

# The call of Hawaii

With its tropical weather, beautiful beaches and friendly locals, **CHRISTINE KNIGHT** and her family keep heading back to Hawaii for more.

"See the line where the sky meets the sea? It calls me," Moana sang of the adventures she couldn't resist across the deep blue sea. Island adventures call us, too, from Hawaii, a US state made up of eight main islands in the North Atlantic Ocean. Hawaii sings to us with a siren song that we've never been able to resist, and we find ourselves revisiting the land of turquoise water, friendly 'Alohas' and gentle sea turtles over and over and over again.

Our journey always begins and ends in Oahu, the third-largest of the Hawaiian islands and home to its international airport. A quick flight from here takes us to Maui, the second-largest island and home to Haleakala National Park and the dormant (but still impressive) Haleakalā Volcano.

## Mesmerising Maui

On a previous visit we'd driven up to watch the sunrise from the slopes of Haleakalā Volcano; seeing the orange and pink of the dawn breaking over the island is an experience not to be missed. This time, however, we want to see sunset, so our junior astronomer can gaze at the constellations through a telescope on a stargazing tour. Despite Hawaii's mild climate, the top of the volcano is freezing after dark. But not even the chill can take away from the astronomical wonders in the skies overhead.

We tackle the scenic Road to Hana drive, an exhilarating road trip along the coast filled with hairpin turns and lush waterfalls, and snorkel with gentle manta rays at its end. Floating on the surface of the sea at night and watching the illuminated ocean giants drift towards us like ghosts is both mesmerising

and magical. They twirl in an underwater dance and brush their wings on our faces and limbs, like soft kisses in the night.

## Volcanic action on the Big Island

From Maui we fly to the Big Island of Hawaii, the largest of the Hawaiian islands and home to Volcanoes National Park and its two active volcanoes, Kilauea and Mauna Loa.

Mauna Loa is the world's largest active volcano, but it is Kilauea, the adjacent volcano, which has recently erupted. The volcanic activity is limited to a remote region on the slopes of Kilauea Volcano, so the island is still safe to visit. There is plenty of controlled volcanic action away from the volcanoes, including Nahuku, the Thurston Lava Tube, a 500-year-old cave formed by a river of lava.

But it's not all about volcanoes here. We see large *honu* (Hawaiian green sea turtles) taking a siesta on Punaluu Black Sand Beach and take a snorkelling and dolphin-spotting tour to Kealakekua Bay. There's something very movie-like about standing on the prow of a catamaran as it skips through the waves, with pods of spinner dolphins as our guides.

We meet thousands of underwater locals who greet us with fishy smiles at Kealakekua Bay, the spot where Captain James Cook met his end in 1779.

## Movie magic in Kauai

Another hop, skip and a jump takes us to Kauai, a smaller Hawaiian island (and, in our opinion, the most beautiful). Kauai is a place of such raw, wild beauty that it feels like we've entered *Jurassic Park* – unsurprising, as it was



01



02



03



04



05



06

01 Waikiki Beach is a must-see 02 Hawaii is the home of surfing 03 Shaved ice is a favourite treat 04 Hawaii's beaches are world-renowned 05 Kauai's stunning Na Pali Coast 06 You can't travel far without passing a fruit stand or farmers' market. Images 03 & 04 © Christine Knight.

filmed here. Only 10 per cent of this island is accessible by car, making a helicopter tour a must in our opinion, to see the spectacular scenery from the air.

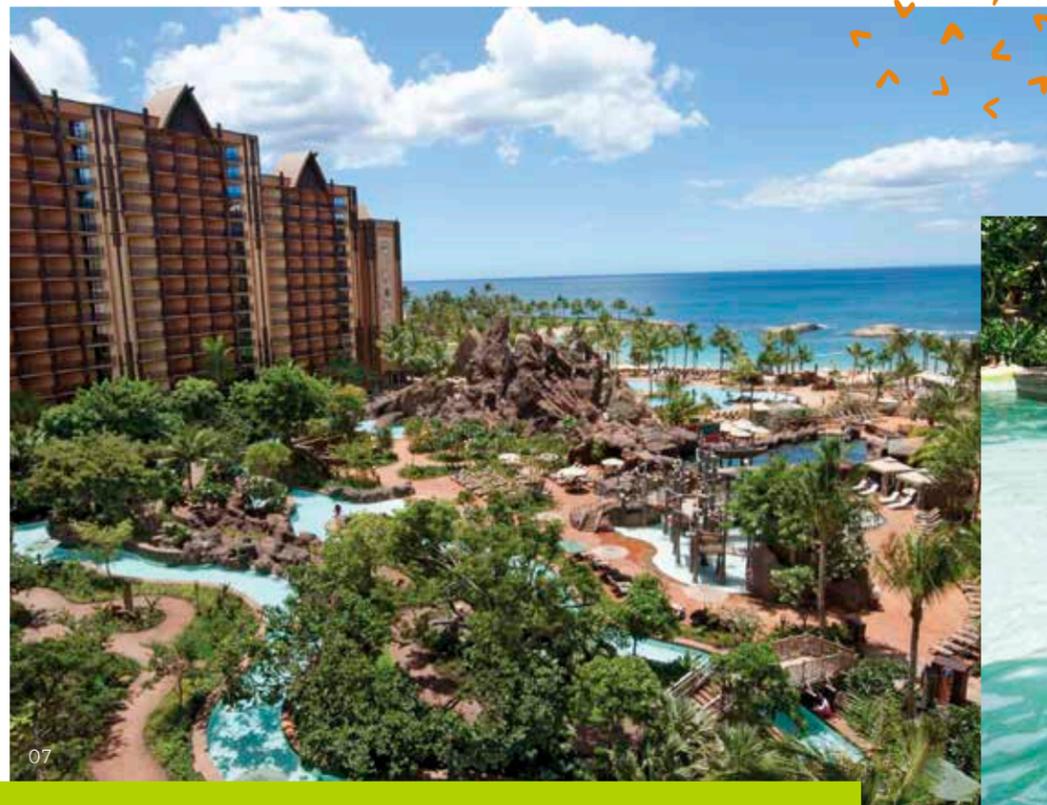
We take a breathtaking tour of the island, marvelling at the Na Pali Coast with its undulating cliffs and cascading colours, and fly over the roaring Manawaiopuna Falls.

