

MID-CENTURY WAIKIKI

A self-guided architecture tour.

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the **SURFJACK**
Hotel & Swim Club

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1 THE SURFJACK

412 Lewers Street
1961 / Architect: Roy Kelley

Originally called the Waikiki Surf Hotel, this eight-story, L-shaped building was designed by Roy Kelley, who today is best known as the founder of the Outrigger hotel chain. The courtyard pool was an idea that architect Edwin Bauer, a friend of Kelley's, earlier explored at the Hawaiiana and Breakers hotels, which you can still see at 250 and 260 Beach Walk. Bauer also utilized this concept at the White Sands Hotel, which you will see later on the walk. Kelley was the first Waikiki hotelier to include swimming pools on his properties, which, at the time, was considered a crazy idea. The two-story building on your left as you enter the Surfjack was built before the Waikiki Surf Hotel. From 1954 until the opening of Kelley's Waikiki Surf in 1961, this concise, modern style building housed the Kuhio Apartment Hotel.

2 FOUR ELEVEN APTS

411 Kaiolu Street
1960 / Architect: Edwin Bauer

This building is an example of classic modern design, and the architect's special skill with cast concrete construction. (Too bad the lanai enclosures make it difficult to appreciate.) A cast reveal at each floor tracks around the entire building, a horizontal header projects out over each bedroom window, and an extra-deep roof overhang reinforces the horizontal theme. On the Kuhio Street side, a breeze block screen and additional reveals break up the solid enclosures needed for elevators and a stair tower. Edwin Bauer's numerous buildings include the Waikiki hotels the Breakers (1954), Hawaiiana (1955), White Sands (1958–1960), the Waikiki Business Plaza with the Top of Waikiki revolving restaurant (1965)—now altered to house an H&M, and Kaiolu Sunrise (1961) across the street (430 Kaiolu Street).

3 ROSALEI APTS

445 Kaiolu Street
1955 / Architect: Morrison & McDonald

The 12-story Rosaiei was the first highrise apartment building in Hawaii, and upon its completion was the tallest building in Waikiki. The Rosaiei was a prototype of many buildings that followed, with its central, double stacked corridor and continuous horizontal bands of cantilevered lanai on both of the long sides of the building. The entry podium's abstract, frond-pattern, concrete balustrade is the International Style building's only concession to applied ornament. Developed by a group of investors from Alaska, the building's name pays homage to their friend Rosalie A. Stephenson, who was a top Waikiki nightclub singer in the 1950s. Next door, at 2155 Ala Wai Boulevard, is the Delgado Apartments, completed in 1948. The L-shape plan creates a unique corner courtyard entrance. The architect was Cyril W. Lemmon, whose firm evolved into the well-known firm Architects Hawaii, Ltd., which is still creating buildings today.

4 PACIFIC POLYNESIA

455 Lewers Street
1953 / Architect: Roger Benezet

Originally built as a 16-unit hotel, this thoughtfully rendered building was converted to apartments in the early 1990s. The building plan is a simple rectangle, with four floors and cantilevered walkways/lanais on the long sides. The architect expanded that simple design by projecting floor slabs past the exterior walls to create horizontal bands, and with extra large windows providing light and ventilation. The end wall's sliding windows with three horizontal panes were a popular modern motif in Hawaii from the mid-1930s through the late 1950s. Combined with the horizontal wood railings, the building was modern but not out of place in a neighborhood that was then comprised of clusters of wood bungalows.

5 BOULEVARD TOWER

2281 Ala Wai Boulevard
1962 / Architect: Hideo Murakami

This building's design is all about horizontal bands, created by solid continuous railings on all sides. Then everything changes when you look at the entry bay—the walls extend out like modern buttresses, slightly curving up and then gradually sloping back to accentuate the 10-story height. Combined with deep cast concrete window awnings that get shallower at each floor, this ground-hugging mid-rise is like a stepladder to the sky. Hideo Murakami, born in Hilo, Hawaii, in 1930, was a fellow at the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, and studied with the famed architect at Taliesin, his iconic Wisconsin estate.

