



Neighbor Island Travel Guide

Overview: Traveling Beyond O'ahu

If you're planning to extend your stay before or after the conference, consider visiting a **neighbor island** to experience Hawai'i's rich diversity of landscapes, ecosystems, and communities.

Interisland Travel Snapshot

- **Air Travel** is the primary mode of island hopping. Both [Hawaiian Airlines](#) and [Southwest Airlines](#) offer **daily flights** connecting Honolulu (HNL) with:
 - Kahului (OGG) – **Maui**
 - Kona (KOA) or Hilo (ITO) – **Hawai'i Island**
 - Līhu'e (LIH) – **Kaua'i**
- Flights are short (30–50 min) and frequent. October is shoulder season, so availability is generally good, but **early booking is still advised**.

Travel Planning Tips for October 2026

- **Pre/Post-Conference Windows:** Ideal side-trip windows are:
 - **Before:** October 4–7
 - **After:** October 11–13+
- **Weather in October:**
Generally dry on leeward sides (Waikīkī, Kona, Līhu'e), with potential rain on windward areas (Hilo, Hāna). Surf may begin to rise on north shores.
- **Flight Booking Advice:**
 - For best results, plan a 2–4 day trip per island, and avoid same-day returns unless absolutely necessary.
 - Interisland flights: Book 4–6 weeks out.
 - Book "open jaw" itineraries (e.g., HNL → LIH → OGG → HNL) to avoid backtracking.
- **Car Rentals:**
Highly recommended on neighbor islands. Book early, especially for Hāna or Volcano access.

Choose Your Island Adventure

Hawai'i Island

Best for: Volcanic landscapes, astronomy, coffee farms, and cultural depth.

Must-Do Experiences:

Natural & Cultural Highlights

- **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park** — Explore craters, lava tubes, and active volcanic terrain that continues to shape the island.
- **Mauna Kea Stargazing** — Observe the universe from one of the world's premier astronomy locations (note altitude restrictions and 4WD requirement).
- **Pu'uuhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park** — Step into ancient Hawaiian refuge grounds and cultural sites.
- **Lyman Museum & Mission House (Hilo)** — Learn about Hawai'i's natural history and the island's early cross-cultural evolution.

Agriculture & Local Industry

- **Kona Coffee Farm Tours** — Visit estate farms and learn about one of the world's most distinctive coffee-growing regions.
- **Hāmākua Ag-Based Businesses** — Explore small-scale sustainable farms producing macadamia, chocolate, and tropical fruit along the scenic Hāmākua Coast.
- **Hilo Farmers Market** — A local hub for produce, artisans, and regional flavors.

Innovation, Energy & Research

- **OTEC / Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA)** — Near Kailua-Kona, this state innovation park hosts research in ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC), aquaculture, algae biofuels, and sustainable technology.
 - **Businesses & Facilities at NELHA:**
 - *Kona Deep* (deep ocean bottled water)
 - *Cyanotech / Nutrex Hawaii* (microalgae and nutritional supplements)
 - *Ocean Era* (marine aquaculture innovation)
 - *Hawai'i Ocean Science & Technology Park* visitor education area

Marine & Outdoor Adventures

- **Manta Ray Night Snorkel (Kona)** — Swim alongside graceful manta rays under the stars.
- **Kahalu'u Bay Snorkeling** — Easily accessible coral reef with sea turtles and local reef ecology.
- **'Akaka Falls State Park** — Lush rainforest trails to one of the island's most photogenic waterfalls.

Professional or Thematic Visits for Economic / Land-Use Interests

- **University of Hawai'i at Hilo – College of Agriculture, Forestry & Natural Resource Management** — Research on sustainable land use and tropical agriculture.
- **Kohala Institute at 'Iole** — Nonprofit educational campus dedicated to land stewardship and sustainability in North Kohala.
- **Waimea Agricultural & Ranching Tours** — See how traditional paniolo (Hawaiian cowboy) culture intersects with modern land management.

Suggested stay: 3 nights (Kona side for coast + Volcano side for national park)

Kaua'i

Best for: Lush scenery, waterfalls, hiking, and quiet beauty.

