

HAWAII

Oahu a paradise for both parents and toddlers

Child-friendly services and activities make vacation fun for kids and relaxing for mom and dad

MHAIRRI WOODHALL
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

My daughter's excited squeals snap me out of a sun-drenched daze. She's been running around the Keiki Cove splash zone for 45 minutes. Her unbridled enthusiasm and bold moves (staring directly into the jets until water shoots her in the face) have now drawn a crowd of onlookers. When new kids dare to enter, my eighteen-month-old pre-talking force of nature acts as ambassador, explaining with animated gestures how to properly use the splash zone.

My husband and I are in awe, both of her enthusiasm and at the fact we've been sprawled on lounge chairs for almost an hour doing nothing. An impossible feat when you're a parent to an active toddler. Aulani, a Disney Resort and Spa in Oahu, is now my happiest place on earth.

We chose Oahu for our family holiday because Hawaii truly is fabulous for toddlers. Kids between 18 months and four years of age have zero interest in being strapped to a stroller taking in local sights. They crave freedom, and need an outlet to exhaust their boundless energy. A day at the beach, powering through sand and splashing in the ocean pretty much guarantees an early bedtime and sound sleep — the ultimate goal for any parent with young children.

After a little research, I discovered a couple of services that make travelling to Oahu with kids even easier. Carving out time for a romantic dinner, or an adult-oriented activity such as paddle boarding ensures that all members of our family have a chance to unwind. Through Nannies Hawaii I found excellent care



You can watch the North Shore waves from the comfort of the pool at Turtle Bay Resort.

PHOTOS: CURT WOODHALL

for our daughter in each area of the island we visited.

Readily available baby amenities also help alleviate some stress. Between diapers, books, toys, clothes and sun safety supplies I usually have enough room in the suitcase for a sundress and flip flops — never mind lugging a 20-pound car seat through the airport. Paradise Baby Co. offers on-island rentals on everything from strollers and car seats to baby carriers, bicycles and trailers. Diapers and formula can also be purchased and delivered to the hotel.

We started in Waikiki, where a car isn't necessary. The condo-style Trump International Waikiki Beach Walk, TripAdvisor's No. 1 family rated hotel in Waikiki, has full kitchens (great for making quick breakfasts) and a separate living room with balcony, which

allows for romantic dinners after the kids are in bed.

My favourite beach for tots is by the freshwater lagoon adjacent to the Hilton Hawaiian Village. It's much quieter than Waikiki beach and the calm lagoon waters are safe for younger children. Stop by any ABC Store and pick up a bag of plastic beach toys — an inexpensive purchase that provides hours of fun. If you make a day of it, rent an umbrella and lounge chairs from Waikiki Beach Activities.

Off-beach activities that work well for little ones include a visit to Honolulu Zoo, where the hippos and giraffes steal the show as far as my daughter is concerned, and finding Nemo at the Waikiki Aquarium. Both are within walking distance of most hotels, and are often crowd-free.

Restaurants are plentiful

in Waikiki. Happy Hour at Trump's Wai'olu Ocean View Lounge offers exceptional value for the entire family. How can you go wrong with half price sushi (and bubbles), and full kids' menu in a stunning water-view setting? Another great spot with live music and salad bar (as a hungry toddler is a scary toddler) is Dukes on Waikiki Beach.

For date night, reserve a cabana at what I feel is the most romantic restaurant on the island (perhaps even in the State).

The oceanfront patio at Azure Restaurant in The Royal Hawaiian Hotel is my little piece of heaven in Waikiki. Under a canopy of twinkling lanterns, you'll dine on freshly caught fish (hand-picked at the auction that very morning), while listening to waves thunder on the shore. Try the five-course



At Aulani, kids get to mingle with Disney characters.

tasting menu, which includes Azure's signature Kona lobster tail risotto. For another critically acclaimed tasting menu, visit Chef Mavro, Hawaii's only Gayot 2014 Top 40 restaurant. The menu changes with the season, but wagyu medallions grilled to perfection are a mainstay.

After the bustle of Waikiki, Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore is a welcome retreat. Set on almost eight kilometres of beachfront, the property offers views of the area's famous big surf.

