



5 Reasons to Visit Oahu's Windward Side

Windward Oahu visitors can make chocolate, swim with dolphins, visit film sites and moreBy:

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Oahu's windward side looks and feels completely different from the Waikiki side of the island. Running between the southeast corner and northern tip of Oahu, it's drenched in natural shades of green and blue, with no high-rise hotels in sight.

The two-lane windward highway hugs the ocean on one side, with mountains paralleling the other. Stands sell fresh fruit and flowers. Small towns with musical names such as Kaaawa and Kahaluu beckon with beaches and mom-and-pop shops.

While the predominant pace on the windward side is laid-back, the destination features five attractions that are particularly worth a visit.

Kailua Beach Park

The steady tradewinds of the windward side make this park popular with kite-surfers. At the same time, its calm bay appeals to swimmers and families. Kayakers like to paddle out to its small, picturesque offshore islands. Shops await nearby with the necessary rental gear for fun on and in the

water. A half-mile of soft sand draws locals with coolers who settle in for the day and enjoy life in the slow lane.

Kualoa Ranch

What to do when visiting Kualoa Ranch? Here are some ideas: Ride horses and ATVs, tour tropical gardens and movie production sites (“Jurassic Park” was filmed here), tandem zipline, cross suspension bridges and sun and splash at a private beach. A common theme permeates the variety of activities at this 4,000-acre family-owned ranch. All of its offerings are fun, educational and focused on the area’s rich history and culture.

www.kualoa.com

Madre Chocolate

This Kailua-based company helps guests make their own chocolate bars or truffles, with an emphasis on organic, healthful ingredients. Clients can customize their final product by picking their own extras, such as fruits, nuts and spices. Madre also offers tours of a cacao farm, including a chocolate-making demonstration and lunch at a local eatery. Madre’s website lists additional classes such as whiskey and chocolate pairings.

www.madrechocolate.com

Sea Life Park

This maritime attraction is fittingly situated across the road from the ocean. Its daily pastimes focus on the fascinating creatures of the sea. Hands-on encounters bring guests up-close to dolphins, sea lions, rays and sharks. Live shows, touch pools and trainer talks teach visitors about the unique traits of the animals. And at the end of the day, folks can stick around for an evening luau with hands-on crafts, Hawaiian food and a live show.

www.sealifeparkhawaii.com

Valley of the Temples Memorial Park

Snuggled into the base of the Koolau Mountains, this park provides a peaceful setting for stretching legs and taking pictures. The highlight is Byodo-In Temple, the replica of a centuries-old temple in Japan. It was built in 1968, 100 years after the first Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii. Wild peacocks strut around landscaped grounds, and hundreds of carp glide through ponds at this gem on Oahu’s windward side.

www.byodo-in.com

<http://www.travelagewest.com/Travel/Hawaii/5-Reasons-to-Visit-Oahu-s-Windward-Side/#.Vd3f6fVhBc>