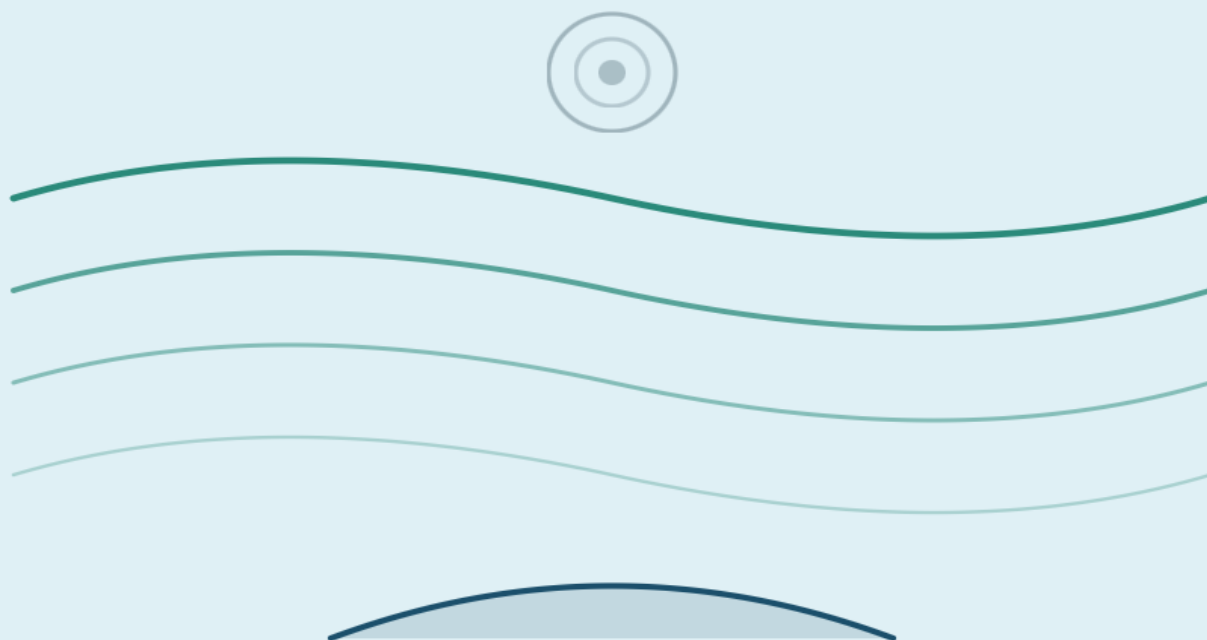




48 HOURS IN

Honolulu

COASTAL · MISTY · FREE

WELCOME

Welcome to Honolulu.

Honolulu carries the double identity of a major American city and a Polynesian capital, and the two rarely compete for attention — they layer. Waikiki's high-rises and Diamond Head's volcanic silhouette sit a few minutes apart, and the city's food, from plate lunches to omakase counters, moves fluidly between Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Portuguese influence in a way few American cities can match.

What most first-time visitors miss: Honolulu rewards a visitor who leaves Waikiki. Kaka'ako's mural-covered warehouse blocks, the Chinatown historic district, and Diamond Head's crater-rim views are all a short bus ride or rideshare from the beach, and each offers a genuinely different version of the city than the resort strip.

Honolulu is well suited to solo travel — consistently ranked among the safer major U.S. cities, with a beach culture built around solo surf lessons, solo sunset walks, and easy solo dining at plate-lunch counters and food trucks that make eating alone entirely unremarkable.

Day One · Diamond Head · Waikiki Beach · Kaka'ako

6:30 AM

Diamond Head State Monument

Diamond Head Road, 10 minutes from Waikiki: a 1.6-mile round-trip hike along the rim of a 300,000-year-old volcanic crater to a lookout over Waikiki and the Pacific. Uneven surface, some stairs and a tunnel section. Entry \$5 pedestrian, reservations required online in advance.

