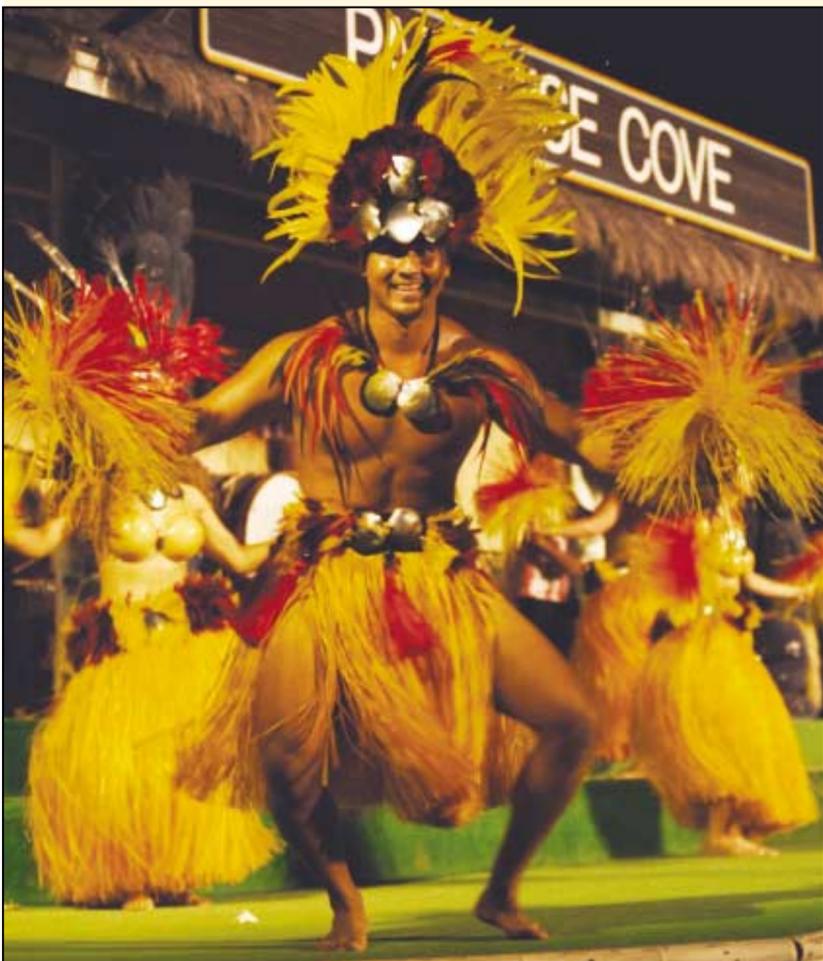




Local fishers demonstrate the art of hukilau or net fishing to those on shore as part of the Paradise Cove sunset ceremonies. Volunteers from the audience are asked to join in if they choose.



Above: A hula dancer entertains the audience with his fast movements during the Paradise Cove Hawaiian Revue.

Right: The fire knife dancers are always a highlight of the evening's entertainment.

Below: Guests can try their hand at an outrigger style canoe in the calm waters of the cove.



## Experiencing the Hawaiian luau

Story and photos by JO2 Jim Williams  
Editor

You heard about it long before you came to Hawai'i and you know you should do it at least once before you leave. It's the quintessential Hawaiian experience ... the luau.

Good food, a great show, a picture-perfect location, all under the stars of a beautiful Hawaiian night and you've got the makings of a perfect island evening.

If your evening happens to come together on the scenic leeward coast in an enchanting cove of Ko Olina, then you must have found the Paradise Cove luau.

One of several luaus offered by the Pearl Harbor's Information, Ticket and Tourism Office (I.T.T.), Paradise Cove provides not only the typical luau feast and show, but many other games and activities typical of the islands.

The festivities begin with an aloha beverage welcome from the friendly staff. Guests are then invited to join in on a variety of fun activities or to just relax on the quiet beach, with tropical drink in hand, enjoying the beautiful Hawaiian sunset.

"From the time you first arrive, there are already activities going on like our arts and craft areas, Hawaiian games, the tattoo area and canoe rides," said 'Auntie Pat' Kaialau, Paradise Cove's service supervisor. "And none of that costs extra. It's all included in the packages to enter."

