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Hawaii's history adds to islands' magic

Make time for palaces, galleries, grand old hotels

By JODI ISENBERG
Metro Toronto

For those of you who have never been to Hawaii, the word itself most likely conjures up a few images in your head.

For me, those images once included Brady Bunch's Greg surfing escapades, Magnum P.I. reruns, leis, luaus and that Lost show. Oh, and gorgeous blue water, palm trees and perfect scenery as far as the eye can see.

Now that I've been lucky enough to travel there, I can confirm a few things: there's gorgeous blue water, palm trees, leis, luaus and perfect scenery as far as the eye can see. It's like being in a dream — only it's all very real.

But what I didn't realize until I escaped there was that the islands are built on a wealth of history. And if you can tear yourself away from the beach for a few hours, you can really paint a new mental picture of Hawaii.

I visited the island of Oahu, home of Waikiki, Honolulu and Pearl Harbor.

Did you know Hawaii had a monarchy? I certainly did-



Iolani Palace in Honolulu was the official residence of Hawaii's last royal rulers.

n't, until I visited Iolani Palace in Honolulu. This was the official residence of King Kalakaua and his queen, Kapiolani, from 1882 until his

death in 1891, and of his sister and successor, Queen Liliuokalani, who was the last reigning monarch and ended up imprisoned here in 1895. In what's described as American Florentine style, the palace has been amazingly preserved and contains many Hawaiian artifacts.

There's also Queen Emma's Summer Palace, built in 1848. It's in the Nuuanu Valley and was a place of escape for the queen consort, her husband, King Kamehameha IV, and their young son, Prince Albert Edward. Combining the queen's Hawaiian and British heritage, the palace houses Victorian and local artifacts.

Also on Oahu, The Honolulu Academy of Arts, which opened in 1927 and is registered as a National and State Historical site, was not what I expected. First off, its collection of international art goes on and on; the permanent collection holds over 38,000 works. This museum is particularly known for its Asian art galleries. If you're into exploring pure Hawaiian culture, the Hawaii State Art Museum, housed in the original Royal Hawaiian Hotel (built in 1927), has three galleries showing a diverse mix of styles and media.

Sometimes you have to look no further than your hotel for a little bit of history. The Sheraton Moana Surfrider and The Royal Hawaiian are both places to stay and historic sites.

Touring the Sheraton Moana Surfrider, opened in 1901, is a bit like stepping



The Sheraton Moana Surfrider is one of Hawaii's grand old historic hotels, and definitely worth a visit.



Queen Emma's Summer Palace, built in 1848, is another royal residence that is open to visitors.

back in time. The "First Lady of Waikiki" has a Victorian feel, with porches lined with white columns and old-style rocking chairs. You can sit in the Banyan tree courtyard and waste the day away; there's a great view of the ocean and the tree, transplanted in 1904, gives a sense of history at this hotel that stayed open during World War II. Afternoon tea is served here on the grand veranda. There are free guided tours of this special hotel several times a week.

The Royal Hawaiian, dubbed "The Pink Palace of the Pacific," was built in 1927 and its look was influenced by screen legend Rudolph Valentino. Playground to the stars, this Spanish-Moorish oasis was visited by Clark Gable, the Beatles, Douglas Fairbanks, Shirley Temple (the cocktail named after this actress was created at the hotel), and, more recently, Harrison Ford, Adam Sandler, Kevin Costner and many others. Free historical walking tours are available, and they host

luaus!

Sure, you can wait for a rainy day on your trip to paradise to explore these historical sites, but don't miss out on learning more about what makes Hawaii such a magical destination.

hawaii's history

► Honolulu Academy of Arts: Tues. to Sat., 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Sun., 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Free first Wednesday of the month. Admission: Adults \$7; students, seniors, and military \$4; Academy members, children 12 and under free.

► Hawaii State Art Museum: Tues. to Sat., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: Free.

► Queen Emma Summer Palace: Daily, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sun. to Sat. Admission: Adults, \$6, Seniors, \$4, Children, \$1.

► Iolani Palace: Grand Tour Hours, Tues. to Sat., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., tours begin every 30 minutes. Admission: \$20 adults, \$5 kids five to 17.

► For more info on the Sheraton Moana Surfrider and the Royal Hawaiian, visit www.starwoodhotels.com.

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