

Aloha, Adventure!

Your running vacation awaits on Hawaii's gorgeous Garden Isle of Kauai.

BY KARLA BRUNING

The least-visited of Hawaii's major islands, Kauai is the Aloha State's best-kept secret. Only 1.1 million of Hawaii's 8.2 million visitors annually venture to Kauai. But runners in the know head to the Garden Isle for technical mountain trails between lushly green volcanic peaks, flat recreation paths with ocean views and one of America's most scenic—and challenging—marathons. The island is best explored on foot (in fact, 90 percent of Kauai is inaccessible by vehicle!), so lace up your shoes and get ready to sweat.

And don't overlook Kauai's 50 miles of soft, white-sand beaches—more per mile than any other Hawaiian island—perfect for a barefoot workout or cool-down splash in the Pacific. Throw in a treasure trove of other outdoor activities like hiking, surfing, swimming, sailing, paddling, riding and zip lining, and you've got an adventure vacation of epic proportions. With average temps that drift between 70 and 80 degrees, it's always a great day to head outdoors. Simply, Kauai is a runner's paradise.



RUN

1. Kauai Marathon & Half Marathon

The Kauai Marathon & Half Marathon rivals any race in terms of scenery and elevation gain. The 26.2-mile course climbs 2,171 feet through Kauai's famous Tree Tunnel, tropical rainforests and backcountry roads, and rewards runners with panoramic ocean views from a perch at Kalaheo. Want a shorter climb? Tackle the half marathon, which shares a beachfront—and downhill—finish with cheerleaders, hula dancers and Hawaiian musicians lining the course. Held annually during Labor Day weekend, the race makes a perfect late-summer escape to the Hawaiian Islands.

2. Ke Ala Hele Makalae

Translated "the path that goes by the coast," Ke Ala Hele Makalae is a master-planned multiuse recreation trail lining Kauai's eastern shore. Still a work in progress, nearly 8 miles of glorious off-road doubletrack now link secluded beaches between Lydgate Park and Kuna Bay along Kauai's Coconut Coast. Largely flat, the path is rarely crowded, with restrooms and picnic facilities along the way. Best of all, the views are spectacular—including crashing waves, sandy beaches, sunbathing seals and even humpback whales in season.

3. Kalalau Trail

If you're looking for a real running adventure, head to the Kalalau Trail, which starts on the island's north side. You'll find 11 miles of technical terrain heading down Kauai's famed western edge, deep into the Napali Coast. Carved from one of the wettest places on earth, the 3,000-foot cliffs of Hawaii's oldest island are thick with waterfalls, lush foliage, steep drops and magnificent scenery. As the only land access to Napali, the Kalalau Trail crosses five valleys before reaching Kalalau Beach, where the cliffs meet the sea. Reaching the beach means an arduous, and unforgettable, 22-mile round trip.

SUN

4. Hanalei Bay

Swim in the shadow of Mount Makana, better known as Bali Hai, the fictional peak of "South Pacific" fame. The shark-tooth-shaped mountain towers over the 2-mile-long beach of Hanalei Bay for some of the most gorgeous sunning you'll find anywhere. Jog a 4-mile round trip on shore, followed by a splash in the sandy-bottomed sea. For cross-training, rent a board in winter when the surf is up, or stand-up paddleboard or kayak in summer when the water is calm. The annual Hanalei Bay Swim Challenge in July welcomes 3,000-meter open-water athletes to the placid, warm pool of Kauai's north shore.

5. Poipu Beach

Poipu Beach on Kauai's perpetually sunny south shore might be the island's most popular stretch of sand. This string of crescent-shaped lagoons reaches from the Sheraton Kauai Resort to Poipu Beach Park. The calm, crystalline waters are perfect for swimming, snorkeling or soaking your legs after a long run, with a mellow pool on one end and coral reefs on another. Windsurfers will enjoy a steady breeze, and surfers can find breakers farther afield. At Lava's on Poipu Beach at the Sheraton, enjoy a fresh fish lunch or evening mai tai beside the turquoise water.

6. Polihale State Park

Accessible only via a bumpy, five-mile dirt road, Polihale State Park on Kauai's west side boasts the island's largest, wildest and most remote stretch of sand. With an arid desert feel, dunes that rise 100 feet and 17 miles of desolate beach, *this* is the place to get away from it all—or go for a really long run. Swim only at Queens Pond to the south; the water is rough elsewhere. But pack a picnic lunch or camp out for the night on the western-facing shore to watch a classically dazzling Hawaiian sunset over the "forbidden" island of Niihau.

FUN

7. Sail the Napali Coast

Sure, you can run the 22-mile round-trip Kalalau Trail through the Napali Coast. Or you can sail the shore with a snorkel or cocktail in hand. The majestic 3,000-foot peaks and cascading waterfalls that plummet into the sea are most impressive by boat. Choose one of the many companies like Holo Holo Charters that offer snorkel trips, sunset sails or even kayak adventures along the legendary shoreline that served as the backdrop for "Jurassic Park." You might spot sea turtles, dolphins or sharks. Squint into the sun, and you'll swear that bird was a pterodactyl.

8. Hike Waimea Canyon

Known as "The Grand Canyon of the Pacific," the 14-mile-long, 1-mile-wide Waimea Canyon is more than 3,600 feet deep. Visit the Waimea Canyon Lookout for panoramic views of this natural wonder, or hit the 45 miles of trails in nearby Kokee State Park, where 4,345 acres of forest, flowers and fauna wait to be explored. Sitting on a plateau as high as 4,200 feet, some of the park's trails offer vistas of the canyon that you won't find elsewhere. Be sure to bring a jacket. Temps at that elevation range from 45 to 65 degrees with a healthy chance of rainfall. The emerald valley below wouldn't have it any other way.

9. Ride Horseback Hawaii-Style

Make like a *paniolo* (Hawaiian for cowboy) and explore the isle on horseback. Whether you're a beginner or expert looking to ride one hour or five, there's an outfit ready to lead you through foothills, sugar-cane fields, rainforests and farmland. At Silver Falls Ranch near Kilauea, you'll enjoy a leisurely trek through 300 acres of tropical trails culminating in an afternoon dip under a waterfall. Try the taro burger for a truly Hawaiian taste.

SLEEP

Tuckered from all that touring? Stay at one of Kauai's resorts known for pampering runners. **Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa** on Shipwreck Beach is the host hotel for the Kauai Marathon & Half Marathon, offering room and spa specials during race week, running maps year-round, a 24-hour StayFit gym for jet-lagged exercisers and the best pool on the island. **St. Regis Princeville** provides running maps with 3-, 4-, 6- and 8-mile loops, an outdoor running station complete with water bottles and towels, and a gym—not to mention jaw-dropping views over Hanalei Bay. **The Westin Princeville Ocean Resort Villas** not only has the

GRAND HYATT KAUAI RESORT AND SPA

ST. REGIS PRINCEVILLE

THE WESTIN PRINCEVILLE OCEAN RESORT VILLAS

famed Heavenly Bed, but also a whirlpool Heavenly Bath in every room to soothe tired legs. Join the RunWestin concierge for a weekly group run or grab a WestinWorkout Running Map by New Balance with various routes. **WB**

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: HITA, PHIL HOSNOD, SCOTT DEARER, DANM EDMUNDS/ HITA, ROBERT COELLO/ HITA, TOR JOHNSON/ HITA