

# Ep #179: Oahu on Points: A Family-Friendly Hawaii Adventure



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

**Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg**

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Alex: It's no secret we love using points and miles to visit Hawaii, but one island we haven't covered yet is Oahu. Listen in as we share our tips for visiting Oahu and how you can save using points.

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Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. So our free weekly show, aka the one that you're listening to right now, focuses on evergreen content. What that means is that we can record this episode a month in advance, and when it airs, nothing will have changed. Everything will still be relevant for you. But if you want the latest points and miles breaking news, that's all over on *Points Talk*® Premium, our premium podcast. You can subscribe now using the link in the show notes or at [pointstalk.supercast.com](https://pointstalk.supercast.com).

All right, we have each been to Maui and Kauai plenty of times. So this spring break, Alex decided to change it up a little bit and try out a new island. She and her family of six went to Oahu. And today she's sharing how she visited Oahu on points. And we also have Megan, our Director of Operations, who also has a family of five back to share how she and her family used points to visit Oahu as well.

So Alex, let's kick it off. Tell us all about how you and your, I guess, five boys, including Mitch, got to Oahu on points.

Alex: Yeah. All right. So before the Hawaiian Airlines card went away, I opened those, and I was very like, I don't know, we've never fly Hawaiian Airlines. And granted, that being said, you can use them, you know, with Alaska Airlines as well, and the two programs were merging. So I knew I could use them that way,

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but I just, there's a ton of tons of value to be had with Alaska Airlines, but I hadn't really taken advantage of it very much.

But I was like, okay, the cards are going away. You know, having that FOMO that Jess always gives us. And so I opened one. My the personal, my husband opened the personal and the business. I tried for the business but was denied. So we had a nice healthy stash of Hawaiian Airlines. Now the program is Atmos™ Rewards. And so with that, I had plenty of Atmos Rewards to book us a flights to Hawaii.

So I wasn't even, I don't know, this hasn't been on my radar for very long because Hawaiian Airlines is relatively new to Salt Lake, flying out of Salt Lake, and they only offer flights, direct flights from Salt Lake to Honolulu. And so I looked that up, and I was like, I'm just going to see what my options here are. Like, granted, we have Southwest® Companion Passes®. That's what we always do. But I was like, oh, this would be kind of cool to fly direct and go to Honolulu. So this was kind of part of why we decided to go to Oahu was to try out this direct flight option from Salt Lake City.

And you guys, the price was so good. We paid just 15,000 points per person on this direct flight. So I was really happy with that. Like 90,000 points for a family of six to fly to Hawaii one way. So, so good.

So now, if someone's wanting to do something similar, what you would need to do is open up Atmos Rewards cards, or built rewards also transfers to Alaska Airlines, or to Atmos Rewards. So that would be a really good option. But yeah, it was so nice having a direct flight. I really liked flying Hawaiian Airlines. I was happy with it.

They have Starlink internet, and my kids were like, who needs business class when you have Starlink? They could play all their games. Yes, they could stream their shows. It was as a parent it was nice too. I mean, it's really great when you have the entertainment screens. That's always great. But this was maybe better because they could watch what they wanted to watch right on Netflix or Disney+ and just stream any of their shows. So that was, that was pretty awesome.

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So and then coming home, we did fly Southwest coming home because the Hawaiian Airlines flight coming back is a red eye flight, and I'm I'm not about to do the red eye flights to Hawaii. I think they're terrible because you get home at like 7:00 a.m. and then you have all day long that you have to stay awake, and you didn't really sleep on the plane if you're me.

So we flew Southwest. I believe we paid around 32,000 points each. Just a, a little quite a, like more than double what we paid going in there. The two Companion Passes we have, my husband and I both have one that came in clutch for this. We had a connecting flight in Oakland and then went on to Salt Lake. So I was, I'd much rather take a connecting flight coming home to avoid a red eye.

Jess: Yeah, and you were flying over the holiday, too. So.

Alex: Yeah, it was, yeah, we came home the day after Easter. So it was kind of a busy travel time. What about you, Megan? I know you've done this. How did you do your flights to Hawaii?

Megan: All right. We've been to Oahu twice. One's just us and then once with the kids as a family of five. And both times we did the same way. We went to Maui first and did five days and then took that little like one hour, 40 or like 40 minute flight to Honolulu and spent two days on Oahu. And then, actually, the one with the kids, that's when we went to Australia. So we like stopped in Hawaii for a week and then flew Qantas direct to Sydney from Honolulu. So if you want to do it that way.

Alex: That's my kids' dream.

Megan: That is a really good way to kind of break up the super long flight.

Alex: Yeah. How long is that flight to Sydney from Honolulu?

Megan: Like 10 hours.

Alex: Okay. Is it a daytime flight, though?

Megan: Yes. Okay.

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Alex: I could actually do that.

