





sitting atop a 9'6" surfboard in Turtle Bay on Oʻahu's famous North Shore, waiting for a wave. Behind me, palm trees line the shoreline, shading wide sandy beaches and hardened black lava. My feet dangle in the warm, clear water and twirl like eggbeaters for stabilization, while waves roll under me, too small to ride. I stare out toward the deep blue in search of the promise of a larger, rideable wave—and finally, it comes.

A hundred yards out, the waterline on the horizon rises almost imperceptibly, but I recognize the signs. I spin my board on its tail, lie prone and begin to paddle. I want to catch this moving train, but I need to build up some speed before it will take me for a ride.

My hands dig into the water, forcing my polished board to skim across the surface. The mass of water continues to swell behind me, then 50 yards out, it collides with a shallow reef below the surface and jacks up. The face of the wave rises quickly, and I catch it. With the force of five tons of water behind me, my ride begins and a jubilant rush—the storied "stoke"—jolts

A statue of Duke Kahanamoku, credited with transforming the sport of surfing, stands on the beach of his native Waikīkī.

my system. I transition to my feet and aim the board's nose down the wave. I glide along the wave's glassy face while behind me the wall of water collapses into churning froth. The wave and I move independently yet together, like a pair of tango dancers. I feel the wave beneath me as it morphs, rebuilds and collapses, and I respond, turning left then right until my board slows and the wave is spent. My surf instructor, former pro Hans Hedemann, calls out a few words of advice. I nod, spin my board back toward the horizon and paddle out in search of another ride.

The sport of surfing is woven into Hawai'i's mystique, and it is what has drawn me and my adventure buddy Kevin Whelan to a 10-day surf odyssey through the Islands. We will try our luck at some of the best-known breaks, while checking out alternative board sports such as standup paddling (SUP) and windsurfing. Along



# PRO'S PICKS O'AHU

NORTH SHORE PRO: Hans Hedemann was a pro surfer in the 1980s. "O'ahu offers consistent surf year-round," Hedemann says. "In the winter [October to March], the North Shore gets big, and the south dies down. In summer, the North Shore can be calm as a lake while beaches on the south catch the summer swells. Where and when to go all depends on your skill level."

#### BEGINNER

TURTLE BAY: The waves here are easy to paddle out and catch.

HALE'IWA/PUA'ENA POINT: The waves are often small enough for novice surfers.

CHUN'S REEF: This sand-and-rock reef is good for beginners when the waves are smaller; it is advanced-only in winter.

#### INTERMEDIATE

SUNSET BEACH/KAMMIELAND: The waves are powerful at Sunset Beach, and it starts working around 3 to 5 feet. Kammieland is less challenging and more relaxed.

PŪPŪKEA: Just east of Sunset Beach, this is a great spot in the spring and fall.

HALE'IWA: The right-hand wave is more consistent and can get hollow.

DISCO'S/TURTLE BAY: Hollow, fast and powerful in winter, this is a great longboard wave that can take you more than 100 yards in summer.

#### **ADVANCED**

You'll find the biggest and most consistent waves from January through March.

MOKULE'IA: This right-hand reef break is rarely crowded but has powerful waves. Rogue sets are not uncommon; be sure to go with a guide, and avoid this break in winter.

SILVER CHANNEL: Just east of Mokule'ia, this spot has clean peaks and lighter crowds.

SOUTH SHORE PRO: Errol Kane is a Honolulu native, lifelong surfer and owner of Hawai'i Hot Spots Surf School.

#### **BEGINNER**

KAISER'S: This spot breaks left and right, and offers options for everyone from first timers to advanced shredders.

CANOES: The waves here are slower and softer, great for learning.

WALLS (BY THE ZOO): This area is for body-boarding only; with no surfboards or skegs in the water, the spot is fun and safe. —*R.D.* 



LEFT: Standup paddlers at Olowalu enjoy Maui's vivid marine beauty.

BELOW: A windsurfer launches off a wave at Hoʻokipa Beach, a favorite surfing and windsurfing spot on Maui.

