

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HAWAII ISLAND

Big Island Beach Guide

Get to know the shoreline.

A beach can be a beautiful afternoon and a useful way to get to know a place. Whether you already live on the island, are thinking about a move, or want to understand what makes your own property's location useful, start with the shoreline and the everyday route to it. These are a few places to explore, along with the practical details I would look at. You do not need a buying timeline to enjoy looking.

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The Kawaguchi Group

Sources reviewed October 27, 2026 · Selected beaches

START WITH THE SHORELINE

What would you like to explore?

This is a starting list, not a ranking or a complete inventory of island beaches. The detailed entries and source notes explain the differences.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE	START WITH	NOTICE WHEN YOU VISIT
A small sandy beach near Kona	La‘aloa / Magic Sands	Sand coverage and the crossing from parking
A reef-focused outing	Kahalu‘u or Waialea	Conditions, reef etiquette and closure notices
An open sandy shoreline	Hāpuna or Kua Bay	Surf, shade, parking and entry fees
A walk by palms and fishponds	‘Anaeho‘omalu Bay	Public access route and the resort setting
A lagoon and picnic setting	Carlsmith	Entry terrain and current lifeguard presence
An east-side ocean park	Richardson	Water entry and the route from town
A black-sand coastal stop	Punalu‘u	Wildlife space and conditions along the shore

Oceanfront, a view, and beach access

Keep these as separate questions. What can you see from the home? What shoreline is nearby? How would you actually get there? The answers are useful whether you are buying, selling or simply exploring.

EXPLORE THE COAST

Kona

A pocket of sand, a reef bay, an open coast. Try comparing the kind of shoreline you enjoy with the route you would actually take from home. A place that looks close on a map may feel different once you include parking and the walk to the water.

ALI'I DRIVE • SMALL SANDY BEACH

La'aloa / Magic Sands

This small beach is also called White Sands or Disappearing Sands. Strong surf can move the sand away and expose the rocky shoreline. Go Hawai'i lists restrooms, showers and lifeguard service. [1]

What I would look at: Notice how much sand is present on the day, then look at the street crossing and walk from parking.

KEAUHOU AREA • REEF BAY

Kahalu'u Beach Park

Kahalu'u is known for snorkeling and reef education. The bay occasionally closes during coral spawning, so check the current notice before planning around it. Go Hawai'i lists parking and lifeguard service. [2]

What I would look at: If snorkeling is part of your picture of island life, pay attention to reef etiquette, access and daily conditions.

NORTH KONA • KEKAHA KAI STATE PARK

Manini'owali / Kua Bay

Kua Bay is the northern section of Kekaha Kai State Park. DLNR describes swimming during calm seas and warns of dangerous shore break and rip currents in high surf. It lists no lifeguard service. Nonresident entry and parking fees apply. [3]

What I would look at: Compare an occasional beach outing with the drive you would be happy to make several times a week.

EXPLORE THE COAST

Kohala Coast

Three different ways to spend time by the water. Start with the shoreline, then explore the surrounding area. Being near a resort beach and owning a home with beach access are separate questions; check the actual route and access arrangements for any property.

SOUTH KOHALA • STATE BEACH PARK

Hāpuna Beach

Hāpuna offers a sandy beach and picnic setting, with swimming when seas are calm. DLNR lists lifeguard service and warns of dangerous shore break and rip currents during high surf. Nonresident entry and parking fees apply. [4]

What I would look at: Spend some time on shore before deciding whether the water matches your comfort and experience.

SOUTH KOHALA • MARINE LIFE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Waialea Bay / Beach 69

Waialea combines a beach with reef and rocky areas. DLNR describes seasonal sand changes, a rough access road, no facilities and no lifeguards. High surf can affect the bay. [5]

What I would look at: Look at the terrain between your parking spot and the shoreline, especially if easy access matters to you.

WAIKOLOA BEACH RESORT • PALMS & FISHPONDS

‘Anaeho‘omalu Bay

Often called A-Bay, this palm-lined shoreline sits beside historic fishponds at Waikoloa Beach Resort. Go Hawai‘i lists restrooms, parking and a picnic area. A shoreline stroll is one way to get a feel for the setting. [6]

What I would look at: Walk the public route you would use and note how the beach connects with the surrounding resort area.

EXPLORE THE COAST

Hilo & Kaʻū

Lagoons, ocean parks and a black-sand coast. These places broaden the picture beyond a sandy beach out front. Visit the shoreline and the nearby town as two parts of the same outing, then consider how each fits the way you like to spend a day.

HILO • LAGOONS & LAWN

Carlsmith Beach Park

Carlsmith, also called Four Mile, has lagoons and lawn rather than a broad sandy shoreline. Go Hawai'i lists parking, restrooms, showers and picnic tables. Published lifeguard schedules differ between sources; confirm on site. [7, 11]

What I would look at: Think about whether a grassy picnic spot and lagoon setting appeal to you as much as a sand beach.