Stroll leisurely about Paradise Cove's Hawaiian Village area to learn about different crafts of the islands. Local lei makers teach guests the secrets and history of making Hawai'i's famed flower necklaces and assist anyone who might need a little help in making their own to take home. Other crafters assist with palm frond bracelet and headband weaving.

Prefer something a little more rugged? Paradise Cove also has a Polynesian tattoo hut where guests receive an ancient Polynesian trophy similar to those worn by ancient voyagers from New Zealand and Tahiti. But don't worry; these tattoos are temporary and wash off with soap and water, unlike the ones worn by the ancient voyagers.

Now that you're looking like Hawaiian royalty, try your hand at some of the ancient sports once enjoyed only by the ancient ali'i. It's said many of these traditional sports involved physical strength, stamina and danger.

So test your strength by trying the 'o'o ihe (spear throwing). Originally used to train young warriors in combat, the target (often just the stalk of a banana plant) is placed and contestants throw a lightweight wooden spear at it from about 15 feet away (less for children).

Then, show off your stamina playing 'ulu maika (the rolling disk stones game). Very popular in early Hawaii, it consists of rolling carefully crafted stones that look similar to hockey pucks between stakes on a special course.

A slight variation is moa pahe'e (the dart sliding game) where instead of rolling stones, the player slides a moa, or wooden dart, between the stakes.

As for danger... show your fearlessness by braving the wild ocean in an outrigger style canoe.

Okay, the water is not very deep and you do have a canoe guide who shows you what to do, but there could be big fish and sharp rocks, right?

The sound of a conch shell eventually calls everyone to gather together for the "shower of

flowers" where fragrant flower blooms are dropped from the tops of tall palm trees to rain down on guests. Following is the traditional hukilau, a ceremony where spectators watch, and possibly participate in, the gathering of giant fishing nets from the sea.

Afterwards at sunset, the crowds move into an amphitheater to observe as the Paradise Cove Royal Court ceremoniously unearths the luau's traditional imu underground-roasted pig.

After being seated in the dining area, a Hawaiian prayer of blessing is said and guests begin a traditional Hawaiian feast that includes a variety of salads, rice, pineapple, poi, lomi lomi salmon, island fish with macadamia nut crème sauce, teriyaki chicken and kalua pig and more.

As everyone settles into their meals, the real entertainment begins with the award-winning Paradise Cove Hawaiian Revue, a show offering comedy, audience participation, Polynesian fire-knife dancers and, of course, outstanding singing and dancing that takes you into the night.

Led by Paradise Cove entertainment director O'Brien Eselu, an accomplished local musician and recording artist — not to mention kuma hula (hula teacher) of the award-winning Ke Kai O Kahiki halau (hula family) — the show's cast also includes several dancers who were winners of the Merrie Monarch Festival on the Big Island.

"Our accomplishments are the products of the discipline, study and long hours of dedication that go into learning the craft of hula and exploring the spiritual connection with our island heritage," said Eselu. "What this means for our visitors to Paradise Cove is that they will be treated to an evening of dance featuring the very best artists performing in the islands today."

When the last song is sung, the feast cleared away and it's time to go home, you'll be happy to know that you've at last experienced the ultimate Hawaiian party. And the next time some far away friend or family member asks if you've been to a luau yet (and you know they will), you can answer, "Yes, it was paradise."

Paradise Cove, that is.

Two military packages regularly offered at I.T.T. are

- The Hawaiian Luau Buffet package: This includes all of the games, arts and crafts, Hawaiian village activities, two drinks, plus the buffet dinner and show for \$32 (for adults), 26 (for children over five).

- The Royal Ali'i Service package: This includes all of the Paradise Cove amenities plus preferred show seating, table service instead of the regular buffet, plus unlimited mai tais and Blue Hawaiis for \$42 (for adults), \$34 (for children over five).

Paradise Cove is also offering two specials at the ticket gate until the end of March.

With a military ID, buy one adult ticket, get one child's ticket free or get 10 percent off the price of a regular ticket.

I.T.T. also offers special luau packages to the Hale Koa luau and Germaine's Luau in Waikiki.

Directions to Paradise Cove: Take H-1 West toward Waianae and take the Ko Olina exit into Paradise Cove.

For more information, call I.T.T. at 473-0792 or visit their office. Or call Paradise Cove at 842-5911 or visit their website [www.paradisecovehawaii.com](http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com).