer is illegal), and giant trevally, parrotfish, and unicorn tangs congregate. Outside, you're likely to see the occasional shark in the distance.
- **Shark's Cove:** Braver snorkelers might want to head to Shark's Cove,

on the North Shore just off Kamehameha Highway, between Haleiwa and Pupukea. Sounds risky, we know, but we've never seen or heard of any sharks in this cove; and in summer this big, lava-edged pool is one of Oahu's best snorkeling spots. Waves splash over the natural lava grotto and cascade like waterfalls into the pool full of tropical fish. Deep-sea caves to explore are to the right of the cove.

- **Kapiolani Park Beach:** In the center of this beach park, a section known as Queen's Beach or Queen's Surf Beach, between the Natatorium and the Waikiki Aquarium, is great for snorkeling. I prefer the reef in front of the Aquarium because it has easy access to the sandy shoreline and the waters are usually calm. Bonus: it's right next door to the Aquarium in case you see any flora or fauna you would like more information about.

4 The Best Golf Courses

Oahu is golf country, with 5 municipal, 9 military, and 20 private courses to choose from. The courses range from 9-hole municipals, perfect for beginners, to championship courses that stump even the pros. See chapter 6 for complete details.

- **Ko Olina Golf Club** (☎ 808/676-5309): *Golf Digest* named this beautiful 6,867-yard, par-72 course one of "America's Top 75 Resort Courses" when it opened in 1992. The rolling fairways and elevated tees and a few too many water features (always where you don't want them) will definitely improve your game or humble your attitude.
- **Turtle Bay Resort** (☎ 808/293-8574): Of the two courses to choose from here, we recommend the 18-hole **Arnold Palmer Course** (formerly the Links at Kuilima), designed by Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay. They never meant for golfers to get off too easy—this is a challenging course. The front 9 holes, with rolling terrain, only a few trees, and lots of wind, play like a course on the British Isles. The back 9 holes have narrower, tree-lined fairways and water. In addition to ocean views, the course circles Puna-hoolapa Marsh, a protected wetland for endangered Hawaiian waterfowl.

- **Makaha Resort Golf Club** (☎ 808/695-7111 or 808/695-5239): Readers of *Honolulu* named this challenging course Oahu's best, and in 2002 the readers of *Golfweek* rated it in Hawaii's top 10. An hour's drive from the crowds of Honolulu, this William Bell-designed course is in Makaha Valley on the island's leeward side. Incredibly beautiful, sheer, 1,500-foot volcanic walls tower over the course, and swaying palm trees and bright bougainvillea surround it; an occasional peacock even struts across the fairways. "I was distracted by the beauty" is a great excuse for your score at day's end.
- **Olomana Golf Links** (☎ 808/259-7926): This gorgeous course in Waimanalo is on the other side of the island from Waikiki. The low-handicap golfer may not find this course difficult, but the striking views of the craggy Koolau mountain ridges are worth the greens fees alone. The par-72, 6,326-yard course is popular with local residents and visitors. The course starts off a bit hilly on the front 9, but flattens out by the back 9. The back 9 have their own special surprises, including tricky water hazards.

5 The Best Walks

The weather on Oahu is usually sunny, with trade winds providing cooling breezes—perfect for a walk. Below are our favorites, from city to trail.

- **Diamond Head Crater:** Most everyone can make this moderate walk to the summit of Hawaii's most famous landmark. Kids love the top of the 760-foot volcanic cone, where they have 360-degree views of Oahu up the leeward coast from Waikiki. The 1.4-mile round-trip takes about an hour. See chapter 6.
- **Makiki–Manoa Cliff Trails:** A 15-minute drive from downtown, this walk passes through a rainforest and along a ridgetop with nonstop views. The somewhat strenuous loop trail is one you'll never forget, but it's more than 6 miles long, gains 1,260 feet in elevation, and takes about 3 hours to finish. The views of the city and the shoreline are spectacular. See chapter 6.

- **Manoa Falls Trail:** This easy .75-mile (one-way) hike is terrific for families; it takes less than an hour to reach idyllic Manoa Falls. The often-muddy trail follows Waihi Stream and meanders through the forest reserve past guava and mountain apple trees and wild ginger. The forest is moist and humid and inhabited by nothing more dangerous than giant blood-thirsty mosquitoes. See chapter 6.
- **Chinatown:** Honolulu's Chinatown appeals to the senses: The pungent aroma of Vietnamese *pho* mingles with the sweet scent of burning incense; vendors and shoppers speak noisily in the open market; retired men talk story over games of mah-jongg; and the constant buzz of traffic all contribute to the cacophony of sounds. No trip to Honolulu is complete without a visit to this exotic, historic district. See chapter 7.