Must-Do Experiences:

- **Waimea Canyon** — Known as the “Grand Canyon of the Pacific.”
- **Nā Pali Coast Tour** — Boat, kayak, or helicopter to view towering sea cliffs.
- **Limahuli Garden & Preserve** — A model of native ecological restoration.
- **Kauai Chocolate Farm Tours** — Lydgate Chocolate is recognized (3X) as one of the World's Best at the Cacao of Excellence Awards in Paris. Discover chocolate paradise on this 5th generation Kauai Cacao Farm.

Suggested stay: 2–3 nights (Consider staying near Poipu or Princeville for access to south or north shore)

Maui

Best for: Coastal drives, sunrise vistas, waterfalls, and snorkeling.

Must-Do Experiences:

- **Sunrise and hiking at Haleakalā** — Reserve sunrise admission, camp sites or overnight cabins in advance; unforgettable views above the clouds; short hikes along the crater rim, all-day hikes across the crater floor, and overnight visits offer a variety of options to see this otherworldly landscape.
- **Road to Hāna** — Full-day tropical drive with waterfalls and hidden beaches.
- **Snorkeling at Molokini Crater** — Offshore reef with crystal-clear water and striking marine life.

- **Sunset Cruise or Scenic Sail** – Maui offers a wide variety of ocean excursions; the islands of Maui Nui are even more beautiful when seen from the water.
- **ʻĪao Valley and Kepaniwai Park**– Lush mountain valley for scenic views and hiking, and cultural heritage sites for exploring.
- **Upcountry Farms** – Including `Ulupalakua Ranch Store and Grill and the Tasting Room at Maui Wines, Ali`i Kula Lavendar Farm, Maui Bees, O`o Farm, Surfing Goat Dairy, and Ocean Vodka; most take reservations
- **Small Town Charm** – Stroll, shop, or dine in any of Maui’s charming small towns, including Pa`ia, Makawao, Ha`iku/Pauwela, Kula/Waiakoa, and Wailuku.
- **Photo-Worthy Ho`okipa Beach Overlook** – to see world-class windsurfing, kite surfing, foiling, and surfing, and sometimes turtles on the beach; stop by here on your way to or from Hana, or if you visit Pa`ia.

Suggested stay: 2–4 nights (Kahului or Kihei base recommended for closest access to major sites; Wailea and Ka`anapali offer complete resort amenities)

Important Note on Lahaina:

In August 2023, Lahaina Town suffered a devastating wildfire that caused significant loss of life, historic sites, and community infrastructure. Portions of Lahaina remain may still be closed to the public in 2026 as the community continues its recovery and rebuilding efforts. Please respect all signage, access restrictions, and requests from local residents. Travelers are encouraged to support locally owned businesses and to travel with empathy and awareness of the ongoing healing process.

Responsible Travel in Hawai‘i

As a guest in Hawai‘i, you play a role in helping protect its unique culture and fragile ecosystems. Here are trusted resources and key principles for **pono (right, responsible)** travel:

Key Principles

1. **Respect the Land (Aloha ‘Āina)** – Stay on marked trails, avoid disturbing wildlife, and do not remove rocks or sand.
2. **Honor Hawaiian Culture** – Learn about place names, language, and cultural protocols.
3. **Support Local Businesses** – Choose Native Hawaiian- or locally-owned tours, shops, and restaurants.
4. **Reduce Environmental Impact** – Use reef-safe sunscreen, avoid plastic waste, and conserve water.
5. **Be Mindful of Sacred Sites** – Heiau (temples), fishponds, and other wahi pana (storied places) deserve reverence.

Trusted Resources

Resource	Description	Link
Mālama Hawai‘i	State-wide initiative promoting regenerative travel	 https://www.gohawaii.com/malama
Travel Pono (GoHawaii)	Guidelines for respectful tourism	 https://www.gohawaii.com/travelpono
Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (HTA)	Official site with insights on responsible travel	 https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/
Hawaiian Cultural Etiquette Guide	Practical tips on behavior and respect	 https://www.hawaii-guide.com/culture
Reef-Safe Sunscreen Info	What’s legal & safe to wear in the ocean	 https://health.hawaii.gov/ (search: reef-safe sunscreen)