



Kīhei, Maui's Sunny South Shore

Sharing the sunniest, driest end of Maui with Wailea and Mākena is the community of Kīhei. The brilliant feature of this seaside town is its six-mile long stretch of sandy beach with views of Kaho'olawe, Molokini, Lāna'i and West Maui. From this vantage point, the West Maui Mountains appear to be a separate island, a mysterious Shangri La in the distance.

Kīhei's Kalama Beach Park has shady lawns and palm trees dotting its 36 oceanfront acres. A blink away are Kalepolepo, Waipu`ilani, and the three beaches of Kama'ole. One may be favored for swimming, another for body surfing or board surfing. Each one is wide, sandy and sunny – a perfect postcard, the quintessential tropical beach.

People come to Kīhei for the beaches and stay for weeks at a time. Many stay a lifetime. Some of the best bargains in accommodations can be found among the condominiums, small hotels and cottages along Kīhei's beach road.

A string of sleepy Hawaiian villages with outrigger canoes once lined the shore. Kamehameha had an ancient fishpond at Kalepolepo restored for his use and enjoyment. According to Hawaiian lore, it took 10,000 men to complete the project. Hawaiian royalty sojourned regularly at Kīhei, basking regally on the breeze-swept shore.

There's nothing sleepy about this coast now, nor will it cost a king's ransom to visit. Small shopping malls, a bustling farmer's market, activity centers, and a spate of restaurants and sundown mai tai spots enliven the Kīhei scene. Everyday, good things abound here, from health food stores to supermarkets and a pizza restaurant or two. Everyone eventually ends up at the modernized Azeka's Shopping Center to buy old-fashioned Maui potato chips and casual local cuisine, or to shop for sunglasses, books and beach towels. There's also a public golf course in Kīhei, Elleair Maui Golf Club, where players of every handicap will find a challenge.

But the fun doesn't stop with the setting sun. Kīhei's nightlife includes sports bars, karaoke spots, and dance clubs.

Birdwatchers and nature lovers have their own adventures, too. At the north end of the Kīhei is a national wildlife refuge, Keālia Pond, where endangered Hawaiian stilts and coots thrive in a salt-water marsh that is easily visible from the road. Nearby, the harbor at up is the launching site for an armada of pleasure boats taking visitors on charter fishing excursions, whale watching expeditions and snorkel trips to Molokini.



At this end of Maui, anyone on a budget can enjoy the sunshine, surf and sand that are ubiquitous in Kihei. The magical Maui nights are available to everyone, and anyone can feel like a king here. Those who listen carefully may hear the song of the whale – even while floating in the ocean – and see the great humpbacks frolicking in the waves.