

Sariah's Kona Picks

Five nights, six days, and no rigid schedule. A budget-conscious menu of beaches, food, sights, shopping, and island drives from the condo on Ali'i Drive.

Quick arrival plan: After collecting the rental car at KOA, make one grocery stop before going to the condo. Costco is best for a larger family stock-up. Walmart, Safeway, or KTA work better for smaller quantities. Drive times below are approximate from the condo unless noted.



ALOHA, SARIAH & BENZEN

Your Kona adventure starts here

Beaches, malasadas, manta rays, island drives, and plenty of lanai sunsets. Pick whatever sounds fun each day and enjoy Hawai'i at your own pace.

The Condo

Welcome to Nalu Bliss at Kona Nalu, an oceanfront home about two miles south of downtown Kailua-Kona. Enjoy the lanai and sunset, while remembering that this is also a private residential building.

Arrival and access

Check-in 4 p.m. • Check-out 10 a.m.

The condo is on the second floor. The elevator is in the center of the building after several steps; the stairs near the designated parking space are usually faster.

Door-code and backup-key details are in the private welcome message. To lock the keypad, press the top Schlage button, turn the knob, and double-check the door.

Parking

Use the designated space listed in the private welcome message. Do not occupy it before check-in or after check-out because the manager and cleaners need it.

Limited street parking may be available near the neighboring church. Follow posted signs and do not block residents.

Wi-Fi, television, and Alexa

Wi-Fi credentials are in the private welcome message. The condo also has television and Alexa service.

Please do not post or forward access credentials publicly.

Kitchen and supplies

The kitchen includes cookware, knives, wine glasses, a coffee maker, and a grinder. Unopened beverages and condiments left in the refrigerator are available to enjoy. Labeled shower dispensers contain body wash, shampoo, and conditioner.

Lanai, pool, and grills

Watch children closely on the lanai and at the pool. Keep climbable chairs away from the railing, and remember that there is no lifeguard. Use only plastic drinkware in these areas.

Unplug the George Foreman grill after use. A shared charcoal grill is near the pool.

Quiet hours and house rules

Follow all posted quiet hours and pool rules. The complete instructions are in the house binder inside the small bar inset opposite the kitchen table. There are neighbors above, below, and on both sides.

If something needs attention

Contact Jeff through the private welcome message or booking thread first. Local property-management details are provided there. Report problems promptly so they can be corrected during the stay.

Close to home

Magic Sands nearby • Downtown a few minutes

Magic Sands is a short walk or quick drive, although the water can be rough. The lanai is the easiest sunset spot of all. Seasonal whale sightings are most common December through March.

Shopping

Groceries are expensive in Hawai'i, so buying breakfast food, drinks, snacks, and beach supplies on arrival will save money.



Costco

KOA 10 min • Condo 15–20 min

Best value for water, drinks, breakfast food, snacks, beach supplies, and family-sized quantities. If Sariah is a Costco member, this is also the best place to fill the rental car with gas. Membership required.

Walmart

KOA 15 min • Condo 10–15 min

Good for inexpensive groceries, toiletries, reef-safe sunscreen, beach towels, coolers, and forgotten necessities.

Safeway

KOA 15 min • Condo 10–12 min

An easy conventional grocery stop. Use a Safeway account or phone number for sale prices.

KTA Super Stores, Kailua-Kona

KOA 15 min • Condo 10–12 min

Locally owned and especially good for poke, prepared food, local fruit, Hawaiian products, and normal-sized quantities.

KTA Keauhou

Condo 8–10 min south

The easiest place for a quick restock after arrival. It is not on the airport route, but it is close to home.

Beaches

The Kona side is usually calmest in the morning. If surf looks rough, choose a protected bay or make it a sightseeing day.



Magic Sands / La'aloa

3–5 min

The closest classic beach. Great when the sand is in and the water is calm, but heavy surf can remove the sand and create strong shore break.

Kamakahonu Beach

10–12 min

A small protected bay beside Kona Pier and the Courtyard King Kamehameha hotel. The closest dependable kid-friendly choice when Magic Sands is rough.

Check parking signs. Nearby coffee validation terms can change, so confirm before leaving the car.

Kahalu'u Beach Park

7–10 min south

The easiest family snorkeling choice, with a shallow protected bay, reef fish, and frequent turtle sightings. Go early. Never touch turtles or stand on coral.

