

How to Feel Like a Hawaii Family

Maybe the two of you visited Hawaii B.C. (Before Children), or maybe a trip to Hawaii has been the dream for years. There's no place on earth quite like this handful of sun-drenched mid-Pacific islands. The Hawaii of South Seas literature and Hollywood films really does exist. Here you'll find palm-fringed blue lagoons, lush rainforests, hidden gardens, cascading waterfalls, wild rivers running through rugged canyons, and volcanoes soaring 2 miles into the sky. And oh, those beaches—gold, red, black, and even green sands caressed by an endless surf. The possibilities for adventure—and relaxation—are endless. Each of the six main islands is distinct and infinitely complex. There's far too much to see and do on a 2-week vacation, which is why so many people return to the Aloha State year after year.

As a nearly lifelong Hawaii resident, I'm letting you in on some of the secrets that Hawaii families enjoy. We live here because of the beauty, culture, and lifestyle of these precious islands. You don't have to be rich to live in Hawaii (although, as my mother says, "it sure helps") to enjoy a quiet early-morning walk on the beach just as the sun lights up the turquoise water, to smell the sweet fragrance of just-blooming ginger, or to hear the thundering music of a waterfall. Hawaii can be a place that teaches your kids to enjoy the richness of their senses, from the vibrant colors of a rainbow to the smell of a bamboo forest just after an afternoon rainsquall.

Hawaii can also be a place of adventure, the opportunity for you and your children to try new things: Snorkel in warm tropical waters filled with neon-colored fish; coast down a dormant (but not extinct) volcano; silently glide over calm waters in a double kayak; or soar through the air, stopping to hover over an exploding volcano in a helicopter.

Even the word "Hawaii" conjures magic the world over, not only for the incredible beauty here but also for the culture and the lifestyle. This is a land founded by people who had immense respect for the island and the ocean. Their creed was a lifestyle of harmony and generous sharing. Millions of visitors flock to these islands every year because with all that's going on in the world today, they hunger for this harmony and generosity, which in Hawaii is referred to as the "aloha spirit."

All is not perfect in paradise. It is expensive in Hawaii: The islands sit in the middle of the Pacific, the most remote island chain in the world, and everything that is not grown or produced here has to be shipped or flown in—so be prepared to pay more. And despite being part of the United States, things are definitely done differently in Hawaii—that's why you've shelled out the money to give your family an opportunity to experience life here.

Part of raising a family is building memories that will last a lifetime. A trip to Hawaii will create memories not only of what you did, but of a lifestyle—the way people related to each other, the way the ocean smelled in the early morning, the way the stars glittered at night, the way the multicolored flowers looked in the full sun, and the time your family spent in a very special place.

When in Hawaii . . .

Hawaii loves travelers—they are the main industry, and a majority of Hawaii residents earn their living in the tourism industry or an industry closely connected to it. I love to pretend I'm a visitor when I travel around the state. Visitors are taken good care of and are treated like guests. Still, if you want to do as the Hawaiians do while you're in Hawaii, below are some helpful tips to help you blend in a little better:

- **Do not buy matching outfits.** It has always puzzled me that seemingly normal people come to Hawaii and feel that the entire family has to be dressed in a carbon-copy set of aloha wear: matching aloha shirts for the boys that perfectly match the baggy *muumuu* (Hawaiian-style dress) for the girls. Look around: Do you see troops of families in replica outfits? That's not to say that you can't outfit your family in aloha wear—just let each individual pick his or her own outfit.
- **Prepare for a variety of weather.** In addition to the shorts and T-shirts you throw in the suitcase, pack some clothes to keep you warm, especially if you plan to visit the mountains in Hawaii. Yes, even in summer, it is cold atop the mountains. At the ocean, after the sun sets, the temperature can drop and the wind can pick up. Whenever I'm at a sunset event on the ocean, I can always pick out the locals: They are the ones carrying sweaters because they know how the temperatures drop an hour after sunset.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

The purposes of this book are to help visitors get the most out of their trip to Hawaii and to update local residents who want a refresher on all the activities for families. You won't find a lot of historical information or social commentary here. What you will find are opinions on the best places for families to stay, restaurants that welcome children, and a range of activities for all ages. I have purposely left out many chain restaurants and shops that your hometown may already have. You can go to them anytime—while you're in Hawaii, try to do things unique to Hawaii.

There are lots of islands in Hawaii, and each is unique. Read through each island chapter before you decide which island will best suit your family. **Remember:** Do

not try to do more than one island a week; if you do, you'll have a vacation in interisland terminals instead of on beautiful beaches. The islands are far apart and it takes a full day to check out of your hotel, fly to another island, and check into a new hotel.

Once you decide which island you will explore, have a family planning session and choose the major things you want to see and do. Don't plan any more than one major activity a day, and leave at least a couple of days wide open. Pinpoint activities on a map—does your plan make sense or are you crisscrossing the island unnecessarily? If you're on Oahu and driving to the Polynesian Cultural Center, for example, perhaps you can plan a stop at the North Shore for a picnic lunch.