6 The Best Views

- **Puu Ualakaa State Park:** Watching the sun set into the Pacific from a 1,048-foot hill named after a sweet potato is actually much more romantic than it sounds. *Puu Ualakaa* translates into "rolling sweet potato hill," which refers to how the early Hawaiians harvested the crop. Don't miss the sweeping panoramic views, which extend from Diamond Head across Waikiki and downtown Honolulu, over the airport and Pearl City, all the way to the Waianae range. Catch great photo ops during the day, romantic sunset views in the evening, and starry skies at night. See chapter 7.
- **Nuuanu Pali Lookout:** Oahu's best-looking side, the Windward Coast, can be seen in its full glory from the Nuuanu Pali Lookout, a gusty perch

set amid jagged cliffs piercing the puffy white clouds that go racing by. 1,000 feet below, the island is a carpet of green that runs to an azure Pacific dotted by tiny offshore islets. You'll feel like you're standing on the edge of the world. See chapter 7.

- **Diamond Head Crater:** The view from atop this world-famous 720-foot-tall sleeping volcano is not to be missed. The 360-degree view from Koko Crater to Barbers Point and the Waianae mountains is worth the 560-foot hike. See chapter 6.
- **Lanikai Beach:** This is one of the best places on Oahu to greet the sunrise. Watch the sky slowly move from pitch black to burnt orange as the sun begins to rise over the two tiny offshore islands of Mokulua. This is a

five-senses experience: birds singing the sun up; a gentle breeze on your face; the taste of salt in the air; the smell of the ocean, the sand, and the fragrant flowers nearby; and the kaleidoscope of colors as another day dawns. See chapter 6.

- **Puu O Mahuka Heiau:** Once the largest sacrificial temple on Oahu, Puu O Mahuka Heiau is now a state

historic site. Located on a 300-foot bluff, the *heiau* encompasses some 5 acres. Hawaiians still come here to pray—you may see offerings such as *ti* leaves, flowers, and fruit. Don't disturb the offerings or walk on the stones—it's very disrespectful. The view from this bluff is awe-inspiring, from Waimea Bay all the way to Kaena Point. See chapter 7.

7 The Best Adventures for Thrill-Seekers

See chapter 6 for details on these and many other adventures.

- **Soar in Silence in a Glider:** Soaring through silence on gossamer-like wings with a panoramic view of Oahu is an unforgettable experience. Glider rides are available at Dillingham Air Field, in Mokuleia, on Oahu's North Shore. The glider is towed behind a plane; at the right altitude, the tow is dropped, and you (and the glider pilot) are left to soar in the thermals.
- **Surf Waikiki in a Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe:** It's summertime and there's a South Pacific swell rolling into Waikiki from Tahiti; here's your chance to try surfing—in a Hawaiian outrigger canoe. Numerous beach concessions on Waikiki Beach offer the chance to paddle an outrigger canoe and surf back into Waikiki. Not only do you get a great view of the beach from offshore, but the thrill of actually catching a wave and gliding back into shore.
- **Float on the Thermals on a Tandem Hang Glider:** See things from a bird's-eye view (literally) as you and an instructor float high above Oahu on a tandem hang glider.

- **Leap into the Ocean:** Even though all the signs say DANGEROUS, STAY OFF THE ROCKS, a favorite pastime on Oahu is climbing the stone precipice at Waimea Beach Park and leaping into the ocean. This is for experienced swimmers in summer only, as the thundering winter waves drive everyone from the sea, except the professional surfers and the very, very stupid.
- **Venture into the Deep:** It's Hawaii—you have to see what's under the waves. Try scuba diving; you can enjoy a "scuba experience" with absolutely no previous diving experience. Here's your opportunity to glide weightlessly through the ocean while you admire the multicolored marine creatures.
- **Eyeball-to-eyeball with a Shark:** You're 4 miles out from land, which is just a speck on the horizon, with hundreds of feet of open ocean. Suddenly from out of the blue depths a shape emerges: the sleek, pale shadow of a 6-foot-long gray reef shark, followed quickly by a couple of 10-foot-long Galápagos sharks. Within a few heartbeats, you're surrounded by sharks on all sides. Do you panic? No, you are on the North Shore Shark Adventure.

