

## Story

# Maui: 3 insider itineraries

## Go beyond the usual

By DAVID LANDSEL

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#### Where Central Maui

**What** Dramatically located on a hillside at the mouth of the lush 'Iao Valley, historic Wailuku is the seat of county government, yet a sleepy town of about 13,000 that sees relatively few tourists. Later for them — this is where to find some of Maui's tastiest food.

**Do** The island may be famed for its sunny weather, but just minutes from the desert-like climate of beachy Kihei is the **'Iao Valley**, the second-wettest place in the state (the first is on Kauai).

Wailuku's quiet Main Street runs straight into the valley, the burial ground of many important Hawaiian chiefs, the site of a very important battle in the 1700s and today, a place that's considered sacred. Take a hike at **'Iao Valley State Park**, then stop in at the heritage gardens in **Keponiwai Park**, featuring pavilions and gardens from the many and diverse groups that contributed to what we know today as Hawaiian culture. Of course, the best way to learn about a culture is to eat the food, and no place on Maui offers as quick a crash course as Wailuku, overloaded with excellent local dives. Make sense of the scene by signing up for **Tour da Food**, a personalized experience with long-time resident Bonnie Friedman, who has been studying Hawaiian cuisine for nearly 30 years. She'll take up to 4 people — that's as many as she can fit into her white Toyota sedan — for a wild ride around the backstreets of Wailuku, showing you where to find the best cheap ahi poke, the tastiest spam musubi and Maui's best shave ice (from \$280 for two, includes all food; [808] 242-8383, [tourdafoodmaui.com](http://tourdafoodmaui.com)).



DAVID LANDSEL

The shave ice queens of Waiehu Beach Road, behind the counter at Tom's Mini Mart. The convenience store is a popular stop on Bonnie Friedman's Tour da Food, an insider look at Maui's local dining scene.

**Photos: Maui for insiders**

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**Eat** Still hungry? While Friedman's tours are impressively immersive, you won't come close to exhausting the possibilities around town while under her wing. Our top recommendations in Wailuku are two of our top recommendations island-wide; number one being the simple **Geste Shrimp Truck**, Maui's answer to the more-famous trucks that clog Oahu's North Shore. Foodies across the state know that Geste's scampi platter beats any of Oahu's touristy trucks hands-down for quality and taste; we agree. Find the truck on the harbor side of Kahului Beach Road, Tuesdays through Saturdays from late morning onwards. Tied with the shrimp truck for tastiness is **Tokyo Tei**, a Japanese-Hawaiian institution located in a utilitarian office building on Wailuku's Lower Main Street that houses nearly half a dozen karaoke bars. Inside though, it's all smiles and delicate shrimp tempura, some of the island's tastiest ahi sashimi and excellent salmon teriyaki. You can easily eat for \$25 or less per person, making this one of Maui's best bargains as well (1063 Lower Main St.; [808] 242-9630).

**Stay** Once Maui's premier resort area, Wailuku town now barely registers on most tourist itineraries. There are still a few great places to stay, however — we recommend the historic **Old Wailuku Inn**, a friendly bed & breakfast-style operation on the south side of town. Choose from classic accommodations in the original building — built by the man who founded Maui's first bank nearly 100 years ago — or more modern rooms in the neighboring Vagabond's House, where we love the second-floor Miulana room with its private lanai and many-headed spa shower. All rooms, however, are clean, quiet and conducive to kicking back and relaxing (from \$165; [mauiinn.com](http://mauiinn.com)).

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