Megan: But we landed like in the evening. So like we flew all day and landed, it was dark, like 7:30, 8:00 at night.

Alex: But then you land and you're just going to go to bed. That's actually really, that's, that's actually doable. I'm going to actually look into this. It was kind of fun when we flew out coming home, there was all these plays. Like, there's a Japan Airlines plane, there was an ANA plane, it was decorated with like a turtle, a sea turtle. It was so cute. And my kids were like, what's this airline? What's this airline? Oh, we want to go there. Let's do that.

My oldest, his big thing right now is he wants to go to the Park Hyatt Kyoto. And I'm like, keep big dreams, buddy, big dreams. But like, there's just a big Japanese influence in Honolulu. And so my kids like loved that. And so he is very hooked on, we've got to go to Japan. So that's another thing we you could do is go to Honolulu for a few days and...

Megan: Especially with your direct flight, you would just do your direct flight. You could spend like two or three days and then continue on.

Alex: Yeah.

Megan: So we both times flew United, and both flew right from our little airport in Rochester and we flew to Maui first. And you can, we booked it for 22,500 miles, but with the recent changes with United, those flights are now 25,000 miles each way. But the taxes and fees are only \$5.60. And if you have that United credit card with the annual fee that gives you the, it's like, I think it's, is it up to 10% or a solid 10% award discount now?

Jess: But I thought it was 10. Oh, the recent, recent changes.

Megan: The recent ones. Yeah.

Jess: I think it's, I think they said 10, I think they said 10 to 15%. And I think I'm assuming they're trying to compete with Delta, giving the 15% award discount for their cardholders. So yeah, but it's been 10% on all the ones that I've checked recently.

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Megan: Yeah, same here. But the Gateway<sup>SM</sup>, the \$0 annual fee one, does not give that unless you spend \$10,000 a year. So we actually both were just denied the United business cards, and I'm actually considering upgrading my Gateway back to the Explorer card just so I can get the 10% discount.

Alex: I'm thinking of doing the same thing, Megan, and I would normally not do that. I would normally be like, I'm going to just open the United Explorer card, but I don't know if I'd get it and you know, you've got to consider 5/24 and all of that. So I think that's a good option is to upgrade that card if you can't open a new one.

Megan: Yeah. And from the East Coast, like it is far to get to Hawaii for us. So you can fly direct from Newark and Washington D.C., all the way to Honolulu. So that is a really, really great option, especially if you can get it for that 22,500 miles. So, we flew from Maui to Honolulu and that was, you can find those as low as 6,000 miles on Southwest or like \$60, \$80. Those flights are only 40 minutes, so they are super cheap, or you can use Atmos for 6,500 miles, and the taxes and fees were only \$6.

And from the other options from the Northeast would be Boston, JFK, Washington D.C., American Airlines is the same 22,500 miles. You can book that United flight through Air Canada. So if you don't want to use your Chase Ultimate Rewards or your Bilt points, you can pay 25,000 miles, but the tax and fees are \$63. So it is a little bit higher on that end.

And then the last option was Southwest. I was just looking, and Southwest, somebody in the Facebook group just posted the other day and said, how do you get from the Northeast to Hawaii? And somebody was like, I booked from BWI, Baltimore, for 13,000 miles on Southwest. And I was like, okay, now I'm, I was very intrigued by this because that is a really good deal.

Alex: That's for such a long flight, like that's crazy.

Megan: Yeah. So there, you do have one layover. It's not direct. So you would lay over in LAX, and I found those as low as 14,000 miles. So as with anything, flexibility, if you can fly, be flexible, Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays seem to have like the lowest points amounts, of course. And then, so if you are, if you

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have a lot of time, that could really work for you too, especially if you have a Companion Pass.

Alex: Yeah, that's crazy.

Jess: I don't even have a direct flight from Houston on Southwest. So the one layover from the East Coast, I feel like is no big deal at all.

Alex: Yeah, like I'm actually think that's really good that it's not two layovers.

Megan: Exactly. Like for us, we would have to go probably Chicago to Honolulu. So we would have like one layer of that way, or we go to Newark and or D.C. and fly United and have one layover. But that's still not bad for us because it's usually only that like hour and a half to two hour layovers and then it's just that long flight, that long haul flight.

Alex: Yeah. All right, so getting to where we stayed, we were just stayed one night in Waikiki. We stayed at the Hyatt Regency Waikiki. When we stayed, it was a category five, so we paid 20,000 points a night. And then I used a suite upgrade award, and how this worked is like they gave me two connecting rooms. So in one room, it was a king bed with a full bathroom. And then in the other room, it was just a sofa bed. So it kind of, I can't imagine that somebody would just book just the room with a sofa bed and another full bathroom.

Megan: It's like a studio apartment, like.

