

CRUISE HOLIDAYS

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FALL/WINTER 2014

HAWAII WATER ADVENTURES  
SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE  
NORTH TO ALASKA

FEATURING  
**DISTINCTIVE  
VOYAGES**

SEE PAGE 38



*Grand river  
cruising*



EXPLORING THE HIDDEN GEMS OF THE CARIBBEAN



# Get wet

## HAWAII'S BEST WATER ADVENTURES

JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV

Hula dancers and luaus. Golfing on ocean-view championship fairways. Pearl Harbor and drool-worthy shopping at Waikiki. Hawaii's signature sights and activities are well-known and easy to experience, whether you choose to stay put on land or cruise between its islands. Some of the best things to do, however, are water-based. Let's face it, you can't visit the Hawaiian islands and not dip a toe in the turquoise waters, right? Hawaii, in fact, offers oodles of water activities, from snorkeling to sailing – even tubing down historic sugar cane irrigation canals. So haul out your swimsuit, 'cause there's an ocean of watery fun just waiting for you in the Aloha state. Here are our top picks.







## SAILING AND WHALE WATCHING

There's something almost mystical about gazing up at the 4,000-foot emerald cliffs of Kauai's unspoilt Na Pali Coast from the deck of a sailboat. Ribboned by cascading waterfalls, this 17-mile stretch of gob-smacking scenery is right out of *Jurassic Park* (filmed here, along with *King Kong*). Sailing trips on large catamarans are popular. Spinner dolphins like to race along at the bow, and a snorkeling stop is often included – keep an eye out for sea turtles.

Want to see whales too? Thousands of humpbacks migrate each winter from Alaska to the warm shallow waters off Maui to mate and give birth. Between December and April, you can take a whale watching cruise. Sometimes the whales come so close to your boat you can even smell their fishy breath. We like the non-profit Pacific Whale Foundation, which supports its research with trips on catamarans and high-tech rafts, led by marine naturalists. Some vessels have hydrophones, so you can listen to whale songs too.



## HAWAII

### SNORKELING

Rainbow-hued parrotfish. Bright gold racoon butterflyfish. Black tangs. You see galaxies of tropical fish while snorkeling around the sunken volcanic crater of Molokini, two miles off-shore southwest of Maui. You might even see graceful manta rays and a white tip reef shark (don't worry, they won't bother you). Molokini's crescent-shaped rim poking up above water is a seabird sanctuary; underwater, it's a marine conservation area protecting over 250 marine species. The waters are usually crystal clear too. Catamaran snorkeling tours provide noodles and flotation devices, so you feel comfortable in the water. "Turtle Town," where Hawaiian green sea turtles congregate, and Olawalu Reef are also popular places to snorkel on Maui. On Oahu, Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve is a beautiful snorkeling cove with a white sand beach and fish galore. Watch a short video first at its Marine Education Center, then snorkel to your heart's content. You can rent gear there.



DSICHO / THINKSTOCK

### TAKE TO THE RIVER

Kauai has the only navigable rivers in Hawaii. That means great kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding or SUP (the world's fastest growing watersport). Sprinkled with yellow and scarlet sea-hibiscus flowers, the Wailua, Hule'ia and Hanalei Rivers are picturesque calm waterways – perfect for beginner paddleboarders. Tours often include hiking, swimming and making like Tarzan by jumping from a rope zip line into a deep jungle pool.

You can also go tubing on Kauai. 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 – oooh, scary! – pass through five pitch-black tunnels.



CDUGLAS/PEEBLES / ALAMY





## SURF'S UP!

Catch a wave on world-famous Waikiki Beach. Ever since Duke Kahanamoku and fellow “Waikiki Beach Boys” introduced surfing to the world in the 1920s, Waikiki has been known as one of the best spots in Hawaii to learn to surf. The waves are gentle – and you get great views of Honolulu’s iconic Diamond Head volcano as you’re gliding into shore. Choose from plenty of surf schools, which have staked their colorful boards in the sand. Lessons usually run two hours. And instructors promise you’ll pop up and ride a wave by the end of your first lesson. Really! To watch big wave surfing, head to Oahu’s north shore in winter. That’s when pro surfers tackle 30-foot monster waves at Pipeline, Sunset Beach and Waimea Bay. On Maui, it’s fun to watch windsurfers and kiteboarders somersaulting in the waves at Hookipa Beach Park, near funky Paia town.

EPICSTOCKMEDIA / SHUTTERSTOCK



## BACK ON LAND...

Some of these water activities and destinations are better at certain times than others. On Kauai, the surf picks up on Poipu in the summer months, but beautiful Hanalei Bay on the north coast is calm then for swimming. If it’s cloudy on Maui at Kapalua, you might find sun at Kihei and Wailea Beaches. That’s where your hotel concierge can come in handy, giving you specific tips. And of course, staying on the islands means more time to experience and enjoy what Hawaii offers, both on land (hey, time for a scenic helicopter flight over Kauai or strolling Lahaina town in Maui) and in the water.