8 The Best Places to Discover the Real Oahu

Oahu isn't just any other beach destination. It has a wonderfully rich, ancient history and culture, and people who are

worth getting to know. If you want to meet the "local" folks who live on Oahu, check out the following:

- **Watch the Ancient Hawaiian Sport of Outrigger Canoe Paddling:** From February to September, on weekday evenings and weekend days, hundreds of canoe paddlers gather at Ala Wai Canal and practice the Hawaiian sport of canoe paddling. Find a comfortable spot at Ala Wai Park, next to the canal, and watch this ancient sport come to life. See the Calendar of Events in chapter 2, “Planning Your Trip to Oahu.”
- **Attend a Hawaiian-Language Church Service: Kawaiahao Church** (☎ 808/522-1333) is the Westminster Abbey of Hawaii; the vestibule is lined with portraits of the Hawaiian monarchy, many of whom were coronated in this very building. The coral church is a perfect setting to experience an all-Hawaiian service, held every Sunday at 9am, complete with Hawaiian song. See p. 197.
- **Buy a Lei from Vendors in Chinatown:** A host of cultural sights and experiences are to be had in Honolulu’s Chinatown. Wander through this several-square-block area with its jumble of exotic shops offering herbs, Chinese groceries, and acupuncture services. Before you leave, be sure to check out the lei sellers on Maunakea Street (near N. Hotel St.), where Hawaii’s finest leis go for as little as \$3.50. See chapter 7 for neighborhood walking tours and details on where to buy leis.
- **Observe the Fish Auction:** There is nothing else quite like the **Honolulu Fish Auction** at the United Fishing Agency, Pier 38, 1131 N. Nimitz Hwy., Honolulu (☎ 808/536-2148). Fishermen bring their fresh catch in at 5:30am (sharp) Monday through Saturday, and the small group of buyers bids on all manner of fish. The auction lasts until all the fish are sold. It is well worth getting up early to enjoy this unique cultural experience. See the Fish Markets section of chapter 8.
- **Get a Bargain at the Aloha Flea Market:** For 50¢ admission, it’s an all-day show at the Aloha Stadium parking lot, where more than 1,000 vendors sell everything from junk to jewels. Go early for the best deals. Open Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday from 6am to 3pm. See the box “Favorite Oahu Experiences,” in chapter 6.

9 The Best Luxury Hotels & Resorts

- **Halekulani** (☎ 800/367-2343 or 808/923-2311; www.halekulani.com): Halekulani translates into “House Befitting Heaven,” an apt description for this luxury resort spread over 5 acres of prime Waikiki beachfront property. When money is no object, this is the place to stay. The atmosphere of elegance envelops you as soon as you step into the lobby. Even if you don’t stay here, drop by at sunset to sip on a mai tai at the gracious House Without a Key and listen to Sonny Kamehele sing Hawaiian songs as a graceful hula dancer sways to the music. See p. 89.
- **Embassy Suites Hotel–Waikiki Beach Walk** (☎ 800/EMBASSY or 808/921-2345; www.waikikibeach.embassysuites.com): Just opened in 2007, this ultra-luxurious one- and two-bedroom-suite hotel chain (known for its complimentary, all-you-can-eat, cooked-to-order breakfast and evening manager’s cocktail reception) has one of the most central locations in Waikiki and is loaded with amenities. When you pencil it out, it’s actually a good “deal” for families. See p. 88.
- **Royal Hawaiian** (☎ 800/325-3535 or 808/923-7311; www.sheraton.com):

Hidden in the jungle of concrete buildings that make up Waikiki is an oasis of verdant gardens and a shockingly pink building. The Royal Hawaiian Hotel, affectionately called the “pink palace,” is known around the world as a symbol of luxury. Since the first day it opened in 1927, the Royal has been the place to stay for celebrities, including Clark Gable, Shirley Temple, President Franklin Roosevelt, the Beatles, Kevin Costner, and others. Its location is one of the best on Waikiki Beach. See p. 91.

- **Moana Surfrider Hotel, A Westin Resort** (☎ 800/325-3535 or 808/922-3111; www.moana-surfrider.com): Step back in time to Old Hawaii at the grand Moana Surfrider Hotel, built in 1901. Entry is through the original colonial portecochere, past the highly polished wooden front porch, with white wooden rocking chairs, and into the perfectly restored lobby with its detailed millwork and intricate plaster detailing on the ceiling. Time seems to slow down here, tropical flowers arranged in huge sprays are everywhere, and everyone in the lobby seems to be smiling. At check-in, guests are greeted with a lei and a glass of fruit juice. This is a hotel not only with class, but also with historic charm. See p. 90.

