



Hawai'i Convention Center
1801 Kalākāua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815
kelepona tel 808 973 2255
kelepa'i fax 808 973 2253
kahua pa'a web hawaiiitourismauthority.org

David Y. Ige
Governor

George D. Szigeti
President and Chief Executive Officer

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Culture, Diversity and Innovation Highlights Hawai'i Tourism Conference, Sept. 26-30

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Tourism Conference begins next week featuring dozens of diverse sessions, presentations, panels and special events, all centered around the theme of Transforming Tourism Together and focused on Hawai'i's future as a global travel destination.

Presented by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) and hosted at the world-class Hawai'i Convention Center, this year's conference, Sept. 26-30, encompasses a full week and covers a wide variety of subjects important to supporting the tourism industry, including perpetuation of the Hawaiian culture, ecological sustainability, quality of the visitor experience, and marketing innovations (see schedule below).

In addition, a host of networking opportunities will bring participants together with industry partners who are bringing business to the Hawaiian Islands. Continuing Professional Credits are also being offered to attendees.

George D. Szigeti, HTA president and CEO, noted the conference is designed for local and global participants to collaborate and capitalize on new business initiatives. "This year's conference is focused on innovation, technology, networking, business-building opportunities, and celebrating our culture and environment, all the qualities needed for Hawai'i to continue enjoying future success. As a destination, we need to ensure that we are meeting the expectations of global travelers – especially millennials. This conference is fulfilling that objective."

For more information and to register for the conference, visit www.hawaiiitourismconference.com. Discounts are available for groups, educators and students. Free validated parking is available to registered attendees throughout the week of the conference.

Registered attendees can pick up their badge and conference materials in advance at the Hawai'i Convention Center on Monday, Sept. 26, from 12:30 – 5:00 p.m. On-site registration for the conference will also be accepted at that time.

MONDAY, SEPT. 26

Island FAM Tours

Attendees will see what makes Hawai'i a world-class destination through a selection of day tours to take in historical sites and attractions on Kaua'i, Maui, O'ahu and the island of Hawai'i.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 27

A.M. Aloha Activities: Tai Chi

6:30 – 7:30 a.m., Rooftop Garden, Hawai'i Convention Center

Join world-renowned Tai Chi Master Ren Guangyi, Hawai'i's China Health and Wellness Ambassador, for a special treat of a Hawai'i-inspired Tai Chi routine to rejuvenate the body, mind and soul.

A.M. Aloha Activities: A Gathering at the Surf

7:00 – 7:45 a.m., Shorebird Restaurant, Outrigger Reef Resort

Enjoy breakfast and a conversation with Quiksilver's George Kam about surfing, one of Hawai'i's gifts to the world.

General Session: E Komo Mai – Welcome to the Hawai'i Tourism Conference

8:00 – 9:30 a.m., Ballroom

After attendees are welcomed with a Hawaiian pule and hula, internationally renowned photographer Steve Uzzell will take them on a journey through Hawai'i and showcase the uniqueness of the islands through his world-renowned photographs.

Culture: Infusing Hawaiian Culture in Retail

9:45 – 11:15 a.m., Room 314

Hear success stories from Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs on triumphs and challenges in the retail sector, with a focus on international consumers and the expanding marketplace.

Education: Institutional Education and its Economic Impact

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 311

The niche market of student travel continues to grow. Discover how to build and market edutourism programs.

Environment: Sustainability and Greening Your Business

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 317

Learn about the resources available and examples of sustainability implemented at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress to help ensure Hawai'i remains a beautiful place for visitors and kama'āina for generations to come.

Visitor Experience: Building on the Growing LGBT Tourism Market

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 312

Developing the LGBT market through targeted research and campaigns with case studies from successful destinations.

Culture: Cultural Festivals: A Formula for Success

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 314

Turning grassroots gatherings into signature events with real community and economic impact.

Education: Edutourism and Lifelong Learning

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 311

Travelers are seeking richer vacation experiences that involves the acquiring of new knowledge and skills. Explore the opportunities in cultivating this market.

Environment: Climate Change, Rising Oceans and Air Quality

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 317

An in-depth conversation on climate change and its impact on island tourism. Discover how to counter challenges to Hawai'i's ecosystem and coastal infrastructure.

General Session: 2016 Tourism Legacy Awards Luncheon presented by Bank of Hawaii – Honoring Hawai'i's Gifts to the World

12:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m., Ballroom

Surfing – one of Hawai'i's gifts to the world – and two of its modern-day legends, Buffalo Keaulana and George Downing, will be honored for their lifetime of contributions to the sport.

