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Island Hop in Hawaii

BY LEAH DEANGELIS

Everywhere you go lately, people are talking about Hawaii. With affordable direct flights available right out of Bellingham International Airport and Sea-Tac Airport, it's easy to see why. We're just six hours away from sunshine, warm sand, swaying palms and that soul-feeding aloha spirit.

Each island has its own personality. A great way to maximize your trip is to fly into one island and depart from another. Add a hop in the middle, and you could easily visit three islands, making your visit a tropical trifecta of bliss.

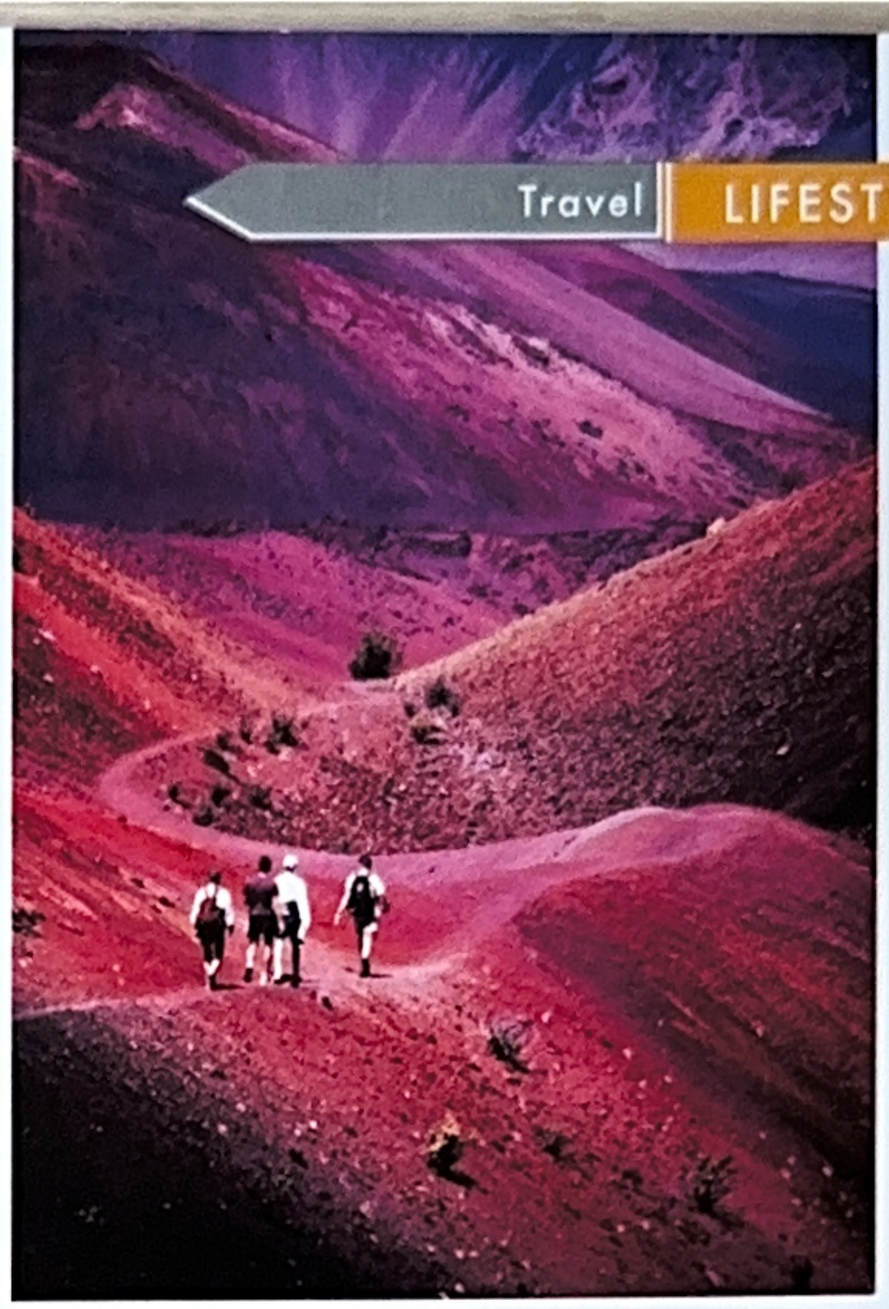
Maui

Maui makes a great first impression and has a little bit of everything. Shop in Lahaina, drive the famous Road to Hana, and hike to watch the Haleakala sunrise.