'Anaeho'omalu Bay / A-Bay

35–45 min north

A long family-friendly beach at Waikoloa. Unclaimed beach chairs on the sand may be used by the public, but reserved resort equipment may not. Lava Lava Beach Club is beside it.

Kua Bay / Manini'ōwali

25–30 min north

White sand and turquoise water. **No day-use reservation is required.** Go early because parking fills, shade is scarce, and shore break can become powerful.

Kauna'oa / Mauna Kea Beach

45–55 min north

The first choice for a north-coast beach day. Ask the resort guard for a public beach-parking pass. Spaces are limited, so arrive early.

Hāpuna Beach

45–55 min north

The reliable Mauna Kea backup, with lifeguards, restrooms, and showers. Nonresidents currently pay \$10 per vehicle plus \$5 per person over age three.

No ordinary day-use reservation is required.

Restaurants

Breakfast at the condo and picnic lunches will stretch the budget. \$ is inexpensive, \$\$ moderate, and \$\$\$ a vacation splurge.



Breakfast 🍷

808 Grindz Café \$

10–12 min

Local breakfast with pancakes, eggs, fried rice, and generous portions. One of the better values in town; waits are common.

Big Island Grill \$–\$\$

10 min

Casual local favorite for loco moco, pancakes, omelets, and plate lunches. Good portions. Currently closed Sunday and Monday.

Papa Kona \$\$

8–10 min

Oceanfront breakfast and brunch at Waterfront Row. Go for the view and split larger dishes if staying on budget.

Hawaiian Style Cafe, Waimea \$

55–65 min

Huge local breakfasts and famous pancakes. Combine it with Waimea, Honoka'a, Waipi'o Lookout, or Hāmākua. Arrive early and share.

Lunch 🍷

Da Poke Shack \$-\$\$ Closest

Walk • 1–2 min

Excellent fresh poke bowls and Hawaiian plates right at Kona Bali Kai. Go near opening because popular choices sell out.

Kona Crust Pizza \$

12–15 min

Casual New York-style pizza and an easy budget meal for kids. Slices cost less than a full sit-down lunch.

Ultimate Burger \$-\$\$

15 min

Big Island grass-fed burgers near Target. Casual, quick, and family-friendly.

Rainbow Cafe \$

18–22 min

No-frills Chinese food near Costco with large portions and reasonable prices. Best paired with a Costco run.

Broke Da Mouth Grindz \$-\$\$

15–20 min

Big-flavored local comfort food and generous plate lunches. Sharing can keep the bill down.

Umekes \$\$

12–15 min

Poke, fresh fish, tacos, and Hawaiian dishes. More expensive than Da Poke Shack but good for a casual sit-down meal.

Lava Lava Beach Club \$\$-\$\$\$

40–45 min

Beachfront lunch beside A-Bay. The setting is the reason to go. Happy hour is currently 2–4 p.m.; put your name down early.

Dinner, sunset, and pupus 🍷

On the Rocks at Huggo's \$\$-\$\$\$

7–10 min

Go for sunset, pupus, one drink, and live music rather than an expensive full dinner. Happy hour is currently 3–5 p.m.

Kona Brewing Company \$\$

12–15 min

Family-friendly pizza, burgers, salads, and local beer in a relaxed outdoor setting.

Papa Kona \$\$

8–10 min

Oceanfront dinner downtown. Weekday happy hour is usually the best-value time to visit.

Condo dinner \$

Home

Pick up poke, rotisserie chicken, salad, fruit, or prepared sides from Costco or KTA. Dinner on the lanai is often easier and cheaper with tired kids.

Malasada stops 🌸

Hot Malasadas Truck near Puakō \$

40–45 min north

Stop when heading to A-Bay, Mauna Kea Beach, Hāpuna, or Hawi. Truck days and hours vary, so consider it a bonus if open.

Tex Drive In, Honoka'a \$

1 hr 15–25 min

The classic malasada stop for a Waipi'o or Hāmākua Coast day. Order them hot. It is **Tex**, not Ted's.

Shops

Downtown Kona has the most local atmosphere. Waikoloa's shopping centers are polished and convenient to combine with A-Bay, but generally cost more.



Downtown Kailua-Kona

8–12 min

Best for browsing shirts, jewelry, art, coffee, macadamia nuts, and tourist gifts. Compare prices because stores carry similar items.

Waterfront Row

8–10 min

A small oceanfront group of shops and restaurants around Papa Kona. Combine browsing with breakfast or sunset.