HILO • BAY & OCEAN PARK

Richardson Ocean Park

The bay at Richardson is a well-known Hilo snorkeling spot. Hawai'i County lists ADA access and restrooms. Go Hawai'i and Hawai'i Ocean Safety list lifeguard service; confirm staffing on arrival. Treat water entry as a decision for the conditions that day. [8, 9, 11]

What I would look at: Check the actual entry terrain and spend time along the shore before choosing a place to get in.

KA'Ū • BLACK-SAND SHORELINE

Punaluʻu Black Sand Beach

Punaluʻu is a black-sand beach in Kaʻū. Hawai'i County lists restrooms, a pavilion, BBQ grills and camping. Turtles may rest on the shore; give wildlife room and keep a clear path to the water. [10, 12, 13]

What I would look at: Enjoy it as a shoreline stop without assuming it is a swimming destination for your visit.

BEYOND THE BEACH

Connect the coast with everyday life.

You can use these questions while looking at a home, preparing to sell, or getting to know another part of the island.

What does “on the water” mean to you?

A view from the lanai, a sandy shoreline, or a place to get into the ocean? Write those down separately. They can lead to very different homes.

What is the real route?

Trace the drive or walk from the property to the public access point. Include hills, crossings, parking and the final approach to the shore.

How would an ordinary day work?

Try the trip at the time you would normally go. Add a grocery stop or your work route. A vacation afternoon is only one part of living here.

What should we verify about a home?

Ask me to review the property details and documented access. Keep an ocean view, a nearby public beach and a specific property's beach access separate when comparing listings.

Selling a home near the coast?

Describe the actual view and the route to the beach clearly. Show what is documented, identify what still needs checking, and help buyers understand the location beyond the listing itself.

A note to bring along: “The part of being near the water that matters most to me is...”

BEFORE YOU GO

A little planning helps.

A beautiful description is a starting point. Conditions and access still need a fresh look on the day of your visit.

Check the day, not just the destination.

Look at current ocean conditions, water-quality advisories and posted closure notices before you go. Read signs at the beach and ask the lifeguard about the conditions. If you are unsure, enjoy the shore. [11, 14, 15]

Give wildlife room.

NOAA recommends staying at least 10 feet from sea turtles, 50 feet from monk seals, and 150 feet from a mother seal with a pup. These are viewing recommendations, not a complete statement of wildlife law. Respect barriers and never touch, chase or feed wildlife. [12]

Plan for entry and parking.

As checked October 27, 2026, DLNR lists a \$5 nonresident entry fee per person and \$10 nonresident noncommercial vehicle parking at Hāpuna and the Kua Bay section of Kekaha Kai. Children age 3 and under enter free. Hawai'i residents with qualifying Hawai'i identification are exempt from these entry and parking fees. Payment is credit card only. Recheck the park page before visiting. [3, 4]

A note about changing information.

This guide does not confirm that a beach is open or that conditions are suitable today. Carlsmith lifeguard schedules differ between the tourism description and Hawai'i Ocean Safety's listing; confirm staffing on arrival. Precise access arrangements, amenities, fees and closures should be rechecked with the responsible agency. [7, 11]

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LET'S TALK

A place can look different once you know the details.

Send me a beach you liked, a home that caught your eye, or a question about your own property's location. I can help you connect the coastline with the practical details of buying, selling or making a move here.

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Whether you already call the island home or are considering a move, I'm happy to help you sort through the questions at your pace.

Start with a question.
We can take it from there.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

SOURCES & NOTES

Where the details come from.

Original guide prepared for Hayden Fennoy. Beach facts are based on the references below, reviewed October 27, 2026. The “what I would look at” notes are practical prompts, not claims about a specific property.

- [1] Go Hawai'i · La'aloa / White Sands
- [2] Go Hawai'i · Kahalu'u Beach Park
- [3] DLNR State Parks · Kekaha Kai
- [4] DLNR State Parks · Hāpuna
- [5] DLNR Aquatic Resources · Waialea Bay
- [6] Go Hawai'i · 'Anaeho'omalua Bay
- [7] Go Hawai'i · Carlsmith Beach Park
- [8] Hawai'i County · Richardson Ocean Park
- [9] Go Hawai'i · Richardson Ocean Center
- [10] Hawai'i County · Punalu'u Beach Park
- [11] Hawai'i Ocean Safety · Lifeguarded beaches
- [12] NOAA Fisheries · Viewing wildlife in Hawai'i
- [13] Go Hawai'i · Island of Hawai'i beaches
- [14] Hawai'i Ocean Safety · Safety resources
- [15] Hawai'i Department of Health · Water advisories

Source titles are clickable. County directory details were checked through indexed agency summaries where direct page access was unavailable. No current opening status or on-site inspection is claimed. This selection does not cover every shoreline or district.