
Travel Guide Honolulu

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Quick view

Honolulu – a brief overview

Honolulu. The name alone is enough to conjure up images of white sands, lei garlands and days spent doing little more than wandering from swimming pool to cocktail bar and back again. The reality isn't always too far removed from the cliché, particularly in the ever-popular beach neighbourhood of Waikiki, but the city itself is the economic centre of the archipelago, as well as its capital, so there are plenty of museums and smart hotels to complement the sun loungers and music joints.

Sitting in the south of the dramatic island of Oahu, it's a far remove from most American cities – in more ways than one.



USA

General Information

Country overview

From its vast plains, snow-covered mountains, deep forests and strange rock formations, to soaring skyscrapers and a thunderous cultural scene, the USA is a collage of extremes. Nothing can prepare you for your first glimpse of Manhattan's unforgettable skyline, your first ride in a yellow cab, the ubiquitous hamburger joints, yawning expanses of prairie, the sweet strains of New Orleans jazz, or the neon-lit excesses of Las Vegas.

Marvel at the thunderous spectacle of Niagara Falls in northern New York, or seek an antidote to urban chaos amidst the flat farmland of the Midwest. Then there are the black hills of South Dakota, the dramatic mountain and ocean landscape of California's Pacific Coast Highway and the world-famous Grand Canyon.

Geography

Covering a large part of the North American continent, the USA shares borders with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The country has coasts on the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The State of Alaska, in the northwest corner of the US, is not part of the continental US; it is separated from the rest of the USA by Canada. Similarly, Hawaii is not part of the "lower 48" states; it lies in the central Pacific Ocean.

The country's dependent territories are offshore and have distinct geographies of their own; the majority are islands.

The third-largest country in the world (after the Russian Federation and Canada), the USA has an enormous diversity of geographical features, including mountains, plains, and coastal zones. Though there are many cities that are densely populated with more manmade features than natural ones, there are also vast rural areas that are far more sparsely populated. The climate ranges from subtropical to arctic, with a corresponding breadth of flora and fauna.

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 319 millions (estimate 2018)

Capital: Washington, DC.

Language

English, with significant Spanish-speaking minorities.

Currency

US Dollar (USD; symbol \$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of \$100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1, though the \$2 bill is rare and is not in high circulation. Coins are in denominations of \$1, and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 cents.

Electricity

120 volts AC, 60Hz. Plugs have two flat pins with or without a third round grounding pin.

Public holidays

Below are listed public holidays for the January 2019 – December 2020 period.

Note: States can recognize other days as state holidays that are not federal holidays.

2019

New Year's Day: 1 January 2019
Martin Luther King Day: 21 January 2019
President's Day: 18 February 2019
Memorial Day: 27 May 2019
Independence Day: 4 July 2019
Labor Day: 2 September 2019
Columbus Day: 14 October 2019
Veterans Day: 11 November 2019
Thanksgiving Day: 28 November 2019
Christmas: 25 December 2019

2020

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020
Martin Luther King Day: 20 January 2020
President's Day: 17 February 2020
Memorial Day: 25 May 2020
Independence Day: 3 and 4 July 2020
Labor Day: 7 September 2020
Columbus Day: 12 October 2020
Veterans Day: 11 November 2020
Thanksgiving Day: 26 November 2020
Christmas: 25 December 2020

All information subject to change.

**Travel etiquette**
How to fit in**Social Conventions**

Americans are renowned for their openness and friendliness to visitors. The wide variety of national origins and the USA's relatively short history has resulted in numerous cultural and traditional customs living alongside each other. In large cities, people of the same ethnic background often live within defined communities.

Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting in formal situations and in business meetings. As long as the fundamental rules of courtesy are observed, there need

be no fear of offending anyone of any background.

Gifts are appreciated if one is invited to a private home.

As a rule, dress is casual. High-end restaurants, hotels and clubs may require more formal attire.

Smoking is increasingly unpopular in the US; it is essential to ask permission before lighting up. Smoking is not allowed on city transport and restricted or forbidden in public buildings in most states. There will be a posted notice where no smoking is requested. An increasing number of states (including California and New York) have banned smoking altogether in bars, restaurants and many public places.



