

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **DISCOVER AN UNDERWATER PARADISE** **AT MAUI OCEAN CENTER**

*Top-Rated Attraction in Hawaii!*  
*- Zagat Survey U.S. Family Travel Guide*

**MA'ALAEA, MAUI, HI** – Attracting over 300,000 visitors annually, the Maui Ocean Center is one of Maui's most popular attractions. Visitors to The Hawaiian Aquarium will discover an underwater paradise at this state-of-the-art marine park. The beauty and wonder of Hawaii's aquatic world come to life in this three-acre facility, conveniently located at Ma'alaea Harbor. All of the exhibits at Maui Ocean Center present living animals in habitats that faithfully replicate their natural environment beneath the sea. While at times it might seem incredible, the colors of the fishes, corals, sponges and other fabulous marine creatures are absolutely natural!

Through years of research and meticulous care, Maui Ocean Center has gathered the best and most unique collection of Hawaii's marine life. As a result, what would take years, if not a lifetime to explore in the wild, can easily be seen in a leisurely stroll through the facility in one day. For visitors, this aquatic experience is both educational and breathtaking as they encounter hundreds of species including various endemic species. Approximately 25% of marine species found in Hawaii are endemic, meaning they are found nowhere else in the world.

Over 60 exhibits and hands-on activities will delight children and adults alike. The 54-foot long acrylic tunnel takes visitors inside the 750,000-gallon Open Ocean Exhibit so they can come eye to eye with numerous reef sharks, stingrays and thousands of tropical reef fish. Playful green sea turtles, mystical moon jellies and elusive octopus are just some of the marine animals that one will encounter on a trip to Maui Ocean Center. In addition to extensive narrative signs and optional audio guides, marine naturalists give interactive presentations throughout the day and answer any questions that guests may have. These personal encounters with nature are designed to help visitors develop an understanding and appreciation of the unique nature of Hawaii's marine environment in an enjoyable and safe setting.

All the animals displayed at the Maui Ocean Center are collected exclusively from waters around the Hawaiian Islands. All collecting is conducted under strict, government permits and the animals are featured and cared for with integrity. The green sea turtles, for example, are part of Sea Life Park Hawaii's hatch-and-release Hawaiian Green Turtle Education Loan Program. They are given a strong head start and will eventually be released to the wild. Many of the rays and sharks are rotated from the Aquarium to the ocean. And when a shark is brought into or released from the Aquarium, it is blessed by Maui Ocean Center's Hawaiian cultural advisor, Dane Maxwell, for sharks are considered na 'aumakua (deified ancestors or personal gods) in Hawaiian culture.

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Dedicated to perpetuating the island's host culture, Maui Ocean Center's exhibits and tours also showcase the language, myths and history of the Hawaiian Islands in an entertaining and educational format.

For visitors who like to plunge into their activities head-first, the Aquarium's Shark Dive Maui® program allows certified divers to descend into the Open Ocean Exhibit to experience the marine life up close. Surrounded by over 20 sharks, half a dozen stingrays, and thousands of tropical fish, divers will have a lifetime experience and their entire family will be able to watch the dive from start to finish! In addition to shark and ray biology, the dive program highlights the close spiritual connection between the Hawaiian culture and the ocean, especially the spiritual importance of sharks as 'aumakua.

An average visit to The Hawaiian Aquarium lasts approximately two hours, but most visitors stay longer to absorb the breathtaking views, linger over lunch at the Aquarium's award winning restaurant or open-air café, or to immerse themselves in the Maui Ocean Treasures gift shop, a veritable collection of ocean- and island-inspired jewelry, art, clothing, toys, gifts, books, gourmet pantry food, and logo items.

Maui Ocean Center is open 365 days of the year, from 9am to 5pm. General admission is \$27.95 for adults; \$24.95 for seniors (age 65 and older); \$19.95 for children (age 3-12); free admission for children under 3. Special rates, packages and theme events are also available for groups.

For information and group reservations, contact the Maui Ocean Center: 192 Ma'alaea Road; Ma'alaea, Maui, HI 96793; telephone 808.270.7000, facsimile 808.270.7070, e-mail [info@mauiocenter.com](mailto:info@mauiocenter.com) or visit website [www.mauiocenter.com](http://www.mauiocenter.com).

The mission of Maui Ocean Center is to foster understanding, wonder and respect for Hawaii's marine life. Maui Ocean Center was named "Top 25 Best Aquariums in the U.S." and inducted into "Certificate of Excellence Hall of Fame 2015" by TripAdvisor, "Top-Rated Attraction in Hawaii" by Zagat Survey US Family Travel Guide, "Leader In Responsible Tourism" on the Top 100 Blue List by Islands Magazine, and "Best Land Activity" in 2008, 2009, 2011 by the readers of The Maui News. Open daily from 9am to 5pm. For more information please contact the Maui Ocean Center: 192 Ma'alaea Road; Ma'alaea, HI 96793; telephone (808) 270-7000, facsimile (808) 270-7070, e-mail: [info@mauiocenter.com](mailto:info@mauiocenter.com) or visit [www.mauiocenter.com](http://www.mauiocenter.com).

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