Insider Tip: Book the earliest available reservation slot — both for cooler temperatures and to beat the crowds that build steadily through the morning. Bring water; there's none on the trail.

9:30 AM

Waikiki Beach

Kalakaua Avenue: the world-famous crescent of sand beneath Diamond Head, calm and swimmable, with beginner-friendly surf breaks. A beginner surf lesson (many operators along the beach, \$75–95) is a genuinely good solo activity here — lessons are typically small-group with an instructor.

Insider Tip: Board and lesson operators cluster near the Duke Kahanamoku statue — compare a couple before booking, and ask specifically for a small-group or semi-private lesson if solo attention matters to you.

12:30 PM

Lunch: Duke's Waikiki

2335 Kalakaua Avenue: an open-air beachfront restaurant with genuinely good seafood and unbeatable ocean views, a local and visitor favorite alike. \$22–38, bar seating available.

Insider Tip: Sit at the outdoor bar rather than the dining room — same view, faster service, and an easy solo-dining setup.

2:30 PM

Kaka'ako Murals

Roughly bounded by Ala Moana Boulevard and Cooke Street: an ever-changing outdoor gallery of large-scale murals from local and international artists, covering entire warehouse walls across several blocks. Free, self-guided, genuinely excellent for a solo photo walk.

Insider Tip: The mural collection changes regularly — even a repeat visitor sees something new. Pair the walk with a coffee or food truck stop nearby.

5:00 PM

Ala Moana Beach Park

Between Waikiki and downtown: a long, calm, locally-favored beach with a protected swimming lagoon and excellent sunset views, generally less crowded than Waikiki itself.

Insider Tip: Locals come here specifically to avoid the Waikiki crowds — a good late-afternoon alternative if you want a quieter beach hour before dinner.

7:30 PM

Dinner & Sunset: Royal Hawaiian's Mai Tai Bar

2259 Kalakaua Avenue, the “Pink Palace of the Pacific”: an oceanfront outdoor bar at the hotel where the Mai Tai was reportedly invented. Order one at sunset for a genuinely iconic Waikiki evening, then walk to any nearby restaurant for dinner. \$18–24 for the cocktail.

Insider Tip: Arrive 20–30 minutes before sunset to get an oceanfront table — it fills up fast and the light is the entire point.

Day Two · Pearl Harbor · 'Iolani Palace · Chinatown

7:30 AM

Pearl Harbor National Memorial

1 Arizona Memorial Place, 25 minutes from Waikiki: the USS Arizona Memorial and visitor center, a sobering and historically significant site honoring the 1,177 crew members lost on December 7, 1941. Free entry; the boat tour to the memorial itself requires a timed ticket, reserved online in advance or by arriving early for a same-day walk-in slot.

Insider Tip: Reserve tickets online well ahead — same-day walk-in tickets are limited and go quickly. Arrive at opening if you didn't book in advance.

11:00 AM

'Iolani Palace

364 S King Street, downtown: the only official residence of royalty on U.S. soil, home to the Hawaiian monarchy until its overthrow in 1893. Guided and self-guided tours cover the restored state rooms and the monarchy's history. Admission \$27.

Insider Tip: The self-guided audio tour lets you move at your own pace, which suits a solo visitor better than the scheduled guided tour if your time is tight.

1:00 PM

Lunch: Chinatown

Downtown Honolulu's historic Chinatown district: a dense grid of noodle shops, dim sum counters, and the Maunakea Marketplace food court, where several vendors serve fast, excellent plate lunches for \$10–15.

Insider Tip: The Maunakea Marketplace food court is the easiest solo-lunch format here — order at any stall, find a table, no wait.

3:00 PM

Honolulu Museum of Art

900 S Beretania Street: a genuinely strong collection spanning Asian, Hawaiian, and Western art across a series of courtyard-connected galleries. A quiet, unhurried counterpoint to a beach-heavy trip. Admission \$20.

Insider Tip: The courtyard cafe is a pleasant place to sit with a coffee between gallery wings — worth building in extra time.

