

Downsizing for Hawaii: What to Keep, What to Sell, and What You Will Regret Either Way

Most people moving to Hawaii underestimate how much the physical transition costs them — not just emotionally, but financially. The average mainland home is around 2,000+ sq ft. The average Hawaii home or condo buyers are landing in? Often 1,000 to 1,400 sq ft, sometimes less. That gap has consequences. This episode is about making smart choices before the move so you are not paying to store stuff you never use or crying over furniture you gave away.



What's Your Next Step?

Get the Full Guide

Everything you need to know about downsizing for Hawaii — in one place.

[Link to Youtube Description]

Book a Meeting with the Experts

Talk directly with someone who knows Hawaii real estate and can help you plan your move.

[Link in Youtube Description]

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The Hawaii Space Reality Check

"YOUR STUFF WAS BUILT FOR A DIFFERENT LIFE"

2,100

Avg Mainland Home

Square feet — the space most people are moving from

1,300

Avg Hawaii Home

Square feet — what buyers typically land in on arrival

\$3,000

Annual Storage Cost

At \$250/month — just to store things you are not using

\$6,000

Full Container Ship

Maximum cost from the West Coast — every cubic foot matters

The Space Gap


Moving from a 2,100 sq ft mainland home to a 900–1,400 sq ft Hawaii property means a **30 to 60 percent reduction in space**. Studios and 1BR condos can be as small as 700 sq ft. Everything you own needs to be re-evaluated through that lens.

The Psychology Shift

Hawaii homes are designed for outdoor living. Lanais, open layouts, and natural airflow replace the need for large interior space. Your relationship with "home" fundamentally changes — and that is actually a good thing, if you plan for it.

Find storage near me

Recommended locations




Great American Self Storage of Kailua-Kona


1.3mi

74-5499 Loloku St,
Kailua Kona, HI, 96740

(808) 329-8700



0.3'x0.5'	Office, Pay By...	\$15	Select
10'x10'	Drive- Up...	\$334	Select
10'x20'	Drive- Up...	\$471	Select
More Sizes		See all sizes	




Great American Self Storage of Kahului

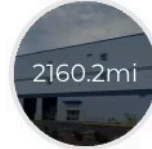
88.3mi

40 Pulehu Pl,
Kahului, HI, 96732

(808) 419-3184



5'x5'	Second Floor,...	\$60	Select
10'x15'	Second Floor,...	\$300	Select
10'x20'	Outdo... Protec...	\$250	Select
More Sizes		See all sizes	




Great American Self Storage

2160.2mi

851 East Enos Drive,
Santa Maria, CA, 93454

(805) 349-2201



10'x10'		\$157	Select
10'x10'		\$157	Select
10'x20'		\$235	Select
\$15 One-Time Admin Fee		See all sizes	

What to Sell Before You Go

Large mainland furniture rarely fits Hawaii spaces — and the humidity and salt air will wreck certain materials fast. Here is what deserves a price tag before you pack a single box.

Large & Cheap Furniture

Sectional sofas, California King beds, large entertainment centers, and garage workshop setups. Solid wood swells and warps. Particle board and MDF degrades quickly in humid coastal environments. Cheap flat-pack furniture is especially vulnerable — the humidity and salt air will destroy it fast. If it was not built to last on the mainland, it will not survive Hawaii.

Extra Vehicles & Oversized Vehicles

Hawaii traffic, tight parking (especially Oahu), and shipping costs of **\$1,000 to \$1,500 per car** from the West Coast means most people should evaluate hard whether they truly need two vehicles.


What about Teslas?

Winter Clothes & Cold Weather Gear

Hawaii's climate means you will rarely — if ever — need heavy coats, snow boots, thermal layers, or cold weather gear. These items take up significant space and shipping weight. Sell or donate before you go.

Extra Clothes

Hawaii's dress code is casual year-round — aloha shirts, board shorts, sundresses, and slippers (flip flops) cover most occasions. Heavy wardrobes built for mainland seasons, office dress codes, or cold weather simply do not apply. You will likely wear 20% of what you own 80% of the time. Pare down before you go — and enjoy the excuse to build a lighter, more relaxed wardrobe when you arrive.

 **The rule of thumb:** If you would not pay to replace it at Hawaii prices, sell it on the mainland where it has more value.

What You Should Absolutely Keep

"THE THINGS PEOPLE REGRET GETTING RID OF"



Sentimental & Irreplaceable Items

People in the rush of downsizing make emotional decisions they regret. If it cannot be replaced, protect it — full stop. This means photos, family heirlooms, handmade items, gifts from people who are gone. The move is chaotic and things get lost, damaged, or accidentally donated. Box these items separately, label them clearly, and treat them as non-negotiable. No amount of square footage savings is worth losing something irreplaceable.



Power Tools and Garage Equipment

Power tools, ladders, air compressors, and specialty equipment are expensive to replace in Hawaii — and selection is more limited than on the mainland. If you own quality tools, bring them.



Quality Kitchen Items

Quality kitchen items are often worth bringing to Hawaii, especially if you've invested in cookware you love. High-end pots and pans, cast iron cookware, quality knives, stand mixers, specialty appliances, and other premium kitchen tools can be expensive to replace and may have fewer options available locally.

❓ **The sentimental storage question:** If you have items you cannot bring and cannot part with, what is the actual long-term plan? This is worth discussing honestly before you go.

Our final thoughts....

As you finalize your plans, these critical last-minute considerations can help smooth your transition and save you money.



Maximize Airline Baggage

For smaller, essential, and irreplaceable items, bringing them as checked baggage or carry-on can be significantly cheaper than shipping.



We have Costco and Amazon!

Costco is available on every major Hawaiian island (and four on Oahu!). This means you can easily purchase many bulk items, groceries, and even some household goods upon arrival, saving you considerable shipping costs and hassle.

*"*Excluding Alaska and Hawaii*"*



Plan for Shipping Delays

Container shipping to Hawaii typically takes 2–4 weeks from the West Coast, and delays happen. Plan to live out of suitcases for at least a month. Have essentials, bedding, and kitchen basics ready to buy or borrow on arrival. Do not assume your container arrives on move-in day.



Buyer's Remorse Is Normal

You will open boxes in your new Hawaii home and think — ***why did I bring this?*** It happens to almost everyone. Do not beat yourself up. Donate it, sell it on Facebook Marketplace, or pass it along to a neighbor. The goal was never perfection. The goal was getting here.

A tropical beach scene with waves, palm trees, and a building in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Mahalo for Watching!' is prominently displayed in the center-left.

Mahalo for Watching!

Visit us at livinginhawaii.com