- **W Honolulu** (☎ 800/782-9488 or 808/922-1700; www.whotels.com): It's expensive, but worth every penny, to be totally pampered in a low-key, elegantly casual hotel that caters to the business traveler but takes excellent care of vacationers, too. The W Honolulu can be summed up in a nutshell by the button on your room phone that says “whatever/when-ever.” That's what we call service! If you're craving peace and quiet—away from the crowds of Waikiki but close

enough (about a 15-min. walk) to shops and restaurants—this is a perfect location. See p. 104.

- **Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa** (☎ 800/HILTONS or 808/949-4321; www.hiltonhawaiianvillage.com): Waikiki's biggest resort, this place is so big it even has its own post office. Some 3,000 rooms are spread over 20 acres with tropical gardens, thundering waterfalls, exotic wildlife, award-winning restaurants, nightly entertainment, two brand-new state-of-the-art spas, 100 different shops, children's programs, fabulous ocean activities, a secluded lagoon, three swimming pools, Hawaiian cultural activities, two minigolf courses, and Waikiki Beach. You could spend your entire vacation here and never leave the property. See p. 85.

- **Kahala Hotel & Resort** (☎ 800/367-2525 or 808/739-8888; www.kahalaresort.com): Since 1964, when Conrad Hilton first opened this hotel as a place for rest and relaxation, far from the crowds of Waikiki, the Kahala has always been rated one of Hawaii's premier hotels. A venerable Who's Who of celebrities have stayed at the hotel, including every president since Richard Nixon, a host of rock stars from the Rolling Stones to the Beach Boys, and a range of actors from John Wayne to Bette Midler. The Kahala is a completely up-to-date resort, with exotic Asian touches, but it retains the grace and elegance of a softer, gentler time in the islands. See p. 111.

- **J. W. Marriott Ihilani Resort & Spa at Ko Olina Resort** (☎ 800/626-4446 or 808/679-0079; www.ihilani.com): Located in the quiet of Oahu's west coast, 25 minutes west of Honolulu International Airport—and worlds away from the tourist scene of

Waikiki—the Ihilani (which means “heavenly splendor”) is the first hotel in the 640-acre Ko Olina Resort. It features a luxury spa and fitness center, plus championship tennis and golf. The plush rooms are spacious, with huge lanais and lagoon or ocean views from some 85% of the units. With luxury like this, who misses Waikiki? See p. 117.

- **Turtle Bay Resort** (Oahu; ☎ 800/203-3650 or 808/293-6000; www.turtlebayresort.com): After a \$35 million renovation, this once sterling

hotel is back. The resort is spectacular: an hour's drive from Waikiki, but eons away in its country feeling. Sitting on 808 acres, Turtle Bay is loaded with activities and 5 miles of shoreline with secluded white-sand coves. All the rooms have great views, but the separate beach cottages are positioned right on the ocean (the views alone are worth the price). The 42 bungalows have been renovated (hardwood floors, poster beds with feather comforters) and have their own check-in and private concierge. See p. 115.

10 The Best Bargain Accommodations

It is possible to stay on Oahu without having to take out a second mortgage. Here are some options.

- **The Breakers** (☎ 800/426-0494 or 808/923-3181; www.breakers-hawaii.com): Full of old-fashioned Hawaiian aloha—and it's only steps from the sands of Waikiki—this two-story hotel has a friendly staff and a loyal following. Each of the tastefully decorated, large rooms comes with a lanai and a kitchenette, with prices starting at \$125. See p. 96.
- **Hawaiiana Hotel** (☎ 800/367-5122 or 808/923-3811; www.hawaiiana-hotelatwaikiki.com): “The spirit of Old Hawaii”—The hotel's slogan says it all. This intimate low-rise hotel has guest rooms that feature kitchenettes, two beds (a double and a single, or a queen and a sofa bed), a view of the gardens, two swimming pools, and a location a block from the beach. Rooms start at \$125. See p. 97.
- **Royal Grove Hotel** (☎ 808/923-7691; www.royalgrovehotel.com): This small, family-owned hotel is a great bargain for frugal travelers. What you get here is old-fashioned aloha in cozy accommodations along the lines of Motel 6—basic and clean. And you can't do better for the price—this has

to be *the* bargain of Waikiki. For \$47 (about the same price a couple would pay to stay in a private room at the hostel in Waikiki), you get a room in the older Mauka Wing, with a double bed or two twins, plus a kitchenette with refrigerator and stove. See p. 108.

