



Oahu

Test the Waters on

Sure, You Can Just Lei Around, But What's the Fun in That?

E by jenna schnuer
lectric blue pierced with bright white shafts of light. And, below me, seven creatures I couldn't quite identify. That's all I saw. It felt like I'd fallen into a video game screen. The blue was that brilliant. The place felt that foreign.

Yet this was no video game or foreign land—mostly. A minute earlier, I had pushed myself off the side of a Wild Side Specialty Tours boat into Oahu's waters. Though there were eight other people with me, they were out of my field of vision when I looked down, when I saw the creatures. My hope: that those dots far

below were the spotted dolphins we had been following for miles, the ones that had raced just ahead of and alongside the boat. They were playing a game of catch me if you can, a game we were all happy to go on playing for the rest of our lives.

Until, that is, the boat's captain, Tori Cullins, asked me and a friend if we wanted to get in the water, to see if the dolphins would be as amused by us as they were by the boat. I think we set a speed record for putting on flippers and goggles.

The group of seven dots started moving up toward the surface ahead of me. It,

quickly, became clear that these were the spotted. Their elegant movements propelled them through the water with, it seemed, little effort. I would never be satisfied just watching dolphins from the comfort of a seat at Sea World ever again.

Though other Hawaiian islands best Oahu for title of most beautiful, the island (which, by the way, has some stunning scenery of its own) serves up adventures that will make you believe you can do anything. (And, well, the post-adventure beachside cocktails aren't bad either.) It pushes you to test the wa-

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When You Go

PLAY

Go snorkeling:
Wild Side Specialty Tours
sailhawaii.com
(808) 306-7273

Go kayaking:
Kailua Sailboards & Kayaks
kailuasailboards.com
(808) 262-2555

Go stand-up paddleboarding:
Rainbow Watersports
rainbowwatersports.com
(808) 372-9304

Go surfing:
Hawaiian Fire
hawaiianfire.com
(808) 737-3473



EAT

For innovative (and rather sexy) sushi:



▲ Doraku Sushi
2233 Kalakaua Avenue
Building B, 3rd Floor
Honolulu
(808) 922-3323

For some of the best pork chops you'll ever come across:
Side Street Inn
1225 Hopaka Street
Honolulu
(808) 591-0253

For traditional Hawaiian food:
Hall's Hawaiian Foods
760 Palani Avenue
Honolulu
(808) 735-8019

For the best sugar rush in town:
Matsumoto's Shave Ice
66-087 Kamehameha Hwy.
Haleiwa
(808) 637-4827



Tourists relaxing on the beach, North Shore, Oahu

STAY

Outrigger Reef on the Beach
2169 Kalia Road
Honolulu
(808) 922-1429

Halekulani Hotel
2199 Kalia Road
Honolulu
(808) 923-2311

ters (quite literally) and your own mettle for adventure—and collect some new skills that will give you plenty of bragging rights back home.

During a five-day trip to Oahu, I thoroughly (and happily) exhausted myself with a multi-sport jaunt through snorkeling, surfing, stand-up paddling and kayaking. There was also a marathon-eating session of all things unhealthy at the well-known semi-dive, the **Side Street Inn**, and a long walk to secure a (much healthier) grilled ahi salad at the **Diamond Head Market & Grill** and a honeydew, grapes and mint smoothie from **Diamond Head**

Cove Health Bar. A handy side benefit of Oahu's outdoor adventures? No-guilt eating.

The activity also helped stop—OK, slow—my usual bathing suit-shy ways when I was standing tall(ish) on a surfboard or its kinder easier-to-learn cousin: the stand-up paddleboard. This was no see-and-be-seen trip; it was a use-your-body-to-move-forward-and-have-fun trip.

It didn't hurt that my instructors for each sport were some of the most encouraging I've ever come across. Over the years I've been taking lessons on the road—everything from trapeze school to hang-gliding. It's become clear to me that my success often depends on the attitude of my instructor. During my first try at surfing a few years back, my barely out of his teens instructor made it clear that, in his eyes, I was nothing but an old lady (at 37!) and a talentless waste of time. It was not the most successful surfing outing in history.

But on Oahu, the thoughts of *oob, fun* that piled into my head when I found out the surf instructors at Hawaiian Fire were all off-duty firemen quickly turned to *wow, these guys think I can do this*—and so I did. Their eyes and words all encouraged me to keep trying, keep pushing. After a few rapid-fire falls, I was up and surfing. I'm not quite sure who was prouder—me or my firemen.

The encouragement continued as I took my first wobbly moves toward forward motion on a stand-up paddleboard. Using an ultra-stable beginner's board—with a nice cushy underfoot surface—I went first to my knees and, slowly, to my feet. My teachers for the day: some serious athletes (including Brian Keaulana, a legend of the

Hawaiian surfing world and co-founder of C4 Watermen paddle surfing company). Within minutes, I was slowly making my way around the lagoon, imagining a life that included far larger doses of both my new favorite sport and the island where I first experienced it. ♥

Writer Jenna Schnuer stops off in Teaneck, New Jersey, between trips. Read more of her work at jennaschnuer.com.