

# Hawaii Packing Checklist

Checklist · 72 items · 11 sections

Hawaii is not a generic beach trip. Pack for snorkeling on coral reefs, sunrise on a 10,000-foot volcano summit, lava-rock hikes, and a luau dinner, all in one suitcase. This checklist covers reef-safe sunscreen (required by Hawaii law since January 2021), inter-island flights, cultural etiquette, and the agricultural rules that apply when you fly home.

Open the editable, AI-powered version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/hawaii-packing-checklist>

## DOCUMENTS & PRE-TRIP

- Government photo ID (driver's license is fine for US domestic flights)

HIGH

*Passport only required if connecting through an international carrier or if your REAL ID is not yet issued.*

- Print or save offline: hotel, rental car, luau, and tour confirmations

HIGH

*Cell service drops on the Road to Hana, in Volcanoes NP, and on Kauai's north shore.*

- Reserve timed-entry passes for Haleakala sunrise (Maui) and Diamond Head (Oahu)

HIGH

*Haleakala sunrise reservations open 60 days in advance and sell out within minutes.*

- Travel insurance policy with hurricane and volcano coverage

*Hurricane season runs June through November. Kilauea eruptions can close park areas with little notice.*

- Cash for tips, food trucks, and farmers markets (Hawaii is a tip-heavy culture)

- Inter-island flight confirmations (Hawaiian Airlines, Southwest)

HIGH

*Check-in for inter-island flights opens 24 hours before. Carry-on size is strictly enforced.*

## REEF-SAFE SUN PROTECTION (REQUIRED BY HAWAII LAW)

- REEF-SAFE sunscreen, mineral-based with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, SPF 30+

HIGH

*Hawaii Act 104 (effective January 1, 2021) bans the sale and distribution of sunscreens containing oxybenzone or octinoxate. Maui County also bans non-mineral sunscreens. Violations can carry civil fines up to \$1,000 per offense. Read the label, don't trust marketing claims.*

- Approved brands: Sun Bum Mineral, Stream2Sea, All Good, Thinksport, Raw Elements

HIGH

*Reef-safe means free of oxybenzone, octinoxate, octocrylene, and avobenzone. Reef-friendly is a marketing term with no legal definition, so always read the active ingredient list.*

- Reef-safe lip balm with SPF 30+

HIGH

- UV-protective long-sleeve rash guard (UPF 50+)

HIGH

*A rash guard is the single best way to protect skin and the reef. Less sunscreen needed, more coral saved.*

- After-sun aloe vera gel (refrigerate at hotel for extra relief)
- Polarized sunglasses (cuts ocean glare for snorkeling lookouts)

HIGH

- Wide-brim hat with chin strap (trade winds will steal a regular cap)

HIGH

## CLOTHING (BEACH TO VOLCANIC SUMMIT)

- 2 to 3 swimsuits (rotate while one dries, ocean salt slows drying)

HIGH

- Lightweight breathable shirts: linen, cotton, or moisture-wicking synthetic

HIGH

- Shorts and lightweight pants (mosquitoes in rainforests, sun on lava fields)

HIGH

- Beach cover-up or sarong for walking to and from the beach

- Aloha shirt or sundress for nicer dinners and luaus

*Most Hawaii resorts and restaurants accept resort-casual. A true aloha shirt is considered formal wear in the islands.*

- Warm fleece or insulated jacket for Haleakala or Mauna Kea summit

HIGH

*Haleakala summit at sunrise can hit 32 degrees F or below, even in July. Mauna Kea is colder. Bring real warmth, not just a hoodie.*

- Beanie and gloves for high-elevation sunrise viewing
- Light rain jacket or packable shell (frequent passing showers, especially Hilo and Kauai)

HIGH

- Long-sleeve hiking shirt (sun protection, brush, mosquito barrier)
- Underwear and socks (more than you think, sweat soaks fast in humidity)

HIGH

- Pajamas or sleepwear for cool nights with AC

## FOOTWEAR

- Sturdy walking sandals (Texas, Chacos, or Birkenstocks for town and short trails)

HIGH

- Flip-flops or slides (called slippahs locally, for pool and beach walks)

HIGH

- Reef shoes or water shoes with closed toes

HIGH

*Required at most snorkel spots. Lava rock cuts feet and urchins lurk in shallow pools.*

- Hiking shoes or trail runners with grippy soles

HIGH

*Lava rock is sharp and slick when wet. Skip the sneakers for Volcanoes NP and Diamond Head.*

- Hiking boots with ankle support for Kalalau, Mauna Loa, or multi-day trails

## SWIMMING, SNORKELING & BEACH GEAR

- Snorkel mask and snorkel (bringing your own beats \$15 a day rentals)

HIGH

*Costco and Walmart in Honolulu and Kahului sell decent sets if you don't want to pack one.*

- Snorkel fins (optional, but doubles your range at Hanauma Bay and Molokini)

- Dry bag (10 to 20 liter) for valuables on boat tours and beach days

HIGH

- Waterproof phone case with lanyard

HIGH

- Quick-dry microfiber beach towel (resort towels stay on property)