- **Ke Iki Beach Bungalows** (☎ 866/638-8229 or 808/638-8829; www.keikibeach.com): Snuggled on a large lot with its own 200-foot stretch of white-sand beach between two legendary North Shore surf spots (Waimea Bay and Banzai Pipeline), this collection of studio, one-, and two-bedroom cottages offers affordable family bungalows with complete kitchens—if you can live without being right on the ocean, the garden units start at \$120. See p. 116.
- **Rainbow Inn** (☎ 808/488-7525): This private tropical garden studio has panoramic views of Pearl Harbor, the entire south coast of Oahu, and the Waianae and Koolau mountains. A large deck and full-size pool are just outside your door. Rainbow Inn is a short drive from all of Oahu's attractions, yet far enough away to provide you with lots of peace and quiet. At \$115 a night, this is one of Oahu's best deals. See p. 110.

11 The Best Resort Spas

- **Abhasa Waikiki Spa in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel** (☎ 808/922-8200; www.abhasa.com): This contemporary spa, spread out over 7,000 square feet, concentrates on natural, organic treatments in a soothing atmosphere, where the smell of eucalyptus wafts through the air. Experience everything from the latest aromatherapy, to thalassotherapy (soaking in a sweet-smelling hot bath), to shiatsu massages, but their specialty is a cold-laser, anti-aging treatment that promises to give you a revitalized face in just 30 minutes. See p. 91.
- **Ihilani Spa at the J. W. Marriott Ihilani** (☎ 800/626-4446; www.ihilani.com): An oasis by the sea, this 35,000-square-foot facility, filled with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking lush tropical plants, is truly a spa in the literal sense of the word, meaning “health by water.” The modern, multistoried spa combines Hawaiian products with traditional therapies to produce some of the best water treatments in the state. You’ll also find a fitness center, tennis courts, and aerobic and stretching classes. See p. 117.
- **Serenity Spa Hawaii** (Outrigger Reef on the Beach ☎ 808/926-2882; www.serenityspahawaii.com): This 5,000-square-foot spa has a very extensive menu of treatments from Hawaiian lomilomi to hot lava rock to the very popular “Golden Touch” massage, which helps you get a glowing tan with applications of skin conditioners, tanning accelerators, and SPF sunscreen. See p. 94.
- **Spa Suites at the Kahala** (☎ 808/739-8938): The Kahala has taken the concept of relaxation to a new level with former garden-view guest rooms converted to individual spas, each with a glass-enclosed shower, private changing area, infinity-edge deep soaking Jacuzzi tub, and personal relaxation area. No detail is overlooked, from the warm foot bath when you arrive to the refreshing tea served on your personal enclosed garden lanai after your treatment. See p. 111.
- **SpaHalekulani**, Halekulani Hotel, Waikiki (☎ 808/923-2311; www.halekulani.com): Focusing on the healing traditions of the Pacific islands—Samoa, Tonga, and Tahiti, as well as Hawaii—this boutique oasis in Waikiki’s most luxurious hotel defines pampered comfort in a nurturing setting designed to relax even the most tense. From the time you step into the elegantly appointed, intimate spa to the last whiff of fragrant maile, their signature scent, this is truly a “heavenly” experience. Try something unique, like the Polynesian Nonu, a Samoan-inspired massage using stones and the nonu plant, or the Ton Ton Amma, a Japanese amma massage with ton-ton pounders. See p. 89.
- **Turtle Bay Resort** (☎ 800/203-3650; www.turtlebayresort.com): This Zen-like spa positioned on the ground floor facing the ocean has six treatment rooms, a meditation waiting area, an outdoor workout space, and a complete fitness center and private elevator to rooms on the second floor that are reserved for guests getting spa treatments. For the ultimate in massages, book the oceanside cabana and listen to the gentle lull of the waves as they roll into the North Shore. See p. 115.
- **Waikiki Plantation Spa**, Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach (☎ 808/926-2880; www.waikikiplantationspa.com): Located in the penthouse of

Pampering in Paradise

Spa-goers in Hawaii look for a sense of place, steeped in the culture. They want to hear the sound of the ocean, smell the salt air, and feel the caress of the warm breeze. They want to experience Hawaiian products and traditional treatments that can only be found in the islands. And now they can.

With so much to offer, the spas of Hawaii, once nearly exclusively patronized by women, are now attracting more male clients. Special massages are offered for children and pregnant women, and some spas have programs to nurture and relax brides on their big day.

Today's Hawaiian spas offer a wide diversity of treatments. Forget plain, ordinary massages—now you can try Hawaiian lomilomi, Swedish, aromatherapy (with sweet-smelling oils), craniosacral (massaging the head), shiatsu (no oil, just deep thumb pressure on acupuncture points), Thai (another oil-less massage involving stretching), and hot stone (with heated, and sometimes cold, rocks). There are even side-by-side massages for couples. The truly decadent might try a duo massage—not one, but two massage therapists working on you at once.