- **Drive with aloha.** Hawaiians probably drive slower than drivers elsewhere, give way to other drivers, and never, never (*never*) use horns to signal dissatisfaction with another driver. (The *only* time locals use their horns is to greet someone they know.) And one more thing: If you are sightseeing and driving slowly, look in your rearview mirror to see if you are holding up traffic—if so, please pull over and let the cars go by.
- **Be friendly.** Reach your hand out and greet everyone. Local residents say, “How-zit?” meaning “how are you?” Tell people your name and ask for theirs.
- **Get out of resort areas and explore.** Resorts are fabulous, but there is so much more to Hawaii. Rent a car and get out and drive. Stop along the way, talk to local residents, ask them what their favorite beach for snorkeling is, where they love to eat, and what they’d do if they had a day off.
- **Be appreciative.** Hawaii locals just love compliments. If you like the store, restaurant, activity, even your hotel room—tell the management. People in Hawaii are long on appreciation and admiration and short on criticism (even constructive criticism).
- **Smile.** You’re in Hawaii and it’s warm and beautiful—there’s a lot to smile about.

When you arrive, allow yourself, especially the kids, time to recover from jet lag. Not only is Hawaii 2,500 miles and two time zones from the U.S. West Coast (three time zones during daylight saving time), but there’s a huge change in climate and temperature. Plan nothing on the day you arrive, except checking into your hotel, maybe some beach time, an early

dinner (remember the time change), and an early bedtime. Once you’re ready to see the sights, be flexible.

So let’s get started with planning the vacation of your dreams. For those too excited to page through from beginning to end, this chapter highlights the very best Hawaii has to offer.

1 THE BEST HAWAII EXPERIENCES

- **Hitting the Beach:** A beach is a beach is a beach, right? Not in Hawaii. With 132 islets, shoals, and reefs, and a general coastline of 750 miles, Hawaii has beaches in all different shapes, sizes, and colors, including black. The variety on the six major islands is astonishing; you could go to a different beach every day for years and still not see them all. For the best of a spectacular bunch, see “The Best Beaches for Families,” later in this chapter.
- **Taking the Plunge:** Don mask, fin, and snorkel and explore the magical

world beneath the surface, where you'll find exotic corals and kaleidoscopic clouds of tropical fish; a sea turtle may even come over to check you out. Can't swim? That's no excuse—take one of the many submarine tours offered by **Atlantis Adventures** (☎ 800/548-6262; www.atlantisadventures.com) on Oahu, the Big Island, and Maui. See chapters 4, 5, and 6.

- **Meeting Local Folks:** If you go to Hawaii and see only people like the ones back home, you might as well not have come. Extend yourself—leave your hotel, go out and meet the locals, and learn about Hawaii and its people. Just smile and say, “How-zit?”—which means “How are you?” (“It’s good” is the usual response)—and you’ll usually make a new friend. Hawaii is remarkably cosmopolitan; every ethnic group in the world seems to be represented here. There’s a huge diversity of food, culture, language, and customs.
- **Feeling History Come Alive at Pearl Harbor** (Oahu): The United States could turn its back on World War II no longer after December 7, 1941, when Japanese warplanes bombed Pearl Harbor. Standing on the deck of the USS *Arizona* Memorial (☎ 808/422-0561; www.nps.gov/usar)—the eternal tomb of the 1,177 sailors and Marines trapped below when the battleship sank in just 9 minutes—is a moving experience you’ll never forget. Also in Pearl Harbor, you can visit the USS *Missouri* Memorial; World War II came to an end on the deck of this 58,000-ton battleship with the signing of the Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945. See p. 117.
- **Watching for Whales:** If you happen to be in Hawaii during humpback-whale season (roughly Dec–Apr), don’t miss the opportunity to see these gentle

giants. A host of boats—from small inflatables to high-tech, high-speed sailing catamarans—offer a range of whale-watching cruises on every island. One of my favorites is along the Big Island’s Kona coast, where **Captain Dan McSweeney’s Whale Watch Learning Adventures** (☎ 888/WHALE-76 [942-5376] or 808/322-0028; www.ilovewhales.com) takes you right to the whales year-round. (Pilot, sperm, false killer, melon-headed, pygmy killer, and beaked whales call Hawaii home even when humpbacks aren’t in residence.) A whale researcher for more than 25 years, Captain Dan frequently drops an underwater microphone or video camera into the depths so you can listen to whale songs and maybe actually see what’s going on. See p. 214.

- **Creeping Up to the Ooze** (Big Island): Kilauea volcano has been adding land to the Big Island continuously since 1983. If conditions are right, you can walk up to the red-hot lava and see it ooze along, or you can stand at the shoreline and watch with awe as 2,000°F (1,093°C) molten fire pours into the ocean. You can also take to the air in a helicopter and see the volcano goddess’s work from above. See “Hawaii Volcanoes National Park” under “Exploring the Big Island with Your Kids,” p. 203.
- **Greeting the Rising Sun from atop Haleakala** (Maui): Bundle up in warm clothing, fill a Thermos with hot chocolate, and drive to the summit to watch the sky turn from inky black to muted charcoal as a small sliver of orange light forms on the horizon. There’s something about standing at 10,000 feet, breathing in the rarefied air, and watching the first rays of sun streak across the sky. This is a mystical experience of the first magnitude. See “House of the Sun:

Haleakala National Park” under “Exploring Maui with Your Kids,” p. 270.

