

# KAUAI

GREAT ADVENTURES ON  
HAWAII'S GARDEN ISLE





Get set for adventures galore on the “garden island” of Kauai. Fly over canyons in a helicopter without doors, sail with dolphins along the cliff-cut Napali Coast, kayak up jungle rivers and tube down old sugar plantation canals. Oh, and explore beautiful tropical gardens too.

## JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV



DOUGLAS PEEBLES / ALAMY

RIPPLED WITH WATERFALLS, blanketed with rainforest and chiseled with jagged mountains and canyons – this is Kauai, perhaps the most stunningly scenic of the Hawaiian Islands. Nicknamed the “garden isle,” it blooms with bougainvillea, ginger and bird-of-paradise flowers.

For some excitement, take in Kauai’s beauty by helicopter. (Choose a “no doors” chopper – great pictures and more fun!) In 90 minutes, you can see the whole island from the air. To the west, you’ll soar over the 14-mile-long Waimea Canyon – dubbed “the Grand Canyon of the Pacific” – incised with dramatic red, purple and ochre cliffs. To the north, gape at the unspoiled Napali Coast, with 3,000-foot-high, emerald mountain cliffs rising from the ocean floor.

Movie directors love filming on Kauai. So your pilot may point out the valley cleft where the giant ape cradles the heroine in *King Kong* and the idyllic Hanalei Bay beach that George Clooney jogs along in *The Descendants*.

Sailing trips on large catamarans up the Napali Coast are also popular (just take

precautions if you’re prone to seasickness, as the swells can be wicked, especially in winter). Spinner dolphins like to race along at the bow. A snorkeling stop is often included – keep an eye out for sea turtles.

One of Kauai’s newest family-fun tours is tubing. Don a helmet with miner’s headlamp, jump into a big inflatable rubber tube and float down historic irrigation channels, hand-dug before 1870 to transport water to the island’s sugar cane fields. You’ll feel like a kid again as you bounce off the ditches’ lava rock walls, twirl about and – ooh, scary! – pass through five pitch-black tunnels.

What about beaches? Lucky you. The gold sand crescent of Kalapaki Beach is just a short walk from Nawiliwili Harbor, where cruise ships dock. Protected from the surf, its calm waters are ideal for swimming. Or try stand-up paddle boarding, the world’s hottest new watersport, where you stand on a surf board and paddle with a long oar (good core exercise); you can rent a board from a beach vendor.



DAVID P. SMITH / SHUTTERSTOCK

Kauai also has the only navigable rivers in Hawaii. That means great river paddling as well. The Wailua, Hule’ia and Hanalei rivers are calm picturesque waterways, sprinkled with scarlet sea-hibiscus flowers that have fallen off hau bushes. Kayaking or stand-up paddling combined with hiking, swimming and/or ziplining are offered by several outfitters. Wailua River adventures usually include a two-mile roundtrip hike to Sacred or Secret Falls. The 120-foot falls aren’t exactly a secret anymore, but hey, a cool dip in the freshwater pool at the base is still a treat. Or if you choose a Hule’ia River excursion (which starts near the cruise ship pier), make like Tarzan at the end by jumping from a rope zipline into a deep jungle pool.

**Above left:** Tubing the irrigation canal of an old sugar plantation.

**Above right:** Kauai’s Wailua Falls is most recognized from the opening credits of the long-running TV show *Fantasy Island*

**Facing page:** A helicopter ride offers breathtaking views of Kauai’s unspoiled Napali Coast, with its 3,000-foot-high, emerald cliffs rising from the ocean floor.





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JANICE MICALOV



GEORGE MICALOV

## THAT'S NOT ALL...

"Hang out with shady characters, do-gooders and beauty queens." So says the van's sign on the drive into the Allerton-McBryde tropical gardens. Even if you lack a green thumb, you'll love these 350-acre conservation grounds. On a guided tour, stroll through a cool bamboo forest and outdoor "rooms" with fountains and rippling pools. Also learn about blue-cheese stinky noni fruit (studied for its medicinal cancer-fighting properties) and "canoe" plants brought to Kauai by early Polynesians – and marvel at the towering Moreton Bay fig trees, whose gigantic roots hid the dinosaur eggs in *Jurassic Park*. And if you spend the evening in port, you can't beat dining on the island's fresh local fish. Try the Plantation Gardens restaurant (sit out on the lanai under whirling ceiling fans) or the sophisticated new Red Salt (don't skip their liliko'i ginger crème brûlée).

## SHOPPING

Local treats include estate-grown Kauai Coffee, hand-made soaps and candles infused with island fragrances like plumeria, coconut and mango, Auntie Liliko'i jams and passion fruit wasabi mustard, and hand-crafted pottery from Kilohana Plantation. To ensure you're getting products made on Kauai, go to [www.kauaimade.net](http://www.kauaimade.net) for *The Official Shopping Guide to Local Products Made With Aloha* – it lists the stores and products. (Pst... Walmart often has the best prices.) For a special memento, check out the leis and jewelry made with tiny rare shells by local artisans on the nearby "forbidden" island of Ni'ihau.

## GETTING AROUND

You'll need to rent a car to tour the island on your own. Book in advance and most rental agencies will send a free shuttle to meet you at the cruise ship terminal (the rental location is two miles away at Lihue airport). Taxis are available if you want to surf, snorkel or chill at Poipu Beach for the day. Once named "America's best beach," Poipu is a 20- to 30-minute drive from the cruise terminal. ■

Clockwise from top left:

Kayaking the Hule'ia River.

A high view of Kauai's Waimea Canyon, often called "the Grand Canyon of the Pacific".

Cruise ship entering Nawiliwili Harbor.

Kauai's spectacular National Tropical Botanical Gardens is home to the towering Moreton Bay fig trees, whose gigantic roots hid the dinosaur eggs in *Jurassic Park*.

## KAUAI FACT FILE

Population: About 68,000

Currency: U.S. dollars

Time Zone: Hawaii standard time (5 hours behind the U.S. East Coast, 6 hours behind during Daylight Savings)

Language: English

Climate: Year-round temperatures average 75 to 85 F. In winter, a light evening sweater or shawl is a must. Kauai gets more rain than other Hawaiian islands (that's why it's so lush). But it has several microclimates, and even if it's cloudy or rainy elsewhere on the island, Poipu is often sunny.

## WHO GOES THERE?

Norwegian Cruise Line's *Pride of America* cruises the Hawaiian Islands year-round on 7-night roundtrip sailings from Honolulu, overnighing in Kauai. The ship typically arrives at 8 am and leaves the next day at 2 pm. Other cruise lines and ships sailing to Kauai, departing from Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego or Vancouver, offering a variety of durations from 12-18 days are:

Carnival Cruise Lines – *Carnival Miracle*

Holland America Line – *ms Zaandam*, *ms Veendam*

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line –

*Radiance of the Seas*, *Rhapsody of the Seas*

Princess Cruises –

*Golden Princess*, *Grand Princess*, *Sapphire Princess*, *Star Princess*