Massages are just the beginning. Body treatments, for the entire body or for just the face, involve a variety of herbal wraps, masks, or scrubs using a range of ingredients from seaweed to salt to mud, with or without accompanying aromatherapy, lights, and music.

After you have been rubbed and scrubbed, most spas offer an array of water treatments—a sort of hydromassage in a tub with jets and an assortment of colored crystals, oils, and scents.

Those are just the traditional treatments. Most spas also offer a range of alternative health care procedures such as acupuncture and chiropractic, and other exotic treatments such as ayurvedic and siddha from India or reiki from Japan.

Once your body has been pampered, spas also offer a range of fitness facilities (weight-training equipment, racquetball, tennis, golf) and classes (yoga, aerobics, step, spinning, stretch, tai chi, kickboxing, aquacize). Several even offer adventure fitness packages (from bicycling to snorkeling). For the nonadventurous, most spas have salons, dedicated to hair- and nail-care and makeup.

If all this sounds a bit overwhelming, not to worry, all the spas in Hawaii have individual consultants who will help design an appropriate treatment program to fit your individual needs.

Of course, all this pampering doesn't come cheap. But to banish your tension and stress? The expense may be worth it. Massages are generally \$100 to \$135 for 50 minutes and \$145 to \$180 for 80 minutes; body treatments are in the \$100 to \$180 range; and alternative health-care treatments can be as high as \$150 to \$220.

the Outrigger on the Beach hotel and overlooking the heart of Waikiki is this boutique spa with a “island-style” menu of treatments from massages to facials to body wraps and polishes, all

using the spa’s own private label of lotions and oils. An express elevator zips you up to the 17th floor, where a lanai allows you to relax in total serenity. See p. 90.

12 The Best Restaurants

- **Alan Wong’s Restaurant** (☎ 808/949-2526): One of Hawaii’s premiere chefs, Alan Wong specializes in absolutely the best Pacific Rim cuisine. His restaurant is always packed, although the ambience is limited and it’s located in a shopping mall in the suburbs—but for serious foodies this is heaven. Masterpieces at this shrine of Hawaii regional cuisine: warm California rolls made with salmon roe, wasabi, and Kona lobster instead of rice; luau lumpia with butterfish and kalua pig; and ginger-crusted fresh *onaga*. Opihi shooters and day-boat scallops in season are a must, while nori-wrapped tempura ahi is a perennial favorite. The menu changes daily, but the flavors never lose their sizzle. See p. 146.
- **Cassis Honolulu** (☎ 808/545-8100; www.cassishonolulu.com): In 2007, Hawaii’s top chef, George Mavro, opened this casual bistro that features many of the island-influenced dishes that he no longer serves at his upscale Chef Mavro Restaurant (see below) since he changes that menu every 3 months. The trendy eatery (packed at lunch) also has a very hip wine bar (featuring the wine pairings of the day). See p. 134.
- **Chef Mavro Restaurant** (☎ 808/944-4714): Honolulu is abuzz over the wine pairings and elegant cuisine of George Mavrothalassitis, the culinary wizard from Provence who turned La Mer (at the Halekulani) and Seasons (at the Four Seasons Resort Wailea) into temples of fine dining. He brought his award-winning

- signature dishes with him and continues to prove his ingenuity with dazzling a la carte and prix-fixe menus. See p. 146.
- **Kaka’ako Kitchen** (☎ 808/596-7488): If you’re in the market for a quick-and-healthy breakfast, lunch, or dinner at budget prices, here’s the place. It’s not fancy; in fact, the trademark Styrofoam plates, warehouse ambience, and home-style cooking are the hallmarks of this local favorite in the Ward Centre. The menu, which changes every 3 to 4 months, includes seared ahi sandwiches with *tobiko* (flying-fish roe) aioli for lunch; and a signature charbroiled ahi steak, beef stew, five-spice shoyu chicken, the very popular meatloaf, and other multi-ethnic entrees for dinner. See p. 138.
- **La Mer** (☎ 808/923-2311): This is Hawaii’s premier splurge restaurant, the oceanfront bastion of haute cuisine, a romantic, elegant, and expensive place where people dress up—not to be seen, but to match the ambience and food. It’s an open-sided room with views of Diamond Head and the sound of trade winds rustling the nearby coconut fronds. Award-winning chef Yves Garnier melds classical French influences with island-fresh ingredients. See p. 122.
- **Ola at Turtle Bay Resort** (☎ 808/293-0801; www.turtlebayresort.com): Even if you’re staying in Waikiki, plan a day at the beach on the North Shore and eat here for dinner. You will not regret it. First, the location—literally

on the sandy beach next door to the Turtle Bay Resort. Second, the restaurant is an open-air beach pavilion. But the best part is . . . the food! The menu is filled with creative selections (the ahi and lobster *poke* served with a wonton spoon) and some of the best food you will eat in Hawaii. See p. 155.