## BASKING ON A BEACH

Shaking out your towel on a beach might not count as a water activity. But swimming definitely counts. And swimming and beaching go hand in hand. Hawaii boasts dozens of enticing beaches, but some standouts always make the “best beaches” lists. Lanikai Beach near Kailua on Oahu gets raves for its soft sand, calm clear water (ideal for kids) and swaying palm trees. Poipu Beach on Kauai’s south shore is also favored by families for its calm shallow waters. Endangered Hawaiian monk seals like to nap on this beach too. Closer to Kauai’s cruise ship dock is the gold sand crescent of Kalapaki Beach (just a short walk from Nawiliwili Harbor). Protected from the surf, it’s another superb swimming beach. At wild Makena Beach on Maui, the waves are just right for body surfing.

MARISA ESTIVILL / SHUTTERSTOCK





## WHERE WE STAYED

### GRAND HYATT KAUAI RESORT & SPA

Who would expect parrot talks to be a whimsical star attraction at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa? Held near the beach by a wildlife handler, they feature a different engaging macaw a day – leaving the other birds in the lobby atrium to squawk their jealous frustration at not being picked.

The five-star resort sprawls over 50 acres of lush oceanfront gardens on the sunny south side of Kauai. It offers something for everyone – like a gigantic free-form saltwater lagoon with a man-made beach, a snaking “lazy river” ozone pool with waterslide, and the charming Tidepools restaurant on stilts overlooking a large pond with colorful koi fish. There’s also an exquisite spa with outdoor lava rock showers, a popular children’s club and the adjacent 18-hole Poipu Bay Golf Club course, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. And hikers shouldn’t miss the cliff walk that winds along steep craggy cliffs, pounded by crashing waves below.

Guest rooms were renovated in 2011. The resort gets kudos for its green initiatives and voluntourism opportunities. Solar panels provide green energy and it recycles extensively. And you can volunteer for hands-on forest restoration work or beach clean-ups. Really, there’s much to like about this Grand Hyatt.



PHOTOS COURTESY HYATT HOTELS

## CRUISING PARADISE ON PRIDE OF AMERICA



NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE is the only company that offers year-round cruising in Hawaii on their ship the **Pride of America** which was purposely built for cruising these stunning islands. Sailing every week from Honolulu and offering nearly 100 hours of port time on her seven day cruises, the ship which carries around 2100 guests has a true Americana theme on board with many historic and whimsical touches throughout the ship.

*Pride of America* has freestyle dining with 18 restaurants, eight of which offer complimentary dining and nine bars and lounges, plus all kinds of entertainment and sports options. This is also an ideal choice for families with lots of larger and family staterooms and also many with balconies – all the better for whale-watching and seeing the fabulous scenery go by – such as the dramatic Na Pali Coast. The itinerary stops at the four main islands with overnight calls in Kahalui on Maui, and Nawiliwili, Kauai and visits in Hilo and Kona. True island hopping Hawaii style and a great chance to learn more about the culture of this wonderful state.

PHOTO COURTESY NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINES





## HEAVENLY HALEKULANI

Halekulani means “house befitting heaven” in Hawaiian. And the elegant Halekulani hotel in Honolulu certainly qualifies. Not because of its physical construction – the 453-room resort occupies five relatively standard buildings. But because of the serenity it manages to instill throughout the guest stay. For one, it sits on the quiet end of Waikiki Beach (but still tantalizingly close to luxury shops).

Rooms too are very Zen-like and calming. “Seven shades of white” is the theme of the décor. The carpets and sofa are ivory, sliding louvered doors opening onto the balcony are white, and the palest shade of blue-grey silk wallpaper covers a feature wall, adorned with a silver-framed, sea-themed picture. Big bathrooms are also tiled in all white with a marble countertop.

But the service is what really makes you cast off the burdens of the real world outside for a moment when you check in. You’re personally escorted to your room for the process (no standing in line at a busy front reception desk). And you’ll discover a welcome fruit bowl and box of Halekulani’s own chocolates to sweeten your stay. Wi-Fi is free too.

We chilled out relaxing by the pool. It has a beautiful mosaic of an orchid in the center, made from 1.2 million glass tiles. Beside the pool lies a large expanse of lawn, sprinkled with lounge chairs shaded by swaying palm trees. Attendants make sure you don’t lack for a drink or towel.

The sea-view Orchids dining room is lovely for brunch – crisp white tablecloths, gracious service by black-jacketed waiters (who shelter you from splashing water with a napkin when pouring ice water from a silver jug) and everything from sashimi to tempting desserts. Other guests think Halekulani is pretty heavenly too. It’s won a string of awards over the years and is consistently rated one of Honolulu’s best hotels.



PHOTOS COURTESY HALEKULANI