

HAWAII FIVE-STAR
The 246-square
metre adults only
Serenity Pool at
the Four Seasons
Maui has an
underwater music
system and four
bubble loungers.

The swaying palm trees, hula dancers and ukuleles of this island paradise have proven perennially appealing, but the combination of cheap airfares and the strong Australian dollar has seen a meteoric rise in visits from Australians.

Phil Tripp
surveys the luxury
accommodation.

Hello Hawaii

“The lobby bar is hidden behind a secret passage as if in a castle while the pool bar is a nesting area for the hip beautiful people that are its clients.”



BEACHES AND HIGHLANDS
Opposite page from left: all of Turtle Bay’s rooms, suites, cottages and villas are absolute beachfront; Turtle Bay’s beach cottages have 15 foot ceilings and four poster beds. Left: the Lodge at Koele feels like a luxe country manor.

THE ISLANDS OF HAWAII have the happy habit of rapidly decompressing visitors who get enraptured in the swaying of palm trees and hula dancers’ hips accompanied by soft guitars and ukuleles. Exotic flowers abound with hypnotic aromatherapy. The food is equally alluring with Pacific Rim flavours that merge Asian influences with fish, tropical fruits and vegetables grown on volcanic soils.

It’s no wonder that with the meteoric rise of the Australian dollar, cheap flights and incredible shopping bargains that 25 per cent more Australians visited Hawaii in the past year. Unlike similar Asian destinations, medical facilities are world class, there is no political unrest, nor cultural challenges, crime is low and there are no language problems with the locals on all the islands. The many accommodation options range from chain hotels to resorts, inns, bed and breakfast havens, lodges and luxe hideaways.

Arriving in Honolulu, you can choose to stay in Waikiki or head to the North Shore to slip into island time.

The **Halekulani Hotel**’s 3,600 square foot azure Cattleya Orchid pool inlaid with 1.2 million South African glass tiles is a landmark of Waikiki elegance. Founded as a beachfront home with five bungalows in 1907 called the Hau Tree, it grew to become a stylish five acre oceanfront resort whose name translates as “House Befitting Heaven”.

Its five low-density buildings comprise over 450 rooms surrounded by open courtyards and lush gardens with three restaurants including the classic indoor/outdoor House Without a Key featuring light jazz

and Hawaiian music. The neoclassic French cuisine of Orchids is Hawaii’s only AAA Five Diamond restaurant.

The neighbouring, newly opened **Modern Honolulu** is billed as an Urban Resort conceived by original boutique hotel creator Ian Schrager and now under the management of Aqua Resorts. Luxe, hip and modern, it’s aimed at younger business and leisure travellers desiring a highly stylised and technologically sophisticated “home away from home and office away from office”.

A few blocks from the beach, it has an intimate Private Sunset Beach with a lagoon and sands imported from other Hawaiian islands without the crowds of Waikiki. The lobby bar is hidden behind a secret passage as if in a castle while the pool bar is a nesting area for the hip beautiful people that are its clients.

Physical fitness is addressed by custom designed Bikini and Surf Boot Camp regimens as well as vegetarian or organic spa menus for dramatic weight or waist losses. The compact Spa adjoins the beach area but in-room treatments are encouraged over public exposure – a relief for its celebrity clients.

Arresting design extends to the signature restaurant of contemporary Japanese Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto. In a town filled with celeb-chefs, he’s crafted a seamless integration of Western and Oriental ingredients in his own unique cuisine enhanced by personal beer and sake creations.

Head to the North Shore where winter surf is mammoth and you’ll find the **Turtle Bay Resort** featured in the Russell Brand/Jason Segel/Kristen Bell film *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. But it’s also been locations

for the fourth *Pirates of the Caribbean* film and the more recent *Soul Surfer* flick on pro-surfer shark victim Bethany Hamilton.

Turtle Bay stands alone in that area with 375 guest rooms, 31 suites, 42 beach cottages and resort villas – all absolutely beachside facing pounding waves and just steps away from the world’s greatest surf contests. The cottages are grouped in private clusters of six and feature 15 foot ceilings and king poster beds. The villas enjoy amenities such as a private pool, Jacuzzi, courtyard and barbecue area but also a personal chef for four-course dinners in privacy and comfort.