- **Olive Tree Cafe** (☎ 808/737-0303): This temple of Greek and Mediterranean delights is the quintessential neighborhood magnet—casual, bustling, and consistently great. Owner Savas Mojarad has a following of foodies, hipsters, artists, and all manner of loyalists who appreciate his integrity and generosity. Standards are always high, prices reasonable, the dishes fresh and homemade. Bring your own wine and sit down to fresh fish souvlakia, excellent marinated mussels, and sheep's cheese spanakopita. Mojarad even makes the yogurt for his famous yogurt-mint-cucumber sauce, the souvlakia's ticket to immortality. Don't miss the chicken saffron, a Tuesday special. See p. 152.

- **The Pineapple Room** (☎ 808/945-6573): Yes, it's in a department store, but it's Alan Wong, a culinary icon. The food is terrific, particularly anything with ahi (for example, the ahi meatloaf). The room features an open kitchen with a lava-rock wall and abundant natural light, but these are details in a room where food is king. The menu changes regularly, but keep an eye out for the ginger scallion shrimp scampi, nori-wrapped tempura salmon, and superb gazpacho made of yellow and red Waimea tomatoes. See p. 135.
- **Roy's Restaurant** (☎ 808/396-7697): Good food still reigns at this busy, noisy flagship Hawaii Kai dining room with the trademark open kitchen. Roy Yamaguchi's deft way with local ingredients, nostalgic ethnic preparations, and fresh fish makes his menu, which changes daily, a novel experience every time. Yamaguchi's special dinners with vintners are a Honolulu staple. See p. 152.

13 The Best Shopping

Products of Hawaii now merit their own festivals and trade shows throughout the year, and MADE IN HAWAII is a label to be touted. Here are a few places to score some finds.

- **Academy Shop** (in the Honolulu Academy of Arts; ☎ 808/523-8703): The recent expansion of the Honolulu Academy of Arts made a good thing even better. You'll find a stunning selection of art books, stationery, jewelry, basketry, beadwork, ikats, saris, ethnic fabrics, fiber vessels, accessories, and contemporary gift items representing the art and craft traditions of the world. See p. 244.
- **Avanti Fashion** (☎ 808/924-1668 and 808/922-2828): In authentic

prints from the 1930s and '40s reproduced on silk, Avanti aloha shirts and sportswear elevate tropical garb from high kitsch to high chic. Casual, comfortable, easily cared for, and light as a cloud, the silks look vintage but cost a fraction of collectibles' prices. The nostalgic treasures are available in retail stores statewide, but the best selection is in Waikiki. See p. 235.

- **Bailey's Antiques & Aloha Shirts** (☎ 808/734-7628): Bailey's has one of the largest vintage aloha-shirt collections in Honolulu, with prices ranging from inexpensive to sky-high. Old Levi's jeans, mandarin jackets, vintage vases, household items, shawls, purses, and an eye-popping

assortment of bark-cloth fabrics (the real thing, not repros) are among the mementos in this monumental collection. See p. 236.

- **Contemporary Museum Gift Shop** (☎ 808/523-3447): This gets our vote as the most beautiful setting for a gift shop, and its contents are a bonus: extraordinary art-related books, avant-garde jewelry, cards and stationery, home accessories, and gift items made by artists from Hawaii and across the country. Only the best is sold here. See p. 244.
- **Honolulu Chocolate Co.** (☎ 808/591-2997): Life's greatest pleasures are dispensed here with abandon: expensive gourmet chocolates made in Honolulu, Italian and Hawaiian biscotti, boulder-size chocolate "turtles," truffles, chocolate-covered coffee beans, and jumbo apricots in white and dark chocolate, to name a few. See p. 239.
- **Mana Hawaii** (☎ 808/923-2220): Authentically experience Hawaiian culture in the heart of Waikiki, where five successful Native Hawaiian partners have combined their talents into one mega-culture shop. You will find everything from Hawaiian books to Hawaiian-made gifts, clothing, jewelry,

and art, even hula implements and ukuleles, plus healing Hawaiian lotions and oils. See p. 245.