# RULES ON THE WATER

- If someone is up and riding toward you, consider the wave taken—do not try to catch it. Dropping in on another surfer can cause injury to yourself and others, and create animosity toward you from other surfers.
- If more than one person is paddling for a wave, the surfer closest to the peak has priority.
- Don't sit and watch a surfer riding toward you—move out of the path.
- Don't paddle out to waves that exceed your surfing abilities—this can put you and other surfers in danger.
- Remember the surfer's mantra: When in doubt, don't go out.
- Waves are free and seemingly endless, but as any seasoned surfer will tell you, there are never enough to go around. Respecting locals in a lineup is common courtesy. Show respect to get respect, and be honest about your abilities.
- Local surfers often feel a sense of ownership about their surf spots, and outsiders may receive a chilly reception in some places. Always show respect and courtesy to other surfers, and if at all possible, find a local guide, instructor or friend to accompany you on the water and to help create a welcoming experience. —R.D.

the way, we hope to get a sense of the people who define the Islands' surf culture: surfboard shapers, retired and up-and-coming pros, and everyday folks who just love to ride the waves.

Hawai'i and surfing are inseparable. For centuries before the first

contact with Western civilization, surfing was an integral part of Hawai'i's culture, religion and social fabric. There were strict *kapu*, or rules, that defined how surfboards were made, where royalty and commoners were allowed to surf, and what types of surfboards each class could ride.

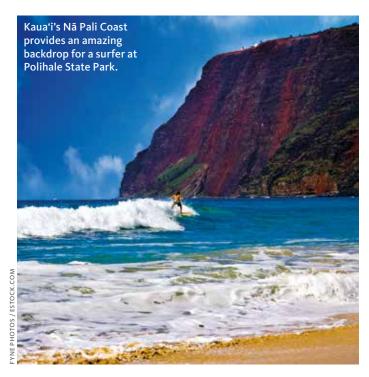
Many credit the transformation of surfing from a generations-old Polynesian pastime into the international sport it is today to Duke Kahanamoku, who grew up in Waikīkī. Before becoming an Olympic gold medal swimmer, Duke developed his familiarity with the water by riding boards fashioned after the ancient Hawaiian *olo* boards: 16 feet long and weighing more than 100 pounds, a far cry from the feath-



erweight short boards used in many competitions today. The sport has continued to develop and create descendants over the past 40 years, with bodyboarding, standup paddling, windsurfing and kitesurfing joining the lineup, enabling more people to enjoy even more time on the water.

Each of the major Hawaiian Islands—Oʻahu, Maui, Kauaʻi and Hawaiʻi Island—has unique attractions for surfers and board enthusiasts. Surf breaks such as Waikīkī, Banzai Pipeline and Jaws need no introduction, while hundreds of lesser-known breaks dot the shorelines and provide a wide range of conditions to suit all levels. Whatever your degree of adventure and athleticism, if you can swim, you can

ALASKA AIRLINES MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2013 87



find a board and a patch of water that will give you the ride of your life.

## O'ahu

Oʻahu is one of the world's most popular  $\,$ 

surfing destinations, and for good reason. From the famously friendly waves of Waikīkī to the epic swells on the fabled North Shore, surfers at every level can find suitable waves along the island's 112 miles of coastline. Big-wave surfing was pioneered here in the 1950s, and with the shortboard revolution of the 1960s and '70s, surfers began challenging the North

Shore's 30- to 40-foot behemoths along the "Seven-Mile Miracle," a stretch of shore-line with two dozen surf breaks and massive waves from October to March. Since 1983, the premier surfing event of the year

has been the Triple Crown of Surfing held at Hale'iwa, Sunset Beach and Banzai Pipeline. What the World Cup is to soccer, the Triple Crown is to surfing, attracting the best big-wave surfers from around the globe to compete where simply entering the field of play requires acts of courage and strength.