- **Taking a Day Trip to Lanai** (Maui): If you'd like to visit Lanai but have only a day to spare, consider taking a day trip. **Trilogy** (☎ 888/MAUI-800 [628-4800]; www.sailtrilogy.com) offers an all-day sailing, snorkeling, and whale-watching adventure. Trilogy is the only outfitter with rights to Hulopoe Beach, and the trip includes a minivan tour of the little isle (pop. 3,500). See p. 284. You can also take **Expeditions Lahaina/Lanai Ferry** (☎ 800/695-2624; www.go-lanai.com) from Maui to Lanai, then rent a four-wheel-drive vehicle from **Dollar Rent-A-Car** (☎ 800/588-7808) for a day of backcountry exploring and beach fun. See p. 285.
- **Soaring over the Na Pali Coast** (Kauai): This is the only way to see the spectacular, surreal beauty of Kauai. Your helicopter will dip low over razor-thin cliffs, flutter past sparkling waterfalls, and swoop down into the canyons and valleys of the fabled Na Pali Coast. The only problem is that there's too much beauty to absorb, and it all goes by in a rush. See “Helicopter Rides over Waimea Canyon & the Na Pali Coast” under “Exploring Kauai with Your Kids,” p. 380.
- **Watching Rainbows at a Waterfall:** Rushing waterfalls thundering downward into sparkling freshwater pools are some of Hawaii's most beautiful natural wonders. If you're on the Big Island, stop by **Rainbow Falls** (p. 203) in Hilo, or the spectacular 442-foot **Akaka Falls** (p. 199), just outside the city. On Maui, the road to Hana offers numerous viewing opportunities. At the end of the drive, you'll find **Oheo Gulch** (also known as the Seven Sacred Pools), with some of the most dramatic and accessible waterfalls on the islands. (See “Tropical Haleakala: Oheo Gulch at Kipahulu” under “Exploring Maui with Your Kids,” p. 277.) Kauai is loaded with waterfalls, especially along the North Shore and in the Wailua area, where you'll find 40-foot **Opaekaa Falls**, probably the best-looking drive-up waterfall on Kauai. (See “Wailua River State Park” under “Exploring Kauai with Your Kids,” p. 383.) With scenic mountain peaks in the background and a restored Hawaiian village on the nearby riverbanks, the Opaekaa Falls are what the tourist-bureau folks call an eye-popping photo op.
- **Smelling the Flowers in a Tropical Garden:** The islands are redolent with the sweet scent of flowers. For a glimpse of the full breadth and beauty of Hawaii's spectacular range of tropical flora, I suggest spending a few hours at a lush garden. Two tropical havens not to be missed on the Big Island include the 40-acre **Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden** (p. 199), featuring 1,800 species of tropical plants, and the **World Botanical Gardens** (p. 199), showcasing some 5,000 species. **Liliuokalani Gardens** (p. 200), the largest formal Japanese garden this side of Tokyo, resembles a postcard from Asia, with bonsai, carp ponds, pagodas, and a moon gate bridge. On lush Kauai, **Na Aina Kai Botanical Gardens** (p. 386), about 240 acres in size, is sprinkled with some 70 life-size (some larger than life-size) whimsical bronze statues, hidden off the beaten path of the North Shore.
- **Exploring the Grand Canyon of the Pacific—Waimea Canyon** (Kauai): This valley, known for its reddish lava beds, reminds everyone who sees it of Arizona's Grand Canyon. Kauai's version is bursting with ever-changing color, just like its namesake, but it's smaller—only a mile wide, 3,567 feet

deep, and 12 miles long. This grandeur was created by a massive earthquake that sent streams flowing into a single river, which then carved this picturesque

canyon. You can stop by the road and look at it, hike down into it, or swoop through it by helicopter. See p. 379.

2 THE BEST WAYS TO ENJOY HAWAIIAN CULTURE

- **Experiencing the Hula:** For a real, authentic hula experience on Oahu, check out the **Bishop Museum** (p. 113), which has excellent performances on weekdays. The first week after Easter brings Hawaii's biggest and most prestigious hula extravaganza, the **Merrie Monarch Hula Festival** (p. 226), at Hilo on the Big Island; tickets sell out by January 30, so reserve early.
- **Buying a Lei in Chinatown** (Oahu): There's actually a host of cultural sights and experiences 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 \$4. If you'd like a little guidance, follow the recommendations in "Shopping with Your Kids," p. 143.
- **Listening to Old-Fashioned "Talk Story" with Hawaiian Song and Dance** (Big Island): Once a month, under a full moon, "Twilight at Kalahuipua'a," a celebration of the Hawaiian culture that includes storytelling, singing, and dancing, takes place oceanside at Mauna Lani Resort (☎ 808/885-6622; www.konafriends.com/maunalani-talkstory.html). It hears back to another time in Hawaii, when family and neighbors would gather on back porches to sing, dance, and "talk story." See "Old-Style Hawaiian Entertainment," on p. 227.
- **Visiting Ancient Hawaii's Most Sacred Temple** (Big Island): On the Kohala