The hotel’s casual Palm Terrace hosts a Sunday brunch and daily buffets that appear to be close to inundation by huge swells and breakers.

THE BIG ISLAND – HAWAII

When Laurance S Rockefeller founded the **Mauna Kea Hotel** in 1965 as the first luxury property on the sunny Kohala Coast, he stated “Every great beach deserves a great hotel”. Not only was the hotel located on the stunning Kauna’oa Beach, it also lay adjacent to Hapuna Beach, voted the best strand of sand in America for decades.

A recent major earthquake caused severe damage but the owners saw this as an opportunity to spend US\$150 million to refurbish it. Sharing amenities with sister **Hapuna Beach Prince** next door, the duo occupy a unique niche ten kilometres away from a coast crowded with resorts.

Don’t miss the Clambake each Saturday on the beach with all-you-can-eat lobster, crab, prime rib and other native delicacies.

The Four Seasons’ newest resort 20 kilometres south is **Hualalai**

at **Historic Ka’upulehu** where a lush oasis, once the home of kings, is surrounded by black lava flows dotted with ancient fishponds and petroglyph carvings.

It recently revitalised its property with an expanded spa, beachfront dining and new Deluxe Suites in addition to its 7,000 metres of Jack Nicklaus signature 18-hole golf course. With 243 expansive guest rooms and 51 suites housed in intimate two storey bungalows arranged in small crescents along the beach and golf course, it presents a 180-degree view of the Pacific.

It’s not unusual to see private jets parked only a few miles away at Kona Airport and this is the getaway favoured by tech billionaires, rock stars and reclusive actors.

MAUI

Four Seasons also has arguably the top property in Maui skirting the white sand beaches of Wailea on the slopes of the dormant volcano Haleakala. From the national park where bicyclists zoom down 40 kilometres through five climate zones, through to the underwater world of diving and snorkelling at its shores, it’s ideal for adventure or relaxation.

The Spa at **Four Seasons Resort Maui** has consistently been voted one of the top spas in America as a nurturing tropical retreat.

Arranged in a U shape, 380 five-star rooms and suites make it the largest property on the island, crowned by the 5,000 square foot Maile Suite and four 1,800 square foot Deluxe Suites.

The design of indoor and outdoor combined restaurants makes for an upmarket food court in front of crashing waves and a view of neighbour



DESTINATION ► HAWAII

island Lanai. DUO is an exciting addition to Maui's top end dining scene with Kobe Beef and local seafood delights while celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck's Spago serves luxe Italian fare.

On Maui's western tip is a new name for an older traditional escape of pure Hawaiiana. Travaasa purchased the legendary Hana Maui Hotel last year and renamed it **Travaasa Hāna**. At the end of a winding 84-kilometre road with 69 small bridges and 620 curves, which takes three hours from the airport and passes through rainforest and by numerous waterfalls, the resort had lost its lustre through seven owners since 1947.

Travaasa set about curing the property's ills quickly starting with the Sea Ranch Cottages that dot the slope to the seas and traditionally forego TV and internet. It also set about overhauling the Garden View Suites uphill and completely revamped the food and beverage services.

“The broad beach is protected by a natural reef providing stupendous snorkelling without leaving the resort.”

KAUAI

Built by Christopher and Pixie Skase and perched on a cliff overlooking sparkling Hanalei Bay on the moist north side of the Garden Isle, **The St Regis Princeville Resort** has sweeping views of lush rainforests matting soaring mountains. It's gone through several owners since the Skases crashed but never lost its charm or allure.

The St Regis touch adds its pre-eminent private butler service to guests in the 50 premium suites which include the 2,400 square foot Royal Suite and 1,800 square foot Presidential Suite wrapped in blue quartzite marble spanning the top floor. The other 200 spacious guest rooms are also elegantly appointed with spectacular views.

