

# Finding Long-Term Rentals in Hawaii in 2026

Introduction



# Current Market Landscape (2026)

## Tight Housing & Rental Scarcity

Hawaii's rental inventory remains tight, with low vacancy rates and high rents, especially on O'ahu and Maui. (Living in Hawaii)

Maui is particularly strained due to the aftermath of the 2023 wildfires and low vacancy rates under 2% in some areas. (AP News)

## Shifts from Vacation to Long-Term Housing

Local government actions are affecting rental availability:

Maui County passed Bill 9 to phase out over 6,000 short-term vacation rentals in key areas by 2029–2031 to redirect housing stock to residents. (SFGATE)

This means more units could transition to long-term leases — but slowly and unevenly.

# Where to Look for Long-Term Rentals

## Primary Islands & Cities

**O'ahu (Honolulu area)** – most opportunities but highest competition and price points.

**Maui** – limited availability; regulatory changes may open more over time.

**Big Island & Kaua'i** – sometimes more affordable options, but still competitive.



## Neighborhood Guidance

In Honolulu, consider neighborhoods like Kalihi, Kaimuki, Kapahulu for more affordable rents compared to Waikiki or Ala Moana. (KT Rents)

# Best Platforms & Listing Sources

## Online Listings to Explore

**HiCentral.com** – pulls directly from MLS and features licensed, verified long-term rentals (especially useful on O‘ahu).  
(Hawaiihomelistings.com)

**Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace** – widely used by locals, but be cautious about scams. (Captain Cook Real Estate)

**Zillow, Apartments.com** – additional channels, though responses can vary.

## Local Networking

Word-of-mouth, community groups, and social media island groups are often key ways to find listings before they go widely public — locals often share leads directly. (Buzzworthy)

# Budgeting & Cost Expectations

## Know the Costs

Rents in Honolulu for studios/1-bedrooms often hover well into the \$2,000+ per month range — and sometimes much higher. (KT Rents)

Factor in utilities, internet, parking, and renters insurance — these can add several hundred to your monthly budget. (Marie Hansen Properties)

Many landlords expect proof of income showing 2.5x–3x the monthly rent to qualify. (Living in Hawaii)



# Rental & Legal Basics

## Written Lease Agreements

Always have a written lease, whether month-to-month or one year — crucial for clarity and legal protection. (DCCA)

Know that security deposits in Hawaii are typically capped at one month's rent. (DCCA)

Retain signed copies of leases and inventory of unit condition to avoid disputes.

## Tenant Rights & Law

Familiarize yourself with Hawaii's Residential Landlord-Tenant Code and use resources like the state's handbook or hotline for questions. (DCCA)

Avoid paying large sums before seeing a property — scams are common, and deposits without seeing can be risky. (Royal Hawaiian Movers (RHM))

# Avoiding Scams & Red Flags

- 📄 **Watch out for listings with prices way below market, poorly written ads, or landlords who refuse in-person meetings.** (Royal Hawaiian Movers (RHM))

Do not send money via wire or untraceable transfer services if it feels suspicious or you haven't verified the listing.



## Tips for Out-of-State & Remote Searchers

- Use virtual tours and online applications when relocating from the mainland or overseas. (KT Rents)
- Plan a scouting trip to view units in person if possible — landlords often prefer meeting people they will trust long-term.
- Consider starting with a short-term rental while you search (just be aware of legal short-term limits in some areas).

# Summary Takeaways for Viewers

Hawaii's long-term rental market in 2026 is competitive and expensive, but opportunities exist with the right strategy.

Use trusted listing platforms, network locally, and beware of scams.

Understand Hawai'i lease norms, legal protections, and the importance of a written lease.

Tough market conditions — especially post-Maui wildfires and regulatory shifts — mean persistence and preparation are essential.



**ADDITIONAL THINGS**

**PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW**

**(BUT OFTEN DON'T)**

# 1. "Long-Term" Means Different Things in Hawaii

In Hawaii, "long-term rental" doesn't always mean 12 months. Many listings labeled "long-term" are actually:

- 6-month leases
- Month-to-month after a trial period
- Owner-occupied ohana units with flexible rules

Some landlords keep leases short on purpose to:

- Adjust rent annually
- Retain flexibility if family needs the unit

Viewers should always ask:

- Lease length
- Renewal expectations
- Rent increase history

## 2. Ohana Units: Huge Opportunity, Hidden Trade-Offs

Ohana (ADU) rentals are a big part of the rental market in 2026.

### Pros

- Often cheaper than apartments
- Utilities sometimes included
- Quieter, residential neighborhoods

### Cons

- Shared utilities or parking
- Rules tied to the main house (guests, pets, noise)
- Owner lives on-site → less anonymity
- Sometimes informal leases

# 3. Zoning & County Rules Affect Availability

Each island and county plays by different rules, which directly impacts rental supply.

## O'ahu

Most stable inventory, but highly competitive

## Maui

Post-fire housing pressure + STR phase-outs = chaos + opportunity

## Big Island

More space, fewer units, longer commute trade-offs

## Kauai

Extremely limited rentals, heavy local preference



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# 4. Landlords Often Prefer Locals (or People Already Here)

This is uncomfortable but real. Many landlords prefer:

- People already on island
- Stable local employment
- Referrals from people they trust

Remote workers may face skepticism due to:

- Income verification concerns
- Fear of early departure



## Tips viewers should hear:



Include a short intro message explaining why you're moving & long-term intent



Show stable income history



Be professional, polite, and fast

# 5. Timing Matters More Than People Think

Hawaii rentals are seasonal.

## Best availability:

- Late summer (August–September)
- Early winter (January–February)

## Worst times:

- Spring
- Early summer
- Right before school starts

 Many leases end in summer — competition spikes.

## 6. Parking Is a Bigger Deal Than Rent (Sometimes)

Some condos charge extra for parking

Street parking rules vary by neighborhood and county

  Great reminder: **Cheap rent with bad parking = daily stress.**

## 7. Pet Policies Are Extra Strict

Pets are one of the biggest deal-breakers.

Many rentals are no-pet

Pet rent and deposits are common

Breed restrictions exist (especially dogs)

Emotional support / service animal laws apply — but landlords still push back

# 8. Utilities & Infrastructure Are Not "Mainland Normal"

Viewers should expect differences:

- Electricity is expensive (AC adds up fast)
- Some homes: Don't have AC / Have solar with usage rules / Use catchment water (Big Island)
- Internet quality varies by area
- Trash, water, sewer may or may not be included

 **Ask exactly what's included — never assume.**



## 9. Natural Hazards Affect Where You Should Rent

This is rarely discussed but crucial.

Flood zones

Hurricane exposure

Lava zones (Big Island)

Wildfire risk (dry areas, Maui especially)

📌 🎯 **Living cheaper sometimes means higher risk zones.**

# 10. Cultural Expectations Matter

Hawaii isn't just expensive, it's relational.

Being respectful, humble, and patient goes a long way

Overly aggressive negotiating can backfire

Showing appreciation and responsibility matters

 Landlords often choose the person they trust, not just the highest income.