

Camping By the Numbers

Oahu's public and private camps embrace families craving adventure

It just makes sense that Oahu would offer ample camp options in beautiful settings where Mother Nature provides fresh air, sunshine and recreation. From seasonal day camps for keiki K-6 to campsites geared to bonding and recreation, you'll discover natural highs for the entire family.

1. OAHU STATE PARKS

Oahu is home to four state parks (dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/oahu) that offer tent camping at simple developed campsites. Ahupuaa O Kahana State Park and Malaekahana State Recreation Area both provide beach sites along the island's Windward Coast. Keaiwa Heiau State Recreation Area appeals in a forested environment on the hills above Aiea and Pearl Harbor, while Sand Island State Recreation Area offers shoreline weekend camping near Honolulu's urban core.

Aside from tent camping, Malaekahana

by Dawna L. Robertson

Beach Campground (Malaekahana.net) & Kamaaina Kids offers additional camping opportunities in its Kahuku Section. You'll find Plantation Suites and Plantation Hale in a rustic beachfront setting. Visit the website or call (808) 674-7715 for more details and reservations.

Aside from water sports and hiking, several Oahu State Parks also emphasize Hawaii's distinctive archaeology and history. At Kahana, for example, 31 families dwelling in the ahupuaa's "living park" assist with interpretive programs that share Hawaiian values and lifestyle.

Since these parks serve a diverse and densely populated urban community, you'll find that rules and procedures differ from those on the Neighbor Islands. Camping is prohibited on Wednesday and Thursday nights, while Sand Island limits



He'eia State Park is one of the many breathtaking campsites.

stays to Friday through Sunday nights only. You may apply for an Oahu camping permit no more than 30 days in advance.

To reserve a Wiki Permit online, visit dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/camping-lodging/oahu. Kamaaina fees are \$12 per night for up to six persons, and then \$2 nightly for each additional person—with a maximum capacity/fee of 10 persons/\$20 per night.

2. CITY & COUNTY OF HONOLULU CAMPGROUNDS

To make your planning experience as convenient as possible, the City and County of Honolulu's new online Camping System (Camping.Honolulu.gov/#&slider1=1) allows you to reserve one of 216 campsites within 17 campgrounds from your computer or mobile device. You may also print your valid permit online.

While most campgrounds are not gated and are open 24 hours, you'll find nightly gate closures at Bellows Beach Park, Hoomaluhia Botanical Gardens, Kaiaka

Beach Park, Kokololio Beach Park, Kualoa Regional Park and Waimanalo Bay Beach Park.

“Camping is a fun and affordable way to bond and create memories.”

Among these, Bellows features 50 campsites located on a gorgeous stretch of Windward Oahu sand in Waimanalo. Always in high demand, Kokololio in Laie also lures with a beautiful beach—although surf and currents may demand a swimmer's undivided attention.

A hidden Kaneohe Bay gem in Kaaawa across from Kualoa Ranch, Kualoa “A” closes for dedicated summer programs after Memorial Day Weekend until Labor Day Weekend. Facing Mokolii (Chinaman's Hat), Kualoa “B” is adjacent to ancient Hawaiian fishponds. Steeped in history, the area is a top pick for kayaking, spearfishing, diving and shore fishing.

Be sure to visit the Camping.Honolulu.gov website and check out the FAQ page. You can also email camping@honolulu.gov or call (808) 768-3440. Depending on the park you select,



At Kama'aina Kids' camp, children learn how to paddle and sail.

permits allow your stay to begin on Friday and end on either Monday at 8am (three days for \$32) or Wednesday at 8am (five days for \$52). Family campsites accommodate up to 10 persons max.

SEASONAL CAMPS & PROGRAMS

Parents will also find year-round sessions and seasonal camps where keiki grow through stewardship programs. Select camps also welcome entire families, church groups and retreats geared to team building.

Kama'aina Kids is a private, non-profit, multi-service organization dedicated to serving children, families and our communities by providing ongoing quality education programs to help build a sense of self, community and environment. As an accredited member of the American Camp Association, it is committed to the highest operating standards in the camp industry.

Day camps offer a safe, exciting and enriching adventure for children in grades K-6, with locations throughout the state of Hawaii. At the center of its core curricu-

lum is a focus on developing critical 21st century skills—such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking—through fun, unique and hands-on activities

Camp Kama'aina Kids is a seasonal day camp offered during the fall, winter, spring and summer breaks that sync with the Department of Education's official school calendar. At camp, children have the opportunity to build friendships, learn new skills and create experiences that will last a lifetime. The day camp program includes experiential excursions, arts & crafts,

cooperative games, simple science, singing, dancing and more.

Specialty Camps are also available at Bishop Museum, Sea Life Park and Wet 'n' Wild Hawaii, while summer day camps feature a waterfront experience launched from Heeia State Park.

Visit KamaainaKids.com to learn more, and receive discounted rates on select day camp programs when registering online.

“Mother Nature provides fresh air, sunshine and recreation.”

1. HEEIA STATE PARK

Kama'aina Kids has been overseeing waterfront and environmental education programs on Kaneohe Bay since 1987. Now, with Heeia State Park (HeeiaStatePark.org) as its base, the organization operates a water-oriented summer camp program that teaches local children ocean safety as they learn how to paddle and sail.