Kevin and I have neither the courage nor the strength to surf the North Shore in winter, so we intentionally planned our surf safari during the calmer summer months. Our base camp is Turtle Bay Resort, a surf-themed, family-friendly resort with more than 400 rooms set amid 840 lush, oceanfront acres. Hans Hedemann owns the surf shop and has a superior collection of boards to rent, and a friendly and qualified staff to teach or guide surfers at every level. On our first day, Hedemann and a member of his staff, Rocky Canon, took Kevin and me to the edge of the resort for surf lessons customized to our skill levels. We paddled out to the break, and the crowd was light-fewer



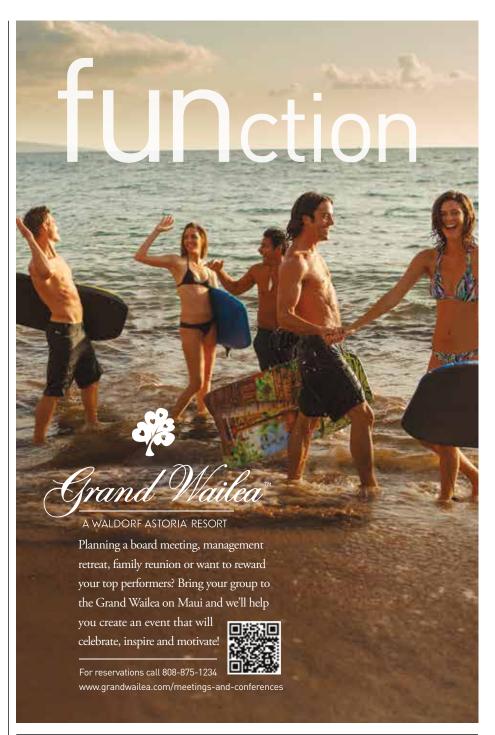
than 10 people, a mix of locals, visitors and instructors.

Now, every 3 to 5 minutes, another knee- to shoulder-high wave approaches and starts to peak. Kevin and I take turns and get sage instruction and support with each ride. When our shoulders are exhausted, Hedemann and Canon lead us to the adjacent bays on standup paddle-boards, a tranquil way to explore the tropical landscape while improving our balance and core strength.

After two days of surfing and instruction, our skills have advanced, and we make our move to Waikīkī to catch the summer swell. We drive along the Seven-Mile Miracle, through the quaint plantation town of Hale'iwa, and make a detour at the Old Sugar Mill in Waialua to meet shaper Jon Pyzel of Pyzel Surfboards and artist Nick Welles of Two Crows Surfboards, part of a new breed of artisans who are keeping the art of hand-styled surfboards alive. The shops are tucked into the tin-walled warehouses of this defunct mill, and the smell of resin mixes with the sound of sanders and ventilation fans-all part of the process of crafting the next generation of performance boards.

Inside the shaping studios of Two Crows and Pyzel, the essence of the surfing mystique pervades. You don't find wannabes in the shapers lineup—these folks are using craftsmanship and idealism to succeed in a highly competitive industry, where artisans seek to create the perfect board. A passion for the craft—and for surfing—is pervasive among the shapers, artists, engineers and other shop staff, as everyone works toward the same goals: to create objects that function as magnificent magic carpets for the sea.

An hour later, we arrive at Hilton Hawaiian Village on Waikīkī Beach, where surfing icon Duke Kahanamoku grew up. We check into the hotel and soon head for the water. Hundreds of international vacationers lounge on the cool, white sand. A young boy with swim fins and goggles kicks along the shore on a bodyboard. Two young sisters ride atop a wide standup paddleboard, one paddling as the other enjoys the ride. A group of 10 in matching







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bright-green rash guards—ranging from kids to retirees-stand on soft foam surfboards on the beach as they learn the elements of surfing.

We rent two boards from Errol Kane, owner of Hawai'i Hot Spots Surf School, and paddle out to Kaiser's, one of the better surf breaks in Waikīkī, named after Henry Kaiser, the original developer of Hilton Hawaiian Village and founder of Kaiser Permanente. A few hundred yards offshore, first timers and inexperienced surfers practice their skills in the forgiving foam of collapsed waves. Farther out, glassy waves 3 to 6 feet high peel left and right, creating endless opportunities for the dozen or more intermediate and advanced surfers who cut, carve or cruise based on their skill level and style.

