

Hawaiian Luau

Get your Hula on...

Your Party...

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Waking up in your beach hut this morning is a fabulous feeling, you can hear the sound of the waves before you even open your eyes and when you do, you're view is straight down to the ocean. You lay still for a long time just enjoying the scene outside your window. Eventually you decide that it's much too nice a day to spend inside.

You get up and make yourself a breakfast of fresh fruit salad and then head out onto the veranda to eat al fresco.

As you step outside of your door, you see that there is a flower necklace, or lei, hanging from the door handle. You pick it up and see that there is a note attached. It says...

"You are invited to a Hawaiian Luau.

Follow the footprints down the beach and you'll reach the party."

You walk to the edge of the balcony and see that there is a set of footprints leading up to your door and then retreating back down the sand and away along the beach. You get excited at the thought of this new adventure.

You've still got your breakfast to eat, so you sit down at the table to enjoy it before heading off.

When you're ready, you slip the pink and white orchid lei over your head and set out down the beach. The soft sand slips and slides beneath you until you reach the firmer sand where the footprints are clearest to follow. You walk to one side of them, unwilling to destroy your trail – you may need them to get home again!

You can see them stretching out in front of you and you wonder where they're going to lead you. They begin to loop away from the edge of the water and head inland, you follow them towards a line of palm trees. In the distance you can just make out a grey hut, almost hidden between the green palm fronds.

You keep walking and now you can hear people talking and even music playing. You know you must be getting close to your destination.







You feel a little nervous; but as you step into an open glade you see lots of smiling faces. Many of the women and men are wearing traditional Hawaiian outfits of grass skirts and garlands around their heads, necks and wrists.

A young woman comes across to greet you; she has on a long flowing grass skirt that floats around her as she walks. Around her neck is a long necklace made of shells as well as one of flowers and on her head is a small wreath of ferns, leaves and flowers.

'Aloha. Welcome to our luau, my name is Kamea. I see you found your invitation. We're so pleased you're joining us. In fact you're just in time to help us get ready for the luau. There is a lot to do.

'The men have just dug the imu, a large cooking pit in the sand. Come and see,' she says, leading you deeper into the village to where a group of men are standing around a large rectangular hole. Smoke is drifting out of the hole, bringing with it the scent of burning wood.

'They have been busy since early this morning, putting Kiawe logs in the bottom of the pit and then covering them with river rocks. They set fire to the logs and then left it for a couple of hours, until the hot coals and rocks were ready for cooking. You've arrived at just the right time.'

You walk closer and see that the men are spreading the rocks out on the bottom of the pit and placing wet leaves onto them.







'Those are banana leaves,' Kamea explains. 'We cover the hot coals with them, so that we can then put food into the pit to cook. The word luau actually comes from a dish of the same name. We'll be cooking that today along with sweet potatoes and the traditional kalua pig.'

'Once inside the imu, the food is covered with more banana leaves and ti leaves. Then the men will place several wet burlap sacks over the top to add steam and keep the heat in, before covering with a tarp to seal it up before the pit is covered with sand.'

'It takes about 6 to 8 hours of this steam-cooking, before the food is ready. So while our feast is cooking, we're going to go and make our own leis, just like the one you are wearing. Leis are important because they acknowledge someone of great importance. They are also given as symbols of love, appreciation and respect. The fanciest lei is always worn by the guest of honour, so that they stand out.'

'For men who don't want to wear flowers we make them maile leis or kukui nut leis. Maile leis are made out of green leafy vines while kukui nut leis are made from the nut of the state tree. In ancient Hawaiian times they were sacred and only given to people of great importance.'



Kamea leads you to where a group of women are sitting down surrounded by fresh flowers, green ferns and shells. You join them and Kamea passes you a needle and thread.

'It's very easy,' she tells you. 'It's just like threading beads. Help yourself to whatever takes your fancy and then thread it onto the needle.'

The flowers are so bright and fresh; you choose some in your favourite colours and begin to thread your lei. It's fun and really relaxing to do. You get absorbed in the repetitive motion as the women chat around you.