Alex: Yeah, but with no actual bed, just a sofa bed. So I went really, I really went back and forth of, do I want to use a suite upgrade award for a one-night stay? But I was like, you know, this is just going to make us all much more comfortable. It was really nice having the two bathrooms. And even though it was one night, we were there, we got like, it was a pretty full time we were there because we got there early and we left a little bit late.

And then we requested a roll-away. So that like they brought the roll away up. We didn't have to pay for it. That worked out really nice. So my husband and I had the king room, and then we put all the kids with the sofa bed and the roll-away, and it worked out really, really nice to have all that extra space.

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I will say it was kind of funny because I would say like a week before, they emailed me and it was like all of these disclaimers. Like the parking garage is like really can be a little tricky. And but the building's older and we can't do anything about that. So please have patience. And this is a very busy hotel, so we usually cannot accommodate early check-ins or late checkouts. Please be courteous of that. And if this won't work for you, maybe stay somewhere else. And then the next one was, there, this is a busy hotel, and so sometimes there is a wait at the elevators. And like just full of disclaimers, which was pretty funny.

But I didn't actually have any issues with any of those things. We actually didn't use the parking garage. We used valet. That was included. Like, we got that for free with my Globalist status. So, and being there for one night, I would actually, I don't know how much it was, but I would be after hearing how what kind of a mess the parking garage is, I'd maybe just valet if you're only going to be there for a bit. And I didn't notice any issues with the elevators. We got there about it, I think check-in was maybe at 3:00 or 4:00. I can't remember which one. But we got there an hour before that, and they were fine to they were like, oh yeah, your room's ready. You can go. Here's your keys. And then when we left, they let us keep one of those rooms till 1:00. So we got they extended the checkout a little bit.

I found the customer service really great. I thought everybody there was so kind and friendly. So I really liked it for that. I will say, the hotel is massive. There are two big towers. There's tons of stores located in the hotel. There's like to for reference, there's two ABC stores. And if you know, if you've been to Hawaii, you know there's ABC stores everywhere. The pool is really small for what a big property it is. But they do have like a hot tub as well. And I don't really think the small pool is much of a deal breaker because the beach is literally right across the street.

And really, I think what you're paying for here is the location. The rooms are, they're older. It's a little, it could use some work. But I was fine with it. Like, I actually really, I liked the hotel. I would stay here again. It's not somewhere I'm going to be like, I'm going to go stay here for a week. Like I won't do that. But I also wouldn't want to go to Waikiki for a week. But I was pleasantly surprised by

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how much I did like Waikiki. I thought it was really fun for two days, a one-night stay. There's some fun things to do there, which we'll get down, we'll get to later.

But I think for me it was just knowing like having the right expectations of, okay, this is not the Grand Hyatt Kauai. This is not some luxury hotel, but this is a fun hotel with a lot of cool shopping and cool restaurants nearby that we can walk to. If you were just coming here for a few days, you wouldn't even need a car to be here, really. If like they have a little trolley that takes you around Waikiki. I was really pleasantly surprised and happy with it. But I do know for some people, they're like, if you don't have your expectations, right, you could be disappointed.

Jess: Well, that's probably why they sent that email, because they were like, we need to set everyone's expectations. And then after you got that email, you probably were like, wow, this isn't so bad after all. So they probably do that. There's some psychology going on with the Hyatt Regency Waikiki.

Alex: Yeah, they're pretty smart. And they do have a club lounge, so if you have a club access award, you could use that there. They had, you know, pretty standard breakfast, like what you'd find at any of the Hyatt Regency's. They also had a evening snacks where like I think it could pass for dinner. There was like a pasta like a pasta dish, kind of like spaghetti, but different types of noodles. There was chili, there was a bunch of vegetables with hummus and dips, and like cold pasta salads.

So we saw a lot of families up there eating their dinner there. We were only there for a day, and so we ate dinner elsewhere, but it could work for a family if that's what you're thinking. It can get can get a little crowded. And it was, I would say, sometimes looked a little messy, but it was it was fine. Yeah.

Megan: Yeah. And that usually comes with the crowds, too. It's like hard, especially during the peak hours, it's hard for them to keep up, so I would understand.

Alex: I totally. And they were working really hard in there. Like I said before, the service at this hotel was really good and everybody was so, so nice. Yeah.

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So Megan, tell us, I know you've since you've been a couple times, you've stayed a couple different places. So let's hear about yours.

Megan: All right. For the trip that was just Tim and I, we stayed at the Moana Surfrider, Westin Resort, which is a Marriott Hotel. And that is literally on Waikiki. Like, you walk out the back of the hotel, and that's the beach right there in front of you. Yeah.

Alex: Yeah, and my hotel was just across the street and like kitty corner kind of from it because I saw it and I was like, ooh, there's the Moana Surfrider. It's so cute. It is looked really cute.

