



WATER FUN: Paddle surfing at the world-famous Waikiki Beach. ANNE PILLSBURY

Hawaii's O'ahu: An island of contrasts and colour

By ANNE PILLSBURY

From the strange mists of Waimea Valley to shopping on Kalakua Avenue

The island of O'ahu in Hawaii is a "make the most of every moment" kind of place.

The island's colours, fragrances, flavours, and tastes draw tourists from all over the world. And, when you arrive, the aloha spirit beckons you to discover its tropical treasures.

The majestic palm trees are the first mahalo (thank you) moment. Welcome to Hawaii!

Entering Waikiki brings a sense of timelessness. The popular TV shows Hawaii-Five-O and Baywatch secured Waikiki Beach notice as a world destination spot.

ISLAND CONTRASTS

Part of O'ahu's attraction is its mix of urban Honolulu with its nightlife and downtown beaches, and the rug-

ged North Shore, where serious surf and ethereal forests provide a perfect contrast for residents and tourists alike.

With approximately 905,000 residents, O'ahu has 70 percent of Hawaii's population. And Waikiki can always count on 40,000 tourists at any given time flying into Honolulu Airport.

It is, therefore, amazing that you rarely feel crowded in Waikiki.

Take Duke's, the legendary hot spot and gathering place on Waikiki Beach. It's probably the most crowded spot in Waikiki, but it manages to turn that feature into an asset.

Destination information provider Frommers.com describes Duke's as "Hip, busy, and on the ocean—this is what dining in Waikiki should be. There's hardly a time when the open-air dining room isn't filled with good Hawaiian music."

It is classic Americana merged with simple Hawaiian.

Connected to the newly furnished Waikiki beach walk and overlooking the best surf on the beach with a view of Diamond Head, Duke's is a great gathering spot for surfers, party-goers, and anyone who wants a meal in a care-free atmosphere.

Strolling north, another hot spot, the Tropics Bar & Grill, offers perhaps the best up-close eatery experience on the beach. Its lav-

ish, colourful drinks—Mai Tais, Chi-Chis, and Pina Colodas—are refreshing with their coconut milk, papayas, and pineapples.

Sipping these drinks "virgin," you can drink endlessly and still hop back on a stand-up surf board and savour the inter-connectedness between poolside and ocean.

SHOPPING

Part of this glamorous complex is the Holiday Hawaiian Hilton 22-acre beachfront resort. Sporting boutiques, bonsai gardens, flamingo-filled ponds, a plethora of restaurants, and a fleet of limousines ready to pick up the newly married or second honeymooners, it is a true in-town oasis.

A trolley ride down the broad expanse of Kalakua Avenue brings you to the Kalakua shopping promenade showing off its multi-million-dollar enhanced makeover. Kalakua has a spectacular feel at night, with fire-lit lanterns flickering against the bright, contemporary spotlights of newer chic shops like Chanel, Prada, and Billabong.

If brand shopping isn't your style and you prefer artisan products, consider a drop into the International Market-place. This Polynesian-style flea market displays jewelry ranging from Tahitian pearls to Australian pink opals to Hawaiian shells and corals.

Even the chain ABC store, with an outlet just about every

quarter mile downtown, provides a decent variety of fragrances, beach towels, flip flops and sun block—up to 75 SPF! For those with the munchies, there are dozens of varieties of delicious macadamia nuts.

As a Pacific paradise, no other island better represents the fusion of cultures and visitors than O'ahu. Its aloha (Welcome!) attitude has made Hawaii the most ethnically diverse state in the union.

Celebrating its 50th year of statehood last year following

years as a U.S. territory and history as a Hawaiian monarchy, Hawaii's legacy as a Polynesian American resort remains unrivalled.

With an architectural blend of past and present, O'ahu has managed to keep time standing still. Its pre-existing planning, street, and promenade layouts have now been merged with an over \$1 billion dollar makeover that began in 2001. It shows.

SURF'S UP!

Moving outside the downtown core to the east coast perimeter of the island brings you to Hanauma Bay, a national park and family fun spot that includes snorkeling among the sea turtles. The currents can be a little challenging, so lifeguards are on standby to watch that no one goes beyond the buoys.

A peaceful drive northeast reveals hidden coves, sandy beaches, and coconut groves.