Three of Oahu's best known surf spots — Waimea Bay, Banzai Pipeline and Sunset Beach — are a 15-minute drive

away. We like to grab a picnic lunch from one of the many North Shore shrimp trucks, or a teriyaki chicken plate from Ted's Bakery, and watch the onslaught of towering waves pummel the beach.

The resort's two pools and swimming bay keep my daughter happy. In addition to a spa, golf courses, tennis courts, biking trails and kayaking, Turtle Bay has a riding stable. The Pony Experience includes a grooming lesson and a 15-minute pony ride — or in my daughter's case sitting on a pony for 10 minutes while I take hundreds of photos.

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GO FEST: WHISTLER'S GREAT OUTDOORS FESTIVAL

Victoria Day Long Weekend: May 16 - 19

Come out and play this May at GO Fest, Whistler's Great Outdoors Festival! GO Fest is a farewell to winter and a celebration to launch summer, showcasing Whistler's outdoor recreation activities, as well as free concerts. The challenge of this four-day festival starts with deciding what to do first.

HIGHLIGHTS

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>May 16
SHEEPDOGS
8PM
GO Fest Mainstage</p> | <p>May 17
THE GREAT GREEN RIVER CHALLENGE
11AM and 2PM
Green Lake</p> | <p>May 18
GREAT SNOW EARTH WATER RACE
12PM Race Start
Whistler Mountain</p> |
| <p>May 16
GO ENDURO
5PM
Whistler Bike Park</p> | <p>May 18
ALPENGLow FUN RUN
8:00PM Race Start
Village Square</p> | <p>May 19
THE GREAT SLUSH CUP
10AM - 4PM
Blackcomb Mountain</p> |

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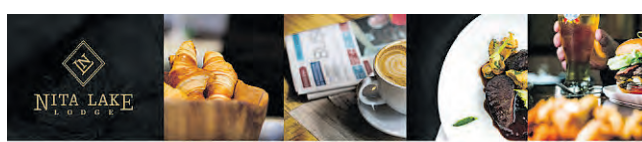
THIS SPRING IN WHISTLER

Come Outside And Play - GO Fest!

BY MICHELLE LEROUX

Whistler's spring festival GO Fest, Whistler's Great Outdoors Festival, is the newest offering on the resort's action-packed calendar of events. GO Fest is set to pack the Victoria Day, May Long Weekend with a variety of outdoor pursuits, sport events and cultural offerings that truly celebrate the unique time of year in Whistler when people can choose their own adventure, whether it be winter or summer themed pursuits.

"GO Fest is all about of outdoor activity and we have some awesome, family-friendly events. There are free live concerts, and mass participation sport events like the Great Snow-Earth-Water relay race and the AlpenGlow Fun Run, animated by lululemon," says Darren Kinnaird, event producer for GO Fest Whistler. "There are also some really unique demo opportunities like fly fishing and stand-up paddleboarding, training clinics for running and cycling, not to mention the Adventure Film Series, presented by Whistler Film Festival."



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Other events included in the four-day schedule of active programming include the GO Enduro mountain bike race, DiscGO disc golf tournament, the GO Ski To Sail Regatta, The Great Green River Rafting Challenge, the GoPro GOShow film contest, presented by Whistler Blackcomb, The Great GO Fest Slush Cup on Blackcomb Mountain, a Yoga Jam at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, the Cheakamus River Extreme Kayak Challenge and The Chairlift Revue theatrical production.

It wouldn't be a Whistler festival without free concerts and GO Fest has it covered on the Village Square Main Stage. Besides the headlining concert by Juno award-winning rock band The Sheepdogs kicking off all the action on Friday, May 16, musical acts The Boom Booms, DJ Foxy Moron, She Stole My Beer, Gordo, Blame It On The Weekend and Coloured Sky will all take their place on-stage over the course of GO Fest May 16-19.

With so many ways to play, après is a great way to celebrate the day's accomplishments. The Whistler Brewing Company has GO Fest participants 19+ years of age covered with GO Apres Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 3-7 p.m. at participating establishments throughout Whistler Village. <http://www.whistler.com/go-whistler-festival/>

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