

Take a Hawaiian Vacation Like a Local on the Big Island

The first thing people say when they are about to go on vacation is how excited they are to be immersed in the culture. Little do they know that they will soon embark on the same, postcard vacation that everybody else experiences. How exactly do you take an authentic vacation and avoid big tourist companies?

How to Avoid the Big Crowds

The first thing you will have to do is avoid where the big crowds go. The flocking groups in certain seasons like summer and spring usually indicate tourists. Let's take a look at some things you can do to avoid big money grab tourist spots on the Big Island.

Watch for Where the Cruise Ships Stop

One of the biggest hints of where the tourists will be is to know where the cruise ships will be stopping. Flocks of people will be filling the streets, shops, and restaurants near the ports since the tourists only have a few hours usually to explore the island. You can be sure that any amenities near the cruise ship stops are geared towards tourists and not locals. If you want to experience authentic Hawaii, avoid these areas.

Some of the main cruise ship stops on the Big Island include...

- Hilo port
- Kona harbor
- Kawaihae port

What Are Some of the Top Tourist Spots on the Big Island?

Another way to avoid tourist enhanced areas is to know what the main tourist attractions are in Hawaii. However, it is worth noting that even though the listed attractions are filled with tourists, some of them will still offer amazing experiences, such as the [Hawaii Volcano National Park](#). It might be worth considering taking a day out of your vacation to embrace some of the amenities that are top tourist spots (there is a reason why everyone visits these places!)

I have listed some of the top tourist spots below.

- Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
- Waipio Valley and Overlook
- Kona Coffee Farm
- Pu'uuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park

- Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden
- Kahalu'u Beach Park snorkeling
- Dolphin Quest Hawaii - Swim with Dolphins

Where Do the Locals Hang Out?

Now that we have looked at how to avoid the big crowds, it is time to get to the good stuff. Where do the locals go to enjoy their beautiful island?

Local Restaurants on the Big Island

Hawaii offers some fantastic cuisine. Here I will cover some amazing restaurants and cafe's that won't be infested with tourists.

Tin Shack Bakery

The best thing early in the morning on a bright, sunny day is a good cup of coffee. The Tin Shack Bakery is a fun little cafe that you can visit to experience some of the best pastries that locals can't get enough of. If you want to go the full mile, be sure to buy some locally farmed quail eggs sold at the shop.

Moon and Turtle Restaurant

If you are craving some locally sourced food, check out the Moon and Turtle restaurant. The chefs prepare food sourced from local dairy, pork, and cattle farms as well as local seafood markets. Only able to hold around 40 customers, the restaurant provides intimate seating and a relaxing environment away from the hustle and bustle of popular tourist restaurants. (The smokey sashimi is a loved menu item.)

Uncle's Awa Club and Hoolaulea Farmers Market

This farmers market will be a wonderful place to visit if you want a taste of local life. Every Wednesday around 5 pm, the quiet neighborhood sparks to life with live music and food vendors. The market will be your place to purchase any fresh produce you want to take back to your resort or hotel. Lastly, if you're going to bring some gifts back home, there will be some unique items like jewelry and clothing that you won't find anywhere else.

Favorite Activities on the Big Island

Now that we know some of the best places that locals eat, it is time for some fun. What do the locals do to pass the time?

Honolii Beach Park

Even if you are not a surfer, this will be a spot you won't want to miss. The Honolii beach park is where many of the locals go to surf. Grab some coffee, pack your camera, and head out to the beach to watch the locals rip the waves.

Kona Henna Studio

This studio is a small business that knows some locals by name. Kona Henna Studio started out at farmers' markets and grew into the loved shop they are today. It radiates a welcoming environment and offers beautiful henna designs. They have many designs to choose from, but you can also ask for a more personalized design.

Lanai Cat Sanctuary

You can be sure that you won't see any tourists at the Lanai Cat Sanctuary. The spot is a favorite to all cat lovers and is the place to go when residents want to adopt a cat. If you are looking for a more casual, laid back activity, then head to the sanctuary and pet some cats!

The Puna Trail

Even though there may be some adventurous tourists taking on the trails of the Big Island, you will mostly spot locals hiking alongside you. Check out the puna trail for a taste of authentic Hawaiian adventure. The hike will lead you to a remote white sand beach. It is so remote because there is no way to drive to this beach; you can only hike to it because it is private land.

Final Thoughts

Even though the Big Island may seem infiltrated with tourist rich amenities and shops, that makes up very little of the island. All it takes is a bit of research and a few chats with the locals to find authentic experiences. Walk down some lively streets like Kailua-Kona Alii Drive or Downtown Hilo, find a few hidden cafes, and take up some hiking trails. The next thing you know, you'll be living like a local!