

## **Maui on Budget**

If you are thinking about a trip to Maui, or already booked, a little budget planning can ensure you get the most for your vacation dollars.

We travel to Maui every year with the goal of staying as long as possible! Each year as we plan funding for the trip I take some time to review trip costs and plan the vacation expense in advance. Although on several occasions we have attempted to adjust the budget planning to reduce costs, we find each trip comes in near the same amount.

Trip expenses fall into three major categories – flight, fixed daily, and per person expenses.

### **Maui Flights**

There are a wide range of options for flights to Maui including direct flights from many west coast cities, and connecting flights via Los Angeles or Honolulu. Costs per ticket from San Francisco typically runs \$350 – 650, depending on specials and availability. Flights from L.A. are about \$50 less, and from other western cities \$50 more.

As a web-savvy traveler I watch the Maui flight costs regularly, and booked our first few trips online. Surprisingly though, I have gone back to booking through a travel agent as they offer better flight availability, and lower rates! The travel agent competes by buying blocks – groups of seats at a discounted rate to resell with travel packages. On our last trip we not only purchased flights cost less, but also got seats on the exact flight we desired... one that was sold out online! Traveling with kids can be challenging, so getting a daytime, direct flight is quite desirable.

### **Fixed Daily Costs**

While staying in Maui there are a number of expenses that are essentially independent of number of travelers. These expenses include the rental car, and lodging, as the biggest items.

#### **Rental Cars**

The car will run \$30-35 per day standard. One word of caution... Maui rental car agents put used car dealers to shame when it comes to rental practices. The process includes all the "... insurance with that? extra driver? gas coverage? upgrade? ...". To control your rental costs there are a few things you may consider – First, read your insurance policy as you may be covered in a rental car already. Choose a primary driver and pass on the "extra driver expense". Finally, be ready for the pitch and know what you want before entering.

Maui does have "used" car rentals as well. They will pick you up at the airport and have reasonable rates and cars. If you are taking the flight-car package discount this will not be an option.

#### **Lodging**

Lodging is the area you can have the most significant impact on travel budget management. If you book a vacation through a travel agent they will offer you standard

hotel packages. Hotels are easy, and generally provide nice single room accommodations. The downside of hotel vacations is the generally higher prices, single room, and no kitchen.

The following table lists published hotel rates 2004. This table is a small sampling of some of the more popular vacation accommodations.

<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Rates/nt</b>
Grand Wailea	\$465 - \$785 (Suites to \$10,000)
Maui Hyatt Regency	\$325 – 670
Maui Marriott	\$294 – 338
Kaanapali Beach Resort	\$169 - 380

*All rates are based on web published rates on 12/29/03.*

Our first family trip to Maui (including wife and infant) was to the Kaanapali Beach Resort. We found the accommodations ...less than desirable and set out to find an alternative. We ended up at a condo in Kihei the remainder of the trip, and have returned to the same complex almost every year for the past six years!

When you stay in a condominium you get a fully furnished “home” to use for your vacations. Unlike hotels this includes bedrooms, kitchens, dishes and dishwashers, TV and VCR, many have washer-dryers, and a lanai. Like hotels most condominium resorts have pools, some have activity centers, and workout rooms. The rooms typically are only cleaned once per guest when you depart.

Condominium rates range as low as about \$45 per night to about \$400. A sampling of some of the popular destinations in Kihei is provided in the following table.

<b>Condominium</b>	<b>Rates/nt</b>
Maui Sunset	\$80 - 120
Kamaole Sands	\$90-120
Luana Kai	\$89 - 160
Kihei Alii Kai	\$89 - 110

*All rates are based on web published rates on 12/29/03 found on [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com). Actual rates and specials may vary.*

Finding a vacation condominium online is easy. Many are linked through the standard search engines. For one of the most complete listings check [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com) (Vacation Rentals By Owner – One of the largest listing sites).

## Per Person Expenses

Once the flight, car, and lodging is covered, the remainder of the costs are for normal daily activities and entertainment. For simplicity we group our general and entertainment expenses.

For a family of four we plan \$100 per day to cover the general expenses. It runs about \$25 per person, although the first person runs more and additional travelers less. If you are staying in a hotel this number could be significantly higher as you will have to eat out for all meals.

Conservative living could reduce the daily expense further, but keep in mind you are on vacation! The last thing you want is to travel to Maui only to sit in a room to save money.

We enjoy our vacations by balancing a few touristy events with days on the beach, by the pool, or snorkeling. We planned one extended vacation based on a reduced \$75 per day, but found at the end of the trip we blew our budget and still came in at \$100 per day... money well spent.

## Bottom line Expenses

If you are traveling on budget, here is a summary of what to expect. Legal disclaimer *"...all travelers are different so results may vary...enjoy your vacation!"*

Flight	\$400 per person (U.S. West coast)
Lodging & car	\$135 / day (condo assumed)
<u>General Expenses</u>	<u>\$25 per person per day</u>
Couple – Two Weeks	\$3,390
Family of 4 – Two Weeks	\$4,890

## Summary

Maui on Budget means getting the most vacation for your money. By planning your vacation spending in advance you can be sure to enjoy the most within your travel budget. Knowing your options when booking flights, cars, and lodging, can free significant amounts of money to enjoy on other vacation activities. For us, Maui on Budget means spending wisely and staying longer!

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*This article is provided by Mr. Marc Elpel and [SunsetMaui.com](http://SunsetMaui.com). Mr Elpel has been an avid activity based traveler for years. Motto – "Travel is for doing, not just seeing." This article may be republished unaltered with this footnote.*