Waimea Canyon State Park also brings us to our knees with its untamed splendour. The park is known as the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific", a good hint as to the spectacular scenery to be anticipated when visiting here.

### Kicking back in Oahu

With our eyes full of natural beauty, we head back to Oahu, the most developed and populated of the Hawaiian Islands, for our last stop before we start the journey home. While Waikiki Beach is popular and home to plenty of shopping and restaurants, our favourite place to stay is **Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa** in Ko Olina, a quiet neighbourhood around 45 minutes out of Waikiki.

We rent a car and spend a few days exploring. A hike to the top of Diamond Head is rewarded with a stunning view, and a shaved ice offers refreshment on our descent.



07

### Hot tip

The average temperature range in Hawaii is 23°C to 27°C, making it the perfect weather for a vacation year-round.

07 Aulani's Waikolohe Valley © Disney 08 Tropical fun awaits families in the Hawaiian islands 09 Making friends at Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. Images 08 & 09 © Christine Knight.



08

## HAWAII HOT HOTELS

### Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa Kapolei, Oahu

Inspired by Disney and Hawaiian culture, this resort is perfect for families, with two restaurants, the Laniwai Spa for the parents, Aunty's Beach House kids' club for kids and a touch of Disney magic.

The hotel is right by the beaches at Ko Olina, but also offers its own pools and water slides. [disneyaulani.com](http://disneyaulani.com)

### Aqua-Aston Hospitality Hawaii

From the family-friendly Aston Hotels & Resorts to the stylish Aqua Hotels & Resorts, Aqua-Aston has a selection of friendly, stylish accommodation to suit every lifestyle, taste or budget. It also offers boutique, budget and rental accommodation in locations right throughout the islands. [aquaaston.com](http://aquaaston.com)

### Embassy Suites Waikiki Beach Walk Honolulu, Oahu

Nestled in the heart of Waikiki Beach Walk, steps from one of the world's most famous stretches of sand, Embassy Suites offers spacious suite accommodation with complimentary breakfasts for guests. Head to the hotel's Grand Lanai (balcony) to enjoy the heated pool, kids' pool and whirlpool spa. [embassysuiteswaikiki.com](http://embassysuiteswaikiki.com)

### Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort Honolulu, Oahu

Blessed with an ideal location just down the road from the famous Waikiki Beach, Outrigger has plenty of beachside fun on offer for guests. The hotel has even partnered with Faith Surf School to offer surf and SUP lessons, and guests can take advantage of complimentary boogie boards and rental beach toys. [outriggerwaikikihotel.com](http://outriggerwaikikihotel.com)

### Ka'anapali Beach Hotel Lahaina, Maui

Ka'anapali calls itself "Hawaii's most Hawaiian hotel". The hotel offers a range of complimentary cultural activities including hula classes, *lauhala* weaving classes, pineapple cutting demonstrations and Hawaiian language classes. It also offers a range of great family dining options, including Tiki Terrace's Sunday Champagne Brunch. [kbhmaui.com](http://kbhmaui.com)

## Hawaii Report Card

**Info** [gohawaii.com/au](http://gohawaii.com/au)

**Getting there** Hawaiian Airlines offers direct flights from major Australian cities to Honolulu International Airport.

[hawaiianairlines.com](http://hawaiianairlines.com)

**Stay** [disneyaulani.com](http://disneyaulani.com)

**Do** [nps.gov/valr](http://nps.gov/valr)

We also manage to fit in a stroll through picturesque Waimea Falls Park and Botanical Gardens and a sobering visit to Pearl Harbor.

What we love to do best, however, is just relax and soak up the serenity that Hawaii brings us. We walk the beaches and make like the endangered Hawaiian monk seals we spot, just basking in the sun and letting all the worries of life back home drift away.

My daughter's happy place, though, is Aulani. She is in her element here, splashing in the pools and spas, riding the lazy river run, learning the hula and taking a ukulele class.

On our final night, we attend a Hawaiian luau and soak up the culture of these magnificent islands. It's hard to put my finger on what it is about Hawaii that draws us back time after time, when there are so many other incredible islands in the world to see. But as I sit watching my daughter, entranced by the telling of traditional stories on a beach where the honu come up to rest, it hits me.

This place feels like the home you wish you had. The heart yearns for beauty, peace and connection, all of which can be found in the paradise we know as Hawaii. As we say goodbye, yet another piece of our hearts has been left behind, no doubt joining those from our previous visits, and it's inevitable they will draw us back again soon. ●



09

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