You gradually build up the string of flowers until it's almost full and then you tie the two ends together, creating your lei. It looks beautiful and you feel really proud of it.

It's not until you finish your lei and look up, that you realise how much time has passed. Kamea smiles at you.

'That looks beautiful,' she says. 'You will be our guest of honour tonight. You know the luau has deep cultural significance. In ancient Hawaii men and woman always ate their meals apart and only men were allowed to eat certain delicacies. This changed in 1819, when King Kamehameha II abolished the traditional religious practices. To symbolise the end of the tradition, he held a feast where he ate with the women and this was the first luau.

'Today the most common reasons for a luau are to celebrate the 1st birthday of a child and a high school graduation.





'I think the food must be nearly ready, come we will go and sit down ready for the meal. '

You follow her to an open area where a large green mat made out of woven leaves is laid out on the floor. There is a beautiful centrepiece about three feet wide that runs the length of the mat. It's made of ti leaves, ferns and native flowers. It looks spectacular.

'The traditional luau feast was eaten on the floor,' Kamea explains. 'Lauhala mats were rolled out to sit on.'

She gestures to a space on the floor and you sit down, crossing your legs. She joins you and then the rest of the village come out, bringing with them platters of food and bowls that they set down on the mat. They sit down and begin to serve the food. You look around for cutlery, something to serve yourself some of the dishes; but there's nothing. Seeing your consternation Kamea smiles.

'All the food is eaten with your fingers. In fact this,' she says pushing a bowl of a thick looking substance towards you. 'This is called Poi, it's a starch dish made by pounding boiled taro roots and mixing with water until it reaches a smooth consistency; but it gets its name from the number of fingers needed to eat it... three finger, two finger, or the thickest, one finger poi. Some Hawaiians eat their poi with salt, some with sugar, even soy sauce.



'Take a bowl of poi, then help yourself to the platters of meat, fish and the other dry foods. You can put them on the clean ti leaves, they act as natural plates, it saves washing up.'

'We don't just serve Kalua Pig, which is roasted whole in the imu. We also have a number of different dishes including luau, the most popular dish at the feast and where the name for the celebration comes from. Chicken and young tender leaves of taro are baked or steamed with coconut milk.'

'There are foods suitable for vegetarians, for example Lomi-Lomi salmon is a fresh tomato and salmon salad that uses salted or smoked salmon. Ahi Poki is a mixture of ahi tuna, or other seafood, marinated in seaweed, chillies, and nut oils. We also have baked sweet potatoes, plantain bananas and yams.'

'For dessert there's obviously fresh tropical fruit- pineapple, mango and papaya. We also have Haupia, a traditional coconut milk-based dessert. To drink we've got Mai Tais, both virgin and alcoholic, as well as coconut water.'

'All the food we eat is locally sourced and fresh, which makes it delicious, as you'll see. I hope you're hungry.'

You realise that you are, your stomach rumbles and you help yourself to a selection of food, it feels like the most tropical picnic you've ever been to and the fresh air and smoky smell from the imu makes it feel a bit like a barbeque. There's definitely something about combining outdoor cooking and eating to give you an appetite.'

Conversation carries on around you and you are happy to relax and join in when you want.'

Once all the food has been eaten, you sit back and watch as the sky begins to change colour with the setting sun. You hadn't realised how late in the day it must be, you've been so caught up in all the preparations and the amazing food.'

Some of the men get up and fetch instruments. One man begins to play a drum and a woman begins to sing, her voice projecting out in part song, part chant. You can't understand the words; but the rhythm is contagious and many of the women get up and begin to dance. You watch the sensuous way they move their bodies, swaying to the rhythm of the dance. They all move as one, each following the same steps in perfect synchrony with their fellow dancers. It looks so beautiful and you begin to tap your foot to the beat.'

Seeing you enjoying the dancing, Kamea leans over, raising her voice so you can hear her over the sound of the music.'

'They're dancing the traditional Hawaiian Hula, it developed as a form of worship, because originally there was no written Hawaiian language, so all the history, legends, genealogy and family traditions were passed down through dance and music. It's all about expressing the story through the body.'

