

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S AFFLUENT ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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Home **May/June 2005**

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■ **FEATURES**

[Family Family AFFAIR AFFAIR](#)

[Matt Dillon - Into the Art of Acting](#)

[SUMMER 2005 MOVIE GUIDES](#)

[LOFTY IDEALS](#)

[THE GREAT OUTDOORS](#)

[Around Town](#)

■ **PROFILES**

[Emily Procter - An Actress who aspires to Sing](#)

[Chris Meloni - He's Just Like the Rest of Us](#)

[Minae Noji - Playing by Hollywood's Rules](#)

[Debbie Matenopoulos - Life After The View](#)

■ **BEAUTY**

[Necessities for Seasonal Revamps](#)

OAHU'S NORTHERN GEM

NEXT TIME YOU HEAD FOR HAWAII, WHY NOT ABANDON THE TALL BUILDINGS, tourist-jammed sidewalks and tiny beaches of



Waikiki and discover the better side of Oahu? There's a different world north of Honolulu, where the beaches are expansive, the waves crash tumultuously upon the shore and small towns abound. Escaping Honolulu and going to the North Shore makes you feel like you're on a different island, lost in a true tropical paradise.

The North Shore is the setting of *Lost*, the popular ABC series that follows a group of plane-crash survivors stranded on a remote island. The fact that they can create that world just an hour north of Waikiki speaks volumes about the difference between the two sides of the island.

■ GETAWAYS

[Carmel's Seductive Pleasure](#)

■ THE GAMES

[Finding LA's Hockey Soul](#)

■ BUSINESS

[Tapping Our Solar Resources](#)

■ GLOBEWALKING

[Hawaii: Getting Away from It All](#)

■ AUTOMOBILES

[Eco Limo's Making Statements](#)

■ THEATER

[Recalling a Forgotten Era](#)

■ MUSEUMS

[Your Guide to What's Hanging in LA.](#)



Driving to the North Shore from Honolulu International Airport is simple. This is a small island, after all. Just head north (duh) from Interstate H1 to H2, through the vast Dole pineapple fields, onto Highway 99, and then onto the two-lane shoreline drive, Highway 83/Kamehameha Highway. When you hit the highway, it's immediately obvious you're not in Waikiki anymore because there isn't a high-rise or a Prada store in sight. Instead, horse ranches nestle up against craggy mountains, and stunning waves dotted with expert surfers break against legendary beaches with names like Banzai Pipeline and Sunset Beach.



If roughing it is your idea of the ultimate tropical experience, there are inexpensive backpacking hostels and small hotels all along the North Shore. But just because this is a world away from Oahu's

main drag, there's no reason not to make luxury a part of your trip to paradise.

That's why the Turtle Bay Resort in Kahuku is the perfect spot to set up your North Shore base camp. It's the only luxury hotel in these parts, perched on the very tip of Turtle Bay on the northeastern edge of the island. Just four stories high, the resort is an unobtrusive landmark with something for everyone, including a low-lying group of 42 cottages that offer unsurpassed privacy and amazing views of the surfer-friendly waves of Turtle Bay.

The recently restored resort is warm and welcoming, from the lobby with its huge glass windows overlooking Bay View Beach to the protected beach cove perfect for swimming, snorkeling or beach volleyball. It has two championship golf courses, one designed by Tom Fazio and the other by Arnold Palmer (who recently got married in one of the cottages). And with its 10 tennis courts, two pools, riding stables and full-service spa, this North Shore gem may just make you want to stay forever.



But one excellent reason to head off the property is to go on an adventure that originates there. Legendary pro surfer Hans Hedemann

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adventure that originates there. Legendary pro surfer Hans Hedemann has a branch of his famous Surf School at the Turtle Bay Resort. He and his teaching staff of pros practically guarantee that even the rankest amateur will learn to ride a wave by the end of just a single one-hour class. Loading into one of their vans, complete with boards strapped to the roof and rash guards at the ready, novices will fit into the North Shore lifestyle like old pros.

Happily, Hans and company don't take beginners straight to the Banzai Pipeline, where winter waves can reach heights of 30 to 40 feet and undercurrents can crack a collarbone on the reef in an instant. Instead, you head past the shrimp farms that dot the coastline of the sleepy town of Kuhuku to the protected beach of Kawela Bay, where more manageable waves beckon the beginner to visions of greatness.

"We'll get you up and riding today," Hedemann promised as we paddled out in the warm water, him on a short surfboard, me on a very long and very forgiving one. And, amazingly, up and away I went, a first-time-ever surfer, a middle-aged Gidget hanging ten and having the time of my life. It seems on the North Shore, even old dogs can learn new tricks, given the right instructor.

But I didn't need lessons to figure out how to enjoy the other amenities at the Turtle Bay Resort. Spa Luana is a luxury spa nestled inside the resort. Treatments include the Hawaiian Ti-Leaf Body Wrap, specifically created to calm the sunburned skin that tourists often sport (the ones who forget that the island sun isn't the same as the one back home, especially if sunscreen is neglected), and the Pineapple Pedicure, what some might call the ultimate pedicure, indulged in while seated in a throne-like pedi-chair outside in the sun and sea air. There's also the traditional Hawaiian Lomi-Lomi massage or the one with hot stones, perfect for those sore, post-surfing muscles, or after a climb up to the scenic waterfall in the Waimea Valley Audubon Center, a wildly beautiful, tropical nature preserve a few miles away from the resort.

Also down the road from Turtle Bay is the pretty little town of Haleiwa with its boutiques, art galleries, surf shops and restaurants. It's perfect for those who find frolicking in the ocean, hiking in the rainforest, or whacking golf balls too strenuous on certain vacation days. Strolling the shops, stopping for a Mai Tai and some seared Ahi tuna and fried calamari pupus at Haleiwa Joe's, and scarfing down a famous "shave ice" at Matsumoto's Shave Ice stand makes for a North Shore day to remember...sans body aches.

Many of the most spectacular natural wonders that make the North Shore famous happen in the winter months. Huge surfing waves blow in from December to April, and humpback whales migrate close to shore around the same timeframe. In March, we spotted turtles on the shore off Turtle Bay laying their eggs in the sand, signaling the arrival of spring.

Summer is just as beautiful on the North Shore, but don't expect to see those huge waves or majestic creatures (although the turtles are seen in the water all year long). Sunset Beach and the Banzai Pipeline turn into gentle coves with barely a breaking wave—quite a difference from the raging winter water, but equally enjoyable for swimmers, beachcombers, and sun worshippers in search of a vacation spot that feels far from the madding crowd.

Many major airlines fly non-stop into Honolulu from Los Angeles, including United, American, and Hawaiian. For more information on the Turtle Bay Resort, go to www.turtlebayresort.com. Room rates start at \$400 per night for an ocean-view room; ocean-front cottages are \$850 per night and include special, personalized Ho'okipa (butler) services. For more general information on vacationing on Oahu, go to www.gohawaii.com.

— Jenny Peters

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