

Maui in 10 Days

Most Maui visitors plan a seven to ten day trip their first visit, and usually arrive with just a vague idea of how to spend their vacation. While no two travelers are alike, we can make some assumptions that apply to most visitors of the islands.

This article will provide the typical Maui guest with a list of great activities to pursue in order to get a flavor for the island life while visiting for only a short period. Most people that visit Maui once will return for longer stays knowing the activities that best suit their travel desires.

This article will start by introducing some basic travel information, followed by a schedule of activities to make the most of your visit. Toward the end of the document you will find a much broader list of activities that do not apply to everyone, but which may meet your specific tastes. Some activities are also listed which I will recommend to skip... in general these are overrated for the effort or associated cost.

Maui Introduction

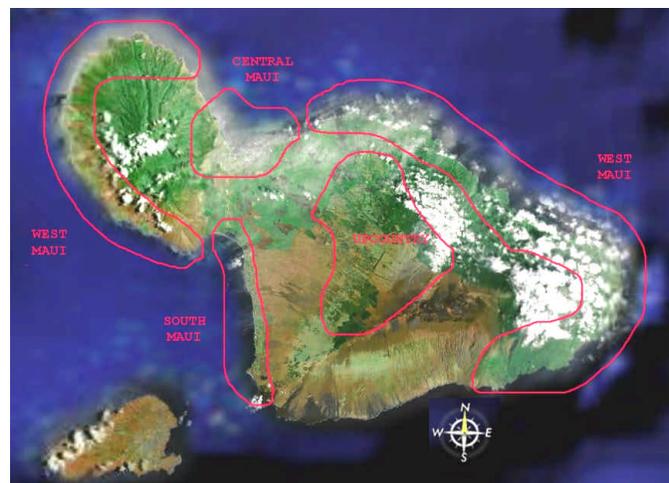
Maui is divided into five main regions known as North East, South, and West Maui, and Up-Country. This is a pretty easy way to describe the island and break down your adventures, but is technically incorrect in terms of geographic orientation.

The area referred to as “South Maui” consists of Makena, Wailea, Kihei, and up to Maalea; an area better described as South-West Maui.

West Maui is centered around Lahaina running from a southern point around Maalea up up past Kahana (Geographically represented as North-West Maui.) Central Maui is where you will likely fly into (Kahului is the main airport), and consists of the area around Wailuku toward Paia. And last, there is west Maui which, well, is actually to the west! West Maui consists of the area from Paia around the western part of the southern volcano (Haleakala) toward the south of the island.

Maui – An Island Comparison

What to expect of Maui? Hawaii can be broken into several extremes – Oahu is the first island many visitors will see, and is by far the most active/touristy. When



you visit Oahu most people stay in Waikiki, which can best be described as “San Francisco on an Island”. The city offers a full night life, beaches are crowded, and you will shuffle around the city for much of your trip.

On the other extreme is Kauai – the quiet island. Kauai has beautiful tropical scenery and beaches, limited tourism, and generally limited nightlife. Kauai can be too quiet for many, but an excellent get away for others.

Then there is Maui in the middle. Maui offers a balance of open space, and city life. A visitor can seek out the evening entertainment, or a private beach for a sunset. The island has a moderate population, and is spread around with open space in between. In general there is a lot of room on the beaches, and one can visit many beach alternatives to get away from the busier spots.

Getting to Maui – Airline Travel

When traveling to Maui you will be faced with a number of flight options. Coming from the major west coast cities you can typically fly direct, but other locations need to transfer in Honolulu, Los Angeles, or other mid-points. Often flights with a stop over can save a few dollars, but my suggestion – value your time!

When possible look for flights which arrive and depart Maui around 2PM. If you calculate your vacation value at work, or the cost per day of visiting Maui, you will likely find the few dollars saved in a stop-over flight (versus direct) is not worth the lost day by the pool. Traveling with kids further amplifies the benefits of direct flights as kids will be ready to get there, and you may still be waiting in another airport for the next leg of your journey.

Visitor Profile

OK, so here are the assumptions.... While no two visitors are the same, you are spending your vacation on a tropical island so I will assume you are drawn by the warm weather, nice beaches, water activities, and tropical waterfall vision. You came for a vacation in a tropical paradise, and are now looking for the best way to enjoy it!