coast, where King Kamehameha the Great was born, stands Hawaii's oldest, largest, and most sacred religious site: the 1,500-year-old Mo'okini Heiau, used by kings to pray and offer human sacrifices. This massive three-story stone temple, dedicated to Ku, the Hawaiian god of war, was erected in A.D. 480. It's said that each stone was passed from hand to hand from Pololu Valley, 14 miles away, by 18,000 men who worked from sunset to sunrise.

- **Exploring Puuhonua O Honaunua National Historical Park** (Big Island): This sacred site on the south Kona coast was once a place of refuge and a revered place of rejuvenation. You can walk the same consecrated grounds where priests once conducted holy ceremonies, and glimpse the ancient way of life in pre-contact Hawaii in the re-created 180-acre village. See p. 192.
- **Visiting the Most Hawaiian Isle:** A time capsule of Old Hawaii, Molokai allows you to experience real Hawaiian life in its most unsullied form. The island's people have woven the cultural values of ancient times into modern life. In addition to this rich community, you'll find the magnificent natural wonders it so cherishes: Hawaii's highest waterfall, its greatest collection of fishponds, and the world's tallest sea cliffs, as well as sand dunes, coral reefs, rainforests, and gloriously empty beaches. The island is pretty much the same Molokai of generations ago. See chapter 7.

- **Most Family-Friendly:** There is no contest. On the Big Island, **Four Seasons Resort Hualalai at Historic Kaupulehu** (☎ 888/340-5662; www.fourseasons.com) offers a relaxing vacation in the lap of luxury, and the staff goes above and beyond its duties to pamper your kids. You can't get any better than this—everything from a complimentary children's program, something for the teenagers, and kid-friendly restaurants. See p. 163.
- **When Price Is No Object:** No question about it: the **Halekulani** (☎ 800/367-2343; www.halekulani.com) is an oasis of calm amid the buzz. This beach hotel is the finest Waikiki has to offer. (Heck, I think it's the finest in the state.) The complimentary children's program is tops, the rooms are practically suites, and the service is superb. See p. 82.
- **When Price Is Your Main Objective:** I recommend two places. On Oahu, the **Doubletree Alana Hotel-Waikiki** (☎ 800/222-TREE [222-8733]; www.alana-doubletree.com) is run by the Hilton Hawaiian Village and located within walking distance of Waikiki Beach. At this small boutique hotel, you get comfortable rooms and the kind of prompt service that you usually receive only at twice the price. (Rack rates here start at \$189.) See p. 79. On the Big Island of Hawaii, the best deal is the oceanfront **Kona Tiki Hotel** (☎ 808/329-1425; www.konatiki.com). Its tastefully decorated rooms, with private lanais overlooking the ocean, start at just \$69 a night! Although it's called a hotel, this small, family-run operation is more like a large B&B, with plenty of friendly conversation around the pool at the morning continental breakfast buffet. See p. 166.
- **Best Suite Deals:** The standout is **Fairmont Kea Lani Maui** (☎ 800/659-4100; www.kealani.com). This is the place to get your money's worth; for the price of a hotel room you get an entire suite—plus a few extras. Each unit in this all-suite luxury hotel has a kitchenette, a living room with entertainment center and sofa bed, an oversize marble bathroom with separate shower big enough for a party, a spacious bedroom, and a large lanai that overlooks the pools, lawns, and white-sand beach. See p. 246.
- **Most Peace and Quiet:** Head out to the North Shore on Oahu for the **Turtle Bay Resort** (☎ 800/203-3650; www.turtlebayresort.com). The resort is spectacular: an hour's drive from Waikiki, but eons away in its country feeling. Sitting on 808 acres, this place is loaded with activities and 5 miles of shoreline with secluded white-sand coves. All the rooms have great views, there are tons of activities for the *keiki* (children), and there's even a romantic restaurant for an adults' night out. See p. 94.
- **Most Hawaiian:** Nestled into the older section at the north end of the resort area, the **Kaanapali Beach Hotel** (☎ 800/262-8450; www.kbhmaui.com), on Maui, has an irresistible local style and a real Hawaiian warmth that's missing from many other, more modern hotels. Old Hawaii values and customs are always close at hand, and the service is some of the friendliest around. Children ages 5 and younger eat free and kids ages 6 to 12 can order from the special discounted kids' menu. As part of the hotel's extensive Hawaiiana program,

you and your kids can learn to cut pineapple, weave lauhala, or even dance the *real* hula. There's also an arts-and-crafts fair 3 days a week, a morning welcome reception on weekdays, and a Hawaiian library. Just opened is Kupanaha, a gourmet dinner show with world-renowned magicians. See p. 240.