While Kevin works on his skills in the foam, I join the lineup farther out. From out here, I can see Diamond Head's green ridgeline, the long string of hotels along the shore, and more surfers than I've seen in days on the North Shore, all riding soft, friendly waves that call to the experienced and the uninitiated alike. I defer a few waves to the skilled locals, then finally catch one; I pop up and ride the long, slow-peeling wave for almost 75 yards.

## Maui

Maui offers an astounding array of surfing, windsurfing and standup paddling opportunities, and is home to famous destinations such as Hoʻokipa, Jaws and Honolua Bay. Tow-in and hydrofoil surfing were pioneered here, and iconic watermen such as Dave Kalama call Maui home for a reason. Long-distance paddlers enjoy "downwinders" along the coast, or cross to the neighboring islands of Lāna'i or Moloka'i, while beginners can enjoy the placid waters around Nāpili and Kapalua. Whatever wave and board scenario you are seeking, from beginner to pro, you can find it on Maui, and you'll enjoy the sport in the company of some of the most welcoming people in the Islands.

Our Maui guides are father and son Martin and Kai Lenny. Martin was drawn to Maui for its legendary windsurfing and met his wife, Paula, on the water; the

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couple chose to name their first son Kai, the Hawaiian word for "seawater." At age 20, Kai is now a three-time world champion standup paddler and a board-sport

# PRO'S PICKS MAUI

THE PRO: Kai Lenny, a 20-year-old water multisport wunderkind who started surfing at age 4. Kai also learned to windsurf, kitesurf, standup paddle, tow, foilboard, canoe and bodysurf to take advantage of Maui's varied water conditions. In 2010 Kai became the first-ever Standup Paddle World Champion. In 2011, he took the title again, and in 2012, he continued his dominance with a first-place finish at the Hawai'i Island Finals SUP pro, and also took first place at the Sunset Beach SUP pro.

#### **BEGINNER**

COVE PARK/KIHEI (IN SUMMER): The waves here are soft, fun and accessible.

LAUNIUPOKO: The waves are fun and consistent, and as a bonus there are shaded tables and showers.

THOUSAND PEAKS: With so many breaks, it's easy to find open waves.

KANAHĀ (IN WINTER): Perfect for beginners, and features long rides.

#### INTERMEDIATE

The "beginner" destinations are also great for intermediate surfers as the waves get bigger during the winter months.

HO'OKIPA: This year-round surf spot can get crowded but has an easygoing vibe; the bigger waves in winter place Ho'okipa in advanced territory.

PĀ'IA BAY: More sand along the surfline makes for softer landings.

#### ADVANCED

Winter is when the waves generally get bigger, though some breaks require more skills and experience year-round.

LANES: Also known as Wana Beach, this long left-hander is accessed from Hoʻokipa and has nice barrels when the waves are bigger.

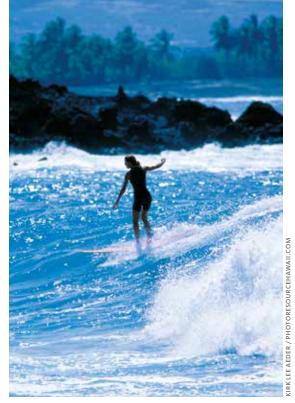
HONOLUA BAY: This spot has truly amazing waves but can be crowded, as it breaks infrequently.

JAWS: A legendary tow-in spot for experts only, this is on the north shore at the end of Pe'ahi Valley and has waves up to 50 feet.

During the summer months, advanced waves can be found at spots including Mā'alea, Dumps and Lahaina Harbor. —*R.D.* 







A surfer glides toward shore at Pueo Bay on Hawai'i Island, with rugged lava-rock terrain and palm trees in the background.

wunderkind, equally comfortable surfing 40-foot waves at Jaws, challenging Oracle's America's Cup boat on his kiteboard or windsurfing in custom-fitted threads for *GQ* magazine. "I am a product of my environment," explains Kai, "and Maui is the best place in the world if you are into watersports. It's like a giant water playground, with some of the biggest waves and best wind on the planet."

Kevin and I meet Martin and Kai at Anthony's Coffee Shop in the plantation town of Pā'ia for a dawn patrol run. Rumors of a south swell direct us to beaches below Lāhainā, so after a breakfast of croissant sandwiches and

açaí smoothies, we pile into Martin's truck with a rack full of standup paddleboards and head west. Along the way, Kai points out good surf breaks that trigger when bigger swells hit the island.

