

Car rentals – *this is my personal experience and opinions.... No guarantees!*

I have been using **Costco Travel** for my car rentals and have not found any big car rental companies who are cheaper. I only use Enterprise because I have never ever waited in line. I have had painful wait times at almost all other companies. The latest one was Avis where I waited over 1 hour. They were renting the cars as they were being returned. Enterprise also has an office at the Marriott next door. Often times the price is less because they don't charge airport tax. You can get a free shuttle there, pick up your car, head back to the airport and p/u family/friends. To return the car, same thing, drop it off, free shuttle back.

It is my opinion that you get what you pay for. I have rented super discounted cars from Budget, etc. and cars are not clean, have had cockroaches and fleas in them. So be aware that quality does count.

**Keep it Local:** Pandemic and post pandemic – you will hear this often while on your trip. We rented from this wonderful young, small company owner called Ali'i Car rentals. He carries only jeep products, but has small SUV's as well as the fun topless jeeps. He will leave the car for you at the airport and when you leave, you just leave the keys in the car and park it in the lot and leave. There is also no airport taxes, so prices are very competitive. He has optional insurance but your car insurance should cover you, check before buying. It was super easy! Cars are not brand new, but usually 2-3 years old. He is very responsive and trying to hold on during these hard times. [www.aliirentalcars.com](http://www.aliirentalcars.com) and 808-346-5219, tell Anwar I sent you!

**'Discount Hawaiian Car Rental'** (<http://www.discounthawaiicarrental.com/>) 1-800-292-1930 – I have used them in the past and have been very happy. Even though the daily rate might look higher than Hotwire or Priceline (it's a rip off - more later) the total always comes out lower. You don't have to put in your credit card, you just reserve, they give you a set price and tell you where to go. Then you pay when you arrive. So if you find something you like better - then you can always cancel. When I rented, they also did NOT charge for extra drivers. That can be a huge savings. Their website can be confusing as the main page has prices for Oahu – so look carefully.... Or just call them!

**Avoid Airport tax** - if you are staying at a hotel, ask to pick up the car there and what the rental cost will be - you will avoid airport taxes but sometimes they increase the car rental (because they can!) – or if you have reserved it for airport pick up, ask if they can transfer the rental to the hotel. They usually will accommodate you!

**Grace period for returns** - Each car rental company is different! Get it in writing. I asked 2 times and was told both times it was 59 minutes for Enterprise. When I dropped the card off, they said it was only 29 minutes and wanted to charge me \$1 per MINUTE..... turns out they were very nice and didn't charge at all. But be careful.

I have an **American Express** card and I signed up for an optional \$15 fee that 100% covers me for every car rental (this is insurance). When I charge the car rental on the AE card, it automatically charges me the \$15 and I'm fully covered. I love it! No feeling bad about not taking their insurance at the counter.

**Pre-paid gas** – do the math on this – you will probably find it pretty hard to use an entire tank of gas in a normal 1 week trip – this is a personal pet peeve of mine that they lure you into thinking you are paying less for your gas, when it is 99% certain you will pay more unless you bring it back bone dry. There is a Costco gas station on your way to the airport for best gas prices.

**Beware of Priceline.** They have some fine print that says that in spite of the daily price they give you, they reserve the right to 'supplemental fees' in certain areas. I was furious when I found this out after thinking I was getting it at one price, putting in my cc # and then getting charged more - and can't do anything about it! **Bottom line – they are a rip off.**

**Hotwire** is a good alternative and I would definitely check out pricing there as well. They don't require you to pay up front, but **check the TOTAL** vs Discount Hawaiian because *the daily rate they quote you is not the whole story.*

Here is another island option – I have never used them but others I know have – Island Cars.  
<http://www.islandcars.net/>

Kauai Rent a car – older cars, good low prices for longer stays. Blend in like a local. Worth checking out.

Most of the car rental companies are right at the airport, although they shuttle you about the 500 yards over to the rental counter. There are 2 companies that are off-site, National/Enterprise and Thrifty.

If you are about **efficiency and speed**, here is what I suggest: Leave someone with all the luggage at the airport and then have only the driver(s) go over in the van to the counter, get registered and come back with the car. It is SO much easier than dragging all your loved ones and stuff into the van and over there, etc. All the rental companies will let you add other drivers if you need to later.

And the airport is very nice and has nice shady benches and bathrooms. The car rental places are crowded (with all those less smart people) with few places to sit, no Hawaiian music playing or palm trees or gentle breezes!

When you get back, you can sit at the curb and load stuff into the car for nearly as long as it takes as long as you don't leave your car for very long – they are super mellow at the airport.

Also be aware at busy times, such as Christmas and New Years – they CAN AND DO **run out of cars!**