6 HAWAIIAN KING

417 Nohonani Street
1962 / Architect: George K.C. Lee

With its strong composition of horizontal and vertical features, and solid and open forms, topped by a deeply cantilevered roof slab, the Hawaiian King catches the eye of modernism fans. What makes it transcend the ordinary is its courtyard featuring a landscaped garden and swimming pool. In the entrance corridor take note of the floor tiles' elaborate design—it was a popular pattern in Hawaii at the time. Hanging in the entry hall are four photographs of Waikiki that document how quickly the area evolved. Searching for an old-school Waikiki bar? Hawaiian King is home to the 55-year-old Honolulu Tavern, where salty dogs talk story—it's a scene right out of Paul Theroux's novel "Hotel Honolulu."

7 WHITE SANDS HOTEL

431 Nohonani Street
1958, 1960, 1965 / Architect: Edwin Bauer

The White Sands Hotel, which shares an architect with Four Eleven Apartments (stop 2), is an example of clean modern lines and restrained concrete construction. Early photos show that the sliding glass doors you see today were originally shoji panels, and the rooms had an oriental motif. Walk into the entrance, and you'll see that the hotel is built around a large elaborate garden and swimming pool that extends the entire block. This was the result of wings being added to the original composition. The wing on the left, with the steeply pitched roof, was the last addition in 1965.

8 HOLIDAY SURF

2303 Ala Wai Boulevard
1966 / Architect: Ernest Hara

At its core, this design is simply a large rectangle with an efficient center double-loaded corridor. But then architect Ernest Hara had fun with cast concrete. First he added a folded plate awning—extra wide—over the entrance. Then over each window he placed a concrete awning that starts heavy on the outside and angles back to the center. In addition, the building features cantilevered balconies. Then it's all capped by an extra deep, too heavy concrete overhanging roof that keeps this fantasy from floating away. With so much active architecture, the whale mural is overkill. Ernest Hara's other Waikiki buildings include the Queen Kapiolani Hotel (1968), Waikiki Grand Hotel (1962), and the Waikiki Shopping Plaza (1975).

9 ALA WAI APTS

2319 Ala Wai Boulevard
1953 / Architect: Wimberly & Cook

One of Waikiki's handsomest surviving post-World War II apartments, this building's most important feature is its structural design—a center core supports extended cantilevered concrete beams on each floor. This allowed a light industrial window wall design with continuous tall bands of glass (to the ceiling), creating uninterrupted views. And it opens the ground floor on one side for a continuous row of parking spaces. The center brick-covered façade on the street stops 42 inches short at the bottom, giving the illusion of floating above the ground thanks to a recessed glass base. The half-oval arch over the door is another surprise in a design of squares and rectangles. George "Pete" Wimberly and Howard Cook's firm is now WATG, one of the world's leading hotel, leisure and entertainment designers.

10 NAPILI TOWER APTS

451 Nahua Street
1962 / Architect: Potter & Potter

The Napili is an architect's building—each physical feature is expressed boldly and also as part of the whole design. You can clearly see the exterior's concrete columns and beams because the inset masonry walls are pulled back from the surface, sometimes as much as a foot. Glass sections are inserted full height from beam to beam, establishing a horizontal rhythm. Typical of this thorough design is a street-level screen of concrete posts and beams that utilizes a standard perforated masonry block with an opening that is perfectly repeated on a giant scale in the building's full height cast concrete screen on Nahua Street. London-born Mark Potter was a direct descendant of famed 17th-century architect Christopher Wren, and his designs done with his son Gordon include the Hawaii State Archives.

11 BEACHSIDE APTS

423 Kanekapolei Street
1959 / Architect: Ernest Hara

The architect's brief was probably simple: Provide a three-story walk-up with small apartments on a limited budget. Ernest Hara created two L-shaped structures that open to each other and dressed up the concept by giving the walkways a solid horizontal mass that ends with floating concrete stairs with light open railings. The roof slab extends only where it's needed to shelter the top walkways and rear lanai, and the two facades have a corrugated texture. Final whimsical touch: the "Beachside" name and logo. Built as a cooperative apartment, the 360-square-foot studios sold for \$12,500, while the 480- to 540-square-foot one-bedroom units started at \$13,500. The Asian-inspired décor included shoji doors, and all units came with General Electric appliances.

