

Aloha, Wanderlust

WH Features Editor Alex Davies hits Hawaii to party like a yogi at the ultimate wellness festival

The hip-hop beat kicks in as the crowd moves on the grass in front of the main stage. A guy in jeans, a cap and hipster specs is MCing and rapping in a laid-back US drawl, as his fans cheer along between poses. Poses? That's right. After all, we're not at your typical music gig. This crowd is doing Cats and Cobras in the name of Wanderlust, one of the biggest yoga festivals in the world.

PARTY ON
Wanderlust's night-time offerings included DJs as well as musician Corinne Bailey Rae.



The guy on stage is superstar MC Yogi, who fuses yoga with hip-hop, electronic and reggae music. He's one of the headliners for Wanderlust, on the Hawaiian island of O'ahu, where I've spent the past few days. The franchise has been going for a decade now, holding events around the US and in cities from Hamburg to Melbourne.

Hosted by Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore, this incarnation of the festival offers a dreamy itinerary of what Wanderlust calls 'transformational experiences'. There's acroyoga, SUP yoga, slackline yoga, equine yoga (yep, with horses – sadly already booked out), meditation, horseback riding on the beach and silent discos. There's also workshops led by chakra experts, sound healers, musicians and thought leaders. Over a fairylight-lit farm-to-table dinner one night, I meet women who shared tears and stories in an empowering session by *Eat, Pray, Love* author Elizabeth Gilbert.

Rather than greasy burger stands, the main stage looks out onto food

stalls serving fresh poke, tacos, acai bowls and even avo toast. Crystals, bohemian clothes and jewellery replace the usual band-merch stands. I'm intrigued by a green juice spiked with CBD oil. Derived from a cannabis compound – not the one that gets you high – the oil is growing in popularity overseas and, while research is ongoing, it's tipped to ease anxiety as well as post-workout aches. It's not yet legal in Australia, so I take my chance to try it. (Verdict? No different to a regular green juice.)

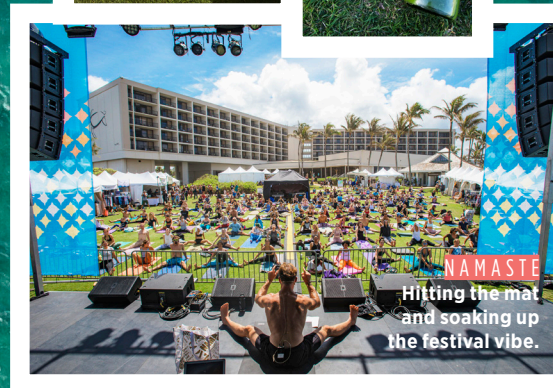
This is all happening with an ocean backdrop. Hawaii's North Shore is known for its easy-going vibe, epic waves (lots of surf comps are held there) and awe-inspiring countryside – *Blue Crush*, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* and *Jurassic Park* were filmed there or close by. Turtle Bay Resort



SURF'S UP
What a spot for catching waves as the sun sets.



THERE HE IS!
Turtle magic on my kayak.



NAMASTE
Hitting the mat and soaking up the festival vibe.

itself boasts kilometres of pristine beaches. Each evening, crowds gather at the resort's outdoor bar to watch surfers catch their last waves before the sun disappears in a display of pink and orange as vibrant as the cocktails we're holding.

One day, I'm up at 6am for a small-group kayak tour of nearby Kawela Bay, home to green sea turtles. As we start to glide through the water, lifting our oars to let the creatures swim undisturbed, the sky opens and unleashes a downpour. The shower gives way to a rainbow and a pinch-myself moment – I may be drenched, but I'm in one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, surrounded by turtles. I could stay out there for hours, but it's time to get back to the resort. Besides, there's a chakra-balancing breathwork session to get to.

In that session I meet two women who live on the island and are checking out the festival for the day. They've been best friends for decades. Later, a twentysomething Canadian photographer and trainee yoga instructor introduces herself while we watch live music on the main stage. I meet mums with daughters, couples, groups of mates and a recently divorced woman buzzing after a chat with Gilbert. This is a place for anyone and everyone, whether you're a yogi or not. It may just be the CBD talking, but as I loo, dance and Downward Dog along to MC Yogi's final track, I realise I really have drunk the Wanderlust Kool Aid. *wh*

STAYED...

At The Kahala Hotel & Resort for a night after landing in Honolulu. Think luxe, friendly and with a beautiful beach and bay. Try the shellfish ravioli at the hotel's Hoku's restaurant and local dish Loco Moco (meat, rice, egg and gravy) at Plumeria Beach House. Then on to Turtle Bay Resort. With pools, food spots, golf courses and activities including kayaking and surf lessons, plus heaps of trails to explore, it has an everything-catered-for feel that means you could spend a whole holiday there if you wanted to.



RELAXED...

In a private cabana at The Kahala Spa for a post-flight treatment: Kala Ko'iKo'i Lomilomi. Think two whole blissful hours of exfoliation, massage, warm stones and me nodding off at times. Heaven.



I ATE...

At the famous North Shore food trucks on the drive to Turtle Bay. A bustling institution, the line-up includes shrimp, roasted corn, fresh coconuts, poke, barbecue meats and shaved ice. Yum.



Flight Plan

Women's Health travelled to Hawaii with Hawaiian Airlines, which flies to Honolulu from Sydney and Brisbane. (Plus, it connects the Hawaiian Islands with 160 local flights daily.) You're looking at about nine hours in the air from the east coast, so take advantage of the in-flight wellness series, *Ola Pono*. It includes yogi-led breathing and stretching videos to promote circulation and ease stiffness, plus mindfulness and yoga content for kids. Book flights at hawaiianairlines.com.au.