Makapu'u Beach is a gathering place for body surfers. The parking lot is filled with Volkswagen Kombis, body boards, and surf-loving locals.

According to SoulSurfers.info, Hawaii is known not only for its great surfing but also as the place where surfing originated.

"No one can say for sure when it began, but there is no doubt that long before the 15th century this sport was absolutely perfected by people of the Sandwich Isles," the website says.

"He'enalu (that means "wave-sliding" in Hawaiian) was popular among both men and women. Surfing achieved a special status and respectability in ancient Hawaii. Renowned surfers were celebrated in song and dance and often enjoyed special privileges in royal circles."

Moving northward, the roads become higher and windier, and alligator rock formations appear on the shallow shores. The waves seem stronger and the white foam and surf more pronounced. You are entering the surfing mecca of the North Shore.

The town of Hale'iwa is a funky destination, offering a mixed bag of home-grown Hawaiian food and lore. Then comes the choice between two contrasting beaches on the northern stretches of O'ahu.

It is either first-world

tourism or rugged individualism.

FINDING LOST BEACH

The Turtle Bay Resort is a golfer's paradise. However, the spot worth searching for is "Lost" beach, the area where the television series "Lost" encamped for six seasons.

This area encompasses the Waimea Valley, 1,875 acres of archaeological history and strange mists. It has a Jurassic-style feel and some degree of remoteness, though beach houses dot the shoreline.

Locating Lost beach means meandering through odd combinations of landmarks like surfing communities, kids' camps, and pineapple plantations, so you need to have a persistent navigator to find it. Fortunately, we had an excellent navigator who "Lost" had its last aloha.

Mokule'ia beach, also known as Army beach, is not far from Schofield Barracks, which is where the Americans spotted the first Japanese flyover en route to bomb Pearl Harbor.

RETURNING TO THE PRESENT

Heading south to Honolulu, we are reminded that getting back to an urban island setting can be exciting.

Whether you are up for an elegant dinner at Keo's Thai, surrounded by aromas of giant plumerias, orchids, and yellow hibiscus, or going to Jimmy Buffet's for prime rib, Waikiki doesn't disappoint. It is perfect after small adventures.

And for those who may be taking a flight connection farther afield to Australia, a quick stopover to the Outback Steakhouse offers a sneak peak of bush-fare from the land down under.

Most of all, sunbathing, some R&R, and feeling the soft trade winds sweep across your skin, offers a final "aloha" before leaving this island paradise.

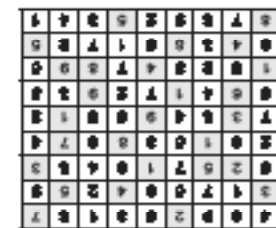
Anne Pillsbury obtained her undergraduate degree in Massachusetts, and did graduate studies in Pennsylvania. She worked for 12 years in The Philippines, Australia, and the USA with an international NGO. She is presently doing coursework in international development and allied healthcare.

Sudoku

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Fill in the boxes using numbers between 1 and 9 so that each column, each row, and each 3x3 square contain all nine numbers only once.

Exclusive Epoch Times puzzle by Sudoku Works. Sudoku puzzles and solutions at: www.sudokuworks.com.



This week's solution

Aged Oolong Tea

This award winning rare aged oolong (loc. chin) from Taiwan is carefully aged in bamboo baskets for 3 years. The tea is slow fermented, naturally oxidized to low in caffeine. A traditional tea preparation for living light on the stomach. Delicious in clear amber brew with a crisp, loose taste.

To learn more visit: www.fiveelementstea.com

White Dew Oolong

This award winning high mountain spring oolong (loc. chin) from Taiwan is carefully aged in bamboo baskets for 3 years. The tea is slow fermented, naturally oxidized to low in caffeine. A traditional tea preparation for living light on the stomach. Delicious in clear amber brew with a crisp, loose taste.

To learn more visit: www.fiveelementstea.com

The Epoch Times
Geography Guru™
"Growing your geography knowledge" Quiz #276

SAINTLY CITIES: Place in order, from west to east, the following North American cities:

- San Jose, California
- San Jose, Costa Rica
- Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
- St. John's, Newfoundland
- St. Louis, Missouri

Read The Epoch Times next week for the answer!

Answer for Quiz #275

TROPICAL CIRCLES: The Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn are near which number of degrees of latitude north and south (respectively) of the equator? 23