

Family-Oriented Things to Do on Hawaii's Big Island

Courtesy of www.bigislandvacation.com

Ohana is the Hawaiian word for family. Here are some things your entire ohana will enjoy during your Big Island vacation. Most are either free or inexpensive.

Kailua-Kona and Kohala Coast Areas

- The Hilton Waikoloa Village is the most family-friendly resort on the Kohala Coast. You can visit for free (pay-parking in the hotel lot, but free parking is often available in the beach access parking lot across the street). Wander the resort, sway in a hammock, ride the boats and tram, watch dolphins play. Ask about purchasing a 4 person day pass which is often available when the hotel is not fully booked. You can enjoy all the resort amenities at a low cost (808-886-1234).
- Stop at the Mauna Lani Resort to sway in the oceanside hammocks, play in the sand, view the turtles that pull out to sun themselves on the beach, and watch the sharks and large fish swimming in the hotel's artificial lagoon.
- Spend the day on Pau`oa Beach at the Fairmont Orchid Hotel. The protected shallow cove is perfect for kid's water play and the resort amenities will please parents. (Fee for parking, but the beach is free to all. Bring your own shade).
- The ocean at Spencer Beach Park is usually calm enough for the entire family to enjoy swimming there. It is also a great place to whale watch (November - March). Lifeguards are usually on duty.
- Snorkel at Kahalu`u Beach Park in Kailua-Kona. The shallow lagoon features tons of turtles. Lifeguards are on duty most of the year.
- Dive to the bottom of the ocean in a real submarine. Explore Kona's coral reefs in a once-in-a-lifetime experience your children will be talking about for years. Atlantis Submarines in Kailua-Kona can arrange your trip. It is expensive, but worth a splurge. Phone 1-800-548-6262 for reservations.

Waimea and North Coast Areas

- Picnic in the park in Waimea. The huge play structure will entertain kids and the cool climate in Waimea is a restful break from the hot coast. Buy your picnic fixins' at one of the grocery stores in town.



- Pack a picnic lunch and spend the day at Kamehameha Park in Kapa`au. Just a stone's throw from the Kamehameha Statue (worth a visit), the park features play equipment and a public pool.

Hilo Area

- If you are in the Hilo area, go to The Pana`ewa Rainforest Zoo. It is home to more than 80 animal species including the endangered nene (Hawaii state bird). Look for the sign on the right as you leave Hilo going toward Volcano. Admission is free.
- While you are in Hilo, visit the Imlilo Astronomy Center. The center has over 100 interactive displays about journeying on land, by sea, and through space. Inexpensive.
- Volcanoes National Park is seventy million years in the making. Visit the world's only 'Drive-in Volcano'. Visit the Art Center, the Jagger Museum, walk through a lava tube, and stand at the edge of a fuming caldera. It is an unforgettable experiences for your family. Open daily. Visitor Center hours: 7:45 a.m. - 5 p.m. Fee: \$10 per car.
- If you are driving between Hilo and Volcano stop at the Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Factory and watch while workers make delicious macadamia nut candies and treats. Look for the Macadamia Nut road on your left as you leave Hilo. Open Daily 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Factory closed Sundays & holidays. Phone 888.628.6256 (toll free) for information. Admission is free.
- Bird watch along the Kipuka Puauulu Trail near Volcano National Park. A kipuka is a place where flowing lava passed around a forest area leaving it as an island in the devastation. It's an easy walk and there are tons of birds. Look for the road to the Kipuka on the right between the National Park and Punalu`u black sand beach.

Just for Fun

- Stop at a shave ice stand and treat the family to the coolest refreshment on the island.
- Humpback whales circle the island between November and April. The best place to spot them is along the Kona/Kohala Coast. Pack a lunch and cold beverages and find a high spot where you have an unobstructed view of the ocean. We like the bluff near the visitor center at Lapakahi State Park or the lawn area near the ball field at Kamehameha Park in Kapa`au.