As we drive along Highway 30, we scan for waves. We pass by Thousand Peaks and Olowalu—too small for our needs—and find the waves to our liking at Launiupoko, a palm- and grass-lined park with picnic tables, showers and numerous surf breaks. We carry our SUP boards over smoothed lava rocks, set our boards on the clear water, climb on and paddle out. Even at 7:30 in the morning, the air and water are in the 70s. The island of Lāna'i seems to float on the horizon. We paddle over a reef a few feet below the surface, and I can see large coral heads and spiky sea urchins—things to be wary of should I fall.

Kevin and I find the waves refreshingly easy to catch and ride. As novices, we aim our boards in a straight line across the wave. Kai, in contrast, shreds the face of each wave, cutting, gyrating and kicking his smaller SUP board like a matador working his cape. After a three-hour session, Kevin and I are spent, and Martin

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and Kai take us to a local spot called Da Kitchen to refuel on massive portions of Hawaiian fare. We swing by Naish Maui Pro Center to borrow a few long-distance SUP boards, recuperate at the Lennys' home, then head north of Pāʿia for an offshore ride.

For his afternoon workout, Kai's downwinder will be a 12- to 15-mile paddle in the open ocean paralleling the north shoreline—then he'll drive back and do it again. Martin takes Kevin and me out for a comparatively mild 4-miler, and after an hour of nonstop paddling, we are wiped. As we head back toward our oceanfront residence at Mama's Fish House Restaurant and Inn, we notice the winds have picked up to almost 30 knots. Nudging our hunger aside, we swing by Hoʻokipa Beach, Maui's top spot for windsurfers, to watch the action. On one side of the Hana Highway, fields of sugarcane sway in the wind, while on the other, fluorescent sails launch off wind swells as windsurfers ride the legendary breeze. We watch riders cut, jibe, launch and somersault off the waves with power and grace. The windsurfers ride on the beach's west side, while surfers ride the swells to the east—a predefined detente that works for all. As our dinner reservation draws nigh, we zip back to our oceanfront inn, shower and walk next door for supper.

The interior of Mama's Fish House Restaurant is tropical and handsome. Founded in 1973 by Floyd and "Mama" Doris Christenson, the inn and restaurant employs more than 300 Maui residents. The staff seems to live and breathe the sea, from the surfers and watermen who fund their passion by working here to the generations of local divers and fishermen who have been supported by the establishment. The aloha spirit pervades every aspect of our meal, from the opening dishes of ahi sashimi, seared wasabi calamari, and Maui onion and tomato salad to the stuffed mahimahi, pāpio with caramelized Maui onions, and desserts of liliko'i (passionfruit) crème brûlée and Kuau Pie with homemade ice cream.

After three days of trying to keep up with Kai and Martin, Kevin and I move to







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Napili Bay Resort in upper-west Maui to explore a more tranquil corner of the island. Napili Bay Resort is a relaxed, family-friendly escape perched along an iridescent bay with a long crescent beach the perfect place for beginner standup paddlers.

When we arrive, I'm delighted to see SUP boards used as a base for snorkeling, as floating islets to tan and relax, and as a mode for parents and their young children to explore the bay together. Whether the rider is sitting, kneeling or standing, SUP boards offer an easy way to enjoy the bay. Kevin and I rent two boards from Jansenknown as the Tiki Man, he has a thick, muscular, tattooed build and a deep and genuine warmth that makes us smile. We spend the day paddling around Napili and the surrounding bays, soaking up this picture-postcard setting-another aspect of Maui's water wonderland.

#### Kauaʻi

Kaua'i has miles of white sandy beaches framed by rainbows, verdant mountains and waterfalls. Called "The Garden Isle," the island has a natural splendor that's one of its hallmarks, and this majestic setting is the backdrop for dozens of popular surf breaks, with dozens more secret spots that you'll need a local to find.