5:30 PM

Kailua or Lanikai Beach (if time allows)

20 minutes from Waikiki on the Windward Coast: calmer, less crowded, and arguably more beautiful than Waikiki, with turquoise water and a view toward the Mokulua Islands. A rideshare is the most practical way to reach it for a short window.

Insider Tip: If your schedule is tight, Ala Moana Beach Park from Day One is the closer, easier substitute — save Kailua/Lanikai for a trip with slightly more flexibility.

7:30 PM

Dinner: Sansei Seafood Restaurant & Sushi Bar

Multiple locations, including Waikiki: creative rolls and fresh sashimi from a well-regarded local chain, popular with visitors and locals alike. \$30–50, sushi bar seating available.

Insider Tip: Ask for a seat directly at the sushi bar — the chefs are personable and it's the most natural solo-dining setup on the menu.

WHERE TO EAT

Honolulu's Table

WAIKIKI

Duke's Waikiki

WAIKIKI · \$\$\$

Open-air beachfront seafood with unbeatable ocean views — sit at the outdoor bar.

Royal Hawaiian Mai Tai Bar

WAIKIKI · \$\$

Oceanfront sunset cocktails at the hotel where the Mai Tai was reportedly invented.

Sansei Seafood Restaurant & Sushi Bar

WAIKIKI · \$\$\$

Creative rolls and fresh sashimi — ask for a sushi bar seat.

CHINATOWN & DOWNTOWN

Maunakea Marketplace

CHINATOWN · \$

A food court of fast, excellent plate lunches — the easiest solo lunch format in the city.

Honolulu Museum of Art Cafe

DOWNTOWN • \$\$

A quiet courtyard cafe, ideal for a slow solo coffee break between galleries.

BARS & NIGHTLIFE

Hula's Bar & Lei Stand

WAIKIKI • \$\$

Long-running LGBTQ+ bar with drag shows and ocean views — a genuinely welcoming solo-friendly spot.

RumFire

WAIKIKI • \$\$

A relaxed oceanside lounge for a chill solo evening drink.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Honolulu

MODE	COST	NOTES
TheBus	\$3/ride, \$7.50 day pass	Oahu's extensive public bus network covers Waikiki, downtown, and the Windward Coast.
Walking	Free	Waikiki, Kaka'ako, and Chinatown/downtown are all walkable within themselves.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best for Diamond Head, Pearl Harbor, and Kailua/Lanikai Beach.
Rental Car	\$45–75/day	Useful if adding North Shore or Windward Coast day trips beyond this itinerary.
Waikiki Trolley	Day pass ~\$60	Hop-on hop-off routes connecting Waikiki to major attractions; convenient but pricier than TheBus.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (HNL) is 20–30 minutes from Waikiki — Uber (\$30–45) or TheBus.
Best Time	April–June and September–November: pleasant weather, fewer crowds than peak winter and summer. December–March is whale-watching season but also the busiest and priciest.
Solo Dining	Plate lunch counters, food trucks, and sushi bar seating make solo eating easy and unremarkable throughout the city.
Reservations	Book Pearl Harbor tickets and the Diamond Head hiking reservation online well in advance — both are frequently sold out same-day.
Ocean Safety	Check daily ocean and surf conditions before swimming — conditions vary significantly by beach and season, especially on the North Shore in winter.
Useful Apps	DaBus2 (TheBus real-time tracker), Uber, National Park Service app for Pearl Harbor tickets.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- Reserve Diamond Head hiking entry online — required in advance, no walk-up entry
- Book Pearl Harbor USS Arizona Memorial tickets online well ahead of your visit
- Book a surf lesson in advance if visiting during peak season
- Bring reef-safe sunscreen — standard sunscreen is banned at some beaches and reserves
- Carry cash for Chinatown's Maunakea Marketplace food stalls
- Check surf and ocean conditions before swimming at any beach
- Download DaBus2 for real-time TheBus tracking

GoingSolo.Life

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/honolulu

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.

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