

Get out and about

Brian Crisp samples some of the popular activities Oahu has to offer

Bike Hawaii

Oahu Bike and Hike tour
Cost: \$US100 plus tip
Every day. 9am pick up at hotel and 3pm return.

www.bikehawaii.com

The vans could go no further.

About five minutes earlier, near the staff accommodations for the University of Hawaii, we'd swapped the bitumen road for a slushy, slippery alternative.

Now, slowly pulling to a halt in a small clearing, it is obvious that the rest of this part of the journey is to be made on foot, but not in comfortable shoes.

The 14 of us – a mixture of Americans, French, Japanese, Canadians and Australians – climb out to discover that we are on the fringe of rainforest in Oahu's Ko'olau Mountains.

We are told to apply lashings of insect repellent, given a bottle of water and trail mix, and then handed

Wellington boots. These black knee-length rubber boots may keep the water and mud out – very important – but they just don't look good and while that didn't bother me it did upset a couple of trendy young ladies in our group.

Welcome to Bike Hawaii's Oahu Bike and Hike Tour.

It is a 3km hike along a tropical stream to a 65-metre waterfall followed by a 15km mountain bike ride down Tantalus taking in stunning views of Honolulu.

Guide Mattias Nyquist, a Swede who in 2004 won the 24 Hours of Hell/Kualoa Mountain Bike Race,

thankfully sets a gentle pace on the hike. There's a couple of creek crossings, a bamboo forest (think *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) to squeeze through and some slipping slopes to conquer. But, all in all, it is worth the effort once you get to the waterfall.

Thankfully the bike part of this trip is all downhill. You collect the bikes at the top of Tantalus and coast down to the bottom with several stops for sightseeing and a picnic lunch looking back over Waikiki.

Swim with dolphins

Waianae Boat Harbour dolphin-watching tours
\$95 per person

www.sailhawaii.com

Waianae Boat Harbour is about a 90-minute drive from Waikiki. The tours leave at 7am.

The 12.8m catamaran is a no-shoe zone – you leave those at the dock. The Hawaiian spinner dolphins feed at night and rest in the mornings, hence the early start. There's no guarantee you will get to swim with dolphins but Wild Side Speciality Tours have a 95 per cent success rate.

There are marine biologists on board to explain about the secret world of dolphins and whales. Snorkels and flippers are provided and even though it was winter when I was there in March, the water temperature was warm.

We were lucky enough to see turtles and swim with the dolphins. Sitting on deck afterward, listening to the other guests speak, leaves you in no doubt that this is one of the things everyone should do before they die. It is something you will never forget.

Surfing in Oahu

Why not explore the legendary North Shore of Oahu. It was once the domain of Hawaiian royalty, but today it seems that this area is a mecca for anyone who has ever surfed.

Everyone has heard names like Waimea Bay and the Bansai Pipeline and if you have watched any of these – *Blue Crush*, *50 First Dates* and *Lost* – then you will have an idea of just how beautiful this area is.

It's where you will find surfing grandmothers standing next to hardcore board riders each trading tips about swells, rips and shorebreaks.

Barefoot boys in boardshorts hitch-hike around the area in search of the perfect wave. That wave is easy to find from the shore as it will be where all the cars have parked.

It's the home of singer Jack Johnson and in December it's the place where you will find the world's best surfers during battle in 10-metre monster waves.

Brian Crisp was a guest of The Outrigger Waikiki on The Beach hotel. www.outrigger.com