"Kaua'i has waves on one side of the island or the other almost every day," says Mitchell Alapa, an early surfing pioneer who owns and operates Hawaiian Surfing Adventures with his family. "The reef breaks offer a great and less-crowded experience for more advanced surfers, yet what really stands out is Kaua'i's sand-bottom beaches"—which are perfect for beginning surfers, he says.

As a perpetual novice, I think beginner waves with a sandy bottom sound ideal, so upon our arrival in Kaua'i, Kevin and I head north. As we drive past Princeville and descend through a tunnel of trees that is the gateway to Hanalei Valley, we are enveloped in the lushness that typifies Kaua'i. We cross a small one-lane bridge and make our way to where the Hanalei River spills into Hanalei Bay.

We stop to rent a pair of SUP boards for

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# PRO'S PICKS KAUA'I

THE PRO: Native Hawaiian Mitchell Alapa is a lifelong surfer and instructor who was honored by the state legislature as one of nine Hawaiian surfers who forged the sport of surfing into the state's collective identity. His company, Hawaiian Surfing Adventures, offers lessons and surfing safaris around the island.

#### **BEGINNER**

HANALEI BAY, ON THE NORTH SHORE: This is home to perfect waves on one part of the bay or the other almost every day of the year. The waves are smaller and gentler in summer.

KEĀLIA, ON THE EAST SHORE: This spot has mostly sandy breaks, but beware of underwater rocks at both ends of the beach.

#### INTERMEDIATE

HANALEI BAY: This is also great for intermediate surfers. Along the shoreline, down the middle to the far end of the bay, the waves get bigger but are still over a sandy bottom; also try outside the bay, which has a shoulder break and a reef, but the water's a little deeper.

ANINI BEACH: This area is fun during the summer when it picks up the east swells, but it's quite shallow. The best time to go is when the tide is higher.

#### ADVANCED

HANALEI BAY IN WINTER: The waves along the shoreline get to be a rideable 4 to 8 feet, and both outer sides of the bay get rideable waves up to 15 feet (measuring from the back of the wave).

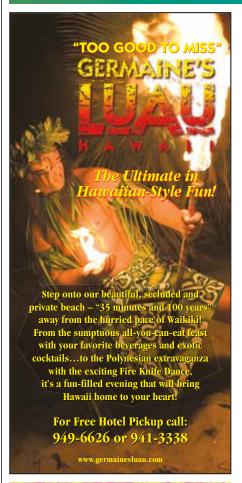
PO'IPŪ BEACH, IN THE SOUTH: This spot has a rock and coral bottom, and the waves can be bigger in the summer.

WAIKOKO'S IN WINTER: Located at the far end of Hanalei Bay over the reef, or on the bay itself.

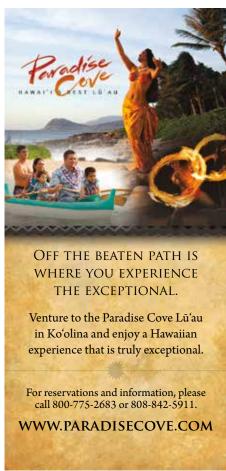
KEĀLIA: With a long stretch of white-sand beach on the east side, this offers a fun wave for experienced surfers when it gets bigger. -R.D.

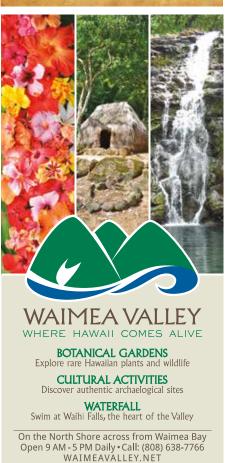
the afternoon, and start by exploring the Hanalei River. The water is a rich green, lined with tall grass and framed by a backdrop of Mount Namolokama and Māmalahoa. For more than an hour, we leisurely paddle upriver on water so still there's barely a ripple, then circle back and make our way to the sea. As we enter Hanalei Bay, a popular pier is on our left, the St. Regis Princeville Resort is to our right and before us roll glassy knee-high

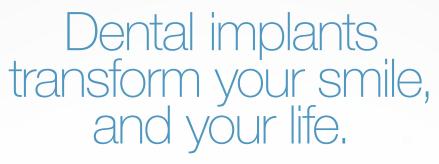
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waves. We paddle out and catch a few, and spy larger waves rolling into the bay and breaking on reefs farther out. We make plans to rent surfboards the next day and return to this idyllic spot.

