

Green Travel Tips for Visitors to Hawaii

When you pack:

1. Include a reusable cloth shopping bag to reduce your use of plastic or paper bags during your visit.
2. Toss in an empty refillable bottle for water – just think of all the disposable plastic bottles you won't leave behind in the landfill.
3. You will only need one suitcase, so pack light, cotton casual clothing.

When you fly:

1. Fly economy class, because more people per plane means fewer emissions per person.
2. Try to avoid using items on the plane that draw current, including lights, power plugs, and even earphone plugs which draw power that's produced from jet fuel. Closing your window shade can help reduce the amount of energy needed to cool the plane.
3. Purchase carbon offset credits. Visit a site such as www.evolutionsage.com to donate money to plant trees or install alternative energy products that will help reduce planet-warming carbon emissions.

When you rent a car:

1. Choose the smallest possible car so you can spend your money on fun and good food, rather than expensive gasoline.
2. On Maui, rent a "Bio-Beetle" which is fueled with biodiesel made from recycled vegetable cooking oils. For information, <http://www.bio-beetle.com/>
By using biodiesel, you'll save up to 50% on your fuel costs, too.
3. Take local transportation when possible for a truly "local" experience -- and save money. The Bus, on Oahu can be found at <http://www.thebus.org/>. The island of Maui also offers a public bus system. Read about it at <http://www.co.maui.hi.us/bus/>.
4. Walk whenever you can, instead of driving. There's no better way to enjoy Hawaii's comfortable climate, get a close look at the beautiful flowers and work off some of those delicious meals you've enjoyed.

When you choose a place to stay:

1. When making travel reservations, ask if the hotel has recycling programs (for aluminum, plastic, paper). Consumer demand will help encourage more hotels to recycle.
2. Ask if the hotel takes steps to reduce energy and water consumption. Some of Hawaii's hotels now feature energy-efficient lighting, low-flow toilets and showers. Others have room air conditioning systems that shut off automatically when the sliding glass doors to the outside lanai (porch) are opened.

At your hotel:

1. Hang and reuse your hotel towels instead of having them washed daily.

2. Turn off the air-conditioner in your hotel room when you leave for the day. While you're at it, be sure to switch off the lights, too.
3. Pack an LED nightlight, which uses less energy than leaving the bathroom light on at night.
4. If your hotel has a lanai (porch), be sure to turn off the air conditioning when you open the doors to the lanai.
5. Remember to recycle your soda cans and bottles! Ask where recycling bins are located.
6. Water is a precious resource on an island. Don't stand under the outdoor showers for long periods of time. Or the indoor showers for that matter!

When dining out:

1. Eat locally grown food items to enjoy the freshest and tastiest foods – and support local agriculture!
2. Choose sustainable seafood products. Get a free copy of the Seafood Watch card for Hawaii, at: http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/SeafoodWatch/web/sfw_regional.aspx?region_id=0.
3. Ask for minimum packaging for take-out orders. You can even carry a set of plastic cutlery with you to wash and reuse each time, along with a cloth napkin to reduce your need for plastic and paper disposable utensils.

When choosing activities:

1. Choose activity providers that are members of Hawaii Ecotourism Association To learn more, visit www.hawaiiecotourism.org.
2. Support those operators that take steps to protect the environment. Be sure they know that you appreciate steps to protect the environment, including using recycled paper and soy-based ink for promotional brochures, recycling, reducing waste, supporting local communities, etc.

When you are outdoors:

1. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes prior to entering the ocean. If you don't wait at least 20 minutes, the sunscreen will probably rinse off into the water and won't do much to protect your skin. Better yet, choose a reef-friendly sunscreen. Beach Bums offers a sunscreen that is made with natural products, biodegrades in water, and is certified to be safe in an aquarium setting.
2. Avoid feeding fish or other wildlife. Feeding wildlife alters their natural behaviors and can upset the natural balance of the reef or the ocean environment.
3. Don't walk or stand on coral. Corals are made of tiny living animals, which can be injured or killed when you step on them.
4. Watch wildlife responsibly. Hawaii is home to many endangered and threatened animal and plant species. Green sea turtles, humpback whales and Hawaiian monk seals are endangered species and fines for harassment are hefty. It is also illegal to harm or harass wild dolphins. Hawaii Wildlife Viewing Guide has excellent information on how to view wildlife responsibly. Purchase one at a local bookstore, or visit www.hawaiiwildlife.org. The signs do mean you!

Most of all, take the time to learn about Hawaii's environment, and to appreciate that many of its plants, birds, animals and marine organisms are endemic, or found only in Hawaii. Do your best to take only pictures and leave only the smallest traces of your visit, to help protect this fragile and unique gem of a tropical paradise for future generations to enjoy.

Visit Hawaii Ecotourism Association at www.hawaiiecotourism.org.