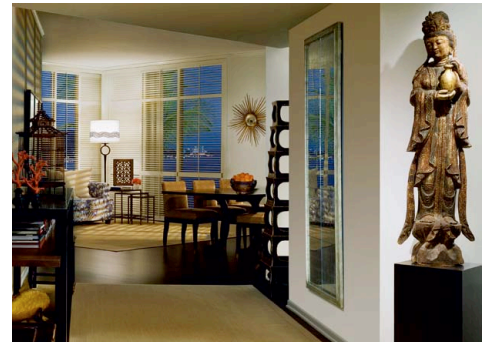
The Prince and Makai courses comprise 36 holes of the most dramatic golfing in the isles. The 10,000 square foot cocoon of the Halele'a ("House of Joy") Spa is matched by a 5,000 square foot infinity pool, overlooking the bay with lush tropical gardens, lava rock formations and flowing water features. The broad beach is protected by a natural reef providing stupendous snorkelling without leaving the resort.

Food options abound in adjoining Hanalei and Princeville towns but the cliffside Kauai Grill features stunning vistas and unforgettable brunch or buffet options with an indoor fine dining setup.

On the sunnier side of the island, **Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa** provides a personal retreat in a 50-acre complex that has been completely made over in the past year yet is still secluded from the other hotels nearby.

Crystal white beaches, lush emerald gardens and dramatic azure waterfalls are the palette that sets off the huge interior and breezy walkways that hug Keonelo Bay. One of the largest spas on the isles, the 45,000 square foot Anara honours the ancient healing customs of Lokahi – inspiring unity, harmony and balance. Incorporating a soothing garden presence, it features steam grottos, lava rock shower gardens and Vichy showers as well as relaxation courtyards. ►

HISTORICAL HAWAII
Right from top: The Halekulani Hotel began life as a beachfront home in 1907; the Halekulani has views of famous Diamond Head; the Vera Wang-designed Halekulani Suite.



A PRIVATE HAWAIIAN ISLAND
Clockwise from right: The Lodge at Koele has fireplaces for occasional chilly evenings; dine on The Lodge's expansive terrace; The Lodge's rooms have an upcountry plantation feel.



Redesigned rooms incorporate mahogany furniture in the old Hawaiian style. A 2,700 square foot Presidential Suite tops the main building with a wrap-around private terrace furnished with a telescope for stars and scenery. All of the resort's 602 rooms and 37 suites have ocean or garden balconies.

Thatched huts with waterfalls and koi-filled lagoons set off the open air Tidepools restaurant whose Pacific Rim cuisine has been rated the best on Kaua'i for several years.

LANAI

In the cool, green central highlands, **The Lodge at Koele** lies hidden like a country manor. Lanai is a private island just off Maui and has hosted private weddings such as Bill and Melinda Gates who rented both The Lodge and its sister beachside property on Manele Bay a few miles down the hill to exclude unwanted media. There are two golf courses between them and the beach at Manele is as private as the properties.

It's like an upcountry plantation of 100 glorious rooms and suites decked out with dark warm wood, cozy window seats and many with fireplaces for occasional chilly evenings.

Surrounded by a spacious terrace with rustic outdoor furniture and lush gardens, The Lodge exudes comfort and relaxation with a warm sun-drenched pool overlooking the bay and Maui in the distance.

The Lodge Dining Room is a cozy yet elegant space with a fireplace and a blend of comfort food and Hawaiian classic cooking.

When to go

The weather in Hawaii is very consistent and average temperatures generally range between 29 and 25 degrees Celcius in summer and winter. The wettest months are November to March, though rainfall is mostly in the mountains and there is almost always a sunny spot on the coast. Mid-December to mid-January is the busiest time, so expect limited availability at hotels, high prices and crowds. If you are looking for the legendary Hawaiian surf then winter is the best time to visit. Pacific storms drive ocean swells towards the north shore beaches creating huge waves.

Getting there

Hawaiian Airlines flies directly from Sydney to Honolulu with a baggage allowance of two 32 kilogram pieces each and standby business class upgrades from economy available if any seats are available at time of flight opening at the airport. **Economy class fares start from A\$2,019 return and business class fares start from A\$4,279 return.**

Hawaiian Airlines also operates internal flights between the islands. Most flights take between 40 minutes and one hour, though some flights only operate via Honolulu.

hawaiianair.com