Where the visitors vary is in the level of activities, or level of adventure, they are seeking. Many people are glad to come to Maui to sit in the sun for the full vacation. Others golf daily, and still others seek “adventure” and entertainment on a daily basis.

Your Maui Adventure Planning

You may (and should) find the thought of a “Maui Schedule” rather offensive, so we shall refer to this as your “Maui Adventure Planning”. The items through this section include the main activities visitors participate in which provide the broadest overview of the island.

The order of activities is dependent on where you choose to stay. Most people will stay either in South Maui (Kihei or Wialea), or West Maui (Lahaina, Kaanapali, Napili, Kanaha). The plan below is best suited to a South Maui stay, but the text that follows describes adjustments for west Maui visitors.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Arrival, Check-in, and head Poolside. book popular activities.	Grand Wailea Beach & Grounds.	Molokini Snorkel Tour. Pool time	Lahaina city tour & Kaanapali strip. Lahaina magic dinner show.	Whale Watching. Iao Valley. Pool time.
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Upcountry Adventures or "Other Activities" (See Text)	Twin Falls Waterfall, Paia, and Mama's Fish	Napili Beach and West coast exploration	Snorkel "The Aquarium"	Packing, poolside, and departure.

Day 1 - Arrival, Check-in, and head Poolside.

First day involves a lot of travel, getting the car, and getting checked in. If you planned well (or are lucky), you can still get checked in early in the afternoon. Rather than try to pack more into a full travel day, head for the pool and get your first day in the sun.

Most lodging locations have activities centers. If you have not booked events in advance, you may want to touch base to see which ones may be booked out or require special planning.

If you are staying in a condo, plan to stock the refrigerator the first night so you will have breakfast in the morning. Planned meals is the easiest way to watch the budget while traveling.

Day 2 - Grand Wailea Beach & Grounds.

If you are staying in South Maui, head for the Grand Wailea for your first full day beach outing. The Grand Wailea has a fantastic beach, good waves for body surfing or boogie boarding, and grounds that are worthy of an extended tour.

For those wanting some exercise in the morning, there is a beachfront walkway that spans this area and provides remarkable scenery. This trail will take you past the Four Seasons, Fairmont, and Grand Wailea (among other properties).



There are several places to get meals at the Grand Wailea, but all are fairly expensive. You may wish to see the beach in the morning, then head back into Kihei around lunch time.

All Maui beaches are public. Access to the beach at the Grand Wailea is via a public access road just past (south of) the Grand Wailea. Watch for the small blue beach

access signs. This is a popular beach so parking does fill up during the busy season. If you are unable to park here, you might consider heading down further toward the Fairmont. The beach parking there (again, just past the hotel) is always available.

If you are staying in West Maui consider swapping days 2 and 4. You will want to explore the areas closer to your lodging first, and can venture out toward south Maui in a few days.

Day 3 - Molokini Snorkel Tour. Pool time

Time to see some fish! The Molokini snorkel trip is one of the more popular adventures. While there are many places to snorkel from shore, you will probably enjoy this boat adventure.

Molokini is a semi-circular reef several miles straight offshore from the Wailea area. The water is clear, and fish abundant. There are various options for snorkel or scuba trips around this area.

Some of the tours also stop at a place just off shore of the Maui Prince hotel called "Turtle Town". This area is home to several sea turtles, and can be visited by dolphins as well. If you skip the Molokini snorkeling, you can still drive to the Maui Prince and snorkel Turtle Town from shore.

One Note – Afternoons the winds often come up (especially in the summer), and the trips may cancel the Molokini portion due to rough waters. If you plan this trip be sure to take a morning tour so you get the best chance at getting out, and get there before the day full of snorkelers have been through.

Day 4 - Lahaina city tour & Kaanapali strip. Lahaina magic dinner show.

Kaanapali beach consists of a number of nice hotels lining the water, along with a water front walk way. This is a good place to visit early in the day. Park at the Whalers Village parking, and walk towards the Hyatt. The Hyatt is a nice place to buy a drink and sit near the water for a mid-stroll break.

After your break head back down the beach toward the Sheraton at the other end. There is a nice beach at this end, along with some snorkeling along black rock near the end of the beach if you have your gear.

