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The Insider's Guide To Kauai

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Travel

I cover adventure, luxury and family travel.

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THE Napali Coast on Kauai. GETTY

Kauai is known as the garden island because it's so lush and green. It's known for its postcard-worthy emerald valleys, jagged cliffs and tropical rainforest (there are plenty of waterfalls to be found here). Kauai is the oldest island in the Hawaiian chain and it is also the northernmost one. Some parts of Kauai are only accessible by boat or helicopter (which makes helicopter and sailing tours well worth it).

For travelers into outdoor adventure, there is plenty to see and do. There's kayaking, snorkeling, SUP and ATV tours. Cultural enthusiasts will love the small towns rich in culture. Couples looking for romance will find that too—Kauai is the perfect destination for romantic dinners; beach sunset walks; and draw-dropping helicopter tours.

Be sure to plan ample time to see and do all that Kauai has to offer.

Top Activities in Kauai



A helicopter tour can get close up views of the Napali Coast. GETTY

Helicopter

[Island Helicopters Kauai](#) offers the "Jurassic Falls Landing Adventure" helicopter tour which is their bestseller. Due to the fact that there are parts of Kauai that are not accessible by road, a helicopter tour is one of the best ways to see waterfalls, the dramatic coastline and the lush green forest below. Viewing Kauai from the air is one of the top attractions on the island

and combining a helicopter tour with a landing, just up the ante. The waterfall on this tour is located deep within a privately owned valley and is nearly 400 feet tall. This waterfall is one of the most famous in Hawaii as it was featured in the movie Jurassic Park. The entire tour is about 80 minutes.

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The open water canals were engineered and hand-dug in the 1870s and are now used for tubing.

KAUAI BACKCOUNTRY

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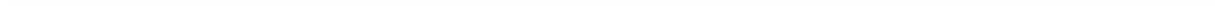
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Tubing

Explore Kauai's pristine emerald green interior by tubing through the landscape. Each person will have their own tube (families love this adventure since kids ages five and older can do it). Donning a headlamp, tubers will traverse through tunnels and along picturesque landscape in Kauai's rich interior (no prior tubing experience required). The open water canals you'll be tubing down were engineered and hand-dug in the 1870s. The historic Lihue Plantation ditch and tunnel system was created to irrigate the island's vast sugar crop plantations. In 2000 production of sugar stopped and in January 2003, [Kauai Backcountry](#) opened a section for exclusive tubing tours. Today this is the only tubing activity of its kind on Kauai. The majority of the time is spent in the water, cruising along the canals (both in tunnels and in the open). Lunch is included at the end of the tour.





On the Napali Coast sunset dinner tour, travelers will cruise on the company's flagship 65-foot ... [+] HOLO HOLO CHARTERS

Napali Coast Cruise

Since 1997, [Holo Holo Charters](#) has taken people on unforgettable adventures to Kauai's world-famous Napali Coast to see 3,000-foot cliffs, emerald valleys, secluded beaches, sea caves, lava tubes and dolphins. On the Napali Coast sunset dinner tour, travelers will cruise on the company's flagship 65-foot power catamaran. The cruise package includes cocktails, appetizers, dinner and dessert, and the signature sparkling wine toast at sunset. The views of the coast are really stunning and passengers will find that they will quickly make friends with both other passengers and the crew. This tour is a really nice way to get an in-depth view of Kauai's stunning coastline.





Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort STEVE SANACORE

Romantic Dinner

[Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort](#) offers a beautiful romantic dinner for couples (it can be booked by those staying at the resort as well as those staying at other hotels and properties). The dinner menu includes a bottle of wine and three courses. Menu options include crab cakes; ribeye; macadamia nut-crusted ahi; crepes and lava cake with vanilla bean ice cream. The resort is located on the island's east side in the beachfront town of Kapaa, less than 10 miles from Lihue Airport. It has great views of both the mountains and the ocean. The newly renovated waterfront property has an infinity pool, oceanfront bar, lounge and firepits, state-of-the-art fitness facility and four unique dining options.

Where to Stay in Kauai





Ko'a Kea Hotel & Resort has outdoor spa cabanas. AVABLU / RYAN FORBES

Ko'a Kea Hotel & Resort at Poipu Beach has the ideal location on Poipu Beach. The intimate boutique resort has an enviable location as Kauai's closest accommodation to the ocean. There are 121 rooms—each one has either a balcony or patio. Be sure to indulge in a spa treatment at The Spa at Ko'a Kea—the spa utilizes indigenous ingredients and the outdoor seaside cabana treatment areas are decadent (getting a massage while hearing the sound of the waves crashing on the beach just feet away). The property also has a pool with ocean views, an outdoor bar and a lava hot tub, along with fire pits and Adirondack chairs. The award-winning Red Salt Restaurant features locally-sourced Hawaiian ingredients for dishes with a modern take including vanilla bean seared mahi; ahi tartare and the famous Red Salt burger.



Timbers Kauai at Hokuala has an infinity pool that overlooks the ocean. TIMBERS KAUAI AT HOKUALA

Timbers Kauai at Hokuala is located in the 450-acre Hokuala resort community along the Pacific Ocean. Timbers has both vacation rentals as well as fractional and whole ownership properties. Amenities include the 18-

hole award-winning Ocean Course, which is Kauai's only Jack Nicklaus Signature Course, a 16.5 organic farm, two-tiered infinity-edge pool overlooking the ocean, spa services and wellness programs, 16 miles of accessible trails, easy access to Kalapaki Beach, oceanfront dining, and full-service concierge team. Oceanfront dining focuses on ingredients from the onsite farm. Dishes include daily-catch fish as well as simply-prepared cuts from local partner butchers. Amenities at the property include including multi-tiered pools; 16 miles of walking and biking trails; 40 acres of lagoons for stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking; Keiki Club for children; pre-arrival grocery including delivery of CSA (community supported agriculture) boxes with fresh produce from The Farm at Hokuala and a full-service concierge team.

Check out my [website](#).



Judy Koutsky

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