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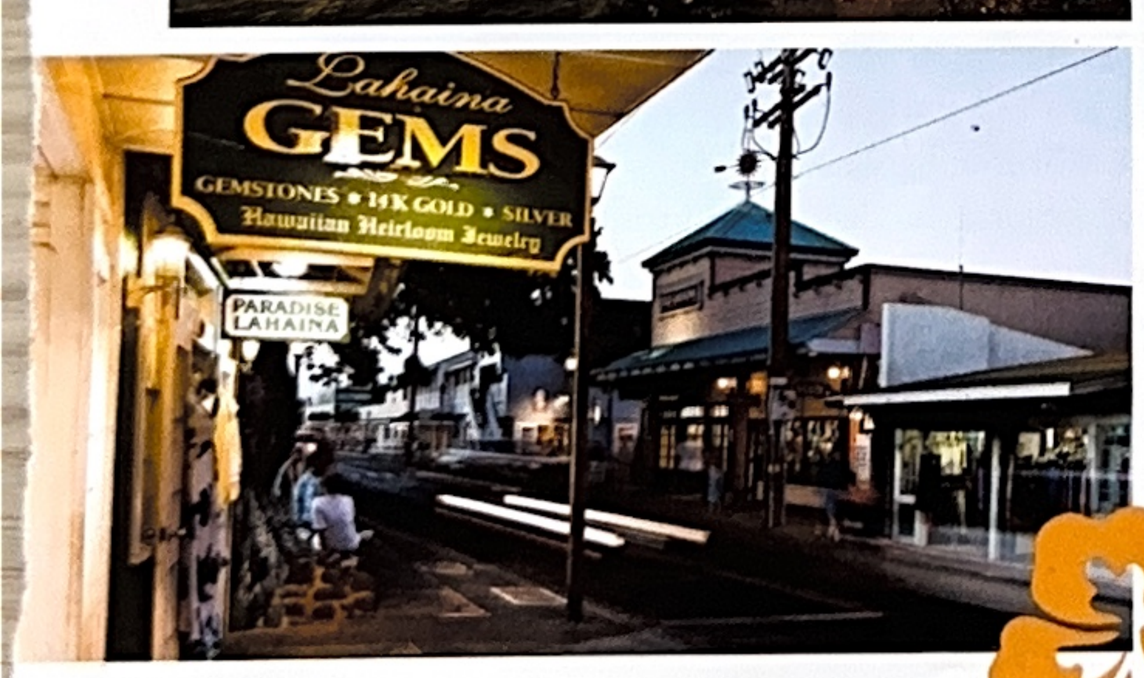
Spectacular views reward Maui visitors who make the trek to Haleakala National Park. This popular hiking destination has inspired many photographers.





A stroll down Lahaina's Front Street leads to one of the nation's largest banyan trees, which is 140-years old.





... continued from page 15 If you just want to chill out, your accommodations can enhance your experience tremendously.

Rich in culture and eager to please, **The Fairmont Kea Lani** is a solid choice for families. Every room in this palatial oceanfront hotel is a suite. A refrigerator and microwave give you the option to prepare your own food and enjoy meals on the spacious *lanai*, or veranda. Fairmont employees complete a cultural education program, and knowledgeable staff members enrich the guest experience, making for a more meaningful stay. You can participate in authentic musical celebrations, take classes and even enjoy complimentary traditional outrigger canoe rides. In keeping with tradition, the canoe guide blows into a conch shell and asks permission, in Hawaiian, to enter the ocean before putting the canoe into the water. During your ride, you are likely to see *honu*, or sea turtles, and whales depending on the time of year.

You can find locally sourced organic food for any meal, from salads to sandwiches to traditional Hawaiian fare. The pao doce frito at award-winning restaurant **Ko** is a traditional dessert you might find yourself craving long after your visit. It's a modern twist on *malasadas*, or Portuguese doughnuts. These sweet bread treats are a holdover from Portuguese immigrants who worked in Hawaii's sugar plantations in the 1800s. You can find malasadas all over Hawaii (Leonard's is famous for this on Oahu), but Ko's are stuffed with coconut gelato, drizzled with black raspberry jam and will surely knock your socks off.

The hotel's free shuttle can take you to even more dining options and shopping nearby. With three beautiful pools and the beach just a few feet away, the Fairmont Kea Lani is perfect for the whole family. Prices vary depending on the season, though in the end it's a good value for what you get. It's also important to note that the resort does not charge additional fees for amenities such as Wi-Fi and parking, which is something to watch out for in Hawaii. ...

All Photography: © 2013 Hawaii Tourism Authority, unless otherwise indicated.





Catch the waves at Oahu's legendary North Shore. Many resorts and local shops offer board and equipment rentals.