After your morning on the beach Head to Lahaina for lunch. Lahaina is an old whaler village turn tourist town. The town has a great deal of character, art galleries, shops, activities centers, restaurants, and crafts. For those looking to get out there can be a moderate amount of nightlife in Lahaina.

If you are staying in West Maui you might want to take a break mid-afternoon before coming back to Lahaina for the "Warren and Annabelle's Maui Magic Show" (dinner show.) This show is highly rated by all that attend, so if you want to see it plan in advance. Some times of the year it can book out months in advance. You might want to book this prior to your trip.

For those coming up from South Maui, you'll need to rearrange your day a bit. You may

want to start your day at the beach a little later (Lunch along Kannapali strip), then head into Lahaina a few hours prior to the show.

Day 5 - Whale Watching. Iao Valley. Pool time.

If you are in Maui between December and April consider a whale watch trip. We went on a trip with the Pacific Whale Foundation (recommended), and found it enjoyable. These are subject to whale participation so you may or may not get the “full show”. Ours was somewhat slow with whales in the distance, but justified when a baby and very large mother surfaced close to the boat. Peak season is around March when you can expect the whales to be most active.

If you are not excited about a boat trip, the whales can be seen from shore as well (although you’ll be looking in the distance to see them.) On several occasions this winter we saw whales along the south coast of Maui while we visited the beaches.

Iao Valley is a spectacular valley that is open to the public (free as well). It is located a few miles from the airport outside of Wailuku. The valley has a number of paved trails that allow you to walk along the river and up to a viewing point of the Iao Needle. You will not spend a lot of time in Iao valley, but it is well worth your time to visit this area.

Day 6 - Upcountry Adventures or “Other Activities”

There are so many activities to do in Maui that I thought it appropriate to leave at least one day in the middle for personal selection. At this point you might just enjoy a day by the pool with a good book, or something more adventurous. If seeking adventure, see the “Other Activities” section near the end of this article. I list a number of popular activities that will appeal to some, but not all visitors... choose the ones that suit your vacation plans.

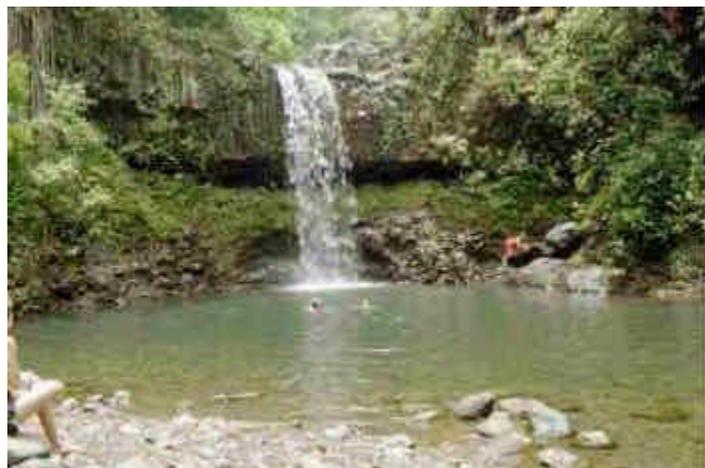
Day 7 - Twin Falls Waterfall, Paia, and Mama’s Fish

Visiting Maui would be incomplete without getting to a postcard waterfall into a pool. Twin falls offers a nice hike, several waterfalls, and good swimming in the natural pools.

Paia is a small town on the road to Hana with a single stoplight, a variety of shops, and even broader variety of people. This surf town has a lot of character that makes an interesting stop on your way through. We like to pick up a sandwich here to take for lunch along our hikes.

The Twin Falls hike and swim makes for a nice day outing. The hike in is approximately ½ mile, and you can do a loop at the end to go

past both falls. The falls are located on the road to Hana about 18 miles from the airport, and are before the narrow windy road begins. If you watch the mile markers



they will count up to 16, then restart. Just a couple miles after restarting you will see a fruit stand and parking along the road. This is the entrance to the Twin Falls area.

While on your way to Twin falls you will pass “Mama’s Fish House” on your left overlooking the water. This place is recommended for dinner, so you may wish to stop and make your reservations now.



This is the rainy side (which explains the water falls) and therefore the trail can be quite muddy. Near the end we navigated through water about two feet deep to get to one of the falls. Overall this was a pretty easy hike, and a nice scenic location. Nice freebee for a day outing.

