

LIBERTY CALL



Adventurers enjoys a day of sea kayaking and snorkeling under the sun. For an experience away from the hordes of tourists, they head to the secluded eastern side of Oahu near the appropriately named Chinaman's Hat.

Morale, Welfare, Recreation offers snorkeling adventures

Whether you are a tourist visiting the Hawaiian Islands for the first time or a long time resident, to venture off shore any one of these magnificent volcanic islands nestled in the Pacific is an opportunity to participate in a truly unique experience.

Hawaii, without question, offers some of the best water sports on the planet. Snorkeling is one of the most popular of these activities, easily accessible to both the novice and expert.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation Liberty/Outdoor Recreation Department at Pearl Harbor offers several snorkeling adventures, all of which are tailor made for the beginner.

We frequently visit some of the most exciting snorkeling spots on the Hawaiian Islands, such as the protected Hanauma Bay State Underwater Park on Oahu.

At Hanauma Bay snorkelers can see parrotfish, trumpetfish, the occasional pufferfish, as well as the commonly occurring french grunt to name a few. The latter by the way bears no resemblance to a United States Marine with a heavy french accent.

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Touted as one of the world's best snorkeling locations, Hanauma Bay is extremely popular, so it is best there early as the parking lot sometimes closes after filling up by noon.

For an experience away from the hordes of tourists, we headed to the secluded eastern side of Oahu near the appropriately named Chinaman's Hat.

After pairing up into tandem sea kayaks, we stowed our snorkeling gear safely inside the boats cargo hatches and launched ourselves for a day of sea kayaking and snorkeling under the sun.

The reef system near Chinaman's Hat teemed with marine life and almost always provided us with a glimpse of the swift and curious endangered green sea turtle.

Though their numbers have dwindled over the years, the now protected green sea turtles are making a comeback and can be spotted at many snorkeling locations throughout the islands.

Sharks Cove is located near Waimea Bay on the North Shore of Oahu and is another great snorkeling site that we like to visit. More fright than bite, rest assured that the name Sharks Cove is a misnomer and by no means is a cove infested with our most feared nemesis of the sea.

As a matter of fact, contrary to its sinister namesake no sharks have yet to be spotted at Sharks Cove. What you are much more likely to encounter along the North Shore are water sports enthusiasts, as this area of Oahu is very popular with both locals and tourists.

We limited our snorkeling on the North Shore to the summer months since the surf there becomes extremely dangerous with the arrival of winter.

Our MWR Liberty/Outdoor Recreation snorkeling trips to Maui are just as spectacular as those on Oahu.

The oceans surrounding Maui and its neighbor islands of Lanai and Molokini are comfortably warm, have great visibility (often in excess of 100 feet) and are teeming with beautiful coral formations and colorful tropical fish.

The view begins within feet of the shoreline and may extend out a quarter of a mile in some areas.

To participate in an upcoming snorkeling trip sponsored by MWR Liberty/Outdoor Recreation at Pearl Harbor, call 473-5443.



Left: Spc. Kenneth Kley (front) and Daniel Dietrick, enjoy one of MWR's snorkeling adventures.

Above: Snorkeling gives an up close look at some of the ocean's most beautiful creatures. The sea turtle was photographed near Molokini, located off the shores of Maui. Fish like the one shown above at Kapalua Bay on Maui can also be seen at Hanauma Bay on Oahu.



The island of Lanai can be seen in the background as snorkeling enthusiasts enjoy warm waters teeming with beautiful coral formations and colorful tropical fish. Visibility in many areas of the ocean is often in excess of 100 feet.

Story and photos by Ken Cornia