Education: Student Debate Finale

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., Room 320

Local, national and international students compete in a public forum debate on issues faced by tourism worldwide.

Culture: From Family Lands to Landmark Destinations: Tourism as a Family Business

2:30 – 3:45 p.m., Room 314

The evolution of Hawai'i's 'ohana farms into sustainable tourism practices is a unique legacy. Learn how to overcome the challenges of keeping a property viable while turning it into a destination opportunity.

Environment: Addressing Visitor Impact on the Environment and Hawai'i's Ecology

2:30 – 3:45 p.m., Room 317

Best practices at controlling visitor industry impacts on natural resources at popular attractions will be addressed.

Visitor Experience: Tourism in the Age of Community Advocacy

2:30 – 3:45 p.m. Room 312

Paving the way for tourism development on local terms. Discover how communities have embraced tourism for the benefit of their residents.

Education: Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Student Forum

3:30 – 5:30 p.m., Room 320

Inspiring and empowering the next generation of Hawai'i's tourism stewards.

Tech Demo: GoHawai'i Mobile App Unveiling

3:45 – 4:15 p.m., Village Square

Introducing the newest version of the GoHawai'i app, with new features and opportunities for tourism industry stakeholders to benefit.

B2B Session: One-on-One Networking Rounds

3:45 – 5:15 p.m., Room 323

Get in front of the top domestic and international tour operators, wholesalers, meetings, conventions and incentive partners, and HTA's global marketing team that are bringing business to Hawai'i.

Culture: Museums, Monuments and Mansions: The Transformation of Hawaiian History into Destination Attractions

4:00 – 5:15 p.m., Room 314

Learn about the process and community support that set a model for transforming historic properties into Hawaiian cultural cornerstones.

Environment: Ecotourism and Visitors Growing Interest in Preservation Initiatives

4:00 – 5:15 p.m., Room 317

Restoration and conservation efforts to strengthen our forests and protect endangered species.

Visitor Experience: Enriching Experiences Through Sharing Economies

4:00 – 5:15 p.m., Room 312

Opportunities and challenges of sharing economies and its transformation of travel.

General: Unveiling of the Hawai'i Convention Center's Hawaiian Cultural Art Exhibit

5:30 – 6:30 p.m., 3rd Floor Concourse

Blessing of the new art exhibits honoring Hawai'i's music, surfing and culture.

Evening 'Ohana Time: Special Screening of Sons of Hālawā

8:00 – 10:00 p.m., Outrigger Reef Waikiki

Enjoy a special screening of the critically acclaimed documentary, Sons of Hālawā. Space is limited and seating is first-come, first-served.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 28

A.M. Aloha Activities: Yoga

6:30 – 7:30 a.m., Rooftop Garden, Hawai'i Convention Center

Join celebrated Yoga-Bliss Instructor Julia Fincher for this sunrise salutation, vinyasa style, asana-flow yoga session. Breathe in fresh air, inspiring views, and find harmony in the peacefulness of nature, that will fill you with the spirit of aloha.

A.M. Aloha Activities: Visualizing Aloha

7:00 – 7:45 a.m., Shorebird Restaurant, Outrigger Reef Resort

Join this beachside conversation with interdisciplinary artist Keith Maile.

General Session: Immerse Yourself in Culture, Live Like a Local

8:00 – 9:30 a.m., Ballroom

Today's travelers don't want to feel like visitors; they want to experience a destination like residents do – where they stay, what they eat, and who they share their experience with. This interactive panel discussion will center on the alternative tourism industry. Industry leaders from Airbnb, Eat With and Food Explorer will discuss cultural immersion through home stay as well as communal eating experiences around the globe.

Culture: Sharing Mo'olelo of Resorts

9:45-11:15 a.m., Room 314

The importance of embodying and honoring the Hawaiian sense of place in creating exceptional visitor experiences.

Island Workshop: Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau Workshop: Promoting Our Island and Unique Experiences

9:45 – 10:30 a.m., Room 317

The Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau presents destination training and partnership opportunities.

Island Workshop: O'ahu Visitors Bureau Workshop: Promoting Our Island and Unique Experiences

9:45 – 10:30 a.m., Room 311

The O'ahu Visitors Bureau presents destination training and partnership opportunities.