Health Health

Main emergency number: 911

Food & Drink

Food in the US is safe to eat, and the conditions under which food is prepared and served are regulated by city, state, and federal health and hygiene agencies. In many jurisdictions, it is mandatory for restaurants to have a certificate of health or hygiene, as well as the current grade they have been assigned, posted visibly.

Although America is famous for its fast food and obesity rates, the local and fresh food movement is very popular in many areas, especially cities, making it easy to eat healthy. A variety of options also makes it easy for people with special dietary needs to find food that suits them, whether their needs are due to health reasons or to religious requirements.

Tap water is considered safe to drink in the US and is often offered in restaurants before bottled water. Bottled water is available throughout the country, however, both in restaurants and shops, for those who prefer not to drink tap water.

Other Risks

The US is generally considered a safe destination for world visitors. Occasional outbreaks of disease, such as West Nile Virus (a mosquito-borne illness) and H1N1 have occurred in recent years, however. Frequent hand-washing and general practices of good hygiene are encouraged to protect oneself against all types of illness.

Another concern with regard to safety is the possibility of terrorist attacks such as the one that occurred on September 11, 2001. City, state, and federal agencies have stringent anti-terrorism practices in place, however, and direct threats are infrequent.



Phone calls & Internet Phone calls & Internet

Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing Code: +1

Telephone

Public telephones have become a rarity, but can still be found here and there. They take coins, telephone cards and credit cards. If you are planning to make regular use of public phones, it's best to purchase a prepaid calling card from one of the many U.S. providers.

Mobile Telephone

Not all European cell phones work on the American network, since it requires a tri-band or quad-band device. Full network coverage is not always assured outside densely populated areas. Roaming charges are high here, so it is often cheaper to buy a SIM card from a U.S. provider. Low-cost prepaid SIM cards for making calls inside the country can be ordered online before you travel.

Internet

Free Internet access via Wi-Fi is possible in many busy tourist spots. When using unencrypted public Wi-Fi networks, it is not advisable to enter passwords, credit card details or banking credentials. We recommend using VPN app or security software to check Wi-Fi hotspots.



Top 10 sights Top 10 sights in Honolulu

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

Where to come to delve into the rainbow world of Hawaiian culture and history, with exhibits spanning everything from the scientific and educational to stories of Pacific traditions and immigration.

1525 Bernice Street
Honolulu, HI 96817
USA
Tel: +1 808 847 3511

Opening times:
Wed-Mon 0900-1700

www.bishopmuseum.org

Kawaiaha'o Church

One of the longest-standing Christian places of worship on the archipelago – and often referred to as Hawaii's Westminster Abbey – this stone church remains a US National Historic Landmark.

957 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA
Tel: +1 808 469 3000

www.kawaiahao.org

Hawaiian Mission Houses

A gem of an attraction for history buffs, with three restored houses (two of which are the oldest in Hawaii) giving insight into life on the islands in the 19th century.

553 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA
Tel: +1 808 447 3910

Opening times:
Tue-Sat 1000-1600

www.missionhouses.org

Kuhio Beach Park

Arguably the best public beach park in town, it's well suited to everyone from surfers and swimmers to those who would rather pass the time of day catching rays or watching hula-dancing.

Kuhio Beach Park, Kalakaua Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Honolulu Museum of Art

With a vast collection of works spanning different periods of the state's history, with local artists appearing alongside heavyweights such as Gauguin and Picasso. It's spread across several venues.

900 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96814
USA
Tel: +1 808 532 8700

Opening times:
Tue-Sat 1000-1630
Sun 1300-1700

www.honolulumuseum.org

Waikiki Aquarium

The second oldest public aquarium in the entire USA, this still-popular attraction does a good job of showcasing the colour and variety of the marine life that populates Hawaii's reefs.

2777 Kalakaua Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA
Tel: +1 808 923 9741

Opening times:
Daily 0900-1630

www.waikikiaquarium.org

Hawaii Children's Discovery Center

A good option for those days when the sun might not be shining (perish the thought), this interactive centre-cum-museum has myriad activities and distractions for younger visitors.