HIGH

- Sand-resistant beach blanket or mat

- Mesh beach bag (sand drains out, unlike a tote)

## HIKING & OUTDOOR

- Reusable water bottle, 32 to 40 oz (tap water is safe to drink everywhere in Hawaii)

HIGH

- Daypack (15 to 25 liter) for hikes, beach trips, and inter-island carry-on

HIGH

- Headlamp with fresh batteries (Haleakala sunrise, lava tube tours, Kilauea night viewing)

HIGH

- DEET-free insect repellent (picaridin works on mosquitoes without melting plastic)

HIGH

*Mosquitoes are heavy in rainforests on the windward sides of every island. Hawaii is also a dengue-risk area.*

- Trekking poles (collapsible) for steep volcano descents

- Energy bars and trail snacks (limited services inside Volcanoes NP and Haleakala)

## ELECTRONICS & PHOTO

- Phone chargers and at least 2 USB-C or Lightning cables

HIGH

- Portable battery pack, 10,000 mAh or larger

HIGH

*Must travel in carry-on per TSA. Sunrise hikes drain phones fast in the cold.*

- GoPro or action camera with extra batteries and SD card

- Camera with zoom lens for whales, sea turtles, and waterfalls

*Whale watching season runs December through April. Keep at least 100 yards from humpbacks (federal law).*

- Downloaded offline maps for Google Maps and AllTrails

HIGH

- Universal power adapter (only if flying from outside the US, otherwise skip)

## HEALTH & FIRST AID

- Reef-safe sunscreen backup tube (yes, again, you will run out faster than expected)

HIGH

- Dramamine or Bonine for snorkel boats, whale watching, and submarine tours

HIGH

*Channel crossings to Molokini and Lanai get rough. Take 30 to 60 minutes before boarding.*

- Antihistamine for jellyfish stings, food allergies, and pollen reactions

HIGH

- Anti-diarrheal (Imodium) and stomach soother (Pepto)

- Basic first aid: bandages, antiseptic wipes, antibiotic ointment

HIGH

*Coral and lava rock cuts get infected fast in salt water. Treat immediately.*

- Prescription medications in original bottles plus a copy of the script

HIGH

- Vinegar (small bottle) for box jellyfish stings, especially Waikiki 8 to 12 days after full moon

## INTER-ISLAND & PRACTICAL

- Compression packing cubes (essential for fitting hike gear plus beach kit)

- TSA-compliant carry-on for inter-island flights (one personal item plus one carry-on max)

HIGH

*Hawaiian Airlines inter-island carry-on is 22 x 14 x 9 inches and 25 lb. Strict enforcement at gate.*

- Laundry bag or dry bag for wet swimsuits between islands

- Empty collapsible duffel for souvenirs and macadamia nuts on the flight home

- Reusable shopping bag (Hawaii has a statewide single-use plastic bag ban)

## CULTURAL ETIQUETTE REMINDERS

- Respect kapu signs at heiau (sacred sites), do not climb on rocks or remove offerings

HIGH

*Kapu means sacred or forbidden. Treat heiau the way you would treat a cemetery.*

- Stay 10 feet from honu (Hawaiian green sea turtles), do not touch

HIGH

*Federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. Fines start at \$500 and can exceed \$5,000.*

- Stay 50 feet from Hawaiian monk seals on the beach (give them their nap)

HIGH

*Critically endangered, fewer than 1,500 remain. NOAA enforces a 50-foot buffer.*

- Stay 100 yards from humpback whales by boat, 50 yards by drone or swimmer

HIGH

- Leave lava rocks, black sand, and shells where you find them

HIGH

*In Hawaiian tradition, lava rock belongs to Pele. Beyond cultural respect, Volcanoes NP rangers receive packages of returned rocks from tourists daily.*

- Dress modestly at heiau, churches, and cultural sites (cover shoulders and shorts)

- Learn a few words: aloha (hello, love), mahalo (thank you), keiki (children), pau (finished)

## WHAT NOT TO BRING (AGRICULTURAL RESTRICTIONS)

- Do NOT pack fresh fruit, plants, or soil to take back to the mainland

HIGH

*USDA agricultural inspection is mandatory before departure from Hawaii. Inspectors will confiscate undeclared produce, seeds, and plants. Citrus, mangoes, and cut flowers (other than approved leis) are restricted.*

- Do NOT collect or pack sand, coral, or lava rock as souvenirs

HIGH

*Taking sand from Papakolea (green sand) or Punaluu (black sand) is illegal and carries fines up to \$100,000.*

- Do NOT pack opihi, sea cucumber, or live marine life

HIGH

*Opihi (Hawaiian limpet) has strict state harvest limits. Commercial export is banned.*

- Do NOT bring sunscreen with oxybenzone, octinoxate, or octocrylene (banned for sale and use)

HIGH

*Hawaii Act 104 of 2018. Maui County also bans avobenzene. If TSA or hotel staff see it, expect it confiscated. Read every label before packing.*

- Approved take-home: commercially packaged pineapples, coffee, macadamia nuts, and pre-inspected leis

*Buy from airport agricultural-cleared vendors or ship directly via approved farms to skip the inspection line.*