- **Best Views:** Every view in Hawaii is terrific, but the **Princeville at Hanalei** (☎ 800/826-4400; www.princeville.com) on Kauai is set in one of the most remarkable locations in the world, on a cliff between the crystal-blue waters of Hanalei Bay and steeped mountains; you arrive on the ninth floor and go down to the beach. This palace of green marble and sparkling chandeliers recalls Hawaii's monarchy period of the 19th century. Opulent rooms with magnificent views, a great children's program, and all the activities of Princeville and Hanalei make this one of Hawaii's finest resorts. See p. 360.
- **Best Beach:** A tough category with so many contenders, but I'm going with the golden sand and generally calm waters in front of Maui's **Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea** (☎ 800/334-MAUI [334-6284]; www.fourseasons.com/maui). This is the ultimate beach hotel for latter-day royals, with excellent cuisine, spacious rooms, gracious service, and beautiful Wailea Beach. The most kid-friendly hotel on Maui not only offers a complimentary kids' program year-round and an everyday activities center (daily 9am–5pm), but also makes the children feel welcome with extras such as complimentary milk and cookies on their first day. Children's menus are offered at all resort restaurants and even from room service. See p. 247.
- **Best Fitness Center & Spa:** On Maui, **Spa Grande at the Grand Wailea**

Resort Hotel & Spa (☎ 800/888-6100; www.grandwailea.com) is Hawaii's biggest spa, at 50,000 square feet, with 40 treatment rooms. The spa incorporates the best of the Old World (romantic ceiling murals, larger-than-life Roman-style sculptures, mammoth Greek columns, huge European tubs); the finest Eastern traditions (a full Japanese-style traditional bath and various exotic treatments from India); and the lure of the islands (tropical foliage, ancient Hawaiian treatments, and island products). This spa has everything, from a top fitness center to a menu of classes, and is constantly on the cutting edge of the latest trends. See p. 247. On Kauai, the luxurious **ANARA Spa at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa** (☎ 800/55-HYATT [554-9288; www.kauai.hyatt.com]) is the place to get rid of stress and be soothed and pampered in a Hawaiian atmosphere, where the spirit of aloha reigns. An elegant 25,000-square-foot spa, ANARA (A New Age Restorative Approach) focuses on Hawaiian culture and healing, with some 16 treatment rooms, a lap pool, fitness facilities, lava rock showers that open to the tropical air, outdoor whirlpools, a 24-head Swiss shower, Turkish steam rooms, Finnish saunas, and botanical soaking tubs. See p. 350. And, on Oahu, **Ihilani Spa at the JW Marriott Ihilani Resort & Spa at Ko Olina** (☎ 800/626-4446; www.ihilani.com) is an oasis by the sea. This free-standing 35,000-square-foot facility is dedicated to the traditional spa definition of "health by water." The modern, multi-storied spa, with its floor-to-ceiling glass walls looking out on tropical plants, 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 a bevy of aerobic and stretching classes. See p. 95.

- **Best Room Service:** Not only does Oahu's **Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa** (☎ 800/HILTONS; [445-8667] www.hawaiianvillage.hilton.com) on Waikiki Beach have a great menu and prompt room service, but the entire megaresort is kid-friendly. The Rainbow Express is the Hilton's year-round daily program of activities for children 5 to 12. Wildlife parades about the restaurants, where kids 4 to 11 eat free. See p. 79.

- **Best Lagoon:** My pick is Oahu's **Kahala Hotel & Resort** (☎ 800/367-2525; www.kahalaresort.com). The lush, tropical grounds at this resort far from Waikiki include an 800-foot crescent-shaped beach and a 26,000-square-foot lagoon (home to two bottle-nosed dolphins, sea turtles, and tropical fish). Views from the floor-to-ceiling sliding-glass doors are of the ocean, Diamond Head, and Koko Head. The resort offers a "keiki club" for kids, with activities ranging from lei making to snorkeling. See p. 92.

4 THE BEST DINING BETS

- **Most Kid-Friendly Service:** **Hoku's** (☎ 808/739-8780), at Oahu's Kahala Mandarin, is elegant without being stuffy, and creative without being overwrought. The staff at this fine-dining room treats kids like princesses and princes. See p. 109. On Maui, the kids will be graciously welcomed at **David Paul's Lahaina Grill** (☎ 808/667-5117), a gourmet eatery which offers a great kids' menu with a kid's soup or salad of the day, fried chicken strips, corn dog, or mahi and shrimp, as well as desserts (ice cream and chocolate cake). See p. 254.
- **Best Kids' Menu:** Bev Gannon, one of the 12 original Hawaiian Regional Cuisine chefs, is raising the next generation of "foodies" at her gourmet haven in the pineapple fields of Maui at the **Halii-maile General Store** (☎ 808/572-2666). Kids eat just as well as their parents when ordering from the creative kids' menu. See p. 261.
- **Best Views:** In Hawaii, views generally translate into "ocean views," and you can't get any closer to the ocean on the

Big Island of Hawaii than **Huggo's** (☎ 808/329-1493) or **Pahu i'a** (☎ 808/325-8000) at the Hualalai Four Seasons Resort. It helps that both restaurants can hold your attention by their food alone without that distracting ocean view. See p. 176 and 175. On Kauai, **The Beach House** (☎ 808/742-1424), which sits right on a promontory with a 180-degree ocean view, also serves excellent cuisine. See p. 363.