- **Native Books & Beautiful Things** (☎ 808/596-8885): Hawaii is the content and context in this shop of books, crafts, and gift items made by island artists and crafters. Musical instruments, calabashes, jewelry, leis, books, fabrics, clothing, home accessories, jams and jellies—they're all high quality and made in Hawaii—a celebration of Hawaiiana. See p. 245.
- **Silver Moon Emporium** (☎ 808/637-7710): This is an island-wide phenomenon, filled with the terrific finds of owner Lucie Talbot-Holu, who has a gift for discovering fashion treasures. Exquisite clothing and handbags, reasonably priced footwear, hats, jewelry, scarves, and a full gamut of other treasures pepper the attractive boutique. See p. 251.
- **Zuke's Magic & Jokes** (☎ 808/847-7788): You don't have to be Harry Potter to enter here, but you may feel like him. Open only on Saturday, amateur and professional magicians stream into this magic store to get the latest "tricks" and learn the art of magic. See p. 245.

14 The Best Spots for Sunset Cocktails

- **Sunset Lanai** (in the New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel; ☎ 808/923-1555): The hau tree shaded Robert Louis Stevenson as he wrote poems to Princess Kaiulani. Today it frames the ocean view from the Sunset Lanai, next to the Hau Tree Lanai restaurant. Sunset Lanai is the favorite watering hole of Diamond Head-area beachgoers who love Sans Souci Beach, the ocean view, the mai tais and sashimi platters, and the live music during weekend sunset hours. See p. 105.
- **House Without a Key** (in the Halekulani; ☎ 808/923-2311): Oahu's quintessential sunset oasis claims several unbeatable elements: It's outdoors on the ocean, with a view of Diamond Head, and it offers great hula and steel guitar music—and one of the best mai tais on the island. You know it's special when even jaded Honoluluans declare it their favorite spot for send-offs, reunions, and gorgeous sunsets. See p. 253.
- **Mai Tai Bar** (in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel; ☎ 808/923-7311): Perched a

few feet from the sand, this open-air bar boasts sweeping views of the South Shore and Waianae Mountains and one of the most pleasing views of Waikiki Beach. Surfers and paddlers ride the waves while the light turns golden and crowns Diamond Head with a halo. Sip a mighty mai tai while Carmen and Keith Haugen serenade you. See p. 253.

- **Duke's Canoe Club** (in the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel; ☎ 808/923-0711): It's crowded at sunset, but who can resist listening to the top Hawaiian musicians in this upbeat atmosphere a

few feet from the sands of Waikiki? Come in from the beach or from the street—it's always a party at Duke's. Entertainment here is tops, and it reaches a crescendo at sunset. See p. 256.

- **Jameson's by the Sea** (☎ 808/637-4336): The mai tais here are dubbed the best in Surf City, and the view, although not perfect, doesn't hurt either. Across the street from the harbor, this open-air roadside oasis is a happy stop for North Shore wave watchers and sunset-savvy sightseers. See p. 154.

15 The Best Oahu Websites

- **Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau** (www.gohawaii.com): An excellent, all-around guide to activities, tours, lodging, and events, plus a huge section on weddings and honeymoons. But keep in mind that only members of the HVCB are listed.
- **Planet Hawaii** (www.planet-hawaii.com): Click on "Island" for an island-by-island guide to activities, lodging, shopping, culture, the surf report, weather, and more. Mostly, you'll find short listings with links to companies' own websites. Click on "Hawaiian Eye" for live images from around the islands.
- **Internet Hawaii Radio** (www.hotspots.hawaii.com): A great way to get into the mood, this eclectic site features great Hawaiian music. You can order CDs and also purchase a respectable assortment of Hawaiian historical and cultural books.
- **Visit Oahu** (www.visit-oahu.com): An extensive guide to activities, dining, lodging, parks, shopping, and more, from the Oahu chapter of the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau.
- **The Hawaiian Language Website** (<http://hawaiianlanguage.com>):

This fabulous site not only has easy lessons on learning the Hawaiian language, but also a great cultural calendar, links to other Hawaiiana websites, a section on the hula, and lyrics and translations to Hawaiian songs.

- **The Pukas in Hawaii: The Short List to Hawaii Web Sites** (www.hawaiiradiotv.com/puka.html): A wonderful collection of links to all kinds of Hawaii websites, from radio stations playing Hawaiian music to the daily newspaper to where to find the cheapest gas.
- **Hawaii State Vacation Planner** (www.hshawaii.com): Helps you plan your trip using the advertisers supporting this private (not government) site.
- **State of Hawaii** (www.hawaii.gov): Features information regarding parks, experiences, and activities from hiking and golf to theater, sports, and culture.
- **City and County of Honolulu** (www.co.honolulu.hi.us): Everything you may want to know from the county government including what to see and do, camping permits, park information, historical and culture information, beach safety and more.