



— ENJOY —  
*Waikiki*  
 THE BOUTIQUE WAY

BY BENJAMIN YONG

Whether it's artisanal coffee, craft beer or even bespoke clothing, people love their finely tailored products – even when vacationing in a tropical destination like Hawaii. So why not extend that concept to lodging? In recent years, boutique companies such as VIVE Hotel have popped up among the sea of big chain hotels, providing guests an accommodation experience that is a little more uniquely fun and custom than the norm.

Opened in 2014, VIVE Hotel Waikiki advertises itself

as going “far beyond the traditional amenities and services typically offered in a beachside locale.” Centrally situated in southern Oahu, just two blocks from the water and surrounded

by shops and restaurants, VIVE is easy to spot thanks to its vibrant orange sign above an all-glass facade that allow passersby to peer into the trendy interior.

In true boutique fashion, there's an expansive sitting area beyond the lobby outfitted with an array of colourful and comfy seating options, 24/7 hot coffee and fruit-infused water, and a small well-stocked library. One of the hotel's premier amenities is a daily complimentary breakfast from 8 to 9:30 a.m. serving different breads, pastries, juice, and best of all, some of the freshest fruits you will ever taste.

There are various types of rooms, all located on floors seven through 22 and some featuring

themes like the Library Suite or the Musician Suite. We were treated to a stay in a Lifestyle Junior Suite that includes a king size bed, desk, separate seating area with a table, and large bathroom containing a seriously oversized rainfall shower. Our windows afforded a magnificent view of the Pacific Ocean, while other suites in the building also face either the mountains or the iconic Diamond Head State Monument.

All rooms come with plush robes, Wi-Fi, mini fridges, air conditioners, and blessedly, no resort fee to bloat up the price. Valet parking is \$25 a night, although there is free street parking if you look hard enough.







No trip to Hawaii is complete without hitting the surf at least once. Operating since 1955, Waikiki Beach Services offers surfing and stand-up paddleboard lessons, equipment rentals, and more.



### Runner up: Shoreline Hotel Waikiki

A slightly older establishment that has recently been renovated by designer Anthony Laurino, Shoreline Hotel Waikiki is stationed nearly as close to the beach and is the sister property to Coconut Waikiki Hotel. The rooms are simple and clean, some featuring small balconies, and overlook either the city or part of the ocean. Coffee, tea and water are free in the lobby, as are beach towel rentals and same-day luggage storage.

### Since you're in Oahu...

#### Surf

No trip to Hawaii is complete without hitting the surf at

least once. Operating since 1955 out of both the Sheraton Waikiki and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Waikiki Beach Services offers surfing and stand-up paddleboard lessons, equipment rentals,



and more. Group lessons are priced at \$75 per person (minimum of two people) and \$100 for one-on-one, both lasting 60 minutes. Instructor Matt Travilla took us out for a

session, first explaining safety and basics on land like how to carry the board, paddle, and stand before hitting the water. Once out there, instructors take the time training each student until they successfully catch some waves.

#### Drink

Waikiki Brewing Company is proof of the rapid expansion of the craft beer scene across the globe. Brewmaster Joe Lorenzen co-owns the full-service outdoor brewpub that launched last year, which is right next door to burger joint Cheeseburger Waikiki where Lorenzen formerly served as general manager. There are almost 10 draught beers on the menu, many rotating, and thirsty patrons can order either \$2 samplers or \$6.50 glasses. A good way to go is

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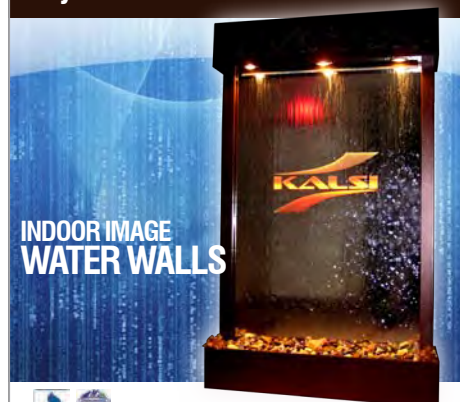
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create your own flight (the Aloha Spirit Blonde Ale and Hana Hou Hefe were two favourites), complemented by a craft beer cocktail (try the Macadamia Brown, \$8). Balance your liquid meal with a healthy Tomato, Avocado and Watermelon Salad (\$11).

### Dine

It's quite possible no restaurant in town gives a better view of Waikiki Beach than the patio at the famous award-winning Tiki's Grill & Bar. On the second level of the Aston Waikiki Beach Hotel, the eatery specializes in American fare with a Pacific Rim twist. Palm wood flooring, torches, fishnets, hand-carved tiki masks, and a 30-foot manmade volcano remind customers of where they are, while the friendly staff is ready to answer any questions about the food or the island.

Before your meal, sip a cocktail – I suggest the signature 1944 Mai Tai for \$11, or add \$4 and have it poured in a souvenir tiki glass to take home. As a starter, go for the tender Calamari Katsu (\$16) served steak strip style and pan-fried. Follow with the melt-in-your-mouth Miso Butterfish (\$29) and finish strong by



The 42-acre Honolulu Zoo, split into Tropical Rainforests, Pacific Islands, and African Savanna zones, is home to 64 reptile, 38 mammal and 160 bird species. Highlights include pink flamingos, African giraffes and lions, Indian elephants, Sumatran tigers, and the list goes on.



getting the decadent coconut-crème-infused 20-layer Haupia Crepe Cake (\$10), a personal creation of five-year executive chef Ronnie Nasuti.

### Visit

Fish and birds aren't the only animals found in Hawaii. The 42-acre Honolulu Zoo, split into Tropical Rainforests, Pacific Islands, and African Savanna zones, is home to 64 reptile, 38 mammal and 160 bird species. Highlights include pink flamingos, African giraffes and lions, Indian elephants, Sumatran tigers, and the list goes on. Aim to spend at least two to three hours on the expansive grounds, and make sure to pick up a map at the entrance to ensure you make it to all the sections. Admission is \$14 for adults and \$6 for children aged three to 12.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK, BENJAMIN YONG, TIKI'S GRILL & BAR, VIVE HOTEL WAIKIKI



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### BENJAMIN YONG

Benjamin Yong is a Vancouver-based journalist often found driving, writing and/or eating, in no particular order.

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