

Green Maui

Maui is greening up,
making it even more magical for visitors.





With luxury resorts lining one coastline, and a large wind farm on another, visitors to the lush green landscape of Hawaii's second largest island, Maui, may be forgiven for feeling confused about the island's eco message.

Similarly, on this sprawling island a rental car is basically essential (unless you have a particular love of hitchhiking). But, fortunately, I didn't have to hire a horrifying US gas-guzzler. Instead, I plumped for Maui's excellent bio-diesel car rental operation, Bio-Beetle. At over 600 km to a tank it's unlikely you'll even have to fill up once during your stay.

According to the authors of Hawaii's new Green Traveler Guide (www.greentravelerguides.com) the green and the not-so-green coexist on Maui. But after seeking out the island's best eco sleeping, eating and activities, they remain optimistic: "The island is home to many dedicated environmentalists, and efforts to halt or severely curtail over-development grow stronger by the year. We came away reassured."

For visitors, the green guide's electronic format will likely provide a few perplexing moments (how do you check a detail on the road? If you print it out does it defeat the point?). I suspect only travel writers holiday with their laptops, but

With the Pacific Whale Foundation... snorkel, swim with green turtles, or watch whales in the shallow waters of peaceful Ma'alaea.

irrespective, this one was reluctant to pull hers out on a black sand beach just to check the area's best green dining options. It seemed to me that it would be the quickest way of destroying the 'local cred' I'd so happily garnered with my uber-cool bio-diesel VW Beetle (not to mention the problem of getting a whole lot of sand in my keyboard!).

Instead, I settled mainly for reading in advance, arming myself with a good map, some scrap paper for tips en route, and once I touched down, abandoning the guidebook mentality. The method proved perfect for Hawaiian travel, where a little planning pays off, but feeling your way is better.

Day 1:

Shunning the resorts of the West Coast, heading east along the Hana Highway is a greenie's dream. Roadside stalls sell smoothies, fresh baked banana bread and organic fruits, or you can stock up at the fabulous Mana wholefoods in the small town Pa'ia (not far from the airport).

Your destination may be Hana, but remembering it's the journey that counts will help: unless you leave early and exercise supreme discipline, it's a long day. It may only be 80 km each way, but the Hana Highway boasts narrow bridges, hairpin turns, and slow, scenic travelling. Temptations include a dip at Twin Falls; watching surfers at Ho'okipa; devouring fresh coconut with a view at Huelo lookout and touring the black sand beach and lava tube of Wai'anapanapa State Park. »




CARBON EMISSIONS


Return flights to Honolulu are rather emissions-intense, according to Climate Friendly:

- From Sydney: 4.9 tonnes; costing \$138.80 to offset.
- From Melbourne: 5.3 tonnes; costing \$150.78 to offset.
- From Brisbane: 4.5 tonnes; costing \$128.39 to offset.
- From Perth: 6.5 tonnes; costing \$185 to offset.

Travel impact

Getting there: 

Getting around: 

Accommodation: 

» Past Hana, Ohe'o Gulch Pools are a gorgeous set of seven rockpools and organic farms which offer regular tours: Ono Organics sell much of their produce to Hawaii's best restaurants, while Laulima is owned by the family who started the fantastic vegan Californian restaurant chain, Café Gratitude.

End the day with dinner in Pa'ia's Fresh Mint (delicious vegetarian Thai) and a night at a nearby B&B. Kuau Inn (www.kuauinn.com) is owned by one of Maui's original hippies, and is highly recommended for a green Maui stay.

Day 2:

Being an island filled with waterfalls and hiking trails, it's easy to get out and walk on your own on Maui. The founder of Hike Maui should know: Ken Schmitt spent three years living in the jungle in the 1970s, before emerging to start Maui's first hiking company. Go guided for the chance to learn about Hawaii's diverse plant life. That way, when you do go alone, you'll know that the gorgeous leis made of the brown Kauai seed are a laxative if eaten raw, and that the sweetly-named Noni (a reported cure-all), actually tastes like old cheese.

After lunch, point your Bio-Beetle north and head for Haleakala, the enormous volcano crater dominating Maui's centre, where a lunar-like landscape is perched 3048 metres above the ocean. Sunrise and sunset viewing are deservedly popular here, just be sure to take warm clothes – it may be Hawaii, but you're higher than Kosciuszko's peak and above the clouds up there.



Above: Writer Sue White (third from right) enjoys her time on Maui with the Hike Maui group.

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TRIP NOTES

When to go:

Most North Americans hit Hawaii in December or January, in an attempt to escape their winter weather. For Aussies, this makes our own winter an even more appealing time to visit – less rain and fewer tourists.

How to get there:

Jetstar flies from Sydney to Honolulu four times a week. Fares start from \$499 for a *JetSaver Light* fare and \$1399 for a *StarClass* fare. Jetstar's carbon offset program allocates money to Fieldforce to offer free environmental consultations in Australian homes. Qantas flies to Honolulu six times a week with economy return airfares starting at \$1169. Qantas also uses Fieldforce's abatement programs for its carbon offset program.

Guides:

Green Traveler Guides: Hawaii is a fantastic e-guide, purchase online from www.greentravelerguides.com (US\$14.95 – about A\$22.95)

Costs:

Accommodation runs from \$100 for a B&B, to \$300 for a room in a resort. Youth hostels and camping are also good options for those on a budget.

Bio-diesel car hire rates start at US\$49.99 – about A\$75 – a day (www.bio-beetle.com).

Day 3:

The Pacific Whale Foundation oozes green credentials. Started in 1980 by a group of locals concerned about the future of the humpback whale, their trips to snorkel, swim with green turtles or watch whales in the shallow waters of peaceful Ma'alaea, are excellent. For visitors preferring to get more hands on, PWF coordinate conservation volunteer experiences for as little as an afternoon, working on the beaches or up at Haleakala Crater.

With much of Maui developed into resorts, it can be hard work to find one with green cred to call home for the night. Make sure you've read the green guide to help with the selection. The Fairmont Kea Lani is one of the good ones: they've branded all the eco-products in their stores, cut chlorine from the two gorgeous pools and helped schools raise over \$20,000 from recycling. Their cooking oil is even recycled and may end up in your Bio-Beetle. If you can drag yourself away from the resort, there's a chance at nearby Little Beach to practice the first ethos of green: reduce. Shedding your swimsuit is standard practice at this nude beach, although not necessarily on Sundays, when large gatherings of locals visit for an all day drumming circle.

Visually stunning and impressively laid-back, it's hard not to fall in love with the Maui experience. Doing it green will allow you to avoid most of the tourist hype, coming into contact with passionate locals living and breathing their commitment to a greener planet: what could be a more energising holiday experience than that? **G**

Sue White is a freelance journalist who has regularly contributed to *G Magazine*. She offsets her flights when she travels.

STOCKPHOTO; MVR; SUE WHITE



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