



# Hawaii at a 'tipping point' of overtourism, travel experts claim

By Janine Puhak

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Paradise may soon have no vacancies, if some Hawaiian travel experts are to be believed.

In a paper published by the University of Hawaii (UH), researchers claim that tourism in Hawaii has hit a so-called "tipping point" of overtourism as increasing numbers of annual visitors are reportedly on the brink of overwhelming the island state's resources, damaging the quality of life for residents and negatively impacting general economic vitality.

The experts claim that the problem will continue to escalate with potentially dangerous consequences unless tourism management officials intervene to initiate change.

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Researchers claim that Hawaii has hit a so-called "tipping point" of overtourism, as increasing numbers of annual visitors are reportedly on the brink of overwhelming the island state's resources. (Getty, File)

"We're not at a crisis point yet. We're at a tipping point. We have so many visitors, we need to get serious about creating management programs," Frank Haas, an author of the paper, told WFAA. The former Hawaii Tourism Authority exec and UH Assistant Dean penned the report with James Mak, UH professor of economics emeritus, and Paul Brewbaker, a veteran economist for the Bank of Hawaii.



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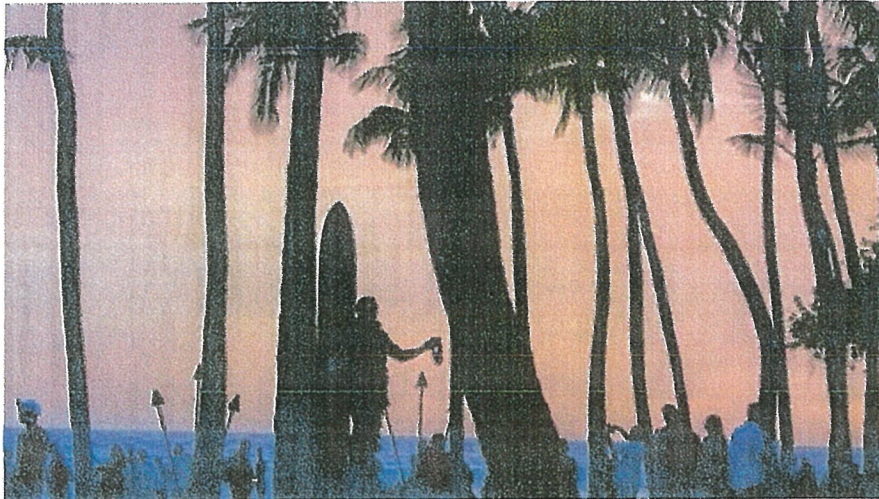
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"We're not at a crisis point yet. We're at a tipping point. We have so many visitors, we need to get serious about creating management programs," Frank Haas, an author of the paper, told WFAA. (Getty, File)

"Despite a string of record visitor arrivals now totaling almost ten million annually, Hawai'i tourism shows signs of trouble," the paper begins. "Inflation-adjusted spending per visitor has trended downward. Diminishing economic contribution, eroding resident sentiment, and increasing congestion and stress on sites and attractions provide evidence that the current governance model is inadequate for effectively managing the increasingly complex issues facing Hawai'i tourism."

The researchers note that Hawaii has long been a "dream destination" for millions, with tourism serving as a "key economic engine for the state's economy," but the Aloha State is currently at risk of being deluged by "overtourism" if nothing stands to change.



Noting that Hawaii has long been a "dream destination" for millions, with tourism serving as a "key economic engine for the state's economy," the Aloha State is currently at risk of being deluged by "overtourism" if nothing stands to change. (Getty, File)

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"Hawai'i tourism has been negatively affected by rapid growth, diminishing economic contributions, and the lack of a comprehensive tourism management plan," the report claims.

As noted by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Hawaii welcomed a record-breaking 9.9 million tourists in 2018.

Though visitor spending rose to a whopping \$17.8 billion last year, creating over \$2 billion in tax revenue, it remains to be seen how Southwest Airlines' new plan to fly over 4,000 people daily to Hawaii will affect overtourism concerns, WFAA reports.

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### NEWS - TOP STORY

# \$53 Million needed for repairs at Hawaii Convention Center

Hawaii Convention Center is facing up to \$53 million in repairs, and state legislators may help out.

Tuesday, October 9th 2018, 10:53 PM HST by Eliza Larson



The Hawaii Convention Center rose up over the Ala Wai 20 years ago. The roughly \$260 million project now hosts dozens of events every year and draws people in from all over the world but it's showing its age. Its facing up to \$53 million in repairs and state legislators are asked to foot the bill.

KITV4 was denied access into the center to see some of the problems. To break it down: about \$26 million is need to fix stairwells, audio problems, breaking chairs and chipped china. The remaining \$27 million is needed to fix the rooftop terrace.

"Heaven forbid it crashes during a convention. We certainly don't want that," State Senator Glenn Wakai said.

Wakai said Hawaii legislators give the convention center a set amount for marketing and repairs every year.

To get the \$53 million, convention center officials could either ask for a lump sum or ask the state to increase the money they receive annually. Wakai said the state could give them the funding for some of the repairs but to repair the roof would take another step.

In 2007, state legislators passed a bill to begin work on a future Museum of Hawaiian Music and Dance. Several years later, another bill was passed to allocate a million dollars a year to build that museum on top of the convention center.

Wakai said the roof repairs were supposed to happen at the same time as the construction of the museum but the project was put on hold. Since the law to build still stands, the roof still leaks.

Wakai hopes legislators prioritizes the convention center's maintenance work this year.

"I think the Convention Center is what generates the money to pay for all of these other essential government services," he said.

There is push back from others in the legislature who wish to prioritize other state projects. For example, State Representative Bob McDermott thinks funding should go towards improving schools.

Teri Orton, the Convention Center's general Manager, released a statement about the needed repairs, saying:

"The Hawai'i Convention Center is committed to moving forward with several capital improvement and maintenance projects that will allow us to continue our 20-year commitment to providing the highest-quality event facilities and services for our guests. Budget discussions are ongoing, and operations at the Center are continuing without interruption."

Wakai also mentioned how the Hawaii Convention Center wasn't seeing many locals at first. But with events like car shows and sporting events now, more Hawaii residents are drawn to the center. He hopes that drives the urgency to start repairs.

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tarzan • 6 months ago

Uh oh... Here comes another creatively-designed tax scheme. Who's gonna foot the bill for this one?

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David Long • 6 months ago

Where did all the profits go? Do they not take a portion of the ticket fee for maintenance? This is another money pit in the making.

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AdrianAkau • 6 months ago

Imagine the cost of maintaining rail later on.

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Makikiguy → AdrianAkau • 6 months ago

You AIN't seen nothing, yet. Remember, they already found cracks and they had to redo some type shims. And last but not least, the rail employees will be some of the highest paid employees in the state.

3 ^ v • Share >



Tom Reed Takeshi • 6 months ago

The HCC is sounding like another Aloha Stadium maintenance mess. Dreading to think what maintaining a rail system will be like.

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myauthorizedopinion • 6 months ago

There goes our tax dollars by the bucket. Business as usual with city leadership, ie C@ldwell. So, is there a reason this convention center can't pay for itself? Granted, that's not the C@ldwell method of doing business especially as long as he can just use a shovel to our tax dollars. Can

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