

Lessons Learned at Aulani: An Aulani Resort Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

This is the [second part](#) of a series looking at lessons learned from our most recent Walt Disney World vacation.

This article one has one big difference from the previous one: we look at Hawai'i from our first visit there to stay at Disney's amazing resort Aulani on the island of O'ahu.

The first thing I learned is that we our Aulanti visit for about the right amount of time: eight nights. I really wouldn't want to spend any less time there; it's a lengthy flight out and back. From Dallas/Fort Worth, it was around an eight hour flight, almost as much time as it takes us to get to Orlando from the UK! Once you get to Hawai'i, you want to be able to enjoy your time there, and take it all in.

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□ One thing I did do wrong in the planning was how much time I expected to spend at Aulani itself. Before we went, people expressed surprise that I hadn't laid aside a whole day there. I must admit I was wondering why on Earth I'd want to do that. After all, for me, the enjoyment of going somewhere is to explore a new destination. Why would I want to waste a day of our time in Hawai'i staying put at Aulani? Well, all I can say is I was wrong, and all those people who expressed surprise were right.

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□ Aulani is a Disney resort, and there is so much to see and do there that you can easily spend a day, or even more here, without venturing out, as you literally have a water park on your doorstep, never mind the fact that you can go snorkelling (for an extra charge), or laze on the beach. It really is like paradise here, and Disney got this absolutely spot on. Trust me, on our next trip to Hawai'i (and we both want to return), we will be sure to allocate some full days to enjoy everything Aulani has to offer.

I have to confess that, had I not already booked flights to take day trips to Maui, Kaua'i, and the Big Island, and car rentals while we were there, I would probably have bailed on at least one of those to spend more time at Aulani. Having said that, I absolutely adored our visits to all three islands, and I'm so glad we went, even if it did take some planning in advance. It's perfectly feasible to take day trips out to other islands, with the flights literally short hops, some of less than an hour. We flew Hawaiian Airlines and were very impressed with them. Each island has something very different to offer, so we certainly plan on another

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couple of day trips when we next go back.

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□For those wondering, if you time it right, Honolulu International Airport is about a 40 minute drive from Aulani, although a lesson we very quickly learned during our stay was to allow much more time if we were driving in rush hour. Now when I say rush hour, it starts stupidly early, about 5:30 am from what we saw, and the evening rush is underway at about 3:30 pm. I'd been told the traffic was bad in Honolulu, but having experienced the M25, London's orbital motorway (beltway), I figured nothing could be that bad. Wow, how wrong you can be! If you plan on driving while you're there, and you may need to, as there's no other easy to get around from Aulani, then be sure to allow extra time for any journey you undertake. We were told there are about a million cars, all trying to use just a handful of routes on any weekday, which understandably creates mass congestion.

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□Something else we quickly learned was that Hawaiian weather is very similar to Florida weather, not just because it's pleasant all year round, but also in terms of how changeable that weather can be. Short, sharp, and sometimes heavy showers are the norm here. They quickly clear away, to leave the sunny weather that this state is known for. However, if you have a convertible car, as we did during our stay, you need to be alert. We had a couple of close calls with downpours, having to pull over to the side of the road to quickly put the roof back up on more than one occasion. We learned that, as nice as it is to have a convertible, it's not that practical here. If it was particularly hot, so we didn't want the roof down, and we were scared we'd get sunburned.

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□One thing I had no idea about until we got to Aulani was the shopping center that's just across the road. We had booked breakfast and dinner at one of Aulani's restaurants, Makahiki, and dinner at the signature restaurant, 'Ama Ama; in part, because I wanted to sample them, but also because I wasn't sure about the availability of other places to eat. I really needn't have worried, as there were plenty of options around. Of course, we didn't try any, but it's good to know for the future.

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□The Island Country Market by ABC Stores there is also packed with everything you could ever want on vacation. Again, I wasn't sure what the shopping facilities would be like, but I was extremely impressed with this place. I didn't think the prices were too bad either, so another lesson learned for a future trip. Need any bits and pieces for breakfast or for another meal in your room? This shop has it all covered, and of course if you're a Disney Vacation Club member, you'll have a fridge in your room, and in all DVC accommodations bar a studio, a full-service kitchen.

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□Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a lot for us to learn on our first ever visit to Aulani, and all of it can of course be used when we return there. Hopefully we will be able to work in a return visit before too long, so wonderful was our time there.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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