Current Heeia activities/programs include ocean activities and eco-tours of Kaneohe Bay, kayak rentals, catamaran sailing, SUP and canoe adventures. Proceeds from these activities—as well as the Banquet Hall Rental fees (from community event bookings, Baby's 1st Luau's, Weddings, etc.—all benefit Heeia State Park, which is operated by Kama'aina Kids.

“We are dedicated to providing safe, fun and educational ocean experiences for children of all ages,” says Tina Scotty, special events coordinator. “Our mission is to raise awareness of Hawaii's unique ecology and cultural history of Kaneohe Bay, and to pass that down to our keiki.”

2. MALAEKAHANA BEACH CAMPGROUND

Kama'aina Kids Environmental & Community Services Division has partnered with Malaekahana Beach Campground (MBC) to operate camping and camp-related activities/programs since 1989. Kama'aina Kids is also an active member in the Malaekahana community, providing afterschool programs at Kahaluu and Laie elementary schools.

Located between Laie and Kahuku on Oahu's northeastern shore, MBC covers nearly 36,300 acres with what's considered one of the most popular camping areas in the State of Hawaii. Beach access means fun-filled days of swimming, bodysurfing,

kayaking, sailing and surfing.

Nature serves as an integral part of the MBC experience, thanks to honu (sea turtles) making this their home, Moku Auia Seabird Sanctuary (“Goat Island”) 600-foot offshore and the nearby James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge that's devoted to the recovery of endangered water birds.

Look for more details at Malaekahana.net/north-shore-oahucampingaccommodations.

3. CAMP MOKULEIA

At the base of the Waianae Mountain Range in Waiialua, Camp Mokuleia is a historic beachfront youth

camp and adult retreat with cabins, private rooms, tent camping, beach house, fire ring and large shady lawns leading to an expansive beach. Generations of kamaaina have escaped the daily grind to enjoy swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, surfing and stargazing in this pristine North Shore area.

With responsibility at its foundation, Camp Mokuleia focuses on living gently and simply through extensive recycling, reducing/reusing efforts, energy conservation and efficiency.

Programs integrate a unique challenge course, cultural history, shoreline environment, growing gardens, and teaching of deep collaborative and leadership skills for the 21st century.

Families and groups can tap into six cool oceanfront bunkhouses sleeping from 14-22 guests each, tent cabins sleeping six and camping sites that span from secluded wooded glades to wide open beachfront spaces.

For more information, visit CampMokuleia.com, call (808) 637-6241 or email manager@campmokuleia.com.

4. CAMP PUPUKEA

Nestled high in the Koolau Mountains,

“At camp, children build friendships, learn new skills and appreciate nature.”

Camp Pupukea is a 65-acre Boy Scouts of America (BSA) grounds three miles above Sunset Beach. The former World War II Army camp engages with more than seven miles of beaches—making it the perfect spot for summer swimming, sunbathing and BSA outings.

Amenities include a swimming pool, chapel, campfire bowl, archery range, rifle range and hiking trails. Those staying overnight have access to the 200-capacity Weinberg Lodge, two pavilions, eight cabins and multiple tent sites.

To reserve Camp Pupukea for a BSA unit or for non-summer weekend group use, visit ScoutingHawaii.org/camp-pupukea-island-oahu.

5. CAMP PALEHUA

Nestled in a forest at 1,600 feet above sea level in the Waianae Mountain Range, Camp Palehua (CampPalehua.org) unfolds to panoramic ocean views of Oahu's southern and western coastline.

The camp's mission is to tap into the natural environment to educate children and adults through culture, science and experiences that guide them toward becoming effective stewards of the land and engaged citizens who will make a difference in the world.

Overnight facilities range from multi-bedroom ohana living to five bunkhouses to space for tent camping. Amenities include a swimming pool, camp kitchen and mess hall, campfire circle, conference room/meeting hall and outdoor basketball court. Or bring your favorite recreational equipment to enjoy on the spacious outdoor grounds. Think archery, bocce ball, Frisbee and other games.

Active throughout the Leeward Oahu community, Camp Palehua's Malama

Learning Center is helping people adopt a lifelong commitment to practice malama aina (caring for the land and sea) through an array of classes and experiences in environmental education for students, teachers and families. Call (808) 347-0736 for more details and reservations.


6. YMCA CAMP H.R. ERDMAN

Since 1926, Camp Erdman has presented a classic environment for summer camps, church conferences, teambuilding retreats and school field trips. The camp operates with a mission to provide positive life-changing experiences through programs that teach values, develop life skills and build character in a safe and multicultural outdoor setting.

Open year-round between the Waianae Mountains and beaches of Mokuleia, the YMCA facility accommodates up to 288 people in 8- and 16-capacity cabins with electricity and indoor restrooms.

Among its school offerings, the Environmental Education program provides Hawaii's youth with a variety of hands-on activities that promote a sense of community and cooperation via safe, fun and challenging activities.

The Leadership Program encourages participants to reach beyond their limits while enhancing communication and cooperation skills. Activities help to build self-confidence and a stronger sense of community through newly acquired skills that should prove vital in a variety of life situations.

For all the details, visit ymcahonolulu.org/camp_erdman, call (808) 637-4615 or email camperdman@ymcahonolulu.org. 

“YMCA Leadership Program encourages participants to reach beyond their limits while enhancing communication and cooperation skills.”