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TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN KAUAI, THE GARDEN ISLE OF PARADISE

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By: Judy Koutsky



Ah, Kauai. Nicknamed the “Garden Isle” because it’s arguably the lushest of the Hawaiian Islands, this tropical paradise boasts great weather, gorgeous scenery (only 3% of the land area has been developed for commercial and residential use, leaving 97% pristine and perfect for exploration) and of course, plenty to do and see. Kauai has seven distinct

microclimates, from the desert-like west to the tropical rainforest interior. The island boasts nine golf courses, five of which are ranked as the top 15 courses in the state. There are over 45 white sand beaches (more per coastline mile than any other Hawaiian island), including Poipu Beach, which continually ranks as one of the best in the world. Plus, Kauai has the only navigable river in Hawaii, the Hanalei River, perfect for kayaking and other adventure water sports. If you're planning a visit to this magical piece of paradise, here are the best things to do and see.



1. Jurassic Falls Helicopter Adventure (Island Helicopters)

Air tours anywhere are a luxury, but on Kauai a helicopter tour takes it to a whole new level. The island's dramatic landscape—from the crater of Mt. Waialeale to Waimea Canyon, to the spectacularly rugged Napali Coast—is best captured from above. Since many of the most beautiful places on Kauai are inaccessible by car, a helicopter is the

perfect way to see the Garden Island, with rolling hills and valleys on the eastern shore and majestic mountains on the west. The weightless feeling of being in a helicopter combined with diverse topography makes this excursion a home run.

islandhelicopters.com

2. Blue Lagoon Hanalei River & Bay Tour (Kayak Kauai)

There are plenty of kayak tours to be had, but what's really nice about this tour is that it combines river and ocean kayaking on the North Shore. Plus, there's a beach stop for a picnic lunch and some swimming and snorkeling time (we saw turtles while in the water, which was an added bonus). Request Lucas as your guide; he's super knowledgeable about the environment and the ecology of the island. kayakkauai.com

3. The Luau at the Sheraton Kauai Resort

I visited Hawaii years back and sat through a "traditional" luau. It was held indoors, on a stage, and felt, well, a bit kitschy. There were coconut bras and grass skirts. So I wasn't really sure what to expect with the Sheraton's version. I couldn't have been more pleasantly surprised. First, it's held outdoors—the only oceanfront luau offered on Kauai—and the professional dancers showcased dances throughout the Polynesian culture, including those that originated from New Zealand, American Samoa, Tahiti, and of course, Hawaii. The dancing, costumes, and narrative were well presented and the food and drink, under the stars with the ocean breeze, was a fabulous combination. I highly recommend it. sheraton-kauai.com

4. Sunset Golf Cart Tour (Princeville Makai Golf Club)

For those who don't play golf, but want to enjoy some of the best views on the island, this tour delivers. You can tour the 18 holes at your leisure, while driving your own golf cart. Feel free to stop and enjoy cocktails and sunset at the 7th hole—which boasts panoramic views of the ocean. makaigolf.com

5. Waterfall Picnic Ride (Princeville Ranch Adventures)

I'm not normally a horse person, but I love hiking and waterfalls and thought this would make a great combination. I was pleasantly surprised at how much fun it was riding through the ranch before hitting the lush greenness of the rainforest. We then hiked to a private waterfall, had lunch, and went swimming. The real adventure was hiking back to

the top (fording a stream and scrambling up a 10-foot rock wall—it was challenging, but lots of fun). This is a good combination tour—horseback riding, hiking, swimming, and lunch. princevillerranch.com

6. Waimea Canyon Sunrise Bike Tour (Outfitters Kauai)

For biking enthusiasts, nothing beats a ride down Waimea Canyon Road. Starting from the rim of the canyon, the bike ride down is 12 miles of smooth winding blacktop to the shore of the blue Pacific. Riders can choose between a four-hour sunrise or three and a half hour sunset ride. Whether you decide to see the sun rise over Waimea Canyon or the sun set over the “Forbidden Island” of Ni’ihau, this tour won’t disappoint.

outfitterskauai.com

7. Waipo o Falls Hike in Koke’e (Kayak Kauai)

Kauai really is a hiker’s paradise. With most of the land inaccessible by road, there’s plenty of hiking trails to be had. Hard core hikers will love the scenic Kalalau Trail along the Napali Coast. I chose a guided hike in Waipo o Falls in Koke e, which offered staggering views of Waimea Canyon as well as plenty of waterfalls. Lunch and swimming at the falls was the perfect resting point before hitting the trails coming back.

kayakkauai.com

8. Kauai Food Tour (Tasting Kauai)

You can’t go wrong sampling food, and you’ll be surprised at the diversity this small island has to offer. From amazingly delicious beef tacos from a food truck to upscale French cuisine, you’ll sample sweet and savory bites at eclectic places. Tours are offered on both the North and South shore. tastingkauai.com

9. Limahuli Garden and Preserve

This lush, magical place has amazing views as well as beautiful flora (both local and exotic) throughout the tropical gardens. This is a great place to just be one with nature and quiet your mind and spirit. ntbg.com

10. Lomi Lomi Massage (Grand Hyatt Kauai)

You can’t come to Hawaii and not indulge in a little spa therapy. The Anara Spa at the Grand Hyatt Kauai consistently ranks as the island’s top-rated facility and at over 45,000

square feet, there are no shortage of treatment options. But you're in Hawaii, so be sure to get the traditional lomi lomi massage. You won't regret it. kauai.hyatt.com





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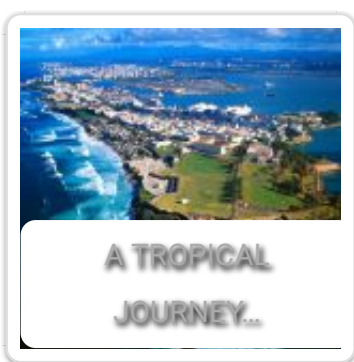
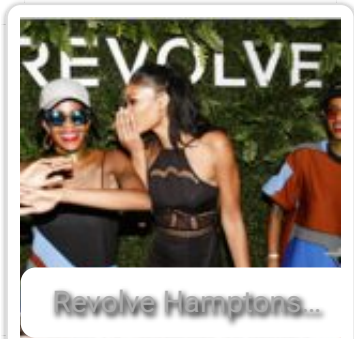
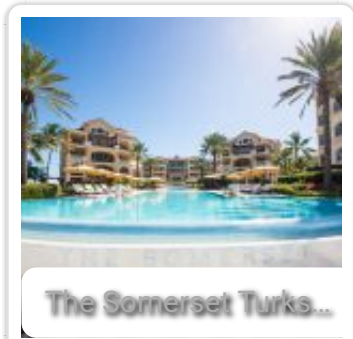
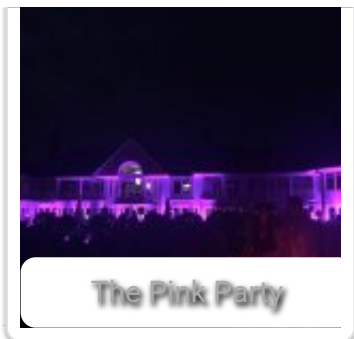
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