

The Pearl Harbor Memorial: Things to Do While Visiting Aulani

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In the second of this [series](#) on things to do on O'ahu, meant especially for those of you lucky enough to be either planning a stay at Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa or visiting on one of the two Disney Wonder cruises there later this year, we look at the island's most famous visitor attraction: The Pearl Harbor Memorial.

It's a sobering place, but one that I would strongly encourage everyone heading to O'ahu to see.

The first thing you need to know about Pearl Harbor (officially, the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument) is that it is an exceptionally popular place to visit. Anyone can come in, and pretty much everyone who visits wants to go out to the USS Arizona Memorial. The memorial stands above the remains of the battleship of the same name, which on that fateful day of December 7, 1941 sank with the loss of a staggering 1,177 lives. A boat ride is needed to go out to the memorial, and just like any popular Disney restaurant or attraction, you need to book the ride as far ahead as you can at the [National Parks website](#).

□ Tickets for the U.S. Arizona Memorial tour are free, and available for up to two months ahead, and trust me, they do go fast, especially at busy times of the year. You may be able to reserve tickets for a specific time, but if that option's not available, your best bet, if you're prepared for an early morning, is to head to Pearl Harbor first thing in the morning, and snag an early tour. If you can't book ahead, for whatever reason, that's also the best time to visit the park, as they set aside 1,300 tickets each day for walk-ups. Everyone in your party has to be present and in line to get a ticket. We booked our tour for 8:00 am, and when we got there, anyone walking up on the day could get a tour just 20 minutes later. By the time we saw the ticket booths again, around 10:00 am, the wait time had already risen to more than an hour and a half.

□ Something else you need to know ahead of time is that you're not allowed to bring any bags into this national monument. The reason is simple, and obvious when you think about it. They don't want you dropping anything into the water above the USS Arizona, as essentially as it's a tomb for more than 1,000 people, which is perfectly understandable. Do plan ahead though, and travel as light as you can on

the day.

Your USS Arizona Memorial tour starts in the Memorial Theater, with a 23-minute documentary film all about the attack, which sets the scene for what you're about to see. By the time the film concluded, I have to say a respectful hush had fallen on our group, with people apparently stunned by what they had just witnessed. You then go outside to the boat that will take you to the memorial, and although it looks some distance away, the ride over there is exceptionally quick, and smooth.

□ When you arrive, you board the memorial, with a strict warning not to take photos on the way in, but with an explanation that you can on the way out. When we visited, there was a park ranger out there, explaining all about the memorial, and answering people's questions, which was nice, as I think without his presence, it would have just been silent. I didn't listen to what he had to say, as I preferred to wander around, see everything for myself, and just take in the magnitude of what I was seeing. I found the list of those who lost their lives particularly sobering, especially as some of the men who'd been on board and had survived, had then asked to have their ashes scattered on the waters when they died.

□ You have a reasonable amount of time on board, then when the boat brings over the next tour party, you depart on that boat. It's a very slick operation, and ensures that there aren't too many people out there at any one time.

□ Outside of the memorial, there's plenty more to see at the Visitor Center. There are lots of memorials, and interpretation panels outside, although if you're visiting on a hot day, as we were, you may find yourself spending more time inside. These exhibitions give you more idea of what life on Hawai'i was like before and after the attacks, and display some of the discoveries they've made in the 70 plus years since then.

□ There's a lot more to see here, and we didn't do everything. We did visit the USS Bowfin submarine, which requires a separate admission (\$12/adults, \$5/children aged 4-12, and \$8/military and senior citizens), and allows you to explore the vessel, and get an idea of what life on board was like.

□ We didn't make it over to the Pacific Aviation Museum (\$25/adults, and \$12/children 4-12) or the Battleship Missouri Memorial (\$25/adults, and \$13/children 4-12), the ship on which the Japanese formally surrendered in 1945, on Tokyo Bay. Both are located on Ford Island, which is still an active military base, so as such, you can only get there

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by shuttle bus from the Visitor Center. Much as we'd have loved to have seen both, we were exhausted by the heat, and felt we'd already done a lot, so we headed out at that point. The next time we're in Hawai'i, hopefully we'll finally make it over there, too.

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□ Pearl Harbor is definitely not to be missed, and pays a wonderful tribute to a terrible part of American history, ensuring that the horrendous losses on that fateful day are never forgotten.

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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