Megan: It's a very like traditional, like if you see like old timey movies of Hawaii, of Hawaii and Hawaiian hotels, like it has that feel and like look to it. It is actually Waikiki's oldest hotel. So there is like history there and they everybody calls it the first lady of Waikiki. And I feel like this hotel really gives more of like those types of vibes.

And if you were a family of four, standard rooms to it four, but for us that really is a the rooms are older, um, so they're very tight and small. Like the room we had just had a, I think a queen bed. I don't even think it had a king bed in it. And there was it was almost being like in New York City. There was almost no room walking on either side. But again, you're paying for the location. You are right on Waikiki Beach. The pool is smaller. It's not really like a it's not a resort pool. And I think that just is because you're in the city, you know, like you're in the city on the beach. Yeah.

Standard nights are 58,000 to 62,000 points per night. So those Marriott 50,000 certificates that you can now top up with up to 25,000 points, that is a really, I would think a really good use of them because the cash rates for this hotel are on par with like Hyatt Regency Maui. Like it is expensive. So I think it would be really good for couples or if you have older kids who want more of like a relaxing vibe and don't need all the pool and all the fun stuff, I think it would really great be great for that.

The second time we stayed there, we had the girls with us, and we stayed at the Hyatt Centric Waikiki Beach, which is like the opposite corner of the Hyatt

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Regency. So it's like, it's across the street from kind of where the Moana Surfrider is and the Waikiki Beach. It's a little bit further up, maybe a couple buildings up, but it's not very far. It's maybe a 10-minute walk to the beach. And standard rooms here sleep four for 20,000 points per night, but we actually booked a standard suite just outright for and this sleeps up to six for 32,000 points per night.

So I, again, for the location, this was a really great option. It had two queen beds and a pull-out bed, and then the couch area had like its own TV, and you could close a curtain. So if you wanted to put the kids to bed and like stay up and do something, like that was actually a really nice option too.

Alex: Yeah, I've, I've heard of some friends that have stayed there, and they actually got put into, I don't, I don't know, maybe my friends booked this room and they didn't know they booked the standard suite, but one of them was like, they upgraded me to this suite, and she didn't have status or anything. So either my friends were unsure about what they did, or this hotel's good about upgrades. Who knows?

Megan: I mean, it might be because I will say there are some downsides. One positive I thought was the parking garage is connected directly to the hotel. So we had a rental car and it was so easy to just park the car, and we went right into the hotel. Like, no big deal. There is no restaurant. And this might have, I mean, we stayed here like two years ago, but there was no restaurant inside the hotel, but you do have a giant food court literally right next door. It's like a mall area. So we ate there. And then the pool is even smaller than the other ones. It is like knee-deep water. It's like a waiting pool. So maybe if you had like toddlers, this would be a really great pool.

Alex: It sounds like they're playing in like a fountain.

Megan: Yeah, exactly. And that's kind of what it looked like. Like it's very long and it has like the little like sprayer jets. But it's not like a jumping swimming pool. But again, you're in the middle of Honolulu, like right on Waikiki. I really think for like we were there for two nights, it was perfect for what we needed. We had already got all of our beach time at Maui.

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Alex: Yeah. All right, so after my one-night stay in Waikiki, we went over to Ko Olina and we stayed at the Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club. I booked this in May. Well, I didn't book it in May 2025, but I went and did a timeshare presentation at the Westin Nanea on Maui, and after that timeshare presentation, they gave me then an option of purchasing an Encore package. So basically, come back and do this timeshare presentation again and you can get another discounted stay at a resort in Hawaii. from and there's a selection you can choose from.

It starts, I want to say, at like \$1,595 plus 50,000 Marriott Bonvoy points. And then if you want to stay at like more premium resorts or get a bigger room, instead of like a studio, bump up to the one bedroom, it would cost you \$1,995.

So we did that and I actually had like posted on Instagram stories when we purchased the Encore package. I was debating between a couple different properties and I was like, hey, if you've been to these, which two do you think I should do? It was the Westin Princeville on Kauai and then this one, the Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club. And overwhelmingly, people were like, we love Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club. Like you should try it. We've been there. Like, it's had like really, really rave reviews. So I'm like, okay, we'll try that one.

And then when I found the direct flights, I was like, oh, this will be perfect. This will be a great opportunity to try something new that we haven't done before, too.

So we paid the \$1,995. We got the 50,000 Marriott Bonvoy points. And this was for a five-night stay. And in return, we had to attend a 90-minute timeshare presentation. Our room was a one-bedroom villa with a sofa bed, a full kitchen, washer, dryer, one bathroom, but it was kind of interesting, like kind of had a connection where we had two sinks, one toilet with a shower, and then with the other sink in the master, there was a bathtub. So it worked, it worked really well for our family.

We also requested a roll-away, and we didn't have to pay any extra for that they brought to our room. So we had, we were obviously in the master bedroom. We had two of our kids on the sofa bed, one on the rollaway, and then our five-year-old slept on the couch cushions. And everybody was happy. It worked, it worked great for everybody.

