

# Getting to Aulani, A Disney Resort in Ko Olina, Hawaii: An Aulani Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

So you've decided that you want to visit Disney's Aulani resort on the beautiful island of O'ahu, tempted by the rave reviews and the chance to sample a taste of paradise.

I can't say I blame you, as that's pretty much how our Hawaiian vacation started out. Then, trust me, there's that moment where reality sets in, when you realize just how far away Hawai'i actually is.

It's one of the most isolated set of islands in the world, a mere 2,400 miles from California. To put that in perspective, when we fly from London to New York, that's 3,400 miles. I guess Hawai'i perhaps doesn't seem that far away, as it's only two time zones behind California, whereas the UK is five time zones ahead of New York.

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□ There are some cruises that will take you to Hawai'i, and you may be one of the very lucky ones on the Disney Wonder in September, either heading to or from the islands via Vancouver, Canada. However, the time spent at sea on those 10-night itineraries severely limits the time you have to enjoy Hawai'i itself. For the vast majority of people traveling to Hawai'i, flying is the only realistic option. Most people heading to Aulani will fly into Honolulu Airport, as that's the main airport on O'ahu. We'll cover how to get to and from Aulani from the airport shortly.

Unsurprisingly, the Hawai'i-bound airline that serves the most destinations in the continental US is Hawaiian Airlines, and while we really enjoyed the inter-island flights we took with them, we chose not to fly to Hawai'i with them. The reason was simple. We checked out the seat pitch of their planes, which trust me, really does matter on a lengthy flight (it's six hours from Los Angeles!), and it was only 31-32". On the flights we checked, there wasn't a premium economy service offering extra legroom, although some of their planes do offer this.

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□ Instead, we looked for options with a premium economy service, and ended up selecting American Airlines. We were flying from Walt Disney World out to Aulani, and that's where it became tougher for us. There aren't many direct flights from the east coast into Honolulu. At the time of writing this, only New York's Newark and JFK, Atlanta's Hartsfield, and Dulles in Washington DC offered such a service, so we had to take a connecting flight to somewhere. We chose Dallas/Fort Worth, as we didn't see the point in flying north to head south again.

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□If you're on the West Coast, you have a multitude of choices. Again, not surprisingly, Los Angeles has the most flights to Honolulu, but you can also fly from the likes of Las Vegas, San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, Oakland, and Sacramento. Further north, there are options such as Anchorage, Portland, and Seattle, and when I was doing my research, I was surprised by how many flights into Honolulu from some of these destinations were operated by Alaskan Airlines.

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□When you're scheduling your flights, think very carefully about the changes in time zones. We flew out of Orlando first thing in the morning, arriving in Hawai'i late afternoon, which of course felt a lot later with the changes in five time zones! On the way out, you'll likely have a choice of departure times throughout the day, although when you head back, the majority of flights from Honolulu are red eye flights.

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□If you're heading back to the East Coast, you may find some daytime flights, which personally I prefer, as we never seem to sleep well on red eye flights. As we were heading back to Orlando, another reason we opted for flights stopping in Dallas/Fort Worth was that they were longer, more like seven and a half hours, allowing us the chance of a little more sleep. Trust me, when we return to Hawai'i (can you tell we're determined to get back there?), we'll go for one of those daytime flights to the East Coast.

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□So you've picked your return flight, and you're all set. Well, not quite&hellip; trust Disney to do things very differently. While the vast majority of hotels in O'ahu are in Honolulu or Waikiki, Aulani is built in Ko Olina, on the west coast of the island. That's only 20 miles away, and without traffic, it's approximately a half hour drive. However, hit it wrong, and arrive in the morning or afternoon rush hour, and you could easily look at double that time. If you think the congestion in your nearest major town or city is bad, you really haven't seen anything yet. I never believed that Hawai'i would have such bad traffic problems, but it does. In the morning, it kicks in around 6:00 am, and lasts until after 9:00 am, and afternoon rush hour starts not much after 3:00 pm, running on until after 6:00 pm. Locals explained it to us by saying they need to move a million people all essentially along one major road every day!

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□The best way to get to Aulani is by renting a car, and we found it very easy to pick up our rental car at the airport. The Aulani website has some comprehensive driving directions, and once you're on the H1 W, you'll eventually see a turning for Ko Olina, and you can't go wrong from there. You can of course take a taxi from the airport to Aulani, and Disney's website also recommends [SpeediShuttle](#) as another option.

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□Despite the traffic problems, I would recommend getting a rental car, as there are so many beautiful places to see on O'ahu. Yes, I appreciate that Aulani is a stunning place, and you could spend your whole vacation there, but if you do, you'll be missing out on a lot.

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□While it may sound like a challenge to get to Aulani, and I won't lie, it's not as easy for us as getting to Walt Disney World, trust me, it's worth the planning and travelling. Even if you travel from the East Coast, as we did, it's a very long day getting there, and a sleepless night getting back, but we would happily do it again, and I can't say more than that. The second we arrived at Aulani, all our 16 hours of travelling instantly seemed worth it, and I'm sure if you visit, that will be the case for you as well.

*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!](#)*

Article last updated: 04-02-2015

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