



*Welcome*  
to Hawaii



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*Dear Traveler,*

*We know you've thought about it - the perfect vacation that takes you away from your weekdays, brings you closer to your loved ones and infuses your life with rejuvenating youth and energy. Yes, these are the things dreams are made of, and we have made it our purpose to ensure your dreams become your reality.*

*-Brendan Vacations*

by Jan Ross, Social Media Director, The Travel Authority

In May, we spent two weeks in pineapple paradise, visiting four of the Hawaiian Islands. Rain forests, active volcanoes, black sand beaches and luxurious hotels where we lounged by gorgeous pools or on equally gorgeous beaches, and consumed mass quantities of lovely, delicious, fresh pineapple. We made this fabulous trip thanks to Brendan Vacations, which provides escorted and independent tours all over the world. I had always assumed we would take a cruise to Hawaii when we decided to go, but take it from someone who adores cruising in every way, an escorted tour of Hawaii is a hundred times better. You have more time on the islands, free time to explore, and you are transported magically from island to island in a comfortable air-conditioned bus to hotels where your luggage appears in your room with no effort on your part. Not only that, most of your meals are provided, and tickets to events and attractions are purchased for you (and part of the total price of the tour). Like a cruise, you pay for your trip completely before you ever arrive and, aside from a few meals and souvenirs, you don't have to spend any more money.

Our first stop was Waikiki in Honolulu, the capitol of Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. We stayed at the Pacific Beach Hotel, steps away from the world-famous Waikiki beach in one direction and hundreds of shops and restaurants in the other direction.

Your first stop should be one of the many ABC stores for souvenirs or drinks and snacks to keep in your hotel room fridge, which every hotel seems to have. These little stores are the best places to buy really reasonably priced Hawaii t-shirts!

Waikiki is known as a great shopping location and you can walk to the International Market Place from most Oceanside hotels. It is located on the main shopping street of Kalakaua

Avenue. The International Market Place is a traditional, open-air market with over a hundred little shops, carts and stalls, surrounded by famous Hawaiian banyan trees. This is a great place to buy interesting souvenirs at low prices and have a meal at the International Food Court.

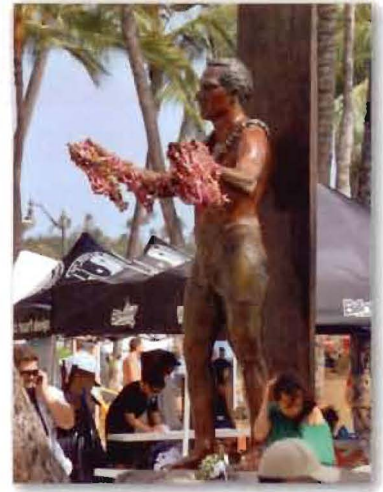
A great place to head on a rainy day or even a sunny one, because it is well worth the visit, is the Waikiki Aquarium. Also located on Kalakaua Avenue, this is a very reasonably priced outing for a family. In this award-winning aquarium, maintained by the University of Hawaii, over 3500 marine animals of 50 different species are on display. The aquarium offers lots of different exhibits, tours and programs for kids.

For the adventurous, head to the Diamond Head crater where an observation deck and underground complex from World War II are now abandoned. Evidence of the command post is still present along Diamond Head Trail, which is paved almost the entire way but can be steep and difficult to climb in spots.

The hike is not easy and I wouldn't recommend it for young children but, if you can make it, the view of the entire west side of the island, from Waikiki to Koko Head, makes it worthwhile. The trail takes about 1 1/2 hours and you should bring water and a flashlight for the tunnel.

You can't go to Oahu and just see the beach at Waikiki. I recommend Hanauma Bay Park for a great family snorkeling or diving experience. This beautiful bay was declared a protected marine life conservation area and underwater park in 1967 and is wonderful for both beginning and advanced snorkeling or diving. Because the reef extends into deep water, you can choose where you want to snorkel or dive.

There is also a large sandy beach which is perfect for sunbathing, swimming, and picnicking. There are picnic tables, grassy areas and shade near the parking



lot and a concession stand as well.

Several hiking trails are located along the beach and up on the ridge which provide wonderful views of the area. There is a nice, paved walkway from entrance down to the beach so it is very easy for all ages. There is even an optional shuttle bus available down the hill to the beach.

The best suggestion I have for you when you visit Oahu is to rent a car. We were not there long enough to see much of the island besides the busy city of Honolulu and there is a huge part of the island which is gorgeous, completely different from this area, and only an easy drive away from town.

We are planning to return – we didn't get to see nearly as much as we wanted!

#### About the Author:

Jan Ross is a freelance travel writer and the Social Media Director for The Travel Authority. Contact her at [jan@sampler-publications.com](mailto:jan@sampler-publications.com) with comments or suggestions for article topics. You can read her travel blog at <http://thetravelauthority.blogspot.com/> to find out about other great travel deals and information. Or call The Travel Authority at 1-877-AXP-1515. They have locations all over Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Florida and Tennessee and will help you get the possible deal for your next trip.

# Aloha, Welcome to Hawaii

  
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