111 Ohe Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA
Tel: +1 808 524 5437

Opening times:
Tue-Fri 0900-1300
Sat-Sun 1000-1500

www.discoverycenterhawaii.org

US Hawaii Army Museum

Occupying a former military installation, this museum gives the chance to see helicopters, tanks, weapons and now-deserted bunkers, while giving information about the archipelago's sometimes troubled past.

2131 Kalia Road
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA
Tel: +1 808 955 9552

Opening times:
Tue-Sat 0900-1700

www.hiarmymuseumsoc.org

Iolani Palace

Visit the country's only royal palace, which has been open as a museum for more than 35 years – the interiors have been lovingly restored to their former glories.

364 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA
Tel: +1 808 522 0832

Opening times:
Mon-Sat 0900-1600

www.iolanipalace.org

USS Bowfin

Ported in Pearl Harbor, this WWII submarine was put into service exactly a year after the notorious attack on the area and remains open to the public as an eye-opening historical artefact.

11 Arizona Memorial Drive
Honolulu, HI 96818
USA
Tel: +1 808 423 1341

Opening times:
Daily 0700-1700

www.bowfin.org



Shopping in Honolulu

Shopping in Honolulu

Key Areas

If you're in search of high-end designer goods, Waikiki's Luxury Row has an eye-popping range of premium outlets, from Chanel and Gucci to Bottega Veneta and Tiffany & Co. Close to Waikiki, meanwhile, the neighbourhood of Kapahulu has a number of smaller unique shops.

Markets

The Mahiku Farmers' Market takes place several times weekly at different spots around the city – it's a great place to try seasonal produce from the islands. You'll also find plenty to tease your tastebuds at the daily Yama's Fish Market (2332 Young Street), which despite its name sells everything from kalua pig to cookies.

Shopping Centres

Aloha Tower (1 Aloha Tower Drive) is a shopping and entertainment zone in downtown Honolulu, named after the landmark tower that still graces the skyline (it's possible to climb it and take a view of the city). Elsewhere, the Ala Moana Center (1450 Ala Moana Boulevard) is the largest shopping centre in Hawaii.



Restaurants

Restaurants in Honolulu

It's said by many that Honolulu feels more Asian than North American. What's certainly true is that the diverse cuisine on offer does credit to both continents, with food being one of the destination's undisputed highlights.

La Mer

Fine dining at the Halekulani hotel, with dishes inspired by flavours from the south of France.

2199 Kalia Road

Price: Expensive

Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Alan Wong's Honolulu

Run by a celebrity chef, this gives an inventive take on Hawaiian cuisine.

1857 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96826
USA

Price: Expensive

Steak Shack

All-day steak plates close to the beach – what's not to love?

2161 Kalia Road
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Price: Moderate

Lucky Belly

A ramen restaurant with wooden, unfussy interiors and legions of fans.

50 North Hotel Street
Honolulu, HI 96817
USA

Price: Moderate

Marukame Udon

More noodle goodness here, now with a Fort Street Mall location to complement its Waikiki outlet.

2310 Kuhio Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Price: Cheap



Nightlife Nightlife in Honolulu

Honolulu knows how to party, and whether you're after a sleek rooftop bar, a beachfront sundowner or a proper Hawaiian rump-shake, there are choices by the dozen. You'll generally find plenty of activity seven nights a week.

Mai Tai Bar

Sitting on top of the Ala Moana Mall, this lanai bar is great place to be at sunset.

1450 Ala Moana Boulevard
Honolulu, HI 96814
USA

Hawaii Theater Center

Built way back in 1922, this restored movie palace still stages a range of theatre and cultural events.

1130 Bethel Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA

Hula's Bar & Lei Stand

A famous gay-friendly beach bar and disco, with superb views over the Pacific.

Waikiki Grand Hotel
134 Kapahulu Ave
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Gordon Biersch Brewery

Hawaii's first brewpub, complete with ocean views and local music.

1 Aloha Tower Drive
Honolulu, HI 96813
USA

Nashville Waikiki

Something a little different – Hawaii's very own country, western and classic rock saloon.

