

The Eastern Coast of Oahu, Hawaii: Things to Do While Visiting Aulani

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Having already visited the [Bishop Museum](#) on the outskirts of Honolulu and [Pearl Harbor](#) in the previous instalments of this series of articles looking at things to do on O'ahu, we now head further afield to the eastern side of the island, which is packed with things to see and do.

As a huge fan of the Far East, and having seen it in a number of movies and TV series, one of the things at the top of my list of things to see was the Byodo-In Temple. It's about a 30 mile drive from Aulani, but it's well worth it. One thing I would say about the drive is that you'll enter through the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, which is a bit eerie. We wondered if the GPS was sending us the right way, but it was. You just have to drive through a cemetery to get the temple!

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□It is a truly stunning place, and you may have seen it on either the big and small screen in the past, as I alluded. It's had a starring role in the likes of [Lost](#); and [Hawaii Five-O](#),, and parts of the movie Pearl Harbor were filmed here. As you approach it, you can see why. It looks just like an ancient temple, but as we learned in Japan, appearances can be deceptive, as many of their temples are re-creations. The Byodo-In Temple also has a shorter history than you'd imagine. It was established in 1968 to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the first Japanese immigrants arriving in Hawai'i, and is a smaller-scale replica of the Byodo-in Temple in Uji, Japan. That one has a much longer heritage, dating back more than 950 years.

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□Something worth knowing about Hawaii's Byodo-In Temple is that, while its official website describes it as being "a non-practising Buddhist temple," it has the feel of a functioning temple, and as such, it's a very peaceful place to visit. It's somewhere that you can stroll through the grounds and explore those parts of the temple that are open, in peace. I certainly had a feeling of complete tranquillity during our visit here.

There isn't much to see inside the temple, but the Amida Buddha is not to be missed. It's thought to be the largest such figure carved outside of Japan, at more than nine feet tall. Seeing it immediately transported me back to our trip to Japan, and the various Buddhist temples we visited there.

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□Every so often as we made our way around the temple, we would hear the sound of the sacred bell, and the signs do encourage you to pause

and listen. It makes a beautiful booming sound, and it felt fitting to listen to it every few minutes.

□ The Byodo-In Temple is open daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm each day, and it's a really reasonable price, at just \$3/adults, \$2/senior citizens, and \$1/children, which I thought was a bargain for what you get to see there.

□ You'll have a choice of ways to get to the temple from Aulani, and either on the way there or the way back, be sure to take the H3 highway. One of my guidebooks gave it a rave review for the sights you see along the way, and they were right. Sadly, it's a part of the island that can often be affected by either cloud or rain, so you may not see it at its best. We drove through a rain storm, and while I couldn't take any photos through the soaked windscreen, it was still exceptionally beautiful. There was lush green vegetation everywhere, and the clouds lingering over the tops of the mountains made for a very mysterious scene.

□ Be sure to stop at the Nu'uaniu Pali lookout along Route 61 while you're in this part of the island. It's about a 15-minute drive from the temple, and we found it fairly easily, with a little help from Google Maps. It's \$3 to park there, and be warned, it can be cold, as it's an overlook. The wind does tend to whip in from the coast, so even if it's a warm day elsewhere on the island, it's worth bringing another layer along. However, the view should not be missed, as it really does take your breath away. It was one of those moments when both of us just stood there gazing at the sight beneath us. It brought home to us what a stunning place O'ahu is.

□ Another route that you can take from or to the temple takes you along Route 83 (and handily the Nu'uaniu Pali lookout is just off this road) and then on to Route 72, which follows the coastline for much of the time, giving you continual views out to sea. We were lucky enough to see surfers out in the water, the archetypal image that I'm sure most people have of Hawai'i. This can also be a good time to stop off at the Sea Life Park Hawaii, as the entrance is just off this route. We didn't, as we just didn't have time, and as part of our trip was due to include SeaWorld Orlando, we figured we'd probably be doubling up.

□ Instead, we headed further down the coast to Koko Head Park. This is a beautiful place, with people making the best of the sandy beach here, watching waves sweeping into shore, and surfers out on the water beyond. It's an idyllic scene, just like one you'd see on Hawaii Five-O, and in fact, I'm sure they've filmed there since our visit, as I remember once screaming at the TV, "We've been there!"

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□Something that you often find in this volcanic landscape are blowholes, where the water washing ashore surges through a hole in the coastline. One of those that can be seen on O'ahu is the Halona blowhole. It wasn't overly impressive, although in fairness, we weren't there at high tide, when the water spurts are at their maximum height, but the rugged coastline was beautiful, and a powerful reminder of what these islands were created from.

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□A few minutes further down the road, you come across the Lana'i Lookout, and once again, you get some magnificent views, with the clear blue sea sweeping in over the volcanic landscape below. This stretch of coastline is a great reminder of why so many people come to visit Hawai'i, as the views are just spectacular.

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□In the final installment of this series of articles, I'll be turning my attention to the capital of this state, Honolulu, and what there is to see 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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