Visitor Experience: Authenticity as a Draw

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 312

Showcasing best practice examples of heritage tourism as a cornerstone of the visitor experience.

Island Workshop: Island of Hawai'i Visitors Bureau Workshop: Promoting Our Island and Unique Experiences

9:45 – 10:30 a.m., Room 311

The Island of Hawai'i Visitors Bureau presents destination training and partnership opportunities.

Island Workshop: Kaua'i Visitors Bureau Workshop: Promoting Our Island and Unique Experiences

9:45 – 10:30 a.m., Room 317

The Kaua'i Visitors Bureau presents destination training and partnership opportunities.

Culture: Cultural Heritage Tourism and Native Peoples

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 314

Collaborate on the growing interest in cultural heritage tourism and native communities, and how to share it with the world.

Global Markets: Canada Global Market Breakout

11:35 a.m. – 12:20 p.m., Room 312

The 2017 marketing plan for Canada will be presented.

Global Markets: China/Hong Kong Global Market Breakout

11:35 a.m. – 12:20 p.m., Room 311

The 2017 marketing plans for China and Hong Kong will be presented.

Global Markets: Europe Global Market Breakout

11:35 a.m. – 12:20 p.m., Room 317

The 2017 marketing plan for Europe will be presented.

General Session: Working Box Lunch: Digital Diaries of People and Places

12:30 – 1:30 p.m., Ballroom Expo III

Explore regional and global crossroads from the perspective of the individual traveler. Through this engaging workshop, we will challenge perceptions of the world and ourselves.

Culture: Aloha Today and Beyond

1:45 – 2:45 p.m., Room 314

This session examines the vision of the late Dr. George Kanahale and the role of Hawaiian culture in the tourism sector, as well as what aloha means for the millennial generation.

General Session: Defining the New Global Marketplace and Relating to Change

1:45 – 2:45 p.m., Ballroom

The focus will be on today's global community and marketplace, and how marketers must adapt and relate to an increasingly connected population of consumers as boundaries disappear and competition becomes more complex.

Culture: Kūkākūkā: A Talk Story with Hawai'i's Cultural Specialists

3:00 – 3:45 p.m., Room 314

This session will give participants a unique opportunity to talk story and share their successes, challenges and emerging trends for cultural specialists at Hawai'i's resorts and retail operations.

Global Markets: U.S. Global Market Session

3:00 – 3:45 p.m., Room 313AB

The 2017 marketing plan for the United States will be presented.

Culture: A Hawaiian Worldview: Practical Applications in Business

3:45 – 5:30 p.m., Room 314

Explores strategies for creating systemic change in the visitor industry that promote Hawaiian values.

Global Markets: Japan Global Market Session

3:45 – 4:30 p.m., Room 313AB

The 2017 marketing plan for Japan will be presented.

Culture: 'Imi Noi'i: Hawaiian Research and Resources for Today's Hawaiian Cultural Resource Specialist

4:45 – 5:30 p.m., Room 314

Explores the essential resources of Hawaiian 'ike, or knowledge, to access and utilize these materials to build cultural narratives and programming.

Global Markets: Korea Global Market Breakout

4:45 – 5:30 p.m., Room 312

The 2017 marketing plan for Korea will be presented.

Global Markets: Oceania Global Market Breakout

4:45 – 5:30 p.m., Room 311

The 2017 marketing plans for Oceania will be presented.

Global Markets: Taiwan/Southeast Asia Global Market Breakout

4:45 – 5:30 p.m., Room 317

The 2017 marketing plans for Taiwan and Southeast Asia will be presented.

General Session: Aloha Reception by Expedia

5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Rooftop Garden

Join us in grand celebration, as we welcome foreign dignitaries, industry leaders for this reception that features a presentation about the new facial recognition software program.

Evening 'Ohana Time: A Golden Legacy

9:00 – 10:00 p.m., Lobby, Outrigger Reef Resort

End the day with evening refreshments and a conversation with stewards of culture and traditions.

Evening 'Ohana Time: Keepers of the Flame

9:00 – 10:00 p.m., Lobby, Outrigger Ala Moana Hotel

End the day meeting installation artist Kapulani Landgraaf and discover her vision for the future.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 29

A.M. Aloha Activities: Picture This – A Guided Photo Art Walk

7:00 – 8:00 a.m., Canal Side, Hawai'i Convention Center

Join master Hawaiian storyteller and cultural guide Manly Ku'ualohapoina'ole Kanoa on a walk under fragrant plumeria trees along the Ala Wai Canal. Learn about Hawaiian culture and legends and how the canal's creation brought Waikīkī to life.