2330 Kuhio Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA



Calendar of events Calendar of events

Cherry Blossom Festival

Honolulu's Cherry Blossom Festival was first held in 1949 and has been celebrating Japanese culture and heritage on Hawaii each year ever since. Events take place in various locations over a two-month period leading up to the festival finale: the grand Festival Ball where the Cherry Blossom Festival Queen will be crowned. Other events include heritage displays, fashion shows, a golf tournament, traditional Japanese musical performances and numerous cultural displays and exhibitions which celebrate Japanese culture, customs and heritage.

20 March - 14 April 2019
www.cbhawaii.com

Venue: Various venues and locations in Honolulu

Honolulu Festival

With an eclectic programme of cultural events, the Honolulu Festival is a weekend of entertainment and educational activities aimed at promoting understanding and

integration between the people of Hawaii and the Asia-Pacific region. During the festival visitors can take their pick from live music, dancing, art exhibitions, film screenings, lectures, school visits and a colourful street parade. This is arguably Hawaii's biggest and best-loved cultural festival.

8 - 10 March 2019

www.honolulufestival.com/en

Venue: Various venues and locations in Honolulu

Lei Day Celebration

Hawaii's most emblematic symbol is without doubt the lei – a garland of flowers, given as an expression of welcome and hospitality. May Day is dedicated to the lei and the traditions associated with it. The first Lei Day was held in 1927. From small beginnings it has grown into an event celebrated across the islands, but especially in Honolulu on Oahu. Events on this day include pageants and competitions for both lei queen and the making of the lei itself.

1 May 2019

Venue: Various venues

Pan-Pacific Festival

A fusion of Pan-Pacific cultures, this popular festival is a weekend of events ranging from a block party to a fun half marathon. But the main event is the colourful parade that starts at Fort DeRussy and then heads through town down Kalakaua Avenue, through the heart of Waikiki and ends at Kapiolani Park. Over 1,000 marchers, floats and bands participate in the parade and the streets are lined with cheering spectators. Another popular event that attracts big crowds is the Hula Festival, which is held in the Ala Moana Shopping Center and offers visitors a great introduction to this traditional Hawaiian dance.

June 2019

www.pan-pacific-festival.com

Venue: Various venues and locations in Honolulu

Aloha Festivals

The Aloha Festivals take place across six of the islands, celebrating Hawaii's music, dance and history. More than 300 events make up the festivals and help to preserve the unique island traditions. On each island, celebrations commence with "Oahu", where a king, queen, prince, princess and attendants are chosen, all of them of Hawaiian descent. The investitures are wonderfully evocative occasions of much colour and ceremony including the blowing of conch shells and waving of feather standards. Aloha Festivals incorporate the strong Pacific, Asian and Western cultural influences on the islands, epitomised by everything from Japanese Bon Dance to the traditional hula. Music, song, dance, traditional rituals and pageantry in native costume, floral parades, sports and competitions are among the many events.

September 2019

www.alohafestivals.com

Venue: Various venues and locations throughout the Hawaiian Islands



Hotels

Hotels in Honolulu

It's little surprise that the majority of tourist hotels in Honolulu tend to be congregated around Waikiki, where the Hawaiian lifestyle of legend is at its most apparent. There are good options for all budgets.

Halekulani

One of the best known luxury hotels in Hawaii, with a beach location.

2199 Kalia Rd
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Category: Expensive

Trump Hotel Waikiki Beach Walk

A five-star, 462-room property with all the usual luxury trimmings.

223 Saratoga Rd
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Category: Expensive

Coconut Waikiki Hotel

A much-praised boutique hotel with a pool, fitness centre and free continental breakfast.

450 Lewers St
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Category: Moderate

The Modern Honolulu

Previously voted Hawaii's best boutique hotel, this is a chic place to stay.

1775 Ala Moana Blvd
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Category: Moderate

Castle Waikiki Grand Hotel

A nicely situated budget option, with easy access to the beach and Honolulu Zoo.

134 Kapahulu Avenue
Honolulu, HI 96815
USA

Category: Cheap