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So I'm not going to get into the timeshare presentation promo package, how we got it, how all that works, because I covered that experience on episode 135 when I recap our stay at the Westin Nanea. So go ahead and check that out.

But the spoiler, we did not purchase the timeshare presentation, or purchase the timeshare. We didn't become Marriott Vacation Club owners, but we did purchase another Encore package. It's pretty funny because the guy's like, during the presentation, how are, how are you going to keep coming to places like this? Because they knew it was our Encore, and they know that we like it, you know, we talk about how it's nice having the kitchen and that extra bit, like the space.

And he's like, you know, you're not going to get another Encore presentation package after this. This is the last one. And I was like, we'll figure it out, like we're, you know, we'll book it on RedWeek or something like that. Like, you know, we can find discounts. And as soon as we were done, we were, they send you out to meet with another person. She's like, okay, well, would you like to purchase another Encore package? And we were like, yes, we would. Sure. Why not?

Jess: So they lied.

Alex: So, yes.

Megan: It's all part of the, the deal.

Alex: Yeah. I do think there's a point where they will cut you off when you've done so many of these, but we're kind of like, for now it works good for us. I definitely think, though, like if you're, I texted one of my friends, and I said, you can never do one of these because you, they are really good at their jobs. They make it sound enticing. They know what they're doing. But we, you know, we have points and all of that. But she's the kind of person that doesn't wouldn't say no. And she'd be like, this is a great deal. Like, I'm going to be able to come back with my family all the time. So you have to know yourself and your spouse if you can say no to these things. And we have no problem saying no, so it works great for us.

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So, what's really, if you don't want to get a timeshare presentation package or you don't have access to those, you can book this resort with Marriott points. It is harder to find for like a good price, but they do become available. I would recommend you can also book it on Airbnb or VRBO. So Marriott Vacation Club owners are like, okay, we can't go this year, and so I will, they'll post it so they can recoup their money, kind of thing. Or some people just own the points and rent it out and try to make money, I think, off like a kind of a little business model. Like I said, you can do RedWeek for discounted stays.

Another thing, somebody actually DM'd me on Instagram. I don't remember who it was, but it was somebody, someone from the community, and she saw this hotel on points on Chase travel portal and it was part of Points Boost, and it was, I mean it's very much going to fluctuate with your dates, but some dates it was maybe around like 43,000 points a night for the one-bedroom mountain view. I think that's an incredible deal to get a condo

Like, I don't know how long, you know, you could check this tomorrow and might not be on Points Boost anymore. We have no idea like how Chase and these hotels partner and how they decide when or how long they're going to be on Points Boost. I will say like if you're looking at holiday dates or peak travel, it's probably going to be much more expensive than that because it is dynamic pricing, but you can find some good deals. So I thought that was pretty cool.

This property, you guys, is so beautiful. So when I went, Mitch dropped me off. We had a rental car and I went to check in, and like as soon as I walked through the lobby, and like could just because so it's the lobby's like up above, and you can see down over and overlook their property. I was like, whoa, this is really, really beautiful grounds. And he said the same thing, like once we got to our room, cause we had to like drive from the lobby over to a different parking area to park for our room, and he was like, wow, this place is amazing. So we, it was gorgeous.

They have a zero-entry pool with a little splash pad area for young kids. We were there every night around dinner time. Like so, Mitch would be like grilling. They have grills there. Mitch would be grilling, I'd take the littler kids. We'd go in the hot tub, they'd go in the splash pad. I'd sit there and read my book and

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watch them, and it was like the perfect way to end our nights. And then we'd go on a walk and like see the sunset. So it's really, really nice.

They have in that same pool area, they have a volleyball net and they have pool volleyball and pool basketball. They have what's called a reflection pool, and it says like quiet please, but it wasn't an adults-only pool. You like kids could be there. I didn't take my kids there because I don't know if they know what that means, but I did see some kids there. They also have another pool that has like all these like looks like lava rocks and a cave you can swim through, and a water slide, and the water slide is dark, so it's kind of fun. And then hot tubs kind of like set up in the rocks.

And then, so Ko Olina, there's like four lagoons. And one of the lagoons is right in front of the Marriott. And it they're man-made lagoons, but they feed right into the ocean. So they look too perfect to be just natural, but they also, if you didn't know, you could think that they were just naturally there.

It kind of the whole property, and someone else had mentioned this to me, kind of reminded me of the Grand Hyatt because they do have the lagoon there. There's is just it's just it doesn't go to the ocean. The lagoon was super calm, so really good for young kids, but if you do want to go boogie boarding or surfing, you need to go to a different beach, but you could snorkel there.