- **Best Decor:** On Oahu, the favorite decor from a kid's point of view has to be at **Sam Choy's Breakfast, Lunch, Crab & Big Aloha Brewery** (☎ 808/545-7979), where an all-wood sampan (the centerpiece of the 11,000-sq.-ft. restaurant) commands attention. The kids can wash their hands in an oversize wok at the center of the room. Plus a 2,000-gallon live-crab tank lines the open kitchen with an assortment of crabs in season. See p. 105.
- **Best If You Have a Sitter:** The romantic, elegant dining room at **La Mer** (☎ 808/923-2311) in Waikiki's

Halekulani is the only AAA Five-Diamond restaurant in the state. See p. 96. Also on Oahu, another great “date-night” rendezvous is **Chef Mavro Restaurant** (☎ 808/944-4714), where wine pairings perfectly match the elegant cuisine of (James Beard award winner) Chef George Mavrothalassitis. See p. 105. It’s worth a drive to the North Shore for the romantic atmosphere and first-rate food of **21 Degrees North** (☎ 808/293-8811), in the Turtle Bay Resort. See p. 111. On Maui, I’d suggest **Vino** (☎ 808/661-VINO [661-8466]), serving the best Italian food on Maui at an exquisite location overlooking the rolling hills of the Kapalua Golf Course. It is run by the team of D. K. Kodama, chef and owner of Sansei Seafood Restaurants and Sushi Bar (p. 98), and master sommelier Chuck Furuya. See p. 258. On Kauai, book **Dondero’s** (☎ 808/742-1234) in the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa before you leave home to ensure a starlight table overlooking the ocean. See p. 366.

- **Best Burgers:** The winners of this highly competitive category are the juicy burgers at Oahu’s two **Kua Aina locations** (☎ 808/591-9133 in Ward Village, or 808/637-6067 in Haleiwa); and Lahaina’s **Cheeseburger in Paradise** (☎ 808/661-4855) on Maui. See p. 103, p. 112 and 255. On Kauai, it’s a tie between **Bubba Burgers** (☎ 808/823-0069) and **Duane’s Ono-Char Burger** (☎ 808/822-9181). See p. 370 and 371.
- **Best Outdoor Setting:** You can’t beat the beachside location under the spreading tree at the **Hau Tree Lanai** (☎ 808/921-7066), at the New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel on the outskirts of Waikiki. See p. 97. On Kauai, the lush garden setting in the Poipu Resort area at **Plantation Gardens** (☎ 808/742-

2216) beckons even the most jaded (seen-it-all) teenager. See p. 366.

- **Best Breakfast:** In Waikiki, there’s no question that the winner is the quirky, late-night and morning eatery **Eggs ‘n Things** (☎ 808/949-0820), with huge, huge breakfasts and never-ending coffee refills. See p. 99. On the Big Island, the **Coffee Shack** (☎ 808/328-9555), overlooking Kealahou Bay and coffee fields, is the place for the most *ono* (delicious) breakfast. See p. 178.
- **Best Brunch:** Not only a winner in terms of best food, best display of food, and best variety of food, but also the winner of great views at brunch (Waikiki Beach) and best brunch decor is Oahu’s **Orchids** (☎ 808/923-2311), at the very plush Halekulani. See p. 96.
- **Best Milkshakes:** Kids will love the giant milkshakes at **Ken’s House of Pancakes** (☎ 808/935-8711) in Hilo on the Big Island, the only 24-hour restaurant on that island. See p. 185. On Kauai, the small roadside stand called **Banana Joe’s** (☎ 808/828-1092) offers creamy smoothies made of just-picked tropical fruit. See p. 403.
- **Best Japanese:** Pushing the envelope of Japanese food (and with a touch of Pacific Regional) is **Kenichi Pacific** (☎ 808/322-6400), in Kona on the Big Island. The appetizers menu is so tempting, your kids might just want to graze from one dish to the next. See p. 177. For more traditional Japanese food, try **Miyo’s** (☎ 808/935-2273), in Hilo, where children’s portions are half-price. See p. 185.
- **Best Chinese:** The kids will vote for **Panda Cuisine** (☎ 808/947-1688) on Oahu every time. Quick, easy, and moderately priced, this dim sum, Hong Kong-style restaurant is perfect for a family lunch. See p. 103.