The next morning, with surfboards in hand, we walk along a narrow footpath toward Hanalei Bay's large crescent beach. When we arrive on the wide sand beach, there are perhaps a half-dozen other people in sight. A lean-to made of branches and palm fronds provides shade on the sand, and a steady stream of waves comes rolling in. We relish the forgiving softness of the sand between our toes as we walk into the water, then paddle out. The water is warm and clear, and the waves waist to chest high without being too fast or powerful. On one wave after another, we paddle, catch, ride and fall. Between sets, we soak up the most breathtaking vista we have seen on our trip: Palm trees line the shore, and behind them the lush valley rises up to the base of jagged green mountains, where waterfalls fill the vertical grooves along the mountain face. Out toward the sea, we can see reef breaks being carved by more advanced surfers, but with these mediumsize waves all to ourselves, we stay in our little spot of paradise until our arms are spent.

# Hawai'i Island

Hawai'i Island offers otherworldly lava landscapes, smoldering volcanoes, lush rain forests and 266 miles of coastlinethe longest in the Hawaiian archipelago. Along with its unique and varied topography, Hawai'i Island offers more than 50 named surf breaks. To get the inside scoop on surfing here, I talk to Chad Campbell, a veteran surfer and the founder of the Kona Surf Film Festival. "The waves on Hawai'i Island are fun to surf; it's less crowded here than on some of the other islands; and there are a lot of places that have an adventure feel to them—where you have to hike or drive a 4x4 to get to them," he says. "Some spots feel like you're on the moon with all the lava."

On the Hilo side of the island, "it is lush and tropical—just rain forest, waterfalls and some very decent waves," Chad contin-

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ues. "On the drier Kona side, the water is amazingly clear and blue, and there are fun beginner waves at Kahalu'u Beach Park and Pine Trees, and experienced surfers will enjoy the challenge of White Sands [the official name is La'aloa Beach County Park] and Old Airport. And there is a ton of surfing history here."

As novices, Kevin and I follow Chad's advice and head to Kahalu'u. We pass the parking lot where carloads of enthusiastic snorkelers unload on their way to see the tropical fish and green sea turtles in the southern part of the bay. Soon after, we see surfers riding knee-high waves near an ancient breakwater. We park on the roadside by a surf shop where we rent surfboards and booties. With Hawai'i Island being the youngest in the chain, most waves break on rock reefs, and a pair of booties goes a long way.

Only six people and a lifeguard occupy the small patch of beach near the entry point. We cross the sand, then the lava rocks the size of watermelons, set our boards in the water and paddle out. A surf class is in session, and all the students are riding easy-to-spot bright-yellow boards; one after another, each catches a wave, either on their own or with a push from the instructor. Kevin and I paddle out to a different section of the surf break and share the waves with a mix of locals and visitors. The vibe is relaxed, the waves comfortable. On the shore, we can see a raised platform lashed together from slender trees at Ku'emanu Heiau, a sacred site originally used only by Hawaiian royalty (ali'i) to pray for surf and to watch fellow ali'i surf. Gourds, shells, flowers and leis sit on top of the platform, recent alms to the sea for the good surf to continue.

After an enjoyable two-hour session, we paddle back to shore. Inspired by our view of Kuʻemanu Heiau, Kevin and I decide to track down another of the historic surf references Chad shared. We drive south to Kealakekua Bay, the spot where in 1779, Lieutenant James King, a surviving member of Captain Cook's crew, penned the first known mention of surfing. We descend from the highlands along the Kona Coast to a wharf at lower Nāpoʻopoʻo.

Peering out on the broad bay, we find it glassy calm. No surf today, though spinner dolphins leap and spin near the shore. We rent a tandem kayak, grab our snorkeling gear and paddle past the dolphins for some good snorkeling at Kaʻawaloa Cove, adjacent to the monument commemorating Captain Cook and the old Hawaiian royal village where he met his end. (Visitors should note that Kaʻawaloa—part of Kealakekua Bay State Historical Park—is a culturally significant area, and that permits are required to land a kayak or any other vessel at the site; check with Hawaiʻi State Parks for details before visiting.)