12 WAIKIKI SKYLINER

2415 Ala Wai Boulevard
1967 / Architect: Lawson Butt, Jr.

An exhilarating example of a mid-century modern highrise apartment tower, the Skyliner is a delight of variegated materials and forms. With its script signage on a black Puna lava rock wall, and its use of two patterns of breeze blocks, the building screams 1960s cool. Rising from a parking podium, the building stands out thanks to its transparent curtain wall and lanai configuration, as well as its dramatically articulated vertical elevator tower with its black surface and recessed curving red wave. This 20-story building with its 122 one- and two-bedroom units was constructed in the midst of an apartment building boom along Ala Wai Boulevard. It was the tallest and largest of eight projects under construction in 1966.

13 DARLANI APTS

254 Kaiulani Avenue
1959 / Architect: Lemmon, Freeth & Haines

The Darlani is a typical three-story walk-up, but its mosaic façade stops passersby in their tracks. The glazed green-and-tan ceramic tiles are still shiny after half a century. The placement and typeface of the sign are the appropriate finishing touch.

14 THE CORALS IN WAIKIKI

248 Kaiulani Avenue
1959 / Architect: W.T. Spalding & Associates

Like the Darlani, the Corals is a typical three-story walk-up that shines thanks to the embellishments of a creative designer. In this case, W. T. Spalding simply adjusted the scale of features. The two balconies on the narrow building face, and the corner stair tower, have a screen that would have typically been breeze block but in this case are large-scale cast concrete panels. The cantilevered balconies on both sides of the building end in curves that are emphasized by corrugated balcony railings. The roof slab has extra-deep cantilevered overhangs on all sides that make the Corals seem more like an exotic pavilion.

15 KAIULANI COURT APTS

209 Kaiulani Avenue
1946–1948 / Architect: Unknown

This three-story apartment building's design works as a bridge from the neighborhood's previous makeup of one- and two-story wood bungalows, to the future taller, densely positioned buildings. Throwback design features include the hipped roofs with large overhangs that step back from Kuhio Avenue, the extra large windows, use of blocks for the infill walls, and a decorative balcony railing depicting breadfruit leaves and fruit—unusual in Waikiki. The forward-looking thorough modern elements are seen in the cantilevered slab walkways, cantilevered hoods over windows, and the industrial type metal window casements.

RETURN TRIP:

From here we recommend that you backtrack to Ala Wai Boulevard and return to the Surfjack on the sidewalk along the canal, which was completed in 1928 to drain Waikiki, a former wetland that was home to rice and taro fields.

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MID-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE MAP

There are still pockets of the Waikiki of "Blue Hawaii" and Don the Beachcomber to be found. Follow this guide for a time-traveling experience of the neighborhood's mid-century-modern gems.

OTHER NOTABLE MODERNIST BUILDINGS IN WAIKIKI

- | | |
|---|--|
| A WAIKIKI COVE APARTMENTS
2118 Kuhio Avenue
W. T. Spalding Co. & Associates
1959 | H PRINCESS KAIULANI HOTEL
120 Kaiulani Avenue
Gardner Dailey
1955 |
| B WAIKIKI BUSINESS PLAZA
2270 Kalakaua Avenue
Edwin Bauer
1965 | L BANK OF HAWAII
2155 Kalakaua Avenue
Wimberly, Whisenand, Allison & Tong
1967 |
| C SHORELINE HOTEL
342 Seaside Avenue
Edward Killingsworth
1970 | I WAIKIKI CIRCLE HOTEL
2464 Kalakaua Avenue
Park Associates
1963 |
| D ALOHA LANI CONDOMINIUM
2231 Ala Wai Boulevard
Lemmon, Freeth, Haines and Jones
1960 | J 240 LILIUOKALANI
John Tatom
1960 |
| E BREAKERS HOTEL
250 Beach Walk
Edwin Bauer
1954 | K WAIKIKI BELLEVUE APARTMENTS
2439 Ala Wai Boulevard
John Y. T. Wong
1962 |
| F HAWAIIANA HOTEL
260 Beach Walk
Edwin Bauer
1955 | (Not on Map)
WAIKIKI-KAPAHULU LIBRARY
2680 Ala Wai Boulevard
Lemmon, Freeth & Haines
1952 |
| G ST. AUGUSTINE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
130 Ohua Avenue
George McLaughlin
1962 | WAIKIKI SHELL
Monsarrat & Paki Avenues
Law & Wilson
1956 |

