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HAWAII

OAHU CITY SURPRISE

Many travelers don't expect an actual city when they arrive in Honolulu. No, it's not Chicago or San Francisco, but there are high-rise buildings and multilane highways just the same. And while one's natural instinct may be to avoid the urban areas in favor of tropical attractions — namely the local beaches — those who embrace this Hawaiian metropolis will discover one of Oahu's most unexpected delights: Chinatown. This historic, 15-block neighborhood (chinatownhi.com) is a cultural smorgasbord, which includes Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, and other customs that influence traditional art displays, enlightening festivals, and delectable food. Dim sum is a must here, and it's the perfect complement to an unhurried afternoon spent browsing Chinatown's markets and galleries. Sure, a day on Oahu without sand between your toes may be a bit of a surprise, but the experience won't be anything you regret.



MAUI SALUTATIONS!



Speaking philosophically, aloha is the spirit of Hawaii. Still, philosophy doesn't quench your thirst. That's best left to a **pineapple smash**, or aloha mary, both of which can be made with one of the state's more tangible spirits: Maui's Ocean Vodka (oceanvodka.com). The Ocean Vodka Organic Farm and Distillery uses organic sugarcane and deep-ocean mineral water to produce its 80-proof vodka. You can learn more about the fascinating process during a tour of the facility, located in Kula.

KAUAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The enigmatic island of Niihau is just 18 miles from Kauai's southwest coast. Judging by the lifestyle of the 200-or-so residents, however, it might as well be 100 miles away — or, more accurately, 100 years away. The island was purchased from King Kamehameha in 1864 and remains a privately owned bastion of traditional Hawaiian culture; locals still hunt with knives and fish with nets — and eschew the trappings of modern society. For nearly a century, outsiders were strictly forbidden from visiting the island. Not long ago, though, Niihau Helicopters (niihau.us) began offering sanctioned aerial tours and coastal landings. Native villages remain off-limits, but the pristine beaches, where you might spot sunbathing monk seals, are accessible.

Another opportunity to turn back time can be found at Kilohana Plantation (kilohanakauai.com). Historical highlights of this working agricultural estate include the 16,000-square-foot, open-for-exploration mansion that was built in 1936, and a classic narrow-gauge train pulled by a circa-1939 Whitcomb diesel engine. Once you've toured the farmstead, top off your visit with a sweet treat from K loa Rum's Tasting Room and Company Store.

BIG ISLAND COWBOYS AND BANANAS

Every Wednesday, the Paniolo Heritage Center at Pukalani Stables (paniolopreservation.org) is home to one of the island's most popular bazaars. The Waimea Midweek Market features everything from fruit and soap to jewelry and aloha-themed clothing. Plate lunches are available, too. But what makes this event a true standout is the on-site Museum of the Hawaiian Paniolo, which celebrates island-cowboy heritage. The best part? Free museum entrance during market days, so you can save your money to purchase more gifts to bring home.

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