If after this short hike and swim you feel the need for more waterfalls, continue on the road to Hana. Approximately 2.6 miles past Twin Falls you will come to cars parked along the road near a bamboo forest. This area is known as Na’ili’ili’haele Falls (good luck asking for directions!) The lower two falls are fairly easy to navigate to, but upper falls require climbing a rope up a steep embankment.

Still not satisfied? Drive in to the 11 mile marker (watch your odometer), and watch for a telephone pole on the left side of the road with a small parking turn out. There is a trail that runs just a few feet back

down the hill to where are large waterfall is visible back up toward the road ahead.

You will note we have not recommended the trip to Hana (See Activities to Skip). At this point you have been to a waterfall, and swam in the natural pools. While Hana is nice, save the Road to Hana for another trip when you have the time to book a couple nights there to explore the area.

Day 8 - Napili Beach and West coast exploration

At this point you have explored South and West Maui, along with Iao valley in central Maui. On day 8 we head back up around West Maui to continue our adventures.

Looping North through Lahaina and Kaanapali, continue up to Napili Bay. The beach there is a little tricky to find, so check your map in advance, and you may need to ask directions once in the area. This small beach provides good water fun, moderate snorkeling, and an interesting beach surge that people ride up and down the side. We visited this beach one day when the waves would reach 6-10 feet straight up off the beach, but would never break! From this vertical position the bottom would push out sending the swimmers shooting up the beach like shot out of a water-gun.

If you continue past Napili there is (or can be) good snorkeling at Honolua bay around the 32-33 mile markers. This is a protected area and fish can be abundant, but should be considered a challenging snorkeling area. The reefs along the right side provide good snorkeling, but a good swim to get to the better spots further out. This area is

fairly exposed so rough water often mucks up the visibility. The beach there is rocky and there is no sand to sit or lay on.

You could continue on this road all the way around toward central Maui (the main airport), but the drive is not justified for most. Continue on to about the 38.5 mile marker (odometer...) where you will come to a turn out to park for the Nakalele Blowhole.

While along this area of Maui be sure to not leave valuables in the car, and you may consider leaving it unlocked to prevent a break-in just to check. This is one of the roads less traveled so your car will be vulnerable while you are on your snorkeling and blowhole outings.

Day 9 - Snorkel "The Aquarium"

Almost last, and surely not least, the Aquarium provides some of the most remarkable snorkeling I have seen on Maui. Like most good things, if interested this is one you need to work for.

There are actually two good snorkel spots along South Maui. The first is along the road at a place called Ahihi Cove in the northern edge of the Ahihi-Kina Natural Area Reserve. From south Maui this is worth the trip, but you would probably be disappointed if you drove down from West Maui for this one spot. Ahihi Cove is the most popular of the two spots mainly because of its easy access. The other location is far better for snorkeling and provides quite an adventure.



Two reach the aquarium continue south past Ahihi cove, across the lava flow, until the road dead ends. If you saw open parking along the road just before the end, return to this area. If not park at the end of the road and walk back up the road about 100 yards to the trailhead. It is not particularly obvious, but you will see a trail along the north side of a wire fence that you can access to head into the lava trail to the Aquarium. The aquarium is about a 20-minute walk across rough, and sometimes poorly marked lava (hike at your own risk.) Ask others for directions or follow them, as you will likely need the help to get to the final destination.



Enter the aquarium at the southern spot along the left side to prevent damage to the reefs. Once your mask drops below the surface you will know exactly why you took this adventure... enjoy!

Note that this is a reserve area so feeding fish is not allowed - You will see more than enough without having to bait them.

We also saw a large eel, and sea turtle in this area. The sea turtles are exciting to see, but maintain your distance as touching them is subject to fines that will dwarf your vacation expenses.

Snorkeling at the aquarium is surprisingly easy. The spot is on an exposed point, but there is almost no wave or swell inside the cove. The hard part is getting to the aquarium as all but one of our party left with small cuts from the lava.



Day 10 - Packing, poolside, and departure.

If you are only staying for 10 days (or worse yet 7!) you may be looking at that list of optional activities, the book you started but did not get time to read, and thinking how another 10 days by the pool would be called for! In this activity packed 10-days you have only just gone through an introduction to the island, and are probably just starting to feel your body clock adjust to the Maui pace. Save some for next trip... time to start packing.

