

Five Days in Maui

Written by Written by Vanessa Ghantous

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Pack your bags and head to Maui this summer. The typical family vacation involves four to five full days on island, so follow this itinerary and you can't go wrong!



Day 1: Finding Nemo, Maui style

Whether you choose the Atlantis Submarine underwater extravaganza off the Lahaina coast, a trip to the Maui Ocean Center in Maalaea, or a day on your own exploring tide pools (hint: there is a great tide pool in front of the Mana Kai Resort at the north end of Keawakapu Beach), there are many ways to get up close and personal with the varied sea life in Hawaii.

For lunch, consider oceanside dining at Mala in Lahaina, or a fresh fish taco at JAWZ in Kihei. For dinner, try Mama's Fish House—they will tell you all about the fish on the menu, including who caught it that morning.

www.atlantisadventures.com, www.mauiocencenter.com, www.malaoceantavern.com, www.jawzfish_tacos.com, www.mamasfishhouse.com



Day 2: Soar Through the Air With the Greatest of Ease

Want three ways to get a bird's-eye view of Maui? Head Upcountry to Skyline Eco-Adventures Zipline tours—strap on a harness, clip yourself onto the line, and fly! A different kind of flying can be found for all ages at Proflyght Paragliding, also located Upcountry—all you need are running shoes and a light jacket, and you can take flight over the slopes of Haleakala, joining the birds as you soar along the breezes. To enjoy views just as breathtaking, but with a seatbelt, try a Sunshine Helicopters tour of Maui. Fun for the whole family!

For lunch, Kula Lodge has a spectacular bi-coastal view of the central valley and West Maui Mountains, a fine menu of gourmet foods and a great gift shop full of local art. For dinner, sunset seating at Capische? at the Diamond Hawaii Resort in Wailea or at The Plantation House in Kapalua are two options for an incredible view with food to match.

www.zipline.com, www.paraglidehawaii.com, www.sunshinehelicopters.com, www.kulalodge.com, www.capische.com, www.theplantationhouse.com

Day 3: A Surfing Safari

A day at the beach on Maui can mean more than just soaking up the sun—Hookipa Beach Park, just outside of Paia, also offers high-energy and outrageous surf action. Bring a cooler and spend the day watching the pros take on the mighty North Shore waves on surf and kite boards.

Bonus: there is a protected area for the little ones to splash without the big waves to cramp their style. If you want to stay closer to your lodgings, you will find less intense surf (along with board rentals and fantastic surf lessons) in Kaanapali and Kihei.

For breakfast and lunch, keep the sand between your toes and head to the Moana Bakery and Cafe. Enjoy an “everything from scratch” menu here, including stuffed French toast and a wide selection of Benedicts. Or, for takeout and picnic-table-casual dining that will appeal to every beach bum on the North Shore, grab lunch at the Paia Fish Market. In Kihei, you can walk to either Surfside or 808 Deli and grab a gourmet sandwich. On the West Side, Gazebo is right on the beach and only open for breakfast and lunch. For dinner, Longboards at the Marriott on Kaanapali Beach has sand, surf and sunsets galore. Over on the South side, head to Lulu's for a relaxed night of fun and sunset views.

www.paiafishmarket.com, www.808deli.net, www.lulusmaui.com



Day 4: Only in Maui

The Hawaiian culture is rich with history, song, dance and traditions. Find a local farmers or crafters market to buy some souvenirs of your time here, and make sure to pick up a “hula girl” grass skirt, lei and coconut bra outfit for your next costume party. One Maui must-see is a traditional

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luau. While many resorts offer luaus, a few are heads and shoulders above the rest. See dinner suggestions below.

For lunch, go local and find a plate lunch. Embracing the many cultures that have made Maui their home, a plate lunch includes items with Asian, Polynesian and American influences. Da Kitchen in Kahului and Kihei have big plates at not-so-big prices, and on the West Side, Aloha Mixed Plate has a worldwide following. For dinner, go to a hukilau: You won't have to pull in the nets, but you will learn a lot about Hawaiian culture while enjoying a fabulous buffet with drinks included. Personal favorites include the Old Lahaina Luau as well as Honua'ula at the Wailea Beach Marriott.

www.da-kitchen.com, www.alohamixedplate.com, www.oldlahainaluau.com, www.honuaua-luau.com



Day 5: Happy Trails to You

Horseback riding is a fun way to explore Maui, and there are stables island-wide, from Hana to Kahana. If you make the drive out to Hana, you'll ride horseback right along the ocean's edge. The offerings on the West Side and Upcountry are more mountainous, with the coolest weather found up on Haleakala.

For lunch, hit the BBQ at Fat Daddy's in Kihei, or try the island's best-kept secret—Bruddah Willy's Sticky Ribs on Highway 30 in Waikapu, open very limited hours. For dinner, take the Sugar Cane Train along the Lahaina Coast, learning the history of the island along the way and enjoying a barbecue feast at the end of the line. Or you can go gourmet and try the prime rib at Makawao Steakhouse in the real paniolo town of Makawao. They still have the hitching posts to prove it!

www.fatdaddysmaui.com, www.sugarcanetrain.com,

If you have a red eye or overnight flight home, you have one extra day to enjoy. Leave your suitcases with your hotel's front desk or check in early at the airport and make the most of your last Maui No Ka Oi experience.

This abbreviated list shows how, with so many possibilities for dining and activities, there is truly something for everyone on Maui. If you take even a few of the suggestions outlined above, you will head back to the mainland with a belly full of food and a mind full of island memories, confident that you have experienced just a small sample of all Maui has to offer. Aloha!

Vanessa Gbantous, a seven-year resident of Maui, works as a travel consultant, making wholesale travel reservations for clients worldwide. She is also the mother of two small children. Read her blog at www.islandtravelgirl.blogspot.com.