



ESCAPING ORDINARY IN HAWAII

By Carla Grossetti

It's while sitting at the stern of an outrigger canoe as it rushes down the face of a three-foot wave off Waikiki Beach in Hawaii that I gain more of an understanding of the Hawaiian passion for *moana* (ocean).

Although the single-hulled canoes were originally created for livelihood and transportation around the South Pacific, today they are used to introduce tourists to the thrills associated with the water sport, which remains an integral part of Hawaiian indigenous culture.

Faith Surf School instructor Isaiah Moniz observes the water whipping my face and laughs: "You just received a Hawaiian blessing."

While my maiden foray gliding toward the shore feels like a joy ride, the Polynesian connection to the boats made from native *koa* hardwood is a lot more profound. "The Polynesians performed great feats of navigation



in the *wa'a* (canoes), sailing the ocean using the stars, wind and currents," says Isaiah.

Isaiah's father started Faith Surf School in 2000 and the business is now Hawaii's largest and most popular surf school.

These ancient Hawaiian pastimes are some of the indigenous customs that Outrigger Resorts actively promotes in order to encourage travellers to 'Escape Ordinary'.

This year, Outrigger celebrates its 70th anniversary, honouring the legacy of its founding members – Roy and

Estelle Kelley – and the story of a brand that has morphed from a single Waikiki hotel into a global portfolio of some 37 properties dotted around Hawaii, the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean.

While Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort celebrates the Aloha State's 'local beach and surf culture', sister property, Outrigger Reef Waikiki Beach Resort introduces visitors to Hawaiian traditions such as hula dancing and strumming a *ukelele*.

Here, at Outrigger Reef, 'ambassador of aloha' instructor Luana Maitland shows us how to follow the *kaholo*,



a four-beat pattern for our feet, and to move our hips like palms starting to sway. Luana’s moves are seductive, and her soft singing, which rises and falls in volume, helps us get a feel for the simple moves in *The Hukilau Song*.

Luana says while visitors to Oahu are initially enticed to its sandy beaches, world-class surf and the silhouette of its majestic Diamond Head mountain, they often leave the island State feeling blessed after learning more about the local culture. She says she is very happy to be the ‘ambassador of aloha’ for Outrigger Resorts as she gets to devote

time each day to reviving aspects of the ancient culture. “Being Hawaiian means always being surrounded by music and dance. Growing up, nothing was ever documented. What we were taught by the chiefs and our *kahuna* was so we would understand our culture and be able to pass it on,” she says.

“It’s very important to me that I get to share the culture that was taught to me by my family. What I teach you is not what I learnt from a book. Hula is the language of the heart and everything in Hawaii comes from the heart,” Luana says. •



TRAVEL FACTS

GETTING THERE

- Hawaiian Airlines flies to Honolulu from Sydney daily and from Brisbane three days a week. hawaiianairlines.com.au

WHERE TO STAY

- **Outrigger Reef Waikiki Beach Resort**, which specialises in traditional Hawaiian culture
- **Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort**, which specialises in local beach culture
- **Waikiki Beachcomber by Outrigger**, which is undergoing a multi-million-dollar modernisation
- outrigger.com