The Disney Aulani resort is just a short walk away. There's like one other hotel between the Marriott and Disney Aulani. So we walked over there to see what it was like. We saw some characters. I was so funny. I was texting Jess because I was like, my youngest, like he loved meeting the Disney characters on our DisneyCruise. So we saw Goofy like in the breakfast area, and he's like, Mom, take a picture of me and Goofy. And it's like Goofy's 50 yards away and we're like taking a picture with Goofy in the background.

And we saw Mickey and Pluto just like, we didn't get to go up to them, and I wasn't about to be like, you guys, we're not, we aren't staying here. We can't do this. But we just like walk around. It was kind of funny, though, one time Goofy walked by and my husband had a football because the kids like throwing a football all around. And Goofy like walks by and puts his arm out like for a pass from Mitch and then he gets the ball, and he like goes in this football pose and

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then hands the ball back to Mitch. So that was pretty funny. We still so we still got some character interactions even though we weren't guests at Aulani.

But the whole area is just really calm and quiet. It's not near as busy as like Kaanapali Beach or even Wailea Beach. And Wailea is really pretty calm. The walkways are huge. And so you're not like fighting people to get around or if you're a runner, you don't have to run into people. And so that was really, really nice. It just, yeah, it was just really relaxing and nice and quiet there.

There is a Costco and Target, and a restaurant about 10 minutes away, but other than that, there's not much right there. There's like a monkey pod, a golf course, and a few little shops close by, but not much. But the other those the Costco and Target are really convenient, especially when you do have a kitchen to be able to go get groceries and things like that. So we really loved this property. I would totally return here. So yeah, I highly recommend it. Okay, we're going to get into what to do on Oahu now, and Megan's going to go first.

Megan: All right. So I think if you're going to do kind of like what Alex did, or even like we kind of based ourselves in Waikiki area, but then we had a rental car. I think a rental car is kind of necessary if you want to get out of Honolulu. Yeah. I think you could probably, if you were just going to go there and stay at Waikiki Beach for the like a couple days or a whole week, you could easily Uber from the airport. It's not that far. But there are so many things to see on the island that a rental car really makes it just so much better.

So some of the favorite things that we did is we went to the Dole Pineapple plantation, and you can get a Dole Whip. So if you're a Disney fan, that's another way to get a little Disney in your trip. They have like a little train, you can see like how the pineapples are grown. So that was really cool, and they kind of have like a little.

Alex: Where is that, Megan? We didn't do that. So that would have been kind of fun.

Megan: Yeah, and it's kind of like, you have to get there early because parking does get crazy. It's very popular, but it's free to just park and go inside. I think the train has like a little fee, and then of course, if you want the Dole Whip or ice

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cream or whatever, that's an extra fee too. We actually did a character breakfast at Aulani.

Alex: Hey, now I'm like we should have done that. We didn't have to take a picture from 40 yards away. I didn't even think of like you don't have to stay there.

Jess: Poor Noah getting the back of Goofy in his picture when he could have gotten a full-on character breakfast.

Alex: Yeah. I'm actually really sad. I should have asked you about that beforehand.

Megan: Yeah, so we just booked a character breakfast, and then if you're dining, you get the free parking. So, like, you just they validate your parking for you. So we just went and had breakfast there and then kind of the same thing. We just wandered around, and then we found like Moana was outside. We got pictures with her, and at the breakfast they give you one of those cards with like your pictures on it. So like we just used that, and we're like, oh, we're just going to pretend like we paid all this money to stay here.

Alex: But there's your little hack. Go and get character breakfast at Disney Aulani Resort. At least you paid money for something. We didn't do anything. We were just walking around. But I will say we didn't, we didn't take away from anybody's experience.

Megan: And we also love just driving around like the North Shore area, and you can find like quiet beaches. You can just stop and watch the surfers. Tons of food trucks just randomly everywhere, and even playgrounds. Like we just saw a playground, pulled over, parked, and like let the kids hop out and play for a little bit just to like get a break. And a lot of the other things we did, Alex also did, so I'll let her finish covering the rest of those.

Alex: Yeah, feel free to chime in if I miss anything, though. So we landed at 10:00 a.m., thanks to that four-hour time change for us. And we were kind of thinking like, we can't check in for a while because they'd sent me that letter. So we're like, what should we do go do?

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So Pearl Harbor is only about 10 minutes or so from the airport. So we did that. We drove there first thing after landing. Well, first we got some lunch at a little food truck really close by. I forget what it's called. Shay's Smash Burger, I think, is what it's called. And so we ate there and then we went to Pearl Harbor. We only spent about an hour. Megan, did you go there as well?

Megan: Yeah, we did actually did the same thing. We like got in our rental car and then. And it did feel a little weird because the parking lot was really full, so we had to kind of park on the street area. And I had read about like car break-ins and stuff. So I was like, oh, all of our luggage is here.

Alex: I know they do have signs. We were able to park in one of the parking lots, but like kind of a ways down and the signs say, don't leave valuables, high theft area. And I'm like, well, I don't really have an option because we just landed.

