

Hawaii Looks To Upskill Kiwi Agents



Pic: HTA/Tor Johnson

Hawaii Tourism's New Zealand office is finishing the year on a high—and has its sights set on capitalising on 2018's additional air capacity AKL-HNL.

The STO will launch a new agent specialist programme here in the New Year while it expands its targeted demographic markets.

New Zealand manager Darragh Walshe says the STO has seen growing leisure business from New Zealand, and adds there's plenty of opportunity to expand the destination's appeal for New Zealanders.

"... the extra airlift coming on board in 2018 will provide more opportunities for travel agents to target groups, special interest and MICE," says Walshe. "From sports events, to school trips, to cultural exchanges and company incentives, Hawai'i offers plenty of scope for the Kiwi market."

... Event-full HI

The increased air frequency will make Hawaiian events an easier sell. The island state has a slew of headline events from one of three PGA golf tournaments in Jan; in Feb it hosts

the street art Festival Pow!Wow!Hawaii in Kakaako; and Mar brings the Honolulu Festival celebrating Pacific Rim culture.

The iconic Merrie Monarch Festival hula festival is on in Apr, while each May, the Lantern Floating Hawaii sees visitors can join residents to set adrift one of thousands of candlelit paper lanterns in waters off Oahu's south shore at sunset to honour departed love ones.

King Kamehameha Day celebrations are held state wide in Jun, while the Koloa Plantation Day's celebrate Kauai's multicultural and agricultural roots.

The Waikiki surf-and-shore beach competitions of Duke's OceanFest are held in Aug, while the Aloha Festival events are staged across the state through Sep.

For the gourmands, the Hawaii Food and Wine Festival has become a must-do for visitors heading to Hawaii in Oct; while the Hawaii International Film Festival is on in Nov. Ending the year, the state's Hawaii-style holiday season spirit is on show with events including the Honolulu City Lights.



Farm-To-Fork

Hula Hulas has opened its first 'farm-to-fork and entertainment restaurants and bar' advises the Island of Hawaii, with four more set to open state-wide. The Hula Hulas in Hilo features ocean view dining with a menu that supports local farmers, bow hunters and fish crafters, as well as a dozen local and global craft beers and seasonal cocktails. Menu highlights include ahi poke, macadamia nut calamari fingers and pineapple-chilli glazed pork belly. See hulahulashilo.com

The West's Best B&B

The Dragonfly Ranch Healing Arts Centre has been named one of the best bed and breakfast operators in *West Hawaii Today's* Best of West Hawaii Awards.

The Hawaiian Islands says the tree-house getaway is also offering 20% off stays for five nights plus on all bookings made online.

The ranch caters for families, couple and individuals offering workshops, vegan detoxifications and weight loss retreats. See dragonflyranch.com

Aqua Aston Excellence

TripAdvisor has awarded 23 of Aqua Aston's properties the 2017 certificate of excellence, including nine on Oahu, five on Maui, three in Kauai, and four on Hawaii Island. The certificate is awarded to accommodations, eateries and attractions that have earned great reviews on TripAdvisor as well as quality customer service.



Dive With Whales On Maui

Clients dreaming of snorkelling during humpback whale season in Hawaii are in luck, as the Sheraton Maui Resort & Spa releases its new Dive into Maui package advises SPG Hotels. The Dive into Maui package is valid for travel 03 Jan-15 Apr and includes deluxe oceanfront accommodation, welcome s'mores basket amenities, two pairs of Sheraton Maui binoculars, a marine life educational talk with the Maui Ocean Centre's marine naturalists, snorkel gear for two for one day, fish identification cards and two tickets to the Maui Ocean Centre. Prices start at USD757 per night, minimum three night stay. To book call (866) 716 8140 and mention WHALEPKG.

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