- **Best Hawaiian Regional Cuisine:** The masters of Hawaiian Regional Cuisine include **Alan Wong's Restaurant** (☎ 808/949-2526) on Oahu; **Merri-man's Market Café** (☎ 808/886-1700) on the Big Island; and **Roy's Restaurant** (☎ 808/396-7697) on Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and the Big Island. Any of these great places will introduce you to the unique blends of Hawaii's fresh produce, fish, and meats in this well-loved cuisine. See p. 106, 181, and 110, respectively.
- **Best Pizza:** This is another hotly contested category with many great places to choose from. On the Big Island, head to **Boston Basil's Pizzeria** (☎ 808/326-7836), where sauce is the thing. See p. 177. On Maui, my two favorite picks are **Nicky's Pizza** (☎ 808/667-0333) and **Shaka Sandwich & Pizza** (☎ 808/874-0331) for perfect crusts. See p. 257 and 259. And on Kauai, **Brick Oven Pizza** (☎ 808/332-8561) still makes pizza the old-fashioned way. See p. 367.
- **Best Pasta:** There's great pasta in Hawaii, but the two standouts are **Buon Amici** (☎ 808/732-5999) on Oahu and **Pomodoro** (☎ 808/332-5945) on Kauai. See p. 108 and 367.
- **Best Mexican:** **Norberto's El Café** (☎ 808/822-3362) on Kauai has been serving lard-free Mexican for nearly a generation. See p. 371. In Waimea on the Big Island, the tiny **Tako Taco Taquería** (☎ 808/887-1717) pumps out healthy Mexican at wallet-pleasing prices. See p. 183. And on Maui, although **Mañana Garage** (☎ 808/873-0220) can't really be classified as "true" Mexican (in fact, it defies classification in any category), the eclectic cuisine here (not to mention the very oddball decor) will make your kids smile. See p. 253.
- **Best for Feeding Large Families:** In terms of getting your money's worth of good food at bargain prices, head to the **Olive Tree Café** (☎ 808/737-0303) on Oahu to take out or eat at the outdoor tables. See p. 110. On Maui, two fabulous budget-price eateries for large families are **AK's Café** (☎ 808/244-8774) and **Moana Bakery & Café** (☎ 808/579-9999). See p. 253 and 262.
- **Best Fresh Fish:** **Mama's Fish House** (☎ 808/579-8488) in Kuau on Maui is synonymous with excellent fish. (Even the kids get fresh fish on the keiki menu.) See p. 262. But that's not all; at the other end of Maui (and also on Oahu) in Kapalua and in Kihei, **Sansei Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 808/669-6286) has only the best fish, carefully prepared. See p. 258.
- **Best for Aspiring Gourmands:** Take your budding "foodies" to the Big Island, where, on the Kona side, the **Hualalai Club Grille by Alan Wong** (☎ 808/325-8525) will serve them (from the kids' menu) the best in Hawaiian Regional Cuisine. See p. 175.
- **Best Ice Cream:** At stores, restaurants, and ice-cream parlors throughout the state, ask for **Roselani Ice Cream** (☎ 808/244-7951), Maui's only made-from-scratch, old-fashioned ice cream. See p. 300. On the Big Island, be sure to try **Tropical Dreams Ice Cream** (☎ 808/889-5577), another creamy taste treat. See p. 182.
- **Best Delivery:** On Oahu, you are no longer limited by the room service menu in your hotel room. **Room Service in Paradise** (☎ 808/941-DINE [941-3463]; www.rsiponline.com) is the answer to a parent's prayers. They deliver almost a dozen different cuisines (from American/Pacific Rim to Italian

to sandwiches and burgers) from 50 different restaurants to your hotel room. See p. 96.

- **Best Takeout:** On Oahu, great grinds (food) can be had from Honolulu's **Kaka'ako Kitchen** (☎ 808/596-7488). See p. 103.
- **Best Diner:** Maui has the best diners in the state. My two faves are **CJ's Deli and Diner** (☎ 808/667-0968) in Kaanapali for the best food in a retro atmosphere, and **Peggy Sue's** (☎ 808/875-8944) in Kihei for an upscale Maui-kinda diner the kids will love. See p. 256 and 259.
- **Best Shave Ice:** Like surfing, shave ice is synonymous with Haleiwa, the North Shore Oahu town where **Matsumoto Shave Ice** (☎ 808/637-4827)—and other neighboring establishments—serves mounds of icy treats to long lines of thirsty takers. This tasty and refreshing cultural phenomenon is even better over ice cream and adzuki beans. See p. 126.
- **Best Plate Lunch:** For seasoned plate lunchers who favor the traditional “two scoop rice” lunches weighted with carbohydrates and hefty meats, **Zippy's** (21 locations throughout Oahu; visit www.zippys.com for the one nearest you) is a household word. On Kauai, **Pono Market** (☎ 808/822-4581), **Fish Express** (☎ 808/245-9918), and **Koloa Fish Market** (☎ 808/742-6199) are at the top of the plate-lunch pyramid. See p. 365, 364 and 364, respectively.
- **Best Noodles:** Ramen, udon, saimin, pho, pasta, chow mein—Hawaii is the epicenter of ethnic noodle stands and houses, with many recommendable and inexpensive choices. **Jimbo's Restaurant** (Oahu; ☎ 808/947-2211), a neighborhood institution, is tops for freshly made

udon with generous toppings and a homemade broth. See p. 108.