Megan: So I was like paranoid about that. And they, I assume it's still the same that like they're really strict on the size of bag that you can bring in.

Alex: Oh, they their signs said you can't even bring a bag.

Megan: Like no bags. Yeah.

Alex: No bags. So I brought a water bottle.

Megan: We had to like check our, I had to check my wallet. Like literally the size of like nothing. And they have like a little bag check there. So I felt like it was a little like, I didn't want to leave it in the car. And I'm like paranoid, now I have to check it with a stranger. So that is something to be aware of.

Alex: Yeah. What did you, how long did you guys spend, and what did you do there? Because we, we did, all we did was we walked around the grounds and we saw the video that they offered there because my kids had so many questions. They're like, so why did they do this? And then why this? And I'm like, we're going to go watch the video, and you're going to get all those questions answered.

Megan: Yeah. I do think they have a really great visitor center, and you can kind of just like walk through and it kind of tells the story of everything and there's just

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a lot of like the little history blurbs and stuff that you can just stand and read and like little clips of, so there is like a longer video, but then there's like little videos like throughout the visitor center.

When it was just Tim and I, we actually went out to the USS Arizona like memorial, and you that's a different, an extra cost. So you had to like get a timed entry for that, and then you get on like a little boat, and that takes you out there. I think that's really cool, but with the kids, I didn't think it was necessary because it was so hard for them to understand at that age. Maybe if they were teenagers, I probably would have done it, but my kids were only like five and seven at the time, and so for me that wasn't worth it. The visitor center was plenty.

Alex: Yeah, and we didn't do that either, and it was kind of the same thing of like, I have to like get the timed entry tickets. I don't know exactly when we're going to be able to make it because we were going right after we landed, like I didn't want to have to like kind of worry about that, and I also knew that we were probably going to be pretty tired after flying seven hours. So I was like, we're going to make this pretty quick, but it's like something I think would be great to go back and do and kind of go out there.

Another thing that we did when we were in Waikiki, is we hiked Diamond Head. So that was really, really cool. You need to get reservations in advance for this. I will link the website down in the show notes so you can go and do that if you're interested. We did the first slot of the day. So 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. If you want to, if you're bringing a car and you're going to park, you need to arrive within the first 30 minutes for parking.

So we got there at 6:15, and it was, we didn't see very many people going up until we got to the top, and it was like, oh wow, there's a lot of people up here. And my kids were like, we don't need to, like we were at the top, and then you go like around the corner to look down. You basically you're seeing all of Waikiki from down below. It's really, really cool and really pretty. My kids are like, we don't need to go around that. I was like, you guys, we walked all the way up here. We are going around and seeing the view. But there were just so many people. And then coming down, there were more people as well.

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So if you can, I would recommend doing the 6:00 a.m. It worked really well for us our first day because we were up at like probably 5:00 a.m. anyway. And so it's not very far from the hotel. It's maybe like a 10 to 15-minute drive, is all. And it was really pretty, so many good views. It's all uphill, and it's about 1.6 miles round trip. My five-year-old did it. So, and he was fine. There was a part where you go through a tunnel. Like you're and it's all dark and he's like, this is like Minecraft. You know the Minecraft movie where Steve goes through. Anyway, he they did great and it was fine.

And then we also spent time at Waikiki Beach. You could do surfing lessons if you want. We didn't this time, but I kind of wish I would have had my kids do that because they enjoy surfing and it was a good spot to do it.

And then there's just tons of food and restaurants that we walked to while we were in Waikiki as well. We went to like, I don't know about you, Megan, but I was blown away by the number of ABC stores in Waikiki. And my kids were looking for these viral ice cream pops. It's like a mango on top of a stick, but it like looks like a mango and the packaging's really cool. And we went to like eight ABC stores and found them and it was just pretty funny.

So another thing that we did is what we visited the Polynesian Cultural Center. This is on the North Shore. And a lot of the students, the people that work there are students from BYU Hawaii that are from islands, all different Polynesian islands. And here they have six island villages represented. So there's Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga. I'm going to have a hard time pronouncing it right. Aotearoa. It's New Zealand, but the Maori word for New Zealand. And Tahiti. And they had, they have like a marketplace. The villages open, I think at like 12 or 12:30. But they have this marketplace where there's all these like food trucks and stuff. It's called Huki Law marketplace. So we went there and ate lunch and then went to the, went to all the shows.

So each island has a show that and they give you a map of like showtimes and some of the islands have more than they have a couple different shows. So you can go watch the show and like some of them it's like in Samoa, the guy would climb up the coconut or the pineapple, no, not pineapple tree, the palm tree. The

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palm tree. And like steps on fire, shows you how to like open a coconut, and anyways, like his, the Samoa show was really funny.