'Every movement, every gesture has a meaning, from the sway of their hips, to the angle of an arm, even their eyes and faces help to tell the story.'

'Come and have a go,' she says taking your hand and pulling you up from the ground.'





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You feel a little reluctant, the dance looks complicated, with lots of different gestures; but as you join the group, they slow down their dance as a new song begins.

'It's very simple,' Kamea says. 'Just sway your hips back and forth, keeping your shoulders still.'

You stand beside her and begin to sway in time to the music; but all the time watching Kamea out of the corner of your eye, trying to keep in time.

'That's fantastic,' she says. 'Now take one step to your right, then step with your left foot, so that you bring your feet together. Repeat that one more time to the right and then we're going back to the left.'

You do as she says; but it doesn't feel nearly as elegant as everyone else looks.

'Keep your knees bent,' she says, 'it helps you to sway.'

You bend your knees and do feel like you're swaying more; but it takes more concentration than you would think.

'That's really great, now we bring in the arms. Raise your left arm in front of you, bend your elbow so that your forearm hovers just in front of your chest. Then raise your right arm and hold it out to the side. Every time we take a step, you gently float your arms, in an easy wave like motion.'





You watch Kamea incorporate her arms and you follow suit. You find it's much easier to do the arm motion; but you lose track of the steps and keep stopping and starting, trying to get your body to fall into sync. In the end you burst out laughing, it's fun; but definitely a skill. The other dancers must have been dancing since they were children. They are real experts and they make the dance seem effortless.

You keep going for a bit longer; but then are pleased to sit down and just watch the other dancers. For some of the songs they start playing ukuleles and the lilting music is so beautiful to listen to as the sky darkens overhead.

You look up and see that the sun has set and night has fallen. There is no light pollution here, so the sky is a deep black and the stars are crisp, sharp points of light.

Torches are lit, to ensure the party can continue and you're pleased because you're not ready to go back to your hut yet. You want the night to last for as long as possible and it can. There's no rush for you to leave, so stay and enjoy the great music and wonderful company.





Speaking Hawaiian

How to say...

The 5 vowels a,e,i,o and u as well as the 7 consonants h,k,l,m,n,p, and w make up the entire Hawaiian alphabet. In the Hawaiian language a consonant is always followed by a vowel which means all Hawaiian words end in a vowel.

Stressed vowels

- a - ah, as in car: aloha
- e - a, as in may: nene
- i - ee, as in bee: honi
- o - oh, as in so: mahalo
- u - oo, as in spoon: kapu

Unstressed vowels

- a - a, as in about: ali`i

Words and Phrases

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| • Aloha | Love, affection; greeting, salutation; Hello! Good-bye! |
| • Mahalo | Thank you |
| • 'Ae | Yes |
| • Aloha au ia 'oe | I love you |
| • Pehea 'oe? | How are you? |
| • Moana | Ocean |
| • Moku | Island |
| • Nalu | Wave, surf |
| • Pū | Shell |

See (and hear) even more words and phrases here...

<http://hawaiian-words.com/basics/common/>
<http://www.alohafriends.com/words.html>



Tropical Drinks



Nothing says Hawaii like a tropical drink - paper umbrella optional. Coconut as an ingredient is very classic; but there are recipes that use the local fresh fruit.

For a fresh natural drink you can enjoy a glass of pure coconut water available from supermarkets - in the chiller section. Try Vita Coco which comes in original and flavoured varieties.

Or have a go at these delicious recipes. They're virgin; but just add 1 oz of rum if you want...

Virgin Pina Colada

Blend 2 ozs pineapple juice (unsweetened), 1 oz cream of coconut and 1/2 cup of ice in a blender and serve.

Virgin Mai Tai

- 3 ozs orange juice
- 1 oz lime juice (or juice of 1/2 lime)
- 1 teaspoon fine sugar
- 1 tablespoon orgeat syrup (almond syrup)
- 1/2 ounce grenadine
- crushed ice

Mix the ingredients together in a cocktail shaker or glass half full of ice. Pour the chilled liquid into a glass and serve.