- **Best Tropical Fruit: Mangosteen,** the queen of fruit in Indonesia, is the sensation at the Hilo Farmers' Market on the Big Island. Mangosteen's elegant purple skin and soft, white, floral-flavored flesh (like lychee, but more custard-like than translucent) make this fruit a sure winner. It joins the ranks of rambutan, durian, sapote, sapodilla, and other exotic Asian newcomers. The mango is always a much-anticipated feature of late spring and summer. **Hayden mangoes** are universally loved for their plump, juicy flesh and brilliant skins. Papaya lovers, take note: **Kahuku papayas**—firm, fleshy, dark orange, and so juicy they sometimes squirt—are the ones to watch for on menus and in markets; check out the supermarkets and the roadside stands in Kahuku on Oahu. **Sunrise papayas** from Kapoho and Kauai are also top-notch. White, acid-free, extra sweet, and grown on Kauai and the Big Island, **Sugarloaf pineapples** are the new rage. Hilo is the town for **lychees** (also known as litchis) in summer, but Honolulu's Chinatown markets carry them, too. Decidedly Hawaiian are **Ka'u oranges**, grown in the volcanic soil of the southern Big Island and available in supermarkets and health food stores. Don't be fooled by their brown, ugly skin—they're juicy, thin-skinned, and sweet as honey.
- **Other Mighty Morsels:** Poi biscotti from the **Poi Company**, available at supermarkets and gourmet outlets such as Hawaiian Regional Cuisine Marketplace (in Macy's in Ala Moana, Honolulu), is a new taste treat, the consummate accompaniment to another island phenomenon, Kona coffee. Highly

esteemed coffee growers (all based on the Big Island, of course), include **Bears' Coffee** (☎ 808/935-0708); **Kona Blue Sky Coffee** (☎ 877/322-1700 or 808/322-1700); **Waimea Coffee Company** (☎ 808/885-4472); and **Bad Ass Coffee Company** (multiple locations). The buttery, chocolate-dipped shortbread cookies of **Big Island Candies** (Big Island;

☎ 808/935-8890) are worth every calorie and every dollar. See p. 225. From Kauai, Hanapepe town's venerable **Taro Ko Chips** (☎ 808/335-5586 for the factory) are the crunchy snack that neighbor islanders drive long miles to find, then cart home in hand-carried bundles. See p. 403.

5 THE BEST BEACHES FOR FAMILIES

- **Lanikai Beach** (Oahu): Too gorgeous to be real, this stretch along the windward coast is one of Hawaii's postcard-perfect beaches—a mile of golden sand as soft as powdered sugar bordering translucent turquoise waters. The year-round calm waters are excellent for swimming, snorkeling, and kayaking. Completing the picture are two tiny offshore islands that function not only as scenic backdrops but also as bird sanctuaries. See p. 129.
- **Hapuna Beach** (Big Island): This half-mile-long crescent regularly wins kudos in the world's top travel magazines as the most beautiful beach in Hawaii—some consider it one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. One look and you'll see why: Perfect cream-colored sand slopes down to crystal-clear waters that are great for swimming, snorkeling, and bodysurfing in summer; come winter, waves thunder in like stampeding wild horses. The facilities for picnicking and camping are top-notch, and there's plenty of parking. See p. 212.
- **Kapalua Beach** (Maui): On an island with many great beaches, Kapalua takes the prize. This golden crescent with swaying palms is protected from strong winds and currents by two outstretched lava-rock promontories. Its calm waters are perfect for snorkeling, swimming, and kayaking. The beach borders the Kapalua Bay Hotel, but it's long enough for everyone to enjoy. Facilities include showers, restrooms, and lifeguards. See p. 279.
- **Papohaku Beach** (Molokai): One of Hawaii's longest beaches, these gold sands stretch on for some 3 miles and are about as wide as a football field. Offshore, the ocean churns mightily in winter, but the waves die down in summer, making the calm waters inviting for swimming, picnics, beach walks, and sunset watching. See p. 318.
- **Hulopoe Beach** (Lanai): This golden, palm-fringed beach off the south coast of Lanai gently slopes down to the azure waters of a Marine Life Conservation District, where clouds of tropical fish flourish and spinner dolphins come to play. A tide pool in the lava rocks defines one side of the bay, while the other is lorded over by the Manele Bay Hotel, which sits prominently on the hill above. Offshore, you'll find good swimming, snorkeling, and diving; onshore, there's a full complement of beach facilities, from restrooms to camping areas. See p. 335.
- **Haena Beach** (Kauai): Backed by verdant cliffs, this curvaceous North Shore

beach has starred as paradise in many a movie. It's easy to see why Hollywood loves Haena Beach, with its grainy golden sand and translucent turquoise waters. Summer months bring calm

waters for swimming and snorkeling, while winter brings mighty waves for surfers. There are plenty of facilities on hand, including picnic tables, restrooms, and showers. See p. 390.