And then they have different activities at each of the villages that you can do. So you can play like these games that are traditional games that they would play on these Polynesian islands or you could get like a tattoo, and my kids thought that was really cool, or just like different ball games. So that was really cool. I don't remember, I think I started saying about the students from BYU Hawaii work there, but what it does is your visit helps provide scholarships to these students who work there who come from all of these islands. So it's pretty cool. Like your visit is going to a good cause to provide a college education for some of these native islanders.

And then, yeah, they also have a dinner there. They have like a buffet or a luau and you can buy tickets for that. And then they have an evening show. I believe it's, well, I did this when I was a kid. I went with my friend's family to Oahu, and we did the whole entire day there and I loved it. The evening show is called Ha: Breath of Life and it tells this whole story, lots of singing and dancing, kind of like a Broadway-style show.

But I was like, I just didn't know if my boys could do all day. Like my boys aren't as, they can't hang with some of this kind of stuff. So I was like, all right, we will just do the island villages, which is about 12:30 to 5:30. And then after that, we drove back through the north shore. We ate dinner at the original Seven Brothers. So Seven Brothers was started there. There's actually seven brothers in the family. And we have, there's some in Utah as well. And so we went to the original Seven Brothers, which my kids thought was really cool because they're kind of obsessed with this place. And then we had shave ice at Matsumoto's shave ice. And that was a really fun day. So we just spent the day there.

We didn't go up to the north shore beyond that, just because we were there shortly after the flooding and just didn't want to be like in the way of their recovery efforts, but we'd already had these tickets to the Polynesian Cultural Center and that was open. And everything looked good when we were there. Like everything seemed like they were, they were, it was the recovery efforts were going well.

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So, and then the rest of the time we spent time at our resort. There was golf nearby at Ko Olina Golf Club, I think is what it's called. What was really cool is in the afternoon, like I think it was three or later, kids could golf for free. And so it was actually really good. Like I, it was a beautiful course, and when I think of going golfing on a vacation, I'm like, well, that's going to cost a jillion dollars. I want to say it was maybe like \$150 for my husband and my oldest, including getting a golf cart and all of their clubs for nine holes. I feel like that's pretty good for Hawaii. So he, basically, kids were free, and I think that's just what it cost for my husband, but then they gave my son the golf clubs too.

And then we went to White Plain Beach to surf and boogie board one day. Um, there you could rent right there. And this was right there in Ko Olina, so not very far away.

I would say like it was kind of rocky, and it, the rentals were really cheap, though, like maybe \$10 an hour per board. But I think we would have had more success if we'd gone up to the north shore. We just were not wanting to be in the way of recovery efforts. So yeah, we would have spent more time up there. But yeah, we had a great time.

So just my overall thoughts on Oahu, and then Megan, I want to hear yours, too. I really, really liked it. I feel like you hear a lot of like, oh, Kauai and Maui, and you know, the Big Island, and you don't when people think of Oahu, they just think of Waikiki. And there is so much more on Oahu than just Waikiki. And I thought Waikiki was really fun. I just wouldn't want to go there for longer than a couple of days.

Oahu was so, so pretty. Like when we were driving up to the Polynesian Cultural Center, our maps took us there one way and took us back a different way. So we got to see a lot, and it was probably about 45 minutes from Ko Olina. And it like we were just like, oh my gosh, this is so pretty. It felt like we were in Jurassic Park. It's so green. We really, really liked it. So, I do I will say I don't think it's an island we will return to as often as Maui or Kauai, but we were really happy with our stay, and we would go back.

Megan: Yeah, and I totally agree, like same as Alex. Like, I loved it for what we did.

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Alex: You do different things. You're maybe more on the go, seeing, 'cause there's so much to see and do there.

Megan: Yeah, and I think that's why I liked the way like that we did it both times, where we had like we started in Maui, we like got over the time change and like relaxed and did all like the beachy stuff. And then we came and did that before we flew home. And also like the flights are just better out of Honolulu. There's more options. So I feel like that also is kind of an appeal of ending your trip there to just to get home faster.

But I do think like the traffic was crazy. Every, both times we were there, I was like, this is such a small island. Why are there so many cars? But I really did love our two days. I'm not sure I would go back. It's just so far for to get to Hawaii for me, that I think if I were to go back to Hawaii, I would like to, I haven't been to Kauai yet, so I'd like to try that. And I would like to go to the Big Island to do the National Park. So I think those would be more of a priority for me than to go back to Oahu. But I still think it offered, has plenty to offer and like especially for a couple of days.

Alex: Yeah, I agree.

Jess: All right, well, it sounds like you both had a great time on Oahu. So maybe I should plan a trip. I'm going to have to book it for like 2028 at this point. I know Megan feels me.

Alex: 2030.

Jess: I know Megan feels me on that. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a rating and a review and share it with your friends. And if you want more Points Talk in your life, don't forget to subscribe to Points Talk Premium.

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