



# 5 Popular Hawaii Sights You Need to Reserve Before You Go (+ 2 suggested reservations)

by Chris Román







## Why does the State of Hawaii require reservations for free attractions?

The reservation system began in 2022. It's Hawaii's response to the strain of over tourism. And honestly, it's a good thing.

This helps preserve fragile ecosystems for marine life and Hawaii's cultural heritage and historic sights, both for people who live there and future generations of travelers.

But yes, it means more planning ahead. The good news: All reservations are free!

### **Option: Skip the online ticket system when you book a guided tour instead.**

If you'd rather not have to keep track of when tickets go on sale (to snag one before they sell out...which can be FAST), book a guided tour instead.

See options below. Please note these are affiliate links, which means I make a small commission at no extra cost to you when you use them to book.

Thanks for supporting the blog and my ability to share useful free content!



### 1. Wai'anapanapa State Beach on the [Road to Hana](#) – REQUIRED

This is a gorgeous black sand beach you won't want to miss when you drive this epic road! Due to overcrowding, you'll only get into the beach with an advance reservation. It's required by the State of Hawaii for all visitors. (Driving Road to Hana does *not* require a reservation though. Just this particular beach)

[Get a free reservation for Wai'anapanapa State Beach up to 30 days in advance here.](#)

**Optional Tour:** Don't want to drive the Road to Hana yourself? It's fairly easy and safe but also very winding! If you'd rather take in the views rather than the road, book a small group luxury tour instead. The tour includes hotel transport in a deluxe limo-van, an ocean swim, breakfast, lunch, and great photo opps.

[You can book the Road to Hana tour here.](#)

### 2. Mount Haleakala – REQUIRED

Seeing sunrise on Mount Haleakala is a bucket list experience. It's so popular though that you'll need a ticket if you plan to arrive between 3 am and 7 am. The State of Hawaii requires an advance reservation.

[Get a free reservation for sunrise at Mount Haleakala up to 60 days in advance here.](#)

**Optional Tour:** Or, leave the driving to someone else with a private guided tour. Your 7 hour sunrise tour—it's a drive from the other side of the island—includes a hotel pick up and drop off, drive to Mt. Haleakala, sunrise over the Haleakala Crater, and scenic drive through Kula.

[You can book the sunrise Mount Haleakala tour here.](#)







### 3. Diamond Head State Monument – REQUIRED

This is an easy 1.8 mile hike you won't want to miss for panoramic coastal views of Honolulu. Your advance reservation thankfully includes parking in this very small parking lot! But if you arrive 30 minutes past your entry time, no guarantees...and it's a long, sweaty hike up a steep hill to the beginning of the trail otherwise so arrive on time.

[Get a free reservation at Diamond Head up to 30 days in advance here.](#)

### 4. Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve – REQUIRED

This is one of Oahu's most beautiful snorkeling spots but it requires a timed reservation (unless you secure a walk-in ticket at the park at 6:45 am).

Reservations can only be made TWO days in advance of your visit and tickets go fast so be ready to secure your ticket ASAP first thing in the morning. Also, your ticket does NOT include parking which is first come, first serve. The parking lot is small-ish with no real options for roadside parking. Go early!

[Get a free reservation to Hanauma Bay up to 2 days in advance here.](#)

**Optional tour:** Get private transport from Waikiki hotels, entrance, and use of snorkeling equipment. Three morning departure times are offered. This tour is a great option since you'll otherwise need to reserve just TWO days before your visit as noted above.

[Reserve private Hanauma Bay transportation here.](#)

### 5. Pearl Harbor National Memorial – RECOMMENDED

Reservations are not required but recommended to ensure availability. You'll pay just \$1 and create a Recreation.gov account to secure your ticket. [Reserve here.](#)

**Optional tour:** You can purchase an (underwhelming) audio guide onsite with the \$1 ticket. Or, reserve a private guided 6 hour tour instead, for a more meaningful experience. Includes visits to the USS Arizona Memorial + USS Missouri battleships.

[Reserve a guided Pearl Harbor tour here.](#)





## 6. Ha'ena State Park - REQUIRED

This is where you'll access beautiful Ke'e Beach on Kauai's North Shore (a great snorkeling spot) and the famous Kalalau Trail (my #1 favorite activity on Kauai).

You can either shuttle here (wide availability) or park (limited availability) but you'll need an advance reservation either way...even if you just want to go to the beach or hike the first half mile of this famous 11 mile trail.

[Get a free reservation up to 30 days in advance here.](#)

Note: If you want to hike beyond Hanakapi'ai Valley (2 miles from the trailhead) or hike the whole trail (22 miles round-trip) with an overnight camp in Napali Coast State Wilderness Park, [you'll need a permit](#).





There are no required advance reservations on Big Island, Hawaii at this time. It's perfectly fine to buy your ticket to Volcanoes National Park at the entrance to the park.

### **7. Mauna Kea Summit – RECOMMENDED**

If you'd like to visit the summit of Mauna Kea for a sunset or stargazing experience, be aware many rental car agencies will require you to have a 4WD vehicle.

One option is to book a guided Mauna Kea Summit and Stars small group tour. You'll enjoy a pre-trip picnic, a ride up to Big Island's tallest peak for sunset, and a private stargazing show through 11" Celestron telescopes on Mauna Kea.

[You can book the guided Mauna Kea sunset and stargazing tour here.](#)