Queens' Marketplace

35–45 min

Open-air Waikoloa shopping with clothing, gifts, food, and practical stores. Easy to combine with A-Bay.

Kings' Shops

35–45 min

Galleries, boutiques, resort shopping, and restaurants across from Queens'. More upscale than downtown Kona.

A-Bay and Lava Lava shop

40–45 min

Beach-oriented and branded souvenirs. Browse while waiting for a table rather than making a separate trip.

Sights

Most of the island's best sights are free or inexpensive. Save long drives for cloudy beach days and verify conditions first.



Manta rays at OUTRIGGER Kona Resort

15 min south

The former Sheraton is beside a lighted manta feeding area. Public access has varied during repairs and construction, so call the resort at **808-930-4900** that day. Sightings are never guaranteed.

[Call resort](#)

Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau + Two Step

35–45 min south

Pair Hawaiian history at the Place of Refuge with nearby snorkeling when the ocean is calm. Two Step enters from lava rock and suits confident swimmers better than small children.

Kona coffee country + Hōlualoa

15–25 min

Cooler hills, coffee farms, tastings, galleries, and views. Greenwell Farms is a practical family stop; check tour times.

Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park

20 min north

A free park with fishponds, lava landscapes, coastal trails, and frequent turtles. Bring water because trails are exposed.

Cocoa Outlet

20–25 min south • 79-7500 Hawai'i Belt Rd, Bay A, Kealahou

A fun local stop for chocolate, pastry ingredients, and baking finds. The owner, Shraddhes, is one of Jeff's best friends, and Jeff will text her to arrange a time for Sariah and Benzen to stop by and say aloha midweek.

Coordinate with Jeff before going so he can confirm the visit and current location.

Waipi'o + Hāmākua + Hilo loop

4½–6 hr driving before stops

A strong cloudy-day trip: Waimea, Waipi'o Lookout, Honoka'a and Tex, the lush Hāmākua Coast, Hilo, then Saddle Road home before dark. Valley-road access is restricted.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

2–2½ hr each way

Go only if active lava, weather, and visibility justify the very long day. Check NPS and USGS immediately before leaving. The visitor center is under renovation in 2026.

[Check volcano status](#)

Hawi, Kapa'au + Pololū Lookout

Hawi 1 hr 20 min • Pololū +25 min

Small shops, galleries, the King Kamehameha statue, and a dramatic valley view. The trail can be steep and muddy; viewing from the top is the easy family option.

Mauna Kea Visitor Station

1 hr 30–45 min

Sunset and stargazing at 9,200 feet when skies are clear. Bring real jackets. Do not take a standard rental above the station unless its agreement explicitly permits it.

Towns

Kona is the everyday base. The other towns work best as part of a beach day or island drive.



Kailua-Kona

8–12 min

Waterfront shopping, restaurants, Kona Pier, Kamakahonu Beach, shave ice, and sunsets. Park once and walk Ali'i Drive.

Hōlualoa

15–20 min

A tiny art-and-coffee village above Kona. Cooler, quiet, and easy to combine with a coffee farm.

Waikoloa Beach Resort

35–45 min

A-Bay, Lava Lava Beach Club, Queens' Marketplace, and Kings' Shops in one easy outing.

Waimea / Kamuela

55–65 min

Green ranch country and cooler weather. Start at Hawaiian Style Cafe, then continue to Honoka'a or Hawi.

Hawi and Kapa'au

1 hr 20–30 min

North Kohala galleries, boutiques, cafés, and historic character. Continue to Pololū if weather is clear.

Honoka'a

1 hr 15–25 min

An old plantation town and gateway to Waipi'o. Walk the short main street and stop at Tex for hot malasadas.

Hilo

1 hr 45 min via Saddle Road

Rainier, greener, and more local-feeling than Kona, with gardens, markets, banyan trees, and waterfalls. Best in the Hāmākua loop.

Before leaving each morning

- Check surf, weather, and any park notices.
- Pack water, hats, towels, reef-safe mineral sunscreen, and a light layer.
- Leave valuables at the condo, never visible in the rental car.
- Screenshot directions because service can disappear on remote roads.
- Start resort-beach days early because public parking is limited.
- Never touch turtles, mantas, or coral, and give wildlife plenty of space.



Prepared by RoamGenie • August 2026

Hours, fees, access, and ocean conditions can change. Verify important details the day of the visit.