Make your own Lei



Flower leis are the most iconic symbol of Hawaii. The garland or necklace is typically made of real flowers; but they can also be made of nuts, shells, leaves, feathers, or even silk flowers.

Make your own!

If you can thread beads, you can thread your own lei. You can use fresh flowers like orchids or carnations, or you can use silk flowers, shells or even make flowers out of tissue paper, felt or other materials. Have fun experimenting.

You will need:-

- A large sewing needle.
- Thread - cotton, dental floss or fishing line/nylon thread - about 115 cm (45") piece
You'll be making a finished lei that is 90cm (36") long and this will give you enough leftover to tie the ends together. You can make it shorter if you want.
- Flowers, beads, nuts, shells, leaves, feathers, silk flowers - anything that takes your fancy. Or check out one of the tutorials on the next page.



What to do:-

1. Tie a large knot at the end of the twine - this will act like a “stopper” for your flowers as you string them. Remember to leave extra string below the knot - you will use this to tie the lei together upon its completion.
2. Thread the needle and then carefully string the flowers together by going through the centres of the flowers, from front to back, and slide them two or three at a time down the string.
3. Keep going until you've almost filled the thread; but still have about 12.cm (5 inches) free.
4. Make sure you check the garland goes around your neck easily and then tie a second stopper knot.
5. Tie the two ends of the lei together and voilà your lei is ready! You can keep flower leis in the fridge so that they last longer.

Other Tutorials

Check out these tutorials

Fresh Flower Leis - www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Lei

Crepe Paper Leis - www.instructables.com/id/How-to-make-Crepe-Paper-Leis/

Printable Flower Leis - www.firstpalette.com/tool_box/printables/flowerlei.html

Silk Leis - Video- www.ehow.com/video_5113083_make-silk-lei.html

Carnation Lei - Video - www.ehow.com/video_5113078_make-carnation-flower-lei.html



Fun Things To Do!

Traditional Hawaiian Recipes

Luau www.hawaii-luau.com/luau_recipes/

Lomi-Lomi Salmon <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/lomi-lomi/>

Poi <http://gohawaii.about.com/od/luaurecipes/r/hawaiian-poi-recipe.htm>

Haupio www.food.com/recipe/haupia-125832

Learn how to Hula

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Dance-Hula>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qO10aSsWSU>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qO10aSsWSU>

See how the experts dance...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABopyrfoa24&list=PLCD3E7CCF8AF4B2A0>

Music

Hawaii is famous for its classic Polynesian drumming and ukuleles. Enjoy some music online. <http://tunein.com/radio/Hawaiian-Music-g146/>

Books

Check out these novels set in Hawaii.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Novels_set_in_Hawaii
- www.bookssetin.com/p1/36/Hawaii/p2/BookSearch.aspx



Movies

- *50 First Dates*
- *Hawaii*
- *Strange Frame*
- *The Descendants*
- *Lilo and Stitch*
- *Just Go with It*
- *Soul Surfer*
- *Princess Kai-ulani*
- *A Perfect Getaway*
- *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*
- *The Big Bounce*
- *Punch-Drunk Love*
- *Blue Crush*
- *Pearl Harbor*
- *Lani Loa*
- *Race The Sun*
- *Picture Bride*
- *Honeymoon in Vegas*
- *North Shore*
- *Tora! Tora! Tora!*
- *Blue Hawaii*
- *South Pacific*
- *From Here to Eternity*
- *Terror Train - Horror!*
- *New Years Evil - Horror*
- *Poseidon Adventure*
- *About A Boy*
- *The Holiday*
- *Assault on Precinct 13*
- *The Gold Rush - Charlie Chaplin*
- *Bridget Jones Diary*
- *Sex & The City The Movie*
- *Trading Places*
- *Money Train*
- *Ocean's 11 (1960)*
- *Radio Days*
- *Strange Days*
- *Sunset Boulevard*
- *200 cigarettes*
- *Entrapment*
- *The Apartment*
- *Four Rooms*

Television

- *Hawaii Five-0*
- *Lost*