Oahu

Oahu is the most populated island and home to **Honolulu International Airport**, which is a hub for connections to other islands. If you're connecting there, it makes sense to schedule a few days to get to know the island. Especially if you like a city vibe, it's a good fit; though, there's much more to Oahu than Honolulu and Waikiki. There are many touristy things to do, but if it's the natural world you want, you won't have to go far to find it. Hike Diamond Head, snorkel at Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve or consider one of several eco-tours available for day trips.

E Noa Tours offers nature outings, like the historic tour of western Oahu. This tour takes guests by horseback into hidden valleys and sacred ground along Oahu's west coast. The contrasting views of red terrain and turquoise blue ocean water are breathtaking, and seeing it all on horseback is a satisfying authentic experience. A portion of the proceeds from these tours goes toward helping the local community, and organic food is grown on site for this purpose.

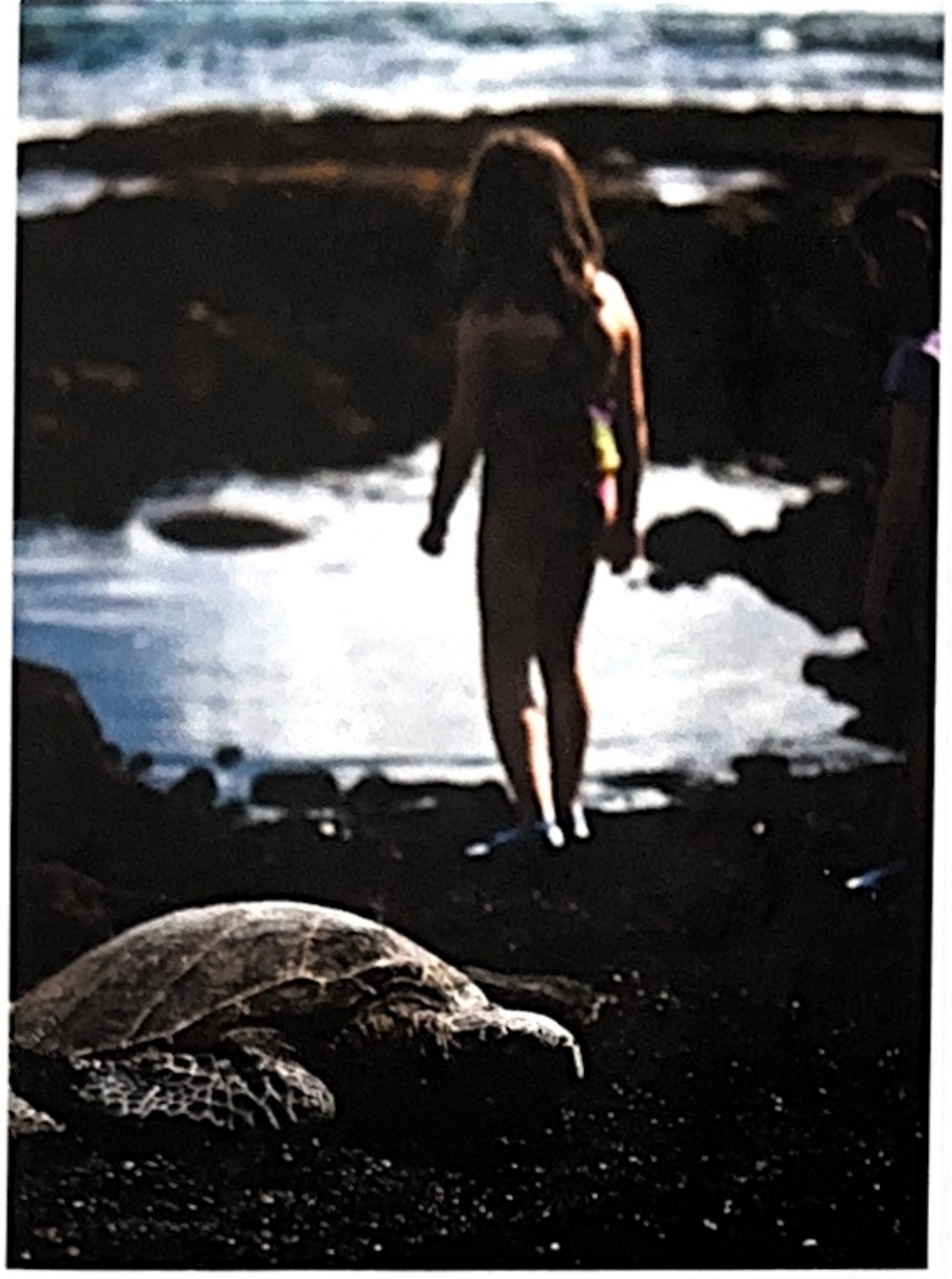
The legendary North Shore is a surfer haven known for the Banzai Pipeline and epic waves. **The Surf Bus** will take you away for a day filled with adventure, including your choice of biking, paddle boarding, snorkeling, kayaking or surf lessons. A stop at the historic Haleiwa Town, with its shaved-ice stands and a variety of restaurants and food trucks will give you a chance to refuel.