A.M. Aloha Activities: The Curious Journey of the 'Ukulele

7:00 – 7:45 a.m., Shorebird Restaurant, Outrigger Reef Resort

Enjoy breakfast, morning music and join the sing-along and demonstration on the beach.

General Session: Customized Travel and Optimizing Customer Experience: Packaging Value to Drive Appeal

8:00 – 9:30 a.m., Ballroom

Explore the ever-changing relationship between the customer and the destination. Hear how curating uniquely personal vacation experience brings its own set of challenges and rewards.

China: China Readiness: Exceeding Expectations of Chinese Customers

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 317

Explore the cultural relevancies affecting our ability to attract and welcome Chinese visitors and how to assure particular expectations are met in delivering a quality experience to a discerning audience.

Japan: Servicing Guests: Flipping the Equation of Five-Star Pricing at Three-Star Quality

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 314

Improving service standards to match visitor expectations and elevating the value of a vacation.

Lodging: Traditional Accommodations: Hawai'i Hotel and Timeshare Update

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 316A

Learn about the current landscape and changes that present new challenges and opportunities for Hawai'i and the global lodging industry.

Marketing: The Lifecycle of the Relationship Between Consumers and a Brand

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 311

From awareness to advocacy, how to interact and communicate with customers.

Technology/Media: Digital Destination Management and Converting Interest to Action

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 320

Direct messaging is the new social media. Are you listening? Learn how emerging immersive technologies like Canvas, 360 Video, FB Live, Virtual Reality and even Poke Stops are putting destinations at the center of mobile discovery.

Visitor Experience: The Upside of Downtime: Why We Need It and How to Leverage it

9:45 – 11:00 a.m., Room 312

Hear about the U.S. Travel Association's Project Time Off, Japan's mandatory 5-day vacation, and how to capture this audience.

China: China Outbound Travel: Uncovering the Diverse Segments of Chinese Travelers

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 317

Learn about the Chinese outbound market and its latest trends and opportunities.

Japan: A Step Ahead: Use of Technology to Capture the Japanese Consumer

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 314

Discover the latest trends in Japanese consumption of media and how to get their attention.

Lodging: Alternative Accommodations; Relating to the Regulating of a New Reality

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 316A

Join the discussion, from alternative accommodations distribution channels to vacation rentals, and see what's next for these markets.

Marketing: Who's Winning – Hotels, OTAs or the Consumer?

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 311

A provocative discussion on the interdependent relationship between hotels and online travel agencies and winning the customers' booking.

Technology/Media: Discover Your Aloha: The HTA-Expedia Marketing Campaign

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 320

Learn about the creative design and technology behind the facial recognition software supporting this exciting new marketing initiative.

Visitor Experience: World Class Retail: How Hawai'i Measures Up

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Room 312

Delve into the world of retail and take a look at how Hawai'i compares to other retail destinations. Discover the local gems Hawai'i has to offer.

General Session: Working Box Lunch: Five Tips on How to Drive Demand When Current Events Shift the Travel Landscape

12:30 – 1:30 p.m., Ballroom Expo III

Learn more about the findings and how your company drives demand during a changing travel landscape.

General Session: Virtual Reality: The Undiscovered Territory in Tourism Marketing

1:45 – 2:45 p.m., Ballroom

Virtual reality in the new frontier in the travel and tourism industry. This moderated panel will include travel industry leaders as well technology pioneers to discuss the next phase in the maturation of VR with a specific focus on 360-degree tech.

Visitor Experience: Behind the Scenes: The Role of Safety and Security

1:45 – 2:45 p.m., Room 312

More than ever, safety is a top priority in choosing a destination. Uncover the importance and role of safety and security as value added in marketing the destination and enhancing the visitor experience.

China: Outlook on Chinese Overseas Investment

3:00 – 4:15 p.m., Room 317

Gain insights on the current state of China's economy and its impact on outbound investment to overseas destinations.

Japan: Getting into the Minds of Your Customers

3:00 – 4:15 p.m., Room 314

Gain an understanding of how data can be used to predict customer behavior and how to apply it.

Lodging: Revenue and Demand Impacts of Socially Engaging with Consumers

3:00 – 4:15 p.m., Room 316A

Examining the effects of reviews posted on TripAdvisor on hotel performance.