On our last day we head to Pine Trees, the beginner spot Chad had recommended as having an adventuresome feel. We drive north of Kona, turn off Highway 19 and head toward the coast. It is midweek, and the beach has fewer than a dozen cars parked alongside. Locals have set out beach chairs, portable barbecues and canopies.

## PRO'S PICKS HAWAI'I ISLAND

THE PRO: Chad Campbell may not technically be a pro surfer, but Campbell has been surfing for 28 years, surfs with some of the best pros on the circuit (such as Shane Dorian) and is deeply involved with the sport as the founder of the Kona Surf Film Festival. "Remember, on the Big Island, everything turns into an expert-level wave when it gets bigger!" he says.

#### BEGINNER

KAHALU'U: The first reef is good for beginners, and lessons are offered here.

THE BAY AT PINE TREES: This is where a lot of novices learn to surf on the Island.

#### INTERMEDIATE

MAHAI'ULA BAY: It's a long paddle out to the reef, but this spot has a right-hand break and a mostly sand bottom, and offers a few different peaks.

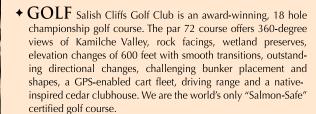
HONOLI'I: Located outside Hilo, this has a hollow, fast and powerful wave.

#### ADVANCED

WHITE SANDS POINT: This point at White Sands Beach Park holds rideable surf up to 10 feet; also popular with bodysurfers.

OLD KONA AIRPORT STATE PARK: This area offers both lefts and rights, and is very shallow at low tide; sometimes crowded. —*R.D.* 

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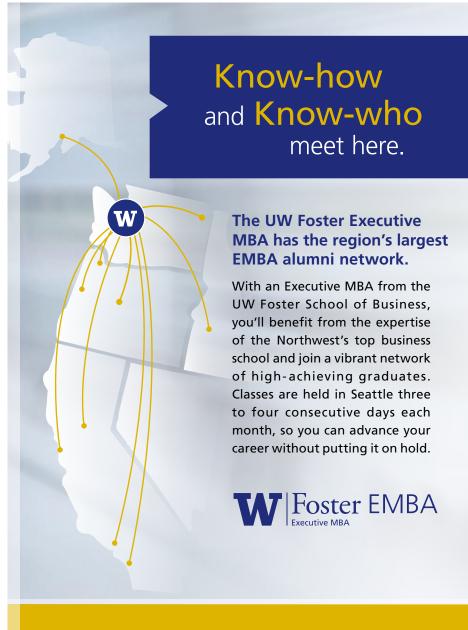


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Music spills out from car stereos, and surfboards dry in the sun.

We put on our booties, cross the sand and rocks, and paddle out. It is still early in the day, and the waves are "clean"—that is, they're breaking from a single peak along their length, creating an open face to ride. On a neighboring break, a father and young daughter catch a wave and ride in on the same board. Farther away, a group of standup paddlers carve the waves with great agility.

Kevin and I take everything we've learned and apply our modest skills. Our strength, balance and timing have improved during our time in Hawai'i; we have grown more relaxed and stable. The rides come more easily and frequently, yet with every wave there remains the joy of our very first ride—we're stoked! ▲

Author's Note: While almost everyone who can swim can surf, I urge you to train a little before you try. When the waves are perfect, you want to be surfing, not panting. Be safe: Get local knowledge before you go, or even better, engage a local guide or instructor. Swells, tides, weather, local rules and access points vary from site to site—doing a little advance research can prevent unnecessary injury. And always be courteous to the locals and other surfers in the water, and be honest with your experience level so you don't put yourself and others in harm's way. Visit thesurfingsite.com for a comprehensive overview of surf breaks throughout Hawai'i and the world.

Rob Dunton is a freelance travel writer and photographer living in Santa Barbara. He has been trying to surf for 23 years and is in awe of those who do it well.

#### **GETTING THERE**

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