A trip out to **Kualoa Ranch** will introduce you to the eastern side of Oahu, and some beautiful scenery, including Chinaman's Hat. This is a popular filming location for movies and TV shows, including "Jurassic Park," "Lost" and "Hawaii 5-0," and the ranch offers some fun activities for kids.

Another great way to get a different perspective of Oahu is to go on a sunset dinner cruise with **Atlantis Adventures**. You don't really do this for the food; it's more of a feast for the eyes. A little kitschy, but good fun, the *Navatek* glides along while you soak in spectacular views. Be sure to do this on a Friday night to see the fireworks display put on every week by the Hilton.

There are a ton of hotels to choose from on Oahu, and if you don't plan to spend a lot of time in your room, go for value. **Hotel Renew** is an eco-friendly hotel located just a block from the beach, and a good home base for activities. Its urban setting, Zen vibe and intimate feel set this hotel apart in an area populated with mega hotels, and there are no resort fees. Modern, with splashes of color, the hotel feels fresh and youthful. Every single light in the room has a dimmer switch, which makes for a custom atmosphere.

If you like history, the iconic **Royal Hawaiian Hotel**, also known as the "pink palace," is a classic choice for when you want to just relax in the comfort of your own hotel. Built in 1927, it is brimming with luxurious history and has old photos and memorabilia displayed throughout. Amelia Earhart, various Kennedys, Harrison Ford, Marilyn Monroe and the Beatles are among the hotel's famous guests. It's gorgeous and opulent, but the most wonderful thing about this hotel is the staff members, who connect well with guests. If you don't stay at the Royal Hawaiian, you can still enjoy breakfast at **Surf Lanai** with its beach atmosphere, shady pink umbrellas, perfect view of Diamond Head and killer organic mushroom omelets and blueberry pancakes.







Hawaiian green sea turtles bask on the shoreline of the Fairmont Orchid (shown above) every afternoon on the Big Island.







Hawaii

Larger than all the other islands combined, the Big Island of Hawaii is a magical place. You can watch new earth as it is created right before your eyes. The birthplace of King Kamehameha and the location of Captain Cook's death, the island is rich in history. Intriguing lava field landscapes covered with *pahoihoi* (smooth lava) and *'a'a* (rough lava) flows makes you feel as if you're in another world, until you see the random goat and remember you're still on earth.

The best way to get a quick overview is by taking a helicopter tour. This is also a fruitful way to see red, glowing lava flows, which are one of the island's most fascinating draws. **Blue Hawaiian Helicopter Tours** use state-of-the-art Eco-Star helicopters, the first designed specifically for touring. The Big Island Spectacular Tour will take you over valleys and majestic waterfalls along the Hamakua coast, over the Kilauea volcano and some of the most geologically active spots on earth.

Fabulous accommodations on the Big Island include the **Fairmont Orchid**, which is a green hotel and an extraordinary destination resort. It's located on the island's northwest Kohala coast, which has the most reliably sunny weather.

The Orchid's grounds are immaculate and perfectly combine rugged Big Island beauty with elegant landscaping. The soothing sound of several waterfalls is heard from all over the property and a family of sea turtles lives on site and can be seen daily. An inviting cove provides a safe place for kids to play, and the hotel has all the water equipment you could want. Paddleboards, snorkel gear, surfboards, boogie boards and kayaks are available, and you can watch your children comfortably from the beach. Shuttles are available at a moment's notice, as are bicycles. You can visit the petroglyphs, golf course and various shops and restaurants.

The hotel's gold floor offers even more luxury, with food served three times daily, beverages and personal concierge service. The private gold lounge is a great place to mingle with other guests and serves as an extra cozy home base for activities.

Sunset cruises, whale watching tours and snorkel outings are a quick shuttle ride away at **Mauna Lani Sea Adventures**, a must-do during a stay at the Orchid. The crew is friendly and knowledgeable, and the water is a soothing variation of turquoise and cobalt blues.

Hawaii is an incredibly easy vacation spot for visitors hailing from the Pacific Northwest. It provides a drastic change in climate and enough of a cultural shift that you feel a little bit like you're in another country without the language and currency barriers, or the necessity of a passport. It offers the perfect mix of natural wonders, scenic views and waterfront relaxation. ◂