Marketing: Embracing Diversity While Preserving Consistent Brand Integrity

3:00 – 4:15 p.m., Room 311

Maintaining a consistent global brand in diverse target markets from East to West.

Technology/Media: WedTech – The Technology that Drives the Wedding Industry

3:00 – 4:15 p.m., Room 320

Discover some of the pivotal technology creators innovating the multi-billion dollar romance industry, and changing how business gets done.

China: China Readiness: Exceeding Expectations of Chinese Customers

4:30 – 5:45 p.m., Room 317

Explore the cultural relevancies affecting our ability to attract and welcome Chinese visitors and how to assure particular expectations are met in delivering a quality experience to a discerning audience.

Japan: Press Play: When Ultraman Lands in Hawai'i

4:30 – 5:45 p.m., Room 314

Working with the biggest intellectual properties in Japan to boost travel to Hawai'i

Lodging: The Shifting Landscapes of the Lodging Industry

4:30 – 5:45 p.m., Room 316A

How have the changes affected the destination? What makes Hawai'i's properties attractive to outside brands and management companies, and what's next?

Marketing: Where Aloha Connects the World

4:30 – 5:45 p.m., Room 311

Discover the possibilities in bringing Hawai'i to the forefront of the global meetings, conventions and incentives market.

B2B Session: One-on-One Networking Rounds

4:30 – 6:00 p.m., Room 323

Get in front of the top domestic and international tour operators, wholesalers, MCI partners and HTA's global marketing contractors that are bringing business to Hawai'i.

Technology/Media: Lights, Camera, Hawai'i

4:30 – 5:45 p.m., Room 320

Revealing the big picture of our film and television appeal as a key promotional platform in marketing Hawai'i to the world.

Evening 'Ohana Time: Meet Artist Nelson Makua

8:30 – 9:30 p.m., Lobby, Outrigger Reef Resort

End the day at this gathering with refreshments and discover the diversity of this legendary artist.

Evening 'Ohana Time: Meet the Artists of the Arts Garage

8:30 – 9:30 p.m., Lobby, Outrigger Ala Moana Hotel

An informal artists salon with the next generation of Hawai'i's I Mua makers.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 30

A.M. Aloha Activities: 5K Fitness Walk

7:00 – 8:30 a.m., Canal Side, Hawai'i Convention Center

Begin the morning with a fresh breath of aloha along a fragrant pedestrian pathway from the Hawai'i Convention Center to Ala Moana Beach Park's Magic Island.

A.M. Aloha Activities: Dressed in Aloha

7:00 – 7:45 a.m., Shorebird Restaurant, Outrigger Reef Resort

Start the morning with breakfast and a spirited history weaving storytelling and displays about Hawai'i's aloha shirt.

General Session: From Farmer's Market to Market Square: The Global Guide to Culinary Tourism

9:00 – 10:30 a.m., Ballroom Expo III

Featuring a veritable who's who of culinary tourism, this discussion will center on the one consistent element that binds all cultures together – food. Attendees will be immersed in first hand stories about the differences we can celebrate and the similarities that bring us together around one global table.

Visitor Experience: Game On: Sports as a Platform in Destination Marketing

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Ballroom Expo III

Join an A-List lineup of sports leaders in a participatory dialogue on taking advantage of sports, athletics and sporting events to market a destination or product.

General Session: Aloha Farewell Luncheon

12:30 – 2:00 p.m., Ballroom

The Hawai'i Tourism Conference concludes with a special commemorative feature on the upcoming 75th anniversary of the attack at Pearl Harbor and a musical performance by Willie K and friends.

About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is responsible for strategically managing the State of Hawai'i's marketing initiatives to support tourism. HTA's goal is to optimize tourism's benefits for Hawai'i, while being attentive to the interests of travelers, the community and visitor industry. Established in 1998 to support Hawai'i's leading industry and largest employer, HTA continually strives to help ensure the sustainability of tourism's success.

For more information about HTA, please visit www.hawaiitourismauthority.org. Follow updates about HTA on Facebook, Twitter (@HawaiiHTA) and its YouTube Channel.

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HTA Media Contacts:

Charlene Chan

Director of Communications
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
808-973-2272 (o)
808-781-7733 (m)
Charlene@gohta.net

Patrick Dugan

Senior Vice President
Anthology Marketing Group
808-539-3411 (o)
808-741-2712 (m)
Patrick.Dugan@AnthologyGroup.com