

Girlfriend Getaway

Voyaging Hawai'i

*Tiffani Sherman recalls how **Norwegian Cruise Line**® made every detail count when traveling with a group of friends.*

There was something transformative about standing in the darkness high on a mountain and shivering, squinting to see the sun rise above the clouds. As the sun flooded the area with orange light, I felt as if I were witnessing nature's magic. Watching the sun rise over Maui's Haleakalā volcano while on a cruise through the islands of Hawai'i is a moment I didn't expect and one I will never forget.

Luckily, someone tipped me off that it would be cold on the top of a volcano before the sun came up, so while packing for my tropical Hawaiian vacation, I threw in a hat, scarf and gloves next to the bathing suits, reef-safe sunscreen and pineapple-printed T-shirt one of my fellow travelers bought me. She had purchased one for each of us. »

I was traveling with five other girlfriends on a cruise on Norwegian Cruise Line's *Pride of America*®. When I was first invited, I hesitated because I live in Florida and thought Hawai'i was nothing more than beaches. However, another friend needed a roommate to share a cabin and convinced me to go.

I had relatively low expectations, and my preconceived notions were way off. The cruise to four islands blew me away and altered all of my perceptions about Hawai'i.

Although I'm a seasoned cruiser and have joined several "girlfriend getaways," I was pleased to discover how accommodating a cruise ship is for groups of friends. We could each pick the type of cabin to fit our budgets: I shared a balcony cabin with a friend, two others shared an outside cabin, one had an inside cabin by herself, and the other chose a studio stateroom designed for people sailing solo.

After settling in our respective cabins and unpacking (for the first and only time on this voyage), we met on deck to order tropical drinks and watch us sail away from Honolulu on the way to Maui.

There is so much to see in Hawai'i that even a week can't do it justice, but having the luxury of spending nearly 100 hours on land allowed us to explore more than I ever imagined. During our

time on Maui, a guided excursion along the Road to Hana and other adventures filled my days with waterfalls, rainbows and sunrises. I soared over a bubbling volcano on the island of Hawai'i during a helicopter ride from Kona, and then smelled the sulfur and felt the steam from the same volcano's vent on an excursion from Hilo.

I was delighted to be introduced to the colorful rocky ribbons of Waimea Canyon, the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, on Kaua'i. O'ahu became my personal foodie paradise as I ate garlic shrimp from a food truck, munched on plump macadamia nuts and enjoyed sweet Dole Whip.

As women who are accustomed to doing things on our own, we relied on a level of flexibility to keep things smooth and stress-free. There was never any pressure to stick together as a group at all times; instead, I set out on excursions with different women each day, and every night we came together over dinner to swap stories about our adventures. Thanks to Norwegian Cruise Line's specialty dining package, we were able to book meals in each of the ship's restaurants throughout the week — thereby avoiding any last-minute hangry decision-making.

On our final night in Kauai, a festive lū'au marked our first excursion as a complete group. It was a beautiful way to celebrate Hawaiian culture and end an unexpected adventure on the islands. As I look at our photographs today, reminiscing



about our time together, the joy in our faces is clear — the six Pineapple Girls in our matching T-shirts and flower leis, wearing big smiles after a memorable Hawaiian voyage.

Having been on 30 cruises (and counting!), Tiffani Sherman is an expert traveler and Florida-based writer who has contributed to a number of print, broadcast and digital outlets.



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