If you have the afternoon flight out you will still have time for a few hours by the pool before you go. Enjoy the time outside before you hop your flight back to reality.

Other Activities

The previously described 10 days in Maui highlights many of the activities that people enjoy when visiting the island and getting their feet wet with

Maui. If you found some of these items not to your taste, the following lists other activities to consider as well.

Helicopter Tour – For those people less financially challenged, there are several helicopter tours available over Maui. You might also consider the Hana fly-drive package that allows you to see Hana, and the island from above, without enduring the drive for endless miles of winding road.

Zip-Line – Upcountry Adventures – In an effort to provide you every means of spending money... I mean enjoying yourself, Maui now has a zip-line company

upcountry. The zip-line allows you to ride down the mountain on cables suspended high in the trees.

Horseback Riding – Upcountry Adventures – There are several companies that offer horseback riding on Maui.

Scuba Diving – Maui has a wide assortment of scuba offerings including training courses, shore dives, and boat trips. If scuba is your thing, any of the activities centers can point you in the right direction.

Sea Kayaking – There are some interesting sea kayak tour options on Maui. Again, check activities booths, or search online before your trip.

ATV – Upcountry Adventures – ATV (All Terrain Vehicles) are available upcountry as well. Another way to get away and experience something new.

Maui Ocean Center Aquarium – There was some debate whether this item falls under the “Other Activities”, or “Activities to Skip” sections. It finally was put here because the aquarium (this is a real aquarium) is really quite nice, it is just weak on the value-proposition as the cost is high and it is not very large.

Golfing – Many golf courses and options available. This is an article by itself so no details provided here. Just be aware that Maui has afternoon winds (that provide the moderate temperatures), which may add a new challenge to your game.

Deep Sea Fishing – Fishing is good off of Maui, but only if you get well off shore into the deep sea areas. If going plan on a 6-hour trip starting at Oh-Early in the morning.

Submarine Tours – Our kids love this, but may be a little slow for most teens and adults. We have been on the Atlantis Submarine twice with the kids.



Surf Lessons / Boogie Boarding – Good for most ages (kids, and adults wanting to be kids). Surf lessons are available. Boogie boards can be rented. If you are in South Maui (Kihei) the Kamaole beaches can be pretty good. Caution is advised... Maui waves are pretty strong even when small.

Upcountry Exploration – Upcountry there is the volcano, hiking trails, gardens to tour, and some unique towns.

Activities to Skip

Road to Hana

Of the activities to skip this may be the most questionable as most people DO the road to Hana. Still, for those that do the drive in and out in a day, the experience is often described as “overrated”. If you do the Day 7 waterfall hikes you should be covered and can save the 6-10 hours on the road you would spend getting in and out of Hana. There are some beautiful sites in Hana, as well as along the way, but one day is just not

enough. If interested in going plan to stay two nights in Hana to break up the drive. While there you can tour the seven pools, Waianapanapa park, hike the area, and experience the town. Anything less is just a lot of driving.

Haleakala Sunrise Tour / Cycle the Volcano

Sunrise on Haleakala and bicycling downhill to the sea has become a popular adventure, but is one you can pass on your trip. First, the day starts at 3AM and you are on vacation! You are then driven to the top of a volcano where temperatures are near freezing, and left in the dark until sunrise. You are then placed on a bike (still half asleep) to ride downhill on a winding road. Remember that waiver you signed... there is a reason on this trip as there are regular accidents resulting from inexperience and conditions combined.

If interested in the sunrise, get to the west coast anyplace from Wailea to Kaanapali around 6PM and catch the sunset as well. At that time you can leisurely sit back with a drink and laugh at those people trying to sleep off that early morning excursion.

Summary

If you are setting out on your first 7-10 day trip to Maui, we hope you will enjoy some of these activities we have recommended throughout this article. While the article focuses on providing a diverse introduction to Maui, and a broad array of activities in a short time, what you will find is Maui is a place where doing less is the normal mode. You might choose to pick just a few of these events and save the remainder for your next trip to this tropical paradise.

This article is provided by Mr. Marc Elpel and SunsetMaui.com. Mr Elpel has been an avid activity based traveler for years. Please contact melpel@sunsetmaui.com for free republishing of this article.